

Meiji-era industrialization and provincial vitality: The significance of the first-enterprise boom of the 1880s

Nakamura, Naofumi, author

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Abstrak

The purpose of this paper is to shed new light on the first enterprise boom of the 1880s, which marked the beginning of Japan's industrialization, with a special focus on developments in provincial areas. The paper seeks to identify important factors that triggered the boom and to examine its development in provincial areas by probing such aspects as the relationship between nationalism and the ideological thrust toward economic development, the process by which investment funds were procured, and the endowment and tapping of human resources. Major findings are as follows: (1) The ideology of national enrichment was influential not only in Japan's geopolitical center but also in the provinces, where it manifested itself as a combination of nationalist sentiment and aspirations for local development. (2) The most salient feature of provincial enterprise was the strong impetus of local initiative in the procurement of funding and human resources. Local bureaucrats and men of influence often took leading roles. (3) The successful launching of enterprises in provincial areas was facilitated by two factors: the provinces had already grown socially competent to pursue industrialization; and the development of rural industry since the Tokugawa period had made them fairly affluent.