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Author: John P. Tang

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THE ENGINE AND THE REAPER: INDUSTRIALIZATION AND MORTALITY IN LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY JAPAN

By JOHN P. TANG*

*Australian National University, Research School of Economics, 26 LF Crisp Building, Acton, ACT 2601, Australia (john.tang@anu.edu.au). The author would like to thank the two anonymous referees and editor in the preparation of this manuscript. Useful comments were also received from Jan Stuhler, Tue Gorgens, Timothy Hatton, Gaurab Aryal, Osamu Saito, Kyoji Fukao, Masato Shizume, Chiaki Moriguchi, Chika Yamauchi, Patrick Nolen, Alfonso Herranz-Loncan, Laura Panza, Latika Chaudhary, Remi Jedwab, Walker Hanlon, Shari Eli, Kris Inwood, Price Fishback, Dan Bogart and participants at the Australasian Cliometrics Workshop, Western Economic Association International conference, ANU Centre for Economic History transport workshop, World Economic History Congress, the Canadian Network of Economic History conference, and various departmental seminars. Dek Joe Sum, Amanda Maclean, Shigeo Morita, and Mitchell Lee provided excellent research assistance. This research is supported by funding from the Australian Research Council (DE120101426) and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

Economic development improves long-run health outcomes through access to medical treatment, sanitation, and higher income. Short run impacts, however, may be ambiguous given disease exposure from market integration. Using a panel dataset of Japanese vital statistics and multiple estimation methods, I find that railroad network expansion is associated with a six percent increase in gross mortality rates among newly integrated regions. Communicable diseases accounted for most of the rail-associated mortality, which indicate railways behaved as transmission vectors. At the same time, market integration facilitated by railways corresponded with a twenty percent increase in total capital investment nationwide over ten years.

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