Achievements of Mishima Michitsune

In 1876, Mishima Michitsune, a former samurai of the Satsuma Domain, was appointed the first governor of Yamagata Prefecture at the age of 40.

During his six-year tenure, he carried out major modernization projects, including the development of government districts and the construction of roads and bridges. He actively promoted large-scale infrastructure works such as the Kuriko Tunnel and the Sekiyama Highway connecting Yamagata and Sendai, earning him the nickname “the Civil Engineering Governor.”

At the same time, because these projects often required residents to provide labor and materials by force, he was also feared as the “Demon Governor.”

Mishima also promoted industrial development by establishing model silk mills and orchards, especially cherry orchards. In the field of medicine, he invited the German physician Dr. Roretz to teach Western medicine at Saiseikan Hospital, whose former main building survives today. In regards to education, he founded the Yamagata Prefectural Teachers’ College.

Yamagata’s modernization during the early Meiji period can be said to have been achieved largely through the policies and initiatives of Mishima Michitsune.