
Summary of Articles :

Agricultural Pumps and the Amendments to the Agricultural Land Re-Organization Law

Tomohiro OTA

This paper argues that the introduction of agricultural pumps in the Meiji era brought about changes in the laws on agricultural administration and land systems.

The Agricultural Land Re-Organization Law (the old law) was enacted in 1899 to increase farm production. In 1905, some revisions were added to the law to promote the introduction of agricultural pumps for agricultural land re-organization projects. Technical experts in agricultural land re-organization encouraged landowners to develop wasteland into rice fields by installing agricultural pumps. Landowners started to plan large-scale rice field construction projects based on using agricultural pumps as introduced by the law. Developing rice fields apparently brought many benefits to landowners by increasing the income derived from agriculture. Landowners also benefitted from the land-tax reduction that was granted to them. However, friction arose between the law and the need to maintain revenue levels.

In 1909, amendments were added to the law, and the new Agricultural Land Re-Organization Law (the new law) was enacted. This paper reexamines a commonly accepted theory concerning this new law. It has been widely accepted that the 1909 amendments reflected the demands of large-scale landowners. However, this paper argues that the new law did more than the old law to restrict the tax-saving benefits gained from land improvement projects. In other words, the amendments to the Agricultural Land Re-Organization Law limited the benefits of large-scale landowners.

The paper also argues that the 1909 amendments resolved the contradictions between the Agricultural Land Re-Organization Law and the land-tax laws that had come about due to the introduction of agricultural pumps for land improvement projects. As a result of the amendments, the Agricultural Land Re-Organization Law expanded into the fundamental law for land improvement projects in modern Japanese agriculture.

In conclusion, the paper points out that the value of reconsidering the characteristics of land-improvement projects in modern Japanese agriculture from the viewpoint of the technology. Such an analysis will also contribute to our understanding of the characteristics of capitalism in modern Japan.

Mobility and Regionality during the Expansion and Destruction of the “Japanese Empire” : An Analysis of Documents from Kamiyama-cho (Myozai-gun, Tokushima Prefecture) Town Hall

Masahiko SAKAGUCHI

This special feature focuses on questions related to human mobility during the period of the expansion and destruction of the “Japanese Empire.” The impetus for this focus is the fact that, despite recent advances in studies on the history of immigrants and colonists, the analysis of diverse entities such as immigrants, colonists, repatriated people, domestic migrants, and those who were not mobile remains to be done. This special feature seeks a comprehensive understanding of the entities involved, by focusing on a single region and identifying the diversity of entities there and the relationships among them. The region under examination is the present-day town of Kamiyama-cho, Myozai-gun, Tokushima Prefecture.

The papers in the special issue can be summarized as follows. Masahiko Sakaguchi’s “Mobility and family in a mountain village area during World War II” examines the significance of mobility in relation to the business of farming during wartime. Toru Hosoya’s “‘Repatriation’ and the rebuilding of lives after the war” examines the process by which repatriated people (and their families) rebuilt their lives, by elucidating issues related to public assistance, postwar reclamation, and agrarian reform. Chong Young-hwan’s “Korean mobility and settlement in Japan during and after the war” analyzes the process and significance of Korean mobility and settlement by examining the cases of multiple families.

The following is a brief explanation of the understanding of history unearthed by these studies while noting the distinctions among them. First, let me explain the relationship between these studies and previous research in the modern history of Japanese farm villages. Earlier historical studies of agrarian villages tended to focus on intermediate groups (municipal governments, cooperatives, social-movement organizations, etc.), explaining areas of conflict between the state and the public as illustrated by those intermediate groups. Later studies asked how these groups took on a “public” character in their regions. Such studies made settled populations the object of their analysis. The studies in this volume, by contrast, focus on those who could not settle, either because of the particular conditions of the period, or because of the nature of the region, or because they were barred from settling in certain regions (for example, if they were Koreans living in Japan). In other words, this set of studies highlights the history of those who had no choice but to maintain households that were unsettled.

Our studies also consider the history of people known as “unskilled workers”, for whom organizing into intermediate organizations was difficult. Existing studies have attempted to do statistical analyses of “unskilled workers” in agrarian villages. Our studies, by contrast, seek a new understanding of the history of these people from the perspective of the family unit and of the conditions of enormous social change, including war, repatriation, and return. Our studies show that the family under these conditions of change was not a monolithic entity.

In addition, the studies in this issue are related to the results of two other recent studies. One of these, by Masakatsu Okado, examines the “work” and “activities” of people as a study of the “history of survival.” One method of studying the “history of survival” is to try to identify the relationship (contradictions, conflicts) between the efforts that people make to survive, on the one hand, and laws or legal institutions, on the other. Our studies adopt this method to compare the relationship between the families of “Japanese people” and of Koreans living in Japan as the interacted with institutional systems, in this case, public assistance during and after World War II. The other recent study, by Kenichi Yasuoka, focuses on people who moved across borders, and specifically on Koreans living in Japan and social activists who left agrarian villages in the post-WWII era. Inspired by these studies, our research also examines both repatriated “Japanese people” who moved across national borders and Korean families living in Japan.

Our studies are also unique in examining the lives of the families of soldiers, repatriated people, and Koreans living in Japan who lived in mountain villages. All of these are part of our effort to examine the effect that the expansion and destruction of the “Japanese Empire” had on those who lived in mountain villages.