Politics and Law in Japan
Lectured by: Prof. Frank Bennett

Land Reform in Japan
Early Post War

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1. The Land Tenure System before the Reform (1)

The land tenure system in Japan is characterized by:

• Extremely small acreage of agricultural land.
• Larger ratio of cultivated land.
• Smaller ratio of pastures and stock-farms.
1. The Land Tenure System before the Reform (2)

In 1941:

- Paddy field owners having more than 2 chō: 4.7% own lands 36.4%.
- Upland owners having more than 2 chō: 2.3% own lands 26.1%
- The tenanted lands:
  - Paddy fields: 53.2%
  - Uplands: 37.7%
1. The Land Tenure System before the Reform (3)

General features of the landowner-tenant relations:

• Unwritten-formed tenancy agreement
• Termination of the tenant’s right to compensation
• Uncertain farm tenancy contract
1. The Land Tenure System before the Reform (4)

- Average 2 acres per farm family (6 million)
- A growth of subsidiary occupations:
  - Forestry
  - Fishing
  - Wage and salary employments
- These tiny farms provided:
  - 39% of 6 million farm families
  - 37% of the agriculture income
1. The Land Tenure System before the Reform (5)

- Intensive cultivation
  - Human labor & fertilizer applied per acre
  - Crops planted in each field per year
- In consequence, although yields per man-hour are low, yields per acre are among the highest in the world
- A great imbalance between population and resources.
1. The Land Reform (1)

Implementation Process:

• November 1945: First land reform plan based on an original plan before the war
• A memorandum from General Head Quarter (GHQ) to support land reform
• Land reform plan from Soviet Union
• June 1946, a proposal for land reform from the USA.
1. The Land Reform (2)

- A proposed plan stated that the state would purchase tenanted fields exceeding 1 ha that were owned by landlords and distribute it to tenants upon payment.
- Lastly in October 1946, the land reform bills were passed and promulgated.
1. The Land Reform (3)

- Such land reform produced drastic change in the Japanese agricultural structure during two years from 1945-1946.
- As a result, 2 million chō of paddy fields and uplands were transferred from landowners into the possession of tenant farmers.
1. The Land Reform (4)

Ratio of tenanted land to total farm land and ratio of tenant farmers to total farm families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Before the reform (Nov. 23, 1945)</th>
<th>After the reform (Aug. 1, 1950)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenanted Land (%)</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant Farmers (%)</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. The Land Reform (5-a)

The implementation of the reform (a):

1. The establishment of owner farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land to be transformed</th>
<th>Expropriated land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenanted lands of non-resident landowners</td>
<td>The whole area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenanted lands of resident landowners</td>
<td>Exceeding 1 chō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-cultivated lands</td>
<td>Exceeding 3 chō</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. The Land Reform (5-b)

The implementation of the reform (b):

2. The legal regulation of tenancy terms and conditions

- Stipulate the minimum period of tenancy,
- Stipulate the tenant farmer’s right to compensation,
- Standardize various forms of rent payment in cash and control the amount of rent.
1. The Land Reform (5-c)

The implementation of the reform (c):

3. Strict control of rental level and transfer of ownership of land between farmers or between a farmer and a non-farmer
   - The level of rental rate dropped to about 7% of production cost of rice (formerly it was 50%)
   - No ownership by non-resident landownership
   - No purchase of land by entrepreneurs
Conclusion

• The number of farmers increased from 5,697,948 to 6,176,419 (about 8.4%)
• No increase of acreage of agricultural land (a landholding and a leased land.)
• Therefore, there was apparently no increase productivity of agriculture.
Thank you for your attention!

References:

• R.P. Dore, Land Reform in Japan, Oxford University Press, Great Britain, 1959


• http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Publish/De/pdf/65_02_01.pdf