

BOOK REVIEWS

Japanese Colonialism in Taiwan: Land Tenure, Development, and Dependency, 1895–1945 by Chih-ming Ka, Boulder, Colo., Westview Press, 1995, xxi + 226 pp.

Since the publication in 1929 of the monumental work of Tadao Yanaihara entitled *Teikoku shugi ka no Taiwan* [Taiwan under imperialism] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten), the study of Taiwan's economic history under colonial rule has produced a large amount of books and articles published in Japanese, English, and Chinese. Of the topics dealt with, the subject of how the development of the sugar industry as the island's core industry influenced the evolution of Taiwan's social formation was best dealt with in both Yanaihara's book and a critical treatment of it published in 1975 by Twu Jaw-yann as *Nihon teikoku shugi ka no Taiwan* [Taiwan under Japanese imperialism] (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press). The book under present review contains much in the tradition of Yanaihara and Twu, while at the same time directing careful study to the available source materials from a new theoretical perspective, thus going beyond mere criticism of the previous research.

Let us begin with an outline of the book's content, then proceed to some critical comments. *Japanese Colonialism in Taiwan* consists of an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion.

In the nine-page introduction, the author briefly reviews the research literature to date and establishes the theoretical viewpoint he plans to develop in the main text. In addition to identifying both Yanaihara and Twu as the pioneering economists emphasizing the dependency of Taiwan's colonial economy on Japanese capitalism, the author also cites the work of such scholars as Ramon H. Myers as one more important research vein emphasizing the beneficial role played by the colonial state in Taiwan's economic development. The author then takes up the concept of "peripheral capitalism" offered by Samir Amin, accepting it as valid with the exception that it may have somewhat overstated the dominance of the "center" over the "periphery," since in the case of Taiwan it is necessary to analyze in concrete terms the mechanism of the articulation between the island's indigenous mode of production, i.e., the family farm, and Japanese sugar capital.

Chapter 1, entitled "Land Tenure, Class Relations, and the State in Precolonial Taiwan (1683–1895)," is an overview of land tenure and class relationships in Taiwan before the advance of the Japanese, describing the island as a frontier society formed by migrants from south China. These migrants consisted of a class of patent holders to reclaimed land, called *k'en-hu*, and a class of perpetual tenants known as *tien-hu*. However, unlike the mainland, the *tien-hu* came to hold the dominant social position in Taiwan by means of gradually strengthening usufruct rights over the land that they tilled. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the relationship between the descendants of the patent holders, called *ta-tsu-hu*, and those of the tenants, called *hsiao-tsu-hu*, was transformed into a kind of "double-tiered" landownership system. Then, along with the development of commercial agriculture, the latter class was able to rise to the positions of landlords. At the end of Ch'ing

period under the governorship of Liu Ming-ch'uan, a land tax reform was instituted attempting to cut away at the influence exerted by the *ta-tsu-hu* by collecting revenues directly from this rising class of landlords, but eventually failed due to heavy *ta-tsu-hu* resistance. While this historical background to the period in question has been already dealt with in the research to date, it has yet to be covered in such detail and analytical depth.

Chapter 2, entitled "The Colonial State, Foreign Capital, and the Articulation of Indigenous Agriculture," discusses changes over the first thirty years of Japanese colonial rule to 1925. The first topic to be dealt with is the reform policies instituted by Gentarō Kodama, the fourth governor-general, and Shimpei Gotō, the chief of the Civil Affairs Bureau, with emphasis on changes in land measurement and registration that accompanied land tax revisions. It was through these reforms that the former *hsiao-tsu-hu* landlord class finally established modern landownership rights, in a process by which the reforms first attempted by Liu Ming-ch'uan were realized under strong colonial rule via the exercise of policing powers. Secondly, this thirty-year period was marked by state-supported infrastructure building and the firm establishment of a modern sugar industry as the result of the advance onto the island by Japanese capital. The expansion of the sugar industry in Taiwan differed from colonial Java, where sugar mills produced cane directly on rice fields rented from local peasants, in that raw cane was purchased from indigenous cultivators under a system of exclusive territories for cane procurement. In this sense, the development of the modern sugar industry in Taiwan was a process in which the indigenous peasant economy was preserved, reorganized, and allowed to choose their own crops freely.

Up to this point in the book, the author has summarized what can be called the conventional wisdom in the study of Taiwan's colonial history and therefore (at least in terms of one who is well-informed of the past Japanese language research), nothing new has been presented. However, in Chapter 3 ("Family Farms and the Formation of Surplus Extraction Mechanisms by Sugar Capital") and Chapter 4 ("The Contradictory Relationship between Rice and Sugar"), the book's true value begins to show as the author begins his discussion of the mechanism of the articulation between sugar capital and the farm economy. The main points of the argument may be summarized as follows. To begin with, because 60 to 70 per cent of the cost of manufacturing sugar was taken up by the procurement of cane, cutting costs in this area was the key to reaping large monopoly profits. It was the previously mentioned exclusive territories for cane procurement, under which cane supplied in a given territory was earmarked for one particular refinery, that made the sugar business so profitable; for through this system "sugar companies enjoyed substantial leverage over the price of cane." What became the standard for setting prices was not the market price of refined sugar, but rather the price of the indigenous (*chailai*) variety of rice. In other words, the purchase price of cane was determined on the basis of the opportunity price of the amount of *chailai* rice that could be harvested from paddy equal in size to the cane field. Since the rise in productivity of *chailai* rice was lower than that of sugarcane, there came about a great discrepancy between the value of cane and rice. It was this discrepancy that was the key to the exploitation mechanism which insured high profits for sugar capitalists and a low income levels for farm families. Therefore, the stagnation in productivity within the rice sector of indigenous agriculture was "articulated" into an arrangement that continued to insure high profitability for sugar capital.

However, this mechanism ceased to function efficiently from around 1925, when the

production of an improved variety of rice, *ponlai* rice, began to increase for the purpose of export to Japan. Unlike *chilai* rice, the productivity of *ponlai* rice increased remarkably, resulting in a sharp rise in the income level of rice farmers. At the time the rice-growing sector was dominated by the landlords who had risen from *hsaio-tsu-hu* class; however, the profits reaped by the export of *ponlai* rice were sufficient to line the pockets of tenants as well. As a result, there was an increase in farm families desiring to switch over from sugarcane to rice cultivation, forcing the sugar manufacturers to raise the procurement price of cane, in order to keep these producers in sugar production. (In 1939, the creation of a state monopoly over foreign rice trading and the introduction of rice price ceilings would send the process into reverse.) This so-called “conflict between sugar and rice” is indeed a very important problem to be dealt with in the historical study of colonial Taiwan, and as such has been discussed to date from a number of different viewpoints; however, the author’s treatment of this problem in terms of the concept of “articulation,” which is clearly developed in Chapter 4, is no doubt the most significant contribution this book has made to the field.

Also at the end of Chapter 4, we find an investigation of changes taking place in farm family social stratification during the 1920s and 1930s based on data collected by basic agricultural surveys conducted by the colonial government’s Bureau of Agriculture and Industry. From these results the author argues that the numerical proportion of owner-cultivators tended to increase over time, while at the same time the influence of the landlord class continued to weaken. (Interestingly enough, this phenomenon is similar to the advance of owner-cultivators and semi-tenants happening in contemporary Japan.) The author explains that such a phenomenon is ample proof of “the persistence of family farms” (p. 177) in Taiwan.

In both his introductory and concluding remarks, the author critically points to a “theoretical ambiguity” in the analysis of the modern capitalist sector characterizing the work of Yanaihara and Twu, explained through the concept of an integral linkage between Japanese sugar capital and the Taiwanese indigenous sector. Nevertheless, one cannot help noticing the large amount of individual points of discussion common to all three works. The freshness and research merit of *Japanese Colonialism in Taiwan*, therefore, lies in its ability to utilize a new conceptual framework based on the idea of articulation in offering a clearer analysis of the subject matter.

In the interest of comparison, the author also touches briefly upon the completely different articulation pattern characterizing the case of Java (pp. 100–102), where a similar colonial advance of sugar capital into the rice-growing economy resulted in sugarcane cultivation directly controlled by sugar mills employing wage labor. To this reviewer, who specializes in Javanese agrarian history, such a comparison with Taiwan is a very interesting proposal, from which we have learned that one key issue in any articulation mechanism analysis would be a comparison of statistics concerning compensation paid by sugar corporations to peasants and opportunity income sources from subsistence food crop production. I hope to pursue such a research direction in the near future. (Hiroyoshi Kanō)