

# JAPANESE CAPITALISM AND ITS AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS

— Culminating in the Rice Riots —

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## I. CAPITAL FORMATION

Notwithstanding that it possessed a number of backward characteristics, Japanese capitalism was almost established in the period extending from about the time of the Sino-Japanese War (1894) on to the Russo-Japanese War (1904). Just as had occurred in England, the classical example of an advanced capitalist country, during this period Japan also established her industrial capital especially in the clothing-producing sector (cotton and silk—particularly the cotton spinning industry) providing daily consumption goods for the masses.

However, when Japan, which had just begun its conversion to the capitalist system, the development of the productive forces was in the low stage, and the processes of production were still ordered by pre-capitalist relations. Furthermore, at the period when Japan was beginning her conversion to the capitalist system world history was already entering the stage of "Imperialism." Under these conditions Japan established her industrial capital with the help of the government, and as a natural result Japan came to exhibit a special structure in comparison with England, the classical example of an advanced capitalist country, and within this structure the agrarian problem likewise came to be endowed with special characteristics. This special structure of Japanese capitalism is reducible to the coexistence of backwardness and precocious development, and in this connexion we wish to draw attention to the following two points.

The first point concerns the structure of Japanese industrial capital itself and the basis upon which it rested, and the second is concerned with the special character of the formula for meeting the demand for agricultural produce while Japanese capitalist economy was being developed.

### *1. Industrialization in the Initial Stage*

In Japan industrial capital with a large scale of production and

provided with modern producing power indeed came into being with the cotton-spinning industry as its basal axis, but all around it there was a vast accumulation of small family enterprises, not only in agriculture but also in commerce and industry. In addition to this there was in the industrial and commercial sectors a vast accumulation of minute-scale capitalist enterprises employing only few workers.

Further, this industrial capital, which grew up in a soil possessing pre-capitalist and low-grade capitalist characteristics over much of its extent, was markedly biased in the direction of the spinning and weaving industry sector, and the heavy industries—the metal and machine industries—were scarcely significant. This structure of industrial capital was also reflected in the labour market. In the mid-19th century, England, like Japan, had set the nucleus of its industrial capital in the spinning and weaving industry, but heavy industry already occupied an important position backing up the spinning and weaving industry and in response to this situation the heavy industry sector employed a much higher proportion of wage-labourers than that of Japan.

On the average, the wage-labourers in the Japanese heavy industry sector had higher levels of skill and wages than wage-labourers in other sectors, worked under better conditions, and were composed mainly of male workers. However, the labour market called into being by large enterprises in heavy industry was not only limited by the relative backwardness of this sector, but also in general weak in the power to draw male labourers from the peasantry, since the greater part of the wage-labourers in it was supplied from the urban population (the artisanate, the *ex-samurai* class, etc.). Peasants were an important source of labourers in the process of the development of Japan's industries, but the greater part of the male labourers from them were connected with pre-capitalist or low-grade capitalist labour markets (in concrete terms, seasonal workers in the indigenous industries, domestic employees in family commercial, industrial, and other enterprises, workers in small-scale capitalist enterprises, and day-labourers or manual workers in whom skill was not required), and in comparison with the later period the association of the labour market with the great enterprises in heavy industry was extremely weak.

In contrast to this, the spinning and weaving industry, as the basal axis of industrial capital, at that time called into being a demand for a large volume of female labourers, and in the form of part-time work it drew upon the services of a large volume of young females from distant rural area of the country during a few years preceding marriage.

**Table 1.** COMPARISON OF THE POSITION OF THE SPINNING AND WEAVING INDUSTRY AND METALS INDUSTRY IN ENGLAND AND JAPAN

A. Labour employed in manufacturing industry (percentage)						
ENGLAND			JAPAN			
	1841	1861	1881	1909	1920	
Spinning & Weaving	72.6	64.9	55.2	60.8	18.7	
Metals	8.0	10.9	12.6	2.3	5.3	(Metals)
				0.6	13.4	(Machines)

  

B. Value of production by manufacturing industry (percentage)						
	1840	1860	1888	1888	1898	1908
Spinning & Weaving	34.1	34.4	28.8	31.0	44.9	40.5
Metals	10.4	14.7	18.9	5.7	5.2	9.4
				4.9	4.3	5.2
				0.8	0.9	4.2
						(Metals)
						(Machines)

- Notes:
1. The figures for spinning & weaving in Part A in England are the total of the figures given for "clothing" and "textile" in the original source, and those for metals are the figures given for "metals". It appears that the machine industry is included in "metals". All these figures are estimates.
  2. The figures for Part A in Japan are for factories employing five or more workers.
  3. In the case of spinning & weaving industries included in Part B in England, the figures for woollens, cottons, linens, jute, silks, and clothing in the original source have been added up, and fitted with the classification in the original source for Japan.
  4. In the case of metal industries, the figures for hardware in the original source have been added up, and compared with the Japanese metals and machine-tools industries.

Source: For England: M. G. Mulhall, *The Dictionary of Statistics*, 4th edition, 1901, pp. 421, 369.

For Japan: Nihon Tokei Kenkyūjo 日本統計研究所, *Nihon Keizai Tokeishū* 日本經濟統計集 (Collection of Japanese Economic Statistics), Tokyo, Nihon-hyōron-sha, pp. 56-57.

Teruoka Shūzō 暉峻衆三, "Meiji Nijū-Sanjū-nendai no Nōgyō Mondai—Shihon-shugi no Taisei-teki Kakuritsuki 明治二十~三十年代の農業問題—資本主義の體制的確立期 (The Agrarian Problem in the Third Decade of the Meiji Era—The Period of the Establishment of a Capitalist System)," in *Shakai-kagaku Ronshū* 社會科學論集, Tokyo University of Education, No. 13 (1966), p. 7.

It is of course true that one-half of the female labourers from rural areas, as the male labourers, was associated with the widespread pre-capitalist and low-grade capitalist labour markets which spanned both rural and urban areas. However, it was a special characteristic of the other half of the female labourers, in contrast to the male labourers, that they were strongly associated with capitalist large-scale industry.

Of course, not only was the wage-labour market called into being by capitalist large-scale industry at this period narrow in scope but the conditions of work in it were extremely poor, as "pre-modern" social relations survived in it.

The vast number of small family enterprises frequently employed outside labourers either temporarily or by the year, but in these cases not only were the monetary wages extremely low but they were also supplemented by payments in kind consisting of poor quality goods supplied by the employer. In such cases monetary wages were even of such a character as to be "pocket-money" given in addition to the payments in kind which made possible the reproduction of the minimum manual labour power. Not only that, but the relations of employment in such cases were "pre-modern" or "semi-feudal," and payments, hours of labour, and the content of the work were not exactly contracted and were susceptible of being arbitrarily altered at the will of the employer.

Not only did social relations of this kind pervade the small-scale capitalist enterprises, but among the workers employed in these enterprises the pre-modern relations of *oyakata* 親方 (master) and *totei* 徒弟 (apprentice) survived to a great degree. Thus it was the *masters* who represented the employees before their employer, and it was common for the young apprentice (no small part of which was supplied from poor peasants) to work at the direction of the *master*, to receive their wages from him, and to live as dependents in his household.

The structure seen in the pre-capitalist labour markets associated with the greater part of the *déclassé* peasantry of this period was reflected in the wage-labour market of industrial capital sectors.

In the cotton industry as the nucleus of industrial capital at that day a large volume of young females was drawn off from the peasantry which had lost their land and lapsed into the status of tenants, in the form of temporary work for periods of a few years, and these labourers were employed under extremely poor conditions. The low wages and poor conditions of labour of these women, which were considered to be the most powerful weapon in the hands of Japanese industrial capital, were actually transplanted forms of wages and condi-

tions of labour for female day-labourers among the peasantry.

On the average, wages and conditions of labour were better than in other sectors in the large-scale enterprises of heavy industry. However, because the development of the latter was markedly slow in Japan, pre-modern relations of employment and the relations of *master* and *apprentice* still survived, albeit that the heavy industry labour market itself was a narrow one, and furthermore was progressively breaking down.<sup>1</sup> Further, the wages of the young labourers from *declassé* peasant families which was fitted into the ranks of the apprentices may be said to have been little different from the wages of day-labourers in agriculture.

The above discussion regarding the labour market was useful to characterize the structure of Japanese agriculture. On this problem let us consider the following two points.

(i) Underdevelopment of the industrial sector rendered incomplete the break-up of the minute scale small peasant production sustained by the communal structure of the agricultural village and consequently small peasant production, which was mainly based on male labour, was left in a stagnated condition. This is attributable to the following factors: the general underdevelopment of industry and especially the inner structure of industrial capital which is biased to light industry depending on female workers; in other words the market for male workers was unexpanded because of the infantile condition of heavy industry, and also employment terms in general were extremely poor in the labour market. Under these conditions many of the peasants failed to adapt themselves to the penetration of the money economy, and were unable, after losing their land and lapsing into the status of tenants, to give up agriculture and stand on their own feet as wage-labour, but continued to carry on minute-scale small peasant production.

In a situation in which small-scale peasant production could not but persist over a wide field, on the one hand "pre-capitalist" and "semi-feudal" expropriation of small-scale peasant production was carried on by landlords, merchants, and money-lenders, and on the other hand a great host of so-called "seasonal wage-labour" (*dekasegi-gata chingin rōdōsha* 出稼型賃銀労働者) was educated which works for low wages and under poor conditions. Thus in Japan "pre-capitalist" and "semi-

<sup>1</sup> On survivals of a pre-modern character in relations of employment in the large enterprises of heavy industry, see Hyōdō Tsuyoshi 兵藤剣, "Tekkō Kumiai no Seiritsu to Sono Hōkai—Nisshin Sensō-go ni okeru Jūkōgyō no Rōshi Kankei 鐵工組合の成立とその崩壊—日清戦争後における重工業の勞資關係 (The Genesis and Break-up of the Ironworkers' Union—Labour-Capital Relations After the Sino-Japanese War)" in *Keizaigaku Ronshū* 經濟學論集, Vol. XXXI, No. 4, Vol. XXXII, Nos., 2-3 (Jan.-Oct., 1966).

feudal" relations in agriculture were closely associated with capitalist relations in industry.

(ii) We must consider how the structure of the labour market was connected with the economic conditions of minute-scale landholding. The main labourer in small farming was male, with female functioning as a secondary labourer. Consequently, the labour market had important connexion with the question of the evaluation of "family labour" on the small holding. However, the greater part of the peasant male labourer was strongly associated with the pre-capitalist and low-grade capitalist labour markets in the urban and rural areas, and was confined to the association with the labour market of industrial capital. Further, the poor wages and conditions of labourer and pre-modern character of employment were still reflected even in the large-scale heavy industry sector. The market for female labour was even poorer in wages and conditions of labour than that of the male labourer.

The evaluation of "family labour" was set in the minimum level so as barely to accomplish the economic reproduction of the small scale holding and in this context it was impossible to demand equivalents to the invested "family labour," even at such a low level of wages as in the industrial sector subject to pre-modern terms of employment.<sup>2</sup>

Further, small peasants suffered from money-lending exploitation by the landlords and merchants. Agrarian income from the small holdings at this stage was even less than the poor level of wages of day labourers in agriculture.

## 2. *Agricultural Products*

Next let us consider the second point mentioned above, the characteristics apparent in the formula for meeting the rise in demand for agricultural produce in the development of capitalism. Here, too, we shall discuss the matter with the help of a comparison with England.

In general there is an increasing demand for foodstuff and industrial products from agriculture as an accompaniment to the development of capitalism, but the formulae employed in meeting this demand in England and Japan differed markedly from one another.

On into the mid-19th century England proceeded to complete herself as 'the workshop of the world,' and in this process, simultaneously with the increasing export of manufactured goods, the increasing demand for food and industrial products from agriculture was met with the help of imports from overseas. In this process the position of agriculture within

<sup>2</sup> See p. 475.

Table 2. PRODUCTION AND THE DEGREE OF DEPENDENCE ON IMPORTS OF WHEAT IN ENGLAND

	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Cultivated Area	Domestic Production	Index of Production per Acre (B/A)	Imports (excluding re-exports)	Total Supply (B+D)	Degree of Dependence on Imports (D/E)
	(1,000 acres) (1855=100)	(1,000 quarters)	(3.41 quarters)	(1,000 quarters)	(1,000 quarters)	(%)
1855	4,076.4 (100)	13,922.8	100	3,056.8	16,979.6	18.0
1865	3,646.7 ( 90)	13,975.9	112	5,996.4	19,972.3	30.0
1875	3,503.7 ( 86)	10,018.4	84	13,841.3	23,859.7	58.0
1885	2,549.3 ( 63)	9,639.7	111	18,719.3	28,359.0	66.0
1895	1,456.0 ( 36)	4,785.6	115	24,802.5	29,586.1*	84.0
1905	1,836.6 ( 46)	7,541.6	120	25,992.3	33,533.9	77.5

Notes: 1. There is an error in the total supply figure marked with an asterisk, but it is left as in the original source.

2. Cultivated area may be regarded as an index of the area sown to wheat.

Source: The original of this table was produced by Yamada Katsujirō from data on pages 92-98 of the *Report of the Committee on Stabilization of Agriculture Prices*, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Economic Series, No. 2, 1925, and the original table has been further processed by Teruoka. Yamada Katsujirō 山田勝次郎, *Kindai Nōgyō ni okeru Shihon-chikuseki to Kyōkō* 近代農業における資本蓄積と恐慌 (Capital Accumulation in Modern Agriculture and Business Slumps), in *Shakai Kagaku* 社會科學, No. 1 (1949), p. 67.

English capitalism rapidly declined. The sown areas and production of wheat, an important product in England, progressively declined, while conversely imports of this grain increased and the degree of self-sufficiency in wheat declined rapidly.

A tendency similar to that of England did indeed appear in Japan also. But in Japan it was much more dwarfed than in England and also included characteristic relations. The cotton industry, as the basal axis of Japanese industrial capital, exported its products to the Asian markets chiefly China, and on the other hand developed relations in which the agricultural product used as raw material, namely raw cotton, was imported from overseas, principally from India, China, and America. In this process the cotton production, which had been an important agricultural commodity in Japan in former times, was caused to decline decisively over the years. Such relations as these may be said to be of the same type as those of England. But what I wish to note here concerns relations which are in contrast to England.

(i) Rice is the staple food of the Japanese, as wheat is of the English, and the increasing demand for foodstuff accompanying the development of capitalism was met in Japan on a strongly self-sufficient basis by means of increased production of rice. In contrast to England, in Japan

the rice production was developed by means of increases in the planted area and yields per unit area. Of course, Japan transformed herself from a rice-exporting country into a rice-importing country in the course of economic development, and furthermore degree of self-sufficiency in rice came to decline as in the case of England. But, as will be abundantly clear from a comparison of Table 3 with Table 2, in Japan the degree of self-sufficiency in rice was maintained at a level so high as to make it unworthy of comparison with England's self-sufficiency in wheat. Further, Japanese industrial capital, while exporting its products to China, developed relations which increased imports of soybean cake fertilizers in return for these exports, fertilizers which were of service in raising domestic production of rice.

(ii) At this stage the greatest Japanese exporting industry was the silk industry, centred on silk-reeling. Exports of raw silk occupied 37% of Japan's exports over the years 1903-1912. As an accompaniment to this development of the silk industry there was a sudden increase in demand at this stage for the raw material used in this industry, namely cocoons, and this, too, was wholly met on a basis of self-sufficiency by an increase in domestic production. To express it schematically, the

Table 3. SUPPLY AND DEMAND RELATIONS FOR RICE IN JAPAN

	Planted Area (1,000 ha.)	Yield per 0.1 Hectares ( <i>koku</i> )	Production (1,000 <i>koku</i> )	Degree of Self-Suffi- ciency (1,000 <i>koku</i> )	Consumption (1,000 <i>koku</i> )	Consumption per Person ( <i>koku</i> )
1878-1887	2,591	1,227	31,799	268*	31,531	0.883
Index	100	100	100	101	100	100
1883-1892	103	111	114	101	106	108
1888-1897	106	113	120	100	112	109
1893-1902	109	116	126	98	118	110
1898-1907	110	126	140	94	125	120
1903-1912	113	135	157	94	134	123
1908-1917	116	144	166	96	143	123
1913-1922	119	151	180	93	153	128
1918-1927	121	152	186	88	162	129
1923-1932	123	151	186	86	174	125
1928-1937	124	156	193	85	187	123
1933-1942	123	161	199	83	197	121

- Notes: 1. The figure bearing an asterisk is the export surplus of the years 1883-1892.  
 2. The index figures in the columns other than the Degree of Self-Sufficiency column are based on the years 1878-1887.  
 3. 1 *koku*=150 kg approx.

Source: Tōbata Seiichi 東畑精一 & Kawano Shigetō 川野重任 eds., *Nihon no Keizai to Nogyō* 日本の経済と農業 (Japan's Economy and Agriculture), Tokyo, Iwanami-shoten, 1956, p. 101.



rapid increase of the exports of raw silk on the basis of self-sufficiency and the increased production of cocoons, naturally brought, in return, sufficient foreign currency to enlarge the scale of imports of raw cotton, iron and steel, and of machinery and machine parts; this special condition spontaneously promoted the development of industrial capital for highly productive modern industry—especially in the field of the cotton industry, as well as in the heavy industries which were as yet underdeveloped in Japan.

Both in the case of rice, a foodstuff, and of cocoons, an industrial raw material, these products were provided by minute-scale peasant holdings and were supplied to the market under the circumstance that they only afforded the peasants an agricultural income per day of labour which was lower than that of day-labourers in agriculture. The relations existed in which the disadvantage of agricultural products being raised by the low productivity of labour under the system of minute-scale peasant holdings was covered by the peasants' minimum evaluation of "family labour." Further, we may say that by basic self-sufficiency in the supply of these two important agricultural products, rice and cocoons, it also became possible to divert the foreign exchange which was scarce at this stage to the rapid construction of highly productive industrial capital and to the overcoming of backwardness thereby.

Basically the landlords, who together with the capitalist class were an important ruling class in Japan, had rice production as the basis of their position of power. As is a matter of common knowledge, the Japanese landlords had fastened on to as much as 70% of the peasantry and were expropriating illegally high rents in kind and rates of interest from their tenants. Combined with the structure which we described in Section 1, in which the minute-scale peasant holding remained in the agricultural sector and was continually reproduced, Japanese capitalism's choice of proceeding in the direction of ensuring increased production and self-sufficiency in the most important agricultural products, rice and cocoons, was extremely convenient for landlords pursuing their own interests. During this period the price of rice rose as the result of the increasing demand for rice, and under these circumstances landlords sought to obtain profit while strongly pursuing increased levies of rent from their tenants and the improvement of quality.

The holding was also minute, and for poor tenant peasants it was extremely difficult to go forward increasing the productivity of agriculture by their own efforts according to the increase of demand. Policies for increasing the production of rice and cocoons were developed "from

above” during this period by the central and prefectural authorities, who were strongly subject to the influence of landlords in their policy-making. Land improvement schemes were carried out with a view to develop productive potential, and for these purposes government finance funds and landlords’ funds were injected. Again, agricultural experiment stations were established by the central and prefectural authorities for the purposes of producing new crop varieties and new systems of productive technology.<sup>3</sup> With such support “from above” attempts were undertaken under the leadership of the landlords to establish permanently in the minute-scale peasant holding a new form of agricultural technology characterized by heavy labour-investment and heavy fertilizer applications.

According to Saitō Mankichi’s 齋藤満吉 researches in the peasant economy, at this stage about 70–80% of tenant peasants’ productive running costs after deducting for wages payable to family labour<sup>4</sup> were incurred in paying for fertilizers.<sup>5</sup> This was a reflection of agricultural technology which proposed to develop productive potential by means of inputs of labour and fertilizers alone. It is of course true that at this time the greater part of these fertilizers was produced on the holding. Such fertilizers were a direct conversion of the labour of the peasants. (The Japanese name for these fertilizers is *tema-goe* or ‘labour-fertilizers’.) Consequently, schematically speaking, the basic condition for the economic reproduction of the fertilizers made on the holding may be said to have been the securing in the hands of the peasants of that portion of the agricultural produce produced by them which was necessary for the reproduction of their labour-power. Let us suppose that these relations were more or less established during the period covering the regime of the Tokugawa Shogunate and on into the first years of the Meiji era. In the period of the establishment of capitalism, however, increased investment of fertilizers with a view to increasing production

<sup>3</sup> The following laws and government orders were promulgated for the purposes of promoting this complex of undertakings.

National and Prefectural Agriculture Experiment Stations (1893–94). The River Law. The Industrial Banks Law. The Agricultural and Industrial Banks Law (1896). The Forests Law. The Soil Erosion Prevention Law (1897). The Land Consolidation Law (1899). The River Law, the Soil Erosion Prevention Law, and the Forests Law were known as ‘the three laws for the regulation of water.’

<sup>4</sup> ‘Productive running costs’ include the cost of seed and fertilizers and miscellaneous expenses, but not rent.

<sup>5</sup> Saitō Mankichi 齋藤萬吉, *Nihon Nōgyō no Keizai-teki Hensen* 日本農業の經濟的變遷 (Economic Change in Japanese Agriculture), Tokyo, Nishigahara Kankōkai, 1918, pp. 185–186, 196–197.

was carried out, principally with highly effective commercial fertilizers, particularly soybean cake.

According to the researches of Saitō Mankichi quoted above, at this stage commercial fertilizers accounted for half of the quantity of fertilizers applied to irrigated land used for rice cultivation and for about 30% of the quantity of fertilizers applied to unirrigated land. We may take it that even in the areas where agriculture was backward, 10-20% of the quantity of fertilizers applied were commercial fertilizers. Further, commercial fertilizers came to be used as indispensable means of production not only on the holdings of cultivating proprietors but also of poor tenant peasants who had lost their land.

In such a situation as this it became necessary for the peasantry in general, including the tenants, to recoup the cost of the fertilizers they invested, and for this purpose also the securing of a certain portion of the agricultural produce now produced in increased quantity came to be demanded anew. Not only was this so, but if the peasants were to take steps to increase future production by increased investment of commercial fertilizers the agricultural produce to be allotted to this purpose must at all costs be secured by them in advance.

In general, however, there remained in the hands of the tenant peasants, subject as they were to expropriation from the part of their landlords, only such a portion as would be barely sufficient to sustain their meagre livelihood, or even a portion smaller than this. They were lacking in the power to raise the money to pay for fertilizers for themselves and adjust themselves to the course of increasing the production of agricultural products.

Landlords and rice-fertilizer merchants advanced fertilizers or funds for the purchase of fertilizers to tenant peasants. Advances of fertilizers by these persons were associated with their money-lending functions. The landlord recouped advances for fertilizers with the addition of usurious interest in the form of payments in money or rice superadded to the ordinary rent. It is of course true that in some cases the cost of fertilizers was advanced by the landlord without interest or at a low rate of interest. For this purpose "Industry and Economy Savings Associations" (*Kinken Chochiku Kumiai* 勤儉貯蓄組合) were set up all over Japan at this stage with landlords' funds as the nuclei around which the minute savings deposits of the tenant peasants were collected. However, these undertakings were not carried out as philanthropic activities on the part of the landlords. They recoiled in the form of rent increases. Not only the tendency for landlords to raise the rent

contracted for, but also the tendency for them to raise the rent actually levied was strengthened. In Japan the level of rent contracted for represented the maximum rent which the landlord could levy from the tenant. Actually rents were depressed below this level in each year because of the existence of customary practices allowing for reductions of rent in certain circumstances. Advances of funds for fertilizers without interest or at low rates of interest markedly strengthened the demands of landlords, who sought to expropriate rent from their tenants over and above the full rent contracted for, making the increase in yields per *tan* brought about by the fertilizers their excuse for doing so.

On the one hand, pressure was applied by landlords for the raising of rents in the manner we have described above, the reason given being that of the increase in production resulting from land improvement schemes and the increased investment of fertilizers. Again, by the formation of a national market for agricultural produce the landlords pursued the improvement of the quality of the agricultural produce delivered to them in payment of rent in order that they might sell their agricultural produce profitably. On the other hand, the tenant peasants who took steps to maintain and promote productive potential under the system of minute-scale agriculture by means of heavy investments of labour and fertilizers, were now pressed by the necessity of securing in their own hands a certain portion of agricultural produce for the purposes of recouping the cost of commercial fertilizers. Sharp contradictions were formed in Japanese society at this period over the relations of antagonism between these two.

It need hardly be said that it was not only the demands of tenants for the securing of the costs of fertilizers which stood in a relation of contradiction and antagonism to the landlords who were pressing the tenants for higher rents. The demand for the securing of the 'wages payable to family labour,' the most important item of production costs and more important even than the cost of fertilizers, stood in sharp opposition to the pressure brought to bear by landlords. For example, at this stage the demands of the landlords for the improvement of the quality of rice resulted in the tenants being compelled to make heavy investments of family labour in a wide range of activities, including the cultivation and management of the rice, the threshing, hulling and milling of the crop, and the baling of the grain. But considering the matter in connexion with the question of the evaluation of 'the wages payable to family labour' by the peasants, who could evaluate 'the wages payable to family labour' only at extremely low levels by equivalence to the

wages paid to day-labourers in agriculture, which at that time had not risen much above traditional levels, and furthermore they were not in a position to demand 'wages payable to family labour' as a category, even at a low level of remuneration. Sharp class contradictions were indeed formed between the landlords pressing for increased rents on the one hand and the tenants demanding the reproduction of their family labour-power, even if only at a low level, on the other. But the tenants of this stage did not possess sufficient strength to offer clear resistance to landlords' pressure from the point of view of the evaluation of 'the wages payable to family labour' or to place limits to that pressure, or further again, conversely, to win for themselves reductions in rents.

Under these conditions the landlords were indeed obliged to make some reduction in the proportion of the yield per unit area taken as rent, but they were able to realize an increase in the absolute sum of rents. Further, at this stage the price of rice moved in a manner which was relatively profitable, and with the help of the fact that this alleviated in some measure the economic distress among the elements who constituted the backbone of rural society, the cultivating proprietors and the full-time agriculturalists in the upper stratum of tenants, this increase in rents by the landlords was realized without the accompaniment of sharp class antagonisms, that is, without tenancy disputes. We may say with justice that this stage was the period during which the Japanese landlord system was at its most flourishing.

But after the Russo-Japanese War, and in particular after the First World War, the situation changed. The peace of the villages was broken, fierce tenancy disputes swept the country, and at length the withering away of the landlord system hove in sight. In the following we propose to make clear the mechanisms involved, considering them in connexion with the changes taking place in the structure of Japanese capitalism.

## II. STRUCTURAL CHANGE

The task is to make clear the agrarian and food problems in Japan during the stage extending from the First World War, through the Russian Revolution (1917), the Rice Riots (1918), the post-war slump (1920), and up to the great slump during the early Shōwa period (beginning in 1927). We may characterize this period by the fact that Japanese capitalism entered the stage of monopoly, that is, of Imperialism, and further by the fact that notwithstanding under the despotic Emperor

system political activities aiming at socialism or democracy were developed, and these came to lead a mass struggle aiming at democracy and the safeguarding of living-rights as they drew not only the working class but also the tenant peasants into organizations which in both cases reached nation-wide proportions. It is our present task to make clear the agrarian and food problems of this period in connexion with these characteristics, and I wish to do so from the point of view of how these matters differed from the archetype of the agrarian problem in the period of the establishment of capitalism as we have described it above, and of by what changes in the structure of capitalism these differences were sustained.<sup>6</sup>

### *1. Industrial Development and Labour*

Japanese capitalism, which had been in a depressed state since the Russo-Japanese War, entered a period of great activity with the outbreak of the First World War. In the five years between 1914 and 1919 the numbers of Japanese industrial companies were doubled, and their capital funds trebled. The predominance of light industry, with the cotton-spinning industry as the basal axis, and the relative insignificance of the heavy and chemical industries, with metals, the machine industry, and the chemical industry as the basal axis, continued to characterize Japanese capitalism throughout its extent (in 1919 the spinning and weaving industry accounted for 50% of the total value of industrial production, 40% of factories, and 55% of the artisanate), but after the outbreak of the First World War the heavy and chemical industries expanded at a rate which far outstripped the spinning and weaving industry and consolidated their position within the total economy. This tendency persisted and was strengthened after the post-war slump.

Further, and also in association with this development of the heavy and chemical industries, the concentration of production and centralization of capital advanced, and Japanese capitalism entered the stage of monopoly. During the post-war slump and the period of chronic depression which followed it the process of the centralization of capital advanced

<sup>6</sup> If space had permitted we should have made clear the structural characteristics of Japanese capitalism and the agrarian problem in the period between the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War. Here, however, we shall omit an account of these matters because we do not have the required space, but we may think of the structure of Japanese capitalism and the agrarian problem at this stage as possessing a character transitional between the archetype of the period of the establishment of capitalism in the mid-Meiji period and the structure following the First World War which we shall now proceed to describe.

markedly. Comparing 1920 and 1928 we find that large-scale factories employing 500 or more workers increased their proportion of the total number of factories from 0.8% to 1.0%, and their proportion of total factory labourers employed from 22% to 24%. Again, the great companies with capital funds of five million yen or more retained the same proportion of the total number of companies, 1.8%, but their proportion of total capital funds increased sharply from 57% to 65%. On the other hand the minute-scale companies with capital funds of less than one hundred thousand yen actually showed a slight decrease in relation to total capital funds, from 3.8% to 3.7%, notwithstanding their numbers as a proportion of the total number of companies were greatly increased from 62% to 69%. A greater and greater portion of total company capital was centralized in the hands of a handful of large companies.

The process of the centralization of capital which we have described above was combined with the building up of a pyramidal hierarchy of company control covering the whole range of the economy from production to finance and commodity circulation, topped by the holding companies monopolized by the *zaibatsu* families who were the leaders of the Japanese capitalist class. These *Konzerns* established their controlling position in the capitalist economy in the course of the period extending from the end of the First World War up to the slump in the late 1920's. In 1928 the four great *zaibatsu* groups—Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, and Yasuda—had control of 33% of bank deposits and 36% of total company paid-up capital. This vertical hierarchy of control by the *zaibatsu*, that is, by monopoly capital, was further supplemented by the cartels which were formed over a large part of the most important sectors of industry. Under the conditions of such a development of monopoly capital a great gap appeared between the profits made by monopoly capital and those made by minute-scale capital, and this gap became wider.

Again, following up the retreat of European capital from Asia which had taken place during the war, Japanese capitalism, which had undergone spectacular development during the same period, strengthened its exports of commodities and capital to the Asian markets, centred on China, and in the process joined the ranks of the great imperialist powers. The expansion of Japan's exports of commodities and capital to the colonial and dependent territories demanded the expansion of imports from these areas in the interests of the smooth progress of the economic cycle. As we shall show below, the existence of the system of landlord-and-minute-scale tenant made it difficult to cause agriculture

promptly to adjust its production to the increase in demand for agricultural products accompanying the rapid development of capitalism, and it came about that monopoly capital increased imports of cheap agricultural produce from these colonies and dependencies, thus oppressing Japanese agriculture.

As can be inferred from Table 4, there was a sharp increase in the numbers of Japanese factory workers after the outbreak of the First World War, and the tendency to progressive increase was maintained after the post-war slump. Within it there advanced a decline in the proportion employed in the spinning and weaving industry and an increase in the proportion employed in the heavy and chemical industry. Influenced by the increase in the numbers of workers employed in the heavy and chemical industries, in which male workers were overwhelmingly predominant, the proportion of male workers in the total Japanese industrial labour force rose by a wide margin from 39% in 1909 to 49% in 1928. The increase in the numbers of industrial workers was further associated with the increase in the numbers of workers in transport, communications, and telecommunications which took place in this period.

With the outbreak of the First World War the labour market on a level which was one stage higher, and the demand for labourers, particularly male labourers, increased. Within this there was an over-all rise in the wages of labour. The greater part of the young peasant male labourers was switched to commerce and industry in the cities as wage-labourers. But after the First World War not only did the association

Table 4. CHANGE IN THE COMPOSITION OF INDUSTRIAL WORKERS

	Total Number of Workers (thousand persons) (percentage of male workers)	Percentage of Workers				(B)+(C)+(D)
		(A) Spinning & Weaving	(B) Chemicals	(C) Metals	(D) Machine Tools	
1909	780.5 (38.6)	64.3	3.5	2.3	6.0	11.8
1914	941.6 (40.1)	62.0	4.2	2.9	7.9	15.0
1920	1,547.8 (46.7)	56.6	5.7	4.9	12.9	23.5
1928	1,927.6 (48.7)	54.0	6.1	6.6	12.7	25.4

Note: The figures are for factories employing five or more workers only, and white-collar staff have been excluded.

Source: Ministry of International Trade and Industry, *Kōgyōtōkei Gojū-nen-shi* 工業統計五十年史 (Fifty Years of Industrial Statistics), Tokyo, 1961, pp. 4-13.



Table 5-I. EMPLOYMENT OF AGRICULTURALISTS TEMPORARILY

Type of Seasonal Temporary Employment	Males		
	Six Prefectures of the Tohoku Region	Four Prefectures of the Hokuriku Region	Six Prefectures of the Kinki Region
Fishing	23.3	2.6	0.2
Agriculture and Forestry (Agriculture)	29.1 (16.1)	16.6 (6.8)	19.3 (12.9)
Mining	5.6	2.8	0.2
Industry (Brewing)	10.8 (9.0)	8.1 (0.5)	29.9 (24.3)
Itinerant Merchant	2.4	8.1	8.6
Building and Urban Labour	14.2	21.2	23.0
Others	14.5	40.6	19.0
TOTAL Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Absolute Figures (thousands)	18.8	24.3	28.0
Percentage of Agriculturalists in Total Number Leaving Villages	46.2	63.4	78.8

Table 5-II. EMPLOYMENT OF AGRICULTURALISTS ABSENT FROM

Type of Employment	Males			
	Six Pre- fectures of the Tohoku Region	Four Pre- fectures of the Hokuriku Region	Six Pre- fectures of the Kinki Region	Three Pre- fectures of the Chūgoku Region
Employment Overseas	7.4	7.0	0.7	38.5
Fishing	1.7	1.2	0.2	0.6 0.9*
Agriculture and Forestry	36.2	15.4	9.6	9.6 15.6*
Mining	14.6	2.9	0.4	7.1 11.5*
Industry (Cotton, Silk-reeling, and Weaving)	11.4 (0.1)	19.2 (0.4)	21.2 (1.7)	12.7 (0) 20.6*
Commerce	7.6	19.6	35.4	12.3 20.1*
Urban Labour	2.2	2.9	4.5	1.5 2.5*
Others	18.8	31.8	18.4	17.7 28.8*
TOTAL Percentage	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0 100.0
Absolute Figures (thousands)	13.2	13.7	21.9	16.1 —
Percentage of Agriculturalists in Total Number Leaving Villages	67.2	89.0	68.4	60.3 —

Notes: 1. 'Temporary absence from village' means 'being away from the village for  
2. 'Absence from village for long period' means 'leaving the village with the  
3. The content of 'Urban Labour' and 'Others' is not clear.  
4. The three Prefectures of the Chūgoku region are those of Okayama 岡山,

Source: Based on the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, *Nō-Gyo-son Rōdōryoku*  
and Fishing Villages), Tokyo, 1927. (The survey was carried out only in  
in occupations not directly connected with industry—enrolment in educational  
Shūzō, "Dokusen Dankai ni okeru Nihon no Nōgyō Mondai 獨占段階における  
*kagaku Ronshū* 社會科學論集, No. 11 (1964).

ABSENT FROM THEIR VILLAGES, 1927 (percentage)

Females				
Three Prefectures of the Chūgoku Region	Six Prefectures of the Tōhoku Region	Four Prefectures of the Hokuriku Region	Six Prefectures of the Kinki Region	Three Prefectures of the Chūgoku Region
3.3	2.6	0.4	0.2	0.2
15.7	27.1	7.4	15.3	16.7
(11.2)	(23.9)	(6.6)	(13.9)	(15.4)
8.8	4.6	0.4	0.1	5.4
4.5	42.6	63.1	52.2	36.2
(—)	(—)	(—)	(0.3)	(—)
7.3	0.8	0.7	1.4	3.3
17.3	9.9	16.7	17.4	18.3
43.3	12.1	11.4	13.5	10.1
100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
12.3	4.9	16.4	12.9	6.0
49.6	60.2	68.4	73.4	51.1

THEIR VILLAGES FOR LONG PERIODS, 1927 (percentage)

Females						
Japan	Six Prefectures of the Tōhoku Region	Four Prefectures of the Hokuriku Region	Six Prefectures of the Kinki Region	Three Prefectures of the Chūgoku Region	Japan	Japan
14.7	6.1	4.5	7.3	36.4		12.2
0.7	0.8	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.4*	0.5
14.9	33.5	13.6	5.6	9.6	15.0*	14.0
8.8	11.9	1.9	0.1	5.1	8.1*	8.0
17.3	23.3	28.7	30.8	16.9	26.6*	—
(—)	(4.1)	(7.7)	(12.6)	(0.9)	(—)	(25.2)
20.0	5.6	12.0	27.2	10.8	16.9*	14.7
3.5	1.8	3.4	4.3	1.8	2.9*	3.1
19.8	17.0	35.4	24.4	19.2	30.1*	22.1
100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
167.2	9.4	11.8	15.6	11.4	—	122.8
70.0	69.2	70.3	66.6	59.0	—	70.0

more than one month with the intention of returning to the village within the year.' intention of not returning for more than one year.'

Hiroshima 廣島, and Yamaguchi 山口.  
*Idojōkyō Chōsa* 農漁村勞働力移動狀況調査 (Survey of Movements of Labour in Agricultural respect to administrative Villages, Cities, and Townships being excluded, and employment institutions, military service, government employment, etc.—has been excluded.) Teruoka 日本<sup>の</sup>農業問題 (The Agrarian Problem in Japan at the Stage of Monopoly), "Shakai-

of the rural male labourer with the cities become appreciably stronger, but its association with the capitalist labour market became markedly stronger. As can be seen from Table 5, with the exception of the northeastern region, then a backward region of Japan, and the area to the north of it, the greater part of the rural male labourers in the remaining parts of Japan flowed out to take up employment in industry and commerce, and the majority of them were concentrated in the Tokyo-Yokohama 東京-横浜, Aichi 愛知, Ōsaka-Kōbe 大阪-神戸, and Fukuoka 福岡 urban centres of large-scale industry.

Further, the association of the rural male labourer with the labour market of the heavy and chemical industries was weak during the Meiji period, but with the development of the heavy and chemical industries during and after the First World War no small number of them came to be associated with this sector of industry. Table 6 shows the results of a survey carried out in 1923 in respect to the adult workers (approximately 90,000 persons) employed in comparatively large-scale factories—factories with 100 employees or more—in Ōsaka, one of the great urban centres of industry in Japan. According to this survey, in what may be described in general terms as light industry—textiles, food processing miscellaneous industry—and the chemical industry, the proportion of “inexperienced persons,” that is, those who had no experience of being an industrial worker before entering the service of the company, was extremely high, ranging between 60% and 80%, and of the male workers 40% to 50% had previously been employed in agriculture. The majority of these “unskilled” workers were drawn directly from agriculture.

In contrast, in the heavy industries such as the machines industry and special industries (e. g., military, metals, electricity and gas) the proportion of “skilled labourers”—who had been industrial workers somewhere else before entering the company’s factory—was higher, because in general the work required some degree of skill. But in these cases, too, the proportion of “unskilled labourers” was fairly high, namely 30% and 46% respectively, and again 43% of the male workers had agriculture as their previous occupation.

Although the figure is not shown in the Table, the occupation of agriculture was outstandingly numerous as the previous job of the “unskilled labourers” (18,090 cases), followed, after something of a gap, by “student” (7,995), “unemployed” (5,814), “housework” (2,775), “commerce” (2,550), “domestic service” (1,369), and “miscellaneous occupations” (1,168), and these accounted for practically all the “inexperienced persons.” Since it is probable that no small number of the workers

Table 6. THE CONNEXION BETWEEN THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS AND AGRICULTURE OF ŌSAKA

	Number of Factories	Adult Workers	Unexperienced Male Workers	Percentage of Unexperienced Workers whose Previous Occupation was Agriculture, by Industries		Percentage of Total Unexperienced Workers whose Previous Occupation was Agriculture, by Industries	
				male	female	male	female
Textile Industry	38	36,650 (9,713)	78	51	43	41	88
Machine Industry	47	31,760 (29,699)	30	43	51	22	4
Chemical Industry	34	8,910 (6,129)	70	60	40	23	4
Food Industry	7	4,355 (1,510)	64	37	10	4	1
Special Industry	10	3,509 (3,348)	46	43	33	1	0
Miscellaneous Industry	20	5,005 (3,449)	70	42	29	9	3
Total	156	90,189 (53,848)		49	40	100	100

Source: Compiled from Ōsaka City Office, Department of Social Welfare, *Kōgyō Rōdō Koyō Kankei* 工業労働雇傭關係 (Employment Relations among Industrial Workers), Tokyo, Kōbundō, 1924.

who are included in the occupations from "student" to "miscellaneous occupations" had been members of *agricultural households*, even if they had not been directly engaged in agriculture, we may say that the relation of being directly supplied from the agricultural household labourer was very strong among these industrial workers.

The great enterprises in the heavy and chemical industries came to absorb large numbers of young male labourers from among the peasantry, either on their graduation from Higher Primary School or on the completion of their military service. In the heavy and chemical industries of this stage the apprenticeship which was to be found in the labourers during the mid-Meiji period, as well as the premodern character of relations of employment, were being demolished, and the supervisory functions which the master had formerly exercised on the job were in process of being taken over by the supervisory organization directly under the control of the enterprise. Under these circumstances there appeared a strong tendency for young labourers to be taken into employment directly by the enterprise and trained as skilled workers on the job. In this way the great enterprises in the heavy and chemical industries fitted their workers into the framework of the promotion system within the enterprise. By a combination of high productivity and monopoly these great enterprises in the heavy and chemical industries paid wages

to their workers which were higher than those of the minute-scale enterprises. Not only did a profit-gap appear between the great enterprises and the minute-scale enterprises at this stage, but a wage-gap also appeared. In contrast to the establishment period of capitalism the structure of the labour market had now been transformed so that it could no longer be described as "equality."<sup>7</sup>

In connexion with the state of affairs in which the peasant male labourer—chiefly the second and third sons of full-time agriculturalists—even came to be associated with the labour market of the great enterprises in the heavy and chemical industries, the wages of day-labourers in agriculture came to be raised, and further, the valuation of family labour by the peasantry was also raised. The wages of day-labourers in agriculture were placed at the bottom of the layered structure of wages which became conspicuously apparent during this period, but within this structure the wages themselves were raised. In association with the fading of the pre-capitalist and premodern character of employment, relations were formed in which 'wages payable to family labour' were demanded at least by the peasants at levels conformable to the progressively rising wages in agricultural day-labourers. It is true that these wages of day-labourers in agriculture were declining to a relatively low position since they occupied a position at the foot of the expanding range of wage differentials, but in absolute terms the level of these wages was rising, both in name and in substance.

## 2. *The Price of Agricultural Products and the Peasant Economy*

Next let us take up the questions connected with Section 2 in Part I. The rapid development of capitalism after the First World War brought about a sudden increase in the demand for agricultural products. The demand for rice also rose sharply, sustained by the sharp increase in the numbers of employees in non-agricultural and the rise in wages. However, under the class antagonism characteristic of the landlord-and-tenant system it was very difficult for minute-scale peasant holdings to respond to the increased demand and bring about a steady rise in rice-producing potential. In 1918, with the addition to the necessity of supplying rice for the armed forces by the Siberian Expedition and the occurrence of a bad harvest—two conditions which stimulated speculation

<sup>7</sup> See p. 473ff. On these points see Hyōdō Tsuyoshi 兵藤劍, "Dai-ichi-ji Taisen-go no Rōshi Kankei—Jūkōgyō wo Chūshin to shite 第一次大戦後の勞資關係—重工業を中心として (Labour-Capital Relations After the First World War—with Special Reference to Large Enterprises in Heavy Industry)," *Keizaigaku Ronshū* 經濟學論集, Vol. XXX, No. 4, Vol. XXXI, No. 1 (Jan.-Apr., 1965).

—a sudden rise in the price of rice took place and the Rice Riots, modern Japan's first experience of a nation-wide uprising of the masses, broke out. Not only was this struggle waged mainly by the comparatively low stratum of workers in the cities, but in the rural areas, too, a struggle centred on the poor peasants and the semi-proletarianized stratum, who were not able to eat the rice produced by themselves but had to buy rice from landlords and merchants, arose on the occasion of the Rice Riots. Further, even in cases in which matters did not proceed so far that a definite disturbance occurred, the feelings of enmity towards the landlords on the part of tenant peasants in the extensive rural areas were markedly heightened.

The Rice Riots profoundly horrified the ruling class. The monopoly capitalists who by now held the leadership of the ruling class felt strongly the necessity of ensuring ample supplies of rice, and of holding down the price of rice in order to prevent the reoccurrence of such popular violence resulting from sudden rises in the price and also in order to keep down wages, which were still continuing to rise as an accompaniment to the increase in demand for labour following the First World War.

From 1920, immediately after the Rice Riots, policies were carried forward which aimed at the improvement of the quality of the rice produced in Korea and other Japanese colonies (the grading-up of colonial rice to Japanese standards) and at increasing the area planted to rice for which a lever was provided in the form of land improvement works. These policies were also carried forward out of the necessities of Japan's running of her colonial territories. That is to say, these policies for increased rice production in the colonial territories also proceeded from the necessities of the Imperialist economic circulation represented by Japan's expansion of exports of commodities and capital to the markets of Asia by taking steps to "develop" the colonial territories and increase her imports of agricultural produce from them.

Using the labour of the peasants of the colonies, who were subsisting at markedly low standards of living, and at the same time developing natural resources hitherto unused, colonial rice which had been graded up to Japanese standards was rapidly produced in greater volume, and imported into Japan in great quantities for sale at extremely cheap prices. It came to occupy a proportion of the Japanese rice market which could not be ignored, and was a powerful factor keeping down the price of Japanese rice.

In 1927 Korean rice was 5.3% cheaper than Japanese rice on the Tokyo rice market, and Taiwan rice was 16.1% cheaper on the Kōbe

**Table 7.** IMPORTS OF RICE FROM THE COLONIES—KOREA AND TAIWAN (Five-yearly averages, in percentage)

	Total Rice Supply			
	Balance of Japanese Rice	Imports from Korea	Imports from Taiwan	Total (absolute figures in brackets)
1913-1917	96.6	2.0	1.4	100.0 (56,332)
1918-1922	94.5	4.0	1.5	100.0 (61,109)
1923-1927	86.6	7.3	3.1	100.0 (64,457)
1928-1932	86.5	9.4	3.7	100.0 (69,969)

Note: The amount harvested in the previous year has been taken as Balance of Japanese Rice.

Source: Tōbata Seiichi 東畑精一, *Nihon Nōgyō no Tenkai Katei* 日本農業の展開過程 (The Developing Process of Japanese Agriculture), Tokyo, Iwanami-shoten, 1936, p. 383.

rice market.

As a result of the post-war slump in 1920 the price of rice, which had continued to rise abnormally throughout the war, now fell, and the golden age for the landlords and a section of the upper stratum of the peasantry came to an end. Under political pressure from landlords occasioned by this fall in the price of rice, the Rice Law of 1921 was put through the Diet. This laid down that when the government considered it necessary to adjust supply and demand in relation to rice it could purchase and sell rice for this purpose. This Rice Law proved to be the beginning of full-scale policies for the maintenance of the price of rice in Japan.

However, because of the existence of certain conditions which we shall describe below, this Rice Law was unable effectively to keep up the price of rice and throughout the 1930's the price of rice remained at low levels. These conditions were, a) the fact that the government funds for use in maintaining the price of rice were inevitably reduced to an extreme degree because of the post-war slump and the chronically bad state of business which followed it, b) the policy of maintaining the price of rice conversely resulted in assuring the market against colonial rice imported at extremely cheap prices and brought about a sudden increase in imports of low-priced colonial rice, c) while the wages of labour had declined in the capitalist countries of Europe since the post-war slump, in Japan they showed a converse trend to rise and it was particularly desirable for monopoly capital that the price of

labour should be kept down and the price of rice reduced so that Japanese manufactured goods could compete better in the international market, and d) the response of the minute-scale peasants to the fall in the price of rice inevitably revealed itself in their not choosing the course of reducing production of rice but in their taking steps to increase production all the more, even at the expense of having their labour exploited still further.

With the transition away from the rice shortage and high rice prices of the time of the Rice Riots countermeasures against a rice surplus and low rice prices became the central tasks in the food question in the post-war period. During this period following the First World War the fall in the price of rice was a serious factor oppressing the economic circumstances and conditions of economic development not only of the landlords who were the most important marketers of rice but also of the peasants, who were marketers of rice even if only on a small scale.

On the one hand a tendency to increased imports of rice and the lowering of the rate of self-sufficiency on the English pattern did indeed take place, but on the other hand steps continued to be taken to increase the rice production based on the small-scale farming. Changes appeared during and after the First World War in connexion with the means of production and the wages to family labour in the conditions governing economic activities on the peasant holding, and how these changes reflected the class contradictions in agriculture.

(i) As a reflection of the spectacular development of heavy industry and the rising evaluation of 'wages payable to family labour' by the peasants, small-scale agricultural machinery, principally employed in the threshing, hulling, and milling processes and comprising prime movers, powered threshing machines, etc., was introduced into the upper part of the peasant holding at this stage. But even so the system of heavy investment of labour and fertilizers remained on the whole the essential core of the system of agricultural technology. The amounts of commercial fertilizers applied per unit area continued to increase under the influence of promotion from outside by landlords and Industrial Associations, centred on inorganic fertilizers, and the sums spent in purchasing these fertilizers also increased. When in addition to these the price of rice fell at the time of the post-war slump and thereafter remained low, it became even more necessary than in the Meiji period for the peasantry to secure large quantities of rice in their own hands so that they might cover the costs of fertilizers invested in the land. (See Table 8.) In connexion with this point, during this period still sharper



Table 8. CHANGES IN COMMERCIAL FERTILIZERS USED BY PEASANTS  
—Average for Each Period—

	Estimated Total Consumption of Commercial Fertilizers (¥1,000)	Total Cultivated Area (ha.)	Commercial Fertilizers per 10 Acres (¥)	Average Price of Rice ( <i>koku</i> )	Cost of Fertilizers of Rice ( <i>koku</i> )
1903-1907	39,440	5,427,402.7	0.727	14.32	0.051
1912-1916	106,920	5,887,171.2	1.816	17.00	0.1068
1917-1921	360,903	6,110,341.6	5.906	36.67	0.1611
1922-1926	289,528	6,093,858.4	4.751	33.00	0.1440
1927-1931	266,149	5,986,287.2	4.445	27.68	0.1606

Notes: 1. The average price of rice per *koku* is the average of the Tokyo rice market.  
2. 1 *koku* = 150 kg. approx.

Source: Figures for estimated 'total consumption of commercial fertilizers' and for 'total cultivated area' from the Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry, *Hompō Nōgyō Yōran* 本邦農業要覽 (Guidebook to Japanese Agriculture), Tokyo, 1942.

contradictions were formed between tenants and landlords who were demanding increases in rents.

(ii) As we have noted above, in the process of the peasant male labourer becoming capitalist labour the small peasant producers came to demand the securing of 'wages payable to family labour' with greater clarity in order to ensure the economic reproduction of their holdings, further to which a rise took place in the evaluated levels of such 'wages payable to family labour,' a rise which reflected the rise in the levels of wages. Expressing these 'wages payable to family labour' in terms of *koku* 石 of rice, we must expect this quantity of rice to have exhibited a certain rise, even when the price of rice was static. Since, however, the price of rice had fallen after the post-war slump the rice equivalents of the increased levels of 'wages payable to family labour' demanded by the peasants as the basis of the economic reproduction of their holdings were pushed up to levels which were a good deal higher than hitherto. Under the conditions of the fall in the price of rice and a certain rise in the 'wages payable to family labour' the tenant peasants came to demand the securing in their own hands as 'wages payable to family labour' of a still greater share than hitherto of the rice which they had produced. In this way sharp contradictions and relations of antagonism again came to be formed between tenant peasants and landlords over the question of securing 'wages payable to family labour.'

On the other hand, the landlords continued to press their tenants with demands for increased rents or for the strict levying of the full contracted rent on the grounds that they had carried out capital investment for the purposes of increasing rice production. Nor was this all,

for the fall in the price of rice after the post-war slump, together with the heavy burden of taxation (principally the Land Tax) laid upon landlords strongly oppressed the economies of the landlords, and in order to relieve themselves, even if only in a slight degree, from this oppression the landlords came to embark upon the action of levying their rents from their tenants with particular severity.

In this way, on the one hand the tenant peasants demanding the securing in their own hands of a quantity of rice a good deal greater than hitherto for the economic reproduction of their holdings and their livelihood, poor though these might be, and on the other hand the landlords who were desperately engaged in trying to cover the loss to their net returns caused by the fall in the price of rice and increased taxation by raising their tenants' rents—during this stage following the post-war slump unprecedentedly sharp contradictions came to be formed between these landlords and the tenant peasants over the division of the produce.

By the Russian Revolution and the Japanese political and labour movements aiming at socialism or bourgeois democracy, these sharp contradictions between landlords and tenants were at once transformed into relations of enmity.

Some progress in consolidating and organizing the tenant peasants was made at this stage, and on the basis of it a sharp struggle against the landlords was developed, aiming principally at reductions in rents under the conditions of a certain degree of association between the working-class struggle and the socialist and democratic political activities. The tenant peasants' struggle aiming at the safeguarding of minimum living-rights and rights in respect to their holdings forced the rents to undergo some reduction. After the First World War the rising level of rents was transformed into one of decline over Japan as a whole. Further, landlords' net returns decisively declined under the conditions of a situation in which rents were declining, the price of rice was falling and the Land Tax was being raised, and the landlord system itself also turned in the direction of decline. In direct contrast to the spectacular strengthening of monopoly capitalism at this period the landlords' standing within the ruling class was clearly on the wane.

Our task has been that of making clear the economic mechanisms which sustained the tenants' movement from the background. Let us draw attention only to one point of the tenants' movement at this period. This point is the following. Tenants succeeded in many parts of Japan in winning reductions in rents and were able to enlarge their share of

the produce as a result of a sharp struggle by tenants against landlords. But what significance did this enlarged share have for the tenant peasants? On the one hand this enlarged share of the produce made possible a certain increase of investment in the physical means of production making possible a higher productive potential than that of the Meiji period, and the recoument of the costs involved in doing so, granted that agriculture still remained within the framework of technology in which heavy investments of labour and fertilizers were the essential elements. During and after the First World War there occurred not only an increase in the productive potential of the established products, rice and cocoons, but also a new development of animal husbandry and fruit-growing. But the portion corresponding to 'wages payable to family labour' left in the hands of the tenant peasants after the recoument of the costs of the material investments put into the holding (of which fertilizers were the most important) was no more than at exactly the same level as the wages of a day-labourer in agriculture when calculated in terms of daily remuneration per unit of labour time. Of course, as we have already pointed out, the wages of Japanese day-labourers in agriculture had indeed been raised by a good deal since the Meiji period, both nominally and substantially. But as wages of day-labourers in agriculture occupied a position at the bottom of the differential wages system which had at last become conspicuously apparent, topped by the wages paid by the great enterprises of heavy industry, they represented a relatively impoverished wage. We must not lose sight of the fact that what the tenant peasants had been able to secure after their bitter struggle and its many sacrifices was no more than 'wages payable to family labour' at a level comparable to this.

In making a political, economic, and ideological evaluation of the bourgeois democratic tendencies which at last showed their heads during this period, the period of the so-called "Taishō Democracy," I feel that while evaluating correctly the positive and progressive aspects achieved in the securing of 'wages payable to family labour,' the rise in standards of living and the rise in the productive potential of tenants' holdings by the development of the tenant peasants' movement as one important component of these tendencies, we must nevertheless also evaluate correctly the limitations of this movement.