

A NOTE ON THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF AGRARIAN REFORM

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This work, Elias H. Tuma, *Twenty-Six Centuries of Agrarian Reform: A Comparative Analysis* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1965) is a comparatively comprehensive book, having been written recently, and we may consider that its methodology and contents raise some extremely interesting questions. Below I propose to use this book to develop my own ideas about land reform in the style of a memorandum. Yet I must make clear in advance that since space is limited my development of my ideas will include certain points which are inadequate, or on which I have been unable to express my mind to the full.

Now may we not suppose that few can have failed to be struck with astonishment on seeing the title of this book? I, too, when ordering the book from the bookseller's catalogue, thought that it must be a misprint and felt obliged to have it confirmed, but I was informed that in spite of all it appeared that it was not a mistake. On learning this I came to the conclusion that the book no doubt began its account from the classical ages of Greece and Rome, and this expectation proved to be correct.

According to the author of this work, "The history of land reform is as long as the history of the world, extending back into medieval, ancient, and biblical times" (p. 3). For this reason the author has included accounts of the land reforms of Solon and Pisistratus in Athens, and of the Gracchi in Rome. The author's aim in this work is to take up a number of historical examples of land reform and to elucidate their significance and functions at the level of general theory. That is to say, he aims at setting up a general theory of land reform, a thing which has practically never been done before. However, since in the author's view land reform is as old as the history of the world he has been led to start his exposition from the land reform of Greece and Rome. In addition to these, examples of land reform from England, France, Russia, Mexico, Japan, and Egypt are dealt with in this book.

The first problem which strikes me is the author's method of comparative study, a method which we may well characterize as "supra-historical." In saying that land reform is as old as the history of the world, the author presumably wishes to express the opinion that land reform has an eternal and universal significance for mankind. But may not his doing so have led him to neglect or erase the inherent significance of land reform during certain specific stages of development in the history of the world? It is probably a fact that policies which may be regarded as land reforms existed previous

to the present century. But however we choose to define land reform it is after World War I that it comes on to the stage of history as an important phenomenon, and after World War II that it appears in full dress. Land reforms were carried out in the countries of eastern Europe after World War I under the influence of the Russian Revolution, and again after World War II land reform was one of the important political and social phenomena in the countries of eastern Europe once more, and also in practically all the backward areas, including East Asia, Southeast Asia, the Near and Middle East, and Latin America. Consequently, we must surely conclude that if we are to elucidate the inherent significance and character of land reform in the backward areas at the present day we must take the present stage of development of world history as the background, and accord the fullest consideration to it. The matter with which we are most concerned is *the inherent significance and character of land reform at a specific stage of development in world history*. This being so, if we list the land reforms which have been carried out from antiquity to the present day in an indiscriminate manner, and by comparison among them abstract the common points which we can find and thus produce what may be called a general theory of land reform, this cannot but result in an abstract theory of an extremely characterless kind, and further, it will be impossible for us to elucidate fully by means of it the special significance and character of land reform at the present stage. A method of comparative study such as that employed by the author appears at first glance to be historical in character, but we are obliged to say that in fact it is an extremely unhistorical method.

One of the most important factors which we must take into consideration if we are to define the significance and character peculiar to land reform at the present day is the fact that on the one hand Socialism has been firmly established as a social system and is undergoing development, and without taking into consideration this world social system and the international relations subsisting within it we will never be able to attain an adequate understanding of the political, economic, and social phenomena in any of the countries of the world. As the author of this book basically recognizes, land reform is carried out with the direct aim of producing political and social, rather than economic, effects, and, this being so, land reforms which are carried out by the superior ruling power acting through an administrative apparatus—frequently with the accompaniment of external pressure—are at the present day charged chiefly with the important function of being a barrier to the advance of Communism, while conversely land reforms which are forcefully carried through by the ruled classes from an important part of the anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist struggle, may yield the important prospect of the negation of the capitalist system of society and the establishment of a socialist one. At present in the backward countries the ruling classes and ruled classes are opposed in a relation of contention—concealed or overt—over the rights of leadership in carrying out land reform, and we may expect that the future political, economic, and social systems of these

countries will differ completely, depending on which side wins the final mastery in this struggle. Consequently, we should conclude that, instead of employing an unhistorical comparative method such as that used by the author, for a true elucidation of the basic character of land reform at the present stage we should above all things keep our eyes fixed on the present stage of development in world history and carry out our analysis in relation to it.

In connexion with the above we may touch on a number of points relating to the most characteristic of the methods employed by the author of this book. First, the author divides land reforms into two great divisions, Types I and II, according to whether the character of the land reform is more conformable to capitalism, or the western European type of democracy, or whether it is more conformable to Socialism or Communism. Thereafter he picks out from these two types of land reform, wherever he can, the points which they have in common and the points in regard to which they differ, doing so under the heads of aims (a), course of implementation (b), and effects (c), and then goes on to express these in a special notation (for example, 1_a, 2_a, . . . 1_b, 2_b, . . . 1_c, 2_c, . . .). Next, he takes the concrete examples of land reform and divides them between Types I and II by reference to the points expressed in this notation. When this has been done we can see at a glance from a table that, for example, the Roman land reform has only one point which falls in the category of Type II, whereas the Mexican land reform has 3 points which fall in the category of Type II. I do not fully understand what manner of significance this method of comparison possesses, but for the nonce may we suppose the following? When, for example, we are looking into the character of a land reform in a specific country we will divide its characteristics between Types I and II in terms of the points expressed in the above-mentioned notation. As a result, we may find that a land reform in a specific country has *more* of a socialist character but on the other hand is not entirely devoid of a capitalist character, or again that the opposite is the case. These are results produced by an extremely technical classification. Further, the author's method is most strikingly displayed in his being able to use so technical a classification. That is to say, in the method which the author employs, the capitalist and socialist systems of society are not conceived as discrete concepts, and one has the impression that we can here perceive the author adopting a posture similar to that of Rostow, the posture of one who would answer, to some extent, the problems of political policy. Even if it is not positively intended to be so, it would seem inevitable that a general theory which is produced from comparative studies of a purely technical character and which is devoid of the concept of the social system must be of an extremely abstract character. (To avoid misunderstanding I hasten to add that I am not saying that a method such as that employed by the author is wholly meaningless. I merely wish to emphasize that such a method by itself is insufficient.)

Next, there is the matter of the reasons for which the author has picked the eight countries mentioned above for his historical examples of land reform.

The reasons are nowhere clearly stated, but it appears that his choice is by no means the result of a capricious selection, but is characterized by the existence of a definite preoccupation. It would seem that this is connected with the formation of the middle class. After carrying out his analysis of these eight countries the author gives the following summary: "To summarize, it seems that certain static features were common to all the environments in which reform was introduced. Among them were private tenure, a high degree of land concentration, widespread tenancy and absenteeism, small-scale operation and backward techniques, low per capita productivity and income, and a high degree of maldistribution of both wealth and income. Equally common were a bimodal class structure and a wide gap between the upper and lower classes, while in each case the influence of a middle class had become apparent. Finally, it seems common for the middle and lower or peasant classes to unite against the upper class, although each with different objectives in mind" (pp. 172-173). "In general, the internal strength of the reformers or their ability to introduce reform depended on the position of the urban middle class, unless they were externally supported" (p. 175).

For the author, the ample growth of an urban middle class—a clear definition is not to be found, but the term includes merchants, the army officers, the professionals and the intellectuals and would seem to be used in distinction to the urban bourgeoisie—is the necessary intra-national precondition for the realization of land reform. Such an underlying mode of thinking is probably the most powerful reason for the choice of these eight countries. (It is however true, of course, that the usability of the data is probably another reason.)

The author further sums up as follows: "A strong middle class had traditionally been associated with democracy and political stability. It has been regarded as a source of checks and balances which maintain stability and contain conflict. Therefore, decline of the landed middle class or small and medium owners has been interpreted as a threat to democracy and a source of instability" (p. 176).

According to the author, democracy and the middle class are one and the same substance, and the creation of a stratum of small or medium owners is a means by which the middle class, and democracy, may be strengthened. If, therefore, we were to make a schematic representation of the author's way of thinking, it would be something like the following:

Urban Middle Class→Land Reform→Strengthening of
the Whole Middle Class→Strengthening of Democracy

We may also say that such notions are of a piece with the strategic way of thinking which can frequently be observed in the attitude of Americans to the backward countries—a way of thinking which we might well call "arguments in which expectations are placed in the middle class."¹

¹ The doctrine of healthy cultivating proprietorship, or the way of thinking which holds that small-scale landownership is the backbone of democracy, may be said to be a way of thinking which is common to most Americans, who are in the tradition of

Now views of this order are already well enough known, and there is probably no need to take them up for discussion. However, the author of this book has carried this way of thinking one step further. He has done so by pointing out the *limits* of the role of the middle class in the backward countries. The author maintains that in the majority of land reforms at the present day the middle class has a tendency to become conservative, from the point of view of the peasants. Because of this the longings of the peasants cannot be fully satisfied, and their expectations of the middle class cannot but end in disillusion. Having come to this conclusion the author ends his book by asking whether the non-socialist land reforms in the backward countries at present will be able to get rid of unrest and avert revolution, and replies that, "A most optimistic answer can be only conditionally in the affirmative" (p. 242). Such a conclusion must sound extremely pessimistic to people on the western side of politics. Moreover, I think that this conclusion of the author's reasoning is one of the most important points made in this book. It is to be regretted, however, that no attempt is made to elucidate the question of why "a restless middle class [which] has been emerging at a high rate" in the contemporary backward countries has come to possess a conservative character. As a result, this important point made by the author cannot avoid striking the reader as being extremely abrupt and unsatisfyingly incomplete.

It will be much troublesome for anyone to make this point clear enough. If, now, I were to express my thoughts about it in a very simple and abstract manner, might the result be something to the following effect? One reason would seem to be that the middle class fear that the carrying out of land reform would inevitably lead to revolution, because there is too much dissatisfaction and discontent among the peasant class. Another reason would seem to be that since the middle classes in the contemporary backward countries are subject to a very high degree of economic instability they are continually obliged to strengthen their character as landowners, or are unable to withdraw altogether from landownership. I think that it is because of these two basic reasons that the middle classes in the contemporary backward countries have been obliged to become conservative in the face of the poor peasants' demands for land. However, if we are to expound the above points in a truly persuasive manner it is probably inevitable, and indeed natural, that we will be asked to make clear the basic character of the economies of the contemporary backward countries in their relation to the international

Jeffersonian democracy. (For example, see A. W. Griswold, *Farming and Democracy*, New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1947.) However, at the present stage of world history the fostering and strengthening of democracy is frequently synonymous with anti-Communism. Further, we have reason to believe that the way of thinking in which the middle class figure as the "natural allies of America" lies concealed in the background of present American strategy in relation to the backward countries. (For example, see G. E. Taylor, *The Philippines and the United States: Problems of Partnership*, New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1964.)

economy.

Now in this matter I feel that there will be a problem if we define the character of the middle class in the manner employed above, that is, statically in terms of general theory. Within the middle class, such groups as the urban middle and petty bourgeoisie (the elements which come under the definition of "national bourgeoisie") and the intelligentsia may, depending on the positions and situations in which they are placed, form national united fronts in co-operation with workers and peasants and become a sovereign body which provides the propulsive force for carrying out land reform from below. Consequently, the problem is not confined to defining the character of the middle class as a whole in terms of general theory, but must be carried further so that concrete observations appropriate to the actual conditions prevailing in each of these countries are *also* made regarding the situations in which each of these groups within the middle class will cease to be conservative.

Now what may be considered to be one of the great merits of this book is the fact that a fairly clear definition of the concept of land reform is given. The author believes that the agricultural structure is composed of three principal departments, (1) tenure or title to the land, (2) pattern of cultivation, and (3) terms of holding and scale of operation. Reform in the first department is called land reform or "land tenure reform," and reform in (2) and (3) is called reform of the operation of the holding or "land operation reform," while "agrarian reform" is considered to consist of a combination of these two types of reform, land tenure reform and land operation reform. Reforms in these three departments are mutually independent, so that in some cases they may be interconnected and in other cases not. Hitherto the concepts of land reform and agrarian reform have been frequently confounded, and since this has resulted in excessive confusion in analysis we feel obliged to say that the author has contributed something by defining these two concepts clearly in his book. It is true, however, that this kind of separation of these two concepts is found, albeit in a vague form, in the United Nations' report *Land Reform: Defects in Agrarian Structure as Obstacles to Economic Development* and in other publications, and question has been whether the point has been consciously clarified or not.²

The reason why I have expressed my appreciation of the author's clarifi-

² For some time past I have been considering reorganizing the concepts into the three terms 'land reform,' 'agricultural reform,' and 'agrarian revolution,' corresponding to the author's land tenure reform, land operation reform, and agrarian reform. Historically speaking, the occurrence of agrarian revolution in its most typical form is found, as need hardly be said, in England in the second half of the 18th century, and I hold that in this case land reform and agricultural reform proceeded more or less simultaneously and in parallel. The reason why I use the term 'agrarian revolution,' and not 'agrarian reform,' is that I believe that the rise in the productivity of agriculture after the land reform is occasioned to a particularly high degree by the change in the *system of agriculture*. However, there is probably no need to go too deeply into such questions of the relative merits of terminology. The main point is the necessity of distinguishing among these three concepts as tools of analysis.

cation of the concept of land reform is that it has important corollaries in regard to two points. (It is nevertheless doubtful whether the author is fully conscious regarding these points.) Firstly, by separating the concepts of land tenure reform and land operation reform the character of land reform as a *politico-social concept* is clarified. Hitherto the concept of land reform has been used in a somewhat common-sense fashion, and has been frequently confounded in the thoughts of those who use it with concepts relating to economics and productivity. This vagueness in the concept of land reform is one of the reasons why some have raised such questions as whether land reform at once leads to a rise in production or not. For example, one frequently comes across views to the effect that in areas of surplus population land reform brings about the fragmentation of agricultural holdings, which has a negative effect on the raising of agricultural productivity. As far as practical matters are concerned, this type of argument is of a piece with arguments against land reform in general. However, the fact is that we cannot say anything dogmatic as to whether land reform at once produces a rise in the productivity of agriculture or the reverse; only when we have taken into consideration the many complicated conditions governing agriculture in the country in question, for example the conditions for the running of the individual holding, the conditions for the commercialization of agricultural production, and the conditions subsisting in the subjectivity of the peasantry, will it be possible for us to say anything at all in concrete terms.

However, if in such cases we clearly define the character of land reform as a politico-social concept, questions such as the direct discussion of effects leading to increases or decreases in production will no longer arise, because of the presuppositions from which we set out. Land reform is no more than an indispensable pre-condition for an increase in the productivity of agriculture. Further, the concept which is directly related to the productivity of agriculture is that of land operation reform, so that whether a rise in agricultural productivity will come about or not will depend on whether land reform is accompanied by land operation reform or not; that is to say, on whether land reform is carried to the higher level of agrarian reform through the agency of land operation reform or not. In this way, the separation of land reform as a politico-social concept from land operation reform as a concept relating to economics and productivity, as carried out by the author, avoids needless confusion in the realm of theory, and I think that it has significance for the purposes of combatting the simple type of argument against land reform.³

³ While correctly observing that "land reform creates small family farms primarily for social and political objectives rather than for economic efficiency or higher production" (p. 9), the author seems to fail to carry this point of view through to the last. At the present stage land reform does not have as its aim the direct realization of a rise in the productivity of agriculture, but rather is carried out for the purposes of politico-social stability in the country in question, or as an important instrument for the seizure of power by a ruled class.

Secondly, the separation of land reform from land operation reform and its definition in narrowly prescribed terms as being a reform of landownership and ownership rights leads to a correct appreciation of the importance of land reform. Thus what D. Warriner calls "the American conception of land reform,"⁴ or again the United Nations conception of land reform,⁵ includes much in addition to a redistribution of landownership by way of policies for agriculture, and its coverage is thus enlarged so that it comes within the author's concept of agrarian reform. As we have said above, at the level of theory this is liable to result in the mistaken way of thinking which directly connects land reform with the productivity of agriculture, but this is not all, for it leads to an undue undervaluing of the importance of land redistribution, the nucleus of land reform policies, by listing it indis-

In connexion with this point it is of interest to look at the history of land reform as carried out by the Chinese Communist Party. During the first stage the Land Law of the Chinese Soviet Republic of 1931 and the General Provisions of Land Law in China of 1947 had as their aims the elimination of semi-feudal landownership, and did not aim at a rise in the productivity of agriculture or at industrialization. These latter aims were set out for the first time in Article 1 of the Chinese Land Reform Law, promulgated in June, 1950, after the establishment of the People's Republic of China. This declared the intention to "sweep away the system of ownership by landlords which was the means for carrying on feudal exploitation, putting into effect a system of landownership by peasants, and thereby liberating the productive powers of the agricultural villages, expanding agricultural production, and opening the way to the industrialization of China" (see Motonosuke Amano, *Chūgoku no Tochi Kaikaku* (Land Reform in China), Tokyo, Institute of Asian Economic Affairs, 1962). The fact that this Land Reform Law of 1950 proclaimed the aim of raising the productivity of agriculture is due to no other reason than that by this time the Chinese Communist régime was established, and had acquired the firm confidence that it was politically possible to continue land reform into the stage of operation reform.

⁴ Doreen Warriner, *Land Reform and Development in the Middle East*, London, Oxford University Press, 1957, p. 5. The concept of land reform as defined by the US Government means the reform of agricultural economic institutions (for example, landownership and tenancy, land rents, taxation of agricultural or income from agriculture, agricultural credit, and produce marketing), and only in so far as they are relevant to these institutional problems it may include agricultural technology, land utilization and development, conservation of resources, and methods of raising productivity (UN, *Progress in Land Reform*, New York, 1954, p. 49).

⁵ Among the UN publications *Land Reform* (1951) and *Progress in Land Reform* I, II, III (1954, 1956, 1962) we notice marked differences in the definition of the concept of land reform, but in general we may be entitled to regard the UN conception of land reform as being that set out in the *Progress Report*. According to this, "the ideal land reform programme is an integrated programme of measures designed to eliminate obstacles to economic and social development arising out of defects in the agrarian structure" (UN, *Progress in Land Reform, Third Report*, New York, 1962, p. vi), and in addition to land redistribution it includes the enlargement of the size of the unit of cultivation or operation, the establishment or strengthening of essential governmental, co-operative or commercial agencies or services relating to agricultural credit, supply, marketing, extension, and research. In this case it is perfectly clear that the concept of land reform has been enlarged until it comes within the scope of agrarian reform.

criminally along with other policies for agriculture. We may suppose that the reason for the United Nations enlarging the scope of the concept of land reform in this way may be found in the political intention of avoiding giving offence to the underdeveloped countries, but will not this have the contrary result of giving encouragement to a type of land reform which is poor in content and productive of no substantial effect? In the light of this tendency I feel sure that the author's limited definition of land reform is particularly significant.

Lastly, I wish to refer briefly to the author's views of the Japanese land reform. The author classifies land reforms into the categories of non-revolutionary reforms and revolutionary reforms according to whether the aims of the reform are those of preventing revolution or of supporting it. In the case of the former of these, the non-revolutionary reform, it is general for the reform not to be accompanied by land redistribution or a basic change in landownership, but in the case of the latter, the revolutionary reform, the reform is carried out by a new régime during or immediately following a revolution, and the general characteristic of the reform is the distribution of private lands among small peasants. As examples of revolutionary land reforms the author goes on to list the reforms of Pisistratus, France, the Soviet Union, Mexico, Egypt, and, with some reservations, Japan. However, we cannot but feel grave doubts regarding the inclusion of the Japanese reform in the category of revolutionary reform.

From the point of view of the author's standards of classification, a reform is to be classified as revolutionary if it is accompanied by a redistribution of land, but if we are to maintain that a reform is of a revolutionary character it will be necessary to presuppose that the class basis of state power has undergone a revolutionary change. But although one may maintain that the position of the landlord class within the power structure of Japan has declined to some degree since the war, it is a fact unchanged from pre-war times that this class, together with the bourgeoisie, has constituted a consolidated ruling power. We cannot deny that, as the author says, the absolute power of the Occupation Authorities was set above the Japanese ruling power, but this absolute power was exercised through the Japanese power structure, and it is a fact that the class basis of the (American) Occupation Authorities did not involve any essential contradiction of that of the Japanese power structure. The defeat in war did not bring about any epoch-making change in the Japanese power structure, not to mention a revolution. Further, the Japanese land reform merely changed the basic relations in the Japanese class structure from "bourgeoisie and landlords versus workers and peasants" to "bourgeoisie versus workers and peasants."

This being so, I am of the opinion that, contrary to the author's view, the Japanese reform should be regarded as a classic example of non-revolutionary reform. The basic aims of the post-war land reform in Japan were not only those of destroying semi-feudalism in the Japanese country-side and thus clearing away the roots of Japanese ultranationalism, but were also

directed to endowing the social consciousness of the peasantry with the attributes of the petty bourgeoisie by creating a widely distributed class of cultivating peasant proprietors running minute holdings, and by this means nipping in the bud any possibility of co-operation between workers and peasants and avoiding a post-war politico-social crisis, or revolution.⁶ In so far as this was so, the intentions of the Japanese ruling class (the bourgeoisie) coincided with those of the Occupation Authorities. It thus becomes possible for us to cite the case of the Stolypin Reform, which the author includes among the non-revolutionary reforms, as being the reform which is closest in character to the Japanese land reform.

Further, as we would naturally expect from his way of thinking as described above, the author suggests that the motive power behind the Japanese land reform was supplied by the Occupation Forces. According to him, "The philosophy of the post-war reform, then, was not indigenous. It was imported and foreign to the country" (p. 136). Today such views are to be found fairly generally among people in the countries of Southeast Asia, and they have a definite image, peculiar to themselves, of the fundamental character of the Japanese land reform.

But while on the one hand I feel a certain degree of sympathy with these views, yet on the other hand I find it impossible to suppress some considerable feelings of dissatisfaction with them. It is an undoubted fact that the American Occupation Authorities supplied the fundamental pressure which drove forward the post-war land reform. On the other hand, however, the creation of a body of cultivating proprietors, which was the fundamental ideal of the land reform, was a policy which had been consistently followed by the

⁶ Further, in the light of the conditions prescribed by the stage of the development of world history, it was inevitable that this Japanese land reform should be stamped with the character of being, more than anything else, a barrier to Communism. For example, Dr. Yasuo Kondō says the following in the preface to his *Nōchi Kaikaku no Shomondai* (Problems of the Land Reform), Tokyo, Yūhikaku, 1951: "The landlord system which had been gnawing at the vitals of Japanese rural society for several centuries was swept away by the Land Reform and the land for which some millions of tenants had been longing for so many years was given them. This was an important part of the Japanese Occupation Policy of the Allied Forces, and by it the peasantry were given a sense of security, but although at the time it was thought to be a policy of a left-wing character, we see today that it has succeeded in firmly establishing the most conservative elements of the peasantry as a breakwater against the tide of Communism." This is clearly an *ex post facto* appreciation of the land reform, an appreciation of its results, and it is still a matter of dispute whether the American Occupation Authorities had the subjective intention of building a bulwark against Communism through land reform from the very first. Recently, however, the American journalist David W. Conde, a former member of the staff of the American Occupation Authorities, has made the following notable revelation regarding the hidden background of occupation policy: "The generals, who knew nothing about economics or agriculture, opposed it on the grounds that it was 'Communism itself,' but it was at last accepted when it was pointed out that by encouraging private ownership of small-scale landholdings it would actually be of an anti-Communist character" (*The Asahi Jānaru*, 15th August, 1965, p. 109).

Japanese Government from the 1920's as an important measure for suppressing social unrest in the country-side and which had a long history of implementation, even if only in an inadequate manner, and it would seem to be a mistake to ignore these facts and to suppose that this ideal of agrarian administration was suddenly imported into Japan after the war.

We can perceive no basic difference in form between the first draft programme for land reform produced voluntarily by the Japanese Government and the second draft programme later produced on the basis of the recommendations of the American Occupation Authorities. Nothing more can be said than that the difference between the two drafts consisted in the degree of thoroughness of the proposed reforms. What is more, the dramatic fact that so drastic a land reform was carried out in an extremely short space of time and with no friction worth mentioning is surely not to be simply disposed of by ascribing it to the absolute powers of the Occupation Authorities. We are forced to come to the conclusion that the Japanese Government, considered as a sovereign body, was amply possessed of the conditions which would make this possible. It is therefore to be desired that before all else we should make a correct evaluation of the relation between foreign pressure and domestic necessities when we determine the sources of the propulsive power which drove forward the Japanese land reform. Further, we may say that today this evaluating attitude is now more or less firmly established among Japanese scholars and research workers.