

*Income Sharing among Malay Peasants: A Study of Land Tenure and Rice Production* by Akimi Fujimoto, Singapore, Singapore University Press, 1983, xiii + 290 pp.

Akimi Fujimoto is now at the Tokyo University of Agriculture's NODAI Research Institute. *Income Sharing among Malay Peasants* is based on his doctoral dissertation, "Land Ownership, Rice Production and Income Sharing among Malay Peasants" (Flinders University of South Australia, 1980).

Southeast Asia has been modernizing its rice-farming techniques since the latter half of the 1960s and Fujimoto notes that critiques on the effects of modernization on rural society in the region can be divided into two general categories. The first is that the spread of technological innovation and monetary economy is gradually weakening, and threatens to destroy, the traditional, kin-based, communal organizations and relations of mutual assistance between peasants. The other is that those organizations and relations are indeed in a state of flux, but that they will endure.

Fujimoto's thesis is of the latter category. His argument is that landlord-tenant relations based on kinship are still prevalent in the village society of the Malay rice farmer, that tenancy and labor arrangements based on non-market principles still exist and that the functions of mutual-assistance-type income-sharing are still strong. Fujimoto is an economist of the neoclassical school, but he points out that, based on his collected field-survey data, the neoclassicist analytical framework is inadequate for understanding the situation in Malaysian rice-farming villages and an interdisciplinary approach, including sociological and anthropological perspectives, would lead to a better understanding of landlord-tenant relations and labor patterns.

The book is in four parts: background, orthodox analysis, income-sharing approach, and conclusion and policy implications. Part I examines the existing literature and discusses the three major issues for neoclassical analyses of landlord-tenant relations: 1) What determines the form of tenancy (fixed-rent and sharecropping)? 2) What effects do differences in land ownership for owner-farmers, owner-tenant farmers and tenant farmers have on the rice growing economy? 3) What determines the level of rent?

Research up to now on the first point claims that the difference in tenancy forms between the west-coast states of Kedah and Province Wellesley, where rents are fixed, and the east-coast state of Kelantan, where share-tenancy is the rule, is attributable to the latter's lower, more unstable productivity. Many scholars thus conclude that the introduction of irrigation systems, better farming techniques and high-yielding varieties to east-coast rice growing regions would stabilize and increase productivity and gradually change the pattern of tenancy from sharecropping to fixed-rent. Fujimoto points out that the contrary would actually be the case, and that such neoclassicist interpretations do not apply to Kelantan where new rice growing technologies are widely available but sharecropping is still the prevalent pattern.

Fujimoto says that data on which to base a discussion of the second issue—how differences in land ownership affect operational efficiency—is still insufficient. On the third issue, in which neoclassicist theory contends that marginal productivity of land determines the level of tenancy rent, Fujimoto says that existing field works indicate a much more complex rent decision process and that definitive answers must wait

for interdisciplinary studies in which economic and non-economic factors are taken into account.

Based on his demonstration that existing data does not allow clear answers to the three pertinent issues, the author has made his own field work to collect new data. Part II is devoted to an analysis of the survey data within the framework of neo-classical economic theory.

After first providing an overview in Chapter 5, of the surveyed area—two villages in Province Wellesley, where fixed tenancy rents are dominant (p. 113), and two villages in Kelantan (p. 127), where sharecropping is the rule—Fujimoto gives a detailed discussion in Chapter 6 of the actual situation of village landownership, landlord-tenant relations, and land acquisition methods. Farm size in both areas is minute: the average west-coast family operates a 2.42-acre farm and the average east-coast family operates 1.66 acres. Sixty to 70 per cent of this land has been handed down through inheritance. A rather high 44 per cent of west-coast farmers are tenants while a lower 34.6 per cent of east-coast farmers rent land. Sixty per cent of west-coast tenant farmers pay fixed cash rent while an overwhelming 73.5 per cent of east-coast farmers are *bagi-dua* sharecroppers.

The author then analyzes landlord-tenant relations in detail. A high percentage of landlords and tenants in both areas are related by blood or marriage: 72 per cent on the west-coast and 67.9 per cent on the east. Although the percentage of related landlords and tenants varies from area to area, it is generally high throughout Malaysia and is attributable to a strong tradition of mutual assistance between relatives. Fixed-rent tenants pay one-third to one-fourth of total production in standard rent while most sharecroppers pay one-half. Alleviating the onus of heavier rents for the sharecropper is the fact that their landlords almost always pay for fertilizer and/or hired hands for their share of the harvest. There are, however, general variations in rent levels in both surveyed areas which are partially brought on by the relative differences in economic standing between landlord and tenant. This is especially obvious when the two parties are related but rental variation also appears to work to a certain extent, between nonrelatives.

Landlord-tenant relationships logically influence the cost-of-living structure and the rice farmer's earning power. In both regions surveyed, the net benefit of rice farming, on a per acre basis, is largest among tenant farmers (Chapter 7) because of the extremely low rent they have to pay and the comparatively high interest on farm assets, including land, that the owner-farmers must pay. It is commonly assumed that landlords exploit tenants by forcing them to pay high rent but the data indicates otherwise. For example, landlords are unable to obtain sufficient earnings from their land because rent is geared at a level lower than the land's marginal productivity. This means that positive factors are always operating on tenants to increase the amount of land they rent (Chapter 8).

Part III is the book's most important. In it, the functions of the mutual assistance tradition are discussed in terms of the neoclassical economic framework used in Part II to analyze landlord-tenant relations. In Chapter 9, Fujimoto roughly sketches the theoretical framework used for interpreting the income-sharing customs of the Malay rice farmer. Neoclassical theory holds that the economic behavior of both landlord and tenant obeys capitalistic market principles and that land is rented and labor hired on the basis of rational economic calculation. But many aspects of the Malay rice farmer's economic behavior do not operate according to market principle. For ex-

ample, tenancy conditions between landlord and tenant based on kinship are decided according to a flexible form of mutual assistance that matches respective living requirements. This is done because principles of income-sharing are at work in which the object is to acquire and guarantee a mutual living standard for survival.

Assertions on the concept of mutual assistance have been made by scholars such as Manning Nash, J. Scott, R. Firth, M. G. Swift, and C. Geertz. Fujimoto points out that Scott's patron-client concept differs basically from the concept of income-sharing. Patron-client is essentially a set of vertical relations of rule and obedience established when very large differences of economic level exist between the two parties in a landlord-tenant relationship. Patron-client relationships would be difficult to develop in Malay rice-growing society where the gap between rich and poor is relatively small. Both the author and I basically agree on this point.

To provide a more detailed explanation of income-sharing, Fujimoto breaks income-sharing practices into four types: Income-sharing that (1) accompanies transfer of land ownership by inheritance, grant or sale; (2) occurs during the transfer of realized income (*zakat*); (3) occurs through provision of income opportunity (tenancy contract and employment opportunity); and (4) accompanies decisions on rent and wage level.

Income-sharing accompanying land ownership transfer takes place mainly between relatives. There are, for example, transactions in which relatives who are better-off financially buy land at higher than market price from landowners who are faced with the economic difficulties of advancing years. Wealthy landlords have also been known to sell land to young relatives at lower than market price. *Zakat* transfer of realized income is redistribution based on standards determined by the Islamic religious committee (*Majlis Ugama Islam*). An important feature of *zakat* is its communal nature based on rural social principles and Islamic philanthropy and equality. *Zakat* seems quite different from the custom of income-sharing and, therefore, I wish the author would have more clearly delineated that difference.

The third type of income-sharing, that which occurs by providing income opportunity, is examined first from the viewpoint of hired labor. The labor force is generally used in three ways: family labor, labor exchange (*gotong-royong, tolong-menolong*, etc.), and hired labor. The proportion of the three forms on the west-coast is about equal while east-coast farmers rely more on family labor and less on hired labor. A closer look at the situation in both regions shows a tendency to use hired labor without adequately using employable family labor. Fujimoto says that reliance on hired labor is due not to a desire for more leisure time on the part of the farmers but due to an income-sharing function in which better-off farmers provide job opportunities to other, poorer, farmers related by kinship or communal ties.

Fujimoto suggests the situation is best described in terms of his concept of "tenant-manager," which applies to the custom of tenant farmers availing themselves of income-sharing through low-rate rent contracts from the landlord and then providing employment opportunities to farmers poorer than themselves. He says this practice exists only in the west-coast region where fixed rents are the rule and productivity is comparatively high. In low-productivity Kelantan, income-sharing occurs only between landlord and tenant; tenant-manager relations do not exist; there is no room under circumstances of low and unstable productivity for income-sharing to function between tenant-farmer and farm worker. The lack of such tenant-manager relations also means that poor, landless Kelantan farmers have to travel far, even to other states, to find employment opportunities in non-rice-farming sectors.

Part IV concisely organizes the survey results and analyses given and concludes

that the economic behavior of farmers inexplicable to neoclassicism is better understood by the income-sharing approach. Fujimoto also gives two important hypotheses. One, that the income-sharing approach may be applicable to other rice-farming regions in Southeast Asia. The other, that income-sharing is a rational socioeconomic system for maintaining standards of survival and that it will function as a means for continuity as long as no major socioeconomic changes occur. These two perspectives suggest that the author considers the income-sharing approach to be very broad in its spatial and temporal applicability.

I am afraid I cannot agree with those two viewpoints. The income-sharing function has marked limitations in other countries of Southeast Asia, such as the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand, where high land rent is the rule. Furthermore, the recent introduction of cultivating and harvesting machinery and the development of the industrial sector provide indicators that the income-sharing function is weakening in Malaysia as well.

The most important aspect of Fujimoto's book is its use of the concept of income-sharing to clearly organize and analyze all economic behavior within the framework of mutual assistance, chiefly through kinship, between Malay rice farmers. The book has rough spots in overall composition and fails to provide adequate evidence for some of its positions. But Fujimoto has developed a systematic approach which takes through advantage of the existing scholarly research. In addition to the four patterns given, I believe that cooperative performance (excepting production activity) in the daily lives of farmers should be considered part of income-sharing. The reason being that the income-sharing concept is extremely effective in analyzing the most traditional (existing prior to the coming of Islam) behavior extant in rural Malay society, that of redistributing labor opportunity and produced goods as a means of ensuring survival.

Fujimoto's concept of income-sharing arises out of his analysis of Malay rice-growing society, a society now launched steadily on the road to modernization. Further work to confirm the depth and effective range of this concept and to elucidate its position in the economic and social history of the Malay village would be important.

(Kenzō Horii)