

# History of Japanese Economic Thought

## Lecture No. 12

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# 12 Tada-atsu Ishiguro and Tenant Farming Problem

## ● Tada-atsu Ishiguro

● 1884/01/09 – 1960/03/10

Agricultural administrative bureaucrat; borne as the first child of Tadanori Ishiguro, a viscount and army surgeon; in Tokyo; son-in-law of jurist Shigenobu Hozumi. After graduating in law in 1908, he entered the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, took part in the problems of tenancy by directing the investigation commission on the tenant-farmer system as agricultural administration manager since '20, assumed undersecretary of Agriculture and Forestry in '31, and led the movement of economic reform in rural districts from the following year. He retired from government service in '34 and successively held such important posts related to agriculture as chief director of the industrial association central treasury, the farm village reform association, the Manchuria relocation association, and chief director of the agricultural patriotic federation. He led the wartime agricultural administration as the Agriculture Minister in the second Konoe Cabinet in '40 and as the Agriculture and Commerce Minister in Kantaro Suzuki's Cabinet in '45, and earned the nickname of "the god of agricultural administration." An imperial nominee to the House of Peers from '43, in the postwar period, he was elected to the House of Councilors (Ryokufukai) after depurging in '52. (*Iwanami Dictionary of Japanese History*, Iwanami Publishing)



Haruhito Takeda, *Shueisha-Edition History of Japan (19)/Imperialism and Democracy*, Shueisha, 1992, p.249

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# Tenancy Disputes

● The struggles in which tenant farmers confronted landlords with the objective to improve tenancy conditions. Attributable to poor harvests, such disputes already arose sporadically from the mid-Meiji Period in western Japan, but it was after the World War I that the situation became serious. In western Japan centering around Kinki, the expansion of capitalism with the momentum of the War promoted the development of labor market and the production of agrarian small commodities, which intensified contradictions between high rate/amount of tenant rents and operations of tenant farmhouses, thus tenancy disputes spread rapidly demanding reductions in tenant rents. In the background of these conflicts lay an inflow of egalitarianism, socialism evolved from the Russian Revolution, and the outbreak of rice riots, and these were strongly reflective of the demand for the recognition of tenant farmers' personality. These disputes peaked in the mid-1920s, and during the Showa Depression, the mainstream changed to conflicts led by medium and small landlords who put pressures on tenant farmers for evacuating tenancy, and the severe confrontation over land continued between the two parties. The center of disputes moved to eastern Japan and silk-raising regions, and the number of cases of these disputes increased to record 6824 in '35, the highest after the War. In the disputes, landlords resorted to the land ownership protected by the civil law of the Meiji Period while tenant farmers sought the guarantee of cultivation right. In many court decisions and arbitrations, the evacuation of tenanted lands and the payment of unpaid rents were approved, on top of which oppressions/controls exemplified in the 3/15 Incident were exercised, thus these disputes changed themselves to the nature in which tenant farmers were put on the defensive. Be that as it may, such strifes continued without a break until the point during the wartime, and such enduring battles of tenant farmers before the War became the historical premise for the implementation of the agrarian land reform.

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# Tenancy Conciliation Act

● The statute aimed to cope with the upsurge of tenancy disputes after the WWI that was promulgated in Jul. and enforced in majority of the prefectures in Dec. 1924. Institution was established for the court to arbitrate between a landlord and a tenant farmer based on an allegation from either side, and the tenancy officers were placed in each prefecture to enforce the statute. An arbitration outcome, if approved by the court, had legal force equivalent to a court-mediated settlement. There were some cases in which the arbitration awarded farmers landlords' concessions in regions where the former was strong, but, inasmuch as the civil law of the Meiji Period—endorsing superiority of landlordly possession of land—constituted the basis, the number of ones disadvantageous to tenant farmers was not negligible. The Act was abolished in '51 after the War and replaced with the agricultural conciliation institution included in the Law for Conciliation of Civil Affairs.

Haruhito Takeda, *Shueisha-Edition History of Japan (19)/Imperialism and Democracy*, Shueisha, 1992, p.254



220 伏石争議 香川県の伏石村ふせいしの争議では、農民たちが小作条件の改善と小作料3割減とを求めて立ち上がった。地主側は、立毛たちげ(収穫以前の稲)差し押さえて対抗したが、農民たちは共同で脱穀を強行した(写真の絵葉書)。激烈な闘争の末、1925年から3年間、小作料を1割7分5厘減らすことで決着した。

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# Tenancy Legislation

● The tenancy legislation bill was first discussed in the investigation commission on the tenant-farmer system installed by the Takashi Hara's Cabinet of 1920. It was the "research material for the tenancy bill" (the organizer's private plan) worked out by Kenichi Kodaira, an agricultural administrative bureaucrat. Amid problems after the WW I such as rice riots, tenancy disputes, and ILO's issue on agrarian laborer (the recommendation to organize a tenancy union), Japan was under heavy pressure to modernize the landlord-tenant relationship. For this reason, the focus of the times was on the tenancy legislation comprised of the three statutes: the tenancy law (the establishment of the cultivation right), the tenancy union law, and the tenancy conciliation law. Nonetheless, this bill failed to be passed because of the landlords' strong protest campaign, except for the tenancy conciliation law of '24. Its legislation came to be shelved with the incomplete deliberations on the tenancy bill lastly proposed by the Hamaguchi Cabinet in '31.

# Tada-atsu Ishiguro's Thought

● “It must be stated that Ishiguro's *Nohon-shugi* [the belief that the state should be based on agriculture], which he maintained throughout his lifetime, took its prototypical shape in this period. Surely Ishiguro was an advocate of *Nohon-shugi* and his conceptual core was committed to peasantry-ism. But it is safe to say that at the bottom of his peasantry-ism runs a stream of the thought asserting that it is the independent and free peasantry stratum who forms a fertile breeding ground for the formation of domestic market, and that only upon this foundation can the reempowerment of our nation's democracy be ensured. To come right to the point, I would like to say that this idea of Ishiguro's, reflected on his vision of what the state should be, honestly expresses his strong desire to actualize the 'nation of farmers' on the basis of the laboring of self-employed farmers.”

Tamio Takemura, *Unrest in Landlord System and Bureaucrats of Agriculture and Forestry*, included in *History of Economic Thought of Modern Japan Vol. 1*, Yuhido, 1969

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# Influence of Masana Maeda and Kunio Yanagida

- Positioning himself as a successor to the job of Masana Maeda, Ishiguro spoke, “in his famous *Opinion of Industrial Promotion* of the 17th year of Meiji Period, Maeda stated that primarily such matters as enacting laws, bringing in capital, establishing systems, or putting up facilities, are all fringe, and what is important is the spirit to set these in motion. Having made strenuous efforts on numerous political measures and facilities in the agricultural administration department, I was keenly impressed with the fact that, even if the government and groups provided a variety of facilities, they turn out to be useless unless farmers themselves voluntarily made use of them. So in the 14th year of Taisho Period, together with some friends of mine, such as Kato and Nasu, I launched a campaign for establishing the national high schools in order to fill up a deficiency in existing agricultural schools.”

● A table talk of Ishiguro and Einosuke Ishi, chief of Japan Agricultural Research Institute :

● Ishii: “That (a series of movements by Masana Maeda such as ‘*Opinion on Industrial Promotion*,’ ‘*Village Approvation*,’ and ‘*Survey on Agricultural Affairs*’) is very close in shape to the economic reform movement that you, Mr. Ishiguro, subsequently conducted assuming its central role. Weren’t there human social ties? I have a feeling that, since Mr. Korekiyo Takahashi, another central figure at the occasion of the economic reform movement, was a follower of Mr. Masana Maeda, whose way of thinking or intention was passed on to that movement through Mr. Takahashi.”

● Ishiguro: “That’s certainly right. In the wake of the agricultural depression in the early Meiji Period, Mr. Maeda’s ‘*Opinion of Industrial Promotion*’ and Rikinosuke Ishikawa’s ‘*Research on Proper Agricultural Produce*’ were released, and things went by quite inconspicuously. And which has something in common with the spirit of Sontoku Ninomiya’s reconstruction work.”



## ● 1920-23: Establishment of the investigation commission on the tenant-farmer system

● Jul. 1919: Ishiguro assumed the office of agricultural administration manager.

● He spoke of his inaugural aspiration:

● “I set my mind on conducting a survey on the tenant-farmer system again and on proceeding to the tenancy legislation. Ten years had passed since the last survey (research on the tenancy customary practice in the end of Meiji Period by Tada-atsu Ishiguro, Shinzo Toyama, and Takeo Ono, et al.) had been implemented, and tenancy disputes were becoming active day by day. In addition, the government had passed by this time span without doing anything in preparation on the basis of that survey. In light of the past and with an eye to the future, I thought this ought to be carried out resolutely. But judging from internal affairs of the times, it was something that really required a momentous decision.”

● “The number of cases of the tenancy disputes was about 250 in the 7th year of Taisho Period, but which increased to a few thousand nowadays. It’ll be awful if this becomes even stronger. ... We thought it would be best for farmers to own their land, but to make so many tenant farmers independent, land of large landlords had to be divided out, for which we needed funding resources to purchase land from its owners at appropriate prices as we couldn’t confiscate it from them for nothing. ... We had no option but to go ahead without funds, which meant the only way was to gradually improve the tenancy system so that farmers became capable of operating their farming. So we started out with the survey of the tenancy system. But we also embarked on the formulation of farmers’ proprietorship as a means for the tenancy disputes inasmuch as facilitating for realization of land-owning farmers was a good thing to do.”

● ← In fact, the agricultural administration manager Ishiguro had his subordinates, such as Takeo Ono and Denhan Kasamori, thoroughly study problems associated with the agrarian-system reform of the Restoration, and at the same time, had Katsumasa Tanabe, et al. research issues as to innovations of the land system conducted in Europe after the War.

# Intention of Ishiguro's Agricultural Administration

● “I believe that, by protecting agriculture even at great sacrifice, though I may be censured as a stolid man—as a national trait of our country, stolid elements should preferably be respected as much as possible—to take measure so as to have the young men and women, sound in mind and body, stay in our country's farmlands to certain extent is what the res publica is expected to do without minding expenditures. In the light of the position of our nation's agriculture today, based on the fact that it **supplies the greater portion of main foodstuffs**, and that **majority of our citizens rely on agriculture for clothes and food**, and that the settlement of the international trade balance in foreign trade of export and import depends on a piece of silk thread pulled by a young daughter of a small farm family, and that it constitutes the source of sound labor of men and women for commerce, industries and all other areas, I think that the res publica must shoulder the need to significantly protect farm villages which are the fountainhead of these. From this perspective, it is correct to state that to decide on means that cannot be avoided to adopt for the future progress of agriculture is not just an industrial issue, but **rather the problem of politics and societies.**”

## ● Backlash Against Tenancy Legislation

● “Once a move was leaked out on newspapers regarding the tenancy legislation bill being prepared by the investigation commission on the tenant-farmer system, landowners across the country and their spokespeople being the members of both the Houses of Peers and Representatives joined forces secretly and started a campaign to oppose this bill under the name of the studies on farming community and such. As a result of this move, the deliberation on the tenancy legislation bill in the investigation commission suddenly became muted remarkably, which is the most noteworthy fact. Thus, a general atmosphere in the commission—mostly representing the landowners’ force—came around to the opinion that the conciliation law should be enacted speedily rather than the tenancy law.”

Gentaro Suehiro, *Agrarian Legal Issues*, 1924

# Change in Tenant Farmers' Consciousness after WWI

Masakatsu Daimon, *Modern Japan and Agrarian Life*, Nihon Keizai Hyronsha, 1994

Tenant Farmers in Extravagant Lifestyle? – – Report of Gifu Prefecture's police department:

- “The custom (of tenant farmers) once simple has become extravagant: Cotton fabric has been replaced by silk one, straw raincoat by cloak, straw sandals by air ones; (ellipsis) Particularly as for virile young men, they part their hair and decorate themselves with gold-rimmed glasses, gold watches, gold rings, silk umbrellas and such, and their spirit has been spoiled with frivolous notion just like they have lost a tendency of steadiness with their faded sense of settling and working in farm villages, but gained a trend to move toward interests, avoid difficulties and seek easiness.”
- “Stirred under the spirit of the times, they (tenant farmers) have fallen into luxurious habits to be lapped with beautiful garment and gourmet food. Many of them eat boiled rice by doing away with barley on the pretext that the latter was actually uneconomical as it gave the feeling of hunger more quickly than the former. Moreover, claiming that they cannot bear their sericultural overexertion without taking nutritious food of fish and chicken, they have a luxurious lifestyle during the silk-raising season...”
- “Bygone days, few tenant farmers ate rice and the majority had proso millet and foxtail millet; after the Sino-Japanese War, they began to eat barley, which changed to 50-50 between barley and rice after the Russo-Japanese War, and, then totally to rice after this war. Many use *tatamis* in houses, and some hang scrolls in alcoves. Silk-raising farmers have grown particularly luxurious. Also there are many who read newspapers and magazines. In this manner, along with the upgrading of their living conditions, tenant farmers have developed a sense of economy and come to considering whether the distribution of agricultural profits is appropriate.”



# Backlash Against Landlords

- Disparities in the living standard owing to the great-war prosperity showed a trend to expand most between landlords and tenant farmers among others. In Gifu Prefecture, “the price hike of rice provided landlords with a big profit but farmers with a little,” and with that, farmers “felt envious of luxurious lifestyles of landlords,” and came to think that “it was extremely unfair for landlords to be obtaining huge profits out of land requiring them little expenditures.” (according to Daimon)
- “To landlords, (tenant farmers) traditionally paid much respect as they were in the relation of master to servant. But now, without admitting the position of landlords, farmers insist: ‘Landlords indulge in luxury because we have a hard time cultivating and furnish the cornucopia of well-selected rice, and, **as long as we, too, are human beings** and they enjoy luxurious lives, we also need to spend appropriate lives, and for that purpose, the reduction in tenant rent is a matter of course.’”
- “Farmers contend that their economy these days (around 1920) is quite difficult and their life today is much different from what it was a few years back; That is, if a child of a landlord’s wears a good pair of sandals, the one of a farmer’s wants the same, and when a child of a landlord’s has a *hakama* [loose-legged pleated trousers for formal wear] on, the one of a farmer’s demands the same, hence no use in telling only farmers’ children should skimp.”
- Stubborn in general and behind the trend of the times, landlords of this village discriminate against tenant farmers and are heartless to them; (ellipsis) when a landlord called a representative of the farmers out to tell his opinion, he sat on a chair having the visitor done obeisance on his knees and so on. This haughty attitude on the landlord’s part hurt the representative’s feeling, and made the existing situation worse even further.”  
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# Grounds for Tenant Farmers' Assertion— – Statement of Revenues and Expenses

- Attached to this statement of reasons are two statements of the tenant farmers' revenues and expenses that are shown in Tables 3-1 and 3-2. Table 3-1 is based on the rice price of 1924 and Table 3-2 on the average price of rice during 1914 through '23. On the basis of these two tables, the "statement of reasons" calculates the labor charge per tenant farmer to indicate that it merely amounts to ¥0.899 in Table 3-1 and ¥0.646 in Table 3-2. In contrast to these figures, a per diem of the agricultural labor charge is ¥2.50 in Uzura Village and no less than ¥1.50 in the national average since 1919, thus appealing how little the tenant farmers' labor charge was. With that, the "statement of reasons" insisted on the need to reduce tenant rents as follows:
  - "From the nature of things, we believe that we tenant farmers by the cultivation of rice **should at minimum have an income equivalent to a labor charge an average agrarian laborer earns, and which must be realized for all intents and purposes** (ellipsis). What we can never tolerate nowadays is just one matter: The rent of this village, i.e., the one we pay, is the highest in Japan, unparalleled anywhere else."

Table 3-1: Statement of Reasons for Reduction of Tenant Rent  
 prepared by Central Japan Agricultural Union  
 (Part 1: Case of Rice Price at ¥40 Per *Koku*, 1924)

Revenue		Expenditure	
Brown rice [21 <i>Koku</i> ]	¥84.00	Tenat rent (1.5 <i>Koku</i> )	60.22
Crushed rice	0.91	Seeds fee (2 <i>Sho</i> at 0.25/ <i>Sho</i> )	0.50
Others (straw and everything else)	6.90	Self-supply manure	5.17
		Commercial manure	2.86
		Petty charge (farm tools/barn expenses and everything else)	1.69
Total	91.81	Total	70.22
		Balance	21.69

(Source) Central Japan Agricultural Union: “Statement of Reasons for Reduction off Tenant Rent”

(Society for Research of History of Peasant Movement, ed., *History of Japanese Peasant Movement*, 1961)

Table 3-2: Statement of Reasons for 20% Reduction off Tenant Rent  
 prepared by Central Japan Agricultural Union  
 (Part 2: Case of Average Rice Price, 1924)

Average rice price	¥28.76	Rice of Gifu Prefecture per <i>Koku</i> for 1914–23		
Revenue	68.21	Breakdown same as in Tabel 3-1		
Expenditure	53.36	Breakdown same as in Tabel 3-1		
Balance	14.85	Labor charge of 23 heads		
Labor charge	0.646	Per head a day		

(Source) Same as the previous page

# Change in Tenant Farmers' View of Labor

- Testimony of Shikataro Kusudo who participated in the dispute at Fujita Farm in Okayama Prefecture:

- “I had thought since long ago that the situation of tenant farmers had been quite intolerable. When I joined Japan Farmers Union, the statement of revenues and expenses was placed under my nose regarding the tenant farmers' operation of agriculture, which let me know that our daily labor was equivalent to a mere ¥0.025 (according to our country's agrarian survey, the wages of agricultural workers were ¥0.78 for annual hire, ¥1.51 for daily hire, and ¥1.53 for seasonal hire in 1924). As that statement was very well-made and truly convincing, I felt then that I clearly saw the cause of a longtime misery.”



# Cognition of Hideo Yokota, Man of *Nohon-shugi*

## — — Evaluation of Statements of Tenant Farmers' Revenues and Expenses

● Historical records Yokota used were various statements of revenues and expenses such as “Farming Reports of Ten-something Prefectures,” the survey by the agricultural bureau director of the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce (1912), the breakdown of receipts and payments of a certain tenant farmer in Tamura County in Fukushima Prefecture (1910), the survey of tenant farmers' revenues and expenses by Niigata Prefecture's agrarian association (Five Villages, 1909).

● According to “Farming Reports of Ten-something Prefectures,” the settlement of balance for rice paddies per *tan* shows a deficit of ¥0.497 at its best, and that of staggering ¥10.985 at its worst performance. The cause of the variance in these deficits “is not the reduction in raw materials (net production cost) but is actually based on the reduction in wages.” For every historical record, Yokota pointed out the low appraisal of tenant farmers' labor. The reason for a small amount of surplus in a Fukushima Prefecture's case is that the calculation of wages is “just two thirds of what is estimated for labor in ordinary farm houses,” and as for tenant-farming houses in Niigata Prefecture, the surplus “is not profit despite its wording, as it is a day's labor worth ¥0.15, a truly miserable remuneration,” concluded Yokota. At this point, Yokota declared, “I cannot help but be convinced that the decision that there is no profit in tenant farming is all the more obvious.”

● Calculations of tenant farmers' revenues and expenses were to “explain clearly how terribly poor their income is,” and “these studies” were “the most important to the dissection of the tenant-farmer system.” Using statements of tenant farmers' revenues and expenses as the means for recognizing the issue, Yokota deepened his view on the tenancy problem, and his focus on these statements and tenant farmers' labor was a guiding thread for him to identify “the tenant-farmer problem.”

- Yokota's writing rolls on further to the evaluation of the tenant-farmer system:
- “The general public's perspective is totally wrong without grounds in that landlords smile at receiving their tenant rent while tenant farmers line their pockets with an extra profit. The actual balance of payments of tenant farmers more than explains as to how wrong such a view is (ellipsis). Tenant farmers do not account for any profit when they deduct corresponding labor, while landlords collect ¥12 per *tan* as tenant rent. (ellipsis) The fact is rather simple: It comes to the conclusion that the profit is entirely included in the name of tenant rent that ends in the hands of landlords.”
- Furthermore, Yokota points out, “An imagination about the tenant-farmer system is nothing but a daydream hallucinating an entirely beautiful fellowship.” In which case the question is “whether tenant farmers should put up with the system that is characterized to be cursed as already indicated.” He receives a “revelation” that “a huge blowup is approaching” between landlords and tenant farmers.

# Economic Factor in Tenancy Disputes

- After the Russo-Japanese War, Yokota thought that amid struggles against hard living due to the depression, tenant farmers would strengthen their “economic consciousness” which should lead to tenancy disputes. He revised this perception after the WWI and came to consider factors in tenancy disputes in a much wider spectrum. Yokota raised three of them: One was an “economic motive” derived from “tenant farmers’ difficulty of living,” another was a “social motive,” and the last was “popularization of democracy.”
- “As long as the tenancy dispute is limited to an economic problem derived from an economic factor, it can be resolved by the change of allotment contracts between the parties concerned, that is, simply as an issue of tenant farmers in agricultural villages. But the outbreak of subject disputes in reality was not by any means merely attributed to an economic motive ingenerated from difficulty of living peculiar to tenant farmers alone. At precisely that time, preceding labor movements working as the stimulant seriously invoked the class-consciousness of tenant farmers, which gave a concrete form of the spirit of class strife that headed toward the stage of a social problem.”

# Social Factor

While the tenancy movement on the ground of “difficulty of living” demanded the reduction and exemption of tenant rents, the abolishment of *komimai* [collection of supplementary rice], and the reduction in contracted tenant rents, the one that emerged as a “social problem” called for a “loud singing” of “labor value,” and then, advanced into asking for the “guarantee of living rights.” The contention of the movement changed “from a request to approve the value of labor that makes an effective contribution in terms of social production, to an assertion that, because of this, living rights should be admitted for tenant farmers who, as the providers of labor, assume an important role in productive activities.” This change signifies the characteristic of the tenancy campaign that took on a “social motive,” according to Yokota. Hereupon, ways of the tenancy movement changed from “single and separate” to “group,” from “temporary union” to “permanent” union, and from “appeal for reduction and exemption” to “fair rights.”

# Popularization of Democracy

It was the “popularization of democracy” that promoted this change even further. The “spirit” of “democracy” is made truthful by the agreement between an ethical view called “equality in personality value” and a view of society with respect to social solidarity (coexistence and co-prosperity, mutual assistance). In the status where “democracy becomes widespread and tenant farmers awake to their own worth as human beings,” the tenancy dispute “which started as a strife of economy is no longer an economic struggle, and changes itself to a movement of the emancipation of personality.” The tenancy dispute was a “demand ingenerated from awareness of the equality of personality value as in ‘I too am a human, and he is a human too,’” which was nothing but a “complaint of awakened tenant farmers.” Here was a sharp and real observant eye—only Yokota was capable of—that saw into **the longing for the approval of personality value** lying beneath the tenancy movement. Fully convinced of the labor value, Yokota moved his recognition forward to the point of the approval of “self-awakening as a human being” = “personality.”



● →The movement of tenant farmers developed from their demand over tenant rents to the liberation campaign that was economic, social, and of personality: in other words, from economic disputes to a social reform movement for the emancipation of personality. Confident of the change in the role of peasant movements amid the tide of democracy after the WWI, Yokota redrew a grand design of the peasant movement like this.



94 農民たち 大正時代、桜島での撮影。

Haruhito Takeda, *Shueisha-Edition History of Japan (19) /Imperialism and Democracy*, Shueisha, 1992, p.125

# Tenant Farmer and Factory Worker

- Yokota had a perspective to grasp the landlord-tenant-farmer relationship by replacing it with the capitalist-worker relationship. “The relationship between landlords and tenant farmers in the tenant-farmer system can’t help but be placed identical to that between capitalists and workers in the factory system, and the landlord-tenant-farmer relation is an expression of the relation between labor and capital in agricultural villages.”
- “(Tenant farmers) become aware that, in order to increase profits of the tenant-farmer class and escape from difficulties of living, they must negotiate with the other profit-sharing party of landlords and change the contract through the other party’s concession. Nevertheless, inasmuch as the contract has been supposedly signed with the mutual agreement under the name of “freedom,” tenant farmers feel not surprisingly that they need to put pressure on landlords to have them conceded. This is a class consciousness. A struggle generated by this class consciousness is named a “class strife.””

## Other Advocacy of *Nohon-shugi*

- **Farmers' Neighborhood-Association Movement: Case of Teisuke Shibuya**
- First characteristic is an anti-city doctrine as the reverse side of *Nohon-shugi*.
- “Imperial Theater, radio, Mitsukoshi, Maru-biru; Although the city tends toward extravagance day by day, the farm village as always faces moldy salted fish and shopworn stained scarlet robes and even these are not easy to get for propertyless farmers covered with dirt like a mole, choked with the pains of poverty like a rat in winter. From the outset, cities live raking off a percentage from farm villages. They subsist snatching farmers' soul in sweat and blood sideways. These cities and city persons are thriving by the day, becoming extravagant day by day, while farmers who provide for them are starving to death. How unreasonable it is! Getting mocked, exploited and squeezed like this, do we farmers still have to keep our mouth shut indefinitely?”

# Farmers' Neighborhood-Association Movement and Teisuke Shibuya

● Teisuke Shibuya, *Direction of Second-Stage Peasant Movement*, included in *Autonomous Farmers*, organ paper of the Farmers' Neighborhood-Association, the inaugural issue:

● “Since tenancy disputes, tenant farmers have complained of the lack of understanding by landlords who, in turn, hated tenant farmers. But eager as tenant farmers might have been to grumble at landlords' inappreciation, they have not thought ill of cities at all, while landlords, albeit bearing a grudge against their tenants, have felt no resentment at politicians, those limbs of city capitalists. And independent farmers have considered the problem as someone else's misfortune and had no knowledge about the exploitation by cities.

● Of course, it is in the nature of things to look at disputes between landlords and tenant farmers as the first step of the peasant movement, and there is nothing strange about it. I designate this as the first-stage peasant movement.

● However, there is a certain limit to the reduction of rice paid as rent: To obtain its deductions from landlords at 20% or 30, nay, at 50 or 60, would never lead to the fundamental resolution of the problem. As an agrarian problem, this issue is not just one for landlords and tenant farmers, but also one for the whole agricultural ploughmen. Thus, the landlord-tenant-farmer problem is merely the one within a household. The longer this issue drags on, the further the fighting capacity diminishes only for us farmers, nay, for the whole agricultural ploughmen. Now all agricultural ploughmen are faced with the autumn when tenant farmers and independent farmers should be united as one body to draw the sword against the modern commercial-and- industrial doctrine, the city-priority ideology.”

● “Is the fundamental just cause of the tenant-farmer problem an issue concerning a relative size of the tenant farmer’s share? Stated differently, is it a question about a degree of the landlord’s exploitation? The landlord is an exploiter to his fancy. The tenant farmer is likely to gain some. But, think of how much he will gain. (ellipsis) It’s not just the problem of landlords versus tenant farmers that is important. There exists a much more fundamental issue. That is the problem of agrarian villages versus cities.





# Were Tenant Farmers Workers?

- Gunta Fujita, *Study on Tenancy Disputes*, Jikyokan, 1924
- In sum, previous disputes were simply the economic problems regarding the sharing, and were not concerned with such complicated issues as the so-called tenant farmers' right to a certain standard of living, or, enhancement of living standards: If a level of the poor harvest was obvious, then, a problem was resolved through a mutual concession based on the landlord's kindness and his tenant farmer's modesty, and left no cause for controversy in the future. On the contrary, all disputes nowadays are more or less based on a notion of the capitalist versus worker, and there are few of those that do not contain some nature of the social issue; in some local areas, they have to be dealt as major social problems, thus their resolutions are becoming quite difficult.
- It must be stated that disputes as social problems, constituting an antagonism against contemporary economic organizations, i.e., capitalistic economic organizations, are extremely difficult to eradicate as long as current organizations really exist. Therefore, it ought to be mentioned that treating entire tenancy disputes as social problems makes their solutions almost impossible.

## ● Tenant Farmer and Industrial Worker

- There are not a few in the world who consider a tenancy dispute as a kind of labor trouble, basing their view on a superficial observation that, as a tenancy dispute is a struggle between an agricultural worker and his landlord, it is similar to a labor strife between an industrial worker and a capitalist or entrepreneur.
- Upon a little inside examination on differences in the industrial situations of an agrarian tenant farmer and industrial worker, and on positions of each individual's other party being a landlord and an entrepreneur, one can find **remarkable variances between these two**; and therefore, it should be obvious that the tenancy dispute does not necessarily require to be treated as a labor-strife sort.
- While both the tenant farmer and the industrial worker are identical as the providers of labor in the industrial spheres, they possess significant differences in the area of operation or usage of their labor.

- A tenant farmer is the so-called provider of self-determining labor and he himself is the employer, while an industrial worker is the provider of labor determined by other and is employed by other. Stated more concretely, a tenant farmer borrows a piece of land from its owner upon the promise to allocate a fixed amount or ratio of its produce, with his own free will, using his own labor (or efforts of others alike), and manages his agricultural business; Industrially speaking, albeit meager compared to the rest, he is clearly an individual and independent business operator. In contrast to this, an industrial worker... simply behaves like a piece of machine following instructions of other, namely, his employer or its proxy.
- Therefore, the tenant farmer, like other entrepreneurs, has to bear by himself responsibilities for a year's output of the produce based on a rich or poor harvest, and a rise or fall in income due to a partial fluctuation of currency price, namely, a high and low in crop markets. The industrial worker, on the other side, has no reason to be responsible for ups and downs of the business as he does not directly undertake its management, hence can always receive his remuneration as promised. That is, the reward for one's labor is unfixed for the former each time and fixed for the latter without exception.

- A labor strife is a controversy regarding a raise in wages or an opposition to a reduction in wages in the future, while a tenancy dispute is a conflict about a reward for labor used for himself.
- ... A tenant farmer closely resembles an entrepreneur manager in industry, rather than an industrial worker. He rents a piece of land owned by another person, thereby operates agriculture freely on his own, has a responsibility for its rise and decline, takes possession of its produce for the time being, and assumes a portioner position: These are not different from ones of an entrepreneur manager's at all. But the essential factors to an enterprise are, for one, a piece of land at a certain place to anchor itself, and another, floating capital that roams about freely, which are the differences from the tenant-farmer operation. Their ways of payment are different too: A tenant farmer in general is under a contract with his landlord, either in writing or oral promise, pertaining to sharing of a fixed quantity, but an entrepreneur in industry does not make a promise to pay a fixed amount of money to his financiers...

● Carrying out an observation this much closely, while a tenant farmer presents no distinction from an industrial worker in that both are providers of physical labor in the production process, he is not at all different from an entrepreneur manager in that he manages the business upon his free will and occupies a position to distribute the outcome of his production. ..., therefore the tenancy dispute in which an agrarian entrepreneur manager—who is a tenant farmer—attempts to reduce the share for his landlord marks a vast difference in substance from the labor strife where an industrial worker demands an increase in the share of the profits from an entrepreneur—who is his employer. One should not treat them uniformly based on his superficial observation alone.