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9. ABSTRACT
 The present study attempts to draw together some of the literature on agricultural development, rural living conditions, and institutional change at the local level in Japan, so that conclusions may be reached about the relationship between institutional change and rural development in that country. The Japanese case is a particularly interesting one, not only because it has so often been cited as a model for other rice-culture nations in Asia and elsewhere, but also because of the existence of a wealth of primary source materials that cover a hundred-year time span in Japan's modern history. Many of these materials have yet to be exploited to their fullest extent, but scholars have already succeeded in uncovering a great deal regarding Japan's early developmental history. In describing that history in this study, it will become apparent that many gaps in our analysis still exist, particularly when we attempt to discuss in a systematic fashion the relationship between institutional change, social change, and economic development.

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LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT IN JAPAN

Ronald Aqua

LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
IN JAPAN

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tion.

FOREWORD

This monograph was written as part of a comparative study of Rural Local Government organized by the Rural Development Committee of Cornell University. The study aimed at clarifying the role of rural local institutions in the rural development process, with special reference to agricultural productivity, income, local participation and rural welfare. An interdisciplinary working group set up under the Rural Development Committee established a comparative framework for research and analysis of these relationships.¹ A series of monographs, based in most cases on original field research, has been written by members of the working group and by scholars at other institutions and has been published by the Rural Development Committee. An analysis and summary of the study's findings has been written for the working group by Norman Uphoff and Milton Esman and has been published separately.

This study of Rural Local Government is part of the overall program of teaching and research by members of the Rural Development Committee, which functions under the auspices of the Center for International Studies at Cornell and is chaired by Norman Uphoff. The main focuses of Committee concern are alternative strategies and institutions for promoting rural development, especially with respect to the situation of small farmers, rural laborers and their families. This particular study was financed in large part by a grant from the Asia Bureau of the U.S. Agency for International Development. The views expressed by participating scholars in this study are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of USAID or Cornell University.

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INTRODUCTION

The modern history of rural development in Japan is one of richness, diversity, and complexity. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the range of interpretations of that history is enormous. Whether the subject be the nature of power configurations in the prewar hamlet, the extent of technological diffusion in rural areas, or the overall rate of change in agricultural productivity, finding satisfactory explanations for trends or events can prove to be a difficult task.

Agricultural economists, agronomists, government officials, and farmers from the crowded and hungry nations of the Third World have viewed with a mixture of awe and envy the enormous productive capacity of Japanese farmers. Japan has seemingly produced a system of labor-intensive, private, small-scale agriculture that not only stimulates rural savings and provides more than adequate food supplies for the nation's needs, but also managed to underwrite financially the initial stage of industrial expansion in the early years of the Meiji era (i.e. from the 1870s to the turn of the century).¹ All

¹A concise statement of these principal arguments can be found in Bruce F. Johnston, "The Japanese 'Model' of Agricultural Development: Its Relevance to Developing Nations," in Ohkawa et al., Agriculture and Economic Growth: Japan's Experience (Tokyo: Princeton University Press and University of Tokyo Press, 1970), pp. 58-102.

of this was accomplished without collectivization of agriculture or the large-scale violent confrontations that have plagued many other rural societies.

Outside observers have further noted with apparent satisfaction the effective operation of a highly-integrated multi-functional cooperative system that boasts widespread farmer participation in local decision-making councils as well as considerable influence in determining national policy regarding agricultural problems.² All farmers are assured of access to the services provided by this system, and the rampant corruption and administrative mismanagement that so often plague cooperatives in other Asian nations seem to be largely absent.

What commentators on the Japanese "model" often overlook, however, is that not all developments related to the evolution of the primary sector in Japan's economy over the past century have been of a positive nature. Rates of change in agricultural productivity and income have not proceeded uniformly in an upward direction, and not all elements of the rural population have been able to benefit from those gains that were recorded. Furthermore, two important land reform programs, participation in a world war, the complete revision of the local administrative system, and the general movement toward

²Reference is made to the Japanese case in Farmer Cooperatives in Developing Countries (Washington, D.C.: Advisory Committee on Overseas Cooperative Development, October, 1971). See also Edgar Owens and Robert Shaw, Development Reconsidered (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Co., 1972), pp. 76-85.

"modernization," with all the processes of social change that that word implies, have acted upon Japanese rural society to produce wrenching changes therein. These changes have penetrated down to the basic units of traditional Japanese society, the buraku (neighborhood or hamlet) and the family, and facilitated traumatic breaks with traditional patterns of authority for many rural inhabitants.

The study of such changes through more than one hundred years of history is necessarily a demanding, and yet challenging task. Because village or hamlet studies are essentially a postwar phenomenon in Japanese scholarship,³ we can only speculate about many aspects of the true nature of village government and central-local governmental relations in the prewar years. There is an abundance of aggregate statistics dealing with educational enrollments, tenancy disputes, rice production, mortgage foreclosures, levels of fertilizer application, banking activities, and other aspects of economic and social activity through which some inferences can be drawn about life in rural Japan since 1868. But the total of these and other "indicators" of rural development and social change somehow fall short of describing how centrally-initiated programs and organizations actually operated in the Japanese

³A notable exception is, of course, J. F. Embree's A Japanese Village: Suye Mura (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939). Some of the early postwar studies by Western scholars include John B. Cornell and Robert J. Smith, Two Japanese Villages (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956); Richard K. Beardsley, et al., Village Japan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959); and Andrew J. Grad, Land and Peasant in Japan (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1952).

countryside, or how peasants living close to subsistence level in the prewar period coped psychologically with national mobilization campaigns designed to foster patriotism and the acceptance of unfamiliar values and goals. The well-worn homilies about "repressive landlords," "communal solidarity," or "oppressive tenancy" that have so often been used to characterize rural conditions prior to the 1946 land reforms⁴ can be disturbing, not because they are inaccurate or untrue, but because they frequently serve to mask or obscure the rich patterns of diversity that surely existed within the overall system.

Rural development and institutional change at the local level are inseparable elements of the broader process of social change in modern Japan. For the four-fifths of the Japanese people who lived in small settlements and were engaged in agricultural production at the time of the Meiji Restoration in 1868, no institutional innovation could have portended more fundamental change for their everyday lives than the deliberate effort by central government authorities to penetrate down to the lowest levels of social organization

⁴ See Barrington Moore, Jr., Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), pp. 228-313, and a response to Moore by R. P. Dore and Tsutomu Ouchi, "Rural Origins of Japanese Fascism," in James William Morley (ed.), Dilemmas of Growth in Prewar Japan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 181-209.

For a review of the Japanese literature on the subject, see R. P. Dore, "The Meiji Landlord: Good or Bad?," Journal of Asian Studies, XVII: 3 (May 1959), pp. 343-355.

with a new, highly-centralized administrative superstructure. The Meiji leaders believed that a coordinated national development effort could not proceed without the full and unwavering participation of all elements of Japanese society. The measures that were taken to ensure this degree of participation in rural areas had a profound impact not only on agricultural production and rural living standards, but also on traditional power structures in the countryside.

"Development" and "governmental intervention" were synonymous terms to the Meiji leaders. The course on which Japan was to proceed after 1868 was carefully charted and closely supervised at the national level. Thus, the question of the role that local governing institutions could play in the development of Japan's rural sector was not one to be treated lightly by her ruling elite. Every directive regarding agricultural policy and every newly-created organization was developed within the broader framework of the nation's overall developmental objectives. Those objectives, at least in the years before World War II, included military expansion abroad, the acquisition and exploitation of overseas colonies, and more generally, achieving the status of a great world power by becoming industrialized and "modernized."

The present study attempts to draw together some of the literature on agricultural development, rural living conditions, and institutional change at the local level in Japan, so that conclusions may be reached about the relationship

between institutional change and rural development in that country. The Japanese case is a particularly interesting one, not only because it has so often been cited as a model for other rice-culture nations in Asia and elsewhere, but also because of the existence of a wealth of primary source materials that cover a hundred-year time span in Japan's modern history. Many of these materials have yet to be exploited to their fullest extent, but scholars have already succeeded in uncovering a great deal regarding Japan's early developmental history. In describing that history in this study, it will become apparent that many gaps in our analysis still exist, particularly when we attempt to discuss in a systematic fashion the relationship between institutional change, social change, and economic development.

This study was conducted for the Rural Development Committee at Cornell University. The Committee generously provided me with the opportunity to travel to Japan in the summer of 1973 to gather materials and meet first-hand with many Japanese scholars, officials, and others interested in rural development. I particularly wish to acknowledge the assistance I received in Japan from Mitsugi Kamiya and Masamoto Yamashita of the National Research Institute of Agricultural Economics (Nōgyō Sōgō Kenkyū Jo) in Tokyo, Kunitoshi Mizuno of the National Diet Library as well as the staff of the Agricultural Research Section of that institution, Prof. Tokio Mitsuhashi of Kyoto University, Prof. Otohiko Hasumi

of Tokyo Gakugei University, and Dr. Takekazu Ogura, the distinguished chairman of both the Institute of Developing Economies and the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Research Council. I would further like to express my gratitude to Gary Allinson, Michael Donnelly, Shigemochi Hirashima, T. J. Pempel, Robert J. Smith, and the members of the Rural Development Committee's Working Group on Rural Local Government for their useful comments and criticisms of an earlier draft of this paper that was presented at Cornell in March 1974. I alone, of course, bear the responsibility for any shortcomings or errors contained herein.

I. AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN JAPAN AFTER THE MEIJI RESTORATION

Although the Meiji Restoration (1868) ushered in the modern era in Japanese history, much of the basis for subsequent economic development, in agriculture as in other economic sectors, derived from various legacies of the Tokugawa era. Well before the Meiji statesmen devised schemes to introduce Western cultivation practices to Japanese farmers (only to be abandoned later in favor of capitalizing on the accumulated experience of the more innovative and successful farmers and improving on existing rural conditions),⁵ Japanese farmers were already accustomed to forming seed-exchange societies to disseminate new and improved varieties, reclaiming land and reshaping paddy-fields, and applying considerable amounts of fertilizer to their land.⁶ Hand-in-hand with this innovative spirit and receptiveness to new and improved agricultural methods went a tradition of fostering educational enterprises and encouraging literacy even among rural youth. As R. P. Dore has observed:

⁵For a brief history of the attempt to introduce Western farming techniques, see Takekazu Ogura (ed.), Agricultural Development in Modern Japan (Tokyo: Fuji Publishing Co., 1963), pp. 150-153.

⁶Thomas C. Smith, The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), pp. 87-107.

In the towns a good proportion of the population could read and write Japanese. Parents bought such education for their children, voluntarily and with hard cash, from teachers who derived their total income from fees. In country districts paternally disposed rich villagers did a great deal to supplement the operations of an otherwise private-enterprise system. At a very rough estimate it would seem that by the time of the Restoration forty to fifty percent of all Japanese boys, and perhaps fifteen percent of girls were getting some formal schooling outside their homes.⁷

A comparison of the rice yields obtained in Japan shortly after the Meiji Restoration with rice yields obtained in other Asian countries in the 1950's and 1960's lends support to the argument that agricultural development in Japan did not begin from "ground zero" after 1868, but rather was based upon a rural infrastructure that was already highly-developed (Table 1).

There is considerable controversy over the actual growth rates for agricultural output, labor productivity, and land productivity for the early years of the Meiji period (roughly speaking, from the 1870's to the eve of the First World War).⁸ In attacking several studies that had relied almost exclusively on agricultural statistics from government archives, James Nakamura has contended that due to the large-scale concealment, misclassification, and undermeasurement of the arable land

⁷ R. P. Dore, "The Legacy of Tokugawa Education," in Marius B. Jansen (ed.), Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 100.

⁸ For a summary statement of the basic components of this controversy, see Yujirō Hayami and Saburō Yamada, "Agricultural Productivity at the Beginning of Industrialization," in Ohkawa, pp. 105-107.

Table 1. Comparison of Rice Yields and Man-Land Ratios between Japan and Other Countries in Monsoon Asia

	Rice yields per unit of area planted (ton/ha.)	Arable land area per farm worker (ha./worker)
Japan, 1878-1882		
Official	2.36	
LTES	2.53	0.326
Nakamura	3.22	0.334
Japan, 1918-1922		
LTES=Official	3.79	0.433
Nakamura	3.83	0.435
Monsoon Asia, 1953-62		
Philippines	1.17	1.31
India	1.36	1.28
Thailand	1.38	0.77
Pakistan	1.44	1.72
Burma	1.49	1.74
Ceylon	1.57	0.91
Indonesia	1.74	0.75
Malaya	2.24	1.76
Korea	2.75	0.45
Taiwan	2.93	0.45
Japan	4.73	0.43

Source: Yūjirō Hayami and Saburō Yamada, "Agricultural Productivity at the Beginning of Industrialization," in Ohkawa, et al., Agriculture and Economic Growth: Japan's Experience (Tokyo: Princeton University Press and University of Tokyo Press, 1970), p. 108.

area, as well as the deliberate underreporting of yield during the early post-Restoration years,

. . . the corrected index of total agricultural production increases by 44 per cent over a 35-year span from 1878-82 to 1913-17; in contrast the previously accepted index constructed by Kazushi Ohkawa and his associates increases by 136 per cent over the same period. The Ohkawa growth rate of 2.4 per cent per year is more than twice the 1.0 per cent median growth rate of the corrected value.⁹

⁹James I. Nakamura, Agricultural Production and the Economic Development of Japan, 1873-1922 (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1966), p. 12 and passim.

In a similar manner, Nakamura finds that other estimates by Bruce F. Johnston and Saburō Yamada are also inaccurate, although perhaps less so than the Ohkawa figures.¹⁰

While the Nakamura argument casts some doubt on the thesis that the agricultural sector in Meiji Japan underwent a remarkable structural transformation in a relatively short time, and so makes Japan appear less idiosyncratic in its developmental experience than was originally thought, still, there is little dispute over the fact that relatively high levels of agricultural productivity had been achieved by Japanese farmers by the 1920's. In accounting for these high productivity levels, economists and others have pointed to a number of different factors. One that has already been mentioned is the legacy of improving agricultural practices carried over from the earlier Tokugawa period. Many of the gains recorded in the early Meiji years represent a continuation of earlier developments and do not necessarily reflect any deliberate effort by the central government to concentrate its resources on building the agricultural sector. In fact, as Table 2 shows, government subsidies for industrial promotion went chiefly to the secondary and tertiary sectors until well into the twentieth century. Despite numerous government pronouncements in the early Meiji period stressing the importance of rural development to the overall strength of the nation, few direct measures were taken by the government to enhance

¹⁰Ibid.

Table 2. Relative Percentage of Industrial Subsidies

	PRIMARY INDUSTRY	SECONDARY INDUSTRY	TERTIARY INDUSTRY
1850	0.0	33.2	66.5
1885	0.3	14.5	55.2
1890	0.0	71.0	29.0
1895	0.0	55.3	41.7
1900	2.8	41.1	56.1
1905	1.9	49.9	48.2
1910	1.6	29.2	70.2
1915	11.6	43.3	45.1
1920	2.9	70.0	27.1
1925	9.2	6.8	84.0
1929	20.7	4.3	75.0
1932	39.3	6.7	54.0
1935	61.8	9.0	29.2
1938	64.9	17.9	17.2
1941	36.6	48.0	15.4

Source: Taichiro Okawara, Agriculture and Forestry Budget in Japan, Agricultural Development Series, No. 8 (Tokyo: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Productivity Conference, 1959), p. 8.

productivity and improve rural conditions until much later.¹¹

Several measures undertaken by the central government did have the indirect effect of fostering improved agricultural productivity. Perhaps the most important of these was the revision of the land tenure system and an accompanying land tax reform. Before 1873, the government had already instituted a land reform program by abolishing the feudal restrictions on the sale or private ownership of land. As described by Nakamura, the new Land Tax Revision Act of 1873

¹¹For a discussion of some of the steps that were taken at the governmental level, see R. P. Dore, "Agricultural Improvement in Japan: 1870-1900," Economic Development and Cultural Change, IX: 1, Part II (October 1960), pp. 69-91.

1. . . . established individual responsibility for tax payments in lieu of village responsibility.
2. The tax base was to be land value instead of the annual harvest, or the annual average harvest.
3. The tax was to be paid in money rather than in kind.
4. The tax rate was set at 3 per cent of land value but with the proviso that the rate was to decrease to 1 per cent as revenues from other sources increased.¹²

Although the government's intention in carrying out this revision was to insure a stable source of revenues in hard currency, so that government programs could be assured of funding without necessarily being dependent on crop conditions and harvests, the tax reform also had the effect of providing an incentive to landowners to increase the value of their agricultural production. Since tax rates became relatively fixed, higher agricultural yields from the same lands meant greater profits for landowners, provided the demand for foodstuffs kept prices sufficiently high. In cases where landowners did not farm the land themselves, but rather rented it to tenant farmers, the landlords could continue to demand high rent payments in kind, convert the payments into cash to pay the land tax, and retain an increasingly large profit as productivity increased.

¹²Nakamura, p. 182. A detailed discussion of the land taxation systems during the Tokugawa and Meiji eras can be found in Nakamura, Appendix A, and in William J. Chambliss, Chiaraijima Village: Land Tenure, Taxation, and Local Trade, 1818-1884 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1965), Appendices IV-VI.

Table 3 demonstrates that the land tax provided a major source of revenue to the central government at least until the 1890's, when other revenue sources became more lucrative. Revenue generated by the land tax was used by the Meiji leadership to finance at least the earliest stages of their program of industrial expansion, and little of the money was returned to the countryside. Furthermore, despite the diminishing share of the land tax in total government revenues after 1900, other taxes continued to drain resources away from the primary sector, as Table 4 shows. Only after World War I, when the Japanese economy had reached a new level of industrial development, was there any diminution in the burden being shouldered by the rural sector in financing the needs of government.

Rapid industrial expansion around the turn of the century, stimulated by two wars conducted on foreign soil, also had the effect of increasing the demand for various products, among them foodstuffs. According to one estimate, per capita annual consumption of rice rose from 118 kg in 1878-82 to 143 kg in 1893-97, and had reached 161 kg by 1913-17.¹³ Demand eventually began to exceed the supply, and after World War I the Japanese government turned to rice imported from the two colonies of Korea and Taiwan to help meet domestic demand.¹⁴ At about the same time, Japanese food consumption patterns

¹³Ogura, pp. 185, 187.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 187-189. These imports in turn eventually contributed to a sharp decline in rice prices in the 1920's.

Table 3. Composition of Central Government Tax Collection

(Unit: Current Million Yen)

Year	Land tax		Excise taxes ^a		Sub-total (land tax and excises)		Income tax		Business taxes ^b		Customs duties		Miscellaneous		Total
	Per cent of total	Per cent of total	Per cent of total	Per cent of total	Per cent of total	Per cent of total	Per cent of total	Per cent of total	Per cent of total	Per cent of total	Per cent of total	Per cent of total	Per cent of total		
1870	11.3	73.9	—	—	11.3	73.9	—	—	—	—	1.1	7.1	2.9	18.9	15.3
1880	42.3	72.9	5.8	10.0	48.1	82.9	—	—	—	—	2.6	4.5	7.3	12.6	58.0
1890	40.1	51.7	16.9	21.8	57.0	73.5	1.1	1.4	.3	.4	4.4	5.7	14.8	19.1	77.6
1900	46.7	24.6	54.4	28.6	101.1	53.2	6.4	3.4	7.3	3.8	17.0	8.9	58.2	30.6	190.1
1910	76.3	15.9	89.6	18.7	165.9	34.6	31.7	6.6	32.5	6.8	39.9	8.3	208.9	43.6	478.9
1920	73.9	6.2	375.4	31.6	449.3	37.8	190.3	16.0	116.7	9.8	69.4	5.8	361.4	30.5	1187.1
1930	68.0	4.8	529.0	37.4	597.0	42.2	200.6	14.2	112.1	7.9	105.4	7.4	401.2	28.4	1416.3

a) Including tax on sake, tobacco, sugar, soya, textile fabrics, as well as profits from camphor, salt and tobacco monopolies (where applicable).

b) Including business tax, succession tax, on bonuses, capital interest tax, business profits tax, war profits tax, and special profits tax (where applicable).

Source: Gustave Ranis, "The Financing of Japanese Economic Development," in Ohkawa et al., Agriculture and Economic Growth: Japan's Experience (Tokyo: Princeton University Press and the University of Tokyo Press, 1970), p. 43.

Table 4. Allocation of Direct Tax Burden

Year (Annual average)	Direct tax allocatable to agriculture ^a (cur. mil. yen)	Net income of agriculture ^b (cur. mil. yen)	Tax burden on agriculture (per cent)	Direct tax allocatable to non-agriculture ^a (cur. mil. yen)	Net income of non- agriculture ^b (cur. mil. yen)	Tax burden on non- agriculture (per cent)
1878-1882	63.6	376	16.9	6.3	283	2.2
1884-1887	63.6	287	22.1	9.5	313	3.0
1888-1892	58.5	377	15.5	9.8	420	2.3
1894-1897	65.6	531	12.4	13.2	660	2.0
1898-1902	99.1	816	12.1	35.4	1,106	3.2
1903-1907	113.6	1,015	11.2	79.3	1,467	5.4
1908-1912	153.4	1,222	12.6	132.2	2,077	6.4
1913-1917	167.7	1,422	11.8	145.4	3,216	4.5
1918-1922	295.7	3,205	9.2	431.1	7,967	5.4
1923-1927	304.2	2,892	10.5	506.2	9,706	5.2
1928-1932	205.5	2,117	9.7	421.3	9,723	4.3
1933-1937	197.3	2,539	7.8	559.2	13,159	4.2

a) Tax figures are from an unpublished manuscript by Mr. Seiji Tsunematsu of the Agricultural Research Institute of the Japanese Department of Agriculture and Forestry. They were published later in Tohata and Ohkawa (1956).

b) Income figures from the worksheets of the Economic Research Institute at Hitotsubashi University.

Source: Gustav Ranis, "The Financing of Japanese Economic Development," in Ohkawa, et al., Agriculture and Economic Growth: Japan's Experience (Tokyo: Princeton University Press and the University of Tokyo Press, 1970), p. 48.

began to shift, and "the per capita rice consumption of the Japanese people slowed down, while that of fish, meat, milk, fruits, etc. began to increase."¹⁵

Given this increasing demand for a variety of food products and the incentive to increase production afforded by the earlier revision of the land tax, the interests of individual owner-farmers and central government leaders clearly coincided. Increased agricultural productivity not only assured farmers of higher profits, but also assured national leaders of an adequate food supply to feed a growing army and maintain a robust and productive peasantry. Owner-farmers utilized their backlog of accumulated knowledge of agricultural techniques to increase productivity not only in their own fields but also in the fields of those who rented lands from them. One of the first steps taken at the national level to capitalize on new developments in technological improvements was a meeting held in Tokyo in 1881, to which 120 veteran farmers were invited to exchange information and organize extension efforts on a national scale.¹⁶ Agricultural schools and experimental stations had already been established by the government as early as 1876 and 1877, and

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

¹⁶ Tokuzo Tatsuno and Reichi Kaneko, Agricultural Extension Work in Japan, Agricultural Development Series, No. 1 (Tokyo: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Productivity Conference, March 1959), p. 7. A detailed chronology of technical extension programs is presented on page 11 of the same publication.

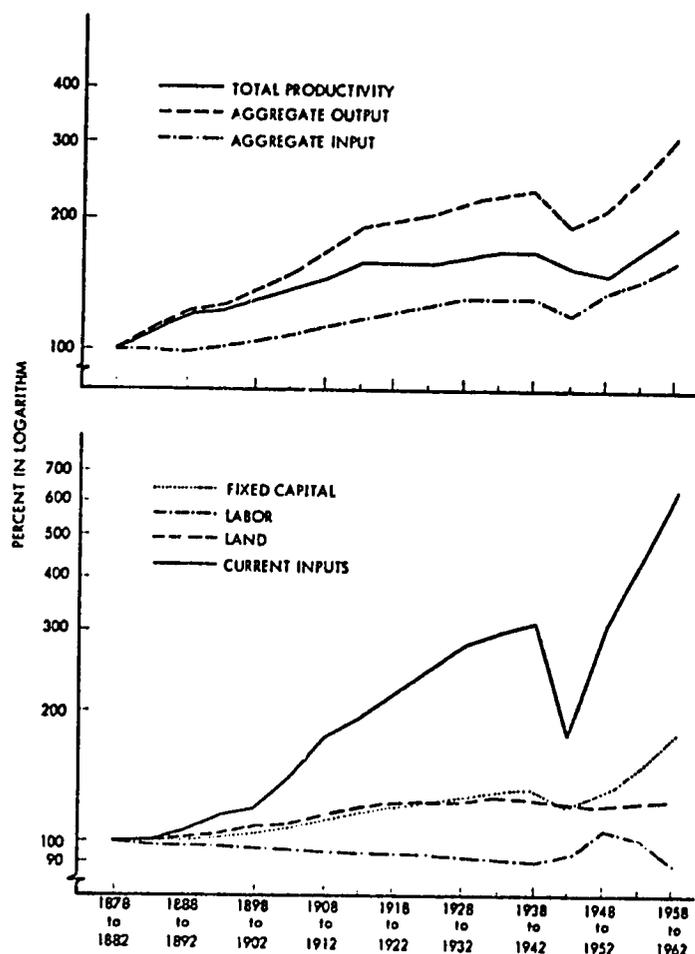
by the 1890's, voluntary associations of farmers called Nōjikai "were established for improving agricultural techniques through exchange of information. In 1899, the Agricultural Association Law was enacted to provide a statutory basis for such organizations,"¹⁷ and Agricultural Associations led by owner-farmers quickly spread to all parts of Japan.

Extension programs, experimental stations and agricultural schools, and newly-formed agricultural cooperatives were among the "nonconventional inputs" that contributed to increased productivity in the years before and after the First World War, but their overall effect on productivity is difficult to measure in any precise manner. Some inferences can be drawn, however, from an examination of Figure 1, which shows trend lines for movements in output, input, and productivity for the entire period from 1878 to 1962. It is clear from the upper graph that gains in aggregate output consistently exceeded increases in "conventional inputs" (i.e. land, labor, capital, and such current inputs as fertilizer, machinery, seeds, pesticides, power, etc.), and Hayami and Yamada draw the conclusion that "such movements in output, inputs, and productivity reflect the character of technological progress in Japanese agriculture."¹⁸ This point is further strengthened

¹⁷ Ogura, pp. 15-16.

¹⁸ Yūjirō Hayami and Saburō Yamada, "Technological Process in Agriculture," in Klein and Ohkawa (eds.), Economic Growth: The Japanese Experience Since the Meiji Era (Homewood, Ill.: Irwin, 1968), p. 137. Emphasis added.

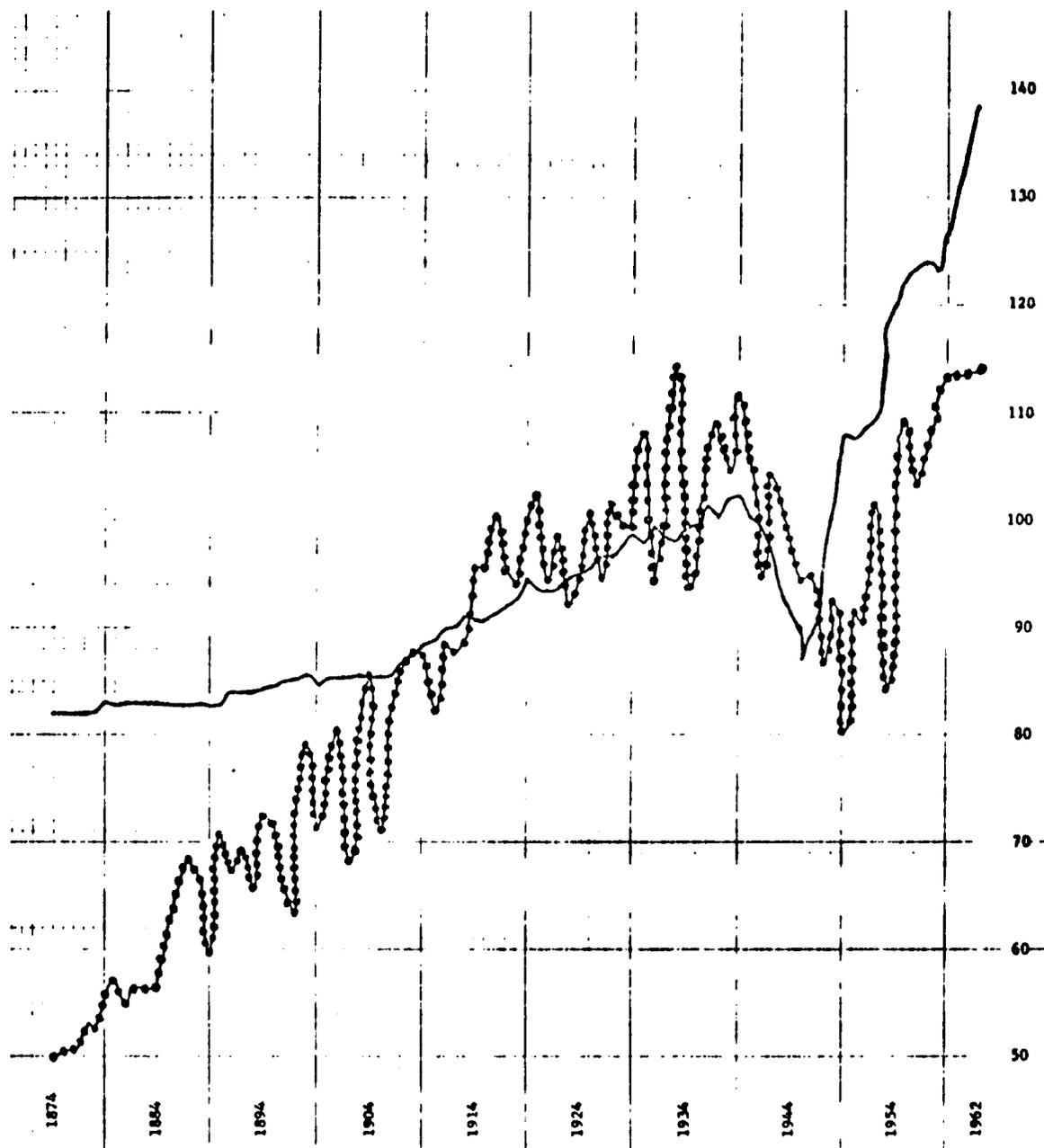
Figure 1. Movements in Output, Inputs, and Productivity



Source: Yūjirō Hayami and Saburō Yamada, "Technological Progress in Agriculture," in Klein and Ohkawa, eds., Economic Growth: The Japanese Experience Since the Meiji Era (Homewood, Ill.: Irwin, 1968), p. 137.

by the trend lines in Figure 2, where it can be seen that at least until World War I, gains in total productivity accelerated at a much faster pace than corresponding gains in total conventional inputs. Through the 1920's and 1930's, fluctuations in productivity displayed no discernable relationship

Figure 2. Indexes of Total Inputs and Total Productivity in Agriculture, 1874-1962 (1934-36 = 100)



Source: Mataji Umemura, et al., Estimates of Long-Term Economic Statistics of Japan Since 1868, Agriculture and Forestry, Volume 9 (Tokyo: Toyo Keizai Shinposha, 1966), pp. 224-225.

Agricultural Total Productivity Index = $\frac{\text{Real Output Index}}{\text{Total Inputs Index}}$

Agricultural Total Inputs Index =

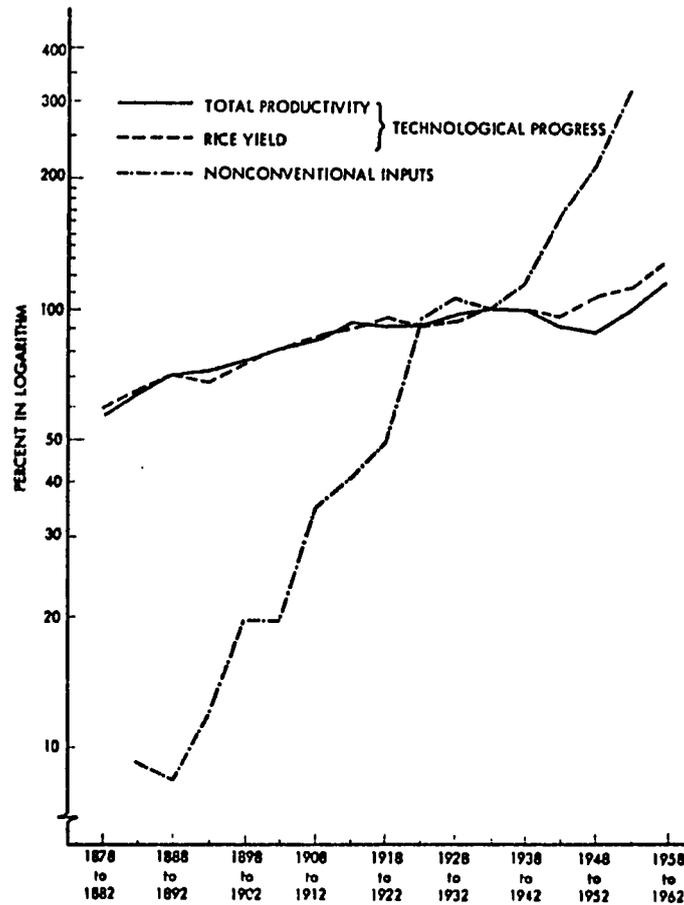
Weighted arithmetic average of indexes of conventional inputs, such as labor, land, fixed capital, and current inputs (fertilizer, seed, etc.), with input prices in a base period used as weights.

to the trend line for conventional inputs (although both moved in a generally upward direction). In the postwar era, a steady and sharp increase in conventional inputs was not necessarily accompanied by a similar increase in productivity. In the years after World War II it would seem that changing consumer tastes and a diminishing return on new investments in conventional inputs have affected productivity, and that by the 1960's diminishing marginal returns to investment in agriculture had become a reality.

The problem of determining the correlates of increasing productivity is further complicated by Hayami and Yamada's contention that technological progress and nonconventional inputs are not necessarily synonymous. In refuting A. M. Tang's contention that technological progress could be measured in terms of government outlays for various rural development programs, Hayami and Yamada demonstrate that technological progress was already at a relatively high level prior to 1910, which was the time when the government began to make investments in the primary sector. This can be seen in Figure 3, which defines technological progress in terms of improved rice yields and total productivity, and nonconventional inputs as the expenditures of both the central and local governments. According to Yayami and Yamada,

When the imported techniques failed to make root in Japanese soil (in the 1880's) and research was in its infancy, it was the technological potential embodied in the Rōnō (veteran farmers), which provided the basis for technological progress. It is generally

Figure 3. Comparison of the Indexes of Total Productivity, Rice Yield per Unit of Area Planted, and Non-Conventional Inputs (1933-37 = 100)



Source: Yūjirō Hayami and Saburō Yamada, "Technological Progress in Agriculture," in Klein and Ohkawa, eds., Economic Growth: The Japanese Experience Since the Meiji Era (Homewood, Ill.: Irwin, 1968), p. 142.

agreed that the Rōnō Gijutsu (veteran farmers' techniques) were replaced by the techniques developed in the experiment stations during the 1910's. By that time the technological potential accumulated under the feudal regime should have been used up.¹⁹

The force of this argument is somewhat mitigated by Nakamura's

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 144-145.

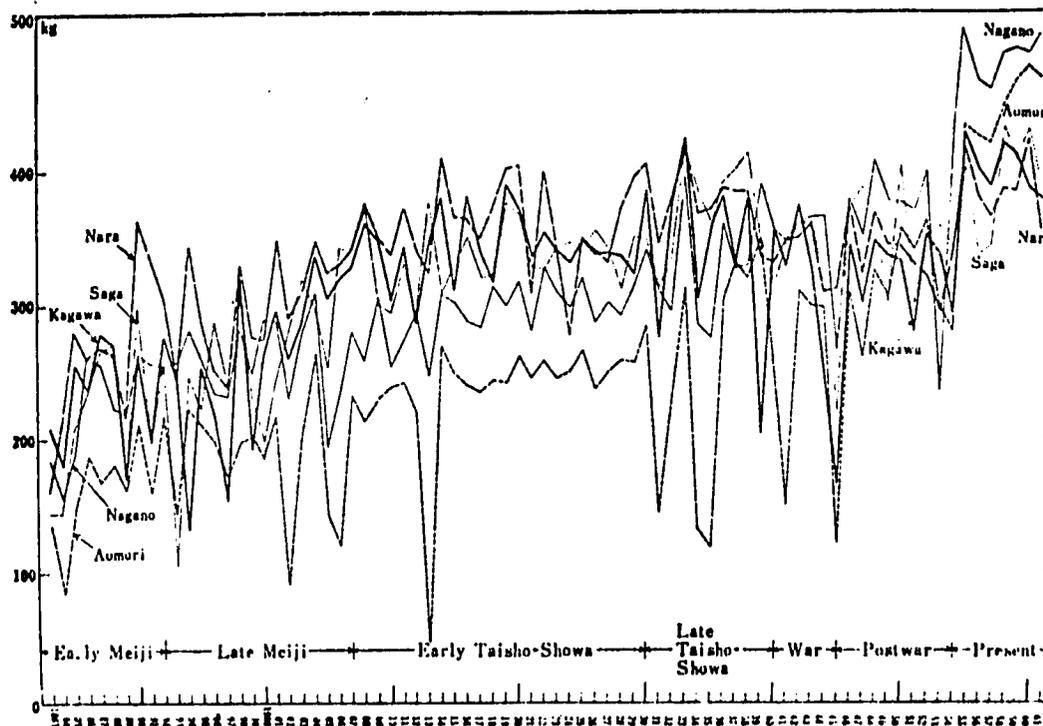
contention that high productivity levels were already being achieved before the advent of the Rōnō Gijutsu,²⁰ but even this does not detract from the more general observation that indigenous techniques developed outside of formal government-sponsored research programs made a significant contribution to agricultural productivity in the early stages of Japan's modern economic history.

While gains were being made, they were not necessarily evenly distributed throughout the country. The different regions of Japan varied enormously with respect to climatic conditions, soil quality, topography, social structure (i.e. clan-based settlements vs. more loosely-structured settlements) and their strategic importance to the central government in terms of its overall development schemes. Hokkaido, for example, received a great deal of special consideration in the early Meiji period as attempts were made there to engage in extensive cultivation of wheat and other upland crops.²¹ One indication of the great variation in productivity throughout Japan can be seen in Figure 4, which shows average rice yields for four selected prefectures from 1883 to 1961. Aomori Prefecture, which had the lowest rice yields of the four in the early Meiji period, was second highest in the postwar period. Nagano Prefecture, which had the highest yields of the four in the late 1950's, fluctuated enormously, and at one

²⁰Nakamura, p. 16.

²¹Ogura, p. 109.

Figure 4. Average Rice Yields per 10 Ares in Selected Prefectures (1883-1961)



Source: Takekazu Ogura, ed., Agricultural Development in Modern Japan (Tokyo: Fuji Publishing Co., 1963), p. 468.

point, in 1953, sank back to its 1912-13 levels. Clearly, although Japanese agriculture has produced remarkably high rice yields utilizing small-scale intensive cultivation techniques, such gains were not always evident at particular times or in particular areas, and they were not necessarily due to "conventional inputs" (i.e. additional capital, more land, better seeds, or more fertilizer). Organizational skill, innovative attitudes, and strong profit incentives all operated to foster the gains that were recorded.

As the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy expanded, the relative contribution to Japan's Gross National Product of the more slowly-expanding agricultural sector declined accordingly. The share of the primary sector in the GNP declined from 42% in 1903-1907 to 21% by 1933-1937.²² By the 1960's, this figure had dropped to roughly 10% of national income.²³ In the area of trade, similar declines occurred in the relative contribution of agricultural exports to the GNP. By 1908-12, "the share of agricultural products in the total volume of exports was only 44.7%," as contrasted with 73.9% in 1878-82.²⁴ In subsequent years, the figure dropped even lower.

In the postwar years, although structural problems still exist, Japanese agriculture has become a profitable occupation for full-time farmers owning reasonable-size holdings. The government has expanded its prewar extension and research services, and a revitalized cooperative system supplies farmers with most of their daily needs. These developments and their related components will be discussed in more detail below. A point that should be remembered is that the para-

²²From Yamada estimates in William W. Lockwood, The Economic Development of Japan (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 135.

²³In 1965, 11.1% of the Gross National Income originated in the primary sector, and in 1970, only 7.5%. From Japan Statistical Yearbook, 1972, p. 490.

²⁴Ogura, p. 7.

meters that determine postwar governmental policy toward the agricultural sector are vastly different from those of the prewar days.

The thumbnail sketch of agricultural development presented in this section has passed over many complex economic issues that have concerned Japanese agricultural economists for many years. It should be obvious by now that consensus is lacking even on such fundamental matters as the true rates of increase in productivity in the prewar period and the relative influence of conventional and nonconventional inputs in determining any increases. Furthermore, even where there is relative agreement on aggregate trends, variations in performance between regions present additional problems of analysis.

In the following sections, a great deal of information regarding the development of various programs and organizations concerned with agriculture will be presented, along with a discussion of rural welfare conditions and the relationship of local government to the overall developmental process. Although these topics will be pursued in the context of the general direction of agricultural development since 1868, it should be borne in mind that that direction has been uneven, contradictory, and subject to much scholarly controversy.

II. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT STRUCTURES FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Although the first concern of the Meiji leaders was to establish an industrial base upon which they could build a strong and independent national polity, the capital to be used in financing industrial expansion was initially derived from surpluses accruing in the agricultural sector.²⁵ As shown earlier, direct government investment in agricultural production was minimal in the early Meiji years. After first attempting to transplant Western agricultural techniques in Japanese soil, government leaders later turned to "veteran farmers" and indigenous technological advances that were a legacy of the Tokugawa era to enhance agricultural productivity. Increased productivity not only meant greater profits for landowners under the revised system of land taxation, but also provided the basis for greater savings and investment capital that could be mobilized in non-agricultural areas.

At first, the Meiji leaders were able to generate capital for industrial expansion--and at the same time realize an increased volume of agricultural production to meet the needs of a burgeoning non-farm population that manned the

²⁵ For a more complete discussion of this strategy, see Gustav Ranis, "The Financing of Japanese Economic Development," in Ohkawa, pp. 37-57.

young industries--without establishing any national agricultural organizations to direct the overall process. Gradually, however, the haphazard methods of disseminating information regarding new developments in production techniques, together with rather uncoordinated and unorganized research, marketing, and credit activities, produced a situation of diminishing returns under the existing system of agricultural policy. The government finally found it desirable to set up national organizations that would ensure coordinated policies in each important functional production area.

Voluntary and locally-managed cooperative societies and agricultural production improvement societies existed long before the central government established such groups on a national basis. Enterprising farmers had set up industrial cooperatives for the marketing and purchasing of such commercialized crops as silk and tea after the Meiji Restoration. Similarly, in many areas innovative farmers or large landowners anxious to raise crop yields on tenanted lands organized agricultural improvement associations, seed-exchange societies, land-improvement associations, and similar organizations.²⁶

In 1899, a national network of officially-sanctioned

²⁶These early developments are traced in Ogura, pp. 301-311, and in Tomomi Ashikaga, Agricultural Cooperative Associations in Japan, Agricultural Development Series No. 6 (Tokyo: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Productivity Conference, July 1959), pp. 8-13.

Agricultural Associations was formed under the Agricultural Association Law, and local associations were organized into county and prefectural organizations and became eligible for subsidies from the central government. The new law

stipulated that the governor of each prefecture was to be the president of the prefectural association and the heads of the counties or villages would be the presidents of their respective county or village associations; the landowners were offered the position of the vice-presidency at all stages of the organization. The Association on one hand became an official organization to carry out the Government's agricultural extension program while on the other hand it became an organization through which landowners were able to voice their interests.²⁷

The central government at first used this new organization to enforce the implementation of various improvements in agricultural techniques, and provided for sanctions against those who did not conform to officially-prescribed standards. In 1903, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce ordered the implementation of 14 separate items of agricultural improvement, and according to one source, "technical guidance . . . did not mean mere guidance, but a compulsion based on authority, with technicians of agricultural associations cooperating in this scheme. As a result, in some localities there occurred many cases of conflicts of farmers versus technical officials and policemen, as the latter tried to enforce these regulations."²⁸ In subsequent years, such high-

²⁷Ogura, pp. 303-304.

²⁸Ibid., p. 166.

handed techniques irritated farmers in many areas to the point where enforcement became increasingly difficult, and such activities decreased after 1910. As Japan began her war preparations in the years preceeding the attack on Pearl Harbor however, the Agricultural Associations emerged as a natural focal point for mobilization campaigns aimed at rural inhabitants. The use of Associations as an organizational weapon in this period spelled their eventual doom during the Occupation, as will be seen later.

In the area of agricultural research and education, many prefectural research stations were established in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and by 1893, the year in which a National Experiment Station was set up, agricultural guidance was transferred from "the hands of veteran farmers to the national and local agricultural experiment stations."²⁹ By 1919, separate research divisions for agronomy, agricultural chemistry, plant pathology, entomology, tobacco, horticulture, livestock, and tea had been established.³⁰ After 1900 and throughout the prewar years, basic research on improving rice yields continued and in part served to stimulate the increased application of chemical fertilizers to rice paddies. In the 1920's, an assigned experiment system was put into effect whereby "national and prefectural experiment stations were mobilized for systematic research," and this

²⁹ Ibid., p. 303.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 323-324.

system "was later extended to research other than breeding."³¹

In 1886 compulsory education was instituted through the fourth year of primary school on a national basis, and this was extended to six years of compulsory schooling in 1907. Numerous vocational schools were established, and between 1899 and 1904, the number of agricultural continuation (vocational) schools jumped from 62 to 1,436; and by 1934 it had reached 12,031.³² In 1890, the Tokyo Agriculture and Forestry School became the College of Agriculture of Tokyo Imperial University, and thereafter, similar institutions were founded in Morioka, Hokkaido, Kagoshima, Ueda, Kyoto, Tottori, Mie, Utsunomiya, Gifu, Miyazaki, and Chiba.³³ By 1933, there were 4,432 students enrolled in 12 agricultural colleges; 66,218 students enrolled in 336 agricultural schools; 967,767 students enrolled in 12,160 agricultural continuation (vocational) schools; and 1,884 students enrolled in five agricultural departments in major universities.³⁴ To supplement the theoretical nature of many courses offered at the agricultural colleges, and partly to offset the reluctance of many college graduates to return to farming, the government supported training farms and youth training schools, where military training and moral training were often stressed over technical

³¹Ibid., p. 326.

³²Ibid., p. 337.

³³Ibid., p. 338.

³⁴Ibid., p. 339.

and vocational training.³⁵ Short-term special programs for practicing farmers were also conducted, and from 1906 to 1918, "the percentage of farmers who attended . . . short-term agricultural institutes grew from 9 to 20%."³⁶

In addition to providing research, extension, and educational services, the Japanese government also undertook several measures that facilitated the provision of improved credit, purchasing, and marketing support structures for farmers. Prior to the establishment of centrally-organized agricultural credit organizations, farmers had relied on such traditional mutual aid societies as tanomoshiko, mujin, and hotokusha, or money-lenders and wealthy landowners.³⁷ In 1896, the Hypothec Bank of Japan and the Agricultural and Industrial Banks were set up to supply agriculturally-related industries such as silk-reeling with medium- and long-term loans. These banks eventually proved unable to reach the lowest levels within the agricultural sector, however, and the task of allocating credit to individual small holders fell upon industrial cooperatives after 1900 with the enactment of the Industrial Cooperative Association Law of 1900.³⁸

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 341-342.

³⁶ Masayoshi Namiki, The Farm Population in Japan (1872-1965), Agricultural Development Series, No. 17 (Tokyo: Agricultural Policy Research Committee), p. 15.

³⁷ Yoshinori Akita, Agriculture Credit System in Japan, Agricultural Development Series, No. 5 (Tokyo: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Productivity Conference, July 1959), pp. 6-9.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 11-18.

By 1898, privately-organized industrial cooperatives numbered 346,³⁹ but these organizations lacked a central coordinating mechanism or a nationwide scale of operations. Active government involvement and participation in cooperative activities after 1900 changed that situation dramatically, however. The new cooperatives were organized into five functional areas of activity: credit, marketing, purchasing, manufacturing, and utilization. Although these organizations were designated as "industrial" cooperatives, in fact almost four-fifths of all participating members were engaged in some form of agricultural production.⁴⁰ Frequently one association took on several different functions, and most associations were involved simultaneously in credit, marketing, and purchasing (credit could not be combined with other services until after 1906), thus becoming true multi-functional cooperatives in the modern sense. With government help in the form of tax exemptions and subsidies, industrial cooperatives proliferated quickly so that by "1910 . . . the cooperative associations were established in 70 percent of the villages, towns, and cities in Japan, and around 1920, the number of members of cooperative associations reached 2,290,000 which represented 40 percent of all farmers in Japan."⁴¹ The rapid

³⁹ Ibid., p. 19.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

⁴¹ Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Land Reform and Farmers' Organizations (1973), p. 62.

expansion of the industrial cooperative network is shown in Table 5. In 1909 the cooperative system was drawn together in a national federation under government supervision and the new Central Industrial Cooperative Association served as a conduit for governmental subsidies, policies, and directives.

Table 5. Number of Industrial Cooperative Associations, by Types of Business

YEARS ENDING	TOTAL NUMBER	CREDIT	MARKETING	PURCHASING	UTILIZATION
1900	21	13	5	7	2
1905	1,671	936	344	492	178
1908	4,391	2,681	1,336	2,273	537
1911	11,160	9,274	4,885	7,244	1,599
1920	13,442	11,901(65)	7,032	9,821	2,448
1924	14,444	12,864(201)	8,135	10,949	3,977
1930	14,052	12,104(259)	8,366	10,292	5,376
1935	15,028	12,931(271)	11,905	12,588	9,973
1941	14,724	13,219(299)	13,272	13,517	13,078

Note: Excludes other organizations of dollars or more as by individual cooperatives. The total number of cooperative associations does not agree with the total of cooperatives as grouped by business performed. Figures in parentheses in Credit Association column indicate the number of Urban Credit Associations.

Source: Tomomi Ashikaga, Agricultural Cooperative Associations in Japan, Agricultural Development Series, No. 6 (Tokyo: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Productivity Conference, 1959), p. 15.

Throughout the 1930's, the cooperative movement experienced a vigorous expansion program as the government attempted to cope with worsening rural problems (which will be discussed in the section on rural household economy) through the injection of greater financial support into rural development projects. The National Diet that met in August 1932 has been labeled the "Agricultural Relief Diet." In that year, the

government developed the "Agricultural, Forestry, and Fishing Village Economic Rehabilitation Movement," whereby, through the offices of the Industrial Cooperative Associations, "entire Japanese villages and towns were given financial assistance for improving their economic conditions through increasing agricultural production, promotion and expansion of the Industrial Cooperative Associations, cooperative marketing of agricultural products, cooperative purchasing of daily needs construction of new warehouses, payment of debts, rationalization of bookkeeping practices, etc."⁴² At the same time, industrial cooperative associations were established in areas where there had previously been none, and the operations of these associations were expanded. By the end of March 1938, only one-third of all Japanese towns and villages were without cooperatives, and roughly 80 percent of all farm households were members of cooperatives.⁴³

National mobilization measures in the late 1930's converted the cooperatives and agricultural associations into control organizations at the village and hamlet levels for the production, marketing, and purchasing of foodstuffs. At the height of the Second World War, in 1943, all the existing organizations and associations were legally terminated and replaced by a highly centralized administrative network under the respective control of the newly-organized National

⁴²Ashikaga, p. 19.

⁴³Akita, p. 32.

Federation of Agricultural Economy Cooperatives and the Central Agricultural Association. "The important business performed by the association was the procurement of rice, barley and wheat and allocation of wheat to farmers and control of planting area of the crops."⁴⁴ Membership in this newly-consolidated Nōgyōkai was made compulsory.

The postwar reorganization and reform of the cooperative network was directly linked to the Occupation-sponsored land reform program. In 1948, the Agricultural Cooperative Association Law was enacted and provided for the dissolution of the wartime Agricultural Associations and the establishment of the organizational framework for a revamped postwar cooperative system. According to the provisions of this law, farmers were to be allowed a free choice in participating in local cooperatives, and these same farmers would constitute the main governing body of the associations. Furthermore, the law stipulated that cooperatives were to be managed according to democratic principles, with the right to recall association directors and the right to call general meetings reserved for the general membership. Finally, the scope of activities of the cooperatives was expanded beyond the prewar functions of credit, purchasing, marketing, and utilization to include such diverse activities as education and extension, organizing collective farm operations, developing rural manufacturing industries, land improvement, and construction of new irrigation

⁴⁴Land Reform and Farmers' Organizations, p. 64.

facilities and other water-related projects.⁴⁵

Under government supervision and encouragement, the number of agricultural cooperatives created under this legislation proliferated rapidly for several years, until by 1951, there were a total of 34,131 cooperatives of various types.⁴⁶ This number far exceeded the total number of rural towns and villages, and reflected the enormous redundancy of many cooperative ventures in the early postwar period. By the early 1950's, many of these associations faced severe financial difficulty as a result not only of short credit reserves, but also because of the decontrol of most agricultural products and the resulting price drop for foodstuffs in the free market.⁴⁷ Measures were taken at the national level to reorganize cooperative management in ways that would ensure fiscal soundness and encourage mergers and rationalization of services, so that weak and inefficient operations could be revamped or absorbed into enterprises that were structurally more sound.

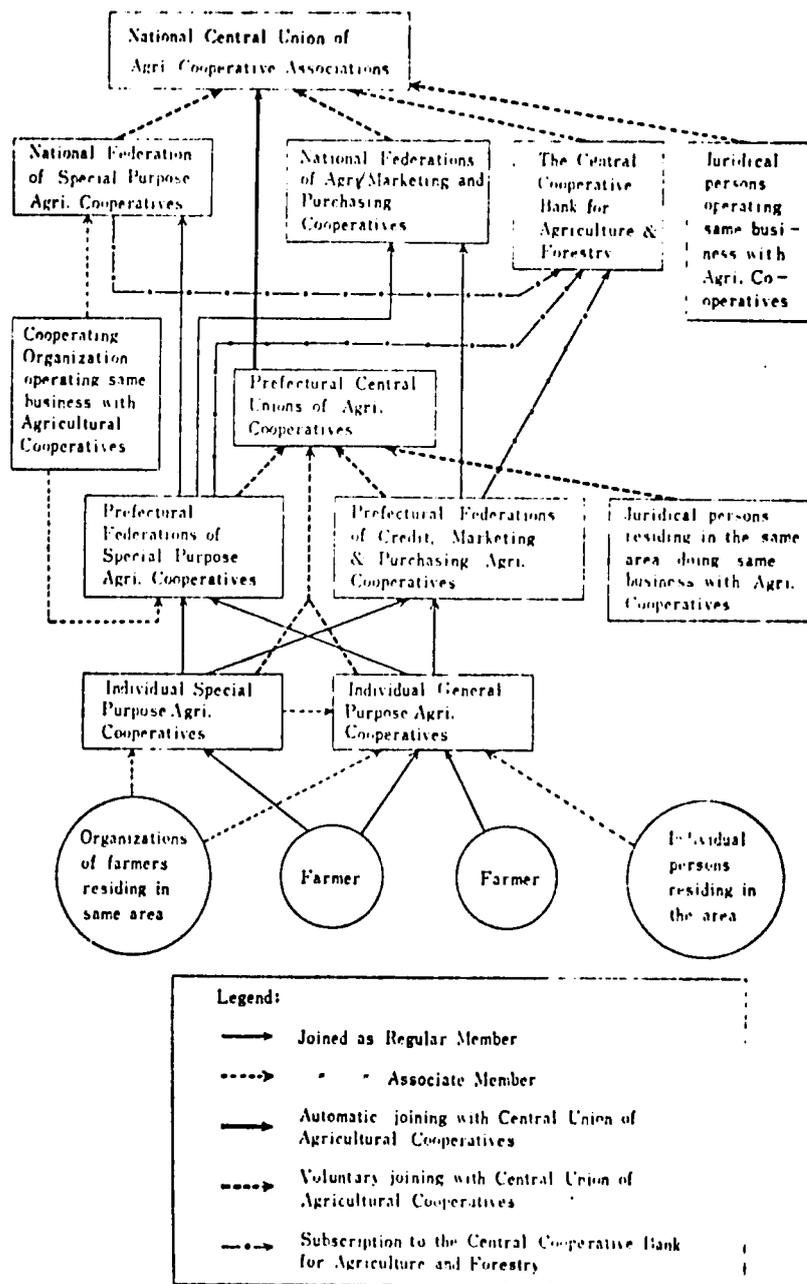
The overall organization of the cooperative association system that emerged in the 1950's is shown in Figure 5. There are both multi-purpose and special-purpose cooperatives at the local level, and these are federated at the prefectural and

⁴⁵Ashikaga, pp. 24-25.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 27.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 29. In 1949, "controls were removed from vegetables, cocoons, potatoes, charcoal, agricultural insecticides, fertilizers, rape seed, feed stuffs, and cotton made-up goods. Just about everything, in fact, except rice, wheat, barley."

Figure 5. The Agricultural Cooperative Association System in the 1950's



Source: Tomomi Ashikaga, Agricultural Cooperative Associations in Japan, Agricultural Development Series, No. 6 (Tokyo: Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Productivity Conference, 1959), p. 40.

national levels. In addition, there are both "full membership" and "associate membership" categories, with farmers entitled to enter the former category and other rural residents the latter. Through mergers and rationalization schemes, the number of multi-purpose cooperatives had decreased from 12,835 in 1955 to 6,049 in 1971.⁴⁸ Within this latter number, the distribution of "full-membership" members by size of association was as follows:⁴⁹

less than 300 members	18.4%
300-499 members	23.3%
500-999 members	31.9%
1000+ members	26.4%

Thus, the number of very small cooperatives was still rather large in 1971, despite measures that had been taken to make the associations operate more efficiently by increasing their scale of operations.

At present the activities of the cooperative associations not only have a major impact upon the economic condition of most rural families but also exert considerable pressure upon the central ministries in Tokyo where national agricultural policies are formulated.

Savings deposited in the cooperatives by farm households totaled 60 percent of all farm household savings in 1972,

⁴⁸ Land Reform and Farmers' Organizations, p. 69.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

while cooperative-marketed rice accounted for 95 percent of the total in 1970.⁵⁰ Percentage shares of other products marketed by the cooperatives in 1970 were as follows: 60 percent or more of wheat, barley and silkworm cocoons; 50 percent of fruits, potatoes and animals; and 53 percent of total agricultural products (including rice) according to value.⁵¹ According to a survey conducted in 1967, farmers purchased 80 percent of their fertilizer and agricultural chemicals from cooperatives, as well as 65 percent of their feedstuffs and 30 percent of their agricultural machinery.⁵² Cooperatives are also involved in selling mutual security insurance (to cover losses from fires and to provide for pension benefits, automobile compensation, and building reconstruction), in providing technical guidance to farmers, and in providing such joint-use facilities as machinery service centers, produce collection, grading and processing equipment, refrigeration, and rice-drying. Finally, numerous youth groups, women's organizations, community clubs, and other voluntary groups are also affiliated with local cooperative organizations.⁵³

While ostensibly a network of private organizations of farmers set up to further their economic interests, the

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 72, 74.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 74.

⁵² Paraphrased from ibid., p. 75.

⁵³ See ibid., pp. 75-78 and Ashikaga, pp. 67-71.

agricultural cooperatives also possess a public character by virtue of their partial subsidization by the central and prefectural governments, their important role as collection agents for the government's rice-buying policy, and their general status as organizations mandated through enabling legislation of the central government and subject to various official control and investigatory procedures. According to Nobutaka Ike,

the subsidy (granted to cooperatives), which for the national headquarters amounts to less than 10 percent of its income, is not so significant from the financial point of view. Symbolically, however, it confirms the public character of the organization. The close ties with the government are also suggested by the type of men who have attained top leadership positions. Its first president had previously held the post of vice minister of agriculture. He was succeeded by an individual who had headed the Nagano prefectural headquarters, while the third president of the association was a person who had previously been a member of the House of Councilors and of the Liberal Democratic party.⁵⁴

At the National level, the cooperatives are deeply involved in the yearly rounds of negotiations that determine the government purchase price of rice for the coming year. Ike relates that

literally waves of farmers descend on the government agencies and on the members of the Liberal Democratic party for the purpose of applying pressure to have the price of rice set at a high level . . . Observers liken the cooperatives' campaign every summer to the annual "spring offensives" of organized labor. The difference appears to be that farmers generally carry more clout because they

⁵⁴Nobutaka Ike, Japanese Politics: Patron-Client Democracy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), p. 59.

support the ruling party with their votes.⁵⁵

The cooperatives, the rural extension agencies, and the agricultural education infrastructure comprise the main institutional support structures for farmers in the postwar era. It should be mentioned in passing, however, that several other organizations at the hamlet level could also be said to contribute to the support of agricultural development, even if that contribution is only an indirect one. There are, for example, cooperative production groups, "ranging from those which simply perform a few operations jointly, to those which have completely merged their farms into a single unit, but they all, to a greater or lesser degree, are different from the traditional forms of cooperation."⁵⁶ Other groups include the Youth Groups and Housewives' Associations, organizations begun in the prewar period and utilized by the central government in its mobilization schemes. Agricultural Practice Unions, also begun in the prewar era, have continued to function as hamlet-based groups that perform such activities as communal spraying of crops against pests and diseases. According to Fukutake, many of these hamlet organizations "show a tendency to be detached from the hamlet as such. . . . As the members of the hamlet become more and more differentiated into

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 60-61.

⁵⁶ Tadashi Fukutake, Japanese Rural Society (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 114.

full-time farmers, part-time farmers and non-farmers and as the diversity of their interests and orientations increases, the possibilities of united action on the part of the whole hamlet correspondingly diminish."⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 116 and passim.

III. RURAL HOUSEHOLD WELFARE

The early Meiji years signaled the onset of worsening tenancy conditions in rural Japan, stimulated by the growing presence of a monetary economy in the countryside, oppressive tax burdens for the smallest landholders, and the abolition of the traditional feudal codes that forbade the ready sale or transfer of land. According to a study by William J. Chambliss, taxation in the Tokugawa era may not have been as oppressive as some historians have thought, and mistaken conclusions about the nature of the Tokugawa tax may have resulted from a strict interpretation of that period's tax records which

fails to take into account developments that lowered the value of taxes, such as increased agricultural productivity and depreciation of the currency used for tax payments. . . . Certainly for villages like Chiaraijima where taxes were lenient and opportunities for trade were favorable, economic conditions among the more prosperous peasants cannot be properly described in terms of subsistence level farming.⁵⁸

Chambliss concludes that "the rate of personal taxes in early Meiji far exceeded the rate of personal taxes during the late Tokugawa period. Therefore it is clear that the Meiji tax reforms signified a reduced rate of taxes for the wealthier peasants but an increased rate for the middling and smaller

⁵⁸Chambliss, p. 99.

peasants in Chiaraijima."⁵⁹

There are a number of ways to document deteriorating peasant conditions in the early Meiji period. While peasant uprisings were not uncommon in the Tokugawa era, neither were they infrequent during Meiji. According to one source, "nearly two hundred and fifty peasant uprisings and disturbances occurred in the first seventeen years of the Meiji era; of these one hundred and ninety occurred in the first ten years."⁶⁰ The grievances which prompted these protests included opposition to the new taxation policy, to compulsory military conscription, and to the high rents which tenants had to pay in kind to landlords.⁶¹

By the beginning of Meiji, up to one-fourth of the arable land was already tenanted, and between 1883 and 1890, more than 367,000 farmers were forced to sell their land in order to raise enough cash to meet tax payments or debt obligations.⁶² "The area under tenancy, estimated to be about 29 percent in 1872 before the new land tax was instituted, approached 40 percent only fifteen years later."⁶³ One indirect measure of

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 100. Emphasis added.

⁶⁰ Edward A. Ackerman, et al., Japan's Prospect (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1946), p. 149.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 150.

⁶² E. Herbert Norman, Japan's Emergence as a Modern State (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1940), p. 144.

⁶³ Fukutake, p. 10.

of the plight of many small holders and tenants was the percentage of people who were qualified to vote in general elections by virtue of their having paid at least five yen in tax. From 1881 to 1894, the figure declined by more than 40 percent.⁶⁴

Landowners often found it more profitable to rent land out to others than to cultivate it themselves, and the number of absentee landlords increased accordingly. Most holdings, however, remained extremely small, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Farm Households by Size of Operated Holding (Percentages): 1908-1940

Year	Size of Holding (ha.)					
	-0.5	-1.0	-2.0	-3.0	-5.0	5.0+
1908	37.3	32.6	19.5	6.4	3.0	1.2
1910	37.6	33.0	19.3	5.9	2.9	1.3
1920	35.3	33.3	20.7	6.1	2.8	1.6
1930	34.3	34.3	22.1	5.7	2.3	1.3
1940	33.4	32.8	24.5	5.7	2.2	1.4

Source: Tadashi Fukutake, Japanese Rural Society (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 6.

Holdings above five hectares were rare, since "if five cho (hectares) of land were tenanted, the income from the rents enabled the owner of the said land to maintain a living standard

⁶⁴Norman, p. 147.

as that of owner-farmers who actually farmed their land."⁶⁵
And a farm with five hectares was, and still is, a rather large operation by Japanese standards.

While landowners fared well and benefited from such factors as favorable price conditions, increasing demand for foodstuffs throughout the early stages of modernization, increasing productivity due to technological innovations and the growth of such institutional support structures as industrial cooperatives, vocational schools, and extension-related activities, and a gradual reduction in the land tax burden,⁶⁶ the welfare of tenants remained relatively unchanged at best through the end of the First World War. Tenants generally had to turn over half or more of their total production to the landlord as payment for rent. Frequently landlords would reduce rents in times of poor harvests or generally poor economic conditions, and the rental was by no means inflexible and permanently fixed.⁶⁷ As Table 7 indicates, however, the

⁶⁵Masaru Kajita, Land Reform in Japan, Agricultural Development Series No. 2 (Tokyo: Agricultural, Forestry and Fisheries Productivity Conference, April 1959), p. 12.

⁶⁶The original Land Tax Revision Act of 1873 called for a gradual reduction in the tax from 3 percent to 1 percent. According to Nakamura, "the tax rate did decrease to 2.5 percent in 1877, but this occurred in response to landowners' pleas for relief because the rice price had fallen in 1873. The national land tax rate did not drop below this level for more than 60 years" (p. 184). Still, "price inflation . . . effectively reduced the tax burden" in subsequent years (p. 185).

⁶⁷For a detailed description of the various kinds of landlord-tenant relations in the prewar period, see Ronald P. Dore, Land Reform in Japan (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 23-53.

Table 7. Percentage Distribution, for Various Purposes and Needs, of Rice Harvested from Tenants' Paddy Fields

Period	Total Harvested Rice	Tenants' Rice Distributed to Landowners		Needed for Farming Expenses (excluding tenants' own labor cost)	Left for Tenant to Cover Living Cost	
		Taxes	Left for Landowner ^a Total			
End of Tokugawa	100	37	28	65	15	20
Meiji Restoration of land-tax revision	100	34	34	68	15	17
1885	100	17	41	58	25	17
1890	100	12	46	58	24	18
1899	100	12	45	57	25	18
1912	100	11	44	55	22	23
1915	100	13	37	50	29	21
1931	100	14	33	47	36	17
1936	100	8	40	48	27	25
1943	100	4	42	46	32	22

a. Increase of landowner's share (paid in rice) is based on a decrease in the tax and an increase of production per unit-area.

Source: Masaru Kajita, Land Reform in Japan, Agricultural Development Series No. 2 (Tokyo: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Productivity Conference, April 1959), p. 12.

proportion of harvested rice that tenants paid to their landlords declined only slightly from 1885 until World War Two. As production costs rose, due in part to new technological innovations that tenants were often compelled to adopt, the tenants' net income in percentage terms remained relatively unchanged throughout the period.

Windfall orders from the Allied Powers during World War I led to an economic boom, but the abnormally high prices for agricultural products precipitated the famous Rice Riots of 1918. These in turn touched off a string of governmental measures to cope with rice supply problems, and most farmers suffered a severe economic depression throughout the 1920's. These conditions indeed worsened during the general worldwide economic depression that reached Japan in the 1930's.

However poorly Japanese farmers as a group fared due to poor economic conditions, though, tenants were much worse off than those who owned all or part of their land. This can be seen from Table 8 which shows trends in household economy for three different socio-economic groups for the years 1924 and 1931. Clearly, all three groups suffered gravely as a result of a severely-depressed agricultural sector during the 1920's. But neither owner-farmers nor part-owners, part-tenants fared as poorly as tenants for the two years surveyed. In both years, household living expenses of tenants were considerably below those of the other groups, indicating a much lower standard of living for tenant farmer families. Furthermore,

Table 8. Trends in Agricultural Household Economy

	Agricultural Expenses							Net Agri- cul- tural Income	Non- Agri- cul- tural Income	Net Farm House- hold Income	House- hold Living Ex- penses	Net House- hold Sur- plus or De- fi- cit	Per- cent- age of House- holds Suffer- ing Net Losses	In- debted- ness
	Gross Agri- cul- tural Income	Land Ad- just- ment and Im- prove- ment	Agri- cul- tural Imple- ments	Ferti- lizer	Rent	Other Misc. Ex- penses	Total							
	¥	%	%	%	%	%	¥	¥	¥	¥	¥	¥	%	¥
Owner-farmers														
1924	1,657	8.7	5.7	30.4	2.3	22.9	599	1,058	325	1,383	1,179	204	26.2	258
1931	789	6.4	7.4	24.4	4.5	24.4	311	478	163	641	631	11	55.1	734
Part-owners, part-tenants														
1924	1,792	5.2	4.2	23.9	29.4	8.7	790	1,003	293	1,295	1,089	207	21.4	403
1931	753	4.1	5.5	21.3	31.2	11.0	362	391	144	535	546	-11	51.1	722
Tenants														
1924	1,423	3.2	3.6	22.3	51.4	2.6	741	682	260	942	777	165	26.1	--
1931	719	3.2	4.2	18.2	50.1	2.9	407	312	137	449	170	-21	51.8	482

Source: Hikari Shinoura, Nōgyō Kyōdōkumiai no Tenkai Katei (The Development of Agricultural Cooperative Associations) (Tokyo: Akishobō, 1972), pp. 68-69.

while the percentage of households suffering net losses was roughly the same for all three groups for both years, the net household income for tenants was considerably lower than for the other groups. This indicates that net losses for tenants were more severe than those for the others. Tenants also devoted a larger portion of their gross agricultural income to agricultural expenses, as shown in Table 9.

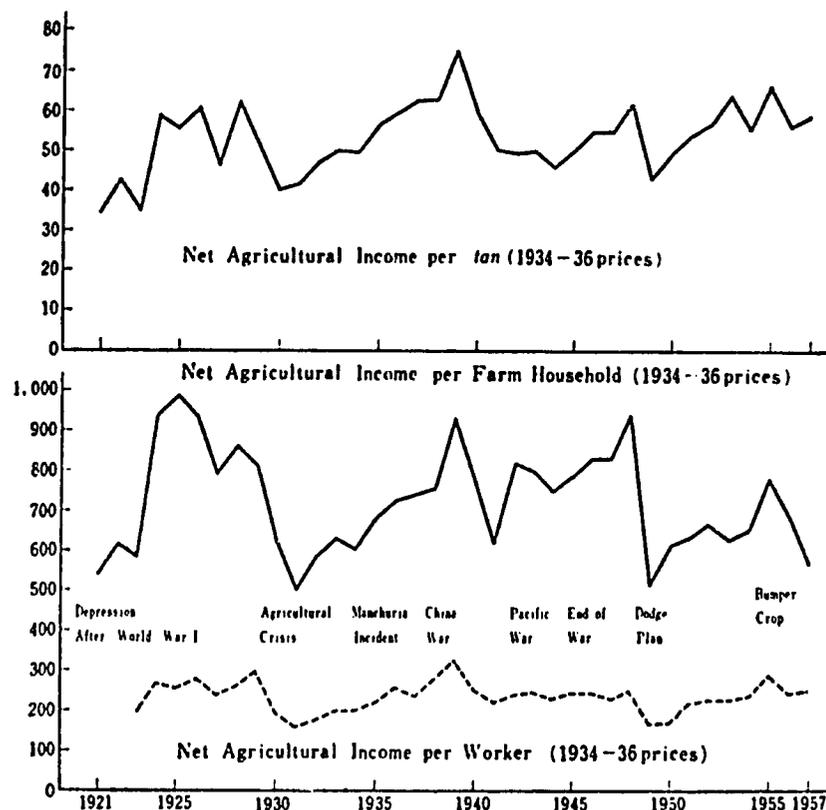
Table 9. Agricultural Expenses as a Percentage of Gross Agricultural Income

Owner-farmers	
1924	36.1%
1931	39.4%
Part-owners, part tenants	
1924	44.1%
1931	48.1%
Tenants	
1924	52.1%
1931	56.6%

Source: Table 8, p. 50.

The overall trend line of net agricultural income for all groups through the mid-1950's is depicted in Figure 6. After a rising trend in the mid-1920's, income levels severely declined in the early 1930's, and only improved as the government implemented a series of programs designed to relieve agricultural distress, including strengthening the cooperative

Figure 6. Net Agricultural Income



Source: Chujiro Ozaki, Farm Household Economy Survey in Japan, Agricultural Development Series No. 13 (Tokyo: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Productivity Conference, 1960), p. 31.

system and providing relief for tenant farmers. After World War II, an economic recession beset a confused and demoralized rural population and served to depress incomes again until a general economic boom during the Korean war and concomitantly more stable rural conditions carried the rural sector into more prosperous times.

From 1872 to 1940, the number of people engaged in

agriculture and forestry remained almost constant, fluctuating between 14 and 15 million. Since there was an overall increase in the economically active population from 19 to 32 million during this same period, it would appear that "the entire portion of natural increase of the farm household population left the farms for the city."⁶⁸ The percentage of the total labor force in agriculture dropped from 76 percent in 1883-87 to 42 percent by 1940.⁶⁹ After World War II, millions of temporarily homeless refugees from the devastated cities flocked to the rural areas, but this sudden upsurge in the rural population was short-lived. As Table 10 shows, from 1950 to 1972, the total number of farm households declined by almost one million, and of those remaining, the overwhelming majority were pursuing farming on a part-time basis only. Japanese farmers have long been engaged in part-time work either off the farm or in small workshops on their own premises. After the war, however, this tendency to pursue non-agricultural sources of income to supplement agricultural income accelerated. While total farm household income has greatly increased since 1960, the percentage of total income from off-farm sources has been largely responsible for this higher income for many rural families, as Table 11 indicates. This is particularly true in the case of the smallest landholders where up to 95 percent of their income is derived from

⁶⁸ Namiki, p. 11.

⁶⁹ Johnston, p. 73.

Table 10. Number of Full- and Part-Time Farm Households, in thousands

Year	Total Number of Farm Households	Number of Full-Time Farm Households	No. of Total Part-Time Farm Households
1950	6,176 (100)	3,086 (50.0)	3,090 (50.0)
1955	6,043 (100)	2,106 (34.9)	3,937 (65.1)
1960	6,057 (100)	2,078 (34.3)	3,979 (65.7)
1965	5,665 (100)	1,219 (21.5)	4,446 (78.5)
1970	5,342 (100)	831 (15.6)	4,510 (84.4)
1972	5,170 (100)	741 (14.4)	4,427 (85.6)

Source: The Interim Report of the Census of Agriculture in 1960, 1965 and 1970 (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Japan); cited by Ryohei Kada and David J. King, "Part-Time Farming in Modern Japan," LTC Newsletter, No. 43 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Land Tenure Center, January-March 1974), p. 21.

Table 11. Annual Farm and Off-Farm Income per Farm Household in Selected Years

Year	Total Farm Household Income (1,000 yen ^a)	Farm Income (1,000 yen)	Off-Farm Income (1,000 yen)	Share of Off-Farm Income (%)
1960	409.5	225.2	184.3	45.0
1965	760.8	365.2	395.6	52.0
1970	1,393.2	508.2	885.2	63.5

^aUS\$1 = ¥360 in 1960, ¥308 in 1972.

Source: Farm Household Economic Survey (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Japan). Taken from Ryohei Kada and David J. King, "Part-Time Farming in Modern Japan," LTC Newsletter, No. 43 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Land Tenure Center, January-March 1974), p.21.

off-farm sources (Table 12).

Table 12. Farm and Off-Farm Income by Size of Holding^a in 1971

Size of Holding (ha.)	Total Farm Household Income (1,000 yen)	Farm Income (1,000 yen)	Off-Farm Income (1,000 yen)	Share of Off-Farm Income (%)
Average	1,545.2	457.3	1,087.9	70.4
0.1-0.3	1,608.7	80.8	1,527.9	95.0
0.3-0.5	1,553.9	153.7	1,400.2	90.1
0.5-1.0	1,508.9	384.0	1,124.9	74.6
1.0-1.5	1,503.6	721.8	781.8	52.0
1.5-2.0	1,512.8	916.1	596.7	39.4
2.0 and over	1,652.1	1,179.8	472.3	28.6

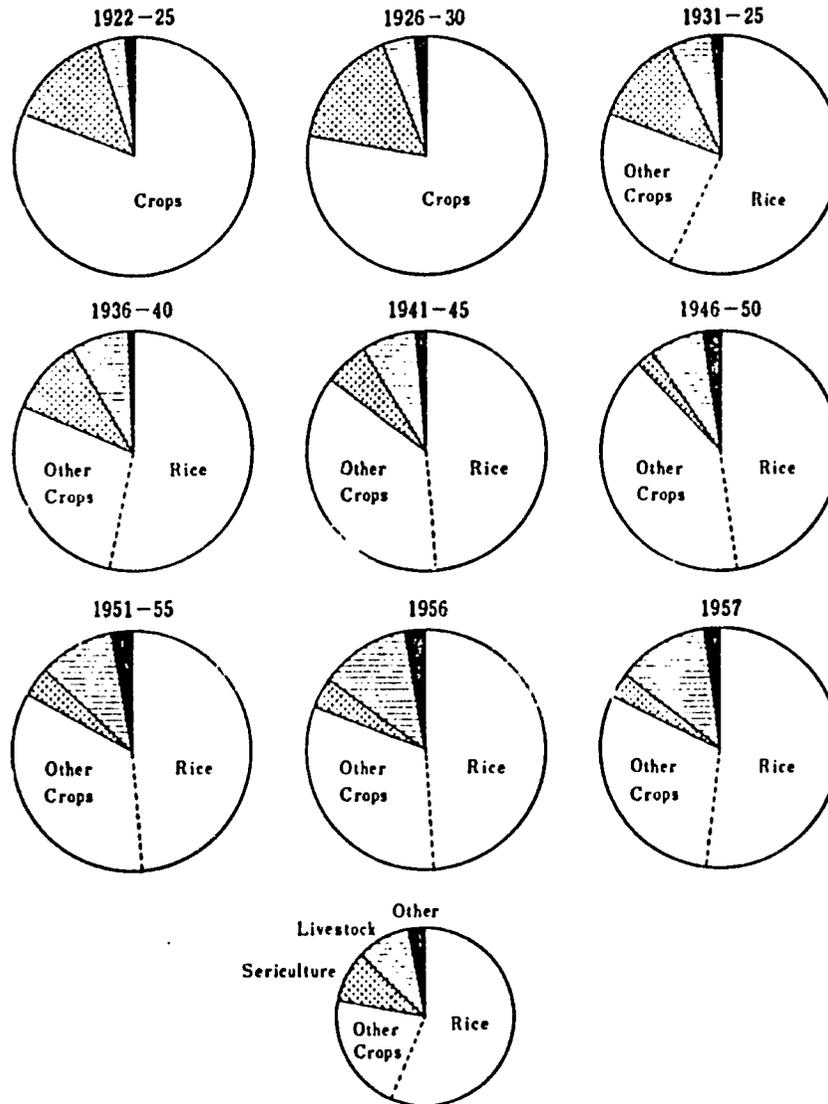
^aExcluding Hokkaido.

Source: Taken from Ryohei Kada and David J. King, "Part-Time Farming in Modern Japan," LTC Newsletter, No. 43 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Land Tenure Center, January-March 1974), p. 22.

Rice is the traditional staple crop for Japanese farmers, and through the years has accounted for the bulk of farm income, as Figure 7 illustrates. In recent years, however, changing consumer tastes and changing market conditions have resulted in a larger share of farmers' time and energy being devoted to livestock and cashcropping. Sericulture has declined in importance in the postwar years, as have the barley and wheat crops.⁷⁰ Supplies of domestically-produced rice

⁷⁰The planted area of wheat and barley declined from 602,000 has. to 367,000 has., and from 402,000 has. to 207,000 has. respectively, from 1960 to 1967. (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, The State of Japan's Agriculture, 1968, p. 24.)

Figure 7. Percentage Distribution of Gross Agricultural Income Per Household, 1922-1925 to 1957



Source: Chujiro Ozaki, "Farm Household Economy Survey in Japan," Agricultural Development Series No. 13 (Tokyo: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Productivity Conference, 1960), p. 34.

have been adequate to meet demand in the 1960's, due not only to the greatly improved postwar levels of productivity on a relatively fixed supply of land, but also to changing consumer food tastes and a growing preference for livestock and dairy products over foodgrains.⁷¹

One major distinction between the prewar and postwar cultivation practices of farmers has been the great increase in the number of major pieces of agricultural machinery on farms in the postwar years. As shown in Table 13, before World War II the number of power threshers, power tillers, and

Table 13. Major Equipment on Farms

Year	(Unit: 1,000)				
	Power threshers	Hullers	Power tillers	Spraying machines	Conventional tractors
1927	30	39	—	—	—
1931	56	77	0.1	—	—
1933	67	95	0.1	0.4	—
1935	92	105	0.2	1	—
1937	129	108	1	2	—
1939	211	133	3	5	—
1942	357	180	7	—	—
1945	352	177	—	—	—
1947	444	199	8	7	—
1949	764	348	10	11	—
1951	972	—	16	20	—
1953	1,269	540	35	44	—
1955	2,038	690	89	87	—
1957	2,283	—	227	155	—
1959	2,459	800	514	305	—
1961	2,703	—	1,020	361	7
1962	2,832	—	1,414	436	11
1963	2,982	—	1,812	565	—
1964	3,085	827	2,183	704	24.8
1965	3,048	—	2,490	851	17.7

Source: Keizō Tsuchiya, "Economies of Mechanization in Small-Scale Agriculture," in Ohkawa, et al., Agriculture and Economic Growth: Japan's Experience (Tokyo: Princeton University Press and University of Tokyo Press, 1970), p. 156.

⁷¹See ibid., pp. 7-10.

spraying machines was negligible. Only after a greatly expanded credit supply and a shortage of agricultural labor supplied the rationale did farmers invest widely in agricultural equipment.

Another indication of the extent of the transformation of credit availability in the rural sector is provided in Table 14, which shows the types of lending institutions that farmers relied on in 1912 and 1964. Whereas in 1912, farmers sought much of their credit from pawn shops, moneylenders, and individuals, the role formerly assumed by these institutions had been largely usurped by banks and cooperative institutions by 1964.

Table 14. Balance of Farmers' Debt by Type of Lender

Lender	1912	1964	
		Long term and intermediate	Short-term
Special banks and government loan	10.3	30.5	2.2
Other banks	17.6	0	3.9
Insurance companies	0.1	1.2	0
Cooperative associations	2.9	41.2 ^a	75.5 ^b
Money lenders	20.3	0	0
Pawn shops	1.3	0	0
Merchants	1.7	0	1.8
Mutual loan associations	8.4	0	2.5
Individuals	35.9	4.0	11.7
Others	1.6	7.3	2.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

a) Loans administered by government.
 b) Loans not administered by government.

Source: Yuzurō Katō, "Development of Long-Term Agricultural Credit," in Ohkawa, et al., Agriculture and Economic Growth: Japan's Experience (Tokyo: Princeton University Press and University of Tokyo Press, 1970), p. 326.

Japanese farmers at the present time have access not only to labor-saving machinery, many sources of off-farm income, and a host of technological and institutional arrangements that have helped maintain their position as the most productive cultivators per given land area in the world; in addition, they are also sharing in the general material abundance that has characterized Japan in the 1960's. Table 15 indicates that farm households are rapidly approaching the consumption standards of their urban brethren, and in some categories, have even surpassed them (i.e. autocycles, scooters, and cargo passenger cars). In Table 16, it can be seen that during the years from 1960 to 1968, the per capita family expenditures of farm households as a percentage of wage-earners' households for all of Japan jumped from 76 percent to 91 percent. In the same period, farm household per capita family expenditures exceeded those of wage-earners' households where those wage earners lived in smaller cities (under 50,000 population) or in villages.

One final indication of the relative well-being of Japanese farmers today is shown in Table 17. For urban households, cereals comprised a shrinking portion of the average family's expenditures for food, and while this was also true for farm households, farm families still consumed a larger amount of cereals in their diets. Although farmers paid a larger share of their income toward food in 1960 than did urban families, this trend had reversed itself by 1968. This

Table 15. Percentages of Farm and Non-Farm Households Possessing Selected Durable Consumers' Goods, 1963-1968

	Piano	Autocycle or scooter	Car		Electric refrigera- tor	Electric washing machine	TV set	TV set (colour)
			Passenger car	Cargo pas- senger car				
Farm household:								
Feb. 1963	0.4	33.4	-	-	8.5	32.0	69.0	-
" 1964	0.3	38.7	-	-	14.5	47.0	81.7	-
" 1965	0.5	45.9	-	-	25.7	58.6	89.2	-
" 1966	0.9	51.8	8.7	-	36.6	68.6	94.1	0.4
" 1967	0.8	53.8	6.6	8.0	49.3	75.7	94.9	0.6
" 1968	1.1	54.6	11.4	7.8	63.3	83.9	95.6	2.6
Non-farm household:								
Feb. 1963	3.7	15.6	6.1		39.1	66.4	88.7	-
" 1964	4.1	16.6	6.6		54.1	72.2	92.9	-
" 1965	5.8	18.1	10.5		68.7	78.1	95.0	-
" 1966	6.9	18.2	13.5		75.1	81.8	95.7	0.4
" 1967	6.8	17.2	11.0	7.1	80.7	84.0	97.3	2.2
" 1968	7.0	19.7	14.6	7.1	84.5	86.7	97.4	6.7

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, The State of Japan's Agriculture, 1968: A Summary Report.

Table 16. Comparison between Per Capita Family Expenditure of Farm and Wage-Earners' Households, 1960/61-1967/68

	Farm households all-Japan	Wage-earners' households	
		All-Japan	In cities and villages with less than 50,000 inhabitants
Per capita family expenditure	¥1,000	¥1,000	¥1,000
1960/61	60.6	80.0	-
1961/62	68.9	90.8	-
1962/63	78.2	102.7	87.0
1963/64	88.8	115.9	97.4
1964/65	101.2	127.7	109.5
1965/66	115.3	139.7	121.9
1966/67	130.1	154.1	134.3
1967/68	155.4	170.7	147.6
1966/67 VS. 1967/68	(119.4%)	(110.8%)	(109.9%)
As per cent of that of wage-earners' households		%	%
1960/61		75.8	-
1961/62		75.9	-
1962/63		76.1	89.9
1963/64		76.6	91.2
1964/65		79.2	92.4
1965/66		82.5	94.6
1966/67		84.4	96.9
1967/68		91.0	105.3

Note: The family expenditures given above exclude house rent, land rent, repairs and depreciation.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, The State of Japan's Agriculture, 1968: A Summary Report, p. 5.

Table 17. Indicators Relating to Food Demand, 1960/61-1967/68

		1960/61	1966/67	1967/68
Urban households:				
Engel's coefficient	%	41.6	37.3	36.8
Share of food expenditure represented by:				
Cereals	%	29.6	21.9	20.5
(Of which rice)	%	24.8	17.2	16.1
Meat, milk and eggs	%	14.0	17.7	17.9
Vegetables and fruits	%	11.7	13.3	13.9
Beverage and confectionery	%	11.7	14.1	14.5
Eating out	%	6.4	7.0	7.4
Farm households:				
Engel's coefficient	%	43.6	34.8	33.1
Percentage of food expenditure paid in cash	%	42.3	55.8	57.8
Share of food expenditure represented by cereals	%	45.0	38.4	36.3

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, The State of Japan's Agriculture, 1968: A Summary Report, p. 21.

fact, coupled with the observation that farmers increasingly relied on purchased foodstuffs for their food supply rather than on produce from their own farms, indicates the growing prosperity of the rural sector. Despite some lamenting among Japanese farmers and farm groups over the inadequate size of holdings, the shrinking labor supply, the shortcomings of the rice price support policy, and other alleged inadequacies of the existing system,⁷² Japanese farmers still are extremely well off by most international standards.

⁷²See, for example, Fukutake, pp. 22-25.

IV. THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN JAPAN; TENANCY RELATIONSHIPS AND THE POSTWAR LAND REFORM

Shortly after the Meiji Restoration, the Meiji leadership undertook a major reorganization of the local administrative system. The feudal domains were incorporated into a system of 43 rural (ken) and 3 urban (fu) prefectures; the ken were further subdivided into divisions or counties (gun), cities (shi), towns (cho), and villages (son). Urban areas and cities were divided into wards (ku).⁷³ The famous Three New Laws of 1878 that established this system (the Law for Reorganization of Counties, Wards, Towns, and Villages, the Rules for Prefectural Assemblies, and the Rules for Local Taxes) also provided for the general election of headmen for towns and villages, but this provision was revised shortly thereafter.⁷⁴ During the years 1878-1888 a process of amalgamation of smaller governmental units into larger ones, particularly at the village and town levels, reduced the number

⁷³A detailed account of this process is given in Hiroshi Kikagawa, Meiji Chiho Jichi Seido no Seitatsukatei (The Establishment of the Meiji Local Government System), (Tokyo: Tokyo Institute of Municipal Research, 1955). The English translation of the original legislation may be found in W. W. McLaren, "Japanese Government Documents," Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, XLII: I (May 1914), pp. lxxxvii-ci.

⁷⁴See Kurt Steiner, Local Government in Japan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), pp. 30-32. The headman was selected by the local council or assembly, subject to the approval of the prefectural governor, after May 1884 (Steiner, p. 30).

of these units from 80,000 to nearly 16,000.⁷⁵ According to Fukutake,

These amalgamations were carried through by the political authority of the central government, not as a result of any local expression of popular desire. Moreover, the Government, in establishing this new system, was not recognizing the right of residents democratically to control their own affairs; it was imposing a system which it was the duty of the people to operate.⁷⁶

The Town and Village Code and the City Code, both promulgated in 1888, established the basic pattern of local administration that was largely followed, with some revisions in 1911, 1921, and 1926, through the end of the Second World War.⁷⁷

Prior to the Meiji Restoration and the abolition of the feudal domains, Japanese villages and hamlets were administratively isolated and virtually self-governing. Extensive rules and codes of conduct regulated almost every conceivable aspect of life in this traditional society.⁷⁸ Tax collection procedures (the villages were responsible collectively for tax payments to the feudal lords), methods of water control, mutual labor pooling, and other communal activities were institutionalized well before the local government reforms of the 1870's

⁷⁵ An extensive history of the amalgamation program is given in Yasuhiko Shima, Choson-gappei to Noson no Hembo (Village Amalgamation and the Transformation of Rural Communities) (Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1958).

⁷⁶ Fukutake, p. 157.

⁷⁷ See Steiner, pp. 41-63.

⁷⁸ See, for example, the rules of Chiaraijima Village's Five-Man Group Register in Chambliss, pp. 109-112.

and 1880's. Pre-Meiji local government generally centered around the activities of a headman (called variously, nanushi, shōya, or kimoiri), the heads of certain village groups (kumigashira), and farmers' representatives (hyakushō-dai).⁷⁹ Although there was enormous variation in the pattern of local leadership due to differing class and kinship structures in different parts of the country, virtual consensus was usually required to decide matters taken up at village assembly meetings, and each separate hamlet presented a strong and united front vis-a-vis outsiders.⁸⁰

The tradition of hamlet solidarity was no doubt bolstered by a system of communal ownership of property. The privilege of sharing in the profits derived from community-owned properties (such as forests) was strictly regulated, and frequently large membership fees or other requirements were exacted from newcomers who wished access to this privilege.⁸¹ The imposition of a centrally-conceived and centrally-directed administrative superstructure upon this traditional system after 1878 often resulted in severe dislocations to the smaller communities that were amalgamated into larger ones. Emotions ran particularly high when communal properties or communal shrines were involved in these amalgamations.⁸²

⁷⁹ Fukutake, p. 117.

⁸⁰ See Toshitaka Ushio, et al., Nihon no Nōson (Japanese Rural Communities) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1957), pp. 49 ff.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Fukutake, pp. 169-170.

Under the new local government system, communities that for centuries had been left largely to themselves were suddenly forced to elect representatives to village assemblies whose membership extended beyond the immediate hamlet. A not infrequent outcome of this process was the reinforcement of the "natural village" (hamlet or buraku) as the center of loyalty, rather than the administrative village (mura) which was linked up to a highly-centralized administrative apparatus. Fukutake observed that

owing to the low level of political activity in the new local government units (i.e. the administrative villages) and the poverty of their revenues, the hamlets did not become mere administrative sub-districts, but continued certain self-government functions in their own right. In this way the hamlet settlements directly maintained the character they inherited from the Tokugawa period despite the establishment of the new local government system.⁸³

The system that the Meiji leaders instituted was notable for the lack of policy or administrative discretion granted to the towns and villages. Although there were elected assemblies which in turn selected their chief executive, the electorate was greatly limited in number (encompassing only about ten percent of the population), and the assembly's choice for mayor was subject to the approval of the higher authorities. Furthermore, the Home Ministry, either directly or through its prefectural governments (which were largely the agents of the central government) exercised control over local governments

⁸³. Ibid., p. 88.

through extensive mechanisms for inspection, sanctions, suspension of local ordinances, and directives; the local assemblies could even be dissolved by higher levels if improper actions were thought to have been taken.⁸⁴ As Steiner relates:

There could be no local police, no local control of nuisances, no enforced zoning, not even a local dogcatcher, unless a national law or ordinance assigned the respective functions to the specific type of local entity in question. . . . There were national laws regarding water supply, drainage, and other proper functions which occupied these fields. As a matter of fact, there were few decisions that a locality could make on its own initiative. . . . There was deconcentration of the national administration, but no local self-government.⁸⁵

The buraku became administrative sub-divisions of villages, but hamlet leadership generally emerged through traditional selection procedures, and previously-existing village power structures often continued to exercise leadership. This meant that wealthier families or landed gentry who for decades, if not longer, had maintained a grip over the affairs of the agricultural settlements, continued to exercise authority even in the revised Meiji system. According to one account, nine village mayors who had been elected in 1888 still held office in 1928; 40 others had held office for 30 years, and another 224 for 20 years.⁸⁶ Other surveys of prewar village records

⁸⁴ See Steiner, pp. 41-54.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 50.

⁸⁶ Harold S. Quigley, Japanese Government and Politics (New York: Century, 1932), p. 306.

generally confirm this trend.⁸⁷

Representatives from each administrative subdivision of the administrative village were selected to serve on the Village Council, and these men, together with the hamlet headmen and the hamlet councils or assemblies, constituted the power structure of the hamlets. Not surprisingly, village politics often centered around disputes between various hamlets, whether the issue was the division of funds allocated from the central or prefectural governments or the determination of how communal land was to be treated in the newly amalgamated units.⁸⁸ Officials of the administrative villages not only faced rampant factionalism from below, but also censorship from above. According to Fukutake, "in these circumstances it is not surprising that the village office was less an office of the village than an outpost of the central government by which it exercised control through the prefectural government."⁸⁹

As national leaders pushed all economic sectors hard in their quest for rapid modernization, villages often found themselves unable to raise revenues sufficient to carry out

⁸⁷ See, for example, Tadashi Fukutake, ed., Nōgyōson Shakei no Tenkai Kōzō (The Development of Agriculture and Fishing Communities) (Tokyo: Chiiki Shakai Kenkyūjo, 1971), pp. 274-277 and the accompanying discussion.

⁸⁸ Fukutake, Japanese Rural Society, pp. 171-172.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 158.

the functions that had been delegated to them. Except for the period immediately before the national mobilization of the late nineteen-thirties, local governments (including prefectures, counties until 1926,⁹⁰ cities, towns, and villages) assumed a growing share of the total expenditures of government, from 25-35 percent through World War I to 40-50 percent in the period from 1920 to 1938.⁹¹ This was an unusually large share of government expenditure compared to almost any other country. During the war years, of course, the trend shifted back toward the central government. The greatest portion of local expenditures went for administration and educational services, and these were financed largely through surtaxes applied to national taxes and through central government subsidies and grants-in-aid. There was a growing tendency toward subsidization of the local governments from above in the prewar years, as reflected in Table 18. The inability of villages to raise enough revenues to cover the cost of such traditional local government services as road and bridge construction and the repair of irrigation works often forced those villages to fall back upon extra-legal revenue sources from within the buraku; such revenues usually assumed the form of "contributions" assessed according to wealth, or

⁹⁰ These units (gun) were legally abolished in 1921, although they were used for certain purposes even into the postwar era. See Steiner, pp. 149-151.

⁹¹ From Koichi Emi and Yuichi Shionoya, Estimates of Long-Term Economic Statistics of Japan Since 1868, Vol. 7: Government Expenditure (Tokyo: Toyo Keizai Shinposha, 1966), pp. 164-167.

Table 18. Trends in Financial Structure of Towns and Villages: Percentage Composition of Income and Expenditure, 1882-1945

Income	Year	1881	1891	1906	1921	1930	1945
Local surtax on national taxes		91.5	63.3	61.4	62.2	20.3	15.5
Independent taxes		-	1.8	1.3	1.1	22.5	5.5
Grants and subsidies from central government		-	11.5	5.3	7.1	18.2	40.9
Local government bonds		-	1.4	6.6	3.4	10.2	1.5
Other sources		8.5	22.0	25.4	26.2	28.8	36.6
Expenditure							
Salaries and administrative expenses		17.1	35.6	29.0	27.9	18.5	32.0
Education		35.3	32.7	40.6	44.4	42.6	13.0
Public works		34.2	26.3	8.7	8.8	8.0	10.9
Industry and commerce		0.6	0.5	1.4	1.6	1.8	10.6
Social security		-	-	-	-	2.6	-
Servicing of debts		-	1.0	5.8	1.8	7.0	5.0
Other expenditures		12.8	3.9	14.5	15.5	19.5	28.5

Source: Tadashi Fukutake, Japanese Rural Society (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 164.

donations of labor and materials for construction projects.

According to Fukutake,

This was one of the factors which left the old village units--the hamlets--with an important role to play. . . . This system became even further entrenched as Japanese capitalism became established and the framework of a modern state came to require an even more extensive degree of administrative control.⁹²

⁹² Fukutake, Japanese Rural Society, p. 164.

Thus, Japanese national leaders eventually found that they were able to incorporate traditional hamlet groups into their mobilization schemes during the 1930's, and these sub-village units persisted as strong focal points of institutional identification for many rural inhabitants well into the post-war era.⁹³

Although there is general agreement among historians that landlords and other local notables dominated hamlet and village affairs to their own advantage in the Meiji period, considerable controversy revolves around the transformation of village power structures after World War I and in the following years. Partially at issue is the role played by the rise to prominence of tenant unions and peasant unions during the 1920's and 1930's. These unions were stimulated by the depressed rural economy during those years but also arose from fundamental grievances regarding tenancy conditions in the countryside.

The Rice Riots of 1918 signalled the start of a new era in landlord-tenant relations in Japan. After the end of World War I, new ideas regarding class relationships had entered Japan through the activities of various socialist and

⁹³ See Robert E. Ward, "The Socio-Political Role of the Buraku (Hamlet) in Japan," American Political Science Review, XLV: 4 (December 1951), pp. 1025-1040; Paul S. Dull, "The Political Structure of a Japanese Village," Far Eastern Quarterly, XIII: 2 (February 1954), pp. 175-190; and Kurt Steiner, "The Japanese Village and Its Government," Far Eastern Quarterly, XV: 2 (February 1956), pp. 185-199.

communist movements as well as through a number of locally-generated organizations.⁹⁴ Tenants formed associations which basically had the objective of reducing rents and strengthening tenants' rights vis-à-vis their landlords, who operated a system that often failed to guarantee security of tenure or fair treatment to tenants. In 1921 there were only 681 tenants' associations, but this number had increased to 4,810 by 1933, with a total membership of 303,000.⁹⁵ As Table 19 shows, the

Table 19. Cases of Farm Tenant Disputes Since 1917

YEAR	NUMBER	TENANTS CONCERNED persons	LANDOWNERS CONCERNED persons	NOS. OF DISPUTES TAKEN TO COURT cases
1917	85	no data	no data	0
1918	256	"	"	0
1919	326	"	"	0
1920	408	34,605	5,236	0
1921	1,680	145,598	33,985	0
1922	1,878	125,750	29,077	0
1923	1,917	134,503	32,712	0
1924	1,532	110,920	27,223	27
1925	2,206	134,646	33,001	654
1926	2,751	151,061	39,705	954
1927	2,052	91,326	24,136	1,522
1928	1,866	75,136	19,474	1,646
1929	2,434	81,998	23,505	1,583
1930	2,478	58,565	14,159	1,638
1931	3,419	81,135	23,768	1,703
1932	3,414	64,499	16,706	2,020
1933	4,000	48,073	14,312	2,853
1934	5,828	121,031	34,035	3,323
1935	6,824	113,164	28,574	4,274
1936	6,804	77,187	23,293	4,249
1937	6,170	63,246	20,236	3,750
1938	4,615	52,817	15,422	2,777
1939	3,578	25,904	9,065	2,592
1940	3,165	38,614	11,082	2,500
1941	3,308	32,289	11,037	2,452
1942	2,756	33,185	11,139	1,876
1943	2,424	17,738	6,968	1,629
1944	2,160	8,213	3,778	1,391
1945	3,171	no data	no data	no data

Source: Masaru Kajita, Land Reform in Japan, Agricultural Development Series, No. 2 (Tokyo: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Productivity Conference, 1959), p. 18.

⁹⁴ See Dore, Land Reform in Japan, pp. 68-80.

⁹⁵ Kajita, p. 17.

number of farm tenant disputes increased sharply in the years after 1921, and although these disputes rarely took the form of violent confrontations, they were to alter drastically the relationships between landlords and tenants in many areas. As one socialist source relates, these disputes were not so much negativistic outbursts against unseen and seemingly uncontrollable "sinister" forces, but rather

were in the nature of a positive movement and gave victory to the tenants from beginning to end . . . it seemed that the tenants' movement with such a battle front and strategy won almost every contest in various districts. Though the demand for a permanent 30% decrease in rents was accepted in few cases, there were many cases where disputes were settled on the basis of a permanent 15-25% decrease.⁹⁶

Some have argued convincingly that landlord-tenant relations varied enormously from region to region, or even from hamlet to hamlet, and that the mere existence of tenancy did not necessarily indicate harsh and oppressive conditions for tenant farmers.⁹⁷ Certainly, even in areas where tenancy assumed a particularly vicious and exploitative nature, traditional values of communal solidarity and the high regard placed upon agricultural cultivation as a hallowed institution ("Nōhon-shugi") served to ameliorate somewhat the negative aspects of tenancy. However, tenant unrest was sufficient enough for the central government to take measures to intervene

⁹⁶From the Japan Labor Year Book (Nippon Rōdō Nenkan), 1923, as quoted in ibid., p. 19.

⁹⁷Dore, Land Reform in Japan, pp. 23-53.

in tenant-landlord disputes, and the Maintenance of the Public Peace Law (1925) and the Violence Control Law (1926) were both geared, in part, to infiltrating and subverting the more vocal and strident tenant groups. In addition, landlords began to form their own associations to counter the organizational threat posed by tenant associations.⁹⁸

In some areas tenants gradually got the upper hand and even managed to gain representation on various local government bodies that were once dominated by the local landed gentry. In other areas, as Fukutake observed, while tenants did not necessarily succeed in gaining any direct voice, "it was no longer possible for the interests of the landlords and the interests of their hamlets to be simply equated."⁹⁹ He continued,

it consequently became more difficult to preserve a satisfactory balance between districts (as conflicts of interest between town and village became more marked), and the minutes of Council meetings came to record a certain number of decisions carried not unanimously but over the dissent of a minority. This was more especially the case in those towns and villages where Farmers' Unions were organized and succeeded in getting some of their representatives elected to the council.¹⁰⁰

The changing balance between landlord and tenant interests reflected itself in the area of national policy as well. In 1924,

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 80-85 and p. 73.

⁹⁹ Fukutake, Japanese Rural Society, p. 178.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

the government enacted the Farm Tenancy Arbitration Bill, which provided for arbitration boards at the local level to help solve agricultural disputes. Two years later, the "Owner-Farmer Establishment and Maintenance Supplementary Regulations" were put into effect to allocate funds to would-be purchasers of land through local administrative agencies, but landowners were left to their own discretion to decide whether or not they would dispose of their properties. From 1926 to 1944, 399,000 farm households received some funding under this program, and approximately 220,000 hectares of land were turned over to former tenants.¹⁰¹ The Tenancy Bill of 1931 attempted to strengthen further various tenancy rights, but never succeeded in gaining approval in the House of Peers.

The Agricultural Land Adjustment Act of 1938 was designed to redress some of the inequities concerning adjudication of contractual disputes between landlords and tenants that had arisen under the Civil Code of 1898. Three items in the Act pertained to strengthening rights, as follows:

1. Opposition to a third party was allowed even in the case of unregistered lease contracts.
2. Even if the term of the lease had expired, the lease would be legally renewed unless the refusal of renewal was proposed within the space of six months to a year prior to the expiration of the lease.
3. A proposal for cancellation of, or a

¹⁰¹Kajita, pp. 21-22.

refusal of renewal of, a lease contract could not be made without due cause.¹⁰²

The significance of this legislation, according to one analysis, lay in the fact that "a special law regarding legal relations between owners and tenants of agricultural land was enacted to counter civil law, 40 years after the enforcement of the Civil Code and eighteen years after the start of tenancy legislation."¹⁰³

As the war years approached, the leaders of the national government took several steps to insure a steady and adequate flow of foodstuffs from rural to urban areas and thenceforth to the overseas armed forces. It was quickly recognized that stable conditions in the countryside were a sine qua non of achieving this goal, and so regulations were put into effect that controlled rents, land prices, and land ownership provisions. The Farm Rent Control Ordinance of 1939 froze all rents on land at their 1939 levels. Furthermore, the prefectural governors were empowered to reduce rents in cases where they were shown to be unreasonably high. The Farm Land Control Ordinance of 1941 prescribed a formula for arriving at a controlled valuation of each parcel of land. And the Farm Land Regulation Ordinance of 1941, amended in 1944, severely circumscribed the conditions under which farm land could be used for other than agricultural purposes.¹⁰⁴ As the result of the

¹⁰²Paraphrased from ibid., p. 22.

¹⁰³Ibid. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁴These regulations are more concretely described in Land Reform and Farmers' Organizations, pp. 45-47.

1944 amendment, "farm land ceased to be a free market good."¹⁰⁵

In addition to these measures, several other steps were taken that had the effect of preparing for a smooth transition to a fundamental restructuring of land-holding patterns during the postwar land reform programs. A rice control act in 1940 stipulated that from 1941,

tenant farmers would deliver directly to the Government the rice which had usually been paid to landowners as farm rents. The Government paid landowners a sum of money equivalent to the amount of rice to be delivered by tenant farmers.¹⁰⁶

The government further established a price differential in its rice purchasing program such that a larger amount accrued to cultivators who sold their rice directly to the government than to those landowners who sold the government rice received as rental payments. In addition, a rice price control system was instituted that allowed the prices paid to cultivators to increase while holding those paid to landowners constant.¹⁰⁷ By 1945, "the rice price paid to landowners . . . was 55 yen per koku, and that paid to cultivators was 150 yen. . . . On the basis of these dual rice prices, general income per tan was 300 yen; farm rents, 55 yen; and the rate of rents, 18%."¹⁰⁸ Thus, the government indirectly succeeded in reducing the rent

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁰⁶Kajita, p. 23.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., pp. 23-24.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 24.

burden as a result of its rice pricing policy.

In 1941, a Farm Land Development Law provided for 50 percent subsidies for the development or improvement of farm land. In 1943 and 1944 the earlier plans of the 1930's to encourage an increase in the number of owner-farmers were improved and expanded upon, and a bonus system for landowners to encourage them to transfer their land to their tenants was introduced. This system later was incorporated in the Occupation land reform programs.¹⁰⁹

During the American occupation of Japan, two major programs were implemented that had a major impact upon life in agricultural settlements. The first of these was the land reform program, and the second, the overhaul of the local government system.

There were actually two land reform programs implemented after Japan's defeat in World War II. The first, promulgated by the Japanese government in December 1945, contained the following provisions:

(a) In order to establish a system of owner-farmers, the way was opened to make compulsory the transfer of land owned by landowners at the wishes of tenant farmers. Through this measure, 1,500,000 cho . . . were to be transferred during a period of five years. All tenant lands of absentee landowners would be allowed to hold 5 cho of tenant lands.

(b) The system of rents-in-kind was prohibited and switched to the compulsory rents-in-cash system.

¹⁰⁹Land Reform and Farmers' Organizations, p. 46.

(c) According to the Agricultural Land Adjustment Law passed in 1938 an Agricultural Land Commission had already been established in each city, town and village. But, before Land Reform, commission members were appointed by the Hokkaido or Prefectural Governor. The first Land Reform bill prescribed that the Commission would be reorganized to become an organ in charge of Land Reform, and each Commission would have 5 members elected from the landowner, owner-farmer and tenant-farmer classes.¹¹⁰

Although the provision for the cash payment of rents was eventually put into effect in 1946, the Japanese government's overall program generally met with displeasure at SCAP headquarters and among tenant farmers, who started to organize and hold rallies in a manner reminiscent of the old peasant union days of the 1920's. It was felt that the provisions for the selection of the local Agricultural Land Commissions left too much discretion to local bodies who would basically remain under the control of the landowners. Furthermore, 5 cho was considered too large a landholding to be left undisturbed and inaccessible to tenants.¹¹¹

Several additional plans were put forth by the Japanese government and by the Soviet and British delegations to the Allied Council for Japan, but these too met with disfavor. Finally, a new Farm Land Reform Bill was submitted to the Japanese Diet and approved in November 1946 after receiving the endorsement of the SCAP authorities. It consisted of two parts, the "Owner-Farmer Establishment Special Measures Bill"

¹¹⁰ Kajita, p. 26.

¹¹¹ Land Reform and Farmers' Organizations, p. 49.

and the "Agricultural Land Adjustment Law Revision Bill."

Although the provisions of these two acts are rather complex, their main elements can be summarized as follows:

- (1) The government purchased all tenanted land of resident landowners above one hectare in area (4 hectares in Hokkaido) and all tenanted land of absentee landlords and then resold this land to the former tenants according to procedures worked out at the local level.
- (2) Government bonds were used as payment to compensate former landowners.
- (3) The membership of the local land committees was adjusted such that it consisted of three landowners, two owner-farmers, and five tenant farmers.
- (4) Any surplus farm land above 3 hectares in area (12 hectares in Hokkaido) was subject to purchase by the government. This was amended to 5 hectares (20 in Hokkaido) in 1947 by the inclusion of grass lands in the definition of "farm land."¹¹²

As a result of this program the proportion of farm households in each landowning category changed as shown in Table 20. In terms of land area, "the area of tenanted land, which before the war had been approximately 53 per cent for rice land and 40 per cent for dry land, fell to below 10 per cent."¹¹³

This restructuring of land holding patterns had important implications not only for the level of agricultural productivity, but also for local power structures in the towns and villages. Former tenants now had added incentives to increase their

¹¹² Summarized from Kajita, pp. 29-32.

¹¹³ Fukutake, Japanese Rural Society, p. 18.

Table 20. Farm Households by Ownership Status, 1946-60 (in percent)

Year	Owners-farmers	Part-owners, part-tenants	Tenants
1946	32.8	38.4	28.7
1950	61.9	32.4	5.1
1955	69.5	26.3	4.0
1960	75.2	21.6	2.9

Note: In the original table, the "part-owners, part-tenants" category was broken down into two separate groups, "part-owners, part-tenants" and "part-tenants, part-owners." Using this distinction, Fukutake explains that since some farmers are not tenants and yet use no land (i.e. apiarists), the total for all groups is less than 100 percent.

Source: Tadashi Fukutake, Japanese Rural Society (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 18.

profits through the higher production of foodstuffs; in addition, they should have been able to increase their representation on local committees and boards with decision-making authority. While in some instances both projected outcomes became realities, the overall results were not altogether unambiguous. In many cases some prewar patterns that lay dormant during the hectic war years gradually re-surfaced as the last Occupation forces went home and full control returned to Japanese authorities.

One immediate result of the land reform program was a redistribution of agricultural income, such that far less money

was expended on rent and related obligations, and far more retained on the farm for capital improvements and home savings (see Table 21). This, together with the program to expand the

Table 21. Distribution of National Agricultural Income Before and After Land Reform

YEAR	INCOME FROM RENTS	CAPITAL INCOME	LABOR INCOME	RATE OF RESERVATION	RATE OF FLOW AWAY FROM THE FARM %
Before Reform:					
1934	36.94	7.83	55.23	76.01	23.99
1935	34.89	6.84	58.27	76.44	23.56
1936	32.45	6.26	61.29	77.95	22.05
After Reform:					
1950	4.05	6.81	89.14	96.59	3.41
1951	3.22	6.56	90.22	96.97	3.03
1952	3.71	7.80	88.49	96.46	3.54

Source: "Distribution Structure of Agricultural Income", by Keinosuke Baba, as published in *Nogyo Sojaku Keisya* Vol. 9, No. 3, published by the National Research Institute of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Source: Masaru Kajita, Land Reform in Japan, Agricultural Development Series, No. 2 (Tokyo: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Productivity Conference, 1959), p. 43.

services offered by cooperatives such that access to various important inputs was assured, resulted in the expansion of capital improvements and fertilizer consumption well above pre-war levels. As we have already seen, farmers' income levels and consumption standards also increased, although tying these gains directly to the land reform program poses some difficulties. In a careful study designed to accomplish just that, Theodore R. Smith noted in his concluding chapter that "it is extremely difficult to isolate agrarian reform benefits arising from changed consumption patterns."¹¹⁴ While Smith drew

¹¹⁴Theodore R. Smith, East Asian Agrarian Reform: Japan, Republic of Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines, J. C. Lincoln Institute Research Monograph Number II (Hartford, Conn.: John C. Lincoln Institute), p. 215.

his conclusions not only from the Japanese case, but also from the Taiwanese, Philippine, and South Korean cases, at least for Japan numerous other intervening variables affecting income and consumption levels come to mind. Among them are the revamped cooperative structure and the new cooperative extension services, the opportunities for increased earning opportunities off the farm in the context of a revitalized industrial sector after 1955, and general governmental interest and investment in the primary sector that far surpassed any prewar efforts.¹¹⁵ Still, the social impact of the land reform cannot be understated. According to one personal assessment,

Before the war, there existed the so-called family status in agricultural villages, and a certain family alone could assume the post of the village master. It was very rare that a tenant farmer became the village master. But the situation changed after the war. In my village, too, landowners or their proxies alone held the post of the village master before the war, but after the war, there have been no landowner village masters. . . . Those who exercised leadership in the village assembly were 'middle-standing' farmers who were emancipated by Land Reform. . . . Though in the beginning these representatives of the new farmer classes appeared to be rather inferior to the classes that ruled before Land Reform in the points of education and

¹¹⁵"The postwar level (1953-55) of Government and private funds for agricultural public works is estimated to exceed that of prewar days (1934-36) by about 60 per cent in terms of real value." From Taichiro Okawara, Agriculture and Forestry Budget in Japan, Agricultural Development Series No. 8 (Tokyo: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Productivity Conference, 1959), p. 9.

political ability, in the course of several years they were as good as the latter in the points of knowledge and ability.¹¹⁶

Statistics collected by SCAP in the early postwar years regarding the land tenure status of village council members corroborate this view, as Table 22 shows. While Dore feels that

Table 22. Members of Village Councils by Land Tenure Status in Thirteen Villages, 1942 and 1947

	Landlords	Owner-Cultivators	Tenants	Non-Farmers
1942-7	44	92	12	65
1947	17	124	34	78

Source: SCAP, Japanese Village in Transition, p. 193; presented in R. P. Dore, Land Reform in Japan (London: Oxford University Press), p. 326, Table 31.

"many of the new men who had gained power in the postwar years by now (1959) had firmly entrenched positions impervious to any comeback from the old guard,"¹¹⁷ still he enumerates certain factors that former landlords had in their favor, and these are summarized below:

(1) Landlords were more experienced as administrators, better educated, wealthier than the average former tenant.

(2) There were lingering traditional attitudes of subservience and respect on the part of former tenants.

¹¹⁶Kajita, p. 46.

¹¹⁷Dore, Land Reform in Japan, p. 327.

(3) Landlords had a wide range of extra-village ties to national political and business figures.

(4) There existed the possibility that the average ex-landlord possessed higher abilities through natural selection in arranged marriages.¹¹⁸

Fukutake concurs in his guarded observation that while land reform struck a deadly blow to local power structures of the prewar type, "the differences between the wealthy farmers with large holdings and the poor farmers with small ones remain. Villages have not become egalitarian unstratified communities,"¹¹⁹ and in certain mountainous or heavily-forested areas landlord influence can still be very strong. Overall, however, the trend is unmistakably away from a sharply-differentiated class structure and landlordism, and as Fukutake notes, this picture is further complexified by the urbanization of rural areas and the tendency toward part-time farming or desertion of hamlets altogether in favor of off-farm employment opportunities.¹²⁰

If the direct and indirect consequences of the land reform program are not easily evaluated, then the reforms instituted by the SCAP government in the field of local government and administration are even less so. The main features of this structural reform included:

¹¹⁸Ibid., pp. 327-329.

¹¹⁹Fukutake, Japanese Rural Society, p. 144.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 145.

- (a) Universal suffrage for adults over the age of 20.
- (b) Direct election for local executives (mayors).
- (c) Recall, council dissolution, and referendum powers in the hands of the electorate.
- (d) Abolition of the powerful Ministry of Home Affairs and the deconcentration of its functional activities to the respective central and prefectural ministries and agencies.
- (e) Decentralization of police and educational functions.
- (f) Abolition of the neighborhood associations (buraku) as legal entities.
- (g) Reallocation of functions between various governmental levels and restructuring of local tax laws, the system of subsidization, and tax equalization procedures.
- (h) Amalgamation of smaller governmental units into larger ones, to strengthen local government finance and attract more qualified administrators into the local government field.¹²¹

There is little doubt that despite the intention of the SCAP government to democratize Japanese political life through the decentralization of public administration and politics, most decentralization measures ended in failure. Local governments, now with more contending political forces, more open and less harmonious relationships at the interpersonal level, and generally more openness of the entire decision-making process, are without question more responsive to the needs of their local constituencies than they were before the war. The

¹²¹Summarized from Steiner, Local Government in Japan, pp. 89-113.

basis of representation has been broadly expanded, and few elements within the communities have little or no voice in local affairs. On the other hand, the measures to decentralize the police, educational system, and other functional areas were largely unsuccessful.¹²² Local governments have come to rely heavily on the prefectural and central governments for guidance in the preparation of legislation and for financial assistance. On the average, roughly one-third of local governmental revenues are derived from grants or subsidies from higher governmental levels, and stringent control mechanisms are usually attached to such revenues.¹²³ Thus, while administrative villages have been strengthened through the amalgamation process vis-à-vis the smaller hamlets, they still are very dependent upon the good graces of the central government in carrying out desired programs.

The major piece of legislation to come out of the post-war period that dealt with agricultural policy was the Agricultural Basic Law of 1961. The main provisions of this Law are summarized below:

- (1) Improvement of agricultural structure through the provision of credits and subsidies to modernize farm management on one-hectare farms.
- (2) Establishment of viable farm units, based on the assumption that many farmers would

¹²² See Robert E. Ward, "Some Observations on Local Autonomy at the Village Level in Present-Day Japan," Far Eastern Quarterly, XII: 2 (February 1953), pp. 183-202.

¹²³ Fukutake, Japanese Rural Society, p. 167.

move out of agriculture into other industries.

(3) A high price policy for rice.¹²⁴

Among the difficulties that the government confronted in attempting to implement its policy included the fact that "the actual plans contain no provision for helping part-time farmers to move out of agriculture nor are there any clear guide-lines laid down for improving the profitability of the individual farm. And there is the danger that uniform administrative guidance will stifle the independent initiatives of the farmers themselves."¹²⁵ Furthermore, the high rice policy resulted in an overflow of supply, and readjustment measures subsequently had to be taken.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Land Reform and Farmers' Organizations, pp. 22-38.

¹²⁵ Fukutake, Japanese Rural Society, p. 198.

¹²⁶ Land Reform and Farmers' Organizations, p. 24.

V. ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN JAPAN AFTER 1868

Up to this point our discussion has been largely descriptive, as a necessary preface to a critical analysis of the role that various local governing institutions have played in rural development (particularly agricultural development) in modern Japan. Our major independent variable in this assessment will be the composite effect of various rural local governing institutions on the major dependent variable, rural development, which involves improvements in agricultural productivity, rural income, and rural social welfare.

Describing changes in agricultural productivity, income, and certain aspects of social welfare is fairly straightforward, although several problems connected with some of the data from the early Meiji period have already been mentioned. Generally speaking, although Japanese farmers entered the modern period at a relatively high level of productivity, they were able to build upon past achievements and produce at even higher levels as the years passed. Such increases, however, were not necessarily reflected in higher incomes for farmers, since a tenancy system that enmeshed nearly two-thirds of all cultivators siphoned much of the potential gain off to parasitic absentee landlords during the prewar period. This condition was further exacerbated by national and inter-

national market conditions for agricultural products that were far from favorable for most small farmers. Although certain institutional adjustments in tenancy relationships, extension and cooperatives services, and overall government policy toward the agricultural sector tended to alleviate some of the most pressing problems that farmers faced as Japan approached World War II (and, in the process, prepared the way for the major structural reforms that were undertaken after the war), these measures were largely insufficient to stave off real suffering for most rural inhabitants. The data concerning social welfare in rural areas in the prewar years are more impressionistic. But it can be reasonably asserted that while some improvements in the diets and general living conditions of farmers occurred, nothing approaching a genuine effort to provide farmers with security of life and livelihood ever appeared in the prewar years. Such measures that were taken stemmed in part from a growing concern among the national leadership groups regarding a steady and adequate food supply and stability in the countryside, where most of the people lived, while Japan was being put on a war footing. Changes in government policy that would ensure healthier and more loyal soldiers were always welcome, but the question of individual financial security in times of personal loss or disability was another matter entirely.

While finding precise determinants of the three elements of our dependent variable poses a few difficulties, it becomes more difficult to describe the components of rural local

organization in prewar Japan, although several institutional candidates immediately come to mind. One problem arises from the fact that there were two administrative/governmental institutions competing for the loyalty of rural inhabitants, the hamlet (buraku) and the administrative village (mura), and our analysis is greatly affected by which unit we choose to discuss. Indeed, the choice was no doubt equally momentous for a rural inhabitant as he was suddenly confronted, in the early Meiji years, with the option of directing his loyalty to some administrative structure other than the immediate community in which he lived and toiled. The fact that central government architects of the modernization program were also sensitive to this problem of divided loyalties was demonstrated time and again by the implementation of such programs as the Local Improvement Movement (1900-1918) which sought to equate hamlet loyalty with national patriotism.¹²⁷

The prewar buraku has earned the attention, if not the respect, of rural sociologists and political scientists alike for its communal solidarity, its maintenance of traditional values, its relative autonomy in the face of central incursions into rural areas, and its reliability as a transmitter of central governmental directives down to the lowest level of societal organization in Japan, the family or ie (household). This judgment extends well beyond the experience of the prewar

¹²⁷ See Kenneth B. Pyle, "The Technology of Japanese Nationalism: The Local Improvement 1900-1918," Journal of Asian Studies, XXXIII (November 1973), pp. 51-65.

mobilization period into the postwar years.¹²⁸ The prewar administrative village, on the other hand, seems to be the object of scorn and derision as the center of factionalism between the interests of rival hamlets, as well as being functionally weak vis-à-vis the central government, financially insolvent, and generally an intrusion into the previously placid countryside of Japan.¹²⁹

In the day-to-day affairs that most affected farmers' lives, ranging from decisions on the sale of communal property to the maintenance of shrines, roads or irrigation ditches, to setting up work teams at transplanting and harvesting time, individual farmers had some access to decision-making councils through their membership in the general buraku meeting or through their representation on the buraku assembly. This access may have been severely constrained by the differentiation among individual farmers according to their wealth and social status, particularly in the prewar years, but the nearness and immediacy of the buraku structure provided at least a sense of belonging and involvement, if not a sense of efficacy in determining local policy outcomes.

Affairs at the level of the administrative village, however, no doubt lent themselves to much stronger feelings of remoteness and helplessness in the face of downward-flowing

¹²⁸ See note 93 above.

¹²⁹ Fukutake frequently expresses this view in Japanese Rural Society, passim.

ministerial directives and decrees. While local elected officials exercised a substantial degree of control over the allocation of local resources and manipulated these resources to their own political advantage, these same officials in most cases had little or no say in the formulation of the national policies that guided the course of the nation and set the standard for major institutional changes. Some local notables did maintain powerful connections with certain leaders in Tokyo and fostered these contacts by using traditional buraku bonds of loyalty to produce desired outcomes at election time.¹³⁰ But by all accounts, the only significant direction of policy initiative and implementation was "downward" from Tokyo to the rural areas.

Hamlet and village bodies were not the only governing institutions that had some effect on rural development. The prewar agricultural cooperatives and agricultural associations, and the revamped postwar cooperative network, occupying as they did such critical positions in the overall system of institutional support for agricultural development, must be included in our discussion of the independent variable local organization. In the prewar period, at least, it would seem that these organizations evolved into centrally-controlled and centrally-manipulated structures that served the interests of local powerful landowners as much as the interests of the

¹³⁰ See Tetsuo Najita, Hara Kei in the Politics of Compromise 1905-1915 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 58-79.

ruling elite. The agricultural associations that were formed late in World War II by merging the two existing organizations were so blatantly operated to exert maximum control over the peasants that they were among the first organizations to be overhauled by the Occupation government. Membership in the wartime nōgyōkai was compulsory and meaningful farmer participation in this organization was well-nigh impossible; the reorganized postwar cooperatives, however, have been cited as models for meaningful farmer access and participation by many outside observers.¹³¹

There were, of course, many other groups of a voluntary or compulsory nature that abounded in the rural areas of Japan in the prewar years. Among them were traditional, buraku-based organizations that performed ceremonial functions or tasks related to the mundane chores of everyday life. Other groups were organized primarily through impetus from the central government and were most often designed to serve some function relating to the glorification of the homeland and national patriotism.¹³² The pernicious aspect of these latter groups spelled their doom in the postwar years, but many traditional groups continue to thrive and new communal endeavors have replaced the prewar mobilization organizations.

What, then, has been the role of rural governing institutions in affecting levels of agricultural productivity,

¹³¹ See note 2 above.

¹³² Fukutake describes these various groups in Japanese Rural Society, pp. 96-116.

income, and social welfare in the Japanese countryside?

Part of the answer would seem to lie in a simple comparison of prewar and postwar developmental levels and governing institutions in rural Japan. An abundance of longitudinal data for a century-long period has facilitated such a comparison. If prewar gains in productivity were largely offset by the absence of such gains in farmers' income and overall standard of living, postwar increases in all three aspects of rural development have been impressive by contrast. The divestment of most absentee-landlord holdings and the abolition of the prewar rent and tenancy systems during the postwar land reform have greatly altered the social composition of major power-holders in the countryside, as we have already pointed out. This fact, together with a revised local government system that encourages participation, the institutionalization of viable political units larger than the traditional neighborhood or hamlet through a large-scale amalgamation process, and a drastically different set of infrastructural support mechanisms such as the new cooperatives and the new system of rural extension, all seem to have contributed to raising the living standard of the average Japanese small-holder.

The land reform and other major postwar innovations obviously accomplished what the prewar structures could not. But to attribute all causal power to these institutional changes would be mistaken. Industrial growth and social change resulting from various outside influences upon Japan's

rural areas have created possibilities and presented alternatives that would have been incomprehensible to a prewar farmer, whether landowner or tenant. Today, Japanese agriculture has become an industry of "women and old men," and many small holders rely extensively on off-farm earnings to supplement their incomes from their tiny holdings.

In the postwar era, rural areas in Japan have become integrated into the national mainstream at an extremely rapid pace. Many villages are all but deserted as younger people flock to the cities in search of more "modern" vocations and opportunities. In short, Japan is no longer a nation of independent peasants cultivating extremely small plots of land at subsistence levels. On the contrary, Japan has become a highly mobile and highly-industrialized society in which the role of the traditional neighborhood or buraku in reinforcing and preserving certain unique Japanese values has become open to question.

The postwar land reform and other major institutional reforms certainly accomplished what the existing prewar structures could not have. Although some may argue that greater decentralization in the prewar era might have resulted in a local government system that was more responsive to the needs of individual farmers, such an argument would not be convincing. Without strong central intervention to reconstruct the balance of social forces in the countryside, decentralization in the prewar period would only have resulted in harsher and more

oppressive control of tenants by landlords than already existed. It was the initiative of the central government, particularly in the 1930's and for reasons only tangentially related to farmers' personal welfare, that started the movement toward constructive changes. Whether such changes could have been initiated and sustained by a dominant class of landlords who in effect would have had to preside over their own disestablishment is an academic question, but in all likelihood the answer is no.

Local governing institutions in prewar Japan were generally well-suited to the task of ensuring at least some measure of local compliance with national modernization objectives. The smallest societal levels seemed better-suited than the newer superimposed administrative structures at the village level and above, and this fact certainly did not escape the attention of the national leadership in Japan. A most remarkable accomplishment of the overall administrative system, including its traditional components, was its ability to forestall social chaos and breakdown at a point in Japan's history when she was faced with the prospect of national humiliation and defeat at the hands of the Allies in World War II. Local governments played an important role in the maintenance of social order by providing institutional support for rural power structures that were deeply embedded in the social fabric of prewar Japan.

Despite the intention of the SCAP Occupation government

to decentralize Japanese society thoroughly by overhauling the public administration system and its related components, the attempt appears to have largely failed. Large-scale amalgamations and the re-assertion of central administrative control in many areas of public policy have rendered many postwar reforms almost meaningless. Still, those farmers who actively pursue their occupation full- or part-time have at their disposal the services of a multi-functional cooperative system that has achieved world-wide recognition for its range of services, not to mention its political clout at both the national and local levels.

The standard of living of most farmers in Japan today is rapidly approaching the level of their urban countrymen, and in some respects has surpassed that level. Changing consumer food tastes, changing lifestyles, and changing patterns of social interaction, all subjects well beyond the scope of this analysis of local institutions, have played a role in bringing about changes in rural areas that bear little resemblance to prewar conditions. Of course, there is much regional variation, and some areas have lagged behind others in their development. But in today's Japan, the relation between agriculture, local government, and social cohesion and stability has become an extraordinarily complex one and difficult to delineate precisely. In advanced industrial societies demonstrating direct causal relationships among socio-economic and political factors becomes exceedingly difficult, and this is

certainly the case in the present study. Still, it seems reasonable to conclude that many postwar changes came about much as the prewar changes did, from above and from the outside, and further, that elements in the existing local structures either opposed or confirmed various aspects of reform, but never undertook to implement them singlehandedly and without outside intervention. The experience of Japan's rural development indicates the importance of organizations that link farmers effectively with central authority, as long as this is exercised developmentally. Local autonomy, and indeed even popular participation, appear not to have been necessary for Japan's agricultural success during its most dynamic period, though these have been increasingly relevant in more recent years as Japan's agriculture has reached its heights of productivity.

APPENDIX

Net Food Supply in Calories Per Capita Per Day, Selected Years

Years	Total food	Starchy staples ^a	Animal proteins ^b	Other
1934-1938	2,050cal.	1,605cal.	54cal.	391cal.
1948-1950	1,910	1,660	71	179
1951-1953	1,930	1,500	93	337
1954-1956	2,070	1,548	107	415
1957-1959	2,170	1,472	136	462
1960-1962	2,230	1,524	175	531
1963-1964	2,298	1,500	221	577
		Per cent of total calories		
1934-1938	100.0	78.3	2.6	19.1
1948-1950	100.0	87.9	3.7	9.4
1951-1953	100.0	77.7	4.8	17.4
1954-1956	100.0	74.8	5.2	20.1
1957-1959	100.0	72.4	6.3	21.3
1960-1962	100.0	68.3	7.8	23.8
1963-1964	100.0	65.3	9.6	25.1

Note: Total food does not include calories derived from beverages. (a) includes cereals and potatoes; (b) includes meat, eggs, milk and fish.

Source: Hiromitsu Kaneda, "Long-Term Changes in Food Consumption Patterns in Japan," in Ohkawa *et al.*, Agriculture and Economic Growth: Japan's Experience (Tokyo, Princeton University Press and the University of Tokyo Press, 1970), p. 418.

Composition of Food Consumption, by Major Food Groups, 1911-40

Years	Starchy staples ^a	Animal proteins ^b	Other foods	Total ^c
Food expenditure per capita (In 1934-1936 prices)				
1911-1915	35.0 (56.0)	5.5 (8.8)	21.9 (35.1)	62.4 (100.0)
1916-1920	36.6 (53.5)	7.7 (11.2)	24.0 (35.2)	68.3 (100.0)
1921-1925	35.4 (48.1)	10.5 (14.3)	27.8 (37.6)	73.8 (100.0)
1926-1930	34.5 (45.8)	10.8 (14.3)	30.1 (39.9)	75.3 (100.0)
1931-1935	33.4 (43.8)	11.7 (15.4)	31.0 (40.8)	76.0 (100.0)
1936-1940	33.9 (43.7)	13.6 (17.5)	30.1 (38.8)	77.5 (100.0)
Calories Per Capita Per Day				
1911-1915	1765 (86.6)	40 (2.0)	232 (11.4)	2037 (100.0)
1921-1925	1807 (85.1)	47 (2.2)	269 (12.7)	2123 (100.0)
1931-1935	1711 (83.3)	72 (3.5)	272 (13.2)	2055 (100.0)

a) Starchy staples include: rice, barley, naked barley, other cereals, sweet potatoes, white potatoes, wheat flour, starch, and noodles.

b) Animal proteins include: meat, milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, and other marine products.

c) Expenditure total excludes beverages and tobacco. Calorie total excludes canned (and bottled) foods as well as beverages. In parentheses are percentages of the total.

Source: Hiromitsu Kaneda, "Long-term Changes in Food Consumption Patterns in Japan," in Ohkawa *et.al.*, Agriculture and Economic Growth: Japan's Experience (Tokyo, Princeton University Press and the University of Tokyo Press, 1970), p. 409.

Changes in Body Sizes

	Army conscription ^a	8 years		Grade-school children 10 years		12 years	
	height	Height	Weight	Height	Weight	Height	Weight
	cm	cm	kg	cm	kg	cm	kg
1883-1892(A)	156.5 ^b	—	—	—	—	—	—
1898-1907(B)	157.4	110.9 ^c	19.2 ^c	120.1 ^c	22.9 ^c	128.5 ^c	27.0 ^c
1913-1922	158.6	111.6 ^d	19.3 ^d	120.9 ^d	23.2 ^d	129.6 ^d	27.5 ^d
1928-1937(C)	160.1	113.6	19.9	123.1	24.0	131.8	28.6
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
(C-A)/A × 100	2.3	—	—	—	—	—	—
(C-B)/B × 100	1.7	2.4	3.6	2.5	4.8	2.6	5.9

a) At 20 years of age.

b) Average for 1884-88 and 1891-92.

c) Averages for 1900, 1902, 1904 and 1906-07.

d) Averages for 1914-16, 1919-20 and 1922.

Source: Yūjirō Hayami and Saburō Yamada, "Agricultural Productivity at the Beginning of Industrialization," in Ohkawa *et.al.*, Agriculture and Economic Growth: Japan's Experience (Tokyo, Princeton University Press and the University of Tokyo Press, 1970), p. 124.

Pec sant and Bullock by Chuah Theah Teng
From the collection of Dr. and Mrs. Clifton R. Wharton, Jr.