

HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE POSTWAR TAIWAN EXPERIENCE FROM AN AGRARIAN PERSPECTIVE

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The so-called "Taiwan experience" is now at the center of scholarly attention. The Taiwan experience is studied and scrutinized from various standpoints, such as that of classical economic theories, progressive dependency or world system theories, or conservative historico-political and sociocultural theories.¹ Many international conferences on this theme have been organized both in Taiwan and abroad, thereby indicating how important an understanding of the Taiwan experience is, affecting, as it does, various facets of our understanding of life. So too, the more varied our perspectives, the more our understanding of the Taiwan experience is enriched.

In this essay we shall examine the Taiwan experience from yet another, as yet untried, viewpoint, a historical point of view, and that from the perspective of agriculture. Both history and agriculture share one characteristic: both are the root and soil from which we grow. To understand ourselves in Taiwan we must understand our roots in our soil, the history of the agrarian experience in Taiwan, how it has transpired since World War II ended. We shall also look into the history of the Sino-American Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction (JCRR; *chung-kuo nung-ts'un fu-hsing lien-ho wei-yüan hui*), from October 1, 1948 to March 16, 1979. It is here, from the perspective of agrarian history, that we shall see both the peculiar characteristics of our postwar Taiwan experience and their universal significance.

Why is this the case? The following three historical phenomena in the Taiwan experience are noteworthy: (1) the emergence of the social classes of full owner-cultivators; (2) the emergence of a middle-class; and (3) a middle-class intelligentsia.

The first phenomenon was the formation of the social class called "full owner-cultivators," and with it, the sudden disappearance of tenants, mainly as a result of land reform policy. According to statistics, full owner-cultivators rose from 32.7% of the farming population in 1946 to 38% in 1952, to 59% in 1955, to 64% in 1960, to 80% in 1974, to 82% in 1984, until an amazing 83.55% in 1992.² This phenomenon decisively altered the traditional Chinese picture of "the rich with farmlands by the thousands, the poor without space for a drill-point." This new farmer ownership of land, as we shall see, was to be followed, as expected, by renewed dedication by the farmers, and then, unexpectedly, by benefits to industry that ushered in the modernization of Taiwan and the demise of agriculture.

The second phenomenon was the emergence of the middle-class in Taiwan, coordinated with a shift to an industrial society in postwar Taiwan. The percentage of farmers in the population steadily declined from 52.49% in 1952, to 49.8% in 1960, and to 20.5% in 1987. This correlates to a decline in agricultural production; the ratio of agriculture in Net Domestic Product (NDP) against its industrial counterpart dropped from 30% versus 18% in 1952, to 28.3% versus 28.9% in 1964, to a dismal 9.2% versus 44.7% in 1980, to 6.2% versus 47.1% in 1987, and to 5.9% versus 43.5% in 1989. These statistics clearly indicate a shift in the economic situation in postwar Taiwan, the first time such a shift from an agrarian to an industrial society had occurred in Chinese history. This shift in economic structure brought about a socio-political change,³ which in turn caused the emergence of the middle-class.

The third phenomenon was the emergence of a middle-class intelligentsia. The metamorphosis and development of Taiwan's economy stimulated popular education. An immediate impetus came from the Nine Year Popular Education Policy (1968–1969), which was put into effect throughout Taiwan. As a result, illiteracy rates of those above six-years-old dropped dramatically, from 42% (1952) to 7.1% (1989). At the same time, the ratio of population with a middle-school level education rose from 8.8% (1952) to 44.9% (1989).

The above attests to a crucial turning point in Taiwan's history, one announcing Taiwan's democratization. It serves roughly to delineate the total shape of the Taiwan experience. Moreover, as we shall see, this series of related developments was initiated by the change in the nature of farming society in Taiwan—and this change continues to stimulate the development that catapulted Taiwan into international modernity. This is why

we claim that agriculture in Taiwan is the root and the soil out of which the modern prosperity of Taiwan was born. To understand the history of agriculture in Taiwan is a *sine qua non* for understanding the Taiwan experience.

THE RISE AND FALL OF AGRARIAN CULTURE,
THE MAIN FEATURE IN "TAIWAN EXPERIENCE"

The major feature of the postwar Taiwan experience is the rise and fall of agrarian culture. It has four interrelated characteristics: (1) this culture is an agrarian economic system based on minute hand-farming and a market trade economy; (2) this is an agrarian society made up of blood relations; (3) in this society, farming has priority over commercial activities; and (4) such a mind-set produced a widely-held belief in the unity of Heaven (nature) and human beings (*t'ien jen ho i*). The last characteristic is a key element in Confucianism—Confucianism and agrarian culture have constituted the two main pillars of traditional Chinese culture for thousands of years.⁴

This tradition of agrarian culture and society in Taiwan underwent a dramatic structural change and decline after World War II. The Land Reform Policy of the 1950s ushered in a series of institutional changes, which were accompanied by improvements in seeds and seedlings, of soil and fertilizers, combined with technical innovations in irrigation to modernize and develop Taiwan agriculture. The strengthening of agriculture in Taiwan affected industrial development in the 1960s. Then followed a decline in the agrarian economy and the farmers' alienation from their lands and villages.

This sweeping structural change has deep historic significance and had much to do with the agrarian and economic policies enunciated and put into effect by the government.⁵ The Great Divide in the history of agrarian policies after the War is 1972: the pre-1972 period and the post-1972 period.

The pre-1972 period began in 1945, when the Japanese occupation of Taiwan was taken over by the Republic of China (ROC). During this period, there was a series of land reform policies such as "The 375 Reduction of Land Taxes" (1949), "The Public Land Purchase Policy" (1952), and "The Land-to-the-Tiller Policy" (1953).

The post-1972 period began in September, when the government of the ROC enacted "Important Implementations for Speedy Reconstruction of

Agriculture." The resulting metamorphosis was nothing short of stupendous; for the first time in Chinese history, Taiwan was turned from an agrarian to an industrial and commercial society, initiating the so-called "economic miracle." At the same time, the speedy change that had occurred within a mere 30 years produced serious social and cultural problems.

The above-mentioned agrarian policies reformed the old tenants system, assisted owner-cultivators in becoming independent, spurred investment in land for industrial and commercial use, and indirectly promoted agricultural production. All this laid a solid foundation for industrial development.⁶

Thus from 1953 on, all agrarian policies were forged under the guiding principle, "Agriculture cultivates industry; industry develops agriculture." The result was a mixed blessing for agriculture, exhibiting the phenomenon of "developmental squeeze."⁷ It happened as follows. First, the increase in agricultural production produced a surplus of manpower and supplies that were then directed to non-agrarian, industrial sectors of society. This ironically resulted in the impoverishment of agriculture. This was exactly what happened during the 1895–1960 period, which resulted in tremendous industrial development in the 1960s.⁸

During the 20-year implementation of this agrarian policy, up to 1972, agricultural development occurred in two stages. The first stage (1953–1960) was import substitution, comprising the first two periods of plans for establishing an agrarian economy; the second (1961–1972) is that of export substitution, comprising the third period of agricultural economic planning. Agricultural enterprises in both these stages were targeted to cultivate industry. The first stage saw payment, with the funds obtained by the export sales of agricultural products, of bills for imported industrial materials needed to nourish burgeoning industry in Taiwan; the second stage shouldered agriculture with the task of providing export industry with sufficient food and labor resources.

An agricultural crisis arose with the completion (1965) of the third economic plan. The most serious problems were the impoverishment of agrarian labor power, investment, and profit, as well as a reduction in the availability of agricultural land and an imbalance between agrarian and industrial development.⁹

Agrarian policies then turned from "oppressing" agricultural enterprises to "balancing" them with industry. "The Important Implementations for the Speedy Construction of Agriculture Act" in 1972 (commonly

called “Nine Great Plans”) and “The Resumption of the Organization and Implementation of Construction of the Great Corps of Eighty Thousand Farmers” in 1983¹⁰ were governmental efforts to bring into harmony the imbalance of agricultural development. But these political efforts were stymied by the effects of a free international economy: Taiwan was threatened by an influx of competitive, foreign agricultural products. Furthermore, industrial waste polluted the cultivated lands, and no one addressed these issues in the public or political arena. All sectors of the agricultural economy felt there was little choice but to take to the streets.¹¹ All this began with land reform, which we shall now examine.

The Rise of Agrarian Culture

Land reform during the 1950s had a profound impact on postwar development in Taiwan.

First, the greatest impact was, of course, in a change in the distribution of land ownership. After land reform there emerged a large number of full owner-cultivators, whose sudden rise was amply demonstrated by the statistics gathered by the JCRR. The year the ROC took over Taiwan, 1946, saw that 32.7% of those involved in agriculture were full owner-cultivators, 28.19% were half owner-cultivators, and 39.11% were tenants. After land reform, in 1953 54.86% were full owner-cultivators, 24.14% were half owner-cultivators, while tenants dramatically decreased to 21%. In 1960, the ratio was: 64.45%, 21.23%, and 14.32%, respectively.¹²

The second dramatic change was the farmers’ own attitude to agriculture. An immediate reaction of farmers to land reform during the 1950s and 1960s was, as could be expected, pride and devotion to agrarian culture—wholehearted dedication to the land, attendant with a positive outlook on farming as a lofty way of life wherein a person could find the meaning of life; farming seemed to be much more than simply a means to earning a living. Farmers now owned the land they cultivated; they had great self-confidence and a positive outlook towards life. In 1952 the JCRR surveyed 875 farming families, and found that 85% of them believed that improvement of their lives would follow their ownership of land; 69% believed that they would surely, eventually, own the land they were currently cultivating.¹³ Thus the early successes of land reform during the 1950s bolstered the farmers’ dedication to their land, and caused farmers to perceive farming as a lofty way of life. They were proud farmers during the 1950s.¹⁴

The third impact of land reform was in the change in the social consciousness of the farmers, a result of reorganizing the farmers' associations. In 1950, the JCRR invited W. A. Anderson, Professor of Rural Sociology at Cornell University, to study and report on farmers' associations in Taiwan.

In August of 1952 the Executive Yüan of the ROC announced "Temporary Plans for the Improvement of Farmers' Associations at All Levels," in which the association members were to be divided into two groups: regular members and associate members. The function of the association expanded greatly to include sales, promotion of agri-businesses, cattle insurance, and, especially, trusts and banking.

There was an increase in the effectiveness of farmers' associations and their growing importance in the eyes of the farmers themselves. The farmers' associations had been under the colonial control of the Japanese government since its "Regulations for Farmers' Association in Taiwan" had been put into effect in 1907. After the restoration of Taiwan to the ROC, the associations gained autonomy, even at local levels where associations were owned by their farmer members.

Kuo Min-hsüeh, a JCRR specialist and former student of Anderson's, took part in the reorganization of the farmers' associations. He made a comprehensive survey of members' attitudes to the associations, especially the extent to which they identified themselves with their associations. Kuo Min-hsüeh found that identification with farmers' associations was rising consistently during 1950s. To the question, "To whom do the farmers' associations belong?" the reply by more and more members was, "The farmers" or "The farmer members," this answer rising from 1.7% (1952), to 56% (1955), to 79.5% (1959).

This feeling corresponded with the steady increase in membership in farmers' associations: rising from 20.7% (1952), to 85.6% (1955), and to 94.2% (1959). So too, the number of farmers who took part in various association meetings increased from 27.6%, to 57.2%, to 82.0%. At the same time, the demand for democratization of the farmers' associations intensified. The ratio of voices saying that the executive secretary be nominated by popular election increased from 20.7%, to 66.5%, to 80.2%. Those who knew and were aware that the representatives of farmer members were elected, not nominated, increased from 32.8%, to 72.4%, to 82.7%.¹⁵

Positive attitudes to farmers' associations were thus a result of land reform and the reorganization of farmers' associations.

The Fall of Agrarian Culture

The sad sequel in the 1960s to the upbeat story of the 1950s must now be told. The agrarian crisis of the 1960s alienated farmers from their land, and caused disenchantment with farming and even dejection. The crisis had two components: land and income.

Land previously had been regarded as a precious family inheritance, on which the farmers' sacred mission of cultivation and their life-ideal of heaven-man unity were based. Sadly, the land was now a mere commodity to be bought up by speculators, who then turned around and sold it at prices three or four times higher than they had originally paid. This was the result of an earlier crisis, the precipitous drop in agricultural prices due to the sudden influx of imports, agricultural commodities from abroad. Farmers' income naturally tumbled. The ratio of income from farming to total farmers' income dropped from 66% (1966), to 45.2% (1971), to 28.8% (1981), the ratio then rose slightly to 31.7% (1984), to 36.7% (1985), to 38.1% (1987).

The above crises were enough to negatively impact the farmers' outlook on life. According to a 1984 survey of 450 farming families 59.3% regarded farming as hopeless; the attitude was especially prevalent among residents living in areas devoted exclusively to farming: 48.6% were dissatisfied with farming as a way of life; 16.6% were *very* dissatisfied. Interestingly, a majority of farmers (53%) were, nonetheless, unwilling to abandon agriculture, and 7% were *extremely* unwilling. This was especially the case in areas with a sparse farming population (76.2%). This attitude may have been a consequence of the lack of education among farmers or their lack of other skills or training for new jobs. But more likely, their reaction may have been due to their attitude to their land; they understood how precious a commodity the land was in this small island with a dense population. They were, in any case, disenchanting with farmers' associations and took to the streets, demanding relief from the impact of foreign imports.¹⁶

This stupendous metamorphosis of the farmers' attitude is quite a noteworthy chapter in the history of the postwar Taiwan experience. The result was the formation of a pluralistic society, a turning away from the tradition of monolithic farming. Monolithic society traditionally bred political hegemony over social, economic, and cultural spheres of the community. Autonomy of these spheres sprung up during the dawning of the plural-

istic society. Social pluralism makes it impossible for the mode of thinking of *one* sector of the society to dominate and control other sectors.¹⁷

Let us now probe further into the *origin* of this *origin* of agrarian metamorphosis, the land reform. How did it succeed?

THE PREWAR BACKGROUND AND INHERITED PROBLEMS

Causes for Success of Land Reform

Three causes can be cited for the success of historic land reform in the 1950s, the land reform that is justifiably termed the beginning of the post-war Taiwan experience: (1) policy-makers were separate from landowners; (2) policy-makers from the Mainland were devoted, while those in Taiwan raised no objection; (3) people were eager to redress the unfair distribution of land ownership at the time, a legacy from the Japanese era.

Those in positions of authority who had come from Mainland China in 1949 were homeless, without family ties—landless. This special situation in Taiwan at that time¹⁸ rendered these policy-makers immune from the effects of the pros and cons, profits or otherwise, of land reform. This separation of policy-makers from landowners made the land reform operation a relatively streamlined affair, unlike other nations (e.g., the Philippines and some nations in Central and South America) that, having come to Taiwan to learn from Taiwan's success, failed in their land reform attempts because they failed to separate the policy-makers from the landowners.

Second, those policy-makers from the Mainland were fresh from their bitter experience and were determined to start anew, to govern fairly and honestly.¹⁹ Sincere dedication in politics, as elsewhere, produced positive results. Land reform was no exception.

Furthermore, their devotion was matched by a lack of objection from the Taiwanese co-policy-makers. These Taiwanese policy-makers—members of the first Temporary Provincial Assembly (1946)—were the cream of Taiwan society. About half were educated at the university level and beyond, and some were well-schooled in the cultural tradition of China, yet maintained a cosmopolitan, international perspective. Many of them came from land-owning families, endowed with vast financial and political resources. All of them enjoyed high social acclaim—truly the leaders of their society. This explains their initial, numerous objections to land reform—they were the intelligentsia who owned land.

But the situation took an unexpected turn. During the infamous February 28 Incident of 1947, a vast number of these high-powered intelligentsia *cum* landowners were assassinated and disappeared from the political arena. A Taiwanese intellectual, in his memoirs, described how hushed and lifeless the room was where government business was conducted, in sharp contrast to the pre-February 28 vibrancy; it was an entirely different world.²⁰ The then ominous atmosphere in which land reform was conducted effectively silenced many a public objection from landowners. It is reported that the first and second general assemblies of the first Temporary Provincial Assembly were attended by almost all members of the Assembly; in contrast, daily attendance at the third general assembly was usually only 16 or 17 members (once, a high of 21).²¹ The then tycoon landowner, Lin Hsien-t'ang exiled himself to Japan, claiming that "I seem to have somewhat different opinions about the government's '375 Reduction of Land Tax' and especially 'Buying-up of Surplus Grain among Big Families'." ²² Lin died in September, 1956, in Japan, his death signaling the end of the old period. There were no further objections from the Taiwanese landowners—the February 28 Incident was the second cause of the success of the land reform program.

The third reason for the success of land reform was widespread discontent over the unfair distribution of arable land resulting from the policies of the Japanese government. Statistics, dated April 10, 1939, indicate that 224,931 families that cultivated less than 1 *chia* each, cultivated a total area of 103,412 *chia*; 3,576 families that cultivated more than 10 *chia* each, cultivated a total area of 106,887 *chia*. In contrast, 579 families that cultivated more than 20 *chia* each, cultivated a total area of no less than 68,410 *chia*! The report indicated that 53.1% of farmers cultivated only 14.96% of the land, whereas 0.13% of the farmers cultivated 9.9% of the land. The statistics clearly showed, not major landowners renting out parcels of land, but rather a concentration of the land in the hands of a few and minute segmentation of the rest of the land for the vast majority of farmers to cultivate.²³ This was the Japanese legacy.

In such a situation, more than 60% of farmers under the Japanese occupation were tenants and half owner-cultivators. Oppressed by both colonial policies and Japanese capitalism, farmers in Taiwan were all too eager to see the land situation changed—and as soon as possible. Their discontent over land distribution was the third factor leading to the success in instituting land reform.

Building an Infrastructure

I would be seriously amiss were I not to mention an important factor in Taiwan's rapid modernization, as well as its rapid development of agriculture—the building of an infrastructure in Taiwan during the 51 years of Japanese colonial rule.²⁴ The Japanese government oversaw the construction of modern facilities, the establishment of basic engineering facilities such as irrigation, electricity, railways, and seaports. Initial achievements in these areas utterly amazed Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (1873–1929), who visited Taiwan trying to understand how it had happened: “The same sun and moon, the same mountains and rivers ... Why such an accomplishment by the Japanese?”²⁵ Similar amazement was expressed by Ch'en I, the governor of Fu-kien Province, on his visit in 1935 to the “Commemorative Exposition, the Fortieth Anniversary of Japanese Governance.” To absorb the “Taiwan experience” under the Japanese occupation, Ch'en I invited the Japanese engineer who had designed the Chia-nan dam, Hada Yōichi, to go and observe the waterways of Fukien, in order that he might formulate “Plans for the Development of Fu-kien.”²⁶

The Japanese accomplishments also impressed members of the JCRR on their visits to Taiwan in 1949. In the first issue of *Working Reports of the JCRR*, members recall how they were burdened with difficulties trying to improve the agrarian situation in Mainland China.²⁷ They praised highly the achievements in Taiwan under Japanese rule.²⁸ Not only was Taiwan equipped with a solid basis for agriculture and industrial development, it was blessed with the convenience of transportation. Taiwan also had healthy agrarian organizations, such as the Irrigation Association (*Shui-li Hui*), to facilitate the task of agricultural construction by communication and coordination with local organizations such as the farmers' associations.²⁹

“Taiwan miracles” were made possible partly because of this solid infrastructure in Taiwan prepared in advance by the Japanese occupation. At the same time, we should not forget that many of these facilities were destroyed during World War II, and had to be rebuilt, with much difficulty, by members of the JCRR.

The Japanese Legacy: Problems

The Japanese contribution to the Taiwan experience was not without its problems: Japanese colonialism and Japanese capitalism induced a trauma

of *oppression*, a sense of Taiwan being pushed into dependency and its marginalization.

The infrastructure that Japan had built for the modernization of Taiwan had a single purpose, poignantly expressed in the slogan: "Industrial Japan, agrarian Taiwan." This phrase carried two connotations: Taiwan as marginal to and in the shadow of *capitalist* Japan, and Taiwan as dependent on and colonially subservient to *imperialist* Japan. The first was economic colonialism and the second political oppression. Taiwan was, indeed, "Under Imperial Japan," as the title of Yanaihara Sadao's book (*Nihon Teikokushugi ka no Taiwan*) tells us.

The economic development of Taiwan under Japanese occupation was tightly controlled and carefully managed so as to serve Japanese needs. In the 1940s many sugar-manufacturing corporations were merged into four main ones, one of which was the Taiwan Sugar Company (*Taiwan Sa-tō Kabushiki Kaisha*), which had 42 sugar factories and 15 alcohol factories; its private railroad had 2,900 miles of track.³⁰ The total area covered by its factories was more than one-eighth the amount of cultivated land in Taiwan. The sugar-manufacturing company in Yen-shui Kang and Hua-lien Kang prefectures occupied 9,248 *chia*—the company occupied more than one-fourth the area of the cultivated land in Taiwan.

Japan's other important accomplishments in Taiwan were: reform of the currency system (1904); completion of a land survey (1905); a railroad system which ran through the entire island of Taiwan; and the opening of seaports in Keelung and Kaohsiung (1908). These accomplishments were all under the control of Japanese capitalists.³¹ As Yanaihara pointed out, Taiwan was thus, step by step, made capitalistic under the guidance of the policies of economic colonialism solely in order to benefit Japan.³² From an international perspective, Taiwan was made marginal and subservient to the capitalistic "centers" (such as prewar Japan, postwar U.S.) for whose needs it manufactured and produced goods. Domestically speaking, the influx of capitalism restructured traditionally closed communities of farms into open ones, turning their agricultural toils and lands into salable commodities at the mercy of commercial markets both home and abroad. According to statistics, the ratio of cash income to agricultural income jumped from 39.8% (1958) to 89.3% (1986), while the ratio of cash payment within the total agricultural expenditure jumped from 59% (1958) to 92.9% (1986).³³

Commercialization of agricultural toil and lands had not been as precipitous in Mainland China as that in Taiwan. This was borne out by John L. Buck, who, from 1929 to 1933, studied 16,456 agrarian families in 156 counties throughout 22 provinces of the Mainland. Amano Motonosuke (1901–1980) also analyzed the extent of commercialization of agricultural products based on the documents provided by Buck. Amano's statistical reports show the extremely low rate of commercialization of agricultural products (foodstuff).³⁴ We conclude then that traditional agricultural enterprises in China obtained their market-economy characteristics in Taiwan only under the impacts of capitalism.

The second problem attendant with Japanese development of Taiwan was the infiltration of Japan's political colonialism, which began with a census and registration (1905) of the Taiwanese population. A land survey was conducted from 1898 to 1904 and a survey of forests and fields from 1910 to 1914 in order to enact land control legislation. The Currency Reform Act (1904) established the basis for the modern monetary system. The railway system operated from Keelung through the entire island to Kaohsiung (1908). The great Chia-nan dam was constructed (1920–1930). An electric power station was built in Jih-Yüeh T'an (1920–1935). All these projects were under the close supervision and planning of the colonial government. Such governmental infiltration into Taiwan's economic-industrial development continued after the War in the form of land reform, the reorganization of farmers' associations, the Irrigation Association (*shui-li hui*), the grain-fertilizer barter system, etc. All these regulations and reorganizations demonstrate the governmental influences that have shaped Taiwan industry and the economy.

THE JCRR AND ITS ROLE IN HISTORY

Besides the Japanese government, there was another organization that influenced the Taiwan experience: the Sino-American Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction (JCRR), which signaled the beginning of the Taiwan experience.

The Principles of the JCRR

The official formation of the JCRR in Nanking occurred on October 1, 1948. Drs. Raymond T. Moyer and John Earl Baker, appointed by the President of the United States, two other U.S. members, and the three illustrious

Chinese members, Chiang Meng-lin (1886–1964), Yen Yang-ch’u, and Shen Tsung-han, who were appointed by the Chinese President, composed the first JCRR. This event can be said to be one of the greatest contributions the United States made to the development of postwar Taiwan. The JCRR recruited agricultural experts for membership through testing and personal interviews.³⁵ The JCRR thus obtained technical experts with doctoral degrees from the U.S., who had their own, practical ideas for solving agrarian problems.³⁶ They helped put into practice the charter of the JCRR as enunciated by Chiang Meng-lin, “to render all the JCRR’s accomplishments in conformity with the historical, political, and social developments of China.”³⁷

The JCRR declared on October 15, 1948 the five main aims of their work, intended to revitalize Chinese agrarian communities:³⁸

1. To improve the living standard of farmers;
2. To increase production of foodstuffs and other important products;
3. To develop manpower resources so as to build up local communities, and then the entire country;
4. To assist in establishing, strengthening, and promoting various organizations, new and current ones, at the prefectural, provincial, and national levels;
5. To provide opportunities for the young democratic intelligentsia (and others with the desire to help) to join in these tasks.

In addition, six principles for putting the above aims into effect,³⁹ together with five policies for concrete action, were announced. In all these pronouncements and policies there were common, fundamental ideas, as enunciated by JCRR’s first chairman, Chiang Meng-lin: do not engage in a big build-up and compete with local organizations, but, rather, try to understand the farmers’ needs at the grass-roots level, promote production while taking care to promote social justice, and work with local organizations.⁴⁰

The above description of the initial purpose of the JCRR demonstrates its two main characteristics: pragmatism and dynamism.

The JCRR did not “beat around the theoretical bush,” but insisted on combining theory and practice in its work, which, it insisted, must be of real benefit to agricultural production and the farmers’ living conditions. This pragmatic character had two features: progressivism and efficiency.

Progressivism: The early JCRR firmly believed that the whole effort had to be accomplished piecemeal, taking care of one part of the entire project, then another, one at a time, for the whole is the sum of its parts. And it did so, whether the project was irrigation or fertilizer promotion. This coincided with what Karl Popper (1902–) called “piecemeal social engineering.”⁴¹ The JCRR was opposed to “utopian social engineering.”⁴² Li Ch’ung-tao, Chairman of the JCRR, 1973–1979, described this method well when he said,

Our beloved Mr. Yu Kuo-hua laughingly said that we are like a petty little pediatrician and nudged us to tackle big projects instead. But the fact of the matter is that we had to devote a long time before coming up with Four Year Project or Ten Year Project.... We simply must tackle small projects piecemeal, one at a time, to really benefit our dear farmers. This is somewhat like fighting a war; we must fight small battles, one at a time. and sometimes in order to fight this battle we must fight it on another front, fighting another battle. The production problem we tackle, and we find problems of distribution and environment-protection. We then have to decide that production must come first; we must make money, fill our bellies, then talk about improving our livelihood, before facing the environmental problem. So what Mr. Shen said about production strategy is correct. It must be tackled, and that with immediate efficiency.⁴³

This philosophy of progressivism, shared by all technocrats, is the first feature of the JCRR’s pragmatic character.⁴⁴

Efficiency: The JCRR strove, as Chiang Meng-lin insisted,⁴⁵ for the greatest results in the shortest time, because of the dangers of national unrest and internecine wars at the time. Attendant with this efficiency, however, was neglect of long-standing agrarian problems. This shortcoming was also shared by otherwise excellent governmental technocrats.

The second characteristic of the JCRR was its dynamism, which had two aspects: (1) activity at the grass roots and (2) freedom from political constraints.

The JCRR initiated their projects at the grass-roots level. The JCRR first tried, as Chiang Meng-lin said, to “listen to and understand the needs of local farmers, instead of telling them what their needs should be.” Members of the JCRR often visited local villages and listened to their practical problems. Chang Hsün-shun also characterized JCRR activities as

“pushing their projects at the grass roots,” not imposing theories learned from foreign lands upon the farmers.⁴⁶

The JCRR was independent of governmental control, for its members were appointed by the presidents of two governments, the ROC and the U.S., and did not belong to any department in either government. Without any political load on its shoulders, with its problem-solving approach, the JCRR was flexible and free to operate like a special fighting brigade in the army, but on the agricultural battlefield.⁴⁷

We would expect such a pragmatic and dynamic JCRR could not help but play a crucial role in the formation of postwar Taiwan. But did it?

The JCRR's Role in History

The JCRR had a difficult role to play. On the one hand, it was a governmental agency; whatever it did represented the position and activity of the government. On the other hand, it insisted on promoting societal welfare among agrarian villages. It strenuously adhered to political neutrality. For example, the JCRR did not take sides in the dispute in September, 1952 over the ownership of land between tenants and the Taiwan Sugar Company, which had been instigated by an American land reform expert, Wolf Ladjinski.⁴⁸ The problem of whether or not to abolish regulations on the fertilizer-grain bartering system was hotly debated in 1959 between the Agricultural Economy Section and the Plant Production Section of the JCRR, without any final decision until September, 1972, when it was abolished by the government.

The JCRR thus was strictly in an advisory position and provided financial and information resources to assist agriculture, refusing to become involved in disputes over power or profit. From a historical point of view, this was where the JCRR's strength lay; but this was also its shortcoming. On the one hand, in its thirty years of history, the JCRR had managed to keep itself from being politically or economically polluted. On the other hand, its value-neutrality unfortunately rendered it incapable of standing up for the farmers. Furthermore, as was mentioned above, its sense of urgency forced it into a short-range, efficiency mentality and was, therefore, unable to attend to long-term, socio-cultural problems in Taiwan.

The JCRR did much to develop and modernize Taiwan agriculture, especially helping the full owner-cultivators, with the Sino-American resources of brain power and financial aid from the U.S., thus laying the foundation for rapid industrial development during the mid-1960s. Sadly,

this agricultural development, by thus being carried over into industrialization, spelled the demise of the traditional Chinese agrarian culture. The JCRR was unable to stem this unfortunate tide.

CONCLUSION

With mixed emotions, I summarize the story of the postwar Taiwan experience from the perspective of an agrarian culture.

The Japanese construction of an infrastructure, combined with the ROC's land reform policies, did much to help the rise of Taiwan agriculture, and to usher in modern Taiwan.

Taiwan's agricultural rise and modernization, however, coincided with the seeds of its fall, led by two forces, capitalism and political infiltration: forfeiting its hard-won profits for the sake of nourishing Taiwan's burgeoning industrialism, as well as being weakened by international markets through an influx of modern farm products that drained Taiwan's agricultural vitality. The JCRR was the government's last ditch attempt to stem the tide, to halt the agricultural demise and promote agrarian culture.

In short, the rise of agriculture contributed to the rise of industrialism. The rise of industrialism contributed to the fall of agriculture and the emergence of modern Taiwan. Politics has had checkerboard (pros and cons) connections to this drama—Japanese colonialism, the ROC, and the JCRR. Such is our story, the postwar Taiwan experience viewed from the vantage point of Taiwan agrarian history.

If there is a lesson to this story, we can find it in Daniel Bell's suggestive rumination of Western experience over the past 150 years, to the effect that economy, politics, and culture tend to conflict with one another. For economic efficiency, political equality, and cultural self-realization are often at odds with each other. The story of the West during these past 150 years is the drama of their conflicts.⁴⁹

Our story here is the same; our task is also similar. We are challenged by the historic task of coordinating *our* three correlated, yet contradictory demands: efficiency, equality, and self-realization. The rise and fall of agriculture that made for the modernization of Taiwan can be viewed as Taiwan's mighty, historic struggle *toward* harmonizing and developing these three inalienable demands of humanity. The struggle is yet to be continued and the vision of grand harmony to be carried on.

NOTES

1. For a review of recent discussions on "Taiwan Experience", cf. Edwin A. Winckler and Susan A. Winckler, et al., eds., *Contending Approaches to the Political Economy of Taiwan* (New York: M. E. Sharp, Inc., 1988), pp. 3–19.
2. Rural Economic Division, JCRR, *Taiwan Agricultural Statistics, 1901–1965* (Taipei: JCRR, 1966), p. 9; *Taiwan Agricultural Year Book* (1993 edition), p. 310.
3. See Walter Galenson ed., *Economic Growth and Structural Change in Taiwan: The Postwar Experience of the Republic of China*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1979).
4. See my "Chung-Kuo nung-yeh ch'uan-t'ung chi ch'i ching-cheng nei-han: Wen-t'i yü chieh-shih," in *Chuna-kuo wen-ming ti ching-shen* (I) (Taipei: Kuang-po tien-shih wen-hua chi-chin-hui, 1990) pp. 211–26.
5. See Liao Cheng-hung, Huang Chun-chieh and Hsiao Hsin-huang. *Kuang-fu hou Taiwan nung-yeh cheng-ts'e ti yen-pien: Li-shih ti chi she-hui ti fen-hsi* (Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1986), Chap. 1.
6. Cf. Martin M.C. Yang, *Socio-Economic Result of Land Reform in Taiwan* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1970).
7. Cf. Teng-hui Lee, *Intersectoral Capital Flows in the Economic Development of Taiwan, 1895–1960* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972); Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao, *Governmental Agricultural Strategies in Taiwan and South Korea, A Macrosociological Assessment* (Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1981), pp. 55–56.
8. Teng-hui Lee, *op. cit*
9. Chang Hsün-shun, "Chia-shu nung-ts'un chien-she chung-yao ts'o-shih tui-tung ch'ing-hsing," *Tai-wan nung-yeh* 9: 2 (1973), pp. 1–6.
10. *Tai-wan nung-yeh chien-she ta-chun chih lin-hsüan chih ch'i chu-chih yao-tien* (Nantuo: Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Taiwan Provincial Government, March, 1993).
11. See above, note 5
12. Rural Economic Division, JCRR, *Taiwan Agricultural Statistics, 1905–1965* (Taipei: JCRR, 1966).
13. Lei Po-erh (Rapper), *Tai-wan mu-ch'ien chih nung-ts'un wen- t'i yü ch'i chiang-lai chih chan-wang* (Taipei: JCRR), p. 156.
14. I conducted a separate investigation of Taiwan farmers' agricultural self-consciousness. I refer the reader to my essay for detailed information on the matter: Liao Cheng-hung and Chun-chieh Huang, *Chan-huo Taiwan Nung-min chia-chih ch'u-hsiang ti chuan-pien* (Taipei: Lien-ching chu-pan shih — Yeh yu-hien kung-ssu, 1992), Chap. 4.
15. Kuo Min-hsüeh, *Tai-wan Nung-yeh Fa-chan Kuei-chi* (Taipei: Taiwan Com-

- mercial Press, 1984), pp. 146–47. See also my “Transformation of Farmers’ Social Consciousness in Postwar Taiwan” in Stevan Harrell and Huang Chun-chieh, eds., *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan* (Boulder, Co.: The Westview Press, 1994), pp. 111–34.
16. Liao and Huang, *op. cit.*, Chaps. 6 and 8.
 17. Chun-chieh Huang, “Industry, Culture, Politics: The Taiwan Transformation” in Richard Hardey Brown, ed., *Culture, Politics and Economic Growth: Experience in East Asia* (Studies in Third World Societies, Vol. 44, William and Mary College, 1994).
 18. For more detailed discussion, see my *Nung-fu-hui Yü Tai-wan ching-yen* (Taipei: San-min shu-chü, 1991), pp. 78–105.
 19. See Ch’en Ch’eng, *Zu-ho shih-hsien keng-che yu ch’i-t’ien* (Taipei: Cheng-chung shu-chü, 1954), p. 83.
 20. Han Shih-ch’üan, *Liu-shih huei-yi* (Taiwan: Han Shih-ch’üan hsien-sheng ssu-shih san chou-nien chi-nien chüan-chi wei-yüan- hui, 1966), pp. 86–87.
 21. Cheng Chih, *Tai-wan sheng-yi-hui chih yen-chin* (Taipei: Hua-shih ch’u-pan-she, 1985), p. 122.
 22. Yeh Jung-chung, ed., *Lin Hsien-t’ang Hsien-sheng chi-nien-chi* (Taipei: Privately published, 1960), Vol. III, p. 109.
 23. Chou Hsien-wen, “Jih-chü shih-tai Tai-wan chih Nung-yeh ching-chi,” *Tai-wan Yin-han chi-k’ an*, 8:4 (1956), p. 91.
 24. For Japanese colonial experience as a factor in postwar Taiwan development, see Hyman Kublin, “Taiwan’s Japanese Interlude, 1895–1945,” in Paul K. T. Sih ed., *Taiwan in Modern Time* (New York: St. John’s University, 1973), pp. 317–58; Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Thomas B. Gold, “Colonial Origins of Taiwanese Capitalism,” in Edwin A. Winckler, et al., eds., *Contending Approaches to the Political Economy of Taiwan* (New York: M. E. Sharp, Inc., 1988), pp. 101–20.
 25. Liang Ch’i-ch’ao, *Yin-ping-shih wen-chi*, Vol. 4, p. 14.
 26. Kogawa Katsumi, *Tai-wan o ai shida Nihonjin* (Matsuyama: Aoyama Toshō, 1989), pp. 260–61.
 27. *Chung-kuo Nung-ts’un Fu-hsing Lien-ho Wei-yüan-hui pao-kao* (October 1, 1948 – January 15, 1950), p. 12. Hereafter as *Pao-Kao*.
 28. *Ibid.*
 29. *Pao-Kao*, p. 39.
 30. Yamane Kentaro, tr. by Cheng Ch’in-jen, “Jih-pen Ti-kuo chu-i yü chih-min ti,” *Shih-huo Monthly*, N.S. 2:1 (1972), p. 48.

31. Yanaihara Tadao, tr. by Chou Hsien-wen, *Jih-pen Ti-kuo chu-i hsia ti Tai-wan* (Taipei: P'a-mi-erh shu-tien, 1985), p. 26.
32. Yanaihara, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
33. *Agricultural Development in the Republic of China on Taiwan* (Taipei: Council of Agriculture, 1988), p. 32.
34. Amano Motonosuke, *Chugoku Nogyou Keizailon* (Tokyo: Ryukei Shusha, 1978 revised edition), Vol. 3, p. 9.
35. Huang, Chun-chieh, *Chung-kuo Nung-ts'un Fu-hsing Lien-ho wei-yuan-hui Kuo-shu Li-shih Fan-wen Chi-lu* (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1992), pp. 153–70. Hereafter as *Fan-wen chi-lu*.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Chiang Mon-lin, "Shih-ying Chung-kuo li-shih cheng-chih chih she-hui pei-ching chih Nung-fu-hui Kung-tso," in his *Nung-fu-hui Kung-tso Yen-chin yüan-che chih chien-tao* (Taipei: Council of Agriculture, Executive Yüan, 1990), p. 27.
38. *Pao-Kao*, p. 3.
39. *Ibid.*
40. See Chiang Meng-lin's letter to Raymond T. Moyer (Chairman of JCRR, 1948–1951), ed. in my *Chung-Kuo Nung-ts'un Fu-hsing Lien-ho Wei-yüan-hui shih-liau Hui-pien* (Taipei: San-min shu-chü, 1991), pp. 45–51. Hereafter as *Hui-pien*.
41. Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), Vol. 1, p. 42.
42. Popper, *op. cit.*, Chapter 9.
43. *Fan-wen chi-lu*, pp. 7–16.
44. *Hui-pien*, p. 494.
45. *Pao-Kao*, pp. 84–90.
46. *Hui-pien*, pp. 130–32.
47. For more detailed discussion, see my *Nung-fu-hui yü Tai-wan ching-yen*, Chap. I.
48. For a study of the problems with land reform in Taiwan during the 1950s as revealed in Wolf Ladjinski's Letter to Chiang K'ai-shek, see my "Kuang-fu ts'u-ch'i Tai-wan t'u-ti kai-ko kuo-ch'eng chung ti chi-ko wen-ti: Rei Cheng-ch'i han-chien chieh-tu," in my *Chan-hou Tai-wan ti chuan-hsing chi-ch'i chan-wang* (Taipei: Cheng-chung shu-chü, 1995), pp. 101–30.
49. See Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1976), pp. XXX–XXXI.