

Japanese Agriculture: Patterns of Rural Development. *Richard H. Moore.* Westview Special Studies on East Asia. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990. 355 pp. \$35.00 (paper)

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Japan warrants much more serious attention than now paid by analysts—including anthropologists—of the agrarian dynamics of state societies. Japanese and foreign scholars have extensively documented its premodern state peasantry, its early-20th-century agrarian capitalism and tenancy, the world's most successful land reform in the late 1940s, a postwar farm mechanization that defied its policy intentions, and, now, a population of farmer-workers who form an essential, though subordinate, ingredient of Japan's industrial strength. Moore's book, based on fieldwork during the 1980s in one of the few remaining rice-growing areas of northeastern Japan, can ably serve as an introduction to this Japanese trajectory of peasant to tenant to farmer to farmer-worker. He grounds both historical change and state policy in firsthand ethnographic experience. And by focusing on agriculture, not agriculturalists or agricultural communities, he has written a useful, indeed necessary, complement to the extensive literature that we now have for Japanese rural villages and farm families.

After providing both general and particular background in the opening two chapters, Moore organizes chapters 3–6 to deal historically with the issues of land and water: the stages of irrigation improvements in his study area, the transition of property rights from usufruct to ownership, the contrary pulls of land fragmentation and consolidation, and the course and effects of the American Occupation land reform. A key contention linking these chapters is the significance of long-term tenancy rights. Moore argues that such rights provided leverage to cultivators, shaped the outcomes of land improvement projects, and affected household succession and branching.

The contradictions of postwar farming policy and practice are the focus of chapters 7–11. The legislative and ideological legacy of land reform has been to protect small-scale proprietor rice farming. At the same time, postwar state policy has aimed to promote large-scale, mechanized, and diversified agriculture. For this, the state has sometimes used the carrot of easy credit and subsidies and other times swung the stick of mandated rice acreage reductions. Not surprisingly, contradictory aims have had paradoxical results: the part-time, small-scale, overmechanized production of the one crop for which demand is declining but profit is assured—rice.

It would be a mistake, however, to attribute this pattern solely to agricultural dynamics. Moore's most valuable contribution has been to link postwar agriculture to postwar industrial development. The first rice transplanters, tractors, and combines in the 1960s freed much of the farm population to migrate to metropolitan factories. By the 1970s, however, the factories were going to the countryside, and part-time farming with full-time nonfarm employment rapidly became the rural norm.

Moore concludes with an informative account of the current international trade conflicts in which Japanese agriculture is now embroiled. He points up the shortsightedness of Japan's response to such demands as opening its rice markets to imports, and he ends with an impassioned "cultural" defense of Japanese family farming. My own assessment is more pessimistic. The "pattern of rural development" he ably describes has brought prosperity to much of the countryside (although the higher incomes of part-time farm households are largely because they have more working adults than urban households). However, this pattern has only delayed a day of reckoning that is fast approaching. Rice imports are inevitable, and regional manufacturing jobs are rapidly lost to offshore subsidiaries. Neither farm nor factory hold much promise for widespread, secure employment in the countryside. Precisely because of the multiple linkages of agriculture and industry in regional Japan that Moore demonstrates, the adjustment to a postindustrial rural Japan will be painful.