

Landlord and Tenants' Relations in the Post-War Era —Reconsidering the Land to the Tiller Program

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ABSTRACT

The discourse on the implementation of Taiwan's land reform traditionally puts effort on the inequality of landlord-tenant institution and the serious exploitation by landlords toward tenants. Class differentiation between a landlord and tenant is obvious, and rebellion from a tenant is also imminent. In order to prevent social unrest and resolve disputes between them, the KMT-state did not have any choice but to perform land reform policy in the 1940s and 1950s. This research would like to explore the relationship between landlords and tenants. Is their relation really inharmonious just as the state proclaims—landlords' exploitation? Do tenants execute protest activities against their landlords? If the answer is no, then how can we explain this kind of situation? These are the major research questions the paper would like to investigate.

The privately-owned land institution and the tenancy system have lasted for more than three hundred years in Taiwan. Even though tenants receive very unequal treatment due to high rental rates, uncertainty of tenure, etc., a tenant protest movement has seldom emerged in Taiwan's history. The reason is probably because of the inequality of the power relation between them since landlords can easily expel their tenants. However, based on the field study, this research finds that a paternalistic ideology has been formed in landlords' and tenants' minds. The landlord and tenant relation is recognized as being like a father and son; therefore, with the deep belief in Chinese filial piety, it is very impossible to have protest activities. The tenants are in a situation of being powerless, because of the shaping of ideology. The relation between them is really harmonious, and it can explain why there were around 29,000 cases, whereby the tenants wanted to return their received land to their landlords after the first stage of land reform policy between 1949 and 1951.

It is because tenants did not release themselves from this ideology that on the other hand, landlords also abided by the subsistence ethic to support their tenants. This does not mean there is no exploitative relation. Tenants and their families did

survive on the borderline of hunger. Nevertheless, while the implementation of land reform policies brought great benefit toward the tenants, both the eminent domain of common ownership-leased farmland and the great expansion of the landlord's definition caused serious hardship to small landholders.

Keywords: Land Reform, Tenancy Relations, Three Dimensions of Power, the Land to the Tiller Program, Paternalistic Ideology