

The Invisible Small-rent: Aborigine Small-rent Land Right of Anli Tribe in Land Tax Reforms under Qing and Japanese Colonial Rule

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the aborigine small-rent land right, which was rendered invisible in successive land tax reforms by Liu Ming-chuan in late Qing Taiwan (1886-1889) and the Japanese colonial government (1898-1905). With the abolition of pre-existing favorable protection of plain aborigine land rights in late Qing Taiwan, the aborigine small-rent had been misclassified as big-rent by officials and scholars alike. When land tax reforms were introduced to establish a modern land ownership system and abolish big-rent land right, the dissolution of aborigine land rights were exacerbated by government intervention through compulsory rent reduction (big-rent reduced by 40%) and further weakening of the aborigines' bargaining power.

Using the case study of Anli Tribe, the author uncovers official archives and cadastral survey data of the colonial land tax reforms to rectify the aforementioned "big-rent reductionism" of aborigine land rights. Since small-rent constituted the bulk of rent income and was essential to subsistence, Anli Tribe resisted persistently its disadvantageous misrepresentation as big-rent. Through protests to the colonial administration as well as appeals to the judiciary, the course was finally reversed under the colonial land tax reform with the aborigine small-rent formally recognized and its original status restored in 1903, while a negotiation for its buyout by the Hans at due (small-rent) prices was settled. Tracing the re-emergence of Anli aborigine small-rent, this study reassesses the land tenure arrangements between Hans and plain aborigines, and explores the differences in governance patterns and legal culture between Qing Empire and the Japanese modern colonial state.

Keywords: State, ethnic groups, land tax reform, aborigine land rights