Abstract

This dissertation aims to elucidate Taiwan’s urban-rural reverse during 1945-1953. In many existing literatures, it has been well documented that urban-rural reverses—a demographical phenomenon composed of peasantry migration, urbanization, and uneven geographical development—might be triggered by either corrosion on agriculture, industrialization, or export expansion. However, in Taiwan, none of these three factors existed when urban-rural reverse had occurred. Based on the fact, I then assume that monetary reform in 1949 and land reform in 1953 are not only continuation of China’s nation-state revolution led by Kai-Shek Chiang, but also critical factors for Taiwan’s urban-rural reverse.

To confirm the assumption, it is important to identify characters of Chiang’s revolution strategy in building a nation-state. Compared with Ze-Dong Mao, who aimed to encompass cities with villages and gained his momentum mainly from land reform, Kai-Shek Chiang tried to rule villages by cities and exercised his authority through an unprecedented control over currency. He then followed in Yat-Sen Sun’s steps, prioritizing monetary reform, regarding a well-functional national-monetary system as a necessary base of the nation-state revolution. As a result, once the Nanjing national government’s financial deficit arouse hyperinflation, overestimation of foreign exchange rate became necessary for the government to lower consumer price, so as to function the national-monetary system. The long-term overestimation of foreign exchange rate affected not only China’s geographical development during 1927-1945, but also Taiwan’s urban-rural reverse during 1945-1953.

Specifically, the monetary reform reconstructed Taiwan’s accumulation regime, making cities substituted for villages to be geographical centers of capital accumulation. Since the reform made the overestimation of foreign exchange rate necessary for maintaining Chiang’s nation-state revolution, reproduction and exportation of agricultural products became profitless from then on. At the same time, consumption and importation of industrial products became profitable, which could be held merely in cities. The two outcomes of the monetary reform made accumulation of capital possible without any of the following investments in agricultural land, agricultural products, or peasantry loan. The rise of city-centered accumulation regime that led to the urban-rural reverse thus became one of the most revolutionary achievements in Chiang’s nation-state revolution in post-war Taiwan.

Ideally, Taiwan’s land reform in 1953 was supposed to suppress land speculation by restricting land use rezoning. However, an actual effect about which the reform has
brought was far from suppressing but facilitating land speculation in terms of legitimizing the land use rezoning. The proliferation of land speculation that further consolidated the newly city-centered accumulation regime then became one of the most ironical consequences of Taiwan’s land reform in 1953.

Key words: nation-state, China’s revolution, urbanization, monetary reform, land reform, New Taiwan Dollar.