

Varieties of Tribal Rents in Late Imperial Taiwan: A Study of Propriety Rights of the Anli Tribe and Xingang Tribe, 1740-1870

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ABSTRACT

The essay intends to clarify the nature of tribal rights in late imperial Taiwan. From the case study of two different tribes, the Anli tribe and Xingang tribe, it shows that the tribal landlords would manage their rental rights based on the productivity of various fields. The past scholarship tends to view the tribal rents in a rather simple term. On the one hand, the orthodoxy would group the tribal rents into the category of big-rents rights whereby the tribal landlords received a small portion of rice grains from the Han Chinese tenants. On the other, the revisionist intends to show the tribal rents belonged to the category of small-rent rights. This paper will point out that both views of tribal rents are wrong in two aspects. First, they fail to examine correctly the contents of land contracts. Secondly, they tend to view the tribal rents in a static form, rather than analyzing the dynamic rental behavior of the rights holders. The paper analyzes the varieties of rental pattern in two different tribes. It shows that the rich tribal landlords, the Pans, by controlling the rights of productive paddy fields, would invest in two types of rental rights. They collected the tribal big-rent while they leased the uncultivated grasslands to the tenants. Meanwhile, they received the tribal small-rent from the cultivators through the investment of subsoil rights. To the Xingang tribal lords who resided in poor mountainous areas, however, they mainly collected the tribal big-rent.

Keywords: Qing Taiwan, tribal rents, Anli tribe, Xingang tribe, plains aborigines