

Transformation of Agriculture in Northeast Thailand

Preface

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DD village in Khon Kaen, Northeast Thailand was first studied by the late Mizuno Koichi, a Japanese anthropologist in 1964 and 1965. From 1981 through 1984, the same village was re-studied by an interdisciplinary team. One of the points at issue in evaluating single-village studies is the applicability of its findings to the region as a whole. With this in mind, some of the participants of the DD study together with new members started in 1988 investigating other parts of the Northeast. Though some employed the method of single-village study again, others attempted multi-village approaches. They were free in selecting not only methodologies but also topics. As you will see in this special issue, however, the interest of the majority centered around the transformation of agriculture in the region under the impact of Thailand's remarkable economic growth in and after the 1980s. This is quite natural because the impact is really far-reaching and causing a structural change. Rural Thailand is no more an appropriate place for fieldwork for investigation of rural stagnation and impoverishment, which might still be seen in not a few other developing countries. Instead, what can be seen there is the process of structural change of agriculture in an economy that is taking off.

Various phases of the transformation are dealt with in this issue: the commercialization of rice cultivation by Miyagawa, labor-saving in rice cultivation by Somkiat and Kono, the new balance of plant nutrients with application of chemical fertilizers by Nakamura and Matoh, the sale and consumption of rice in commercialized production by Nakada, the commercial production of maize by Yanagisawa and Nawata, the rural-urban migration seen at the individual migrant level by Funahashi, and the surge of rural industry by Ikemoto. Nagata's paper explores the possibility of combining statistical data with information obtainable through remote sensing. Fukui views the transformation of agriculture in the Northeast in the context of the changes in economic structure of Thailand since the mid-19th century and argues its implications for the issue of the global predicament.

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