

**Ilse Lenz:** Kapitalistische Entwicklung, Subsistenzproduktion und Frauenarbeit. Der Fall Japan. (Campus Forschung, Bd. 395). Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 1984. 330 pages, DM 48.-

This study focuses on the multiple burdens carried by women in highly industrialized societies. The widely expected revolution of the social foundations of patriarchy in the process of industrialization failed to materialize. Instead, we find that women today are responsible for child rearing, work in paid professions and in their families (house work), but continue to be subject to discrimination in society and politics. How did the "great transformation" from agrarian to industrial society affect the status of woman?

The author defines the purpose of her research (originally done for a doctoral dissertation) as tracing the process by which hard-working Japanese peasant women became migrant workers in the cotton industry and later housewives engaged in "modern housework". Rather than describing the formation of industrial relations and labour markets in detail, Lenz sets out to reconstruct the forgotten rural and female dimension in that process. She refutes the frequently cited argument that "semi-feudal" or "pre-modern" elements explain the poor, disadvantaged position of female workers in the technologically advanced sector of the cotton industry. Instead, she confronts us with the importance of agricultural subsistence production (which centers around the peasant woman) for the reproduction of the industrial work-force. The author's empirical research is confined to one case study of the region of Niigata prefecture in the northeast of Japan (75 f). In her theoretical framework, the revitalized concept of "subsistence production" as it was developed by the Bielefeld group of development sociologists and the notion of "patriarchic capitalism" assume a key position. Parallels are drawn to similar phenomena in the NICs of East Asia today, underlining the timeliness of this approach.

The main part of the study is devoted to the empirical research on female migration to the cotton industry 1890-1935. Here, the author relies on "preliminary considerations" towards a theory of capitalism in East Asia as distinct from Europe, mainly because of the heritage of the rice economy. She employs what she refers to as "an unusual approach to Japanese society" by avoiding the conventional focus on the permanent, regular and male work-force in large enterprises.

The book has seven chapters: The first two (I. subsistence production and social reproduction, II. subsistence production and social reproduction in capitalism) provide the basic theoretical assumptions. Chapter III and IV are part of the section focusing on Japan. They contain descriptions of the capitalist development in Japan from the point of view of female labour and the position and role of women. Chapter V and VI are the actual case study of female worker-migrants



into the cotton industry and Ch. VII gives a survey of contemporary processes.

In my opinion this research work deserves attention as it brings out the role of village women as bearers and victims of the path towards an industrialized society in capitalist Japan. Much evidence is provided to support the concept of patriarchal capitalism – a notion subtly developed here by Lenz (185, 237). I also appreciate the sections of empirical research (pp. 127-153, 156-182) and the wide use of testimonies and autobiographic material about women labourers. These findings, combined with the previously supplied data create a lively record of historical development in the countryside of Niigata in the process of industrialization. Moreover, the author's evaluation of the village community and living conditions is well balanced. On the one hand she attacks romantic glorifications but she does not fall into the other extreme of overlooking the elements of genuine solidarity and strength among rural women. For a student of social movements this study provides a highly stimulating discussion of what is normally called the "proletariat" in the early phase of industrialization in Japan. It becomes clear that this notion has very different meanings in different countries and cultures even though capitalism has created a common frame of reference today. The specific composition of the working class has far-reaching implications for the social movements. Unfortunately, these issues are only touched upon in the final part of the book, where the author points out the subconscious "masculinization" of the status of wage earners even inside the movement.

There are a number of problems with this study: at times, headlines promise more than what is offered (e.g. p. 122) in the text. Regional differences are mentioned several times, but the question whether the case of Niigata agricultural development can be generalized is not answered adequately. Different types of rural development are described (borrowing from the theory of Ōuchi Tsutomu), while other typologies (dōzoku-type vs. kōgumi-type) are not discussed at all. Preeminent writers in rural sociology like Ariga Kizaemon, Kitano Seiichi, Suzuki Eitaro, Oikawa Hiroshi – all dealing with village community, family organization, tenant system etc. – are, with the exception of Fukutake Tadashi, not even mentioned.

The book appears to have been put together in some haste, as indicated by numerous misspellings, mistakes in grammar (e.g. "Bewegung nach Freiheit und Volksrechten", "Credo zur Mutterrolle"), sloppy annotations (the same footnote serves as annotation for different statements), mistakes in the list of references (e.g. there is no Hane 1976 !). At the very least, the editing staff of Campus must be criticized. A more professional version of the study would be desirable.

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