

Development and Decline of Silkworm-Egg Producers  
—The Case of Shiojiri Village, Chiisagata, Nagano—

MATSUMURA Satoshi

As it is well known, in the silkworm-egg production industry in Japan, a production system that combined silkworm-egg production and silk reeling developed rapidly and kept its technical leadership in the silkworm-egg production industry from the 1920s onwards. The large scale silkworm-egg producers in the district of Chiisagata, Nagano, one of the most important areas of its kind in Japan, remained, for a relatively long time, independent of raw silk reeling industrialists, however. This was because the special contract trade system did not spread in the Kantō and Tōzan districts where traditional silkworm-egg producers maintained a close relation with sericultural farmers. It was only much later that they became dependent on the raw silk reeling industrialists.

To survive the Shōwa Depression (Shōwa Kyōkō), the large scale producers needed to have accumulation of a certain amount of profit and, when they didn't have it, they fell into complete decline. In some cases, they cooperated reeling industrialists to escape from the crisis, but the latter's management crisis even accelerated their decline.

This paper also analyzes the labor employed in large farms, taking the case of the Simizu farm. On one hand, the farms had, as the base of its labor, village workers, including employees who were dependent on them. On the other hand, the farms hired an important number of free workers who commuted from neighboring local city as well as migrant workers who came from distant regions. In this sense, these farms had transitional character.

And, they had common interest with landlords as long as they faced village workers and peasants. Since they were not in contradiction with land hold by landlords, and village workers as tenant farmers were held dependent on large farms also through traditional tenantry relation. For this reason, the

negotiation power of poor peasants remained weak at least till the 1920s. The development of large farms thus played only a very limited role in changing the structure of the village.