A Sino-Indian comparison of *terra-nexus*: land, taxation, and social systems during the 15th–20th centuries

TAGUCHI Kojiro (Osaka University)
OGAWA Michihiro (IASA, the University of Tokyo)
Introduction: What is the land system?

**Land system**: a notion suitable for capturing the long-term institutional structure and dynamics of a particular "society"; the social status of each individual was inextricably linked to the land.

- The key: **how to define the land system as an institutional entity**
- Too many research areas are involved with the distribution of agricultural land in both China and India, (or anywhere else).

**The aim of the presentation**: to explore a methodology for describing the similarity, difference, continuity and discontinuity of this “**embeddedness** (@K. Polanyi)” in multi-layered society of China and India
A terminology of *Terra-nexus*: an issue of commensurability

- Conceptual terminology ("legal status of tillers, tenants landowners"; "property rights"…): based on Western experiences=> how *broadly* and *substantively* the extended definitions allow for comparison.

- Less productive non-irrigated land: irrigation facilities (canals and wells) and labor are more significant than the occupation of the land surface!

- Thus, the terminology of *Terra-nexus* (≠property relation, tenure system) is more proper, to distance from the viewpoint simply seeing land as a commodity or asset.

Indapur Taluka, Pune District, Maharashtra (Deccan Plateau), India
Geographical Settings: An Overview

- Population increase: 100-200 million in the pre-industrial period/ three to five times in the twentieth century
- The total amount of cropland almost doubled in the twentieth century from tens of millions of hectares in the pre-industrial period.
- The doctrinal systems were established in the several centuries BCE: Confucianism and Taoism in China, Hinduism (Brahmanism) and Buddhism in India

> Both countries were still too large for the ecclesiastical systems governing social life to be normative in real time.
- Diverse climatic conditions & agricultural patterns
**Terra-nexus in China**

Hiroaki Terada’s argument: a common logic underlying the various forms of “land tenure” in China proper during the Qing period … land by outright purchase (*juemaï*), land with covenants to resell (*huomaï*), land by mortgage (*dian*), land through foreclosure (*diya/tai*), land of cultivation rights, etc. = "chronological and managerial legitimacy for holding land”

- The individual judgements underpinned the formation and subsistence of these “rights” + the principle of "fairness"

A reasonably sophisticated system underlying each of the “rights”, ranging from that to the cultivation of land to quasi-ownership ⇋ the simple yet a sort of society-destroying rule found only on the exclusion of others, such as protection of property rights.
Various forms of land tenure were distributed in a pattern of gradation: It was common for multiple “titles” to coexist within the same plot of land simultaneously: two-tiered ownership / three-tiered ownership

=> "Multi-stratifications/segmentalization of real rights" *real rights: claims in rem

❖ A form of stabilizing land-human relations or enhancing the predictability over them.
❖ Beyond this terra-nexus/equilibrium, multi-layered state agencies exerted limited control (the bottom-right figure)

=> Quota system as the tax collection scheme at the upper layers ∴ small government of Chinese empire
Terra-nexus in India

In India, the land system was more deeply embedded in state institutions and social fabric than in China.

The term “terra-nexus” : it was not so much for a plot of land on the terrain surface, as the total package of entitlements containing the “land rights”.

In Western India, this package was often described by the term Watan. It was the the various hereditary “titles” held by village headmen, farmers, craftsmen, and astrologers: full members of the village community. It could be sold and purchased or, transferred, too,

> holders of watan: rights and duties, and they all could be stakeholders of land.
Terra-nexus in India: Package of Entitlements

Hierarchy of the Local Society: the chief, who also held watan, was a hereditary officer of a local government. The government officer (Local Government 1)

Maratha Empire in Western India: Rule over a large area with the cities at its core: based on local redistribution by watan. It was also connected to the caste system.

The principle of watan, a sort of equity, governed the entire social layer built up from village to county/sub-district > miras and kani in Southern India / jajmani (its remains) in Northern India.

The terra-nexus in India: land itself was rarely sold as a commodity. As the British colonization expanded in India, the strong linkage between individual plots of land with social relations, social status, and village communities was eventually undermined.
Modality of land transaction and social status

Core Issue: the distinctiveness in the modality in which "land rights" were transacted (i.e., how land were embedded in social fabrics)

(China: the multi-stratification/segmentalization of real rights) The degree of bond between a particular plot of land and a particular group was relative, analog, measurable, and non-unitary

Above is far from “well-defined property rights”. "Pre-modern and chaotic land system"?

- Functional correspondence, similar (minor) procedures and operational practices can be found in Western Europe, such as Britain (multiple land titles, ill-defined ownership): etic approach.
- The West, India, China were totally different in terms of their own trajectories and institutions: emic approach

How to reconcile/integrate these two approaches?
Transaction Cost Issues

(Two focus points)
i) society as a multilayered system
ii) our cognitive basis (episteme community) for identifying and evaluating institutions

i) Society as a multilayered system
Terra-nexus in imperial China: **high transaction costs** in terms of information gathering, bargaining, and contract fulfillment.
∵ "The "local practices" — not predictable for outsiders of the respective social fabrics
=> **The amount of transaction costs** (+the affinity between market and a terra-nexus) **differs greatly according to the scope (layer) of the society in question.**
Sino-Indian Comparison: a formulation

- If the social layer structure image held in a particular perspective-sharing group (episteme community) is homogenous, then this situation is described as below:

\[(\forall O_{21n}, O_{21n} \in P_{21n}) \rightarrow T_{18}: (\forall I_{18n}, I_{18n} \in P_{18n}) \rightarrow S-1mr_{18n} \subset S-2qs_{18n} \subset Cqs_{18} \subset Wem_{18}, - (1)\]

\[(\forall I_{18n}, I_{18n} \in P_{18n}) \rightarrow S-1ep_{18n} \subset S-2qs_{18n} \subset Cqs_{18} \subset Wem_{18}, - (2)\]

\[(\forall O_{20n}, O_{20n} \in P_{20n}) \rightarrow T_{18}: (\forall I_{18n}, I_{18n} \in P_{18n}) \rightarrow S-1ep_{18n} \subset S-2tc_{18n} \subset Ifu_{18} \subset Wem_{18}, - (3)\]

Notes: \(O_n\) Modern Observer \(\in\) an element of \(\sim\) \(\forall\) universal quantifier \(\rightarrow\) identify as \(\subset\) be included by \(\sim\)

P_n Episteme community (a domain in which the choice of specific data, logics and terminologies is made exclusively and has intrinsic significance in explaining the world)

S-n Social layer \(I_n\) Individual actor \(T_n\): A specific timepoint \(C\) China \(I\) India \(W\) World

Line (2): the banner land system

(Identifiers) mr (Multi-stratifications/segmentalization of real rights) ep (Entitlements package)
qs (Quota system) tc (Tributary chiefdom) fu (Fiscal union) em (Early modern)

* Line (2) is for Banner land system in China. => for the taxonomy, see the matrix
Sino-Indian Comparison: a formulation

❖ If the social layer structure image held in a particular perspective-sharing group (episteme community) is homogenous, then this situation is described as below:

(China in the 18th century)
\[ (\forall O_{21n}, O_{21n} \in P_{21n}) O_{21n} \rightarrow T_{18} : (\forall I_{18n}, I_{18n} \in P_{18n}) I_{18n} \rightarrow S-1mr_{18n} \subset S-2qs_{18n} \subset Cqs_{18} \subset Wem_{18}, -(1) \]

\[ (\forall I_{18n}', I_{18n}' \in P_{18n}) I_{18n}' \rightarrow S-1ep_{18n} \subset S-2qs_{18n} \subset Cqs_{18} \subset Wem_{18}, -(2) \]

(India in the 18th century)
\[ (\forall O_{20n}, O_{20n} \in P_{20n}) O_{20n} \rightarrow T_{18} : (\forall I_{18n}, I_{19n} \in P_{18n}) I_{18n} \rightarrow S-1ep_{18n} \subset S-2tc_{18n} \subset Ifu_{18} \subset Wem_{18}. -(3) \]

❖ The formulation as such allows us to capture the relationship between different social layers (the emergence), as well as diverse terra-nexus within a single empire.
The issue of agenda setting

(Two focus points)
i) society as a multilayered system
ii) our cognitive basis (episteme community) for identifying and evaluating institutions

ii) Our cognitive basis for identifying and evaluating institutions
❖ The significance of any criterion: only be confirmed through communication between us each time.
❖ Fundamental question: what exactly to explain by setting up various criteria and variables?
   — A different perspective leads to a different historical picture.
=>An interesting example in development economics of India, in terms of terra-nexus and quantitative history
Abhijit Banerjee and Lakshmi Iyer: the long-term effects of institutions brought in from outside in the colonial period.>> The land tenure system, or land tax collection scheme introduced by the British, had nothing to do with the complicated relations in the existing terra-nexus.

i)  land tax collection through landlords (*zamindari*)

ii)  direct collection targeting peasants (*ryotwari*).

=> the areas where the former prevailed during British rule (≒the districts with prolonged elite rule) showed relatively low levels of infrastructure development, literacy, and voting rate.
A different approach (by Jha and Talathi) the per capita economic level in India in the 1990s, estimated by nighttime satellite images,

> more affected by the difference between the districts directly ruled by the British and those indirectly: Princely States than by the difference in the land tenure system (39% lower in the former than in the latter)
These discussions suggest:

i) Differences in the explicandum (variable $Y_i$ in the regression equation $Y_i = \alpha + \beta X_i$) => a different picture of institutional interpretation.

ii) The explanations vary depending on geographical coverage or different layers of the society.

❖ Combined with our discussion

➢ The value of both studies and emic approaches can be demonstrated only after examining their results over various timescales, with various geographical coverages, and with various explicandum.

➢ The very situation in which "a different perspective leads to a different image" should be brought onto the analytical agenda from the meta-level.

➢ Macro-level analysis using sophisticated statistical technique: inadequate (so far, at least) in terms of understanding the various domains + analyzing the operational details at the lower layers.
Episteme Community: Revisiting

- Depending on the selection of i) the variables have to be explained, ii) target social layers and timescales iii) data => Long-term social or institutional images may vary
- All of these form the institutional images within the episteme community for China and India.
  - it is necessary to record and describe the empirical data, theoretical analysis, and discussion related to the system, as well as the "epistemic" foundations that support the significance of the discussion altogether, in a summarized style.

Therefore, we are developing
a) a notation (formulation) to represent multi-layered institutions
b) an accumulation of various statistical data (in progress)
Concluding Remarks

1) As a criterion for comparing societies, holistically, we coined a term *terra-nexus*.
2) we have shown the possibility of characterizing China’s ”representative” tera-nexus as *multi-stratified/ segmentalized real rights*, and India as *the package of entitlements*.
3) The way land was embedded in society, we can regard them as two ways of “avoiding” transaction costs reduction, which were All of these are logical consequences for a small government:
   a) to distribute agricultural profits to the growing population by layering the market for land-related “titles”, as in China
   b) to strictly define the community memberships, as in the Deccan in the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, by tagging hereditary entitlements to specific villages
Concluding Remarks

4) We also attempted to develop the notation exploiting the logical formulae, to capture the multi-layered structure of institutions as well as epistemological horizon.

5) The logical formulae notation introduced here can be quite an efficient way to describe the above highly convoluted (and understandably so) situation, and to bridge the gap between the emic and etic approaches.
Merci pour votre attention!

Multi-stratification of real rights and multi-layered state institution (China)

Package of entitlements (India)
Selected Bibliolist (alphabetical)