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Title	＜書評＞ 石井知章著，『中国革命論のパラダイム転換――K．A．ウィットフォーゲルの「アジア的復古」をめぐり』，社会評論社，2012年．
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Citation	年報人間科学．2014，35，p．173-176
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://doi.org/10.18910/27122
rights	
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〈書評〉

石井知章著
『中国革命論のパラダイム転換――K．A．ウィットフォーゲルの「アジア的復古」をめぐり』
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周　雨霏

The Chinese economic miracle that started in 1990 silenced questions on the legitimacy of the Communist regime for a while. However, an unprecedented amount of new documentation that became available after the opening of the Communist International Archives in the early 1990s brought forth requests for a refinement of the history of the CCP's rise to power. Recently, with the successive release of the Chiang Kai-shek diaries at the Hoover Institute from 2006 onwards, a new boom of re-examination of the CCP's role in the Chinese revolution is arising.

After having articulated the high relevance of K. A. Wittfogel's concept of "hydraulic society" to China's political present in his previous work in 2008, Tomoaki Ishii, Professor of Politics at Meiji University this time shifted his focus to a Wittfoglian narrative on the CCP's way from a small group of left-wing intellectuals to rulers of a single-party state. K. A. Wittfogel (1896-1988), the long-forgotten German-American Marxologist and polemicist, who reintroduced into Marxist theory the study of nature as a dimension of reality decisive for the analysis of society, devised the theory that in early stage of civilizations the building and operating of large-scale irrigation works led to concentration of power in the hands of bureaucratic elite. He likened such societies to the Communist system in the Soviet Russia and China and accused the socialists' attempt of building industrial societies on the basis of nationalization of private ownership to be "restoration of Oriental despotism".

The title of Ishii's book accurately summarizes his central idea: The reinterpretation of the Chinese revolution and recent political developments in the People's Republic of China in the Wittfoglian paradigm, in other words, reinventing the concept of the Asiatic mode of production and incorporating it into the analysis of recent political events in China.

The book has seven chapters, divided into two main parts. The first looks at K. A. Wittfogel's extensive research paper *A Short History of Chinese Communism* (1956) that reexamined the Chinese revolution from the triangular perspective of three main actors: the Guomindang (GMD), the CCP and the Comintern.

In employing Wittfogel's methodology which shed light on Moscow's role in CCP's interaction with non-Communist organizations, Part I throws doubt on the conventional and dominating narrative of the Chinese revolution, which claims Mao's heretical originality for a Communist power strategy was based essentially on peasant support and indigenous elements.

The arguments are chronologically unfolded. The first two chapters offer a critical assessment on the Comintern's role in the Chinese revolution during the first United Front between the CCP and the GMD (1924-1927). Not very different from the advocates of the Asiatic mode of production, Ishii saw the destruction of the first United Front as a disastrous result of Soviet, or Stalin's misconception of Chinese property and class relations as "feudal". They failed to recognize the bureaucratic-bourgeois character of Oriental landlordism. Following this path, Ishii's thesis is unique in characterizing the nature of the CCP and the GMD as oscillating in a power balance: the GMD, representing the national bourgeoisie, had the establishment of „bourgeois democracy" and modernization of China as their overall goal, while the CCP under the intervention of Comintern turned their focus from proletarian revolution to expansion of itself from a small group into a central mass political party, which understandably included the demolition of the GMD. Ishii claims this replacement of the revolutionary goal was the first and crucial step towards the "Asiatic Restoration" (p. 82).

Building on a careful analysis of the textual history and the political substance of Mao's *Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan* in 1927 (湖南农民运动考察报告), the third chapter rejects Benjamin Schwarz's Maoism concept which sees as the revolutionary vanguard not the proletariat but the poor peasantry as organized and led by themselves. In putting Mao's change of direction in the background of a shifting Communist line, it breaks the legend of Maoism and reveals the fact, that Mao did not outline a concept for a Communist-led and peasant-supported revolution, but he was actually following Moscow's directives until the end of the war (p. 195). By integrating the history of China more completely into Stalin's (and the post-October Lenin's) unilinear scheme of development, Mao substantially helped the Moscow ideocrats bury the Marxist view of the Asiatic mode of production – and of China.

Chapter four features the Second Sino-Japanese war on a broad scale and highlights the correlations between Moscow's changing political needs and the CCP's shifting attitude toward the GMD. By illustrating significant changes in the CCP policy prior and after two events – the Munich Agreement of 1938 and the Stalin-Hitler Pact of 1939 – it discloses a long tabooed and ignored hypothesis: Moscow had a decisive say in the fateful events not only during the wartime, but also in the postwar period on numerous issues including their effort to collaborate with Chiang Kai-shek (p. 253).

As the first four chapters suggest, pre-modern China had neither feudal lords nor serfs. A Communist strategy based on a feudal interpretation of the Chinese society necessarily led to self-defeating actions. However, in order to seize the power, the CCP followed the Kremlin mode of replacing the "proletarian revolution supported by a workers and peasants alliance" with a peasants' revolution. As a result, China lost its subject of proletarian revolution and established a disguised Communist regime, which, not different from the Soviet Union's, was practically despotism emerged from the Asiatic Restoration.

The second shorter part moves the focus toward recent political discourse in China. As the most well-known thinker of China's new left, Wang Hui was under fire for casting the political development in China from the 1960's in the term of "de-politicization". In pointing out Wang Hui's ulterior motive when using the term "de-politicization", Ishii criticizes Wang's attempt to re-define the Culture Revolution as an organic component of a worldwide continuing and totalizing de-revolutionary process in the 1960's (p. 273). Wang argues that as the CCP gradually lost its political values and its social goals during the political struggle and power play in the Cultural Revolution, the political context in China thus experienced a decisive turn from the "party-state"–a state that was guided by the political values of a party–to a "state-party," in which the party became nothing but "a component of the state apparatus". This metamorphosis of political parties into states, Wang noted, has been a world-wide phenomenon, true no less of Western-style multi-party representative democracies than of the Chinese Communist Party. Following the Wittfogelian path, Ishii points out two vital confusions in Wang's argument. First of all, Wang wrongly and probably intentionally equated the CCP, which emerged in a peasant revolution, with Western political parties, which originated in a modern democratic context resulted from class struggle (p. 274). On this basis, Wang successfully "laundered" China's "whole revolutionary century" as China's alternative way of political modernization, and covered up the typically pre-modern and "Asiatic" irrational elements which caused social turbulence and violent repression in a chain of China's post-war political events (p. 291f).

This book has several virtues. In particular, its early chapters present a detailed and well documented account of the early developments of the CCP. The author added numerous newly available documents supplementing Wittfogel's view in *A short History of Chinese Communism*. In addition, the full translation of Wittfogel's new foreword to *Oriental Despotism* (Vintage version 1981) is introduced to the Japanese audience for the first time. It sheds light on the genealogy of Asiatic Restoration in a deeply transnational and historical way.

The book also has some weaknesses. Firstly, while it attempts to incorporate recent events including the Chongqing Incident (重慶事件) of 2012 into China's overall political development story, it casts things in

terms of "pre-modern" or "Asiatic" irrationality. But explosive rallies and dictatorship by authoritarian power holders are not necessarily signs of an existing Oriental despotism. Tyranny, radical religious frenzy and nationalist fervor for example, often caused far greater legal turbulence and frustration in democratization than what we have seen in China, yet few would use the word "Asiatic Restoration" to describe their situations.

Secondly, as far as the Wittfogelian view of Oriental societies is concerned, it has had to cope with a meticulous empirical analysis of significant Chinese economic indices, including standard of living, market development, agrarian productivity, institutional structures and, most importantly, the nature of today's ruling class and its managerial functions – though the lack of reliable data makes any thorough study of the last issue quite difficult. It would also be interesting to examine the practicability of Wittfogel's ideas on breaking the mechanism of oriental Despotism, which he mentioned in his famous conversation with the *Die Zeit* journalist Mathias Greffrath as "minimizing the centralization of the managerial function". I hope the author will continue working on this fruitful intellectual enterprise.