

Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives: Political and Economic Change in a Tohoku Village



Review Author[s]:
William W. Kelly

Journal of Japanese Studies, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Winter, 1993), 159-163.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0095-6848%28199324%2919%3A1%3C159%3AOPELPA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-0>

Journal of Japanese Studies is currently published by The Society for Japanese Studies.

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One would have also hoped for a tighter weave between personal experience and scholarly inquiry and the testimonies of natives and newcomers who think and act upon *furusato-zukuri* and who give substance and vitality to statistics, government publications, and official statements. Robertson indeed chronicles important changes, but she does this without showing the full impact of these changes on the lives of the residents. Obviously, cities are places, but the way in which they are perceived and the concomitant attitudes and adaptational responses vary among those who live there. Robertson has given us insights into the structure of this city, i.e., a city can be collective but not unitary (p. 192), but leaves us wanting more of the richness and texture of the meaningful patterns of instrumental and expressive relations. The trope *furusato* is conceptually connected to the city but remains meaningfully unconnected to the people. Hence we eagerly await the author's next iteration of Kodaira's ongoing processes.

Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives: Political and Economic Change in a Tōhoku Village. By Jackson H. Bailey. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1991. xii, 259 pages. \$30.00

Reviewed by
WILLIAM W. KELLY
Yale University

One of the ways in which Europeans can perhaps empathize with Japanese life better than can North Americans is their shared national geographies of capital-centrism. Greeks, Scandinavians, and French, especially, can readily understand the consequences of an enormous concentration of political, economic, educational, and media institutions in a single national center. Stockholm, Oslo, Athens, Paris, and Tokyo each holds immense sway over its country's regions, which are both attracted and repelled by such unipolar force fields.

Yet those who wield such influence have long had misgivings about this institutional concentration. From the Tokugawa's *sankin kotai* to the present-day mandarin's *kyōiku esukarētā*, coming up in the world has meant going up to the capital. And from eighteenth-century edicts that sought to improve domain finances and to empty Edo of its transients and migrants down to the most recent Fourth National Development Plan, regional development has been a perennial concern of metropolitan elites.

From the "tradition boom" (*dentō būmu*) of the 1960s to the more

recent sloganeering of *furusato-zukuri*, *chihō no jidai*, *jiba sangyō*, and *mura okoshi jigyō*, time and again the linguistic billboards have been raised by planners, politicians, and commentators to celebrate, subsidize, and stimulate the heartlands beyond the Pacific urban-industrial belt. Time and again, too, the plans and policies they promote have proven well-intentioned but ill-conceived—and sometimes downright silly. Recently the clever market researchers at Hakuodo's Institute of Life and Living (Seikatsu Sōgō Kenkyūjo) coined the phrase “*OYKOT raifu*” (the inverse of Tokyo life) to tout their summer 1989 report that highlighted the attractiveness of life in 10 regional cities. As the tag suggests, provincial life reverses Tokyo's reputed “three negatives” (*mitsu no ma-nuke*): a frenetic pace, cramped space, and impoverished human relations (*jikan, kūkan, ningen kankei ni mazushii koto*). Come to the provinces to enjoy the OYKOT life of quality time, elbow room, and neighborly contact! And sometimes the region-mongering is merely disingenuous, as with the media darling of the summer 1992 Upper House elections, the Japan New Party and its photogenic leader Hosokawa Morihito. The former governor of Kumamoto quickly learned to style himself after Ross Perot and loudly emphasized local autonomy and decentralization. Like his *tōzama daimyō* ancestors, however, he knows how to adopt the outsider pose only because he is a consummate inside-the-Yamanote player.

Bailey's fascinating book is about some of this very same regional development over the last three decades, and its most remarkable feature is that there is not single mention of any National Plan, of the National Planning Agency itself, of the much-touted “Age of Localities” and “Village Revitalization Projects.” Life has changed dramatically for residents of his Iwate locality, and much of that is due to political leadership and economic activity. Residents have benefited from massive infusions of central funds, but the top-down money almost always funded bottom-up ideas. His case is a vivid demonstration of the gap between what it means to talk worriedly about regional development and what it actually takes to do something about it in postwar Japan.

The particular locality of Bailey's study is the rural administrative village of Tanohata, and his subject is its political and economic transformations from the mid-1950s through the mid-1980s. Tanohata lies along the Rikuchū coast of Iwate Prefecture, and its boundaries extend back into the mountainous interior. The three villages that were merged in 1889 to form Tanohata thus have combined—uneasily—fishing, forestry, and dry-field farming interests. In the 1950s, there was nothing that much favored or even presaged Tanohata's subsequent bootstrap successes, except perhaps the undistinguished backwardness itself. Yet by the mid-1980s, Tanohata was known throughout Tohoku and the country for innovative programs in

local enterprise and international education. Its story is compelling, and it is told well by Bailey, a historian whose own involvement with Tanohata began in 1972 and continues today. He has been very much a participant-observer.

Iwate Prefecture is commonly tagged the Tibet of Japan, but it is more appropriately the Appalachia or the Abruzzi or Occitan of Japan. It is not that Iwate has been isolated, ignored, and undeveloped, but that it has long been de-developed by a national economy that has extracted and attracted its human and natural resources over several centuries. Tanohata in the 1950s was one of its many rural backwaters, with dismal health conditions, poor schooling, few roads, and declining crops and fishing. Demand for its single product of value, charcoal, was disappearing with the national shift to kerosene.

Economic change began inauspiciously with apparent political suicide. The mayor sabotaged a prefectural move to merge the village with an administrative neighbor by drunkenly insulting the assembled officials at the announcement banquet. Prefectural officials were vengeful, but the effect, however, was to remind at least some local residents that there might be something worth salvaging of a Tanohata identity, whose only meaning hitherto had been stigmatic. The next decade brought to the fore a number of new local leaders, especially the major figure in Bailey's book, Hayano Senpei, who was elected mayor in 1965 and was serving his fifth term in the late 1980s.

In an important sense, Tanohata's subsequent history is a story of Hayano and a few other key individuals. He understood immediately that "the vision thing" was doubly critical; from the first, he enunciated an ambitious comprehensive plan for Tanohata, and also seized every public relations opportunity to publicize it within and outside the village. For all of his personal drive, however, he could also identify and convince some talented individuals to come down from the capital or make the U-turn or simply stay at home in Tanohata to work with him. They figure prominently in the book, and they include women as well as men; Bailey makes effective use of interviews and a local collection of women's oral history (e.g., pp. 13–16, 60–62, 219–22).

Earlier, I borrowed the bootstrap metaphor from Bailey, but it is clear that Tanohata was not a case of autochthonous change. Tokyo planner talk meant little to local officials, but money and attention did, and Hayano assiduously cultivated higher political and ministerial links. From his earliest days as a fishing cooperative head, he was a member of Suzuki Zenkō's support group. He allied himself with Chida Tadashi, Iwate's "education governor" and as important a postwar politician for Tohoku as Governor Hiramatsu Morihiko of Oita has been for Kyushu. And he turned his early

support of a Waseda University reforestation project that was started in Tanohata in the early 1960s into a valuable network of connections. This eventually reached Earlham College, the American college that remains Tanohata's partner in international educational exchanges.

Thus, this is a study of local leadership but not simply a biography of leaders. Hayano and his team are never far from center stage, but Bailey gives equal weight to the structures of local political economy and the circumstances of the historical moment that enable and shape their work. The point is no less important for being obvious—that any viable regional development requires the conjunction of dynamic leadership and its mobilization of a local population and outside resources.

In addition to the larger themes of the study, there are a number of specific issues that will interest social scientists of regional Japan, including perspectives on rural education, local politics, and “third sector” enterprise. One of the chief controversies of the 1970s (here as elsewhere) was establishing a consolidated middle school for the village (pp. 127–34). It was contentious because it required many students to board away from home and fueled their upward educational aspirations just at the peak of the related problems of *dekasegi* workers, household succession, and the difficulty of attracting marriage partners for farm youth. At the same time, many argued that any strong sense of local identity as well as training for a local job base demanded just that educational framework. It was a pivotal debate in many parts of Japan. (Characteristically, Hayano used the village's Waseda connections to get an architectural professor to design the new school; it promptly won a national competition in 1977 for the best educational architecture of the year, which he parlayed into further public relations for his educational policies.)

Bailey also offers a rare account of local-level relations among the mayor, council assembly, and town office, and further corroborates the decentered and horizontally articulated models of regional Japan by political scientists such as Richard Samuels, Steven Reed, and Kent Calder (e.g., pp. 102–19). And finally, Tanohata is instructive for being at the center of one of the celebrated successes of 1980s privatization, the coastal Sanriku Railway (pp. 187–201). Santetsu, as it is known, was spun off of Japanese National Railways as the inaugural example of joint public-private investment initiatives. (Not coincidentally, it was formed during Suzuki Zenkō's two years as prime minister.) It has transformed the coastline, stimulating commuter jobs, tourist promotion, and maritime products marketing, while raising fears of a new kind of pollution.

Tanohata by the late 1980s had a healthy local economy. The reforestation project, profitable vegetable and dairy farms, new fishing port facilities, and expanding tourist facilities afforded a comfortable OYKOT standard of living. It proudly displayed its international education pro-

grams to a steady stream of visitors, but strongly rejected prefectural and Mombusho offers to fold them into national structures like the JET program that Tanohata had more than once anticipated. It has held to its path of local control.

Tanohata is exceptional, but in the sense of being exemplary, not unique.¹ Its accomplishments are also quite fragile, and the local future is hazy. As a weather forecast, it would be the familiar *hare tokidoki kumori*. Bailey is hopeful but not sanguine. So much has depended on the determination and imagination of Hayano and other individuals who are now passing from the scene but whose forceful presence has made it harder for others to gain experience. Local tourist and resort development must now cooperate or contend with the massive metropolitan capital of corporate conglomerates like Seibu and Tōkyū. Whether the legacy of Hayano's generation of local leaders includes sustainable commitment and talent will be its final test.

Community and Commerce in Late Medieval Japan: The Corporate Villages of Tokuchin-ho. By Hitomi Tonomura. Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1992. xiv, 285 pages. \$37.50.

Reviewed by
CARL STEENSTRUP
Universität München

In Shiga Prefecture, east of Lake Biwa, stands the city of Yōkaichi, including the town called Imabori. In medieval times, Imabori was a residential cluster in one of Enryakuji's many *shōen*, Tokuchin-ho, and formed a village-based corporate group marked by various forms of collective ownership and administration, that is, a *sō*. Some of the *sō* citizens were members of a merchants' collective, called the "Honai Merchants." Most adult males in Imabori were members of a *miyaza* or shrine association running the Hie (or Hiyoshi) shrine, which was dedicated to Jūzenji, a guardian deity of Enryakuji. (Mention in the book and this review of the "Jūzenji shrine" thus refers to the Hie shrine in Imabori.)

The needs of *sō*, merchants' collective, and *miyaza* for internal and

1. It is important to mention two educational videotapes about four other Iwate towns that Bailey has just produced with David Plath and others. These 30-minute portraits, which pair localities pursuing different solutions to similar problems, are highly instructive though unintended amplifications of the book's themes. Produced by the Media Production Group, they may be purchased for \$35 each (VHS format) from the Center for Educational Media, Earlham College, Richmond, IN 47374.