

**EMERGENT CULTURE OF JAPANESE ORGANIC FARMING:
Miyoshi Producer Group-Tokyo Consumer Group Co-Partnership**

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Abstract

In this paper, I describe how individuals working at the grass roots level influence structural change, and at how they act within structural limitations. My starting point is a relationship of contestation and change, not one of institutional stability and cohesion. I am looking at the fight for subsistence on the part of organic farmers and the rights of consumption on the part of urban consumers as a major line of popular defense. The arguments and tentative conclusions I have drawn are based on my on-going two year doctoral dissertation research project in which I am focusing on a group of thirty-two farm families growing organically at Miyoshi village, located at the southern tip of Bōsō Peninsula, that has negotiated a direct-marketing relationship with a Tokyo-area consumer group of approximately 1,400 families interested in not only obtaining organically-grown food, but in helping to support the farmers growing it. This attempt to decentralize the structure of agriculture, create a viable farm community based on local inputs and ecologically sustainable methods, and form direct links with urban consumers, may be a key to rural revitalization not only in Japan, but in many parts of the world.

In order to put the present dilemma facing the majority of Japanese farmers into historical perspective, I briefly analyze both economic and ideological aspects of major changes in Japanese agriculture in the postwar period, including the recent move toward organic farming. I also show how the factors involved in these local changes are closely interlocked with world geo-political changes, including Japan's need to

increase agricultural imports in response to its export surplus.

In an age of global environmental degradation, those within the organic food movement are dealing with concepts that demand urgent consideration: minimum disruption of ecological processes and maximum conservation of materials and energy, substitution of the most dangerous aspects of present technology with ones that cause minimum disturbance to natural processes, and the decentralization of economy at all levels. They have a vision of a society in harmony with the environment and are developing models to show how ecology can be blended into the marketplace and daily living. "Organic" is a linking symbol through which consumers can relate to producers. The implications inherent in this philosophy are of global significance.

By focusing on an organic farmer/urban consumer co-partnership, I am looking at part of the "Other Japan", that realm of society that gets little exposure. I think that it is particularly important that Japan not be mistakenly assumed to have all the answers to the problems of reconciling technology with tradition. Contrary to the image of a Japan that is unified and single-minded in the pursuit of Japan Inc., I am attempting to show in this short paper, that there are individuals and groups which are actively working toward other visions of what Japan should become.

Introduction

At the national level, the future of Japanese agriculture appears to rest on the outcome of the "free trade" question being debated by domestic and international policy-makers, but at the local level throughout the nation farmers are innovatively creating a variety of viable options for themselves without government assistance.

The Japanese government decided in 1987 to sacrifice what remains of the agricultural sector in order to maintain the strong export-oriented industrial sector (Ohno 1988: 22). Japan's export surplus has forced it to increase agricultural imports to avoid the impositions of trade sanctions by its trading partners, the United States in particular (Moore 1990: 247-66). The Japanese government is steadily lifting its

ban on an increasing number of agricultural chemicals in order to open its door widely to agricultural imports. The Dunkel Plan in the on-going GATT Uruguay Round attempts to impose on Japan and other nations "international standards" on agricultural chemicals and food additives, and the Japanese government is hinting at accepting the plan on the grounds of the "removal of trade restrictions" (Japan Press Weekly 1992: 20-1). Chemical levels five to ten times higher than Japan's current standard of acceptance, and the presence of chemical residues presently banned in both exporting and importing countries will have to be accepted according to the Dunkel Plan. If this plan is implemented and the Japanese rice market is opened by tariffication as it demands, the Japanese people will be subjected to eating rice with a much higher chemical residue content than domestically-produced rice (*ibid.*). This is due to the fact that rice is not considered a staple in the American and European diets, and because it is seldom eaten, the "international standards" allow a chemical residue content which would be unacceptable if eaten on a daily basis.

However, many consumer groups are concerned about the high chemical residue content of imported agricultural products, and the added health dangers associated with post-harvest spraying of fungicides and fumigants to prevent spoilage during shipment. Due to the growing awareness of the dangers of chemical ingestion, there is a growing market demand for organically-grown foods. Because Japanese farmers cannot compete with cheap, heavily-subsidized agricultural imports due in part to the increasing costs of production and the small-scale farm operations which prevail in Japan, many farmers have discussed survival options with each other and are turning to organic agriculture in order to survive as farmers. Due to the growing market demand for organically-grown foods as an economic incentive, close to 300 groups of farmers in different regions of Japan have negotiated co-partnership (*teikei*) arrangements with nearby urban consumer groups interested in buying safe foods without chemical residues (Toya 1992 Personal Communication). Co-partnerships vary in size, methods, and ideology but share a basic structural similarity which involves a pre-

subscription of food purchases by consumer groups negotiating directly with farmer groups on prices and crop variety, including the maximum acceptable amount of each crop, and establishing their own distribution channels. By such direct-marketing links between farmers and consumers, middlemen including processors, distributors, and retailers are eliminated, farmers can get a price which will support their families, and consumers gain access to quality food ranging from rice and winter grains to various fruits, vegetables, and root crops at reasonable prices. With the increasing corporate control of agriculture, particularly in the sectors of provision of farm inputs and farm product processing and marketing, and the emphasis in many countries on export-crop production with its inherent price instability, the significance of such grass roots-initiated alternatives takes on global proportions.

Postwar Marginalization of Japanese Farmers: Cause and Effect

The April 1949 budget presented by Finance Minister Ikeda Hayato (later Prime Minister in the years 1960-64) contained a new mechanism which was of great importance in cementing Japan into the American economic empire: the "U.S. Counterpart Fund Special Account" (Bix 1974: 324; Yanaga 1968: 261-2). This allowed Japan to pay for imports from the United States without having to expend its minute foreign exchange reserves. It functioned as a massive tied loan, although repayment was to be more or less instantaneous with the loan. From the U.S. point of view, it provided a mechanism whereby the United States could be reimbursed for its surplus agricultural products which it was unloading on Japan. The Japanese payments could be used either in acquiring assets in Japan, or in paying for direct or indirect military assistance from the Japanese, which took the form of both production of goods and provision of services (*ibid.*).

American action (including the 1946-47 land reform) was geared towards two goals: first, to further the process of structural change in agrarian relations in order to reduce revolutionary potential (Rowley 1972: 8; McCoy 1971: 17); second, to make sure that Japan filled the

gap in its agricultural imports by taking part of the U.S. agricultural surplus. The two goals are not entirely unconnected.

The United States systematized the unloading of part of its surplus in a complex series of deals concluded in March 1954. The core of the combination was the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement, signed in Tokyo on March 8. At the same time the two countries signed an agreement under which Japan would import surplus American agricultural products, as well as guaranteeing U.S. investments in Japan (Yanaga *op cit*: 261; Ohno *op cit*: 17). What this deal meant was that the United States and Japan would strengthen their military alliance beyond the terms of the 1951 security treaty (Mutual Security Act), with the United States further backing Japanese rearmament by helping to finance Japan's arms industry with "counterpart funds". The Japanese guarantees to the United States were explicit: guaranteed purchase of farm surpluses plus guaranteed insurance on U.S. investments. The "counterpart funds" formula thus functioned after the Korean War to convert surplus U.S. grain into Japanese war potential. Three further agreements were concluded under U.S. Public Law 480 (Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act). As Bix (*op cit*) stresses: "Apart from their crucial military value, these four agreements reflected the growing compatibility of U.S. and Japanese mercantilist trade policies during these years. They also confirmed that postwar Japanese capitalism, no less than the prewar variety, intended to cannibalize the countryside for the development of an urban industrial Japan".

Between the years 1945 and 1953, priority had been given to increasing food production and by 1953 the budget for agriculture and forestry comprised 16.6% of the total national budget, but in 1954 when the first purchase of U.S. agricultural surplus was made, the agriculture and forestry budget was slashed 25% to 11.2% of the total (Ohno *op cit*). By 1956, the budget for agriculture had fallen to 8.4% of the national budget, at a time when Japan's food production was still insufficient to meet domestic demand (*ibid*). An agricultural policy of dependence on imported food was thus initiated and the Japanese

military build-up was assured with a 25% increase in the defense budget in 1954 (ibid: 18).

In order to promote the sale of American agricultural products, a nation-wide campaign to encourage Japanese to change their staple from rice to bread was staged in the latter half of the 1950s jointly by the Japanese and American governments which involved many nutritionists and medical doctors (ibid). A U.S. government supported disinformation campaign convinced many Japanese nutritionists that a rice-based diet was nutritionally deficient and even caused "brain damage" (Hammond 1990: 48). The school lunch program, which provided Japanese children with a glass of milk, a slice or two of white bread, and a bowl of meat and/or vegetable stew, was expanded to include primary and secondary school students, paving the way for astronomical increases in imported American agricultural products over the years as the imposed dietary changes affected the taste preferences of younger generations of Japanese (Ohno op cit: 18; Hammond op cit). In recent years, there has been a proliferation of fast-food restaurants in Japan, including the likes of Wendy's Hamburgers, Dunkin' Donuts, Mister Donut, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Shakey's Pizza, and the ubiquitous MacDonald's, along with family-style restaurants such as Denny's, Red Lobster, and Victoria Station. When given a choice of rice or bread with their meals at these Western family-style chain restaurants, I have observed that Japanese, especially the younger generations, will invariably choose bread, even if the main course is a Japanese dish. I suspect that this is not only a matter of taste preference, but has to do with not wanting to be considered uncouth; the choice of bread is a sign of sophistication and bread a symbol of modernity.

Since the United States, even at the end of the official aid program in 1952 continued to provide free wheat for the school lunch program and to subsidize commercial supplies, the Japanese government passed a resolution in 1953 to purchase more wheat and to encourage the use of wheat and dairy products as staple foods (Hammond: 48). The U.S. Wheat Association even went so far as to dispatch a fleet of "kitchen

buses" throughout Japan in 1955 to show housewives how to use imported flour for baking. This campaign failed dismally since few Japanese households had ovens (*ibid*). In the period from the late 1950s to the 1960s, Japan purchased \$445 million of U.S. surplus agricultural goods in PL480 aid and its imports of U.S. farm products in this period amounted to \$10.8 billion; Japan had become a showcase for U.S. agricultural export (Ohno *op cit*). Rice consumption declined from 115 kilograms per capita in 1960 to 75 kilograms in 1985 and is continuing to decline. Likewise, American dumping of surplus grain put Japanese wheat farmers out of business in 1959 or forced them to grow only rice, contributing to the rice glut of the 1970's (Moore 1990: 256).

A second stage in the U.S. export drive began in the early 1960s after the then European Economic Community (EEC) common agricultural policy began to function in 1962 and common protective barriers began to come into effect. An upsurge in exports to Japan contributed directly to the decline of Japan's production of wheat, barley, soybeans, and rapeseed. By 1971, 85% of the wheat consumed in Japan and 93% of the soybeans were imported from the United States. Between 1965 and 1971 the United States accounted for at least 70% of Japan's agricultural imports, and Japan had become not only the biggest importer of U.S. agricultural goods (about twice India's annual total), but the biggest foreign market ever for U.S. farm produce (Bix *op cit*: 342-3). With food becoming a larger and larger item in the family budget, and the price of the key commodities such as wheat, soybeans, and meat rocketing, the importance of this food tie-up (emblematically fused with the 1954 military agreement) should not be underestimated (Ouchi 1966: 147-8). It is today intricately interwoven with such developments as the American onslaughts on the Japanese retailing system and Washington's drive to accelerate Japanese agricultural liberalization.

Industrial Development and the Rise and Fall of Rural

Subcontracting

In Japan, agriculture as a percentage of the gross domestic product

was about 2% in 1988 (26.1% in 1950), yet agriculture remains as an integral part of Japan's modern industrial structure. The national development plans, beginning with then prime minister Kakuei Tanaka's plan to "Remodel the Archipelago" (Tanaka 1973), decentralized industry (and industrial pollution) to rural areas by creating an infrastructure of roads and railways. Townships actively sought out and invited industries to locate in their area in order to increase the tax base as well as provide jobs which would raise the standard of living of the farmers (Moore op cit: 14), but due to the necessity of offering tax incentives and the preponderance of small subcontracting firms offering low wages, the benefits fell far short of expectations. The agricultural sector of the economy has thus been incorporated into, and subordinated by, industrial development. Japanese farming households have created a "part-time farming" strategy, becoming in essence "week-end farmers", and have become a vital link in the expansion of industrial capitalism (Moore op cit: 14; Ohno op cit: 23). Most farmers who started out with a side job to merely supplement their income have slipped into a dependency on wage labor income to purchase labor-saving farm machinery that allows them to increase off-farm income, which in turn is needed to pay for the machinery and increasing amounts of expensive chemical inputs (Moore op cit). The term *kikai bimbo* (machine-induced poverty) is used to describe the condition fostered by high production costs associated with mechanization and application of chemical inputs. By 1985, the average Japanese farming household earned only 15% of its income from farming (ibid; 171) and in 1987, farming households engaged in farming full-time accounted for a mere 15% of all farming households (Ohno op cit). Since the yen doubled in value in relation to the dollar in 1986, many of the subcontracting companies located in rural areas where farm family members have worked as temporary workers since the mid-1970s (Kobayashi 1974: 568-73; Moore op cit: 14) have been relocated by their parent companies such as Sony and Hitachi to low-wage "Third World" countries, so the unemployment rate is increasing in the countryside (Aoki et al 1987).

Big Business and Agriculture

Since the end of World War Two, the Japanese government has been structured to accommodate, even more closely than before the war, the interests of giant business concerns (Fukui 1970; Kolko and Kolko 1972). Since the economic strength of dominant *zaikai* (financial circles) interests is based on the export of manufactured goods, and since it is necessary to compensate for these exports by importing foreign products, the *zaikai* and its related organizations such as *Keidanren* (Federation of Economic Organizations) have applied pressure since 1955 on the government to liberalize agricultural imports, terminate government control of the rice market, and consolidate farms and encourage their mechanization (Ouchi op cit).

A large portion of the Japanese farm market is controlled by giant monopolies, and if *Nōkyō* (Association of Agricultural Cooperatives) is included among these, monopoly capital's control of the farm market is almost complete (Steven 1983: 118-20; Moore op cit: 137-54). *Nōkyō* has a business arm, a bank, and an insurance company which compare with the largest corporations in Japan. Together they handle the bulk of the farmers' purchases of fertilizer and feeds, their sales of agricultural products, and their financial requirements, with vast assets accumulating in the organizations and in the 300 companies they have created (Steven op cit: 118). *Nōrinchūkin* (Agricultural Central Bank of Japan), the quasi-governmental financial arm of *Nōkyō*, is ranked sixth in deposits among the world's largest banks (Nash 1988). This tremendous growth is based on the financial powers legislated to *Nōkyō* through the American Occupation (Moore op cit: 137). There has been an increasing number of farm land foreclosures on debts incurred by farmers through *Nōkyō* when purchasing farm machinery (ibid). In addition, various supermarket chains are being taken over by giant trading companies (*zaibatsu*) which control the agricultural import market.

Vertical integration, a characteristic feature of agriculture in all advanced capitalist countries, has progressed very rapidly in Japan in the last two decades. Vertical integration actually reduces the farmer to

the status of wage laborer who works at home and is paid on a piecemeal basis. It has been gaining ground chiefly in livestock and dairy production, but also in fruit and vegetable production. Even some rice farmers have entered into this type of arrangement with sake brewers and candy manufacturers (Bernier 1988: 87).

However, vertical integration is only one step in the control of agriculture by monopoly capital. Since 1970, giant food combines have been set up, especially by large trading companies such as Mitsubishi Shōji, Mitsui Bussan, Itoh, and Marubeni. These combines are not only limited to processing foodstuffs or feeds using local or imported products, they have also taken over a good share of the actual production of chicken, eggs, and pigs. For example, the four trading companies mentioned above controlled 71.4% of the total production of chicken in 1970 (Hanamura 1972: 79).

Japanese vertically-integrated corporations have clearly gained an increasingly tighter control over the entire agricultural scene, from production and distribution to imports and sales. Their apparent interest is to obtain cheap agricultural products for processing and to tear various sectors of production away from small-scale farmers. Thus, the future does not bode well for family farmers in Japan who continue to uncritically accept government agricultural policy directives and depend upon government-affiliated agencies for support.

**The Number of Full-and Part-time Farming Households
in Japan (1955-1985) (X 1000)**

Year	Full-time Farming Households	Part-time I Households	Part-time II Households
1955	2,105	2,275	1,663
1960	2,078	2,036	1,942
1965	1,219	2,081	2,365
1970	831	1,802	2,709
1975	616	1,259	3,078
1980	623	1,002	3,036
1985	626	775	2,975

Source: Nōrintōkei Kyōkai 1986: 122-123.

Note: Part-time farms in category I: farm households whose income derives partly from non-agricultural work but which receive more than half their total income from agriculture.

Category II: farm households who earn less than 50% of their income from agriculture.

(from: Moore 1990: 13)

**On-Farm Income Compared to Total Income
for Japanese Farm Households (1955-1985)**

Year	On-Farm Income(A) (X 1000 yen)	Total Income(B) (X 1000 yen)	(A/B)
1960	225	449	50.2 %
1965	365	835	43.7 %
1970	508	1,592	31.8 %
1975	1,146	3,960	28.9 %
1980	952	5,594	17.0 %
1985	1,066	6,915	15.4 %

Source: Nōrintōkei Kyōkai 1986: 23.

(from: Moore 1990: 15)

**Public Opinion Survey Results Regarding the Future Number
of Japanese Farms**

Question: What will have happened to the number of rice producing households
in your region ten years from now?

Prefecture	Same as Now	30 Percent Decrease	Half	Lower Than One- Third	No Response
Fukushima	36.4	29.1	20.9	13.6	0.0
(Northern) Miyagi	29.9	46.5	13.2	9.0	1.4
(Southern) Niigata	22.8	54.4	16.5	2.5	3.8
(Middle) Niigata	25.8	49.2	16.9	7.3	3.6
Mie	18.2	52.7	18.2	7.3	3.6
Nagano	15.4	36.5	17.3	25.0	5.8

Source: Kanō 1987: 52.
(from: Moore 1990: 277)

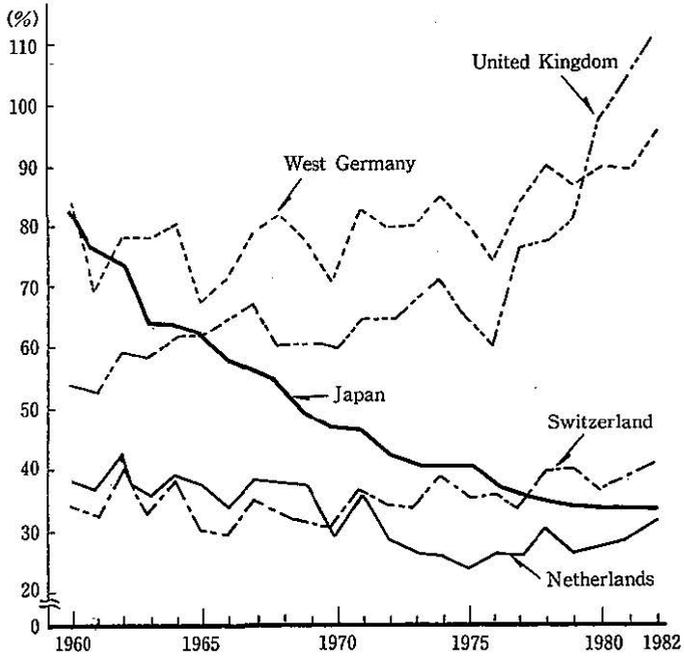
Changing Features of Japanese Agriculture, 1960 and 1985

	1960	1985	1985/1960(%)
Number of farming households	6,057,000	4,376,000	72
No. farming households specializing in farming	2,078,000	626,000	30
Farming population (persons)	14,542,000	6,363,000	44
No. of key farm operators (persons)	11,750,000	3,696,000	32
No. of graduates taking up farming (persons)	127,000	4,000	3
Cultivated acreage (hectares)	6,071,000	5,379,000	89
Paddy fields (")	3,381,000	2,952,000	87
Dry fields (")	2,165,000	1,257,000	58
Orchards (")	451,000	549,000	122
Pasture (")	81,000	621,000	767
Cumulative area under cultivation (")	8,129,000	5,580,000	69
Average annual income of farming household (yen)	410,000	5,502,000	1,342
Average annual income from farming (yen)	225,000	1,066,000	474
Costs of farming operation per farming household (yen)	134,000	1,831,000	1,366
Agricultural chemicals (yen)	5,000	114,000	2,280
Lighting, power (yen)	4,000	77,000	1,925
Agricultural machines (yen)	22,000	382,000	1,736
Feed (yen)	24,000	310,000	1,292
Annual living expenses per farming household (yen)	368,000	4,700,000	1,277
Share of farming income in a farming household's annual income (%)	63	37	
Farming income's contribution to a farming household's living expenses (%)	61	23	

Sources: *Nogyo Shugyo* (Agricultural Census), *Nogyo Sensasu Doko Chosa* (Survey on Employment Trends in Agriculture), *Kochimenseki Chosa* (Survey on Farmlands), and *Nohka Keizai Chosa* (Survey on Family Economy of Farming Households).

(from: Ohno 1988: 25)

Self-sufficiency of selected countries in grains, 1960-1982



Source: *Shokuryo Jukyukyo* (Tables of Foodstuffs Supply and Demand), by Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. "Food Consumption Statistics," by OECD.
(from: Ohno 1988:18)

Japan's Self-Sufficiency in Major Agricultural Goods, 1960-86

(Unit: %)

	1960	1970	1980	1984	1985	1986 (estimate)
Rice	102	106	87	109	107	108
Wheat	39	9	10	12	14	14
Beans and peas	44	13	7	9	8	8
Soy bean	28	4	4	5	5	5
Vegetables	100	99	97	95	95	95
Fruits	100	84	81	74	77	73
Chicken	101	97	98	99	98	97
Milk and dairy products	89	89	86	86	89	86
Meat (other than whale)	91	89	81	80	81	78
Beef	96	90	72	72	72	69
Pork	96	98	87	84	86	82
Sugar	18	23	29	32	33	33
Overall self-sufficiency ratio in edible agricultural goods	90	78	72	71	71	70
Self-sufficiency ratio in including feed grains	82	46	33	31	31	31

Source: *Shokuryo Jukyuhyo* (Tables of Foodstuffs Supply and Demand), by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

(from: Ohno 1988:19)

Note: Import figures for the two major feed grains, feed corn and grain sorghum, which totaled 1.4 million tons in 1960, scored a 15-fold increase to 20.48 million tons by 1987. In the same period, the volume of soybean imports rose from 1.13 million tons to 4.8 million tons; that of wheat from 2.68 million tons to 5.48 million tons; and that of meat from 30,000 tons to 820,000 tons, a 27-fold increase (Ohno: 20).

Research Thrust

There have been a number of ethnographic descriptions of Japan's rural villages, most of which include analysis of aspects of culture change. However, previous studies have mainly dealt with rural villagers who are attempting to adapt to rapidly changing social environments, and have neglected to analyze alternative modes of expression and behavior or the future viability of alternative market structures and redefined social relations. The emphasis of previous anthropological studies of rural farming or fishing villages in Japan have been on cultural continuity, the masterful blending of modernity and tradition, and the stoic acquiescence of villagers to externally-imposed change. Although change may be inevitable due to technological advances and shifts in economic imperatives, what is crucial is who defines "tradition" and who mandates change, and what kind of change. It has been argued in previous studies that although the loss of certain traditions may be regrettable, the benefits tend to outweigh the negative effects, thus what is implied is that to resist is counter-productive and irrational⁽⁹⁾.

Another problem I find with village studies is that they assume that the village constitutes a neatly-bounded unit of analysis; my approach calls into question the validity of the village as a unit of analysis by incorporating political economy at the national level and geo-political factors at the international level. I believe there is a need to look at those farmers who have rejected government agricultural policy directives, distrust government-affiliated agencies, and are engaging in independent, unorthodox approaches in order to survive as farmers. Although I will look at the organic food movement as a whole, including, for example, *Seikyo*, a national supermarket cooperative which handles some organic produce; *Polan no Hiroba*, a national network of grass roots-initiated direct marketing relations between organic farmers and small organic food stores; *Daichi o Mamoru Kai* (Group to Protect the Earth), a grass roots-controlled organic produce distribution network established in 1975 in Tokyo, which now makes deliveries to about 19,000 consumer families and 19 school cafeterias in

the Tokyo area; and comparative analyses of other co-partnerships⁽²⁾, this paper is limited to an analysis of the Miyoshi-Tokyo co-partnership.

Methodology

In order to understand the meanings attributed to specific actions of individuals, it is necessary to not only observe but to participate in the everyday activities of the people being studied. By this qualitative method of active participation in the lives of Miyoshi farmers and consumer members actively involved in the co-partnership, I have been able to discern their shared (and conflicting) cultural meanings, values, rules, and logic of mutual expectations. Since culture is always in process, its meanings at this micro-level of analysis can be identified and interpreted in the social and cultural relationships in which they occur and are obtained. I have observed while participating in not only the everyday activities of farmers working in the fields, but in a number of meetings ranging from a farmers' wives meeting to a joint farmer-consumer meeting discussing strategies to adopt in the campaign to oppose the construction of a golf course in Miyoshi village, in deliveries with the farmers, and in community festival celebrations associated with the yearly agricultural cycle. Social events as well as routine interactions or more explicitly political activities reveal the forms of semiotic resistance used by the participants in creating new meanings of self and of social relations.

Miyoshi Village

Miyoshi village is a quiet rural community at the southern tip of Bōsō Peninsula in Chiba Prefecture near the resort city of Tateyama, two hours by train from Tokyo Station. Twenty-seven of the thirty-two farm families in the producers' group live in Yamana hamlet which lies in a secluded valley surrounded by verdant hills. The valley is bisected by a river and from the fields near the top of the hills overlooking the hamlet, the Pacific Ocean is visible to the east and Tokyo Bay to the west. Enjoying a much milder climate compared to Tokyo just across

the bay, with an average temperature of 17°C and an average annual rainfall of 2000cc, crops are grown year around. More than one hundred varieties of crops are grown annually and the average acreage under cultivation (including the fields for rice, vegetables, and fruits) is 120 *are* (3 acres). Approximately 200 chickens are raised, on average, by each farm family.

Formation and Evolution of the Co-Partnership

The thriving co-partnership (*teikei*) between the thirty-two farm families (most of which are extended family households) and the 1,400 consumer families residing in the Tokyo metropolitan area came about when a group of middle-class Tokyo-area housewives interested in obtaining organically-grown food for health and ideological reasons initiated contact with a group of Miyoshi farmers in October 1973. These housewives had been studying problems associated with chemical farming from both farmers' and consumers' perspectives at monthly study sessions. Fortunately, the director of the Chiba Prefectural Training Center for Young Farmers with whom they had established contact, introduced them to his nephew who was profitably marketing organically-grown mandarin oranges at the time, and as he lived in Miyoshi village, it was hoped that other Miyoshi farmers could be encouraged to convert to organic farming if they were guaranteed a market for their produce. After several months of negotiations following the initial meeting of about one-hundred farmers and consumers at Miyoshi Village Hall, the Group for the Production and Consumption of Safe Foods (*Anzen-na Shokuhin o Tsukutte Taberu Kai*) was established in February 1974 with an initial membership of eighteen farm families and 111 consumer families. As both farmers and consumers in the group anticipated markedly reduced crop yields during the first years following the shift to organic farming, and that during this transition period severe weed infestations were likely to occur, crops would be difficult to establish, and nutrient deficiency symptoms would probably appear, in order to dispel the farmers' hesitancy, the consumers agreed to: (1). allow the farmers to determine the prices of

the produce; (2). accept the entire crop produced and; (3). require consumer members to contribute a deposit of ¥10,000 to share the financial risks incurred by the farmers. The farmers in turn agreed to take the responsibility of delivering the produce each week to the consumers, and in order to facilitate delivery, the consumers were organized into "posts" of ten families.

Farming Practices

After the third or fourth year as the rotations became established, problems diminished, yields began to increase, and eventually, the crop yields approached and in some cases surpassed those obtained by conventional methods. The farmers then willingly agreed to negotiate prices with the consumers.

The farmers apply rice straw, rice hulls, fallen leaves, decayed grasses, threshing sweepings, decayed *tatami* rushes, barley straw, Chinese milk vetch, chicken droppings, rapeseed meal, and rice bran to their fields. Some materials such as rice and barley straw are spread onto the fields unprocessed while other materials are allowed to ferment and spread as compost. They feel that the soil organic matter content is highly correlated with soil productivity, that maintenance of adequate levels of organic matter is important for erosion control, and that it has a profound impact on soil quality: it encourages granulation, increases water storage, nutrient supply and soil organism activity, and improves soil fertility and productivity. Weed control methods used by the farmers include crop rotations, hand hoeing, and to a lesser extent, hand weeding. Preventive methods are emphasized. In contrast to the relations of production within conventional farm households, which usually work the land as individual households dependent on the labor of women and elderly household members, because Miyoshi organic farmers are able to live comfortably on the income they receive from full-time farming throughout the year, the husbands work side by side with their wives in the fields. In the extended family households, the husband's father and/or mother also help with lighter farm work. There appears to be fairly equal participation in production within individual

farm households, however the farmers' wives are often burdened with the double day of farm work and housework.

Obviously, organic agriculture demands more management time and skill than conventional agriculture. The Miyoshi farmers, with nineteen years of experience, are excellent managers with complete knowledge of their farm operations and an intimate knowledge of the variabilities of micro-environments since their fields tend to be scattered as is the norm in Japan. The farmers in the group have the advantage of having many opportunities to meet with each other and are able to exchange information concerning farming matters. They seem to enjoy learning from each others' mistakes and successes. This information-sharing is just one aspect of the cooperation between members of the group.

Consumers' Group Organizational Structure

The consumers' group, with 1,400 family members, is highly-organized, but due to the large number of members, there is understandably much less face-to-face contact among its general membership as compared to the farmers' group. Divided into groups of ten families per "post", most members (read housewives) only have a few minutes to chat with the farmers when their weekly produce is delivered, and talk with other post members while they divide the produce into ten units. There is, however, a core group of active members, most of whom have belonged to the group since its early years, who are on one or more committees and thus regularly go to Miyoshi village for meetings with other committee members or with the farmers and are well-known to each other and to the farmers and their wives. Almost all of the active members are middle or upper-middle class housewives who, for the most part, have no remunerative employment. Each consumer family contributes ¥500 monthly to pay for the travel expenses of committee members, the cost of food and drinks at meetings, and other expenses such as publishing the newsletters and paying the rent for the groups' office.

There are a number of committees which a member may serve on:

- (1). Committee for the Purchase of Outside Produce: The consumers'

group is divided into five "blocks", each of which selects one or more members to serve on this committee. It takes orders from each block to submit to producers of crops not available through Miyoshi, such as honey, Hokkaido potatoes, tea, and adzuki beans; (2). Committee for Forwarding: Miyoshi deliveries are made by the farmers on a rotational basis each week on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays with four or five different routes on each day. A member from each route is elected to serve on this committee and is responsible to keep in contact with each "post" and to notify Miyoshi farmers of any change in post location; (3). Committee for Voluntary Participation (*enno* or "connection farming"): It issues the "Enno Newsletter" and schedules dates for consumer members to go to Miyoshi to work in the fields, applications are taken and arrangements made. Members are welcome to go individually, as a family, or with other post members; (4). Co-ordinator of "Everyone's House" (*Minna no Ie*): She makes arrangements for accomodation in "Everyone's House". This two-story wooden house was built in 1987 and the second floor can accomodate fifty or more people. Members and their families can stay free of charge (food provided-cook yourself), ¥2,000 per night for non-members, ¥1,000 for children under twelve years of age (charge reduced by half if taking part in *enno*). Since it was built, there have been a number of agricultural researchers and groups of farmers from throughout Japan and from other Asian countries who have come to study the organizational and technical features of the co-partnership and have been accomodated there⁶⁹. As a consumer group member, this, in fact, is where I stay when I am in Miyoshi; (5). Committee for Children's Activities: In order to give children of consumer members, most of whom have only experienced life in the conjested urban environment of Tokyo, the opportunity to interact with farmers' children and take part in actual farming activities, various activities such as planting sweet potato seedlings, gathering herbs, digging sweet potatoes, camping in tents, and going on nature hikes have been organized; (6). Public Relations Committee: Consumer and farmer group members contribute articles to be published in the annual "Life on the Soil"

journal; (7). Grievance Committee: Complaints about the quality or quantity of produce are accepted and discounts on payment may be approved by committee members. The committee is made up of both farmers and consumers; (8). Committee for Study and Research: Activities include briefing sessions for new members, the publication of the "Vegetable Newsletter", and organizing lecture meetings. A library of 8mm films, video cassettes, slides, and a collection of printed materials dealing with various aspects of the co-partnership is available; (9). Committee on Food Life: This committee prepares information about and recipes for Miyoshi crops.

Analysis

Most of the consumer group members I have talked with view the organic food movement as an alternative health maintenance system rather than a movement of social revitalization or transformation. Although many of these women are concerned with broader social issues, their primary rationale for joining the co-partnership is the safeguarding of their families' health. They assert that not only are they reassured by the knowledge of who grew the food they eat, they and their families have gotten used to the exceptional taste of organically-grown and are disinclined to revert to buying bland-tasting conventionally-grown produce, even if it is substantially lower in cost. The majority live in relatively affluent neighborhoods which gives the impression that it is only the well-to-do who can afford the luxury of directly-marketed organically-grown produce. I hypothesize that working women with families cannot afford either the time involved in going to their "post" each week to help divide the produce, or the time involved in actually cooking the large amounts of produce delivered weekly, and if they feel unnecessary pressure to fully utilize the purchase, they would be inclined to discontinue their membership after a short period of time. As I stated earlier, other marketing structures exist for organically-grown produce and food products such as tofu, miso, soy sauce, and pasta, and these alternatives appear to be more attractive to the average consumer due to convenience, lower cost, and freedom to

choose quantity and variety. I will be dealing with these other grass roots-initiated organizations in a forthcoming publication.

Although there is a degree of cooperation and mutual trust that has been established between the farmers and the consumers in the co-partnership, there appears to be a fundamental ideological divergence. The farmers, for the most part, are relatively conservative and are not as sceptical towards bureaucracy and the motives and interests of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party as the leadership of the consumers' group is. This ideological distance was made apparent in the difference in rhetoric and strategies adopted in opposing the recently proposed construction of a golf course in Miyoshi village. When the consumer group called for a joint study session to discuss the golf course situation, the majority of the farmers in the group attended assuming, according to them, that it would be a mutual learning experience and a chance to discuss differences. One of the farmers later stated that this meeting, at "Everyone's House", turned out to be a lecture in politics by the consumer representatives using what he called "communist" rhetoric such as imperialism and class exploitation, so some of the farmers just walked out in disgust. He said, "We're just farmers, and don't like to be duped into a meeting of revolutionaries". It should be noted that however liberal consumer group members may be, they, as a whole, are by no means revolutionary.

Several of the farmers explained to me that because they need to maintain friendly ties with other neighboring farmers in the village who are not members of the organic producers' group, they could not afford to antagonize their relationships which in many cases have endured over several generations, by adopting an ideological stance too much at variance with the majority of the villagers. They argued that the consumer members, because they do not live in the village, could afford radical posturing, but felt that that may be counter-productive and may alienate people who might otherwise support the opposition to the construction of the golf course.

In the Miyoshi village mayoral elections held in December 1991, there were 813 votes tabulated for the candidate opposed to the golf course

construction, and approximately 2,100 votes for the incumbent candidate in favor of construction. Both farmer group and consumer group members expressed satisfaction with the results as they had not expected more than 500 votes for the opposition candidate. With such a large proportion of village residents opposed, they feel that it may be difficult to go ahead with the proposed construction plans. The concerted effort to raise the consciousness of Miyoshi residents beyond short term economic self-interests to encompass long-term environmental and social concerns points to the efficacy of the on-going dialog between consumers and farmers in the co-partnership⁶⁰.

The farmers appear to take pride in their work and gain satisfaction from the appreciation shown by the consumers for their efforts. When contrasting their slow-paced lifestyles in a quiet rural setting with the fast-paced lifestyles of the majority of the consumers, they are not only content with their lifestyles, they express sympathy for the alienation seemingly experienced by consumer families, many of whom are unable to spend much time together as a family.

The farmers have the opportunity to talk informally with consumer members when making their weekly deliveries. Although going on the delivery rounds is hard work and makes for a long day (7am-12am), since the producer group agreed to deliver the produce to individual posts at the inception of the co-partnership, it has become part of their perceived job. Several of the farmers I talked with expressed the opinion that going on deliveries to the various wards of Tokyo and nearby suburbs gives them the chance to meet with interesting people of various walks of life who they would not normally have the opportunity or inclination to talk with. Indeed, some of the farmers appear to have developed friendships with some of the long-term consumer members and enjoy talking with them about personal matters unrelated to "business". They also stated that it also helps break up the monotony of working in the fields everyday and that many of them actually look forward to the break in routine that is afforded by making deliveries.

Although the dissemination of urban cultural values and behavior,

particularly via television and other forms of mass media, to rural areas no matter how remote, points to a dialog of unequal exchange in favor of the urban, the Miyoshi-Tokyo co-partnership at the rural-urban interface is a good example of a process of redefining self identities and social relations. Due to the expanding dialog between town and country as evidenced in the co-partnership, I believe the urban-rural distinction can not be viewed as a structuralist binary opposition, but should be viewed as a dialectical relation in a constant process of change and redefinition.

Partially because of the long-term interaction between urban housewives and farm housewives in the co-partnership, there is some evidence of a gradual, albeit hesitant, transformation of gender relations within farm households. Middle-class, urban housewives are important figures in various consumer movements in Japan, and are often the catalyst in effecting change from the grass roots level. An enquiry into the cultural construction of self, through an analysis of gender identity, reveals the types of redefinitions which are being created by Miyoshi farm wives and the ways in which gender relations and inter-generational household relations are affected.

Although one farmer's wife is a full-time elementary school teacher, most of the farm wives I talked with always work in the fields alongside their husbands. Living in extended family households is experienced as advantageous for some, and disadvantageous for others in respect to housework responsibilities. Some mothers-in-law apparently enjoy cooking for the family and keeping the house clean, while others prefer engaging in light farm work and refuse to do housework. In the latter case, the daughters-in-law are burdened with a double day. The fathers-in-law may do some light farm work, but, like the husbands, will come home and just watch TV or read the newspaper and relax with a beer, expecting to be waited on by the women. The women in nuclear family households have varying degrees of success in convincing their husbands to contribute to housework.

At the farm wives' meeting which I was allowed to attend, the women were very candid in criticizing their mothers-in-law and the

negative influence that they seem to be able to exert in regard to the maintenance of traditional definitions of gender relations. One woman pointed out that the reason many of the consumers' group women were able to "educate" their husbands and convince them of the necessity in sharing housework responsibilities was because they were not living with their husbands' parents. She felt that it would take another generation before any effective change could be realized. Another woman expressed the opinion that it was their responsibility to educate not only their husbands, but their mothers-in-law as well. Several other women agreed, and the consensus was that solidarity was needed in order to effectively and strategically resist what they consider to be outdated values and norms of behavioral expectations.

Another topic which was discussed at the meeting was the unfairness of having to work alone in the fields on mornings following delivery rounds. Most of the wives felt that their husbands looked forward to their weekly turn in making deliveries primarily because it gave them the opportunity to drink with the other drivers all night in the back room of the warehouse upon their return to Miyoshi. After these nights of heavy drinking, most of the men tend to sleep in, and their pace of work the next day is much slower than usual. Several of the wives seem to have had more success than the others in encouraging their husbands to limit their socializing to an hour or so, and various tactics such as cold-shoulder treatments, deliberate work slowdowns on their parts the next day, and varying forms of argumentation were discussed.

The social network created by being members of the organic farmers' group, aids these farm wives in overcoming their isolation, as self-empowerment is conceived collectively and the framework of support is in place. The opportunity to meet on a regular basis as farm wives (mothers-in-law are not allowed to attend) to discuss issues formally during the meetings, and informally chat with each other later over drinks and dishes which have been brought to pass, has contributed to the obvious rapport and solidarity exhibited. This collective consciousness allows for a united struggle to implement

changes in attitudes and behavior of those around them, in addition to enabling themselves to redefine and reformulate their self-identities.

Clearly, the co-partnership arrangement has benefited the Miyoshi farm families in a number of ways. Farming full-time, year around not only provides an attractive income, it allows family members to work together, each contributing to the household resources. Without the necessity of outside income, the family members are able to spend a considerable amount of time together, and the children have the benefit of having both parents at home most of the time⁽⁹⁾.

Although a contrastive analysis of other alternative marketing structures, and a comparative analysis of other co-partnerships with varying political agendas and ideologies, levels and forms of political activity is called for, the successful continuation of the Miyoshi-Tokyo co-partnership points to the possibilities in creating new social relations and effecting structural change from the grass roots level.

Modes of domination select from and consequently exclude the full range of actual and possible human practice. The difficulties of human practice outside or against the dominant mode are, of course, real. It depends very much whether it is in an area in which the dominant class and the dominant culture have an interest and a stake. If the interest and stake are explicit, many new practices will be reached for, and if possible incorporated, or else extirpated with extraordinary vigor.

Precisely because consumer-producer cooperative ventures are inherently localized and thus decentralized, the potential political ramifications are extensive in that the centralized oligopolies of food importers, processors, distributors, and retailers could be adversely affected. If the organic food movement continues to gain momentum and alternative marketing structures increase in both numbers and influence, I hypothesize that the established food industry will strive either to co-opt the movement or lobby for national political measures to hinder, socially and politically, their growth. Political measures may include arbitrary certification standards, tax disincentives, or an ideologically-based campaign to discredit the movement or its leading advocates. It is difficult to determine precisely where the state will

draw its line in its operational definition of alternative activity (simply finding a different way to live and wishing to be left alone with it) and oppositional activity (finding a different way to live and wanting to change the society in its light). The state at present in Japan views the co-partnership phenomenon and the organic food movement as alternative and not oppositional. However, if the demonstration effect encourages proliferation of co-partnerships and of other alternative marketing structures, there will be intervention. What form that intervention will take, and whether it will effectively counteract the progress that has been made toward reshaping society from the bottom up, remains to be seen.

Footnotes

- (1) For example see: Embree 1939; Beardsley, Hall, and Ward 1959; Shimpo 1976; Dore 1978; Norbeck 1978; Smith and Wiswell 1982; Moore 1990.
- (2) My second fieldwork site will be at a "new village" in Nagano Prefecture which has been revitalized by the influx of a number of people (some of whom are from the area) who had been radicalized by involvement in the student movement of the 1960s. Because of a "New Left" ideological perspective, I will have the opportunity to compare and contrast their ideology (including gender and age role reformulation), political activities, organization, long-term social objectives, and use of symbols with farmers at Miyoshi, my primary research site. I intend to conduct research there from April to October 1993.
- (3) The original building which was of prefabricated construction built in 1975, was torn down and the present house (constructed of natural materials and designed by group members) replaced it in 1987. The group has been able to accommodate visitors since 1975. In late summer of 1992, a group of children from the Chernobyl area in the former USSR stayed for several days in order to experience living in a rural farm community and enjoy the fresh air, natural environment, interact with Japanese children, and eat fresh chemical-free produce. Their stay was documented in a 30 minute program on NHK, Japan's national public television network.
- (4) The initial ideological distance between farmers and consumers narrowed considerably by the summer of 1992 and billboards vehemently opposing the construction of the golf course were put up jointly in front of "Everyone's House" and in the fields of Yamana hamlet. The latest strategy that has been

adopted is for farm families who own land that is to be part of the golf course, to sell trees (symbolically) to golf course opposition group members and supporters from throughout Japan (¥5,000 per tree). The farmer agrees by contract (with option to renew) not to sell the land to developers for a period of five years. Although the organic farmers with land on the proposed golf course site do not need this economic incentive, it has proven to be an effective strategy in convincing conventional farmers to side with the opposition movement; environmental protection has been effectively coupled to economic gain.

- (5) Most of the farmers in the Miyoshi Producer Group were obtaining secondary incomes from farming (working the land part-time, usually on weekends) when the co-partnership was formed in 1973. Most farm households had to rely on wage labor for their primary source of income. The men worked long hours in low-paying industrial jobs, either in small factories or as truck drivers. Some of the jobs available, such as in the construction industry, entailed seasonal migration which strained close family relationships. I am now in the process of conducting life history interviews, and the picture which is emerging is one of increasing financial difficulties from the mid-1950s on, as agricultural policy shifts affected their livelihood.

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日本の有機農業文化の興隆

—三芳村生産者グループと東京消費者グループの協調関係—

〈要 約〉

ダレル・モエン

本稿では、房総半島の南端に位置する三芳村で有機栽培を行っている32軒の農家のグループに関する調査に基づいて、草の根レベルで働く個人が構造変化にどのように影響を与え、また構造的制約の中でどのように行動するかについて論じる。このグループは、有機栽培による食品の入手だけでなく、有機栽培農家の援助にも関心を持っている東京の消費者グループ（会員約1400家族）と直接取引を結んでいる。ここに見られるような農業構造の分散化・その地方の労働力と生態系を維持する農業技術に支えられた農村共同体の形成・都市部の消費者との直接的な関係の構築、といった試みは、日本のみならず世界各地での農村の復興の鍵となり得るのである。

現在の日本の農家が直面しているジレンマを歴史的視点から捉えるために、有機農業に関する最近の動向まで含めて戦後の日本農業の変化を経済的・イデオロギー的側面から分析する。それにより、そういった地方の変化の要因が、世界の政治的状況の変化（例えば、日本の輸出超過への対策としての農作物の輸入増加）と密接に連結していることが明らかになる。

世界的な環境破壊の時代において、有機栽培運動に携わっている人々々が取り組んでいる問題は緊急に解決が要されているものである。例えば、生態学的プロセスの破壊を最小限に食い止めること、資源とエネルギーを最大限に保存すること、現在の危険な技術の代替物の追究、あらゆるレベル

での経済の一極集中の解消，等。彼らは環境と調和した社会を理想像とし、生態系が市場や日常生活にどのように受け込むことができるかを示すモデルを作ろうとしている。「有機的」という言葉を一つのシンボルとして、消費者は生産者と手を結ぶことができるのである。

有機栽培農家と都市の消費者の協調に注目すると、あまり明らかにされることのない日本の側面を知ることになる。先端技術と伝統の調和という問題のすべての解決案を日本が持っているかのような誤った見方をさせないことが特に重要である。全員が一丸となって「日本株式会社」を追求しているといった日本のイメージに反して、日本のあり方に関する、異なった理想像に向けて活動する個人やグループがいることを、知ってもらいたい。