

Progress Report on the Nozawa Machi Study

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It is our intention to describe here for the benefit of our colleagues at ICU and others something of the nature and progress of the joint study of Japanese rural politics and social leadership on which we are at present engaged.

Firstly, it must be realized that this study is being done in spare time from teaching duties at the University and does not have the advantages of full time continuous observation. However, it is hoped that by spending the major part of vacations plus occasional days and weeks over a period of years, sufficient insight into the subject will be obtained to enable us to draw some useful comparative and theoretical conclusions.

In order to explain the choice of field area it is perhaps best to say something about the nature of our original interests in Japan. These were twofold. Firstly, from a social anthropologist's point of view the Japanese *eta* caste might be profitably studied in relation to village caste studies already done by W.H.N. in India. There has, of course, been a great deal done by Japanese scholars on the history and politics of the 'burakumin' problem but it seemed that it would yet be interesting to apply anthropological methods to a particular *eta* or mixed community. Secondly, it was felt that there was room for a more thorough study of local politics, based on a comparatively long term study, not only of the political process but also of the whole social system of the area chosen. Pursuing the first topic, tentative investigation of communities in Nara-ken, Wakayama-ken and Nagano-ken were carried out early in 1960. For two reasons it appeared that a community in Nagano-ken would be preferable. Firstly, the existence in Nagano of more of the mixed type of village together with a relatively

varied pattern of rural political party strengths suggested that the two interests might there possibly be pursued in a joint study of the same area. Secondly, there were practical advantages in being closer to Tokyo in the circumstances in which the work would have to be done. A combination of factors, not the least of which, as always, was the existence of good personal contacts, finally guided us to Shimogata buraku in Nozawa Machi in the Minami-saku Gun of Nagano-ken.

The advantages of the final choice are (i) the existence of a small but old established *eta* community on one edge of the buraku, (ii) the fact that the buraku is large enough for the interplay of political and leadership rivalry, (iii) the fact that the buraku is a geographically distinct community with no unusual distorting economic influences, other than those to be expected from its size and position as centre of the ex-mura of Kishino. The nearest urban community is more than four kilometres away and is only a small town of 8,000 persons, comprising the old town of Nozawa and surrounding buraku. (iv) the fact that the recently formed Nozawa machi, although of manageable size from the political point of view (17,500) and of uniform agricultural character, also exhibits the whole range of national party political divisions. From a political point of view too the two amalgamations (mura to machi in 1954 and machi into Saku shi in 1961) have in fact proved illuminating about local administration and the organisation of local interests.

More precise definition of the objects of the study took shape after preliminary work in July and August of 1960. It became clear that the *eta* community was of limited interest from our original point of view, since it seems to be in the process of being absorbed into the general community. This process in itself, of course, is of interest. However, the buraku turned out to be very well suited to the study of leadership and political organization, particularly in relation to family organization. The work of the study is now

directed to making clear the system of leadership and authority within the buraku and the process of exerting influence on authority above and outside the buraku. This involves, not only a description of actual official and unofficial institutions and constitutional and traditional rights, but also an understanding of the whole basis of social power in the buraku. More precisely: (i) the connection of leaders with the general social system of the buraku (ii) the method used in dealing with specific buraku problems, (iii) the nature of the relationships between the villagers and those in positions of political importance at machi, ken or national level, (iv) the method used to deal with specific problems involving authorization or resources from a higher level.

Methods

The work has been divided into two main parts. The study of the intra-buraku situation is being carried out by W.H.N. while P.M.N. is collecting information on the connections between the buraku and higher political bodies and persons related to them. This division is purely for practical convenience and also to make use of our respective experience in social anthropology and political science. In fact, of course, the spheres of activity overlap and interconnect to a considerable degree and constant day by day interchange of information and gossip while in the area is indispensable. Relations with local individuals and authorities have from the beginning been excellent and we were preceded in 1960 by a letter of introduction from the mayor of Nozawa Machi to every house in the buraku, requesting their kind cooperation with us.

1. *Shimogata Buraku*

In order to obtain a deep understanding of buraku affairs and organization it was considered desirable first to obtain a clear picture of the entire social composition of the buraku—its inhabitants, economy, family relationships, informal and formal groups and associations. For this purpose a complete house by house interview was carried out. Shimogata buraku having over 270 households

and a population of approximately 1,200, it will be realised that this must be one of the largest rural units for which such a detailed census has been attempted. Interviewing was begun in the summer of 1960 by W.H.N., using an ICU social science student as assistant. The more obviously key households were interviewed first in order to get quick familiarity with the buraku situation. At this time the *kucho*, *jyokai-cho*, shrine keeper, the priest, and officials of the most important associations such as the cooperative and the *fujinkai*, were interviewed. During the summer of 1961 the remaining bulk of interviews were completed. This time we had the assistance of seven Japanese ICU students in their junior or sophomore years, all either majoring in sociology, anthropology or political science.

The students were boarded singly in selected households and a standard payment for board was negotiated through the *kucho* on the strict condition that the students were to live and eat 'as family'. At first they observed interviews conducted by W.H.N. Later on they worked in pairs and, finally, they were confident enough to interview alone. Households of particular difficulty or interest were interviewed (or reinterviewed) by W.H.N. Interview information was recorded at the time onto a standard form, which was duplicated in English within a few days. The team met daily for lunch to check results, report special information and discuss difficulties. There was a marked improvement in the relevance, reliability and thoroughness of the interviewing after the first one or two weeks and we feel that the team received valuable research training from their experience on this project.

Information collected

Informants were generally male heads of households but quite often his wife and sometimes a combination of two or three family members. There was only one case of unwillingness to be interviewed. Basic information collected was:—

1. Name, age, occupation, status and relationship to househead

of all household members

2. The same information for househeads' fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, children, living or dead, resident or non-resident, where not already covered under 1.
3. Since when resident in buraku, place of origin, place and name of *honke*. If *honke* in buraku, nature of connection to it. If household itself is *honke*, details of descent as far back as can be remembered.
4. Full details of occupations or employment, including 'side-lines'.
5. Amount of wet and dry land farmed, land owned before and after reform, grams of silkworm eggs raised, and other livestock and cash crops.
6. Place and name of new family for all women family members marrying out of the family household.
7. Place and family whence all women marrying into the family household came.
8. All associations (official, economic, social or religious), belonged to together with details of positions held and of association itself where not already known to team.
9. Religion, temple associations and exact location of family cemeteries.

Interviewers were asked to press for further details in cases where family or other quarrels or feuds, meetings or joint decisions on non-family matters by groups of relatives, scandalous or abnormal behaviour or membership of minority groups such as Eta or Soka-gakkai, were known or suggested. In fact, they followed up any gossip that might throw light on relationships between villagers. In such cases, one interview might take several hours to complete. All such information was recorded on the blank reverse of the cards. In addition all team members kept a daily diary, in which they wrote down all other information gathered from their adopted families or their informal relationships with other members of the buraku. Diaries were checked every two or three days at team

meetings.

From the results of these interviews a considerable amount of essential background information can be abstracted. This task is yet to be completed. When it is the following information will be available :

1. Total resident population, divided into age and sex groups.
2. Size and nature of the composition of households.
3. Nature of intra-buraku family connections.
4. Degree of buraku exogamy, source of wives and destination of married daughters and sisters.
5. Movement of family members to other parts of Japan or overseas for economic or educational purposes and pattern of movement into the buraku.
6. Main and side occupations of all adult residents.
7. Commuting to nearby towns.
8. Nature of membership and leadership of all political, social and economic groups in the buraku.
9. Degree of involvement in such groups outside the buraku.

Points 4, 8 and 9 are of particular relevance to the main objects of the study but in order to assess the significance of family and other connections between households it is necessary to study particular examples of quarrels, problem solution, project initiation etc. As far as possible, in the period so far spent in the buraku, all meetings of groups were attended and recorded and additional interviews conducted in connection with such issues as the installation of the loudspeaker system, the surfacing project for the main buraku street, the opposition to the city's raising of the *suido* fee, emergency action against rice pests etc. Communal and group work on the roads, silkworms and cocoons, preparation for festivals, construction of the school swimming pool etc. was also observed and investigated.

There are numerous associations operating in the buraku. The heads of the eight buraku divisions (*kyokai*) meet monthly together

with leading members of other important associations to form a meeting known as the Tsuitachikai (first of the month meeting). The *kucho* presides over this meeting, although he himself is elected by the annual general meeting of the buraku. Other official groups include the PTA, the various divisions of the cooperative, the Fujinkai and the Young People's meeting, the firemen and the health officials. There are also two merchants associations, numerous money saving and lending clubs and social and work groups among neighbours. These last are not necessarily based on the official wartime tonari-gumi, although the composition of these kumi are recognised and used as a basis for buraku administration. Other special groups based on family membership, the Sokagakkai, handicapped people and widows also exist. Minutes, accounts and other written material of some of these associations have been made available for examination and duplication.

Interviews have also been done with persons connected with land reform in the district and all land reform records and the present records made available. From these past and present tenant-landlord relationships have been understood and a check made on the agricultural information recorded on the basic cards. Some interesting disputes have come to light but on the whole land reform seems to have had a particularly peaceful passage in this district.

It is now possible to describe the principal features of social organisation and leadership in this buraku from the material already collected, although it is not our intention to do so in this place. However, it is felt that more time needs to be spent in the buraku at other times of the year than the summer so that group activity at different seasons and more activity of a social nature than is possible at the height of the silkworm 'rush' can be observed. The following up of certain current and recent buraku issues and the activities of some of the associations is as yet imperfect. It will be apparent from the extensive nature of the information collected that much interesting material on family organization,

religion, rural emigration and economic change and other topics has been gathered, much of it well worth following up independently from the main trend of this study as at present envisaged.

2. External political relations of the buraku

Shimogata buraku was, up to the end of 1954, the central buraku of Kishino mura. The mura consisted of 11 other buraku—none of them comparable in size to Shimogata—and had a total population of approximately 4,000. In many ways, Shimogata is still the focus of the immediate area. The primary school of Kishino, the cooperative, the fujinkai and other organisations are still based on the mura and meet in Shimogata. Shimogata is also a shopping centre for the district and has 50 shops, 5 bars and 4 barbers. In many respects it approaches a small town with the important difference that the majority of households in the buraku are mainly dependent on their farm land for their livelihood. The muras of Kishino, Sakurai, Osawa and Maeyama amalgamated with the town of Nozawa in 1954. The other three muras are much smaller in population than Kishino but for all four the town of Nozawa forms a natural geographic centre of the district which lies enclosed on one side by the river and on the other by a range of wooded hills. In Nozawa are the high schools, the middle school and a far greater variety of shops and services than can be found in Shimogata. Early in 1961, after only about six years existence, Nozawa machi finally decided to amalgamate with three other machi and mura to form Saku shi, an artificial unit for which it is impossible to discern any natural centre. The first Nozawa machi elections in 1955 were held on the basis of election districts corresponding to the old town and the four mura. The second elections in 1959 were based on a pool district of the whole machi. Likewise, the first Saku shi elections held in April 1961 were based upon the amalgamating machi and mura. The next elections will be held on the basis of an 'all shi' pool. In spite of the short life of Nozawa machi as an official political unit there are good

social and geographic reasons for taking the area of the machi as the basis for this side of the study. It is the area in which Shimogata and other buraku have the majority of their economic and family contacts, which are so important in Japanese politics. The approach adopted has been firstly to try and understand political relationships within this area and then, secondly, in the case of Shimogata to see these against the background of a more intensive social survey. Historically, the situation dealt with is principally that existing during the official life of the machi and information has been pursued backwards and forwards only in so far as it is necessary to understand that situation.

Information collected for this side of the study has been of three main types:

1. Having established good relations with the mayor of the machi, preliminary information about the machi, its formation, its elections, its personnel, its resources and activities was obtained from records and interviews with chiefs of sections at the machi offices. This work was carried out in 1960 by P.M.N. and a Japanese assistant—as was all the work on this part of the study.
2. All 29 successful and unsuccessful candidates for the Nozawa machi assembly elections of 1959 were interviewed in 1960 or 1961. In addition a further 7 candidates for the Nozawa division of the Saku-shi elections in 1961 were interviewed and 11 Nozawa representatives who contested the Saku-shi elections were re-interviewed in 1961. Three representatives of the Kishino district in the first Nozawa elections in 1955 were also interviewed but it was not attempted to interview all 35 candidates for this 1955 election although 13 of them had in fact been interviewed as 1959 candidates. All interviews planned were carried out except in the case of a representative from Shimogata who died in 1960—with whose widow and son a satisfactory interview was done—and in the case of one 1955 candidate from elsewhere in Kishino who had died. The main purpose of these interviews was:

- a) to find out the type of person (age, occupation, experience etc.) who stood to be elected to the local assembly. Here questions were asked about education and career to date, sources of income, land before and after reform, family connections, important positions held by other family members. Particular attention was paid to all social, economic or religious positions held by the informant in his own buraku and to membership of economic and other associations in the machi, gun or ken.
- b) to assess the nature of the informant's support. Here the informant was asked to assess the location and reason for his vote. Here information already given under a) usually provided a useful source of subsidiary questions. Full details of his campaign and expenses were collected and details of any projects he had assisted or initiated to the benefit of his supporting 'area' noted. A precise description of the nature of his original invitation to stand for election often revealed a highly formalized sequence of buraku decision to approach the informant.
- c) to reveal the part played by the informant in the 'supporting network' of other level politicians (diet, ken or mayors). In this connection party membership of supporters' clubs was investigated. Informants also gave information on who they supported in all recent ken and diet elections and described the nature of any support they gave to these other level candidates. An attempt was also made to estimate the importance of the informant as an advisor of other people on how to vote. Details of any help, visits, presents or messages received by the informant from other politicians was also requested.

Considering the very confidential nature of the information desired, informants showed a high level of frankness, even to the extent of giving details of illegal practices, and also in most cases a very precise knowledge of the sources of their vote. The accuracy of such information was often checkable by cross

reference to other interviews and judicious use was made of previous knowledge in questioning. It was felt that a considerable insight into the interconnections between buraku and between local and national politics was gained from speaking with these 39 persons. The opportunity was also taken to get descriptions of the internal political organization of other buraku for comparative purposes with Shimogata.

3. The last two weeks of the November 1960 General Election were also spent in the district, which falls within the number 2 constituency of Nagano ken for the lower house of the Diet. The three Diet members for the constituency having been interviewed in Tokyo, their head-quarters in Nagano-ken were visited and chief organizers interviewed as well as those of the second Socialist candidate and the Communist candidate. The purpose of these visits was mainly to gain an overall picture of campaign organization and to get information on the organizers in the Nozawa district. 5 Nozawa information officers were then interviewed and campaigning, meetings and polling day activities observed. In the summer of 1961 further interviews of the leading campaigners of the two Liberal Democrat and the two Socialist candidates in Shimogata buraku were carried out, from which a fairly detailed picture of buraku voting and campaigning emerged. Various issues concerning all parts of the machi or Shimogata specifically have been given special study by means of selected interviews and observation meetings and records. In this case the amalgamation of Nozawa machi with other places to form the new Saku shi was the most important and raised considerable opposition in the district. Other issues included opposition to the recent rise in the piped water fee (which is still continuing) and pressure in various parts of the machi for major improvements in roads and for typhoon damage relief. The amalgamation of the middle schools and a local river improvement scheme more particularly concerned Shimogata.

The main work that remains to be done is a more detailed study of the sources of finance for various buraku schemes and the 'lobbying' process by which funds and authorization are obtained. It is apparent already that the inadequacies and complications of local finance are of basic importance in their effect on the political behaviour of local Dietmen, machi, shi and ken representatives and on the voting behaviour of buraku politicians.