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The Suburban Rice Farmers: Economic and Cultural Change in Japan

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The world economic situation is forcing the Japanese government to initiate policies designed to make its rice farming industry more competitive on the world market. These new policies, along with the growth of Japan's urban areas, are causing certain stresses on the cultural institution called bunke among the part-time rice farmers in the Kaizuka region of Chiba City, Japan.

An ethnographic study of these farmers reveals that the farmers of the Kaizuka region have responded to recent changes differently from the farmers of other regions because of their cultural institutions and traditions.
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Makoto Chiwaki
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The suburban rice farmers: Economic and cultural change in Japan

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Research Topic and Problem

This paper focuses on rice farmers in the Kaizuka region of Chiba City, Japan. In this thesis I will describe how the lives and practices of rice farmers in this region have been influenced by the broader economic, political, and historical context. Specifically, I am interested in the way in which Japanese national policies relating to rice farming and the importation of foreign rice into the domestic market have impacted their lives.

While much has been written on the social and cultural impact of the increasing amount of foreign grown rice allowed into the domestic market (e.g., Takaya 1990:223-224; Tsukuba 1990:22), such studies have focused exclusively on the situation of full-time, large-scale rice producers. Attention need also be paid to the impact of such policies on city farmers or what I am calling "suburban farmers," those part-time, small-scale rice farmers who live and farm on the periphery of Chiba City, in what might be best described as a suburban area. The situation of these part-time farmers, whose primary
occupations are in the city and who practice rice farming mainly or entirely for their own consumption, has been largely ignored, and is the focus of this paper.

Rice farming for them, as I shall demonstrate, is more than a purely economic activity. It is part of a lifestyle which involves strong family ties and traditional values. Yet this lifestyle is threatened by factors--such as the world market, international competition, government policies to control domestic farming, and real estate prices--which are beyond the individual farmer's control. This idea, that there is more to economic decision making than purely profit motives, is an important contribution made by early anthropologists such as Malinowski (1922) and Polanyi (1968).

In the following chapters, I briefly describe my field methods and the physical setting of Chiba City and the surrounding regions. I also discuss Japanese policies and concerns regarding domestic and imported rice. I then describe the cultural institution called bunke, its history, and its present status, and finally discuss the effect of economic policy changes on the practice of bunke. This study focuses on a specific region of Chiba City, the Kaizuka region, and examines the interplay of economic forces with local cultural practices. I propose that the farmers of Kaizuka have responded to recent
changes in economic policies differently from part-time farmers of other regions of Chiba City because of the history of this particular region, and their cultural institutions and traditions. The responses of farmers in the Kaizuka region are also significantly different from those of full-time rural farmers in Japan, who are more significantly influenced by economic policy changes.

Fieldwork and Research Methods

This thesis is based on approximately 20 weeks of fieldwork conducted in three regions of Chiba City during the summer of 1991. During that time I interviewed approximately 40 people who lived on 10 of the 15 kin-based part-time rice farms in the Kaizuka region. I also interviewed 10 people who lived on 4 of the 40 farms in the Oido region, and 7 people who lived on 3 of the 6 part-time rice farms in the Takashina/Higashiterayama region. I asked them how long they had farmed in the region, how long they planned to continue farming rice, whether they sold the rice they grew or used it for their consumption, which family members participated in rice growing activities, whether they had full-time jobs besides farming, and what were their views on current government policies regarding rice farming and rice importation. I met most of the people I interviewed
through my own network of family and friends.

Chiba City is one of the top rice-producing areas in Japan and has a wide variety of land-use patterns. I chose to focus this study on Chiba City in part because I grew up there and am familiar with it. I grew up as the son of a city official whose elder brother conducts a small scale part-time rice farming operation in a suburban area of Chiba City called Kaizuka. Since I was ten years old, I have helped my uncle with rice farming. In this setting, I developed an interest in the impact of changing economic policies on local cultural practices.

As a Japanese student conducting research in Japan, I did not face some of the usual problems encountered by anthropologists studying a foreign culture. I speak the language fluently and could easily make contacts with informants through personal and informal networks. I also tried to observe the situation as an outsider would, knowing that as a member of that culture it would be more difficult to be objective.

Physical Setting

Chiba City

Chiba City is the capital city of Chiba Province and is located 43km ESE of Tokyo (see Figure 1a). Chiba City (see Figure 1b) covers 272 square kilometers and has a
Figure 1. (a) Map of Japan (Earhart 1984: Frontispiece); (b) Chiba Province (Chibashi 1990:4).
population of 850,000. The northwestern parts of the city are urban but much of the rest of the city consists of countryside and farmland. The city is blessed with a mild climate, and rarely suffers from natural disasters such as typhoons or flood tides (Chibashi 1990:5).

Chiba City is at the center of the Keiyo (Tokyo-Chiba) industrial area, the most industrial area in Japan. In addition, Chiba City is the site of one of Japan's two most important ports. Chiba's port is vitally important to Japan's industrial base for the importation of resources and the exportation of manufactured goods (ibid).

Chiba City is subdivided into 20 regions, similar in concept to the boroughs in New York. My thesis will focus primarily on the Kaizuka region, which I will briefly compare and contrast with other regions including Oido, which can be best described as a rural and large-scale rice farming area, and Takashina/Higashiterayama (T/H), which is characterized by urbanization and small-scale rice farming. Oido and T/H present an important comparison with Kaizuka. Because of historical differences, the practice of bunke is absent in those regions.

**TAA, UCA, and UA Areas**

While technological advances took place in many of
Japan's industries after WWII, advances in the agricultural sphere failed to keep up. This has led to an increase in both the part-time/full-time farmer ratio and the income gap between low-income farmers and higher earning blue and white collar workers (ibid 65).

For these reasons, the restructuring of domestic agribusiness has long been one of the nation's most important issues. The New Farm Establishment Project (NFEP), which began in 1956, was designed to push for the establishment of new farms based on the desires of farmers. The project worked in seven regions within Chiba City from 1959 to 1963 (ibid).

However, changes in both the Japanese pattern of food consumption and the international free market forced changes in the fundamental structures of Japanese agriculture. In an attempt to deal with this problem, the Agriculture Basic Laws were passed in 1961, and nationwide agricultural structural improvement projects were introduced in 1962 (ibid).

In Chiba City, these projects were conducted from 1963 to 1968 as a part of the first Agricultural Structure Improvement Project (1st ASIP). The 1st ASIP aimed at controlling the amount and locations of land under cultivation and modernizing agricultural facilities (ibid). Domestic rice production grew to the point that
by 1970 the Japanese were producing more rice than they could either use or sell, leading to a need to control rice production and to again change the structure of domestic agriculture. The promotion of large-scale core farms was one solution to this problem (ibid).

In Chiba City, the rise of core farms was initiated by the second Agricultural Structure Improvement Project (2nd ASIP). In 1974, Chiba City's agricultural officials proposed a plan in which Chiba City was subdivided into zones designed as Targeted Agriculture areas (TAAs), Urban Areas (UAs), and Urbanization Control Areas (UCAs). These classifications were made according to the location of land, the land use modes in effect at the time the legislation was passed, and other commercial and industrial factors relating to future development. Each region within Chiba City may contain its own UA(s), UCA(s), and TAA(s) (see Figure 2).

Generally speaking, the UAs are characterized by residential areas, high population density, and intensive commercial and industrial activity. Legislation relating to the UAs was basically designed to expand these functions, and today it is almost impossible to practice intensive farming in these areas.

The UCAs are generally surrounded by, or adjoin, the UAs. There are still significant amounts of land under
Figure 2. Chiba City and Areas of Focus (Chibashi 1990).
cultivation in these areas. Land prices have rapidly increased for the last two decades because of a developing transportation system and the area's increasing urbanization. Although commercial and industrial land values are increasing in the UCAs, the city is trying to maintain cultivated land and limit the urbanization of these areas by passing legislation designed to prohibit individuals from selling or buying property in the UCAs.

The TAAs are generally located away from the UAs. They have fewer commercial and industrial businesses in them, and lower land values than UCAs because of their remoteness from the UAs. Most of the full-time farmers of the city reside in and conduct their relatively extensive farming operations in the TAAs. The city is promoting intensive, large-scale, professional farming in these areas. To intensify agricultural production in the TAAs, the city restricts the buying and selling of land between TAA land owning individuals.

The Kaizuka Region

The Kaizuka region is located near the center of Chiba City, about 5 km from the urban center of the city. About two thirds of the region is designed as a UCA, and the rest of it as a UA. As is indicated on Map III, the entire region is completely surrounded by the other UAs.
of other regions. Land prices in the UCA of the region have rapidly increased for the last decade because it will be the first one in Chiba City to be redesignated as a UA (according to some of the land speculators of Chiba City). For the last two decades there has been significant population growth in the Kaizuka region, with the population of the region increasing from 4842 in 1970 to 6843 in 1990 (Chibashi 1991:10). Most of the increase in population is due to people moving into the Kaizuka region. Most of those who moved in from other regions reside in the UA of the region (ibid).

In 1991 there were 15 small scale part-time rice farming operations in the Kaizuka region, involving a total population of around 200. Rice was grown for personal use only, and none of the residents conducted full-time rice farming. Many of these rice fields were "Yatsuda," rice fields surrounded by hills and terminating in a valley between two hills. These rice fields used to be irrigated by using rain water which ran off from the hills, but current farming efforts use well water. Each household's rice fields are divided into a number of small irregular shaped lots (see Figure 3a). Each of the household heads conducts farming with help from his brothers' families (see Figure 3b). This point will be more carefully examined later.
Figure 3. (a) Small Rice Fields in the Kaizuka Region; (b) The Members of a Dozoku Working on Their Rice Paddies.
The Oido Region

The Oido region is located in the southern area of Chiba City. It is 10km from the urban center of the city to which it does not have easy access. The entire region is designed as a TAA, with the highlands being used for vegetable growing and the lowlands for rice farming. Forty households in the region conduct rice farming. These farmers are all relatively large-scale (30-50 ares), and include both full- and part-time operations. Each household's rice fields are neatly divided into a couple of large lots for production purpose (see Figure 4), and large machinery is commonly used.

Figure 4. Large Rice Fields in the Oido Region.
Despite the significant urban growth which surrounds it, the Oido region still remains a TAA, and land prices there have risen considerably. The residents of Oido complain about the city's legislation, which restricts their freedom to sell their own land. Chiba's government views the Oido region as an important base from which to reform the city's agricultural industry.

The Takashina/Higashiterayama Regions

The Takashina and Higashiterayama (T/H) regions are contiguous to the west side of the Kaizuka UCA, and are 1km from the urban center of Chiba City. The eastern portions of the T/H regions are designated as UCAs, with the rest of the areas designated as UAs. There has been significant population growth over the last four decades, with a number of high-rise housing projects being built in the UAs of the two regions. To the south and west of the rice fields in the UCAs of these regions are tall buildings. Some land speculators in Chiba City suggest that the UCAs of T/H, along with those in Kaizuka, will be the first UCAs to be redesignated as UAs.

Six households still conduct part-time rice farming in the largely urban environment of the UCAs of T/H. Each farm consists of a small area of rice fields (3-10 ares). The rice fields are divided into a number of
small lots as in Kaizuka (see Figure 5). Irrigation in T/H utilizes a canal which was built by the city. Unlike in Kaizuka where extended kin help with farming, in T/H, only the rice field owner's immediate nuclear family members help with the actual farming.

Figure 5. Small Rice Fields in the Takashina/Higashiterayama Urban Area.
CHAPTER II

BROADER POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENTS

Anthropologists have recently become particularly aware of the issue of the influence of history and politics on cultures, and have begun to emphasize the importance of placing anthropological studies within the broader context of the "world system" (Marcus and Fisher 1986:77; Said 1989:205). In this study of part-time small-scale Japanese rice farmers, it is important to understand the broader context of Japanese and American economic competition.

SII and the Relaxation of Japanese Rice Importation Policies

Japanese and American government representatives have been meeting for the past ten years to discuss economic issues relating to trade between the two countries. These discussions are a major part of what is called the "Structural Impediments Initiative," or SII. A number of economic compromises have been reached at these meetings, but progress is difficult because the issues raised are related to the fundamental internal industrial structures of the two countries.

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U.S. leaders attempt to maintain political, economic, military, and technological supremacy in the world. One major key to these goals lies in cooperation between the U.S. and Japan. Economic conflict between the two countries has rapidly increased in the last two decades because Japanese industry has been efficiently challenging America's economic and technological supremacy. This conflict has caused the U.S. to take issue with Japanese policies. Stagnation of American products in the Japanese market, such as American cars and some agri-products, have often been attributed to what Americans view as Japanese management's protectionist policies. Thus one of the most important issues for the U.S. is to establish a U.S.-Japanese relationship which enables the U.S. to expedite the sale of U.S. products in Japan.

For the last half decade, the SII issue which has drawn the most Japanese attention is the sale of American-grown rice on the Japanese market. The point was first raised in 1986 when the U.S. Rice Maker Association (RMA) presented former president Reagan with its case against Japanese import restrictions on foreign-grown rice. Subsequent meetings between American and Japanese officials led to the liberalization of the sale of other American agri-products such as beef and oranges in 1991 (Imamura 1991:17), but the two countries have not yet
reached a consensus on the issue of rice sales. The issue, however, has already caused considerable change in Japan's domestic agricultural practices.

Rice and Politics

Rice is one of the few main crops that the Japanese can provide for themselves. As a country whose subsistence is mostly dependent upon imported food, successive Japanese governments have tried to maintain Japan's self-sufficiency in rice production. Among the foods eaten in industrial countries, rice has the highest rate of production and consumption. It has been protected in Japan as a relatively high priced staple, and is generally not imported or exported (Yomiurishimbun 1991:1).

For political reasons, mainly to assure the votes of domestic rice farmers who used to comprise the majority of the Japanese population, successive Japanese governments have made it their "golden rule" to maintain as high a wholesale price for rice as possible. This traditional relationship between the government and domestic rice farmers makes the issue more difficult for the Japanese government today. Because of the resulting drop in rice prices, the relaxation of trade policies to allow the importation of cheaper American-grown rice into the Japanese market would be fatal for those Japanese rice
farmers who subsist by rice farming alone. Thus it is no wonder that most of those who condemn the relaxation of Japanese rice importation policies are full-time Japanese rice farmers.

Restructuring of the Japanese Rice Industry and Its Stagnation

The U.S. government has accused the Japanese government of promoting a protectionist policy. The Japanese economy has enjoyed considerable prosperity for the last four decades by adopting a limited (in American eyes) free market approach. Now the Japanese government is being exposed to a situation in which it cannot give priority to either the principles of free market or the domestic rice farmers without causing tension between local and international economies and interest groups. The seriousness of the issue has forced the Japanese government to come up with as many strategies as possible in order to make domestic rice farming productive enough to compete with cheaper imported rice.

Two of these strategies have been the introduction of free market principles and an increase in the percentage of non-controlled domestic rice. In 1988, the percentage of freely circulated rice was 58% of the year's entire yield (Imamura 1991:566). Another strategy being tried by the government is an attempt to reduce the
number of scattered, small-scale rice farmers, and replace them with efficient, centralized, large-scale farm operations (ibid 562). The goal is to stabilize the cost of domestic rice, not to produce more rice. This strategy has been hampered by a number of socioeconomic factors such as the lack of interest in agribusiness by many domestic farmers, structural changes in the agricultural industry, the scarcity of available farm lands, population growth, and increases in land price. Nationwide increases in land values and corresponding property tax increases are making it almost inevitable that the domestic farmers will abandon their farm land. There is a continuing struggle over land control between the government and private interest groups such as land speculators.

Domestic Rice Surplus Problem and Gentan Policy

Along with the issue of restructuring its domestic farming industry, the Japanese government is also concerned with a domestic rice surplus which has gradually developed since 1969, when the consumption of rice began to decrease as the result of a change in Japanese eating habits (ibid 566). It is important to understand how this problem developed.

An FMS (Food Management System) was legislated in
1942 when the domestic food condition was tight because of World War II. FMS was the system by which the government controlled the distribution of major crops such as rice and wheat, and attempted to achieve a fair redistribution of food. Under FMS the circulation of domestic rice was strictly supervised by the government, with the government purchasing as much rice from the domestic rice farmers as the farmers were willing to sell. FMS continued until 1971, when a domestic rice surplus appeared. As a solution, the government proposed a Gentan (literally--"reduction of rice fields") policy which tried to reduce the domestic rice surplus by trying to get rice farmers to voluntarily control the amount of land under cultivation. Subsidies were offered to those farmers who cut their rice production. These first efforts to control domestic rice production were enacted in 1971, but the policies were largely ineffective because of legislative defects inherent in both the Gentan policy and FMS. Gentan policy failed to live up to expectations because the core feature of FMS was a guarantee to purchase as much rice from the domestic rice farmers as they wished to sell and farmers made significantly more money producing rice than they received for leaving the land fallow. FMS legislation created economic inequalities between those rice farmers who obeyed the Gentan policy and those
who did not. As a solution to this essentially economic problem, the government initiated a Limited Preservation System (LPS) which established a maximum limit to the amount of rice the government was willing to purchase from domestic farmers. Under LPS, the maximum limit was set to an average of the yearly amounts of rice that the government had purchased from the domestic farmers between 1967 and 1969. LPS is currently still based on this standard (ibid).

The government has encouraged rice farmers to plant vegetables instead of rice. Many rice farmers are willing to do so since they make more than they would growing rice. They receive a subsidy for practicing Gentan and make a profit selling their vegetables.

Some domestic rice farmers see Gentan policy as being irrational because it interferes with an area, or "desecrates a sacred precinct," of Japanese culture which most Japanese consider sacrosanct (Soda 1989:182). Also, the average Japanese person does not understand why he should buy foreign-grown rice while the production of domestic rice is being reduced. Some domestic rice farmers see Gentan policy as a reflection of the fact that the government has begun to distance itself from them and to sacrifice their political support for free-market concepts. This policy is difficult to accept for
domestic rice farmers who have been dealing with the world economy under the protection of previous governments.
CHAPTER III

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS OF BUNKE

As I mentioned in the introduction, I am mainly concerned with how the liberalization of the sale of imported rice in the domestic market has influenced the practice of bunke. In this chapter, I give the basic definition of bunke, describe how this cultural practice has developed, and then describe the current status of bunke in the Kaizuka region, and how it is related to ancestor worship and traditional rice farming in the region.

Definitions of Bunke

In traditional Japanese society, the custom was, and in some regions still is, for the father (often while still living) to leave all of his sons some land. He would leave his eldest son the right of succession to the ancestral house, along with the bulk of the estate. The eldest son's inheritance, and his nuclear family (wife and children) are both called a honke. Other sons inherited smaller portions of land, and daughters were married off to other families, often without either dowry or
inheritance (Yanagida 1974:511).

The term *bunke* may be used as either a verb or noun depending on its context. To say "a son *bunkes*" means he was not the eldest son and that he received only a small portion of the family estate, excluding the ancestral house. Each head of the *bunke* has his own nuclear family which lives separately from the *honke*. *Bunke* is also used as a noun when referring to the house or household to which the younger sons move. For example, Takashi will *bunke* to the westernmost *bunke*, and his oldest brother will stay with the *honke*. The son who inherits the *honke* takes care of his parents in the ancestral house, has the right to maintain the family altar, and maintains considerable superiority over the *bunkes* in many aspects of their daily life (ibid 531-532).

Together, a *honke* and its *bunkes* are called a "*dozoku*," which literally means "same group." Ancestor worship is very important to the *dozoku* concept. The members of a *dozoku* usually practice a common religion and share a common cemetery and temple. Based on consanguineous, religious, political, and economic relationships, the *dozoku* forms a unified group in daily social life. The members of the *dozoku* practice food redistribution, gift exchange, and other social activities on occasions such as weddings and funerals. The concept of *dozoku* not
only applies to those who practice traditional farming, but also can be found among kin groups in other occupations such as fishing (ibid 399). The concept of dozoku I am describing here, however, has been maintained primarily by those who cultivate ancestral rice fields.

A typical dozoku unit in the Kaizuka region was the Suzuki family (all names are fictitious). It consisted of a honke and its two bunkes. The head of the honke is Taro, 61-year-old father of two children (a boy and a girl). His wife's name is Hanako. He lives with his father Gontaro, who is 87. Taro has two brothers, Jiro and Saburo, who live on associated bunkes. Jiro is 55 and married to Sakura, and they have three boys. Saburo is 50 and married to Yayoi, and they have a boy and a girl.

Together, Taro, Jiro and Saburo farm 15 ares of family rice fields. All three have full-time jobs in the urban center of Chiba City.

History of Bunke

By 1603, the Japanese warlord Tokugawa conquered the numerous small states of Japan, uniting the country. To help establish a strict legislative control over Japan, the practice of bunke was restricted in most areas in an effort to control the number of landowners. On land
which was directly supervised by the Tokugawa family and its oldest supporters, however, *bunke* was allowed. These regions were known as "*tenryo*" (ibid 511). The Kaizuka region of Chiba City was one of those regions. The Oido and T/H regions were not under the immediate supervision of either the Tokugawa family or its supporters and so *bunke* was not allowed in those areas. In those regions families were not permitted to divide their land.

The Tokugawa regime controlled Japan's rice industry during the Edo era (1603-1867). Rice farms in the *tenryo* were directly controlled by the Tokugawa elite, and rice farming in non-*tenryo* areas were directly controlled through the municipal government of each region. Most rice was directly appropriated by the region's governor, who used it primarily to feed his military forces. Also, some of each region's rice production was paid as tribute to the Tokugawa central government.

The Edo era ended in 1867 and was followed by the Meiji era (1867-1912). With the advent of the Meiji era, private ownership of rice farms was made legal, although some limitations still remained. The practice of *bunke* was made legal nationwide and became popular in some areas. But in the non-*tenryo* areas of Japan, *bunke* had lost the supporting sense of tradition because of the 264-year interval in which *bunke* was banned. This fact
worked against the re-establishment of the practice of bunke in those non-tenryō areas.

Although bunke was legally allowed, certain techno-economic factors also worked against the re-establishment of its practice. First, Japan's urban areas began to industrialize. This required the creation of a work force, which drew its members primarily from the rural countryside. This factor, plus the physical proximity of the farms to the urban areas helped determine the presence or absence of bunke.

For example, the Oido region was both rural and located far from the urban areas. The residents of Oido could not work in the urban areas while living on their rice farms because the distance was too great to commute. Rice farmers generally practiced primogeniture; they passed their farms on to the eldest son, while the rest of the sons moved to the urban areas and entered industrial positions. This factor, combined with a lack of the bunke is not present in Oido today.

The T/H regions are located close to an urban area, so rice farmers could live on the farms while family members worked in the cities. This situation led to the re-establishment of the bunke practice when the Meiji era began. Early in this century, however, the rapid industrialization and spread of Japan's industrial areas led
to soaring land prices in the two regions. Farmers found it more profitable to sell their land for industrial and commercial purposes rather than pass it on to their heirs. As a result, the practice of *bunke* rapidly died out in the T/H regions. This extinction was aided by the lack of established cultural traditions caused by the Edo era restrictions on *bunke* in the areas.

In the Kaizuka region the *bunke* institution is still strong because of a delicate balance between opposing economic, historical, and cultural forces. The region is close enough to the UAs to allow the rice farmers to live and farm on their own land while commuting to the UAs to hold industrial positions, much like the T/H regions. But unlike those regions, Kaizuka is far enough from the UAs to prevent escalating land prices from becoming a major factor, at least until recently.

In addition, as an Edo era *tenryo*, the cultural practices surrounding *bunke* have existed uninterrupted for several hundred years. This last factor makes traditional factors important to the rice farmers' decisions regarding land use.

**Present Status of Bunke**

In the Kaizuka region there are many cultural practices which are associated with *bunke*. Some of these
practices are associated with ancestor worship. Thus it is important to understand the basic assumptions of ancestor worship in Japan.

Ties Through Ancestor Worship

Ancestor worship is an important supportive feature of the dozoku. However, the concept of ancestors is not easy to define and often refers to a mixed group of ancestors, ancestral spirits, ancestral gods or goddesses, and so on (Yanagida 1974:331). According to Yanagida, ancestor worship is often associated with and supportive of consanguineously based clan alliances. Ancestor worship has the primary function of maintaining the social order of the kin-based community (ibid).

Ancestor worship requires a belief in the existence of ancestral spirits. In Japan it is widely acknowledged that the spirit of a dead relative is transformed to that of an ancestral spirit. It is also widely believed that this is achieved when the members of the kin group to which the deceased belongs consciously worship the deceased (ibid).

Yanagida also argues that ancestral spirits become deities which protect not only the kin group, but also the entire region in which they live. Thus ancestral spirits can also become local gods. Many of the members
of each dozoku acknowledge their ancestors by worshipping kin who have recently died, often their grandparents. For this reason, Buddhism, which is more concerned with the spirits of the deceased close kin, has importance in most Japanese societies (ibid). Ancestor worship is symbolized in various ways. "Succession of fire" is one of those symbols. A fire in the hearth represents ancestral deities and the spiritual basis of the members of the kin group. More importantly, it is considered necessary for members of the kin group to eat the same food, especially the rice they grow, which is served to the spirit world as an offering in order to maintain the goodwill of their ancestral spirits (ibid).

Ancestor Worship in the Kaizuka Region

In the Kaizuka region, the concept of dozoku and ancestor worship still remain strong among part-time rice farmers who have cultivated their ancestral fields for generations, although several variations can be observed. Unlike the general concept of dozoku and ancestor worship that I described previously, the members of a honke and its bunkes in the Kaizuka region do not share the same tomb. The honkes' tombs are located on a hill in the center of the region, and only members of the honkes use the ancestral tombs and are worshipped as
ancestors after they die. Ancestor worship seems relatively weak in the Kaizuka region compared with regions which still maintain honke-bunke tomb sharing. According to Sofue, this type of strict sense of dozoku remains strong in the northeastern Japanese provinces of Aomori, Akita, Iwate, Yamagata, Miyagi, and Fukushima (Sofue 1979:131).

In the Kaizuka region, the members of a honke and its bunkes congregate at the honke's house to worship their ancestors on special occasions such as Bon, a Buddhist ritual which is performed in an effort to comfort the souls of one's recently deceased kin. Women return to their parents' honkes for this ritual, but they also participate in their husbands' ancestor worship rituals. There are some variations according to each household, but the common ritual observed in this region is that each honke opens its family altar and decorates it with bamboo, straw, vegetables, and other offerings. The decorations always include ears of the rice from the ancestral plot, in order to report to ancestors the productivity of their offspring in the ancestral rice fields. Bon is a nationwide practice, but this embellishment is unique to rice farmers.

In the evening of the day of Bon, the members of each dozoku go to their ancestors' tomb to call out their
spirits. Each dozoku has a lantern which is decorated with its own distinctive house mark and is taken, unlit, to each ancestors' tomb. They also take some offerings, for example, rice cooked with some vegetables. Once at the graveyard, the members of each dozoku announce to the ancestors that it is Bon and they have come to bring the ancestors home. Each member of the dozoku offers incense sticks and then lights the lantern they brought from home. At this moment, the fire symbolically becomes the ancestors. The head of each dozoku, who is normally male, or its future heir, carefully carries his ancestors' fire home. If the dozoku has any children between the ages of three and eight, each child carries his or her own small lantern. Their parents teach them not to put out the fire until they have safely reached home, so that the ancestors will not get lost along the way. Once one, since the ancestors are considered bare-foot and defiled (by definition, they are dead and in "the underground"), the head of the dozoku cleans the underneath of the lantern with water which has been specially set aside on the threshold of the house. Each of the members of the dozoku then uses this water to wash their hands, and then they sprinkle it on themselves to purify their bodies before they enter the house. Once the ancestors are cleaned, the head of the dozoku takes
the ancestors inside and transfers the flame from the lantern to a special candle which is on the family altar. At this moment the children are informed that they may put out their lanterns. The candle's fire is kept lit throughout the **Bon** period, which lasts for four days (August 12 through August 15). The members of the **dozoku** each offer incense sticks again, then everyone sits around a table which is prepared in front of the family altar and talks. The topics of the conversations are not necessarily limited to the memories of their ancestors. For example, they might informally talk about how they are doing at work or school, or how their rice is growing. Late on the last night of **Bon**, the head of the **dozoku**, his brothers, and the future head of the **dozoku** carry the spirits of the ancestors back to the graveyard in the lantern. At the graveyard, they offer incense sticks and then put out the fire, telling the ancestors that they will come see them next **Bon**. The spirits are believed to return to sleep at this moment.

In Kaizuka, as in other regions where ancestor worship is still practiced, **Bon** is an important occasion on which members of the **dozoku** congregate.

**Social Relationships Among Adjoining Bunkes in the Kaizuka Region**

The practice of ancestor worship among those who
maintain the concept of *dozoku* is weaker among *bunkes* than in the *honke*, which maintains the family altar. It is also acknowledged that the greater the geographical distance between a *honke* and its *bunkes*, the weaker the practice of ancestor worship.

I observed that 10 out of 15 kin-based rice farmers in Kaizuka still maintain a concept of *dozoku* based on conventional *honke*-bunke relationships and supported by both common ancestor worship and the practice of rice farming. Among these rice farmers, geographical closeness is important. Because of their proximity, the practice of ancestor worship among the kin-based rice farmers in Kaizuka is often maintained to the same degree in both the *honkes* and their *bunkes*. In this region each son except the eldest inherits land which is within a minute's walking distance to his *honke'*s main building. While this can be attributed to the *dozoku*'s limited land in some of the cases, it is not necessarily always so. There are many members of *bunkes* who reside close to their *honke*'s main buildings, even though they own relatively large tracts of land which would enable them to settle farther away. This proximity enables the members of each *dozoku* to frequently congregate and exchange information with each other, and helps the *honke* and *bunkes* maintain the same relative degree of commitment to
ancestor worship. I will call this type of bunke an "adjoining bunke."

Dozoku consciousness among kin-based rice farmers in the Kaizuka region is also strengthened by setting up a family altar in each bunke's building. This family altar is slightly different from the one which is set up in the honke's building, since it does not directly house the ancestral spirits. However, it is believed to house the local deity which represents the ancestors of the region. When a younger brother builds a new house, the elder brothers show him how to set up a family altar. This includes choosing the right location and correct orientation for the new family altar.

In the Kaizuka region each dozoku has its own house mark, and each dozoku is often identified by its house mark rather than by its formal family name. Each house mark has its own origin, which is usually based on each dozoku's traditional occupation or the location of the house. Even though the dozoku no longer maintains the same traditional occupation, the dozoku is still identified by its old house mark. Each bunke in this region is also identified by its honke's house mark, but often in a slightly different manner. For example, if the honke has a house mark such as "Kagoya" (basketmaker), its bunkes are identified as "new kagoya." this shows how bunkes
are relating to their corresponding honkes.

Negotiation and exchange of information between bunkes in the Kaizuka region often takes place through the honkes. For example, information about donations to the local shrine almost always flows through honkes. In this case the members of each honke and its bunkes informally discuss the amount of money they will donate, with the honke always giving more than the bunkes do. The bunke members show their respect for their honke by donating less, even if they have more; if the bunkes donated more, it would look as though they were trying to usurp status from the honke. This type of strong honke-centered consciousness seems to be most prevalent among those rice farmers who maintain the concept of dozoku in the Kaizuka region, that is, those which maintain geographical closeness between honkes and their bunkes, and those which maintain the conventional form of dozoku identification.

On such occasions as Machi (a local pre-harvest festival), each honke invites the members of the bunkes and distant relatives to the home to celebrate, praise and express appreciation to the local deity and the dozoku's ancestors for the successful harvest. Machi is an annual event held in September, involving many members of a dozoku, including relatively distant relatives who
may not interact frequently during the year. The same type of Machi festivals are also observed in other regions surrounding Kaizuka.

According to my informants, Machi used to provide an opportunity for the members of kin groups in communities around the Kaizuka region to strengthen their alliances. Where dozokus are very strong, brides are completely separated from their father's kin groups and forced to be part of their husband's kin groups (Sofue 1979:131). On Machi, however, brides in the Kaizuka region could return to their father's community and thus strengthen the tie between the two communities. This function of Machi, however, rapidly disappeared as the socioeconomic structures of the neighboring communities changed. Many of the surrounding communities no longer practice Machi even with their closest kin. It can be argued that the close geographical distance between honkes and their bunkes has helped the members of the dozokus in the Kaizuka region maintain Machi.

According to current laws, no obligation exists between parents, siblings, or children with regard to the inheritance of ancestor worship responsibilities and conventional occupations. Therefore, no obligatory relationship relating to ancestral rice farming exists between the members of a honke and its bunkes. In the
Kaizuka region, however, many members of *bunkes* help with their *honke's* rice farming. Most of the *honke-bunke*-based rice farms in the region are based on and support a relatively strong sense of *dozoku* and crop redistribution practices. Consequently, the degree of cooperation is dependent on the intention of the embers of the *bunkes*, and is greatly influenced by the degree to which the head of each *bunke* teaches his spouse and children to respect their ancestral values. In the Kaizuka region, most heads of *bunkes* practice rice farming on a semi-obligatory basis before they become independent from their *honkes*. Once they become independent, they still provide a considerable amount of help to the *honkes*. The *honkes* show their appreciation to their *bunkes* by redistributing a certain amount of the year's harvest to them. On the surface, this is the most visible economic result of *honke-bunke* cooperation in the region.

This form of rice farming conducted in the Kaizuka region is more complicated than it appears. According to ten informants who form the core of *bunkes* in the region, aged from 55 to 70, the distribution of the harvest was one of the most important sources of subsistence for the members of *bunkes* for at least the first two years after they became independent from their *honkes*. Thus it can be argued that this type of *honke-bunke* cooperation-based

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rice farming originally began as a result of necessity. Consequently, the relationship between a honke and its bunkes was characterized by the bunkes' subservient status to the honke. The honke's superior position diminished as the financial status of each bunke improved. The honke's authority over the bunkes remains when their bunkes' financial status are not sufficient to support them without counting on the year's harvest redistribution. To avoid this type of obligation, some bunkes in the region are willing to buy their honke's rice at a discount price rather than receive it free. The obligation is often revealed by the actual activities of the part-time rice farmers. During major rice farming routines, such as seeding, rice transplanting, and harvesting, the head or future head of a honke visits his bunkes and informally notifies the members of the date when he plans the work, indirectly asking the bunkes who usually buy their rice from him to help with the work. In the case of those bunkes who usually receive the redistribution of harvest free, in contrast, the honke does not visit and notify them of the work, but waits until one of the members of the bunkes visits and asks the honke about the rice farming and determines the general timing of routines himself.

Although one can see that the degree of the obliga-
tion of each bunke to its honke can be generally explained by its financial status, the degree of honke-bunke cooperation varies depending on the intentions of each individual. With the exception of extreme cases, such as above, the members of bunkes often show their respect toward their honkes by informally inquiring about the time of the next rice farming routine. From this viewpoint it seems valid to assume that the rice farming in the Kaizuka region is made possible by both the respect the members of bunkes and honkes extend toward each other, and by their shared attitude toward ancestral rice farming. Economic factors are not the only factor. It is important to note that the members of the bunkes in the Kaizuka region still maintain a relatively positive attitude toward traditional rice farming.
CHAPTER IV

ECONOMIC FORCES PRODUCING STRESS ON THE BUNKE
INSTITUTIONS IN THE KAIZUKA REGION

The world economic situation is forcing the Japanese
government to initiate policies designed to make its rice
farming industry more competitive on the world market.
These policies, along with the growth of Japan's urban
areas, are causing certain stresses on the bunke institu-
tion. In this chapter I will focus on how these factors
are affecting bunke in the Kaizuka region of Chiba City.

Introduction of Free Market Principles
Into the Domestic Rice Market

The Japanese government's attempt to introduce free
market principles into the domestic rice market is one
factor which places stress on the bunke institution in
Kaizuka.

In Japan there are currently two kinds of legally
circulated domestic rice. These are: (1) government
rice which is purchased from domestic rice farmers and
sold to customers through the government, and (2) free
circulation rice, which is limited to high quality rice
dealt with by specified wholesalers and collectors who
are engaged by the producers. Under FMS the sale and purchase of domestic rice was strictly handled by the government (government rice). The system of free circulation rice was introduced in 1969 to insert free market principles into the domestic rice market and to encourage the farmers to produce higher quality rice (Imamura 1991:566).

The government has attempted to increase the amount of free circulation rice by subsidizing independent circulation and ownership, thus encouraging the production of quality rice. Also, in 1988 the Ministry of Food enacted several statutes designed to facilitate competition in the rice market. For example, the government relinquished more of its control over the rice market, giving farmers and distributors more freedom to set prices and choose markets (ibid).

The Consolidation of the Use of Marginal Rice Fields

The government is attempting to consolidate marginal rice fields in order to make the domestic rice industry cost-effective. Large farmers can produce rice more cheaply because they make it possible to use machinery instead of human labor. The hone-bunk institution creates a larger number of small farms which are counterproductive to the government's attempt to establish large-
scale rice farming operations. Thus the government's implicit goal is to eliminate the practice of bunke.

As I briefly mentioned in Chapter II, the Japanese government has recently begun to see those farms which maintain a male who is younger than 60 years old and spends more than 150 days a year for his rice farming as the future rice producers. Currently, less than 28% of the total domestic rice production is produced by these farms which are officially acknowledged as core farms (ibid 562).

Using the government's standard, none of the part-time rice farmers in the Kaizuka region work at core farms. Seventy-four percent of the income of the part-time rice farmers in the Kaizuka region is earned from their non-rice farming occupations (Chibashi 1990:20). Most of their income is from jobs they hold in the urban centers of Chiba City and other major commercial centers, and they conduct part-time rice farming for personal use only. Thus on the surface, the productivity of their rice farming is not important to the government, which is attempting to restructure the domestic rice farms. From this point of view the main attention of the government must be turned to those rice farmers (both full-time and part-time rice farmers) who sell their products to the domestic market. Gentan policy, however, has been ap-
plied to the owners of rice fields whether they gain income from their rice production or not. This point has irritated rice farmers who grow rice only for subsistence. They ask why Gentan policy is used to get them to reduce their rice production when the total amount of rice produced by farmers for their own use is negligible compared to the total quantity of rice consumption in Japan. As I mentioned before, core farms produce less than 30% of Japan's annual rice yield. The remainder is produced by full-time farmers and those part-time rice farmers who sell their products on the domestic market. If one assumes that the rice farmers in Chiba City whose land under cultivation is less than 30 ares are like the type of rice farmers in the Kaizuka region I described, if they decided to sell their products, their share would account for less than 10% of Japan's entire production. The government simply argues that it is necessary to apply the Gentan policy to all the farmers in order to stabilize the wholesale price of rice, but does not explain why. I assume that the policy is applied to all the farmers because either not all the large-scale farmers are profit farmers or all the small-scale farmers are self-sufficient. Gentan policy is implicitly designed to drive the unproductive part-time rice farmers to give up their farming by subsidizing others. If the policy was
not applied to all the self-sufficient farmers, the government might lose the opportunity to acquire the land of relatively large-scale nonprofit farmers. The government's effort to restructure and stabilize Japan's rice market is aimed at replacing the small rice farms with large, concentrated rice farms. The government wants to control as much land as possible. Although it is not explicitly stated, it appears that the government is manipulating the Gentan policy to achieve this goal. I argue that small farmers are being sacrificed. They are encouraged to sell their land to one of the local Agriculture Land Banks (ALBs) which are run by municipal governments. The ALB consolidates the smaller farms into one or more large farms, which are then rented or sold to entrepreneurs willing to establish a large-scale rice farming operation.

In the Kaizuka region the bunke institution is being threatened by the government restrictions relating to the classifications of UAs, UCAs and TAAs in the city.

In UAs, the owner of rice fields is allowed to sell his land for either residential or industrial purposes. Deals between any individuals are possible. Farming activity in UAs, on the other hand, is largely restricted, although it is not officially banned.

As I mentioned in Chapter I, the Kaizuka region is
divided into a UA and a UCA, and the farming activity in
the UA is restricted. For example, in 1989, the Suzuki
family, because of the city's effort to enforce the
Gentan policy, was forced to sell approximately 20% of
its rice fields which were located in the UA. Currently,
the Suzuki family farms on the rest of the rice fields
which are located in a UCA.

In UCAs, landowners are not allowed to sell rice
fields for either residential or industrial purposes but
they may sell them to real estate investors as farm
lands. It is also legal for farmers who reside in UCAs
to sell and purchase rice fields.

In TAAs it is illegal to sell rice fields unless the
deal is between rice farmers who reside in the same TAA
and the purchaser is willing to continue rice farming on
the fields purchased. A farmer who owns rice fields in
both UCAs and TAAs is not allowed to make a deal with a
farmer who owns rice fields only in TAAs.

Another honke-bunk family in the Kaizuka region, the
Yamada family, wished to continue rice farming even after
financial pressures forced the sale of their UCA rice
fields to a real estate investor. Since they owned rice
fields in a TAA and sold UCA rice pads, the Yamadas could
purchase rice fields in the TAA. However, since the TAA
rice fields are located far from the Kaizuka region, the
Yamada family's honke-bunke based rice farming is no longer functioning as it used to. Currently only the members of the honke practice rice farming.

Land Price Increases

Increasing land prices and a corresponding increase in property taxes often cause financial strain for Japanese rice farmers. One way for them to get money is by selling some of their land. The abandonment of ancestral rice fields consequently weakens the tie between the honke and its bunkes and leads to the degeneration of the bunk institution in the Kaizuka region.

Land Price Increases and Government's Attempt to Manipulate the Rice Farmers

Even though the rice farmers in the Kaizuka region, aged 50 to 65, plan to continue using their ancestral rice farms, they are generally pessimistic about their heirs' intentions. On the other hand, the municipal government, which attempts to obtain as many rice fields as possible, does not miss this as an opportunity to manipulate these farmers. As I described before, the Kaizuka region is characterized by its increasing land prices due to its status as a UCA. In the region, the owners of rice fields are prohibited from selling their lands for industrial use or housing lots, but are permit-
ted to sell them to real estate investors as rice fields. According to some Chiba City officials, the main UCAs, including the Kaizuka region, will not be redesignated as UAs for a while. This means that those part-time rice farmers who need immediate money are encouraged to sell their rice fields to real estate investors under less beneficial conditions. As I mentioned, one of the government's tasks is to persuade such rice farmers not to leave their rice fields in the hands of real estate investors but to the ALB. The municipal government offers better conditions (at this moment anyway) than real estate investors while restricting the part-time rice farmers' right to freely sell their own rice fields. The government argues that it is financially beneficial and that their ancestral rice fields will be used as a rice field by professional rice producers. The city's offer must be attractive to part-time rice farmers in the Kaizuka region who need immediate money, are emotionally attached to their rice fields, and who are willing to keep them as rice fields (no longer their own but functioning as they used to, anyway), but who are pessimistic about the prospect of their heirs continuing to farm.

The Rivalry Between the Government and Real Estate Investors

Real estate investors are spurring the competition
among individuals over the procurement of these suburban rice fields. It is legal for rice farmers to sell their fields to real estate investors as rice fields, but not to sell them for residential or industrial purposes. The real estate investor is then supposed to either sell the fields as rice fields, or wait for government approval to sell the lands with either a residential or industrial classification.

As I mentioned, Japanese rice farmers are frequently strained financially. One way for them to get money is by selling some of their land. If the farmer owns land in a TAA, he could sell it and buy an equal amount of land in another TAA, farther from urban areas, but make an overall profit. But if he owns any land outside of a specific TAA, it is illegal for him to buy land in another TAA. Real estate investors take advantage of this situation by acting as mediators. The case of the Yamada family that I described before is a good example. In this family's case, the farmer owned rice fields in both a UCA and a TAA, and the rice fields in the UCA had a high market value. The owner of the rice field wished to sell his high-valued rice fields to a real estate investor who was willing to purchase them for speculation purposes. The owner of the rice field also wanted to maintain the same amount of land in a TAA for use in rice
farming. There was another farmer named Tabata, who owned rice fields in a TAA which he was willing to sell. However, it is prohibited to sell or purchase a rice field in a TAA unless the deal is made between farmers or individuals who reside in the same TAA and the buyers are willing to continue rice farming with the rice field purchased. This is where the real estate investor comes in. Farmer Yamada sold all his UCA land to the investor, who will then hold the land as an investment until the government allows its sale as industrial or residential land. The investor will then make a considerably large profit. The real estate investor then found farmer Tabata who was willing to sell his rice field in a TAA, but could not locate a buyer himself. The investor then arranges the deal between farmer Yamada and farmer Tabata. This kind of complicated deal is impossible or can be largely delayed without the help of real estate investors. The result, as I described before, was the degeneration of the Yamada's honke-bunke.

Stagnation of Land Consolidation

Economic Factors

Although the government's rice field consolidation policy has gradually influenced rice farming in the Kaizuka region, honke-bunke cooperation-based rice farm-
ing is still maintained among some of the part-time rice farmers because of the delicate balance between opposing economic forces. From an economic point of view, traditional honke-bunke based part-time rice farming is still maintained because the region is close enough to the UAs to allow the rice farmers to live and farm on their land while occupying non-farming jobs in the urban center of the city. Moreover, by utilizing traditional ties, supported by their geographical proximity, each of these kin-based farmers can still gather sufficient numbers of kin members to carry out each rice farming routine. This decreases the need to buy expensive equipment and machinery. Their rice farming is essentially based on free labor, and avoids greater debt.

Kaizuka has recently experienced an increase in its commercial, industrial, and real estate values, and these forces seem to suggest the consolidation of the rice fields. In practice, however, the government's attempt to consolidate the rice fields has faltered in the Kaizuka region because instead of selling their rice fields to the government, which claims to provide a better deal than real estate investors, rice farmers are willing to wait until the government allows them to either sell their fields as housing lots, or run their own apartments. Real estate investors and land specula-
tors are attempting to buy the rice fields before the government allows the farmers that freedom. This type of rivalry between the government and other interest groups is one of the main economic factors which has slowed the progress of land consolidation in the Kaizuka region.

This does not mean that the farmers in the region will abandon their honke-bunke based rice farming when the government allows them to sell their farm land freely. Nor does this mean that their rice farming is purely based on economic needs. There are a number of cultural factors which need to be taken into account.

Cultural Factors

Along with these economic factors, the consolidation of rice fields in the Kaizuka region has also been resisted because of the farmers' strong attachment to their ancestral rice fields, though there are considerable differences among them. Although they tend to give priority to current economic conditions, these farmers have not lost their identity as traditional Japanese rice farmers. While there are individual differences, attachment to their ancestral rice fields is shared by the ten heads of the part-time rice farmers I spoke to in the Kaizuka region, and is supported by the nationwide view of Japan's rice farming as a "sacred precinct."
Some of my informants said it is their obligation to protect rice farming from foreign pressures, and insisted that their rice farming should be understood not on a simple economic level, but on a cultural level. When asked about the issue of SII, they answered that more attention should be paid to each country's cultural ecology and history.

Another informant, who retired in 1990 from his executive job in a major heavy industry company at the age of 60, said that he is not going to give up his ancestral rice farming as long as he lives. When asked why, he simply said that he feels obligated to continue the legacy of his ancestors, and will by no means abandon his ancestral rice fields. When asked how he feels about the government's attempt to restructure the domestic agriculture industry, he said that it must be strengthened and the government is doing the right thing. However, he said that he is not going to leave his rice fields to anybody but his son. When I indicated that these were seemingly contradictory statements, he said the most important thing for him and his family is the very fact that they work daily in urban areas, occasionally cultivate their small amount of rice fields for their own use, and still appreciate the ways of their ancestors.

His son, who is currently 28 years old and works for
the government, agreed with his father. He said he had characterized himself as the son of a suburban farmer since he was a high school student. He used to feel uncomfortable about his unusual status, which differs from other young people in his generation, but he gradually came to accept this identity. Although some differences exists between him and his father, the son wants to take over the rice fields and continue to farm them. The son plans to marry a 26-year-old woman who was raised in an urban area and has no farming experience. The son and his father said things may change because of this marriage.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

When I asked the people in the Kaizuka region how the relaxed restrictions on the importation of foreign rice into the Japanese domestic rice market would influence their rice farming lifestyle, most of them answered that the domestic rice farming industry would be destroyed. This answer makes sense. The new policy has spurred the government to seek efficient ways to strengthen and restructure the domestic rice industry. Thus, allowing foreign-grown rice into the Japanese domestic rice market must be, in some way, understood as a major driving force behind the restructuring of domestic agriculture. When people said, "It's going to destroy our domestic rice farming," they were, and still are, pessimistic about the competitiveness of Japanese domestic rice, which is far more expensive than foreign-grown rice from countries such as the U.S. and Thailand. According to a study by the IMF, the 1989 wholesale price of Japanese domestic rice was 6.5 times that of the U.S., and 9.1 times that of Thailand's (Imamura 1990:20). As I described above, the restructuring and intensification of
the domestic rice farming industry has not yet achieved significant success.

From a macroscopic view, the attempt has been impeded by various economic factors such as the rapid increase of land prices in the suburban areas that I observed.

From a microscopic perspective, however, these economic-centered views are divided into various parts. In the Kaizuka region, eight out of ten observed part-time rice farmers I observed still base their rice farming on traditional honke-bunke cooperation which is made possible by their geographical proximity. This practice makes it possible for the members of each dozoku to subsist without undermining their traditional rice farming lifestyle by using machinery, which inevitably is not cost-effective in such marginal farming ventures. With honke-bunke based cooperation tactics, less than 60 days a year are spent growing the rice sufficient to feed the members of a dozoku. In addition, as an Edo era tenryō, the cultural practices surrounding bunke have continued uninterrupted in the Kaizuka region for several hundred years. This point makes traditional factors important to the rice farmers' decisions regarding land use.

Most of the part-time rice farmers in the Kaizuka region do not sell their products on the domestic rice market. Instead, they simply maintain their rice farming...
operations for their own consumption. Their productivity seems to have no direct influence on the wholesale price of rice. Even if the owners of the rice fields agree to consolidate their rice producing system and leave their honke-bunke cooperation-based rice farming in the hands of professional rice producers through the ALB, the effect on the rice prices will be negligible. Their productivity will be influential only when the government successfully acquires the rice fields of those relatively large-scale (more than 30 ares) farmers who do not sell their products on the domestic market. Legislation such as Gentan policy, however, seems to be directed towards this goal. The government can mystify what it is trying to do to part-time rice farmers by manipulating its legislative control in an effort to make the farmers feel like the government is on their side. In reality, the government neither understands nor cares about the farmers' cultural institutions. Under the current conditions, it is the government which has legislative control over the whole situation, and because of the increasing land prices it has produced, it is the biggest threat to bunke.

Thus in addition to educating their children in the values of traditional rice farming, the survival of honke-bunke cooperation-based rice farming depends on
whether the future heirs can hold occupations which will allow them to earn enough income to cover their high municipal property taxes and avoid selling their rice fields for immediate cash. These factors will have to be assured by kin-based rice farmers especially in the near future when they can buy cheaper imported rice by simply going to supermarkets. Otherwise, their "self-sufficient" way of life will place them in a tormenting position, and the cultural values associated with ancestor worship will be weakened. Then, the self-sufficient lifestyle of these rice farmers will eventually diminish in exchange for the "self-sufficiency" of the nation itself.
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