

## The Grass-Roots Modernization in a Japanese Village

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**Abstract:** The critical role played by national or central direction in Japan's modernization is well recognized, but the role of rural Japan in the nation's modernizing process has not been adequately understood. Ways of life in rural Japan, or *buraku*, are usually viewed negatively, and considered stumbling blocks in the process of modernization. However, a closer analysis of Ryumon, an ordinary Japanese village in W Japan which successfully transformed its agricultural system to become a citrus specialty area, has revealed that the villagers achieved a new way of life through many years of grass-roots effort in the context of *buraku* society. Clearly, *buraku* society must be examined more thoroughly before our understanding of Japan's process of modernization becomes complete.

### Introduction

This is a study of how a village community in modern Japan adjusted to and benefited from modernization. The term modernization is extremely difficult to define, but here it is viewed as the process of man's rational control of both his physical and social environment<sup>1</sup>). The critical role played by national or central direction in Japan's modernization is well known (Crawcour, 1956; Hackett, 1965; Lockwood, 1954, 1964). But many have had reservations about the application of the term to Japanese rural society (Fukutake, 1974). However, in order to obtain a full understanding of Japan's modernization process, it is important to ascertain, at the village level, the extent to which innovation grew out of local, village perceptions and initiatives<sup>2</sup>). The recent innovative agricultural development in Japan known as Nogo Kozo Kaizen, or the agricultural restructuring plan in effect since 1961, may be a case in point<sup>3</sup>).

The sweeping landscape change in Ryumon, the village under examination in this study, took place mainly in the 1960's at the time of the introduction of the Nogyo Kozo Kaizen plan (*kozo kaizen* hereafter<sup>4</sup>). Thus a casual observer can easily view Ryumon as a model village which modernized its agricultural system under the government-led program. But a closer examination has revealed that

Ryumonites themselves took initiative to improve the life in their village through cooperative work, rather than by passively receiving directions from the top. Contrary to popular belief, cooperation in rural Japan is very difficult to achieve (Dore, 1978; Smith, 1966). Successful cooperation in Ryumon, then, should not be taken for granted, but should be understood as being carefully induced within the framework of traditional village ways of life. Moreover, since their physical base for agriculture is by no means favorable, the present economic well-being may reasonably be attributed largely to human factors. The significance of Ryumon's transformation is that it is a very ordinary Japanese village in both its physical and social characteristics, and may offer an example for other rural communities.

Ryumon is a predominantly agricultural community within the town of Kokawa in Wakayama Prefecture. The village is a well-defined physical entity on the left bank of the 500-meter wide Kinokawa River which flows through the middle of Kokawa (Fig 1). Ryumon measures about 3 km N-S, and 5 km E-W at the widest point, and has an area of approximately 12 km<sup>2</sup>. About one-half of Ryumon occupies the steep hillsides. The diluvial and river terraces combined comprise about a quarter of the area. The flood plain accounts for another quarter. 43 % of the area is under cultivation, two-thirds of which is on the slope at an

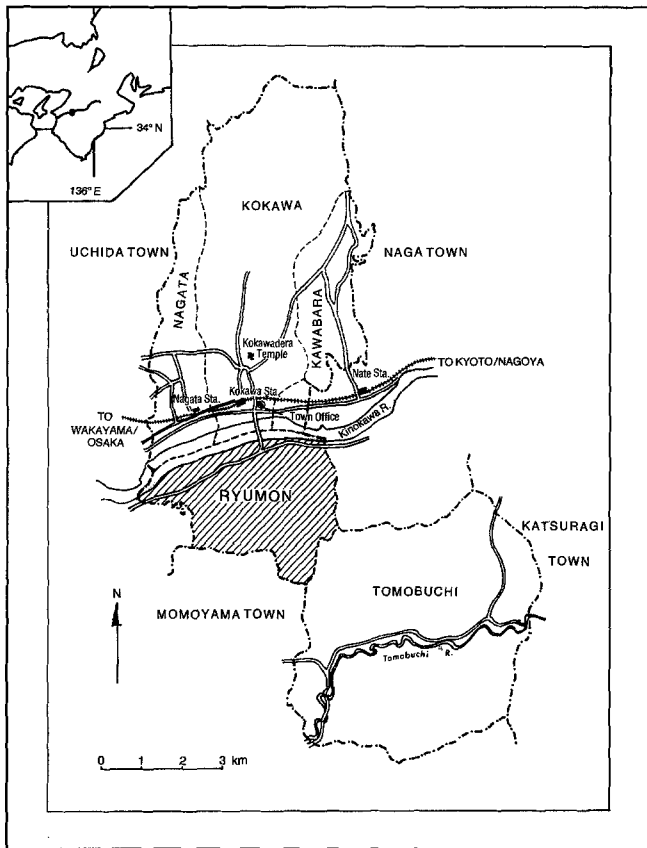


Fig 1 Amalgamated Kokawa, Wakayama Prefecture

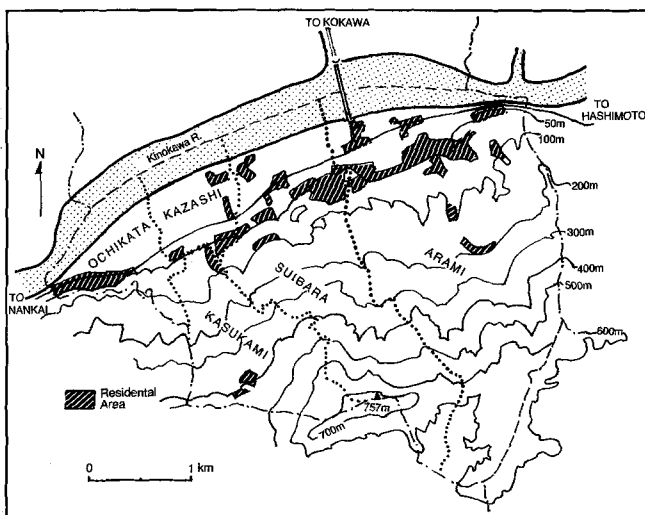


Fig 2 Ryumon

elevation of up to 400 m (Fig 2). The annual average temperature is slightly above 15° C, and there is an annual precipitation of about 1,400 mm. A little less than eight months are frost-free.

The total population is 3,050 with 687 households. 70 % of the households engage in agriculture, 51 % of which are full-timers, while 18 % are part-timers gaining the majority of their income from agriculture. The average holding is a little less than one ha per household<sup>5</sup>). Until 1955, Ryumon was an independently administered Ryumon Mura (Ryumon Village), consisting of five sub-divisions, officially known as *Oaza* but more popularly known as *buraku*, or *mura* (Fig 2). Each of these five *buraku* units, in turn, was administered as an independent *Mura* (Village) through centuries of the feudal period until they were amalgamated as Ryumon Mura in 1889. Thus, *buraku*, with its long history, has been a primary unit of village life in Ryumon, as it has throughout Japan. Although Ryumon was once poor, new and substantial farm residences, many outwardly Western in design and made of ferro-concrete, attest to a new life-style of the villagers.

Few traces of rice cultivation, once their main crop, can be found in the present landscape of Ryumon. In the 1930's, every household grew rice, and more than half of the fields was in rice, 15 % of which occupied terraced hillsides. The entire lowland was in rice, but the steeper hillsides unsuited for rice were in citrus and other fruits as income supplement. In the middle 1950's, 95 % of the farmers still grew rice and regarded citrus as a side line (Fig 3). In 1962, citrus acreage for the first time exceeded that of rice, although 90 % of the farmers still continued to cultivate rice. However, the great transformation began in the 1960's and by 1971, citrus occupied 93 % of the arable land, a mere 3 % of which remained in rice (Fig 4).

Ryumon more than doubled its citrus output from 4,000 tons in 1962 to 10,000 in 1972. In 1979, the village produced more than 100,000 tons, as almost all the newly converted fields have reached the stage of full production. As a specialty area of *hassaku*, a late-maturing citrus species, Ryumon occupies a prominent position in the national *hassaku* market. 96 % of the Ryumon farm households are now citrus specialists. The average income of the full-time farm household is higher than that of city households.

In an effort to find some meaningful explanations for their seemingly swift transformation, I have formulated what I term the *burakism* concept. This hypothesis takes into account those outstanding social and cultural elements of a Japanese village which are believed to have contributed to the transformation<sup>6</sup>). Two basic value orientations have been proposed for *burakism*. One is egalitarian social relationships, and the other is what I have termed individual householdism<sup>7</sup>). It has also been assumed that the following characteristics are closely associated with these basic viewpoints: 1) self-interestedness, 2) competitiveness, 3) self-reliance, and 4) empiricism/pragmatism. The normative values of *wa* (harmony) and *giri* (mutual obligation) in combination are considered critical when cooperative action is involved in the *buraku*<sup>8</sup>).

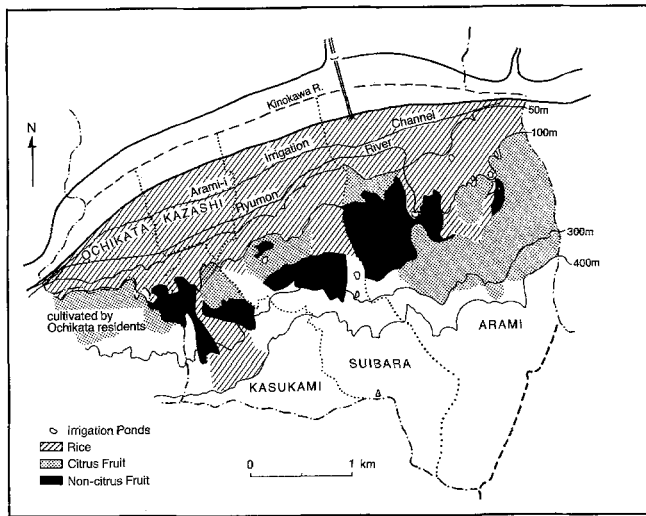


Fig 3 Land Use in Ryumon before *Kozo Kaizen* (1955)

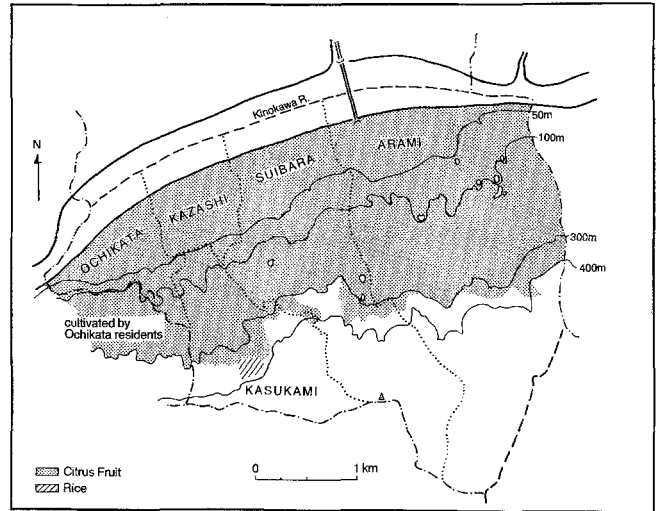


Fig 4 Land Use in Ryumon after *Kozo Kaizen* (1973)

Further, I have assumed that the existence of the *burakism* elements is largely a product of the historical legacy of Ryumon. Although causal elements are much involuted and difficult to isolate, I have assumed the most critical are: 1) strong Buddhist background, 2) stable patterns of residency, and 3) commercialization of agriculture.

As for the Buddhist background, Ryumon was never ruled by feudal lords; much of Ryumon belonged to the Koya temple domain for more than a millennium until early Meiji (1881). Almost all the villagers are still practicing Buddhists of the Shingon sect, with its influential center at Koya-san. It seems especially significant that in the doctrine of the Shingon sect of Buddhism, at least at a popular level, we discover values and attitudes which might be considered quite modern, including equality of all people, empiricism, pragmatism, and the pursuit of worldly wealth (Katsumata, 1968).

The residential patterns in Ryumon, both in the location of houses and the number of households, have undergone little change, even during the past 100 years when freedom of movement was assured. Personal acquaintance is a key element in *buraku* life, which is further reinforced by face-to-face contact in daily living. Individual equality may be difficult to find in *buraku* Japan, but a kind of equality seems to exist (Beardsley, 1957; Dore, 1959, 1978; Embree, 1939). That is, individual households, but not individuals, are viewed as equal in *buraku* social relations. Stable residency would seem to have had much relevance to the existence of *buraku*-style egalitarianism. That is, it may be conceivable continued residence in the same area through generations would make it possible to know the cyclicality of family fortunes, and such recognition would reinforce villagers' belief in the fundamental equality of households.

Commercialization also seems positively related to egalitarianism and individual householdism. Egalitarian

social characteristics are observed particularly in W Japan where commercial agriculture developed early (Fukutake, 1949; Gamo, 1960). It is also noted that commercialization encourages independent agricultural operations of individual households (Beardsley, 1965; Dore, 1978; Smith, 1966). Moreover, economic mobility closely associated with the commercialization of agriculture, is known to be relatively greater in W Japan, both in pre-modern and modern times, than is commonly assumed (Dore, 1978; Nakane, 1967; Smith, 1966). We note that although rice growing was the major activity in Ryumon, cash crops — and especially citrus — had been cultivated on the hillsides from the early Tokugawa period. About 100 ha of commercial orchard existed in Ryumon by the 1880's. Indeed, we find that the economic standing of the people has fluctuated considerably in Ryumon. No household has remained wealthy throughout the history of the village. In Arami Buraku, for instance, none of the most wealthy of a generation before had a place in the highest income category in 1971. Certainly, the post-war Land Reform of 1945 provided an opportunity for accelerated mobility, but even without the reform, a considerable amount of change was taking place.

**Ryumon's Grass-Roots Cooperation**

Let us, then, examine a couple of outstanding examples of *buraku* cooperative work in Ryumon to ascertain how such work was carried out in the *buraku* social context, and how it was related to the successful transformation in the 1960's of the village into a citrus specialty area. Among others which might be mentioned, I will focus on cooperative marketing, and service road construction.

**Marketing cooperation**

Examining the Kyo-ei Citrus Marketing Cooperative in Arami Buraku in Ryumon, we find that the cooperative was formed by *buraku* people in order to defend themselves

against local jobbers who had tried to exploit unorganized individual farmers. It was organized in 1921 in Arami, exactly 40 years prior to the *kozo kaizen*. Kyo-ei was the second citrus marketing cooperative in Japan to pool members' produce, instead of handling lots of individual produce separately and then shipping cooperatively. Forty years later, in the *kozo kaizen* modernization program, the government was to suggest such an integrated cooperative as an ideal model. The original head of the cooperative was a young man in his late twenties. He was chosen as head, since he was recognized by fellow villagers as active, forward-looking, and dedicated to the promotion of *buraku* interests. As we will discover, it is common practice to choose leaders on merit, rather than on age or prescribed status as has often been assumed. The practice seems indicative of the general outlook. Furthermore, "fairness for everyone and prosper together" was the motto of the cooperative, as the name, Kyo-ei (co-prosperity), indicated.

In the history of the cooperative, however, frequent reorganization is a very conspicuous feature. At each stage of reorganization, membership change was considerable. For instance, by the time of reorganization of the group — the third time in four years — only two of the 17 members were original participants. Moreover, repeated reorganization was necessary before a satisfactory mode of cooperation was found for this pioneering group. We discover that at each reorganization, management policies became increasingly more explicit as members tried to resolve conflicts among individual interests, and insure necessary solidarity in cooperative action. One example of such effort is the introduction of a pledge system. The affidavit, signed by each incoming member, stated that:

1. the member must do his best to improve the quality of his produce
2. the decision for withdrawal should not be made lightly even when the profit from the cooperative may not entirely meet one's expectation
3. the decisions of the graders of the products should be accepted as final.

As defined in the *burakism* assumptions, the notion of *giri*, a *buraku* social sanction, embodies a principle of mutuality and reciprocity (Beardsley, 1965; Minamoto, 1969; Sakurai, 1971). Moreover, *giri* relations become operative when specific requirements are met (Beardsley, 1965; Nakane, 1973). Thus, the first point stressing the mutuality of *giri*, implies at the same time that all are of equal status, and therefore, *giri-bound* for the group; reciprocity is expected. According to the second point, a member must recognize that his individual interest is not isolated from that of the whole group, and consequently, he is also *giri-bound* toward the group. The third point makes it explicit that group interest will have priority over each member's self-interest. The clause also implies the absoluteness of *wa*, or harmony of the group.

Indeed, after the adoption of the pledge system, turnover in membership ceased to be a problem, and reorganization was no longer necessary. Thus, after a few years, the pledge system became virtually defunct, since there were so few withdrawals. However, after a generation and with an increased total membership of nearly 100, the pledge system had to be reinstated to serve as a check against manifestations of strong self-interest of newer members. The process of reorganization reveals that voluntary participation was essential for successful cooperation, but while decision-making was left entirely with participating member households, self-interest had to be converted into enlightened self-interest. Traditional *wa-giri* constraints functioned as the transformer, and fostered the solidarity indispensable for cooperative action. Cooperation did not come naturally; it had to be carefully nurtured.

Significantly, Kyo-ei provided a functioning model for the formation of similar cooperatives in Ryumon. Seven other integrated cooperatives were chartered in succession within Ryumon in the 1930's just about the time the pioneering Kyo-ei was beginning to enjoy stable membership and better profit after turbulent initial years of repeated reorganization and experimentation. But we note that all the integrated marketing cooperatives were intra-*buraku* undertakings, independently operated, and competing with one another. Some *buraku* had two or three separate groups. The situation also suggests that it is difficult to foster and maintain group solidarity beyond individual *buraku* boundaries.

### Service road construction

Although Ryumon's integrated marketing was the second successful attempt in the country, Ryumon was literally the pioneer in cooperative hillside service road building in Japan. It may be recalled that 70 % of the total arable land in Ryumon is hilly. But some 20,000 m of hillside service roads existed already before the start of the government-sponsored *kozo kaizen* in 1961. There seems little doubt that the existence of the comprehensive service road system, a manifestation of grass-roots efforts for modernization, helped usher in the transformation of the 1960's. The road construction, then, should also provide us with an outstanding example for our *burakism* analysis. As Kyo-ei evolved stage by stage, so did the service road system in Ryumon; the self-reliant effort is also deep-rooted. But we must recognize that marketing and road construction differ greatly in terms of cooperation. A marketing cooperative can be established and operated on a voluntary basis, but there is little room for individual choice in the case of cooperative road construction, for it is entirely land-based. That is, all those who are in the area must be willing to participate, even to part with land, if necessary, for the greater good of the group. Thus, from the standpoint of

the *burakism* assumptions, all-out participation of people in a land-based project should be even more difficult. Indeed, it is well recognized that the major cause for the retardation of service road building in Japan is that it is almost impossible to arrive at a consensus in land transactions necessary for road building. The break-through in Ryumon thus should be particularly significant.

The incipient attempt at privately undertaken service road construction was initiated by a young household head in Arami Buraku in the early 1920's. The project was to widen a 850-m private footpath to 3 m. The path connected the initiator's house with a trunk village road below, but the path was also an approach to the hillside orchard area used by many. There were several houses on the footpath also. At that time, fruits harvested in the hill orchards were transported on human backs, stored, sorted, and packed in individual homes at the foot of the hills, and then shipped out of the village. The new road was to accommodate ox-carts going from the individual homes to the village road. The scheme was rather modest, but it encountered much resistance. The most serious opposition was that the projected 3 m road was too wide and that 2 m would be enough for ox-carts. But at the insistence of the youthful initiator, the 3 m plan was agreed on in the end. The villagers were dubious, but accepted his claim for the advent of the motor age in the near future. Although the initiator proved to be quite far-sighted, indeed, he donated the extra expenses needed for the extra width in order to get the project started. The new road, however, demonstrated to the villagers the effectiveness of a good service road, since the transportation capacity jumped sixfold (Fig 5).

The next stage of successful road building in Arami had to wait nearly two decades, although the need was well recognized. The fact that other attempts by different villagers in Arami were abortive may speak for the recognition, and, at the same time, the difficulty in starting such a land-based cooperative project. In 1941, a campaign to build some 3,300 m of hillside service roads was organized by another young man, who had returned from military service. Even during WW II when rice cultivation was so much esteemed, the young man realized that citrus, not rice, should be the key crop for the future prosperity of Arami. He first studied previous attempts, including the failures, and proceeded judiciously from the outset. One of his tactics was to draft an objective proposal. Most of the fifty-odd participants understood the advantage of having such roads, yet there were inevitable conflicts of interest. The initiator had been on the Kyo-ei staff, and the documentation aimed at solving conflicts and arriving at harmonious agreement, was reminiscent of Kyo-ei's pledge system. The agreement, the product of much thought and debate by the people concerned, stated that the construction would 1) solve war time labor shortage, 2) increase productivity, and 3) contribute to the future development of Arami Buraku.

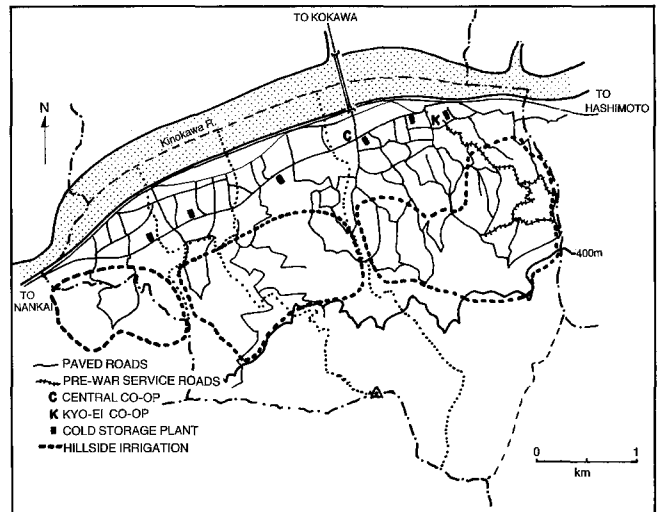


Fig 5 Ryumon after *Kozo Kaizen* (1973)

Moreover, the details of the project and particularly the allocations of costs would be — it was carefully stipulated — “as fair as possible”. To keep benefits and costs equitable for all — a manifestation of the underlying principle of equality — seems to be one of the major undercurrents of the rules. For instance, it was stipulated that professional outsiders should do the surveying and designing of the road system objectively. Cost allocation was graduated so that the well-to-do would shoulder proportionately heavier cost. Another critical stipulation was the collection of seals of approval from every participant. Seals of approval were fixed by those who were present at a general meeting when the project was approved. In a sense, *giri*-relations of the participants were openly acknowledged then. But actually dissenters were all absent. Apparently, they did not wish to register their disapproval openly, because that would violate the highest principle of *wa*, or harmony of the *buraku*. It is likely that since little counter-argument could really be possible against the lofty ideal embodied in the road building, those who might have liked to dissent — out of their self-interest — could not do so openly. Thus, it seems that the three objectives were carefully worded and placed in the agreement to induce *giri-wa* constraints. Further, individual seal collecting from each dissenter provided an opportunity for a dissenter to express disagreement in private, and it also provided organizers with an opportunity to try to secure agreement from everyone concerned.

It is recognized that persuasion is often the only way to arrive at consensus in *buraku* (Kamiya, 1962; Kida, 1967). Ryumon is no exception. And that there is only persuasion to obtain cooperation seems to suggest equal status of *buraku* social relations. The mode of persuasion substantiates that speculation and other aspects of *burakism* assumptions as well. For instance, persuaders are often

chosen from among the peers or relatives, who would visit the dissenter in pairs in the evening. Emphasis would be placed on the presentation of concrete data, including anticipated advantages and costs. Also, benefits for the particular household would be emphasized rather than benefits for the whole group. The decision to cooperate must be made "voluntarily", but that would involve transformation of self-interest to enlightened self-interest. As the number of visits increased, the dissenter was likely to feel more *giri*-bound, since the visit itself would, in effect, be considered as the initiation of *giri*. It was hoped that in the end the persuaded would come to agree as reciprocity. If repeated visits proved unproductive, the quintessential principle of *wa* was openly used to induce cooperation. However, the overt use of *wa* in persuasion was considered an extreme measure as an open statement of *wa* would jeopardize the equal-status relation between the parties involved.

But when the hillside service roads were finally completed, the transportation capacity leaped tenfold (Fig 5). The result was so remarkable that even the grudging accepters gave approval to the modern service road. We note, however, that their genuine acceptance came only after the result was achieved.

The third stage of service road building came a dozen years after the end of the war. By then the mode of transportation was fast changing to motorized vehicles. Besides, the rapid industrialization of the nation had resulted in the exodus of labor from the village. Arami's agricultural economy was stagnating. Another war veteran, who was in his thirties, took the initiative this time. Although he was a pivotal figure, a group of young citrus growers in Arami constituted the motive power. They were eager to take action. As the group studied road improvement possibilities, they came to the conclusion that not only roads but their agricultural system itself had to be renovated in order to keep pace with the nation's post-war industrial economy.

The youthful Arami farmers drafted their indigenous five-year modernization plan in 1958 "as an initial step for Arami's 100-year modernization program". The plan envisioned 1) further improvement of the service road system, 2) installment of an irrigation system for hill orchards, 3) introduction of carrier cables, and 4) reclamation of the higher portion of the Ryumon Range. They underwent another period of crisis in persuading fellow *buraku* people to get the program started. However, knowing their limitations, they did not overextend themselves.

Road improvement received top priority, indicating that the five-year plan was basically an outgrowth of the previous models. Besides, it was most urgently needed. Thus although the total length of the road project reached 10,000 m, there was little opposition. The idea of paving proved to be the most serious bottleneck, although the initial suggestion was to pave 500 m of only the most dangerous portions of the existing routes. We may note that in the entire country there was no precedent for

paving hillside service roads, and indeed, even the local national highway was unpaved in the mid-1950's. We are impressed by the planners' progressive outlook, but can understand how difficult it was for most villagers to initiate such an expensive project without firm assurance that the improvement would warrant the cost. At this point, a direct inducement for paving came in the form of an offer of cement by the organizer of the previous road project. What more concrete inducement could they have! Obviously, the donation marked a start for *giri*-relations, and the project was finally on its way. Again, paving proved to be so useful that all the service roads were paved eventually.

Another entirely new and expensive undertaking was hillside irrigation. Most villagers considered it unnecessary, since, again, cooperative irrigation of hill orchards was practically non-existent in the whole country. However, there existed a private, but successful example in Arami — hillside orchard irrigation had been carried out experimentally by the leader himself. He made public the results of his experiment, which indicated an attractive 10 to 30 % increase in yield. It would not have been necessary for him to disclose the fruit of his private effort, but by doing so he was able to establish *giri*-relations with villagers whom he was trying to persuade to take part in the *buraku*-wide modernization plan.

### The Transformation

When the government's modernization plan was announced in 1961, the indigenous Arami five-year plan had not been completed, but Ryumon's response was immediate; the Arami plan was to be extended beyond the boundaries of Arami throughout Ryumon. The attitudes of self-reliance and pragmatism marked the Ryumon *kozo kaizen* program. The entire project was budgeted for Y 800,000,000, more than ten times the standard appropriation, and the largest of all the *kozo kaizen* projects in Japan. The program continued until 1965, one year longer than the usual duration. But it was also designed realistically enough to meet the needs of the villagers, and within the limits of rational operation. The Ryumonites were able to make realistic assessments on their own because the plan was based on their accumulated experience.

The Ryumon scheme, which aimed at the formation of a citrus specialty area by doubling citrus production and reducing labor input by one-half, included the conversion of practically all the existing fields into citrus orchards. Other undertakings included regulation of field shape, improvement of service roads, cooperative orchard irrigation and fumigation. Ryumon-wide cooperative fruit grading, packing, and marketing, and the installation of cold storage facilities were also planned (Fig 5).

In the analysis of the process of *kozo kaizen* implementation, we again find much evidence for the *burakism*

assumptions. We may recall the examination of Arami experience in cooperation had revealed that cooperation worked well only within the *buraku* spatial limits. How, then, did the Ryumonites manage to transcend the *buraku* spatial threshold to achieve inter-*buraku* cooperation? I have assumed that a quasi-*buraku* social context was created in Ryumon at the time of *kozo kaizen* implementation, which was instrumental for the promotion of inter-*buraku* cooperation. An example is a Ryumon-wide social club organized in 1961 significantly by the initiator of the Arami five-year plan. But it only represented formalization of an informal, but regularly meeting social group which had been in existence since the preparatory stage of the Arami plan. The club membership, which increased to its maximum – nearly 100 – coinciding with the peak of the *kozo kaizen* activities, was carefully composed in proportion to the population size of each *buraku* in Ryumon, and had a uniform age group (mostly in the thirties), a common background experience of having been born and raised in Ryumon, and its members were full-time farmers seriously interested in citrus growing. Since it was a peer group, members could create a social milieu quite like a *buraku*. We note that before *kozo kaizen* certain innovative ideas originated in Arami Buraku were being propagated to other *buraku* units through the members of this “social” club. Further, during the *kozo kaizen*, land-based cooperative work, such as road building and irrigation, was organized and implemented independently within each *buraku*, each club member acting as key figure in his respective home *buraku*. Thus, what may appear to be Ryumon-wide cooperative projects were mostly “federated”, with actual cooperative framework being *buraku*-based. The fact that the “social club” became defunct after the completion of the *kozo kaizen* program in 1965 may further substantiate the speculation.

Negative evidence supportive of the *burakism* assumptions is the failure to completely reshape irregular lowland paddy fields into regular rectangular units. We may note the idea was, in many respects, counter to *buraku* ways of cooperation. First, it involved three *buraku* units; second, transaction of land was involved; third, it was new in Ryumon; fourth, the idea came from the top down, not from Ryumon.

However, let us now examine those aspects of cooperation involving management. The Ryumon Agricultural Co-

operative, an inter-*buraku* organization, took the initiative – as suggested by the government – to plan and operate a central integrated sorting, packing, and marketing plant. As has been mentioned earlier, eight *buraku*-based marketing cooperatives existed in Ryumon, but only one dissolved counter to general expectation of the town level officials. However, as villagers were experienced in cooperative marketing, the idea itself was considered workable, and remained as a goal in their own long-term modernization scheme. Thus, the older *buraku*-based cooperatives joined one by one at their convenience. Seventeen years later in 1979, only one *buraku*-based cooperative remained as independent. That was Kyo-ei, the pioneer in cooperative marketing in Ryumon.

It may seem puzzling, at first, that the pioneer itself should be so uncooperative, but again we may be able to interpret the phenomenon in terms of the *burakism* assumptions. That is, it may be assumed that Kyo-ei, through its long and arduous history, had achieved kin-like cohesiveness, the very factor which enabled its efficient and profitable operation. Present Kyo-ei may be likened to an individual household according to *burakism*. Other aspects of the assumptions are also observable, for as head of the cooperative put it: “Healthy competition with the central plant gives us a challenge, and we try our best to improve our operations. But we will be ready to join when our profit levels dip below those of the central cooperative.” And on the part of the central plant: “We are confident that Kyo-ei will join us when our management proves that we can ensure better returns for our members”.

## Conclusion

Ways of life in rural Japan, *burakism*, are usually viewed negatively, and considered a stumbling block in Japan’s modernizing process. However, the analysis of Ryumon’s transformation has indicated that the effectiveness of modernization schemes was determined by prevailing and traditional ways of life. The success of Ryumon was not given, but is a culmination of their many years of grass-roots efforts in pursuit of a better life. Thus, it seems clear that *buraku* society must be examined more thoroughly before our understanding of Japan’s process of modernization becomes complete.

## Footnotes

- 1) See, for instance, J.W. Hall, "Changing Conceptions of the Modernization of Japan", pp. 7–14, in *Changing Attitudes Toward Modernization*, ed. by M.B. Jansen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).
- 2) See B.F. Johnson, "The Japanese 'Model' of Agricultural Development: Its Relevance to Developing Nations", pp. 58–102, in *Agriculture and Economic Growth: Japan's Experience*, ed. by K. Ohkawa, et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); see also C. Gluck, "The People in History: Recent Trends in Japanese Historiography", in *Journal of Asian Studies*, 38 (1978) pp. 25–50.
- 3) The national government enacted the Nogyo Kihonho (fundamental act for the improvement of agriculture) in 1961, partly inspired by German, French, and other European nations' modernization legislation. At the same time, guidelines for its implementation, Nogyo Kozo Kaizen (agricultural restructuring) program, were issued. The duration of the program was 10 years initially, but was extended to 1978. Currently, Shin Nogyo Kozo Kaizen, or the new agricultural restructuring plan, has been in effect since 1978, to last for five years.
- 4) The data for Ryumon were obtained largely through author's long-term field work, extending over a decade.
- 5) Kokawa Agricultural Cooperative, 1979.
- 6) The *buraku* in this study does not refer to the former outcast groups. In coining the term *burakism*, I had in mind a Japanese term, *muraishiki*, or *mura* consciousness. It may also be called *muraism*, but *burakism* was preferred because I wished to avoid the implication that the dynamics of the traditional socio-cultural elements are equally applicable to the larger official administrative units of *mura* created in the Meiji period. Moreover, the term *buraku* would be more familiar to Western readers referring to the primary social unit of rural Japan.
- 7) The image of Japanese society has generally been that it has a rigid hierarchy in social relations. See, for instance, C. Nakane, *Japanese Society* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press 1970).
- 8) For a fuller treatment of the *burakism* assumptions, see Y.N. Bedford, *Modernization of a Japanese Village: Burakism and Its Spatial Expression*, pp. 24–117. Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Michigan. Microfilmed. (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1978).

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