

ABSTRACTS

The Closedness and Openness of the Japanese Village Community*

by
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The 15th Meeting of the International Institute of Sociology was held at Istanbul in 1952, where I had the privilege of assuming chairmanship of the section on Rural Sociology. There I also made my own report on the Japanese village community. ("Actes du XV^e Congres International du Sociologie, 1952, vol. I, p. 181 ff.), and discussed briefly, from my sociological viewpoint, eleven aspects of the Japanese village community. The aim of the present paper is to make a more detailed study of the first of the eleven aspects, namely the closedness or openness of a community. For our research on this particular theme I am deeply indebted both to the Japanese government which has subsidized it for almost a dozen years, and to the Rockefeller Foundation for a five year grant which has enabled me to continue it since 1957 and will enable me to complete this survey on a national scale.

The country is divided roughly into several districts according to climate, geographical features, and cultural patterns. According to modes of subsistence the Japanese villages may be divided under the three categories of the agricultural, the fishing, and the forestry (mountain) village. Our sociological research was made by selecting a number of villages from each subsistence category in each district.

The Japanese village is now finding itself in a transitional period from an older type of village to a new one. To understand the Japanese village in transition, it is necessary to ascertain to what extent the main characteristics of the old and new types are increasing or decreasing with the lapse of time. In this article I have tried to specify 18 major factors which either determine or represent the opened or closed nature of a village, i. e., the degree of its contact with the outside world, whereby one may know to

* The terms closedness and openness as used in this paper are used to denote those characteristics usually attributed to an open or closed community.

which type the village in question belongs. Our analysis of these factors has been based on concrete objective materials. With regard to each factor full account has been taken of the changes the agricultural, mountain, and fishing villages in each of the districts have undergone in the course of time. And in respect to the mobility of people, differences in sex and age have been duly taken into consideration.

Let us begin with the factors relevant to the closed village community :

(1) The peculiar way of earning a livelihood in a village is closely related with the degree to which it may be considered closed. In an agricultural village, the extreme difficulty of reclamation makes its people cling to their present strips of land and the small-scale intensive labor of cultivation makes it difficult for them to leave their farms. In a mountain village the inhabitants have hardly any leisure to go out of the village, being always busy with the work of forestry, trimming, lumbering, carrying down lumber, making charcoal, etc. In a fishing village, as its fishing area is limited to the sea immediately off its shore, its inhabitants seldom have a chance to go out of their village. Thus it may be seen that in these cases agriculture, forestry, and fishing all have the effect of closing a village community to the outside world.

(2) We must consider the fact that there are certain properties and facilities commonly and equally shared by the villagers. The kinds of such common goods, the economic contents of these, and their importance for the economic life of each villager have been specified. Leaving one's village means, therefore, losing one's share in the benefits drawn from the common goods of the community. This situation also deters villagers from going away from the village.

(3) Strangers are not easily permitted to make use of the common properties and establishments of the village or to join the village shrine festivals. They are required to fulfill certain qualifications such as a specified number of years of residence before they are admitted as villagers with full rights, and they must go through certain formalities before they are admitted. But even after their admission, the native members of the community are apt to exclude them and their descendants and take a

contemptuous and discriminatory attitude toward them. Since all villagers know this, they do not like to move into other villages to become strangers in them. Hence their strong attachment to their own native village. And once a person has moved out of his village, he would not be accepted as a full-fledged villager when he returns. A temporary resident is usually made an object of curiosity, suspicion, or even hatred on the part of the villagers ; but sometimes it happens that those incomers whose differences from the villagers are very conspicuous are warmly welcomed because of these very differences. All these points have been amply illustrated, all explaining what is meant by the closedness of a community.

(4) The fact that a Japanese village has been closed even to its neighboring villages may be understood by examining the discriminatory treatment a man coming from one of the adjoining villages receives when he wants to join an association or some activity of the villagers, and the contempt with which he is looked upon. It is shown that the treatment of an incomer from a neighboring village lies midway between that of a fellow villager and that of a person coming from a remote distance. The closed nature of a village leaves its people ignorant of their neighboring villages ; hence they hold them in contempt. There is scarcely any intercourse and cooperation with them, and there tend to be rivalries, antagonisms, and even conflicts with them. Many functions of a village prove how jealously its people try to maintain the boundary lines of the village and how they are exclusively concerned with their own welfare but indifferent to the welfare of the neighboring villages.

(5) The self-sufficient character of the Japanese village has reinforced its closedness. This has been explained in reference to clothing, food, housing, and other aspects of life.

(6) In a Japanese village it is usual that branch families remain in their native village and thus families related to each other live in the same neighborhood. In every village there are several kinship groups each of which is comprised of a number of families. A table given in this article shows how many kinship groups are found in one village and how many families there are in each kinship group. It is also noted that a Japanese village on account of its closed nature contains many families

that have settled there for many years. By classifying families according to the number of generations they have inhabited their village, it has been indicated that there are families that have been there for several hundred years. The high degree of immobility of the village community may also be known by the fact that there are a few cases still to be found where the village deity which was originally worshipped by the oldest family has finally become the guardian god of the whole community. But while his sanctuary is the center of devotion for all the families of the community, it is the patriarch of the oldest family who still assumes the chief role in the festivities of the shrine.

After discussing the closed nature of the Japanese village community, I now have to show that a certain amount of openness has also been there since ancient times. It used to be, however, only a limited sort of openness: because there were strict regulations as to whence and whither a person or goods should come and go, as to the time of his entry or departure, as to the number and amount of persons and goods to be admitted, and as to the frequency of coming in and going out. There was no freedom in this respect; the openness was therefore only partial and limited.

(7) When we observe the relationship between the occupation of the villagers and the openness of the village, it becomes evident that even in the case of fishing villages, quite contrary to our expectation that a boat may sail any place at any time its owner chooses, the fishing area is in most cases demarcated for the villagers, who seldom leave it. However, there are exceptional cases amongst fishing villages whose members freely move around. Agricultural and mountain villages likewise show both their openness and the limitations to which it is subjected.

(8) Since no village community has complete self-sufficiency it has always had some degree of openness through the demand and supply of goods. But there were limitations set on the dealers who purchased or sold goods. Also, there were regulations as to the kinds of goods, the trading posts, the time of trade, and the amount of goods. Mention is made of the trade or barter done outside the village, which fact is found

especially in connection with fishing communities. We have further studied how non-merchants, such as travelling entertainers, are treated by the village community.

(9) Furthermore, there is openness that results from the demand and supply of labor. Classifying the labor received by a village from outside into the two categories of seasonal temporary employment and long-term employment, I have described what kinds of work belong to each of the categories, from where and how many employees come for each kind of work and how long they stay in the village. In regards to those who obtain jobs outside of the village, their destinations, jobs they obtain there, their number, the frequency of their home-comings in a year, souvenirs they bring home, the days they spend in their homes, etc. are dealt with.

(10) The relation between religion and openness should also be considered. The opening of the village by visiting a temple or a shrine outside the village has been examined. The visits are classified according to the distance which must be covered. The time of such visits and the number of people in each case have been ascertained. Also, the pilgrims coming to the temples or shrines in the villages from outside have been made an object of our investigation.

(11) The opening of villages has partly been occasioned by the necessity of health and recreation. Observations have to be made in this connection as to the number of times a year and the number of people who go out of, or come into, the village for such recreational programs as dramatic performances, athletic meetings and the *bon* (or *ullanbana*, a festival to welcome and console the departed spirits visiting their relatives from their yonder abodes) dance. Our attention has been directed also to the fact that people go out or come in for medical treatment, or for the purpose of recuperation or rest. Especially in the case of villages not having a resident doctor, people have to rely on a doctor practicing somewhere outside the village. Also, the movement of villagers seeking excellent practitioners of acupuncture or moxa-cautery and for the purpose of recuperation at a spa which are numerous in Japan, is noted.

(12) Marriage may become a contributing factor in the opening of village communities. To be sure there has been a strong tendency to

marry within the community itself. This tendency may be explained by the peculiarity of labor conditions and other customs of the village concerned. Differences are found in the size of area within which marriage relationships may normally be established among the agricultural, mountain, and fishing villages. It is to be noted that the fishing community is apt to have a smaller marriage sphere. I have tried to explain this fact. On the other hand, there are cases to be found of marriage relationship being established with families outside of the villages. What kinds of families have done so; under what conditions does such a marriage take place; what is the social relationship of the families of the marriage partners who come from or go into other communities? These questions I have tried to answer.

The above-mentioned items all point to aspects of openness which Japanese villages have shown since ancient times. Since the Meiji Restoration, these aspects of openness have been increasingly strengthened, while the factors which had supported closedness have either decreased or collapsed. Thus the openness of the village life has reached a new stage. Generally speaking, this trend may be viewed as a result of the modernization of the whole Japanese society.

(13) We must observe certain phenomena resulting from educational reforms which have been instituted from time to time; contacts and communications have been increased between the villages and the outside world through the medium of elementary and middle schools. The movement of persons and goods has also resulted from adult education and other educational programs sponsored by governmental agencies.

(14) The development in means of communication has greatly contributed to openness in recent times. The improvement and new construction of roads and their respective dates; the development of hydroelectric plants; the popularization and increase of such means of transportation as bicycles, automobiles, trucks, motor-cycles, and motor-powered boats; the increase of trips from one village to another for excursions, sight-seeing or pilgrimages; all these points have been discussed in full in this paper. Also the use of mass-communication media has been examined by

tabulating the kinds of newspapers and journals subscribed to by villagers and by studying the circulation of each of these. The diffusion rates of radio and television sets among the villages and the characteristics of the more popular newspaper columns and radio and television programs have also been carefully studied.

(15) The opening of the village has been promoted by economic changes. Our analysis has concerned itself with the collapse of village self-sufficiency as a result of the development of capitalism and the tax-reform from payment in kind to payment in cash; with the increasing mobility of goods and people for the purpose of commerce promoted by the penetration of the exchange economy system; and with the coming in and going out of peddlers, commuters, emigrants, and immigrants.

(16) The urban concentration of population is another factor which operates in the opening of villages. As Japanese villages do not have enough lands for their growing population, it is important to study the problem of the younger sons of families who have to leave their homes and migrate to the cities, special notice was given to the relationships they maintained with their original homes.

(17) The extension of the marriage sphere in recent years is also a statistical fact. Our data has been classified into the cases of marrying out of and marrying into the village. It has been revealed that there is a decrease in inner-communal marriages and an increase of inter-communal marriages. This has been proved by examining the number of marriages concluded within a village, county, or prefecture and marriages arranged with persons beyond prefectural boundaries. I have also noted the general extension of the social intercourse range.

(18) Finally, I have examined the decrease or collapse of the other closing factors which have not been mentioned above. Such facts as the decrease or dissolution of the common properties of a village; the softening of exclusive and segregatory attitudes toward the incomers; and the lessening attachment of the villagers to their own villages have been ascertained and discussed.

The Japanese village community has today acquired greater openness. But the degree of openness is far lower in a village than in a city, which

fact is proved by examining the ratio of the people who come into and go out from the village in a year. It may be said that in spite of the observable increase in openness there are not yet very great movements of persons and goods across the village boundaries, so the limitations to the openness of the Japanese community still remain.

Suganoura in the Sengoku Era
An Essay. on *Kugonin* and. *So*

by
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The township of *Suganoura* now forms a part of *Nishiasai-mura*, a village in the Rural District of *Ika-gun*, *Shiga* Prefecture. It has been well-known for its massive medieval archives ready for the historians and its well-established communal organization which is traceable in these materials. My essay, *Kugonin* and *So* in the History of *Suganoura*” which was submitted to the *Miscellanea Kiotiensia* in celebration of the semicentennial of the Faculty of Letters of our University was an attempt to describe the scope, the population and the industrial activities of this little community together with the incessant disputes with the neighbouring township of *Ohura* over the tenant right of the borderland *Hisashimorokawa*, so the niche of land was called, lies between the two villages and was the only place where the peasants of *Suganoura* could have carried on rice-cropping. Though the issues were always at stake, there is some evidence for believing that the land had formerly belonged to *Ohura*, not to *Suganoura* in the not too distant Past. Furthermore there is evidence of engrossing of the land by *Suganoura* in 1295 and the villagers of *Ohura* violated the landmarks and appealed to the Government. *Suganoura*, on the other hand, attempted every possible counter-attack and meanwhile made the land in dispute common to all the villagers, dividing it equally among them. This led to the growth of a solid community on the part of *Suganoura* and to the making of the powerful jury (*SO*) in the fourteenth century. The jurymen looked upon the tenures of the land as inviolable and prohibited the sellers of the tenements to attend the jury in 1346. Moreover the villagers plotted against the neighbouring township with the aid of the feudal retainers who were banded together near the village. Thus they succeeded to perpetuate the right, but in doing so they became more and more dependent on the elders of the village, especially in managing to repudiate the challenges of *Ohura*. Here the Elder *Seikuro* will be worth

while to be remembered as a distinguished figure who could find a sound solution for the disputes from 1445 onward and again of 1461. By his efforts the issues which at first seemed fatal to the village turned to be a windfall. In the midst of turmoils he died. It was in 1467, when he bequeathed his property to the village jury, not to the temple, for the salvation of his soul.

The present paper for this volume of the *Transactions* of the Faculty is, first and foremost, a continuation of my foregoing essay and an attempt to enlarge it by illustrating every aspect of the activities of the inhabitants. First of all, I want to point out the growth of popular movements toward the turn of the fifteenth century as are shown in the peasant revolts during the civil wars of *Ohnin* and *Bunmei*. They revolted against the financial burdens and asked the benevolent Government (*tokusei*) above them. Especially the bad harvest and the wide-spread pestilence since 1460 devastated the whole country. This devastation is a well-known fact, but the immediate effects of the plague still await to be estimated in the light of evidences which I hope to provide from the materials of this village. The verdict based on this study is emphatically catastrophic: the decrease of the population and the change of tenure. The peasants who were unable to plough their tenements owing to the family mortality surrendered them to the lords. The balance of power which existed between lord and peasants was thus abruptly changed. The picture shown here is an Eastern counterpart of the Black Death.

Secondly, the impression gained from the study is the subsiding of the communal activities from the dawn of the sixteenth century. It is noticeable that the village jury was running into debt unable to pay the rent. Characteristic of the fifteenth century was the energetic aspiration of the jury resulted from the communal solidarity. It was based on the appropriation of the land of *Hisashimorokawa* and also on the handsome sum of money advanced by the elders, the *Kulak* of the village. Moreover they profited from the mortgaged lands in the elders hands and which ultimately came into the communal property. Now the situation has changed. The increments of the elders solely dependent on the trade and the navigation

on Lake Biwa were greatly cut down because of the political anarchy that dragged on for a century. The financial difficulties of the jury was unavoidable results with little hope to be recovered since 1515. The customary rents burdened heavily on the purse of the community. The circumstances were almost the same after the assumption of the village administration by the *Asais* in the latter part of the sixteenth century. More than before the villagers were forced to work on the lake trade under the alert eyes of the new lord. It is only toward the end of the century that the village economy had began to assume a process of rehabilitation, when they learnt to grow cotton and *aburagiri*. The exports of the products in exchange for rice at last enabled the inhabitants to get on after time. The commercial agriculture set out in Japan only in the seventeenth century, but the inhabitants of *Suganoura* were thus pioneering on this road to prosperity, first seeking for the plants growable on their hill-side fields and then turning their gains into the basis of communal independency.

Lastly, the change of the village jurisdiction may be summed up here. As has already been referred to, the independency of the village community involved that of jurisdiction. It is noteworthy for such a little village to hold it for so long a time. The internal dissensions of the jury and the intervention of the lord were responsible for its curtailment, but there also lurked behind it the nightmare of financial difficulties which called for the *Asais*' appropriation. The situation was, however, a little more complex. The financial basis of the jury was being slowly consolidated, but not at a stride. In order to complete the process they still await the years to come. This supplied the lord with a strong motive to break it down. The elders of the village longed for the recovery of jurisdiction in the not too distant future, but in vain. Soon the *Asais* fell only to call for the iron hands of *Oda* and then of *Toyotomi* and gone with them all the aspirations of the villagers. Most characteristic of the *Sengoku* Era, those turbulent ages in the sixteenth century Japan, is the permanent loss of their own jurisdiction which the villagers had enjoyed in the age of their medieval forefathers.