Teaching About Home: Geography at Work in the Prewar Nagano Classroom

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RECENT YEARS HAVE WITNESSED a growing interest in the geography classroom as a crucible of nationalist ideology. In the past decade, scholars from around the world have exposed the chauvinism of national atlases (Black 1997; Fahlbusch, Rossler, and Siegrist 1989), assessed the citizenship models implicit in social-studies readers (Bailly 1998; Soysal 1998), traced the institutional linkages between geography and imperialism (Bell, Butlin, and Heffernan 1995; Godlewska and Smith 1994; Livingstone 1992), and explored the role of spatial images and metaphors in shaping national identities (Hooson 1994; Thongchai 1994).

As yet, however, such issues have only begun to be engaged in the Japan field. Aside from the essential essays of Keiichi Takeuchi (1980, 1988, 1994a, 1994b), the history of Japanese geographical education remains largely uncharted terrain for the English-speaking world.[1] Even in Japan, where the subject is hardly terra incognita, geography is routinely treated (at least by nongeographers) as a trivial discipline.[2] One recent critic dismisses Meiji geography as an anachronism that never became

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[1]Geography texts were briefly discussed by William Wray nearly thirty years ago (Wray 1973), and are the subject of ongoing work by Sabine Frühstück (2000), but the history of geography education in Japan has hardly been a major research topic in the English-speaking world. This stands in marked contrast to the high level of American interest in Japanese history pedagogy throughout the postwar period. Even before the onset of the Allied Occupation, American scholars were concerned to understand how official textbooks represented the Japanese past to school-age children; fifty years later, an area-studies journal devoted to "Textbook Nationalism, Citizenship, and War" testifies to the continuing consensus that history lessons carry a profoundly political charge. See *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 30(2), April–June 1998.

[2]Professional Japanese geographers, by contrast, have evinced a serious interest in their discipline's past. For a thoughtful overview of geographical education in the prewar and postwar periods, with instructive international comparisons, see Kikuchi 1960.

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integral to the "grammar of modernity," surviving solely to fulfill a dwindling pedagogical function (Mizuuchi 1994). Others have judged it a failure even in that limited role. In the view of Karasawa Tomitarō, an authority on prewar textbooks, geography lessons were simply too dry and formulaic to have meaningfully shaped the mental worlds of schoolchildren, whose imaginations were much more likely to be fired by their Japanese language (*kokugo*) readers (Karasawa 1956).

The present essay takes issue with these conclusions, arguing for a more inclusive definition of geography that in turn calls for a more serious engagement with its imaginative potential. Of particular interest is the rubric under which prewar Japanese children first learned about the world: *kyōdoka*, or "native-place studies." Most scholars of prewar Japan recognize the term *kyōdo* as a keyword in both intellectual and popular culture during the early twentieth century. Yet less is known about the privileged position that the native place came to occupy in the elementary school curriculum during the same decades. Localities had not loomed particularly large on the educational horizon earlier in the Meiji period (1868–1912), when it was rather the outside world that commanded most classroom attention (Takeuchi 1987). But for a variety of reasons detailed below, the subject of home grew increasingly compelling through the later Meiji, Taishō (1912–1925), and early Shōwa (1925–1989) years.

In the process, the study of local regions—although formally excluded from the purview of geography proper (*chirigaku*)—emerged as the de facto foundation of the geography curriculum. And far from dwindling over time, lessons on the local steadily gained ground. From its initial status as an instructional supplement in the mid 1880s, native-place studies evolved over succeeding decades into an autonomous subject and an increasingly privileged one, until by the 1930s it constituted for many the core of the elementary-school experience. Moreover, pedagogical practice in this part of the curriculum was not limited to the formulaic rote-learning of national or global geography. In the *kyōdoka* hour, teachers regularly took their students on outings to local landmarks, and even in the classroom they engaged in map-reading, map-making, direction-finding, and other forms of active learning. In short, teaching about home gave rise to a geographical pedagogy that was neither dull nor marginal.

It also gave rise to considerable controversy over teaching aims and methods. At least, such was the case in Nagano Prefecture (the former Shinano Province). Faced with the challenge of creating meaningful lessons for children from the remote Japanese Alps—and the even more daunting challenge of shaping a common identity for the half-dozen disparate regions that made up the prefecture (Wigen 1998)—Nagano teachers began working under the rubric of native-place studies well ahead of their counterparts elsewhere in Japan. As early as 1897, a Shinano historian announced the formation of a "Great Japan Native-Place History Compilation Association" (Dainihon Kyōdoshi Hensankai), whose mission was "to pile up native-place histories until they added up to national history (*kokushi*)" (Kimura 1994, 12). In tackling that mission, Nagano's teachers articulated a broad agenda for the local-studies curriculum: one that would enhance students' critical faculties, while also cultivating their attachment to the homeland. After a governmental crackdown on "liberal education" in the 1920s, however, fulfilling both halves of that agenda became increasingly difficult. By the 1930s, a highly politicized debate had taken shape, pitting advocates of scientific geographical training against those who prioritized patriotic sentiment as the true mission of native-place studies.

The present essay traces the contours of this debate, and the pedagogical backdrop against which it unfolded, in early twentieth-century Nagano. It begins by chronicling the growing attention to local studies in textbooks and lesson plans from two leading

elementary schools of the prefecture: one, a laboratory school affiliated with the normal school in Nagano City; the other, the Kaichi Gakkō in Matsumoto, an icon of Meiji-era progressive education. The towns of Nagano and Matsumoto have long had distinctive and even competitive political cultures; the former is the seat of the prefectural establishment in the north, while the latter—the core of a rival southern block—has traditionally been a hotbed of oppositional social movements. Yet materials from both towns document a parallel foregrounding of native-place concerns within the public school curriculum during the later Meiji period, with broad similarities in the way that was done.

During the 1920s, however, the two communities appear to have moved in different directions. Schematically speaking, teachers in the prefectural capital increasingly emphasized the emotional element of native-place studies, while their counterparts in central and southern Shinano tried to advance a more critical agenda. These differences were reflected in the contrasting philosophies of two towering figures in the Nagano native-place studies debates of the 1930s: Isshi Shigeki, a regional historian based in the capital, and Misawa Katsue, a self-taught geographer with connections to Matsumoto. Both were professional teachers; both were scholars of the local landscape; and both wrote extensive polemics on behalf of native-place education in the schools. Yet the ways these two men conceived of locality studies, and the methods they advocated for both native-place research and native-place teaching, differed significantly. After probing those differences at some length, the essay concludes with a brief reflection on the attachment to place that lay at the heart of the prewar *kyōdo* studies paradigm—and on its recent rehabilitation under the guise of "community studies."

The Role of Local Materials in Developmental Education

Compared to the revered status they would later achieve, studies of local history and geography were relatively submerged in the early Meiji curriculum. But they were not altogether absent. Information about localities had formed a standard part of premodern primers, which continued to be used into the 1870s. To be sure, such primers were mainly vehicles for literacy training; as far as we know, they were valued for reading and writing practice, rather than for cultivating a deep understanding of the local place. Nonetheless, the reliance on such materials kept open a space for learning about the local in the first years of Meiji, until modern geography textbooks were developed (Aoki 1995, 260).

What boosted local materials into a much more prominent role was the doctrine of "developmental education" (*kaihatsu shugi*), which flourished in the 1870s. Embracing the child-centered approach of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, a pioneering Swiss educator of the nineteenth century, developmental educators focused on their pupils' intellectual growth and emotional development. Their favored method was to ground abstract principles in the everyday by using concrete examples from the students' own environment wherever possible (Lincicome 1995). This in turn gave rise to a new appreciation of the locality as a pedagogical resource—a tool kit for bringing abstract lessons down to earth. By the 1880s, Nagano teachers (who were among the most enthusiastic followers of developmental education in Japan) were experimenting with a variety of ways to incorporate local materials into their daily

lesson plans. In the words of one Matsumoto teacher (writing for the *Eastern Chikuma County Education Association Journal*), "The study of location should begin with close observation of the students' own district. In this way, [geography education] can fulfill the Pestallozian dictum of proceeding from the familiar to the unfamiliar" ("Chirigaku no kiso to narubeki kyōka" 1885).[3] In a similar spirit, regional illustrations were sought for every subject matter in the elementary school curriculum, from history and geography to language, science, and even mathematics (Shinshū Daigaku Kyōikugakubu Fuzoku Nagano Shōgakkō Hyakunen Shi Henshū Iinkai 1986, 515).

Since teachers were not always native to the village in which they taught, developing such materials required considerable effort. The few published guidelines available in the 1880s offered little more than a roster of the topics to be covered, leaving the hapless teacher to supply the local content. For instance, when the *Eastern Chikuma County Educational Association Journal* published an 1884 article entitled "A teaching program for primary school: geographical features in the neighborhood of the school," it merely reproduced an outline that had originally been devised for Tokyo. The main categories were as follows ("Shōgaku kyōan" 1884):

I. Number of wards
II. Topographical features
    Hills
    Location of the wards in relation to the hills
    Plains
    Waterways
        Rivers
        Ponds
III. Islands
IV. City streets
V. Buildings
        Tokyo Normal School (show interior plan)
        Tokyo City Library
        Tokyo Women's Normal School
        Tokyo University Medical Faculty
VI. Canals
VII. Climate
VIII. Products
IX. Summary

While such an outline clearly had to be adapted to each local landscape, its very publication confirms the first reason Nagano teachers looked to their neighborhoods: as a source of vivid instructional materials.

Over time, however, the locality gradually assumed a second function: as a site in which to integrate the disparate subjects taught in the formal curriculum. This appears to have been the main motive behind the development of the "general courses" (*zakka*) that began to appear in Nagano's primary schools in the 1890s. An 1896 teacher's guide for Matsumoto explained the "aims and scope of the general course" as follows:

I. To provide special supplementary explanations for matters that arise in the course of language or morals lessons;

[3]Unless otherwise indicated, all English translations are my own.

II. To teach about essential matters relating to society, the military, or everyday life that are not adequately addressed in the formal curriculum;
III. To integrate the lessons on geography, history, and science.

Teachers initially appropriated just two hours every other week for this purpose. Sample topics to be covered in the recommended general course for Matsumoto included the following:

Matsumoto Castle
View of the castle keep; function of the castle; its occupants; the overlord; the relative power of lord, samurai, and commoners.

Supplement: on the shogun and emperor.

Newspaper Publishing
News gathering, editing, printing, and distribution; the distinction between newspapers and magazines; their uses; the need for literacy.

The Town Office
Important sections and their duties; location of the Matsumoto Town Office; names of the main government officials. Supplement: on town and village assemblies, and on the bureaus that oversee education.

The Map of Matsumoto
Beginning with the map of the local schoolhouse, proceed outward. Note the names and locations of borders, villages, roads, wards, and important buildings, and impart a sense of the town plan overall. Supplement: provide an overview of Matsumoto's population, occupational structure, products, customs and manners.

(Jūyō Bunkazai Kyū Kaichi Gakkō Shiryōshū Kankōkai 1991, 11:570–78; see also the discussion in Matsumoto-shi Kyōiku Hyakunen Shi Kankō Iinkai 1978, 357–60)

But mid-Meiji educators looked to the locality as more than a place to illustrate and integrate the formal curriculum. A third motive was to foster the students' powers of observation by taking them out of doors. This function was perceived as valuable as early as the 1880s, although it was not systematically implemented for another twenty years. In Matsumoto, primary school teachers began taking their students on regular field trips shortly after the turn of the century; by 1911, this practice was embedded in the fourth-grade syllabus. Besides imparting empirical knowledge about the region, local studies were now conceived as a way to increase a child's powers of observation. Teachers were instructed to "take up materials close at hand" in order to "foster the students' capacity to observe what is in front of their eyes." From this, it was believed, the child's "own thirst for learning" would be awakened. Leaving nothing to chance, the authors of a teachers' guide published that year included explicit instructions about where to direct the students' attention when they climbed to the top of a particular hill to take in the view. There were further instructions on guiding the children to make maps of what they were seeing (Matsumoto-shi Kyōiku Hyakunen Shi Kankō Iinkai 1978, 361, 366).[4]

[4]Outdoor instruction was being championed for similar reasons in Britain at the same time. To Scottish geographer Patrick Geddes (1902, 528), "nature [was] the ultimate teacher;" "for what more can naturalist or geographer claim to possess than the habit of observing and thinking for himself and at his best, without books or helps, in presence of the facts, and in the open air?" Similarly, for Geddes's student H. J. Fleure (1921, 193), "study round about us . . . may contribute largely to the progress of scientific knowledge by developing powers of expression." For a discussion of Geddes and his legacy, see Livingstone 1992, 271–90.

The fourth purpose of local studies was to provide a foundation for national and world geography, which was formally introduced in the upper grades. As the primary school curriculum evolved, local geography—whether in the form of "general studies" (*zakka*) or "native-place studies" (*kyōdoka*)—was taught first, typically to very small children (in years one through four). Geography proper (*chirigaku*), which included the study of Japan as a whole, information about foreign countries, and lessons on geographical principles, was thought suitable only for more advanced students. As one local Pestalozzian put it,

> To order young children to look at the lines on a map, or to recite a list of distant place-names, only serves to kill their interest in geography. By contrast, if you talk to them about the people who live in their area, or about the weather of that place, or about the animals and plants that live around them, . . . then they will listen with delight. . . . Foreign lands are best understood by comparison with those close at hand.
>
> ("Chirigaku no kiso narubeki kyōka" 1885, 8)

Although this approach did not go entirely uncontested (as we shall see), in the main the locality was formally treated as both separate from and foundational for the study of more distant places.

Finally, lessons about the local were also charged with a spiritual function: to foster the child's emotional and moral development. One of the founding texts of the developmental education movement, Isawa Shūji's *Education* (*Kyōikugaku*), made this goal explicit. In a chapter on moral education, Isawa discussed ways to cultivate the "benevolent affections": "love of kindred and friends," "parental love," "filial obedience," "fraternal love," and "love of country." Love of country, he explained, was essential for maintaining and protecting the nation, and should be nurtured at school by using accounts of the local area, including histories and songs (cited in Lincicome 1995, 68).

By 1882, when Isawa's book was published, this idea of teaching love of the homeland as a foundation for national patriotism was catching fire all over Nagano. It fit the generally conservative mood of the 1880s, with its backlash against western individualism; and it gained additional impetus in the 1890s, when victory in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) unleashed a surge in patriotism nationwide. In turn-of-the-century Nagano, patriotism and regionalism went hand-in-hand. Fed by the rise in demand for silk around the world, this rural region had just embarked on a prolonged economic boom. By 1905, Nagano was in the vanguard of the new industrial Japan, and its residents could claim credit for having made the silk that bought the guns that defeated Russia in the bloody Russo-Japanese war of that year (Wigen 1995).

From the start, then, local studies in Nagano were advocated in both patriotic and practical terms. A teachers' handbook published in Matsumoto in the 1890s called specifically for cultivating students' love of their homeland, noting that "pride in one's region is the foundation of love for one's country. To love the landscape of the region, and to be proud of its people, is the foundation of patriotism" (Matsumoto-shi Kyōiku Hyakunen Shi Kankō Iinkai 1978, 367). In a similar vein, a Nagano City teacher wrote:

> by teaching students about the place of their birth, and the products of their locality, we can foster in them a desire to continue and enhance their native land's prosperity.
>
> (Yamazaki 1901, 28–29)

In this guise, native-place education would lead children to see service to the state as a natural extension of their regional identity.

Concretely, local teachers relied on two main methods to link the native-place to the nation. One was to embed local materials in an imperial framework. Such an approach was particularly conspicuous in the general-studies course devised for use in the Matsumoto elementary schools in 1896, one year after the Sino-Japanese war. Following early units on colors, shapes, and simple landscape features, first graders were introduced to the lives of soldiers, military installations, and Nagano's position in the Japanese empire. Second-year students, after making maps of the classroom and learning about food plants, were given lessons on East Asian flags and the Sino-Japanese war, while third-year students mapped both the Matsumoto Valley and "The Battle of the Yellow Sea." Likewise, the fourth-year course interspersed lessons on taxes, the police, and the Red Cross with units on "the strong countries of the world" and "the international fame of the Imperial Army" (Jūyō Bunkazai Kyū Kaichi Gakkō Shiryōshū Kankōkai 1991, 11:570–78).

A second favored way to yoke the region to the nation was to introduce the *kyōdo* as ancestral landscape, a sacred geography linking local gods and clans to those of the nation as a whole. A 1913 manifesto on "historical resources in the *kyōdo*" was explicit on this point, suggesting that the region of the childrens' birth, its ancestral graves, its gods and their shrines, and the genealogies of its major clans were the proper starting-point for Japanese history. Such lessons were "the basis on which they can be brought to embrace both native-place love and love of country (*aikyōdo aikokka shin o dakashimuru kiso taru ya*)" (Ōyama 1913). The patriotic connection could be amplified by telling stories of noble native sons:

> . . . . by teaching students how it was that their ancestors protected and served their feudal lords, how they exerted themselves for their domains, and how great their legacy is for the present day, we can show the students what it means to revere the national body (*kokutai*) and teach them the value of the homeland, thereby fostering a sense of filial piety and nobility of soul.
>
> (Yamazaki 1901, 28–29)

In this way, biographies of distinguished local men (and occasionally women)—notably those who had made a name for themselves on the national stage (typically as war heroes or education leaders)—became a central element of native-place pedagogy in Shinano. Collected in chapbooks with titles like "Moral tales from the homeland" (*kyōdo junwa shiryō*), the biographies of such leaders became fodder for morality lessons. As the foreword to one such collection noted, "The homeland has inexhaustible charms; the words and deeds of the great men who lived there have lasting power over their fellow countrymen, and their power to inspire is great. It is one of the duties of teachers in the locality to pass this legacy down to future generations" (Matsumoto-shi Kyōiku Hyakunen Shi Kankō Iinkai 1978, 367).

From "General Studies" to "Native-Place Studies"

By the early twentieth century, Shinano's elementary teachers had acquired experience deploying local materials for a multiplicity of pedagogical purposes. In the process, although teaching about home remained supplemental to the state-mandated

curriculum, education about the native-place had become steadily more prominent and systematic. This is clearly illustrated in the 1905 general-studies course for third- and fourth-year students in Matsumoto, an outline for which is preserved in the Kaichi Gakkō archives (Jūyō Bunkazai Kyū Kaichi Gakkō Shiryōshū Kankōkai 1991, 11:584–90). The 1905 syllabus is a marked improvement over its predecessors, offering detailed local content, systematic tie-ins with the formal curriculum, and notes on appropriate teaching aids for each lesson, suggesting everything from specific maps and photographs to extracurricular activities. Consider the unit on "The Matsumoto Train Station," scheduled for the tenth week of the third year. Topics to be covered included "(1) the station's location; (2) the importance of on-time departures; (3) the system for tickets and personal baggage; (4) precautions to take while boarding and riding on the train." Footnotes explain that this lesson complements the Japanese language (*kokugo*) lesson on "Traveling by Steam Train," and instruct the teacher that "a trip to the station, timed to coincide with a steam train's departure, is essential" (585).

Nagano City educators followed a similar path. In 1903, the teachers in the laboratory school attached to the prefecture's normal school issued a call for incorporating native place studies into the elementary curriculum. Their idea was to supplement the standard Japanese language reader with local materials, appropriating roughly two hours per week from the time assigned to language classes. As described by Itō Yoshinobu, a teacher at the lab school, the goal was to "enhance both the substance and the interest" of the language curriculum in two ways: "(1) by preparing detailed field trip plans for taking the students out of the school, and (2) by preparing reliable classroom materials on interesting local people." Itō went on to offer the local studies syllabus adopted in 1905 by the lab school as a supplement to the national *kokugo* reader (Itō 1905).

Itō's proposed supplementary syllabus for the third year of primary school reveals a complex structure. The lessons progress along both a spatial and a temporal axis, shifting the child's attention gradually outward from the family to the state while visiting various seasonal themes along the way. An outline of this syllabus, with notable highlights, is reproduced below (from Itō 1905, 35–39).

First Term

I. My household (residence, occupation, the family register, leisure activities, relations with neighbors)
II. Outdoor activities (spring weather, the new growth on grass and trees, the first stirrings of the silkworms)
III. Miscellaneous Festivals
IV. Festivals for the Ancestral Gods
V. Travels by Water
VI. Barley Fields in the Hinterland of Nagano City (planting, fertilizer, harvest, blights)
VII. Silkworms (cocoons, mulberry cultivation, floss, and silkworm egg production)
VIII. Rice Planting
IX. The Rainy Season (implications for farming and sanitation)
X. Waterwheels and Power Stations
XI. Travels by Train (an itinerary following the Shin'etsu line; passenger ticketing, rules to observe on the train)

XII. Thunderstorms (evaporation and temperature, lightning and thunder, precautions to take in an electrical storm; Ben Franklin and the lightning rod)
XIII. Urban Water Systems and Street Sanitation
XIV. Our School (its history, the grounds, numbers of teachers and students, school rules, school spirit, discipline, children's morals, neighboring buildings)

Second Term

XV. Fall in the Region (harvest time; useful insects and harmful insects)
XVI. The View From the Mountains (locations of various mountains, rivers, roads, and schools; how to make and read maps)
XVII. Nagano City (population, products, the city office, Zenkoji Temple, the city's history, the prefectural offices, neighboring counties and villages)
XVIII. Floods
XIX. Timber Production
XX. Prefectural Industries (primarily textiles)
XXI. Rice Harvesting in the Nagano City Area
XXII. Electric Lighting in Nagano City
XXIII. Year-End Observances
XXIV. New Year's Observances

Third Term

XXV. National Flags and Other Flags
XXVI. National Wealth and Prosperity ("the prosperity of each household is the prosperity of Nagano City; the prosperity of each settlement is the prosperity of the country")
XXVII. Days to Remember (Emperor Jimmu's Ascension, Foundation Day, the founding day of the school, each student's birthday)

So long as local materials were merely supplementary to the *kokugo* curriculum, guidelines like this might suffice. But the growing prominence of local materials after the turn of the century brought a tricky question to the fore: how to define the "local" in the first place. The homeland that would eventually emerge as the locus of native place studies—the *kyōdo* itself—was a notoriously vague unit, lacking clear boundaries or even a clearly defined scale. As another teacher at the lab school in Nagano City noted early on, the native place could be framed in strikingly different ways for different pedagogical agendas. Those who deployed the locality primarily as a locus for civics lessons might focus on the smallest self-governing units (i.e., a single city, town, or village); others less interested in political processes might adopt the broader administrative boundaries of a county or prefecture. Still others limited the *kyōdo* to the area that students could directly observe, "which effectively means a very constricted area in the vicinity of the school," while those who wanted to instill patriotism through morality tales took in a much wider scope. As a result, "delimiting the native place is very complex" (Ikenouchi 1912, 26).

Across Nagano, educators finessed this complexity by taking an inclusive, open-ended approach, representing the native place as a set of concentric circles. Starting in the neighborhood, students were led steadily outward to consider the region, the prefecture, the country, and ultimately the whole of the empire. In a 1911 teachers' guide for the fourth-year course in Matsumoto, the students' "homeland" was defined as follows: "centering on Matsumoto town, it includes most of the Matsumoto valley,

the hinterland with which Matsumoto is closely linked. Yet in order to understand Matsumoto, one must discuss all of Nagano Prefecture, Nagoya, Tokyo, the geography of Japan as a whole (covered in detail in the fifth and sixth years), and the civilized countries of the world (covered in the higher-school course)" (Matsumoto-shi Kyōiku Hyakunen Shi Kankō Iinkai 1978, 366).

This nested notion of the locality was already built into the general-studies curriculum of the two leading primary schools in Nagano Prefecture by the early 1900s. The Kaichi Gakkō's fourth-grade *zakka* syllabus for 1905, for instance, was organized around a careful spatial progression. Starting with a unit on the school itself, students proceeded to lessons on the town of Matsumoto, the wider Matsumoto valley, and the surrounding valleys in southern Shinano. Then their attention was directed to the further reaches of Northern Nagano, to the history and administration of Shinano as a whole, and finally to "our empire" and "the Earth." Effectively, the earlier general studies course had been reorganized to promote the study of geography and history centered on the *kyōdo.* It was only a matter of time before the Kaichi Gakkō would relabel the "general studies" course "native-place studies," or *kyōdoka* (Jūyō Bunkazai Kyū Kaichi Gakkō Shiryōshū Kankōkai 1991, 11:584 ff.). By 1907, local studies would emerge in the laboratory school, too, as a separate subject in its own right (Shinshū Daigaku Kyōikugakubu Fuzoku Nagano Shōgakkō Hyakunen Shi Henshū Iinkai 1986, 144).

The elevation of local studies from the status of supplement to that of independent subject created a new demand for textbooks with wholly local content. Rising to the challenge, educators in Nagano Prefecture compiled over a dozen "native-place histories" (*kyōdoshi*) and "native-place geographies" (*kyōdo chishi*) around the turn of the century. The Kaichi Gakkō published its first such text in 1907. Starting with an extended look at Matsumoto, this pioneering homeland primer led the student on a brief tour around the province—highlighting the Kiso, Ina, Suwa, Nagano, Chiisagata, and Saku valleys—before stepping back to look at Nagano as a whole. The coverage was cursory, however, and the text far from evocative. The overview of Nagano simply gave a battery of data on the province's location, population, mountains, rivers, climate, cities, railroads, industries, famous places, and shrines and temples, followed by an abbreviated timeline for the political history of Nagano Prefecture (Jūyō Bunkazai Kyū Kaichi Gakkō Shiryōshū Kankōkai 1991, 17:214–21).

Not surprisingly, this first generation of material proved too dry to capture the students' attention. So the Geography and History Research Association of Matsumoto followed up its 1907 local geography with a more lively "local studies handbook" (*kyōdogakushūchō*) in 1912. This handbook would be revised on an almost annual basis for the next two decades, as teachers continually reworked and added to the *kyōdo* studies syllabus (Matsumoto-shi Kyōiku Hyakunen Shi Kankō Iinkai 1978, 363). Compared to its predecessor, the 1912 primer was more narrowly focussed on the child's own neighborhood. As in the past, the instructor was to guide his students' attention outward through a series of concentric circles toward ever more distant places. But the new text started closer to home (with exercises for mapping the classroom itself and then the school grounds), spent considerable time on the city and its industries, and went no further afield than a few nearby landmarks, all of which could be reached on a school outing (Jūyō Bunkazai Kyū Kaichi Gakkō Shiryōshū Kankōkai 1991, 17:222–29).

This signaled a renewed emphasis on the critical agenda of local studies, using the locality to enhance the student's skills of observation, in contrast to the more

stridently patriotic emphasis evident after the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars. And appropriately so, since 1912 was the first year of the Taishō era and the dawn of so-called "Taishō liberal education" (*Taishō jiyū kyōiku*). The rural prosperity that accompanied the First World War allowed unprecedented numbers of Shinano's farm children to seek higher education in the early 1910s, opening the teaching profession to an influx of young men from relatively modest backgrounds. It was these young teachers who emerged as the core of a reformist group within the Shinano Education Association. Organizing initially to press for the removal of the authoritarian headmaster at the Nagano Normal School in 1915, the reformers went on over the next few years to implement the romantic ideals of the White Birch (Shirakaba) literary group in their classrooms. Serious enthusiasts disregarded the mandated curriculum and textbooks altogether, seeking instead to foster self-expression among their students through stories and art.

Before long, however, such experiments attracted the eye of state officials, who moved swiftly to reassert central control. Beginning in 1918, when several elementary teachers in northeastern Nagano's Sarashina County tried to sell their school's textbooks to buy art supplies, prefectural officials began a systematic crackdown. Over the next seven years, impromptu classroom inspections were conducted across the prefecture. Teachers found guilty of straying too far from the national curriculum—like Kawai Seiichirō, a Matsumoto teacher who bypassed the approved morality primer in favor of a Mori Ogai story—were reprimanded, transferred, suspended, or fired (Tsukada 1974, 262–66).

In this atmosphere of increasing repression, native-place education in the prefectural capital took a decisively conservative turn. In February 1910, when third- and fourth-grade teachers from throughout the prefecture gathered for two days at the Nagano Normal School to discuss their curricular concerns, staff from the laboratory school had insisted that local studies had two purposes, the practical as well as the patriotic. Besides laying a foundation for patriotism, studying the homeland was still promoted as a way to inculcate field observation skills (Shinshū Daigaku Kyōikugakubu Fuzoku Nagano Shōgakkō Hyakunen Shi Henshū Iinkai 1986, 372). After the Taishō reprimands, however, the rhetoric changed. When the Ministry of Education undertook a national survey of native-place education in 1927, the staff of the Nagano laboratory school reported that their primary goal was to amplify the homeland consciousness of their pupils. Using the local village as a starting point, they aimed to enhance the children's prefectural identity and ultimately their "ethnic consciousness" (*minzokuteki ishiki*) as Japanese subjects. Since the native place was the locus of the most basic spiritual sentiments, they wrote, the process of studying its environment was bound to deepen that spiritual bond. In short, it now appeared that the true purpose of local studies was to promote patriotic sentiment; the love of homeland that was fostered in the schools would eventually develop into national consciousness and pride (515–16).

The Shōwa Local Studies Debate

It was in this guise that local studies would become firmly bound up with moral instruction (*dōtoku kyōiku*) in 1930, when the patriotic potential of native-place studies captured Tokyo's attention. A series of related developments combined to thrust the

native place into the national spotlight at this time. Foremost was the crisis of the rural economy. The global depression that followed the American stock market crash of 1929 delivered a brutal blow to Japan's farmers, who were already suffering from a postwar slump in commodity prices. The crash was particularly acute in silk-based districts like Nagano, whose residents depended heavily on income generated by the sericulture, filature, and silkworm-egg industries. As overseas markets dried up, local policy-makers increasingly turned to traditional regional life-ways to come up with practical measures to reinvigorate agriculture and restart a stalled economy. Thus, one Nagano educator writing in 1931 advocated teaching practical courses on "native-place industries" (*kyōdo no sangyō kyōiku*) (Narita 1931), while another observer singled out "the drastic demise of the villages" as the foremost cause of the *kyōdo* studies boom (Isshi 1931, 21).

The economic crisis in the countryside in turn fueled widespread rhetoric about a spiritual crisis, which further advanced the cause of native-place studies. The village became a key locus of the "restorationist" sentiment of early Shōwa, with its stress on reviving a purportedly traditional rural morality (Vlastos 1998). As Isshi Shigeki noted, "since the economic crisis is a product of modern capitalism, there has been a renewed interest in indigenous spiritual and material culture as possible correctives. This [too] leads to a new appreciation of the *furusato* [natal village]" (Isshi 1931, 21). Reflecting the increasing emphasis on spirituality, *Shinano Kyōiku*, the organ of the prefectural education association, featured articles in 1930 on such topics as "Native-place religion" (Ichikawa 1930) and "The importance of regional culture" (Yajima 1930). The author of the latter essay followed up a year later with another, in which he defined the native place in fundamentally cultural terms:

> Usually, the word *kyōdo* is used to mean the immediate region consisting of one's city, town, or village of birth, perhaps including neighboring towns and villages. But what we have in mind is not an administrative district but rather a district that shares a set of cultural features. Any such cultural region nests inside another, larger sphere that impinges on it, and that may be called its "cultural horizon" (*bunka no chiheisen*). Through the development of transportation and communications, the cultural horizon expands from the region to the whole country, leading to the formation of a national and eventually an international cultural horizon. . . . [T]he farther the cultural horizon extends, the more important becomes the preservation of regional culture.
>
> (Yajima 1931, 2)

Finally, the rural crisis in turn helped drive a third motor behind native-place studies: native ethnography, or *minzokugaku*. Starting in the early 1900s, Yanagita Kunio, Japan's pioneering ethnographer, had begun articulating a new vision of the countryside as the locus of an authentic Japanese folk (Harootunian 1998; Hashimoto 1998; Koschmann et al. 1985). This gave a new salience to regional diversity—and did much to professionalize local studies as well. (The very phrase "native place research" [*kyōdo kenkyū*] is said to have been coined by these folklorists, who chose it as the title for their scholarly journal, published from 1913 to 1934.) In Yanagita's wake, investigating regional dialects or handicrafts took on the luster of serious scholarship, making native place studies an increasingly attractive tool for local schoolteachers anxious to advance their own professional identities and agendas. Again, Nagano proved particularly sensitive to the national trend. Taking advantage

of Yaganita's personal ties with the region, Nagano schoolteachers cultivated close connections with the Tokyo-based *minzoku* movement.[5]

All of these forces, then—economic collapse, a search for spiritual renewal, and a new appreciation of localities as a legitimate subject of scholarship—worked together to heighten awareness of the native place dramatically by 1930. In November of that year, a national movement for native-place education was inaugurated with the establishment of the Native-Place Studies Association (Kyōdo Kyōiku Renmei), whose journal was simply called *Kyōdo* (Matsuno 1997). A year later, the Ministry of Education itself awarded funds to normal schools throughout the archipelago for the furthering of native-place research and pedagogy. In the depths of a crushing depression, this meant a 1,810-yen windfall for the Nagano Normal School—enough to finance a new native-place research center (Shinshū Daigaku Kyōikugakubu Fuzoku Nagano Shōgakkō Hyakunen Shi Henshū Iinkai 1986, 515).

The crises that brought native-place studies to public attention in early Shōwa might have been expected to harmonize the practical and patriotic agendas that had always animated work in this field. On the one hand, economic hardship heightened the value of practical knowledge about local environments; on the other hand, the sense of a spiritual crisis heightened the value of reverence toward the homeland. But instead of fusing these agendas together more tightly, the increasing expectations that were brought to bear on native-place studies during the depression began to split them apart. By the time the Ministry of Education got involved, a spirited debate was underway in Shinano between teachers who emphasized sentiment and those who emphasized science in *kyōdo* education.

The most prominent crusader for the spiritual approach to local studies was a Nagano-based history teacher named Isshi Shigeki. In 1931, Isshi published a three-part polemic in the pages of *Shinano Kyōiku* entitled "The meaning and content of native-place research" (Isshi 1931)—the first of many essays on local-studies methodology that he would publish over the course of half a century.[6] Three features of Isshi's vision are worth noting.

First, Isshi argued that the ineffable quality of "regional consciousness" was "an indispensable element in *kyōdo* research." He was very frank about condemning "so-called native-place research" that showed no trace of lasting involvement with a place. In Isshi's view, a detached observer who took up some narrow topic that happened to fall within a local area, and analyzed it in isolation from the wider context of local life, would produce merely *kyōdoteki kenkyū*; that is, "pseudo native-place research." The real thing, by contrast, was distinguished by an appreciation for "native-place consciousness" (*kyōdo kannen* or *kyōdo ishiki*) and by a holistic approach that tried to understand the locality as an organic whole. True native-place research, in a word, respected "the realm of emotion" as well as "the scholarly standpoint" (Isshi 1931, part 2, 43).

[5]Yanagita, whose adoptive family home was in southern Nagano, made repeated visits to the prefecture, where he gave lectures, met with local teachers, and published more than a dozen articles in *Shinano Kyōiku* (the bulletin of the Nagano Prefecture Education Association) starting in 1918. Isshi Shigeki, the most influential native-place scholar in the prefecture, grew particularly close to Yanagita. By the early 1930s, when Isshi was overseeing compilation of the eight-volume *Kitaazumi-gun kyōdoshi kō* [Native-place documents of Kitaazumi County, 1927–1936], he would visit Yanagita at his Tokyo home "at least seven or eight times a year" to seek his instruction and guidance (Isshi 1976, 70). For a comprehensive look at Yanagita's impact on local studies in Nagano, see Kobuchizawa 1978.

[6]Isshi's pronouncements on native-place history were later collected and republished as Part III of Isshi 1976.

Secondly, for Isshi, the place where these two perspectives (the emotional and the scientific) converged was in studies of Nagano Prefecture as a whole. This was a remarkable claim. Most native-place studies in the early twentieth century were undertaken at a very local scale, often focusing on a single village or valley. Isshi, however, not only defined the *kyōdo* in such a way as to encompass the whole heterogeneous landscape of Nagano; he went further to privilege that level of analysis, identifying the prefecture as a sort of golden mean between the parochialism of the village and the abstraction of the nation. The prefecture provided a framework where native-place attachment and scholarly detachment could strike just the right balance. To be sure, Isshi was aware that it might be problematic to label this sprawling terrain, with its seven discrete valleys and hundreds of villages, an authentic "native place." He noted that "further research is needed before we can say definitively whether or not Shinshū [Shinano] constitutes a fundamental unit." Nonetheless, he continued,

> I have a prophetic sense that Shinshū does [constitute a genuine native place], both as a self-governing entity and as a cultural region. We cannot automatically assume that the same is true of other prefectures; the boundaries of a [cultural] region are not necessarily contiguous with political boundaries. [What matters is whether] the region in which we live—our own village, our county, or Shinshū as a whole—exists in our regional consciousness (*kyōdo kannen*). Its scale need not be fixed scientifically; rather, it is something that comes into play spontaneously when the time comes.
>
> (Isshi 1931, part 2, 42)

The last feature of Isshi's approach to *kyōdo* studies was its regionalist political agenda. Isshi concluded his polemic with an indictment of three different groups in Japanese society, each of which had contributed (in his view) to the dissolution of native-place bonds. His first target was big business and the cultural standardization that it brought in its wake:

> Regional products are disappearing, regional culture loses its distinctiveness, and regional capital is getting swallowed up in big capital, so that a general global depression instantly assaults the regions.
>
> (Isshi 1931, part 3, 45)

His second target was the political left:

> Some socialists insist that native places and native-place identities are either in the process of being completely swept away by capitalism or, at the least, are of strictly secondary importance in the creation of a new society, and therefore do not enter into their field of vision. Here, rather than the dissolution of native-place formations and identities, we have instead their denial.
>
> (Ibid.)

Finally, he indicted a third culprit for assaulting the native place: the Japanese state. In a convoluted passage, he wrote:

> It is not as if the nation-centered economic thought and education that have dominated [since Meiji] have not also contributed to the dissolution of native-place communities and identities. I certainly would not dispute the importance of national unification, but there is much to reflect on about whether this hasn't perhaps gone too far, . . . the enhancement of the [central] state being the primary goal of almost all facilities and programs instituted since Meiji.
>
> (Ibid., 46)

At the end of the essay, it becomes clear just what is at stake in this particular definition of *kyōdo* consciousness, *kyōdo* research, and the *kyōdo* struggle. The ultimate agenda of locality studies for Isshi was to create a platform for native-place autonomy, with "native-place" carefully defined at (one might even say appropriated by) the level of the prefecture. Isshi thus ends his polemic not with the usual academic's pitch for more research, but with a politician's call for more regional independence. His parting shot is a pointed observation that "Russia and other Western countries" do a better job of appreciating, teaching about, and granting political autonomy to their regions than does Japan (48).

Such views endeared Isshi Shigeki to the Nagano establishment. Indeed, his graduation from the Nagano Normal School in 1914 marked the start of a stunningly successful career. In 1926, Isshi was appointed to the prestigious and high-paying post of elementary school principal (a job he was to keep until the end of the war). Three years later, he was invited to join the elite editorial board of the Nagano prefectural history; in 1931, he was chosen to represent Nagano at an "All-Japan Native-Place Education Conference." And in 1932, on the eve of his fortieth birthday, Isshi Shigeki ascended to the highest position in the Nagano studies establishment, being named Director of the Shinano History Association (and thereby Editor-in-Chief of its pioneering journal, *Shinano*).[7]

If Isshi Shigeki was the darling of the Shinshū establishment, the opposite was true of his opponent in the local-studies debate: an irascible geographer named Misawa Katsue. Like Isshi, Misawa was a Shinano native, a long-time elementary school teacher, a passionate practitioner of native-place research, and a prolific essayist. But, unlike Isshi, Misawa had never graduated from the Nagano Normal School. As the first son of a rural family, he had been expected to take over his father's farm, so his formal schooling came to an end when he graduated from the local higher primary school (*kōtō shōgakkō*) at age fifteen. But two years later, a position came open in the local elementary school, and Misawa embarked on his teaching career. All the credentials he would eventually earn—including the one that opened the door to his later post at the Suwa Middle School—were obtained by studying in his spare time for the Ministry of Education's licensing tests. However, at the age when Isshi was being promoted to the prestigious post of principal, Misawa could not even keep a steady job; a series of quarrels with school administrators forced him to resign from each of his first five teaching posts (including the Kaichi Gakkō in Matsumoto, where he taught from 1911 to 1916) (Miyasaka 1990, 37–43).

Misawa's first article, a geographical analysis of the Suwa silk industry, appeared in 1922. Over the next fifteen years, until his death in 1937, he would publish more than 120 articles, essays, and books. Like Isshi, Misawa expounded frequently on the meaning and conduct of native-place research, writing essays both for local organs like *Shinano Kyōiku* and for professional geography journals. But the positions of the two men were significantly different.

First of all, Misawa was a physical geographer, and a resolute empiricist. Consider these lines from his 1937 essay on "The mission of native-place geography education":

> My thoughts on *kyōdo* geography are a bit unorthodox. I believe that the proper subject of geography is the interface between the atmosphere and the earth (*fūdo*),

[7]Isshi 1976, preface. After the war, besides retaining his post as head of the Shinano-shi Gakkai, he would go on to oversee the compilation of the official history of Nagano prefecture: a massive, forty-volume project that would occupy three decades of his life. For an appreciation of Isshi's postwar work on behalf of native-place studies, see Akutsu 1991, especially pages 50–53.

> and that our task is to identify and analyze the manifestations of that interface. The first such manifestation is the soil . . . the second is plants, then animals, . . . and finally industries and other elements of human life. The task of geography is to analyze how all these elements are connected in space.
>
> (Misawa 1937 [1979], 40)

In this context, native-place attachment for Misawa took on a subtly different meaning from the one articulated by Isshi Shigeki. What interested Misawa was not ineffable local consciousness, but concrete local knowledge. "To get good results," he wrote,

> the geographer must take as his research object his own native place, or at least his proto-native place (*jun-kyōdo*)—in other words, the place where he was raised or where he works. [For it is the geographer's job to observe such subtle environmental distinctions as] the minute differences of snowfall or the timing of spring's manifestations from one side of a small valley to another. . . . It is best to live in a place for long years—and indeed to have your livelihood depend on the keenness of your observations—if these micro-differences are to be accurately noted. In fact, it is almost impossible for anyone except those who live in the place to obtain these difficult observations. . . . Of course, good geographical training is also absolutely essential.
>
> (Ibid., 41–42)

This conviction, in turn, had two pedagogical implications that distinguished Misawa's approach from Isshi's. One was his belief that native-place education, like native-place research, ought properly to be conducted close to home. Nagano prefecture as a whole—the scale that Isshi described as the ideal one for native-place studies—was much too big for the kind of geographical investigations that Misawa had in mind. "If you look at the geography materials being used in the *kyōdo* studies curriculum around Japan for fourth graders today," he wrote,

> many of them take as their subject a whole county or even the whole prefecture in which the school resides. There is no way that the students can directly experience an area this large. This brings home in a painful way the extent to which the essence of *kyōdo* geography education has yet to be grasped. . . . I firmly believe that this must change. The appropriate scope for native-place geography education is the sphere within which direct experience and observation are possible, that is, the area to which students have deep connections. Reforming *kyōdo* geography education [to focus on the local scale] would be good both for regional development and for the development of geography as a discipline.
>
> (Ibid., 55)

Finally, Misawa put his own unorthodox political spin on the morality rhetoric that had pervaded native-place studies by the 1930s.

> Today, as Japan stands on the brink of a crisis, it is hard to avoid feeling proud about the signs that there is an imminent revival of the Japanese spirit afoot. . . . But when it comes time to actualize this, there isn't really any new policy. The most important thing [we are told] is for each person to be diligent in his calling. But this is not a purely spiritual problem, for a full awareness of the site of one's calling—of the *kyōdo*, and especially of its physical geographic characteristics—is needed. Only from such an understanding can the motivation to be diligent in one's vocation arise.
>
> (Ibid., 44)

For Misawa, true "spiritual development" started with "a full awareness of the site of one's calling." What students needed above all was the ability to make their own careful scientific observations of nature; the goal of native-place education was independent judgment, rather than patriotism. "Needless to say," he went on, "the early years of primary school simply do not afford a sufficient opportunity for fostering this sort of awareness" (Misawa 1937, 44). Thus, in Misawa's view, locality studies ought not to stop in early childhood but to continue at increasing levels of sophistication in the curriculum of the higher schools. It was as science training that native-place geography had the potential to develop the students' character.

This politically progressive vision of native-place pedagogy had a major impact on local geography education in central and southern Shinano. Besides becoming a beloved (if demanding) role model to the students who passed through his own classroom, Misawa also inspired many elementary teachers in the Matsumoto region, where he led a series of weekend field trips. Moreover, he was invited back to the Kaichi Gakkō in the early 1930s to rewrite the local-studies curriculum. Thanks in part to Misawa's input, native-place instruction at the Kaichi school retained a critical component well into the 1930s. To be sure, native ethnography made its appearance alongside history and geography in the Matsumoto native-place studies curriculum, just as songs with titles like "Our home village" and "The sky over our village" appeared in the sixth-grade choral music repertoire. But when a new local-studies textbook coauthored by Misawa was issued by the Kaichi Gakkō in 1932, it had a strikingly different look and tone from its counterparts elsewhere. Complete with a handsomely illustrated teacher's manual, it offered a sophisticated introduction to analytical geography, with detailed units on Matsumoto's drinking water sources, the city and its suburbs, and local industries. The numerous maps, drawings, and photographs that accompanied the text likewise focused students' attention more on analyzing landforms and industrial patterns than on absorbing patriotic messages (Jūyō Bunkazai Kyū Kaichi Gakkō Shiryōshū Kankōkai 1991, vol. 17, 243–55, 584).

Tragically, that spirit was not to last. Misawa Katsue, whose health had always been fragile, sickened and died in 1937. And in the increasingly militaristic climate that followed his death, patriotism became the dominant undertone of native-place studies throughout wartime Shinano, even at the Kaichi school (Jūyō Bunkazai Kyū Kaichi Gakkō Shiryōshū Kankōkai 1991, 17:256 ff.).

Coda: From Homeland to Community

As we have seen, the rift in the prewar Nagano local-studies community was profound, dividing native-place scholars along political as well as methodological lines. Isshi Shigeki's focus on the very young, his exaltation of the prefecture as the proper unit of native-place identity, and his call for cultivating piety toward the homeland worked together to create a highly statist geography practice. By contrast, Misawa Katsue's insistence on teaching mature students, working at a more local scale, and inculcating skills of direct observation and scientific analysis combined to create a rigorously critical form of geographical pedagogy—one that was distinctly less amenable to the political right.

Not surprisingly, it was the latter approach that gained favor after the war. Misawa Katsue came to be revered as "a standard-bearer of Taishō liberal education" whose philosophy amounted to an "anti-fascist thesis" (Miyasaka 1990, 225, 232).

His native-place essays, proudly reissued by his students forty years after his death, remain in print (Misawa 1979), and his teaching methods continue to attract favorable attention as a model of democratic pedagogy. Isshi Shigeki, by contrast, lived long enough to be embarrassed by his prewar polemics. When an anthology of his writings on local history was compiled in 1976, Isshi objected strongly to having his *kyōdo* pieces reprinted at all. According to an editor's afterword, he finally conceded to their inclusion "for the sake of rendering a complete record," but only if they were put at the back of the book (Takeda 1976, 2).

These disparate postwar trajectories underscore the malleability of local studies, reminding us that the native place could be shaped to serve quite contrasting political agendas. Yet despite their very real differences, Isshi and Misawa ultimately shared deep commonalities as well. Regardless of its political valence, the prewar *kyōdo* was above all a place of *attachment*. On this crucial issue, all parties to the local-studies debate were agreed. The ideal teacher was a son of the soil (and I choose the word "son" deliberately, since prewar native-place studies was strictly a male club). Nonnatives were welcome, but only if they were willing to immerse themselves in the life-ways, dialects, and problems of a place long enough to be certified by the locals as "semi-native" (*han-kyōdojin*). Intimate, multifaceted knowledge of the locality could not be acquired solely through books and excursions; it required participating in the life of the region. For familiarity in this paradigm was understood to entail not just local knowledge but also sympathy or identification with the object of one's research. Beyond accumulating information about a locality, the researcher was expected to love the place as well, or at least to be passionately engaged in its problems. In the words of Ariga Kizaemon,

> The village teacher needs to step out from behind his lectern and become a cooperative helper to the villagers; he needs not just to observe but to participate. Teachers must shed their condescending, uninvolved posture, which keeps the villagers at arms' length and obstructs deep understanding of the *kyōdo*.
>
> (Ariga 1933, 34)

Many *kyōdo* studies practitioners were in fact proud amateurs in the original sense of the term: scholars for whom professional training mattered less than the authenticity of their attachment to the place they studied. For some, the focus of that attachment was essentially pietistic, a matter of tracing and fostering bonds with their ancestors. For others, it was more practical, expressed in the search for locally appropriate development strategies. But in either case, prewar native-place practitioners typically felt a deep personal calling to their work. Theirs was ideally research with a passion.

This element of personal attachment fell into disrepute in the immediate postwar period. Anxious to distance local studies from the reactionary associations it had acquired during the 1930s, regional historians from across Japan came together in November 1950 under a new banner, proclaiming the creation of a Provincial History Research Seminar (*Chihōshi Kenkyū Kyōgikai*). The new name was significant; it signaled both a conceptual remapping of the Japanese countryside—as a collection of provincial regions, or *chihō*[8]—and a desire to professionalize the field of local history. Advocates of *chihōshi*—including the prominent Nagano historian Furushima

[8]The term adopted by these historians to designate their new paradigm, *chihōshi*, is usually translated neutrally into English as "local history." But the methodological manifestos of the day suggest that "provincial history" may do a better job of capturing the perspective implied by the term.

Toshio—denounced prewar native-place studies as sentimental, subjective, and unscientific. Instead of viewing a given rural landscape from the inside out, as an ancestral homeland with a spiritual and ecological genius of its own, these scholars strove for a more dispassionate perspective, analyzing local pasts as eddies within the mainstream of national history. Rather than comprising a locus of holistic place studies, rural communities now became fodder for comparative case studies, aimed at elucidating larger national themes. In the process, the conduct of provincial history was significantly centralized. Discredited as purblind parochial patriots, local amateurs fell in behind a new generation of professionals—trained in scientific techniques and often employed at central institutions—who drafted the manuals that set the agendas for local historians across the country.[9]

If this represented a subordination of the local in early postwar scholarship, even more extreme transformations were taking place in the classroom. Under the Allied Occupation, both native-place studies and national geography were banished from Japanese schools altogether, to be replaced by an American-style "social studies" curriculum. Geography as a separate discipline would not reappear until 1955. In that year, it was reintroduced at the middle-school level in a new internationalist guise. Stripped of both regional and patriotic content, geography had been redefined as a vehicle for inculcating pacifism and international understanding (Kikuchi 1960, 177–80).

While that internationalist message has remained dominant, the later Shōwa years witnessed a major native-place revival. Riding a wave of neonationalism in the 1970s, many Japanese began to focus once again on the virtues of the local, making the "natal village" or *furusato* a buzzword for advertisers and planners alike (Ivy 1995, Robertson 1998). Likewise, local historians began to reclaim the term *kyōdo*, reasserting the values of personal attachment, intimate familiarity, and synthetic study, and arguing that a scholar's problem-consciousness should emerge from the everyday life of the locality rather than from academic debates in Tokyo.[10] Not surprisingly, the native place gradually reappeared in the classroom as well. As early as 1958, the Japanese government issued a new set of curricular guidelines, identifying the first goal of geography education as "clarifying what is distinctive about daily life in the *kyōdo* and in Japan." Teachers were further instructed "to lead students to understand the position of their native place in our country as well as the position of our country in the world; to foster love toward both the homeland and the nation; and to nurture a disposition to work hard for the country's development" (quoted in Kikuchi 1960, 180). To fulfill this agenda, local studies were put back into the third-year curriculum for elementary students, and the region was restored as a legitimate framework of geographical inquiry (Takeuchi 1980).

In this way, pride of place has slowly regained respectability in postwar Japan. Yet the legacy of native-place studies is a mixed one, and many devotees of the local are determined not to repeat its prewar trajectory. That determination is clearly in evidence in a new rubric of the local that has gained ground since the 1980s: *chiiki*, a complex term best rendered in this context as "community."[11] While embracing

[9]See, for example, Chihōshi Kenkyū Kyōgikai 1952, Chihōshi Kenkyū Kyōgikai 1955.

[10]See especially Furushima Toshio's critique (1970) of *chihōshi* and manifesto for a new "native-place history."

[11]*Chiiki kenkyū* is also the Japanese translation for "area studies" on the American model. Akutsu Masami proposes an alternative term, *chihōgaku*, to encompass both prewar and postwar genres of holistic, place-based local studies.

the localism, the holism, and the passion of prewar native-place studies, "community" studies are embedded in a distinctly progressive framework: one that weds local initiative and regional revitalization to a fluid and connective sense of place.[12]

As was true of prewar native-place studies, the principle of local initiative is crucial. *Chiikishi* is manifestly history of, by, and for the people of a particular community. To the extent that central scholars are involved in *chiikishi* projects, they carefully position themselves in the local landscape, writing in the first-person about their own connections with the places they study. This has obvious echoes with interwar practice, when scholars were expected to be either natives or seminatives of the regions they studied. Likewise with the second principle of *chiikishi*, the desire to revitalize the regions in the present. Again, the resemblance to prewar practice is clear. Like contemporary community-studies activists, earlier native-place practitioners were deeply concerned about the economic health of the places they studied. To be sure, revitalization today encompasses some new economic strategies, such as preserving historic neighborhoods or buildings as foci for tourism—a strategy that has seen marked success along the old Nakasendō route, especially in Shinano's Kiso Valley. Revitalization today also embraces new cultural objectives, including a kind of salvage ethnography for oppressed or minority groups (such as the *burakumin* and Korean-Japanese) whose distinctive customs are perceived to be in danger of dying out. But the broader goals are strikingly similar to those that drove native-place studies in the 1930s: a desire to sustain both economic vitality and social well-being, by protecting both regional jobs and regional culture.

Where the community paradigm departs most dramatically from the native-place paradigm is in its conceptualization of Japanese localities as nodes in a transnational network. Rather than defining the countryside as an ancestral or ecological unity, *chiiki* advocates map the local landscape in terms of interaction and connectivity. This has three notable effects. First, it allows for a fluid and open-ended conception of place as process, positing a dynamic, interactive space that is continually transformed by flows. Secondly, it allows community scholars to embrace diversity and heterogeneity as constituent elements of a given locale. Rather than making assertions about the putative essence or genius of a place, this paradigm acknowledges all residents, including sojourners and immigrants, as shapers of the locality. Finally, work in this vein highlights interregional linkages, not only within Japan but also between particular Japanese localities and their neighbors overseas. "Communities" in this paradigm take shape at multiple scales, reconnecting local histories to transnational processes. In effect, this approach recasts the Japanese countryside as a constellation of cosmopolitan regions, each with a multinational network (and a corresponding world-view) of its own.

To my mind, this boundary-crossing perspective is the most promising development in postwar locality studies in Japan. Rather than separating the subnational from the supranational as distinct subjects of study, the notion of the *chiiki* is being developed dynamically at several levels at once, situating different Japanese regions within diverse networks of exchange and influence (Hamashita and Karashima 1997). Such a vision seems doubly apt, since this latest effort to rethink the Japanese countryside is itself part of a new transnational conversation about place. Each feature of the community-studies paradigm sketched here—including local initiative, regional revitalization, and a connective conception of place—finds striking

[12]For a thoughtful discussion of community history, from which this list of distinguishing features has been distilled, see Amino 1994.

parallels in contemporary scholarship on localities across the globe. From Europe and America to Africa and Asia, historians, anthropologists, and geographers alike are busy reconceiving regions in similarly dynamic, inclusive, interactive terms (Allen et al. 1998; Applegate 1999; Piot 1999; Wigen 1999). Such a movement has the potential to dramatically reconfigure the linkages between the local and the global, yielding the "progressive sense of place" that Doreen Massey (1993) has identified as an essential starting point for progressive local politics.

Whether that potential will be realized is another question. As the dispiriting histories of previous regional movements remind us, the possibilities for co-option are many. On the one hand, even the most open-ended of local identities might be marketed and manipulated to benefit a narrow constituency (see Timothy Oakes's essay in this issue). On the other hand, regional scholars are not always the most effective political operators. In assessing the failure of the interwar regionalist movement in America, Roger Dorman finally faults its activists for putting too much faith in "the politics of persuasion." And he traces this failed strategy not just to their personal and professional proclivities as artists, writers, and teachers, but to the centrality of pedagogy in the regionalist agenda. Since an "aesthetic education" in regional myths, traditions, and environments was presumed to be "the basis of the regional community, its source of integration," he finds, "it was natural to assume that a program of such education was a sufficient plan of action to instigate that community" (Dorman 1993, 262). The challenge for the current generation, in Japan as elsewhere, is to leverage a more fluid conception of community into a more potent force for change.

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