Chapter 1

The Practice of Tradition and Modernity in Contemporary Japan

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"What we would like," said Obuchi Yasuo, the former mayor of a farm town in northeastern Japan, "is for young people and their employers in Tokyo to consider lifestyle alternatives never possible before. Male and female employees could maintain a spacious residence here in the countryside while commuting to work in the city." Gazing out across the terraced rice paddies visible through the huge sliding windows on the east side of his Japanese style sitting room, Obuchi continued. "We are only an hour by air from Haneda (Tokyo's first international airport), and less than four hours by bullet train—closer to three on the new Super Express.

"A lot of work these days is done by computer over the Internet anyway. If employers in Tokyo could mainstream the concept of telecommuting, be a little more flexible about work hours and weekend leave, their employees and families could live happy, fulfilling lives here, surrounded by nature in a supportive outlying community while earning big city salaries. We could solve a lot of our local social and economic problems this way. Creativity is the key to living well in the 21st century. In whatever ways possible, we need to adopt new ideas and ways of doing things in our everyday lives. If the national government wants to decentralize, so must we in our approach to maintaining our local lifestyle. We must blend tradition with the challenges of modernity in our daily lives and begin creating new cultural possibilities more relevant to our place in time."

Cultural Styles and the Global Ecumene

With the development of modern or even postmodern society in Japan, the lines between tradition and modernity, urban and rural, industrial and agricultural have blurred to the point of being difficult to recognize. One can just

as easily encounter seemingly traditional, agricultural scenes in Tokyo, where rice paddies continue to be carefully cultivated aside baseball stadiums and high tech semiconductor factories, as one can experience modern, industrial urban development among the "rural" countryside of northeast Japan, where Toyota factories sprawl amidst mountain forests and wide expanses of rice paddies far removed from the nation's capital city and metropolitan center. One can find rural products such as *nameko* (mountain-grown mushrooms) from Iwate prefecture along the Ginza, or enjoy skiing in the Japan Alps where the Winter Olympics were held in venues surrounding Nagano City in locations far removed from the nation's urban industrial belt. As one experiences and contemplates contemporary Japan, it quickly becomes clear that concepts such as urban and rural, traditional and modern have come to bear only limited connection to place, instead being abstracted into the realm of ideas people use and manipulate as they create and adapt to their contemporary social milieu.

Representations of both tradition and modernity in Japan have been closely tied to indigenous conceptualizations of *bunka*, a notion that translates as culture and which emerged in the popular discourse of modern Japan during the Taishō era (1912–1926). This idea was employed in part as a means of juxtaposing true culture qua superior, traditional lifestyle to emerging patterns of urban society, such as the increased involvement of women in the working world, that characterized the period (Tamanoi 1998:144). *Bunka*, however, was not simply the intellectual domain of those interested in preserving a real or imagined traditional society. As Tamanoi notes, the term was polysemic, used to represent not only something rural, genuine, and even modern; yet decidedly not urban. It also represented a spiritual element of the person associated with literature and the arts that was conceptually wrapped in the frame of the urban lifestyle (Tamanoi 1998:145).

Indeed, in contemporary Japanese society, the polysemic nature of the term continues to be evident. In rural areas, in particular, *bunka* is a concept often employed in slogans devised to imaginatively represent a town's character to outsiders, and to remind residents that their town is at once technologically progressive and democratic, while retaining traditional values associated with the rural countryside. For example, in southern Tōhoku, municipal governments portray their towns through slogans such as *kagaku to bunka no machi* (Science Culture City) or *akaruku, kakki afurete sumiyasui* (Country Culture Town [that is] Bright, Vivacious, and Easy to Live In). It is common for towns to choose slogans that invoke the *bunka* concept as a means of indexing both progress and tradition.

One agricultural municipality, for example, uses a code term to evoke notions of a polysemic local culture, advertising itself as *kenkō to chōjyu no machi*, *Mahoroba no sato* (the town of health and longevity, the essence of Mahoroba). The term, "Mahoroba," has a particularly poignant association with cultural excellence for Japanese both inside and outside the region. Mahoroba was the name given to the territory now known as Tōhoku (Northeast Japan) by the authors of the *Kojiki* (The Record of Ancient Matters) at the start of the eighth century to recognize the sophisticated and progressive culture that existed in the region. Archaeological artifacts dating back to the Jōmon period (8000–300 B.C.E.), the discovery of a sophisticated irrigation channel system utilized locally prior to the Edo period (1603–1868), the existence of historically significant temples and shrines full of exquisite artwork within the township, and an abundance of local folk traditions that continue to thrive have consistently been used to confirm this point by politicians and others invested in the region's fortunes. The implication of this catchphrase, then, is that this town and its residents embody a superior blend of tradition and culture in the present, a blend it has inherited from the past and which has now been focused on the issues of health and aging—issues central to well-being in Japan's contemporary social milieu.

Of course, the concept of "culture" has not been limited to emic representations of urban and rural Japan. As an analytic category used by anthropologists and those interested in literature and the arts, the idea of "Japanese culture" has both intrigued and centered the intellectual gaze. William Kelly's (1991) review of Japanese anthropology, from its beginnings into the 1990s, indicates this quite clearly. Particularly strong, during the latter part of the century, is an emphasis on the separate, but equally real, social realities that coexist in the Japanese context. Allison's portrayal of corporate after hours entertainment in Japan (1994), Fowler's account of day laborers in a Tokyo suburb (1996), Condry's depiction of Japanese Rap Music (1999), Suzuki's interpretation of contemporary funeral practices (2000), Traphagan's discussions of aging and religion in Tōhoku (2000a, 2004), and Schnell's account of a politically charged *taiko* (traditional Japanese drum) ritual in a central Honshū municipality (1999), exemplify the broad range of such realities. It is important to remember, however, that these perspectives did not emerge spontaneously, but as a product of an intense 50 years or more of postwar ethnographic research.

Following a period, during the early postwar years, of wrestling with general concepts such as "culture" and "personality" within the Japanese context, much of the research in the 1960s and 1970s related to Japan occurred

within the framework of modernization theory (Knight and Traphagan 2003:6). More recently, many cultural and social anthropologists, in particular, have framed the ethnographic study of Japan more squarely within the deconstruction of anthropological theory and increasing complementarities between history, sociology, and anthropology. These anthropologists have pointed out that for Japan, like many others that have been described or framed from the analytic perspective of Euro-American social science, differences between Western and non-Western societies have become increasing fuzzy (Trouillot 2003:9). In the late 1980s, Japanese anthropology concentrated more and more on regional issues, including life in large cities and outlying regions. One result of this emphasis was a move to consider more carefully specific areas of Japanese life within these environments that, at the time, were conceptualized in terms of antipodal oppositions between urban and rural, modern and traditional.

By the 1990s, researchers moved to topics ranging from changing forms of the family and intergenerational relations, to studies of the workplace, education, gender, and patriarchy, which were situated in specific locales within Japanese society (Brown 1996; Kaplan et al. 1998; Kriska 1997; Kondo 1990; McVeigh 1998; Traphagan 2000a). Ethnographies highlighting the plight of women and minorities, cultural tourism, and the anthropology of medicine were also prevalent (Weiner 1994; Fukuoka 2000; Bryman 1995; Raz 1999; Thompson 2004c). Technology use within the home and workplace, town-making, religion, heritage, and festivals were also popular topics addressed by scholars in the field (Hamabata 1990; Clark 1994; Ivy 1995; Long 1999; Mock 1999; Thompson 2004a; Thompson 2004b). This research, when contrasted with earlier work, has produced many significant insights into the nature of Japanese culture since the 1950s, and the processes of change that have been ongoing both within Japan and the community of scholars who study Japanese culture and society (Eades, Gill, and Befu 2000).

A major contribution of Japanese anthropology, resulting from studies dating back to the postwar period, has been that previously documented social characteristics have not disappeared in Japan over the past 50 years, but have instead taken on new forms. Undoubtedly, the particularly turbulent decade of the 1990s, marked by events such as the collapse of both the stock market and land prices (Wood 1993), the devastating Kobe earthquake (Terry 1998), the sarin gas attacks perpetrated by Aum Shinrikyō (Kaplan and Marshall 1996), and the Liberal Democratic Party's declining influence in national politics (Schlesinger 1997), have had a significant impact on this process. But radical discarding of values and social structures of the past has

not been a characteristic of the postwar era; instead, augmentation and improvisation on older themes, the invention of new approaches to social organization, and new ideas about what should be valued by members of society have combined to form the diversity of the current modern moment.

Perhaps what we can take away from much of this research is the point Kelly (1991) makes, that, since the 1950s, an abundance of ethnographic evidence demonstrates that for people throughout Japan, there has been a, "striking diversity of lifestyles and divergence of life chances between the genders, the generations, and the occupations" (Kelly 1991:422). The Japan that emerged from the ethnographic corpus is diverse—a heterogeneous culture and society that, like any other, is characterized by aspects of complexity, conflict, and change, as well as elements of uniformity, conformity, and contradiction.

As Japan has entered the new millennium, it is arguable that there has been an acceleration of diversity within Japanese local culture (Eades, Gill, and Befu 2000). The increase in life expectancy of senior citizens and a decline in the birth rate have added new dimensions to consider at the local level, particularly in the outlying areas of the country (Jolivet 1997; Traphagan and Knight 2003). The modernization processes, including the global diffusion and creolization of cultural forms and meanings (Hannertz 1992) and the globalization of the world economy, among other international factors have played a significant role in this process. Indeed, this diversity is one of the primary themes that emerges from this book, which provides insight into the broad spectrum of values, behaviors, and ideas within a region of Japan that is often viewed, by Japanese, as quintessentially traditional and, thus, particularly representative of a homogeneous Japan with homogeneous, traditional values.

Following the lead of Gupta and Ferguson, who argue that modernization and globalization cause cultures, even within the nation-state, to increasingly become deterritorialized (1997), this book addresses the issue that Japanese culture, while exhibiting general representative characteristics that can be interpreted in terms of culture in the broad sense, also consists of a diversity of separate, smaller societies, each of which might be described as having a derivative culture that both resembles and diverges from these broader themes. Whatever the larger whole that is "Japan" may be, it is itself an expression of these heterogeneous local expressions rather than a homogeneous mass culture that hegemonically shapes, and even dominates, those local realities. The contributors to this book demonstrate how ideas and cultural differences within Japan are being specialized in new and different ways. Each writes from the theoretical standpoint that all associations

of people, place, and culture are not given, natural facts, but are social and historical creations and processes that need explaining in terms of both the extension of the national and global into the realm of the local and the extension of the local into the realm of the national and global. The rapidly accelerating global cultural ecumen—the degree to which the world is becoming socially, economically, and politically integrated and interdependent, yet simultaneously able to maintain such a variety of local cultural forms (Hannertz 1992:217)—makes the study of this process an important part of the anthropological agenda precisely because it is this often implicit mosaic of diverse cultural frames that bound the ethnographic object that then make possible a generalization of the whole.

New Models for Understanding the Regional Culture of State Societies

Central to our aims in this volume is a recognition of the need in sociocultural anthropology, and the social sciences in general, to give serious attention to the regional dynamics of state societies (Abraham and Waldren 1998). We approach this by examining how people use the concepts of "urban and rural," "tradition and modern," "industrial and agricultural," as ideas to explain and define their existence and experience of living in contemporary Japanese society. In the anthropological literature, the juxtaposition of modern and traditional, in particular, has often been used to depict the dichotomy between a hegemonic West and a traditional non-West. The former juxtaposition of rural and urban has been used to describe the relationship between national centers and peripheral areas (Gupta and Ferguson 1999). This book demonstrates, through ethnographic sketches that portray the lives of the inhabitants of Northeast Japan, why these dichotomies are no longer relevant as analytic categories in the Japanese context, while continuing to remain important in emic frames of thought and central features of how Japanese conceptualize themselves and their nation (Creighton 1997).

The northern part of Japan's main island of Honshū, known as Tōhoku, is a region where the sociocultural dynamics of local lifestyle, as well as the attitudes and self-perceptions of local residents, are still not thoroughly documented or understood in sufficient detail, even while some important ethnographic research has been conducted in the region (see Shimpō 1976; Brown 1979; Bailey 1991; Traphagan 2000b; Rosenberger 2001). This book addresses this lacuna in two significant ways. First, we argue that modern Japanese society, featuring interwoven strands of traditional, modern, and

global influences evident throughout the country, is minimizing the differences that exist between country life and city life, rendering the rural–urban dichotomy prevalent in so much postwar, rural ethnography, obsolete (Dore 1978).

Second, we move away from the idea of culture simply as an objectified or reified thing that people engage in as a process of intersubjective construction of cultural realities. Instead, we view culture not only as an intersubjective process, but also as a process through which people adopt different versions of their culture to achieve specific aims. Rather than culture, per se, we are interested in the notion of cultural styles as an alternative model of thinking about the manner in which people represent their world and use the representations they create. By focusing on the uses of tradition and modernity, we demonstrate how life in the Tōhoku region, as in Tokyo, is simultaneously traditional, modern, Western and Japanese, local and global. Each author considers how these ideas are used by Japanese in regional centers and small towns, and have emerged in relationship to influences from the past.

The Tōhoku Region

The Tōhoku (Northeast) region is composed of six prefectures—Aomori, Akita, Fukushima, Iwate, Miyagi, and Yamagata—which collectively constitute the northeastern quadrant of Japan's main island of Honshū. As Japan's ruling families began to emerge out of central Honshū during the Yayoi period (200 B.C.E.–A.D. 250), the Tōhoku region proved to be one of the most difficult territories to pull into the fold. Historically, the Yamato state (350–709), the earliest Japanese government on record, which sent representatives from its stronghold in Nara (central southwest Honshū) up the interior river valleys of north central Honshū and out to the northernmost points of the Japan Sea coast, was the first to introduce mainstream Japanese culture to the Tōhoku region, or Mutsu as it was known at that time (Bailey 1991; Lu 1974).[1]

Even before Yamato expansion northward during the mid–second century, towns and villages existed in the Tsugaru district (Aomori Prefecture), the Hachinohe area (Akita Prefecture), the Sendai Plain (Miyagi and Fukushima Prefectures) and in the Kitakami flats (Iwate Prefecture). Farmland was fertile, and gold, silver, and other valuable minerals were mined in the mountains. Excellent land routes connected inland cities with coastal communities on the eastern, northern, and western coasts. From the northern and western shores, trade with the mainland was frequent. For both

political and economic reasons, the Yamato state was anxious to gain control of northeast Honshū, and embarked on a takeover campaign that lasted several generations (Brown 1979:61–63).

Popular images of the Tōhoku region are stark. From the second to seventh centuries, it was considered a dangerous frontier land that by the end of the Nara period (784) was still not firmly under Imperial control. The inhabitants of the region consisted of political refuges, pioneer settlers, and religious ascetics from central Honshū, some of whom intermingled with indigenous peoples who inhabited the area. The conflicting interests of these groups created a climate of perpetual upheaval only exacerbated by the attempt of the Imperial state to control the region.

During the Heian period (794–1185), the volatility of Mutsu necessitated that the Imperial state's propaganda tactics be shifted into full swing. The inhabitants of the region were classified as Emishi: primitive, barbaric, "hairy people." They were thought to be genetically and culturally related to the Ainu of Ezo Island (Hokkaido), and generally regarded as less than human. Artistic renditions of Emishi, against whom the Yamato state fought many bloody battles, portray them with the physical features of *oni* (demons), *yōkai* (ghosts), and *shiryō* (vengeful spirits). These evil images, superimposed from Japanese mythology and Chinese folklore, were used to dehumanize Mutsu inhabitants and to justify Imperial hegemony over of the territory despite the heterogeneity of the population (Kuji 2002; Lu 1974:11). A subtle but persistent prejudice continues to influence mainstream perceptions of the Tōhoku people, who are regarded as backward, unrefined, and unsophisticated.

History credits Sakanoue-no-Tamuramarō for subjugating the Emishi (and the Ezo [island] people to whom they are said to be related) around the year 797 (Brown 1979:64; Lu 1974:12). However, Mutsu inhabitants weren't easily controlled, and resistance to Imperial rule continued for generations. As the region's native inhabitants were slowly pushed northward, the culture of central Japan came to dominate all of Honshū. By late Heian times (12th century), Tōhoku, as a whole, had begun to be absorbed into the Imperial sphere of influence, but was still considered untamed, exotic, and remote. As Bailey explains, "The establishment of the Fujiwara stronghold at Hiraizumi in [what is now] southern Iwate and the flowering of [mainstream] culture there added romance to the mystery, particularly as legends surrounding the last days of the Minamoto hero, Yoshitsune, took root" (Bailey 1991:37).[2]

From the middle ages to as late as the 19th century, the Tōhoku region served as both a repository of Japan's rich cultural heritage and a

refuge for those defeated in battle or for political, religious, or economic reasons sought to escape the constraints of mainstream society. But as the central government gained control of the territory, it was carved up into a number of smaller fiefdoms controlled by a local *daimyo* (feudal lord), some more influential than others. Until the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the northern part of the Kitakami Valley (Iwate prefecture) was ruled by the Nambu *han* (clan). Because the Nambu lords were descendants of the Sewa Genji line of Minamoto—ancestors of Emperor Seiwa, they had close ties to the centers of power in Kyoto and Kamakura despite their remote locale. This made the Nambu fiefdom a political and economic center in the region, focused on the city of Morioka at the foot of Mt. Iwate, the highest volcanic mountain in northeast Honshū.

The southern part of the Kitakami Valley was controlled by the Date *han*, made famous by Date Masamune, ally of Shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi in the 1580s, renowned warrior, diplomat,[3] and protector of artists and scholars. Date lords, descended from the Fujiwara family also, but were more closely aligned with the shogunate than to the Imperial family. The Date *han* anchored their economic and political power firmly in the city of Sendai in what is now Miyagi Prefecture. When Masamune died in 1636, his fief was the largest one north of Edo (Tokyo). Due in part to their differing loyalties, the Date and Nambu fiefs were in competition for regional power, land, and rice (used to pay taxes in addition to being a staple food). Coupled with intermittent rebellions perpetrated by remaining native peoples, refugees, and pioneer settlers in the region, skirmishes among these groups and between the ruling *han* lasted well into the 19th century. Despite the instability, Date and Nambu lords controlled their fiefs without serious challenge until the end of the Tokugawa period in 1868 (Bailey 1991:37–39; Papinot 1972:71, 432).

From a Tokyo point of view, the Tōhoku region has remained remote, rural, and backward for much of the 20th century as it has fulfilled for Japan the valuable service of preserving an important dimension of the nation's cultural and historic past. Until after World War II, Tōhoku's cold, snowy winters, rugged interior terrain, and lack of efficient transportation infrastructure made major socioeconomic development initiatives in the region difficult to contemplate. But in the postwar period this slowly changed.

Today, each Tōhoku prefecture has one large city that comprises its capital and contains prefecture wide institutions such as national and prefectural universities, corporate headquarters, and medical centers. In general, these are small cities, such as Morioka, the capital of Iwate with

approximately 230,000 people and Akita City, which has a population of roughly 300,000. Aomori City has a population of 297,000, Yamagata City is about 250,000 in size. Fukushima City ranks close to these cities with 289,000. Sendai, the capital of Miyagi Prefecture, is by far the largest with a population of 987,000, and, thus, represents not only the economic and educational center for Miyagi Prefecture, but for the entire Tōhoku region (Asahi Shimbun 2002:260).

All of these cities are historically important in that they are the locations of castles that housed the main families of the feudal domains that dominated the region prior to Japan's modern period marked by the Meiji Restoration. The borders between the prefectures do not correspond neatly to the domain borders of the past, but one can still find cultural variations that are connected to the region's history. For example, indigenous religious rituals and performance arts in the Tōhoku exhibit Date, Nambu, and other influences from mainstream culture brought to the Northeast from central Japan during earlier centuries (Tsubohari 1999). Local dialects vary considerably from one prefecture to another and even within prefectures (Hirayama 1968). To this day, the dialect in the Morioka area of Iwate is different form that of the southern part of the prefecture, which during feudal times was connected to the Date, rather than the Nambu, domain (Morishita 1983).

Culturally, the Tōhoku region, conceptualized by Japanese mainstream society as the nation's repository of traditional lifeways, plays second fiddle to none. The *onsen* (hot spring bath) resorts that permeate the region are highly regarded throughout Japan. Tono, a city located in eastern central Iwate is widely regarded as the folklore capital of Japan (Yanagida 1975). In Fukushima, the frontier castle town of Aizu Wakamatsu, and Hongō, a three-hundred-year-old pottery village, are also well-known. The beautiful Matsushima coastline in Miyagi and the Jōmon period ruins of a residential fortification dating back four thousand years at Sannai Maruyama in Aomori are visited by thousands of domestic and international tourists each year. Akita's four-hundred-year-old *sugi* (chryptomaria) forests, feudal period samurai residential district in Kakunodake, and Kurokawa Noh in Yamagata are also but a few of the Tōhoku region's respected historic resources. All six Tōhoku prefectures are known far and wide as production centers for several varieties of Japan's best tasting rice. Politically and economically, however, the Tōhoku, like other geographical areas located away from the nation's capital, continues to given up much to Tokyo and other urban centers in central Japan, even since the end of World War II.

During a majority of the postwar period, Japan's political authority, economic might, a large percentage of its population and major conduits to the global community have been situated in Tokyo or within the Tokyo–Osaka industrial corridor that stretches from the nation's capital 500 miles southwest (OEDC 1996:11). As a result, Tōhoku and other outlying regions have made great sacrifices which have benefited central Japan greatly while receiving little in return.

The nation's basic tax structure demonstrates clearly the political-economic hierarchy that enables urban areas to prosper at the expense of regions located outside the Tokyo–Osaka corridor. Approximately 70 percent of all taxes in Japan are collected from the wealthiest regions of the country where the nation's economic resources are concentrated. Taxes collected from outlying areas account for only 30 percent of the total (Hashimoto 1996:15). In a nutshell, tax revenues are controlled by national ministry bureaucrats and political parties. At the local level, a fixed percentage of revenue collected by the national government is returned in the form of subsidies and grants to communities that need them. These monies are called, *chihō kōfuzei*, or provincial support funds because this system is designed to redistribute the wealth of the nation concentrated in the *chūō* (nation's center) to the prefectures, cities, and towns in regions located in the periphery such as the Tōhoku, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Okinawa that require the greatest amount of supplementary funding.

Annually, a basic level of provincial support funding, based on population figures, is automatically dispersed to all eligible prefectures and municipalities in the nation. The relationship between population figures in Japanese regional municipalities and the national subsidies these communities are allotted to pay for basic city services through their municipal operating budgets is well-documented (Thompson 2003a:95). Simply stated, the amount of subsidy funding is determined by subtracting expected income from the estimated income needed to support public facilities and services. Part of expected income includes funding based on population figures. A census is conducted every five years to determine what minimum subsidies will be. To receive any subsidies above the minimum, prefectural and municipal bureaucrats must travel to Tokyo and meet with ministry officials to make proper application (Hashimoto 1996; Thompson 2003a:95).

Competition is fierce. Prefectures and municipalities lobby hard for special subsidies, often spending large sums of money and employing sophisticated political and public relations techniques to win maximum allowable amounts. For this reason, leaders of regional governments spend a great deal of time in Tokyo at ministry offices. Thus, taxes, politics, and

local and regional economies are inextricably interconnected (Thompson 2003a:98–102).

Since the 1950s, at least one-third of Japan's population has been concentrated in areas surrounding Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya, respectively, the nation's three largest urban areas. As recently as 1996, Tokyo and the surrounding Kanto Plains Region accounted for 31 percent of the national gross domestic product (GDP) while the Kinki (Osaka) and Chubu (Nagoya) regions combined for 24 percent. Of the GDP produced by Japan's other four territorial areas, the Tōhoku accounted for a mere 6.5 percent, one of the smallest single regional contributions. During the same year, the Kanto, Kinki, and Chubu regions (basically a geographical area encompassing Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya) combined for 47 percent of the nation's total employment and half of all service sector employment in Japan (OEDC 1996:12).

During the postwar period, population figures have played a big role in shaping local expressions of community life particularly in depopulated farming communities with few nonagricultural local industries such as those prevalent in Tōhoku by limiting the financial capabilities of municipal bureaucrats to implement local services that support the quality of their constituents' lives. Prefectures and municipalities located in the most densely populated industrial areas of central Japan have had more money to spend at the local level than their counterparts in the less populated periphery. As indicated by the former mayor at the beginning of the chapter, particularly in smaller Tōhoku towns, designing scenarios that give local residents better access to the resources in the nation's center has become a major concern for bureaucrats situated in the periphery (Thompson 2001).

Until the late 1980s, Japan's state policy initiatives were clearly aimed at utilizing regional resources to strengthen national centers. Historically, the Tōhoku and other regions located away from the benefits of Tokyo's political and economic sphere of influence have supplied Japan's urban areas with natural resources, labor and food (particularly rice). But during Japan's income doubling decade spanning the mid–1950s into the 1960s, newly available jobs in city factories also drew large numbers of men and women away from the regions including the Tōhoku, depopulating their hometowns and paving the way for the economic hardships to come (Thompson 2003b).

Motivated by changing demographics and agricultural market conditions, the state initiated rationalization initiatives starting in 1965—lasting into the late 1970s—encouraging farmers to mechanize, hoping to make agriculture more efficient. However, this only led to overproduction which

resulted in nationally mandated restrictions on *gentan* (crop size) and further directives to add fruits and vegetables to the *tensaku* (crop rotation) in an attempt to help farmers recuperate their lost income through diversification. Instead of streamlining Japanese agriculture, these policies trapped older farmers on their farms and forced their children to commit to jobs in cities far away for financial security. This worsened already existing social problems such as the need for *dekasegi* (seasonal employment by family members away from home), the difficulty of finiding *atotsugi* (successors), and the *hanayome mondai* (bride problem)—the lack of eligible young women willing to marry and build lives with young men residing in rural Japan (Bailey 1991:7).

Interestingly, as early as the 1970s, national structural reforms designed to give regional areas more political authority and economic autonomy were already underway. The publication of *Nippon rettō kaizō ron* (Proposal for remodeling Japan), by Tanaka Kakuei, Japan's Prime Minister (from July 1972 to December 1974) proposed a program of decentralizing government and industries by increasing transportation networks designed to make all areas of Japan more accessible to economic development (Robertson 1991:26–28). But, not until 1983 did the state actually begin implementing industrial decentralization programs such as the "technopolis strategy," implemented to encourage specific growth sectors such as the electronics industry to build new plants in regions outside the Tokyo–Osaka corridor.

As a result of Tanaka Administration policies, each Tōhoku prefecture gained a new production plant during the 1980s, which produced a limited but significant number of new jobs (OECD 1996:20). Meanwhile in the agricultural sector, the government urged Tōhoku farmers to get involved in the service sector by funding the construction of resorts, while simultaneously urging them to leave farming all together. In 1988, Tōhoku gained four more state-funded laboratory and information processing facilities designed to support regional industrial centers; but not soon enough. The population in the six northeastern prefectures of Honshū continued to decline.

In 1989, Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru initiated an unprecedented program called the *Furusato Sōsei Undō* (Movement to create hometown identity) consisting of block grants of ¥100,000 given to every town and village in rural areas to promote *furusato zukuri* (hometown-making). As a participant in *furusato zukuri*, each local municipality could use their grant in what ever capacity they saw fit—to create local jobs, address issues related to health care for the aging, or to fund strategies that might draw

young people back. While widely popularized in the mainstream media, like other state initiated development ideas, this movement did little to reverse Tōhoku's population slide. In effect, the *Furusato Sōsei Undō* was an acknowledgment by the state that it no longer knew how to address issues that had become endemic to regional Japan. In the end, government mandated-agricultural restrictions perpetuated part-time farming by limiting the earning potential of middle-aged farmers, and deterred a generation of their children, who had left the farms for employment elsewhere, from ever coming back.

Still, with no clear plan to repopulate and reinvigorate Japan's periphery, in 1995, the national government passed the Decentralization Promotion Law, designed to pass on to regional governments the responsibility of developing localized strategies to solve their problems. More than ever, national-level bureaucrats encouraged independent local attempts to fund initiatives designed to increase the local tax base. However, the Decentralization Promotion Law, conceived during Japan's bull market years in the late 1980s and early 1990s, was enacted just as Japan's bubble economy began to collapse. The ensuing failure of the stock market and the collapse of land prices caused the national government to close their purse strings, which in effect undermined the plan.

The political economy of the Tōhoku region has had a major influence on shaping local life circumstances. However, and most important, while the state's multiple (and at times contradictory) policy changes and decentralization initiatives have not solved the socioeconomic troubles that have plagued Japan's periphery, attempts to address the problem have contributed significantly toward minimizing urban–rural differences. By freeing Tōhoku and other outlying regions to develop independently, prefectures and their municipalities have been empowered to create unprecedented domestic and international geo–political, economic, and cultural ties independent of Tokyo (Thompson 2001).

One city that stands out is Sendai, which is effectively the metropolitan center for the entire region. With a population slightly under one million, it is several times larger than the other major cities in Tōhoku. Sendai is home to one of the top universities in Japan, Tōhoku University, and has an international airport. Sendai has been mentioned as a possible site for relocation of the national capital from Tokyo. Sendai is also important because it is one of the major destinations for intra-Tōhoku migrants. A quantitative analysis of demographic trends in *Miyagi* in comparison to other Tōhoku prefectures reveals some interesting characteristics of the socioeconomic variables that exist within the region.

Figure 1.1 shows the age distributions for three Tōhoku prefectures, Iwate, Miyagi, and Akita as of 2000. By comparison to the other two, Miygai, in which Sendai is located, shows a much higher proportion of people in their twenties and thirties. As of 2000, in Miyagi, 14.49 percent of the population was between 20 and 29 and 12.68 percent was between 30 and 39. In contrast, in Akita, for example, these proportions were 10.15 percent and 10.3 percent, respectively. Interestingly, this pattern inverts from the age of 40, when Akita and Iwate show higher proportions of people in those age groups. Indeed, Akita has roughly the same proportion of 60- to 69-year-olds (14.87%) as Miyagi has 20- to 29-year-olds. These figures are a clear indication of the migration pattern common in rural Japan, in which following graduation from high school, people move to large metropolitan areas for education and work (Traphagan 2000b).

While Sendai is a major drain on rural populations in Tōhoku, it is important to also recognize that Tokyo has a similar effect for the entire country, which large numbers of temporary and permanent migrants drawn from the countryside. During the 1970s and 1980s there was a continual outflow of population from the prefectures in the Tōhoku region, a pattern appearing to be declining in the 1990s. However, migration data for the late 1990s and early 2000s shows a return to the pattern of annual net loss in migrants for the prefectures in the region, with an average loss of 3,538 people per prefecture in 2001 (Traphagan 2004a).
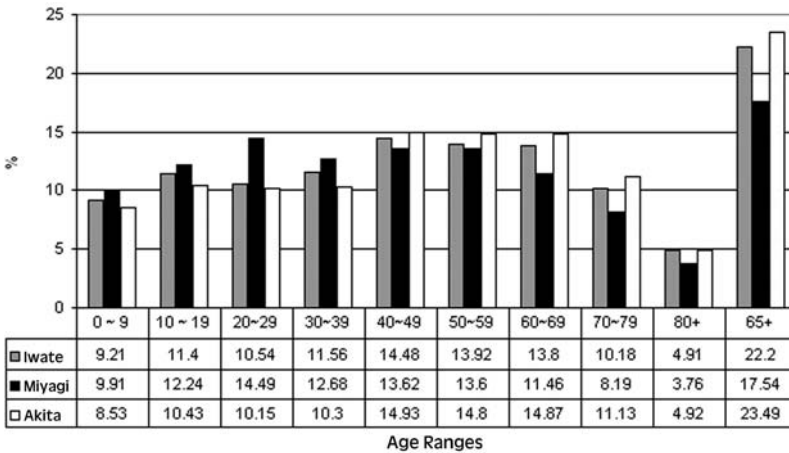
	0 ~ 9	10 ~ 19	20~29	30~39	40~49	50~59	60~69	70~79	80+	65+
Iwate	9.21	11.4	10.54	11.56	14.48	13.92	13.8	10.18	4.91	22.2
Miyagi	9.91	12.24	14.49	12.68	13.62	13.6	11.46	8.19	3.76	17.54
Akita	8.53	10.43	10.15	10.3	14.93	14.8	14.87	11.13	4.92	23.49

Age Ranges

Fig. 1.1. Age Distributions for Iwate, Miyagi, and Akita Prefectures (2000).

If we return to figure 1.1, another feature of the population distribution of the region as a whole is its general agedness. As of 2000, almost 24 percent of the population in Akita and slightly over 22 percent of the population in Iwate were over the age of 65. And Miyagi, with the youngest population in the region, still had over 17 percent of its population over 65. At the microlevel, the proportions of elderly in local municipalities is even more extreme. Some small towns, such as one municipality in Akita, have experienced steady population decline for decades. For example, in one town in Akita Prefecture from 1975 to 1995, the population dropped from 10,158 to 8,885. This decline was accompanied by an increase in the proportion of elderly from 10 percent to 21 percent over the same period. Figures such as these have a detrimental impact upon local tax revenues. It is not uncommon to find towns with more than 25 percent of the population over 65. One township in Akita projects an over-65 population of 47 percent by 2020 (Traphagan 2004b; Akita-ken nōgyō kyōdō kumiai chūō kai 1995:5). The lack of working aged residents drawing full-time salaries in a township with such a high proportion of senior residents only compounds the economic effects of depopulation on the local tax base. The increasing proportion of senior citizens in the Tōhoku has broader conceptual ramifications as well.

As Traphagan argues (2000a, 2003), the aged characteristic of the population in Tōhoku is not simply a matter of demography. Qualitatively, the juxtaposition of the young and old within the socioeconomic context is routinely interpreted culturally by Japanese as a juxtaposition of the modern and traditional. Older people often describe themselves, and are described by others, as *furui* or obsolete and outdated. The implications of this label rests in the idea that the elderly, particularly the oldest, were educated in a prewar society whose values and ideas were radically different from those of contemporary Japan. Thus, they have difficulties understanding the modern world and integrating themselves into it. These notions are exacerbated by differences in dialect—the old often use local dialects that the young, who are taught standard Japanese in school, have difficulties understanding. The gap between broadly defined young and old generations is sufficient enough that people will sometimes say that true understanding between them is almost impossible.

In essence, concepts of tradition and modernity are embodied in older and younger individuals. Drawing on the interpretations of Japanese living in Tōhoku, one can view this as being as though there are two distinct *habiti* coexisting in the same physical space—embodied by both the young and the old. These *habiti*—the embodied cognitive structures that motivate and limit the range of possible behaviors (Bourdieu 1977)—are

themselves structured in terms of conceptualizations of modernity and tradition. The *habitus* of the younger generation is associated with modernity, the embodiment of which is expressed in hair styles, clothing styles, speech patterns, and expectations about life taken on through processes of socialization. These are perceived as radically different from those that existed prior to the end of World War II. The *habitus* of the old is associated with tradition, the embodiment of which is expressed in ideas that are sometimes longed for nostalgically: clothing styles, speech patterns, and expectations about life that reflect the prewar social milieu.

In order to understand the manner in which concepts of tradition and modernity are used in Tōhoku and in other parts of Japan, it is necessary to keep in mind notions about a deep generational divide that is evident in contemporary Japanese interpretations of their own social context—particularly in rural areas. Japanese construct tradition and modernity along numerous, often conflicting, lines, but the division between prewar and postwar education and the rise of postwar democratization and socioeconomic development is one of the most important dividing lines between tradition and modernity. Japanese employ these when interpreting the nature of their society and processes of social change.

Since April of 2002, the immediacy of social change and the juxtaposition of tradition and modernity has, for Tōhoku residents, intensified from a geo–political standpoint, due to the promulgation of the Shichōson Gappei Tokurei Hō (The Special Provisions Law for Amalgamating Cities, Towns, and Villages) by the state. By April 1 of Heisei 17 (2005), all Japanese municipalities with populations of 30 thousand or less must amalgamate into neighboring municipalities increasing local population figures to this level or face further cuts to state subsidies necessary for maintaining municipal operating budgets already depleted to minimum levels (Odashima 2002; Tōwa-chō Kikaku Zaiseika 2002). Many local residents fear that this amalgamation law, the second major one of the postwar period, will rob them of their local identities and cultural heritage as residential neighborhoods become urbanized and homogenized. Pressures such as this compose the contemporary political–economic context in which tradition and modernity is negotiated in the Tōhoku region.

General Content of the Book

Understanding the regional dynamics of state societies is one of the most pressing issues for anthropology in the rapidly accelerating "global cultural ecumen" (Hannertz 1992:217). As a rare examination of this process in

a non-Western advanced industrial society, this book is particularly significant. Contributions to the volume are focused on Japan's Tōhoku region, and are based on each author's extensive contact with the local contexts they describe. All chapters represent topics common to the Tōhoku lifestyle, although the themes explored in the book are applicable to many parts of Japan.

The authors of chapters 2 and 3 focus on social change in the region by examining shifting demographic and agricultural patterns that have changed the physical, technological, and organizational landscape of the Japanese countryside. In chapter 2, John Mock examines the social impact of the rural–urban population shift from the vantage point of Akita Prefecture. Arguing that over the past century and a half, this shift has created one of the most urbanized societies in the world, he compares the impact of this phenomenon in five Akita townships. Mock reveals patterns of depopulation, effects of depopulation, and reasons for depopulation, all of which suggest that the cultural styles chosen by local residents to define their identities and lifeways may be more important in explaining depopulation in Akita than mere economic factors alone.

In chapter 3, William Kelly examines how three outstanding features of modern Japanese agriculture enhanced equity and efficiency in farming. He discusses the growing preponderance of part-time agricultural occupations that both shape, and are shaped by, the play of domestic and international forces in Tōhoku Japan. Kelly concludes with an explanation of why a rural Japan of rice farmers no longer exists, revealing the culturally constructed nature of tradition and modernity in the Tōhoku region.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide a basis for understanding contexts of social change in the Tōhoku region. Part II of the book turns from general discussion to specific case studies aimed at articulating the sociocultural factors identified by Kelly that render the urban–rural dichotomy outmoded for understanding the contemporary experience of Tōhoku Japanese. Each contribution illuminates the multidimensional dynamics that make the Tōhoku lifestyle simultaneously traditional and modern, Western and Japanese, and local and global. The ethnographic accounts contained within each chapter in Part II, which we discuss in detail in the introduction to that section, demonstrate how and why Tōhoku residents direct their lives by choosing from among the many cultural styles now available to them.

Each chapter in this book represents what has been described as a new theme in the recent anthropology of Japanese regional society—ethnographies of local life at the crossroads of the mutual effects of agrarian change and industrialization in regional development (see Kelly 1991). By providing dense ethnographic descriptions of the complex and fascinating interplay

between tradition, modernity, and globalization in the lives of Tōhoku residents, this book contributes to a better understanding of regionally specific expressions of life in contemporary Japan. In particular, one can readily see the complexity and diversity of life and lifestyles among the people who live in a region of Japan often presented as homogeneous in the expression of both modern and traditional cultures.

This book aims at breaking new theoretical ground by considering the different ways in which people put on styles of culture, such as urban–sophisticate versus rural–down-to-earth, to manipulate and negotiate interactions with others. Rather than considering what constitutes rural or urban, traditional or modern, local, national, or global Japan, this book explores how people construct these ideas and use them to shape identities that are both individual and collective. From a more general theoretical perspective, this book can be useful to the study of contemporary Japanese society because it points out the considerable diversity in the ways lifestyles are culturally constructed. Japanese anthropology during the postwar period has made tremendous progress in demonstrating the multiple, often conflicting dimensions of the Japanese lifestyle. In a new millennium, this book shows how local yet global life in Japan really is.

Notes

1. The name "Mutsu" predates "Mahoroba," the eighth century name used to describe the Tōhoku region as recorded in the *Kojiki* (*The Record of Ancient Matters*), completed in 712. Like many ancient territories, the Tōhoku has been referred to by multiple names throughout its history. During the Taika reform in 646, the name Mutsu, meaning "land of the interior," was assigned to the territory that encompassed the northeastern part of Honshū. This region was also known by its Chinese name, Oshū meaning, "interior province." Prior to the fifth century, the same territory was called Michinoku, or simply Michi. The name Mutsu is derived from an alternative reading of the Chinese character compound used to graph Michinoku (Papinot 1972:415). Today the term "Michinoku" is still used by residents of Northeast Japan to evoke a sense of nostalgia for the rich heritage of cultural sophistication and originality associated with the Tōhoku region.

2. According to ledgend, Yoshitsune did not die in Koromogawa, located near Hiraizumi in present day Iwate Prefecture. Instead, one theory posits that he was able to escape to the island of Ezo (Hokkaido). Another theory, based on the similarity of the Japanese pronunciation for the Chinese characters used in the name Minamoto Yoshitsune to Gen Gikyō (a possible variation of the name Gengis Kahan), some scholars speculate that Yoshitsune emigrated to the mainland where he became the famous Mongolian ruler (Papinot 1972:384).

3. Late in the 14th century, Date Masamune went on an expidition to Korea with Asano Nagamasa, brother-in-law of Hideyoshi. (He is also known for helping to get Franciscan Father F. Luis Sotelo released from prison in 1613 as Shogun Tokugawa Hidetada began persecuting Christians.) Following this incident, Date sent Hasekura Tsunenaga, one of his retainers with Sotelo on a mission to Spain and Rome—to meet the Pope, thus earning himself the reputation as a diplomat (Papinot 1972:71).

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