

No. 2

Research on the Life Improvement Programme
in Rural Japan (LIP-RuJ)
and the Prospects
for Japan's Rural Development Cooperation

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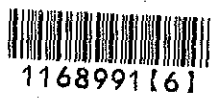
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FOREWORD

In the agricultural and rural development of developing countries, the need for rural livelihood improvement that contributes to poverty alleviation and to social and gender considerations is increasing year by year.

On the other hand, projects for improvement of living conditions that were practiced in the rural areas of Japan after World War II attained great results in improving living skills while contributing to the advancement of the position of rural women. Not a few materials and persons that were used and engaged in these activities for the improvement of living conditions (particularly in the 25 years after the war) still have good advantage in the agricultural and rural development of developing countries. These materials and persons are expected to be utilized not only at the cooperation sites of JICA experts or for the technical training of overseas participants programs but also for pre-dispatch training of the experts.

However, these materials are lost with the passage of time. And skills and kuowhow for extension and experience are starting to disappear as the persons engaged in extension activities such as livelihood improvement extension workers retire.

For this reason, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has been collecting and sorting these materials before they are lost and compiling them into usable materials while systematizing the experiences of activities for the improvement of living conditions in post-war Japan in an effort to contribute to the technical cooperation in the field of rural livelihood improvement dissemination by consigning the task to the Association for International Cooperation of Agriculture and Forestry.

This report is a compilation of the results of these reviews and consists of three volumes, Report, Outline of the Interview Report and Outline of the Review Session.

It is our hope that this report will be utilized extensively by the parties concerned.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the members of the review committee including Mr. Hitoshi Sato, Chief Researcher at the Economic Cooperation Research Section of the Institute of Developing Economies at Japan External Trade Organization, the members of the working group, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the people that attended the review session and reported and the many people who took part in the field study interview for their cooperation.

March 2002

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**I. Life Improvement Programme in Post-War
Rural Japan (LIP-RuJ) and Rural
Development in Developing Countries**

1. Life improvement programme in rural Japan as a successful example of rural development

Japan is the only major aid giving country that has a history of “having received aid” and “having struggled as a developing country.”¹ The fundamental concern of this study lies in how Japan can contribute as an aid donor to the developing countries, particularly towards the improvement of rural life with this unique experience of “having been a developing country.”

Among the experience of development Japan has gone through, most amazing is the fact that the country succeeded in accelerating her economic development in the 1960s and eventually enabled many of the people to enjoy its economic benefits. This Japanese Miracle became possible only after struggling period of 20 years that started with the end of World War II in 1945 while the nation was in a state of starvation and extreme poverty. What path did Japan follow in this 20-year period to accomplish her “escape from poverty”?

We believe that it is incorrect to explain this “Japanese miracle” simply through the success of a macro-economic policy. We have witnessed many instances where a country succeeded in rapid economic development over the past 20 years in east Asian to explain the difference between Japan and East Asian experiences but such development did not automatically lead to the eradication of poverty. Then what is the key?

Our hypothesis is that the process of economic and social development in post-war Japan was not possible without the scheme of “social development,” particularly through the accumulation of various rural life improvements in rural areas. And the keyword for social development in rural areas of Japan at that time was “life improvement.” (Seikatsu-Kaizen).

The national goals immediately after the war consisted of securing of food, improving sanitary conditions and building a “democratic state” to replace the collapsed militarist system. We may say that the concerted efforts by the entire population towards these goals from the central government to local governments (prefectural administrations) and rural communities came to fruition in the form of rapid economic growth. Of course, we should admit the process was accompanied by side effects such as the swelling of urban population, pollution, environmental destruction and rural depopulation. However, it is an obvious fact that the common people of Japan succeeded in escaping from poverty and gained access to a life in which they can live without worrying about food, clothing and shelter.

Then what kind of lesson can the Japanese experience offer to today’s site of development aid that has set its goal on “eradication of poverty” but has been unsuccessful in producing the expected results? It is, of course, far-fetched to think that the experience in Japan with a different historical

¹ In terms of mere economic assistance, the post-World War II Marshall Plan was the aid offered from the U.S. to the European countries. However, it was a reconstruction fund and therefore treated as a different form of aid from development aid.

background and culture can be applied to the present rural development in developing countries. It is true that, despite the economic devastation, Japan in those days had obvious advantages over today's developing countries such as human resources, administrative skills, history of modernization up to that time, and the degree of technical disparity with the then developed countries. However, Japan at that time and present day developing countries also have many points in common. In particular, the sudden assignment of "democratization of rural areas and farmers," under the instruction of GHQ, which had no relevance to Japan's social situation, as well as the introduction of a system called "Rural Life Improvement Extension Service," also under the instruction of GHQ, which had no relevance to Japan's agricultural administration, were events having extremely similar structure to "rural development through intervention of an outsider" that is connected with the present day international cooperation (some call this "Induced Development"). Moreover, Japan would not have been able to survive had it not been for emergency food imports and commodity assistance such as clothing and milk from overseas, especially during the first several years after the war. At the time, Japan was receiving aid from foreign NGOs, UN organizations such as UNICEF and the World Bank.² Recognizing that these matters should reveal the meaning of reflecting on the experience of rural development in "Japan as a once aid-receiving country," the experience of "rural life improvement" should offer many hints for "rural development" which is being attempted in various ways in the developing countries of today.

2. Import of Extension Program and Its Outline

(1) Starting from below zero position

The landscape of Japan in the summer of 1945 when she accepted defeat in war consisted of rural areas with declined productivity as a result of not having been able to secure a sufficient labor force to maintain the farms after the men were called to army and urban areas whose industrial production capacity and social infrastructure had been destroyed by the repeated air raids and the atomic bombings during the last days of the war. And the masses of people tormented by poverty and starvation were all that was left on that land.

Japan in those days was faced with almost the entire array of problems faced by many of the developing countries today such as food shortage, malnutrition, health deterioration and poor sanitary conditions in addition to the sense of humiliation the people were feeling from being defeated in war and the occupation.

One after another, demobilized soldiers and repatriates were returning from the battlefronts and former colonies to this shattered country. The population increased rapidly as the post-war marriage boom was added on top of all this. Meanwhile, the increase in agricultural production was slow owing to the lack of agricultural implements, agricultural machinery and fertilizers. Also aggravated by unseasonable weather, a serious food shortage hit the whole

² Aside from this, there was the GARIOA (Government Appropriation for Relief in Occupied Areas) Fund which was mainly used for food import and the EROA Fund (Economic Rehabilitation in Occupied Area) which was mainly used for industrial machinery. However, these aids were not donated and had to be repaid afterwards. (Kishi, Yasuhiko; "Postwar History of Food and Agriculture," p.26)

country in 1945 and 1946. The food shortage was extremely severe with many dying of starvation.³ The infant mortality rate at the time was very high in both urban and rural areas. Making matters worse, many were victimized by the typhoons that came every summer for the first ten years or so after the war owing to neglect of investment in flood control and disaster prevention. In addition, epidemic of infection diseases brought over from tropical regions by repatriates claimed many lives.

(2) Rural democratization as an imposed ideal

Amid these circumstances, Japan came under the occupation of the Allied Forces led by the U.S. and started off the seven-years of General Headquarters of the Allied Forces' (GHQ) reigning as the authority above the Japanese government. The purpose of the American occupation policy was to convert Japan in such a way that she would not become a threat to the U.S. in the future, and the means for attaining this goal was to democratize the Japanese society by modeling it after the U.S. Toward this objective, a series of policies for the democratization of the Japanese society were set out one after another including constitutional amendment, disbanding of the military, disarmament, enfranchisement of women, dissolution of financial combine (Zaibatsu), and education reform. However, GHQ thought that this wave of democratization had to reach the rural areas where 70% of the population lived at that time for Japan to become a truly democratic society. Thus the three major reforms were implemented in rapid succession in post-war rural areas consisting of "agricultural land reform," "establishment of agricultural cooperatives,"⁴ and "commencement of agricultural improvement and extension programs".

In response to the enforcement of the Agricultural Improvement Promotion Law (1948), prefectural governments created agricultural improvement extension offices and allocated two types of extension workers, i.e. agricultural extension workers (mainly men, in charge of offering guidance on agricultural techniques and agricultural production) and livelihood extension workers (all women, in charge of improvement of rural life). Hiring of extension workers and extension activities actually started in April 1949. And it was this newly created group of female livelihood extension workers that played a central role in the post-war rural life improvement activities.

³ Rice was rationed but the amount of rationed rice was short of the required amount and its delivery was often delayed or cancelled. "Black-market rice" did exist at this time of food shortage, and urban residents were bringing their clothing and assets to rural areas to exchange them for "black-market rice" (farmers were required to deliver all the rice they produced for rationing). However, there were people who were too proud to consume such black-market rice and consequently died of malnutrition. The well-known cases are of a high school teacher in 1945 and Tokyo District Court Judge Tadayoshi Yamaguchi in 1947. Yamaguchi's incident was reported as "tragedy of a guardian of law." (*Postwar History of Food and Agriculture*, p.17, Asahi Shimbun, November 5, 1947)

⁴ The Second Land Reform (Special Measures Law for Independent Farming, revision of the Farmland Adjustment Law) and the Agricultural Cooperative Law were enacted in 1946 and 1947, respectively. Based on the understanding that existence of independent farmers is essential for democratization of rural areas, the three major reforms shared the common goal of carrying out emancipation of farmlands in order to create independent farmers, creating agricultural cooperative so that these independent farmers could support each other and thus prevent them from failing in independent management and having to sell their farm, and setting up an extension program to teach the required knowledge and skills to individual farmers.

3. Concept of Rural Life Improvement Extension Service

General McArthur of the GHQ who ruled occupied Japan gave top priority to democratization as the means of reconstructing Japan and considered it necessary to permeate this to every nook and corner of rural Japan where 70% of the population lived. Thinking that conventional methods would not work in rural areas where tradition and old social structures were retained, GHQ narrowed the target to women who had been severely oppressed and tried to redirect their emancipative energy towards social reform. The system of livelihood extension workers for rural women was introduced as the most well defined means for attaining this goal.

In those days, democratization was the voice of Heaven and no one was able to refute this slogan squarely. For this reason, the slogan was granted a no-questions-asked legitimacy when reaching out to women.

Nevertheless, changing the awareness of women and of rural areas was not a task that could be carried out overnight. A rationale for carrying out rural life improvement other than the democratization ideology was needed. And increasing food production was the undisputed national goal in those days. Increasing food production, particularly increasing rice production, was a matter of utmost importance in overcoming the food shortage in which many people were dying of malnutrition and trains were packed with people traveling from cities to the countryside to obtain food.

“Farm labor is indispensable in increasing food production and the health of such farm labor is the key to increasing production. And therefore creating a cheerful and healthy rural life is a matter of vital importance for the agriculture of Japan.” This rationale offered the logic supporting the need for “livelihood extension workers” in addition to the “agricultural extension workers” who support production skills, leading to frequent reference to “inseparability of production and livelihood.”

Disparity in livelihood between urban and rural areas was also apparent from the viewpoint of social welfare. People in rural areas in those days may have had some access to electricity, but hardly any running water or gas. This meant that women were placed in a poor environment for doing housework, as they had to go to rivers and springs to draw water and cook on stoves that required the collection of firewood. Seeking to improve the lives of these women was therefore also justifiable from the viewpoint of social equity. However, there were insufficient economic resources for this purpose.

For this reason, economic self-sustenance of the rural economy was included among the goals of rural life improvement. “Awakening self-reliance” in the moral realm and “economic self-sustenance” in the economic realm were slogans that were on the same track as “democratization” in the political realm.

This “Awakening self-reliance” in the moral realm is expressed by the phrase that was set as the target for the entire agricultural improvement extension program, “creating farmers who think.”

This is based on the same concept as “creating students who think” in the educational reforms that were also put forward by GHQ. In this sense, rural life improvement programmes had the same positioning as adult education and social education.⁴⁵

4. Strategy of rural life improvement programme

(1) Livelihood extension workers

The greatest factor behind the success of the rural life improvement programme was the dedicated activities of the women who became livelihood extension workers. Rural life improvement would not have been achieved had it not been for these women who visited one isolated village after another and tried to encourage rural women by sometimes staying overnight at these villages. While women who studied home economics were able to work as livelihood extension workers under the original U.S. system, early livelihood extension workers that were recruited when the extension program started in 1949 were mostly qualified teachers and nutritionists, because institutions of higher education for home economics were almost non-existent in Japan at the time. The livelihood extension workers (also called “Home Advisor”), who were women, worked in extension programs together with agricultural extension workers (also called “Farm Advisor”), who were men. Compared to agricultural extension workers who had actual skills and knowledge about agriculture, livelihood extension workers had no specific skills and were seriously lost as to about how they should approach the extension program. It was also difficult to obtain the understanding of agricultural extension workers.

It was the combination of lack of teaching skills among livelihood extension workers and the goal of “creating farmers who think” that led to the quite intentional adoption of the bottom-up method. Democracy meant everyone expressing their opinions and certain actions being taken according to the consensus of many people. Extension workers were relatively highly educated compared to the village women and were often called “sensei” (teacher). However, they were strictly instructed to refrain from taking high-handed and instructor-like attitudes and made efforts to build relationships of trust with the villagers by staying over at farms when visiting remote villages. For this reason, they were concentrating activities that could be described as an original form of fieldwork in which they went around the village on foot, talked to the women and gained an understanding of real life in the village. (Village development extension workers of today’s Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers may be going through the same experience.)

The role of livelihood extension workers was by no means to become women’s leaders. Extension workers were expected to play the role of facilitators who enabled women to become aware of numerous problems that existed in daily life and recognize them as problems. They did introduce new contrivances such as improved cooking stoves, improved work clothes and nutritious food. However, it was not until village women became aware of the problems of the cooking stoves they

⁴⁵ Yamamoto, Matsuyo the first manager of the Rural Life Improvement Section said, “...after the American ideology came in, GHQ’s idea in a broad sense was to incorporate agriculture and livelihood into the adult education program.” (Nishi Kiyoko, “Lives of Japanese Women Under Occupation,” p.187)

were using, inconveniences of their work clothes and problems of their daily diet that they started exploring the direction of improvement. In other words, the extension workers did not impose the improved cooking stoves from the outset.

In addition, since extension workers did not necessarily know everything about life, they also played the role of an intermediary who introduced required knowledge and skills from agricultural extension workers and concerned administrative agencies, and introduced rural life improvement practice made in other villages. Although in the field of agricultural knowledge, people performing such functions and possessing agricultural skills did exist⁶, information on livelihood skills was not easily conveyed when the free movement of women was limited in rural communities. Livelihood extension workers, who were provided with the modern tool the bicycle, may have been seen as butterflies that flew freely from one village to another.

Subject-matter specialists were posted in each prefecture for the purpose of providing logistical support to livelihood extension workers in an effort to establish a system in which people having expertise in food, clothing and shelter offered advice to livelihood extension workers. These subject-matter specialists regularly received training in Tokyo. It was the Rural Life Improvement Division in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries that issued instructions on the method of dissemination for the entire country. Yamamoto Matsuyo (maiden name Ohmori), who had studied home economics at the State University of Washington before the war, was appointed as the first manager of the Rural Life Improvement Division which was created in 1948 under the instruction of the GHQ Natural Resources Bureau. What GHQ expected from Yamamoto was to introduce the American style educative extension program to Japan. Yamamoto offered unique guidance by hammering American lifestyle into the newly-appointed extension workers, and the managers of the Rural Life Improvement Division who took office after Yamamoto (all women) strived to develop extension methods suited to the Japanese circumstances by mobilizing scholars of pedagogy and sociology.⁷

It must have been unthinkable to ask scholars outside of the technical field to assist in programs implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries prior to this. The division may have become a sort of sanctuary in the ministry after it took in an unknown field of "livelihood."

However, the end extension workers did not follow blindly a centrally unified guidance program. In the Japanese archipelago, elongated in the north-south direction, the content of agriculture varied accordingly with the climate, and rural villages in western and eastern parts of the country had a different history. For this reason, livelihood extension workers introduced self-modified method to

⁶ Miyamoto Tsuneichi, a folklorist from a farm household in Yamaguchi prefecture, spent some time during and after the war teaching agricultural skills to farmers in various places. Miyamoto has remarked about his experience as follows: "It was fun to learn new skills and I learned so much. And I would convey those skills to people who did not practice such skills. They really appreciated it. My role was like that of carrier pigeon." (Miyamoto, Tsuneichi; "Folklore Travels," p.128, Kodansha Academic Library)

⁷ People such as Umene Satoru of Tokyo University of Education in pedagogy as well as Aoi Kazuo and Matsubara Jiro of Tokyo University in sociology were also invited as lecturers in such training and they cooperated in preparing the teaching materials for the extension workers.

suit the situation in each location while taking into consideration the instructions from the central government on the prefectural and field level.^{*8}

(2) Administrative support

Extension programs were carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the expenses were split with the respective prefectural governments. For this reason, unified instructions were issued from the central body, but programs unique to each prefecture were also carried out to the extent permitted by the prefectural budget. Extension workers (both agricultural extension workers and livelihood extension workers) were affiliated with the agriculture and forestry section of the prefectural governments and were transferred every few years from one extension office to another within the prefecture. There were far more agricultural extension workers at first, with one being posted at every natural village (villages prior to the administrative consolidation 1953). They stayed at facilities called resident centers or they simply rented private homes in villages where there was no extension office. On the other hand, there were only several livelihood extension workers in each prefecture and one or two in each extension office at the beginning. It was therefore difficult just to visit every village regularly.

For this reason, they started by meeting the main figures in the village through connections and information from the agricultural extension worker stationed in the village and participated in male-dominated agricultural discussion meetings to familiarize the men in the village with livelihood extension workers. Village and town offices were generally cooperative and offered many kinds of support.

Green bicycles (the same kind as provided to agricultural extension workers) were initially provided as their means of transportation. Since it was rare for women to ride bicycles in rural areas those days, they spearheaded the introduction of modernization to rural areas along with public health nurses who rode on white bicycles. Bicycles were later replaced by motor scooters and became the object of admiration for women in the village. (Gasoline was paid for out of public funds and it is said that extension workers rarely used these scooters for private purposes.)

When the prospects for increased food production became bright and the fiscal situation of prefectural governments stabilized after entering the 1960s, improvements in the living environment made quantum leap advancements through the establishment of a scheme whereby the prefecture offered interest-free loans towards construction of village community centers and individual kitchen improvements. Such support from the prefectural administrations played a role in furthering the results of rural life improvement activities. At any rate, one can safely conclude that the active commitment of the administrations that offered training, provided

^{*8} See, for instance, an interview record of Kato Kishie, who served many terms as a home advisor/subject-matter specialist. (See the appendices of Outline of Review Section)

bicycles and motor scooters, and accommodated the rural life improvement funds contributed considerably to the success of the rural life improvement movement.

5. Concept of "Improvement"

"Minimizing the amount spent" and "making the best of the resources available" were among the characteristics of the rural life improvement extension. This was because if new materials and additional expenditures were required for the new attempts being made amidst the fund shortage in the rural communities at the time (not to mention the Japanese society as a whole), they would be given the cold shoulder by many of the poor farmers as unfeasible undertakings.

"Stove improvement" was selected as an entry point for rural life improvement programmes in many regions because it was an energy-conserving facility improvement that could be built with clay and a few bricks. Livelihood extension workers were also taught the skill of daubing oven walls by studying under professional plasterers to save costs. They also underwent practical training in planning so that they could install cooking stoves and kitchen sinks on their own. These hand-made cooking stoves also had a benefit of being tailored to the physique of each housewife at farm households.

It offers a sharp contrast to rural development projects implemented in developing countries today in the sense that improved cooking stoves that have been standardized as part of the package are brought in by the donors.

Improvement of work clothes was based on unseaming old clothes and sewing them back together again. Meanwhile, the new menus introduced for nutritional improvement were contrived to make the most of the vegetables that were locally available.

There were also various contrivances for improvement of dwellings. It may be an attribute of the light-handed Japanese, but the concept of "Kaizen", or improving life by utilizing things that are available and at hand is an interesting idea that led to the improvement of the Japanese-style factory management system thereafter (TQC etc.).⁹

6. Participatory Multi-Sectoral Development

Study on rural life improvement should not be misunderstood as the Rural Life Improvement Programs undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries are the sole subject of the study. It is true that the main approaches in rural life improvement were carried out by female livelihood extension workers posted throughout the country by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and respective prefectural governments. However, the subject of our study is the "rural life improvement movement (R-LIM)."

It is referred to as a "movement" because the movements of "improvement" and "development" that were actually carried out in rural villages at the time included not only those that spawned from the

⁹ See the paper by Watanabe Masao in Chapter 4.

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries programs, but also nutritional improvement, birth control, and maternal and child health care (under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health and Welfare), social education and new livelihood movement (under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education) and environmental health that was promoted mainly by local municipalities, so the “rural life improvement” was a kind of a national slogan.

Moreover, each of these activities had their leaders: nutritionists in the health center and nutrition improvement promoter selected from the villagers (working as volunteers) in the case of nutritional improvement, team members of Mother and Child Parenting Teams in birth control (also volunteers), public health nurses in maternal and child health care, and 4H Clubs^{*10} and livelihood classes in juvenile activities. These activities based on the free initiative of the villagers were being practiced all over the place. Furthermore, livelihood extension workers worked with public health nurses in some activities, rode on so-called “kitchen cars” (nutrition improvement vehicles) with nutritionists to offer cooking lessons, raised issues at social classes by obtaining help from social education secretaries, and participated in 4H Club camps.

It was indeed an experiment of comprehensive rural development and an exploration for participatory development that attempted to attain the goal through community participation within the confines of limited funds and resources available to the government and people alike.^{*11}

The results of these rural life improvement practices (LIPs) were reported through various channels and groups participated in national level competitions through recommendation. Successful groups and villages were commended by the Prime Minister, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and newspapers.^{*12}

7. Group-oriented Activities

Another characteristic feature that contributed to the success of the rural life improvement programme (R-LIP) was the encouragement of group activities. The empirical rule of “group action is more effective than individual action” naturally existed when approaching various rural life improvement activities. Aside from this, opinions such as “what one person alone cannot accomplish becomes possible when people work together in groups” and “encouragement from just getting together and talking” were heard with one accord from group members at the time.

^{*10} A regional club for fostering rural juveniles that originated in the U.S. “4H” stands for “Head,” “Hand” “Heart” and “Health.” For some reason, guidance and fostering of the 4H Club was placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and both livelihood extension workers and agricultural extension workers worked as leaders of local 4H Clubs.

^{*11} There were also environmental health activities such as the “Movement for Eliminating Flies and Mosquitoes” in which women’s associations and youth organizations played the central role under the guidance of public health centers.

^{*12} Aside from these, the Ministry of Health and Welfare commended programs in health areas, the Ministry of Labor commended villages that produced outstanding results in collaboration, and the New Life Association gave similar commendations to villages who attained remarkable results in awareness transformation. Although this strategy of offering encouragement and honor to people engaged in these activities was effective, it may have been closer to a Japanese pre-war tradition than to an American practice (a system of domain lords rewarding his samurais who attained good academic results and shoguns offering [aозashi ikkanmon] to children who were famous for their filial piety existed since the Edo Period).

Actual attempts that were often made after passing the individual-oriented entry point activities such as cooking stove improvement were collective cooking and collective childcare centers during the busy farming seasons. Homemakers of farm households in busy farming seasons were not only required to engage in heavier labor than usual, but also had to prepare meals for the additional number of people who came to assist with the work. However, lack of time and energy to do so resulted in a simple assortment of rice, miso soup and pickles, which frequently caused weight loss and malnutrition. In addition, an increase in the number of accidents involving infants that were left in the fields due to lack of parental attention during busy farming seasons had been pointed out. Asking women of non-farming household to work together and prepare meals for a large number of people made it possible for farm household women to not only concentrate on the farm work but also to enjoy nutritious well-prepared food. Similarly, they were able to concentrate on their farm work by having members of the female youth group look after their children during the busy farming day. Livelihood extension workers took the initiative in carrying out these plans and conditions.

Aside from the women's association whose participation was mandatory for all households, increasing numbers of people formed home living improvement practice (H-LIP) groups with their friends and engaged themselves in activities such as cooking classes, food processing, and work clothes making under the guidance of livelihood extension workers.

Meanwhile, as kitchen improvements required considerable expenses, people often formed groups to perform mutual loan association, raised poultry together for what they called "egg savings" and took on part time jobs such as carrying firewood in an attempt to raise the required funds collectively. It can be interpreted as a joint surviving strategy of rural women who were not able to have money that they could spend at their own discretion.

From the viewpoint of livelihood extension workers, grouping the target women had a ripple effect whereby proper guidance given to the group leader would reach the other group members. Grouping was promoted because of this merit of being able to reach out to a greater range of people with the same effort. Systems such as "conveyance guidance" and "[fukuden]" are worthy of attention in this regard. This corresponds to a rule requiring group leaders to always communicate to the group members the results of cooking classes and nutrition seminars held in other towns that they attended on behalf of the group. Visiting towns that are located some distance away requires a certain amount of travel cost in addition to loss of opportunity costs from taking time off from their farm work. On the other hand, going to town is a privileged event for rural women who had little access to entertainment. In contrast to developing countries where group leaders monopolize information and knowledge and do not pass them on to ordinary members, it is interesting to note that this "[fukuden]" was part of the obligation of group leaders in rural Japan. Even if the opportunity to attend courses and study tours were concentrated upon a certain person, other members in some cases made the rational choice that such person can bring back information better than any other member in the group and therefore is better suited for the job. It appears that this is one of the reasons one cannot determine whether a group is being managed democratically or not by its outward "equity."

Incidentally, livelihood extension workers promoted the formation of home living improvement practice groups but faced resistance from existing women's organizations (e.g. women's associations,

women's section of agricultural cooperatives) at the beginning. These organizations were usually controlled by elder women and tended to be negative toward new attempts and activities that would change the village traditions. For this reason, livelihood extension workers sometimes had to pour their energy into convincing these existing female leaders. However after some time, situations in which the same person served as both the leader of a women's association and the leader of home living improvement practice group became common. More than just a few people held three positions by also serving as director of the women's section of agricultural cooperatives.

8. Utilization of External Resources

Another point worthy of note in the life improvement movement in post-war Rural Japan (LIP-RuJ) is the effective utilization of external resources such as foreign aid. The first ship carrying LARA (Licensed Agency for Relief of Asia: consisted of 13 US.NGOs) relief goods that were being sent in from the U.S. and other countries for emergency relief mainly in the turbulent period immediately after the war arrived Yokohama in November 1946. At Christmas of the same year, this food was utilized effectively for supplying nutrition to children. It was used for the school lunch pilot program at Nagata National Elementary School in Tokyo.^{*13}

In addition, relief goods from UNICEF were supplied for a period of 15 years from September 1949 until 1964. In particular, the distribution of skimmed milk powder in various parts of the country as UNICEF Milk for furnishing nutrition has been recorded in many film archives. The distribution rationing was conducted through resident groups such as Mother and Child Parenting Team. Since there was not enough milk to go around, the method of distribution was entrusted to resident groups through discussions and a mechanism of distribution that gave priority to those in need appears to have been quite prevalent.

In addition, the capital for purchasing the "kitchen cars" that proved effective in nutritional improvement originally came from the funds that were reserved by the Japanese government in Japanese yen in respect of surplus wheat from the U.S. that was offered to Japan as aid in the form of food aid (Farm Produce Trading Promotion Assistance Law of 1954). This law is referred to as PL480 and was the prototype of the "domestic currency reserve" required of the aid-receiving country in the aid for increased food production (KR2) which Japan is currently offering to developing countries.

At the time, the Ministry of Health and Welfare was feeling the need for nutritional improvement on a national scale and already had the ideas for the nutrition improvement vehicle needed for that purpose. However, the Ministry of Finance would not appropriate any budget for this on the grounds of fiscal difficulties. For this reason, the Ministry of Health and Welfare accepted the offer from the wheat growers association of Oregon, U.S. that made the approach in search of an outlet for their surplus wheat. It was not possible to spend the domestic currency reserve without the involvement of an American organization. In this manner, the Japanese government did its best to utilize to the fullest extent the foreign aid that was being offered to the country. However, there was

^{*13} History of Food and Agriculture, pp.27-29

no intervention of any kind from the U.S. regarding the operation of the kitchen cars, and an organization consigned by the Ministry of Health and Welfare called the Japan Nutrition Association managed the renting of the 12 kitchen cars to the prefectures throughout the country in order.

9. Future Research Subject

In this manner, various rural life improvement movements that took place over the 20-year period from immediately after the defeat in World War II (1945) to the dawn of the rapid economic growth era (around 1965) consisted of poverty eradication, rural development and participatory development, many of which are aspects that are being approached in the developing countries today.

This is not the only reason we are focusing on the rural life improvement movements of this period. Japan experienced seven years of occupation from 1945 to 1952, and the target of democratization had been set by the GHQ irrespective of the will of the Japanese people. The extension system that was selected as the means for attaining this target was also transplanted nearly compulsorily by imitating the system in the U.S.

In respect of this “setting of development targets by an outsider” and “a system introduced by an outsider,” the situation in Japan at the time had some factors in common with the developing countries that are receiving assistance today. Moreover, democratization is the very task that is currently being placed upon the developing countries.

What is the reason behind Japan succeeding in this task of “attaining the target that has been set by an outsider” by utilizing the “system brought in by an outsider” that present day developing countries are having difficulty in succeeding? What is the difference between the reality of the developing countries and the experience of Japan? Answering these questions is a task that has been placed upon us.

(1) First hypothesis: Domestication of foreign aid

Our hypothesis at this point in time is that Japan came out successful by “interpreting” the tasks that had been placed upon her by an outsider in a manner that was convenient for herself, thereby “domesticating” the system that was brought in from outside. If this were the case, we need to reveal the process by which Japan managed to domesticate the system that was brought in by an outsider. Finding an answer to this question would make a practical contribution to rural development in the future. One may be able to find a lesson that today’s developing countries could learn in domesticating alien systems.

Development is a process of incorporating an alien system into oneself. It does not come into existence simply through imitation of technology or a system. We believe that Japan’s success involves many hints for revealing this process, and feel the need to reconsider the current development studies in which Japan’s case has not been fully studied.

(2) Second hypothesis: Economic development and LIP

Another significance of redefining the rural life improvement movement in the context of social development is its relationship with economic development. The theory of social development

may appear to have a tendency of placing its grounds on denial of economic development. However, we do not think that economic development always makes an inadequate goal: Instead, we feel that the cause of economic development not contributing to the eradication of poverty lies in the fact that the fruits of economic development are distributed unequally among the people. For example, the Miracle of East Asia in the 1980s represented the success of economic development modeled after the rapid growth of Japan. But why did the gap between rich and poor expand all the while welfare did not advance for the society as a whole? Our second hypothesis argues that Japan was able to rapidly distribute the fruits of her rapid growth to a considerable degree because the social development called "rural life improvement movement" had prepared its groundwork during the twenty year period prior to rapid growth.

Thus the life improvement programme in post-war Rural Japan (LIP-RuJ) offers a wide array of clues for solving the problems faced by the developing countries of today including breaking out of poverty, rural development and participatory development. Our future study will be focused on extraction of universal factors in LIP-RuJ conducted as part of a comprehensive rural development, analysis of factors unique to Japan, and exploration of their reproducibility in today's developing countries.

1. The Rise of Rural Life Improvement Movement in Contemporary

In rural regions of Japan, movements of rural life improvement and movements containing the elements of rural life improvement (hereafter collectively referred to as “rural life improvement movement”) have been carried out in a wide variety of content and format to some extent or another since the end of the Edo Period and early Meiji Era to Taisho and pre-war Showa Eras, and then up to the rapid economic growth period after the war (up to the time of enactment of the Agricultural Basic Law in 1961). The term “rural life improvement” was not necessarily used in all of these movements. Typical examples among them are listed as follow:

- 1) Houtokusha movement (end of Edo Period through Meiji Era)
- 2) Chosonze (Township and village planning) movement (1890s and 1900s)
- 3) Local improvement (Local improvement) movement (1910s onward)
- 4) Rural economy rehabilitation movement (during the Showa depression in 1930s)
- 5) Rural life improvement under the wartime mobilization (wartime in 1940s)
- 6) Post-war rural life improvement movement (post-war recovery period)

These rural life improvement movements have the following five characteristics.

First of all, all rural life improvement movements were developed in the rural villages during periods of social turmoil and instability. For instance, the Houtokusha movement expanded during the major transition period of the Japanese society including the end of shogunate reign and Meiji Restoration. In the case of Ihara Village in Shizuoka Prefecture (present Ihara Town of Shizuoka City) which is one of the most famous Houtoku villages, the Houtoku method was introduced in the rural economy recovery movement to cope with the rapid commoditization of rural economy at the end of Edo Period, the effects of trade liberalization based on unequal trade after the Meiji Restoration and the resulting depression in the early years of Meiji. Chosonze (Township and village planning) movement and Jikata Kairyō (local improvement) movement had the characteristics of industrial promotion and local development against the backdrop of reconstruction of a national system and infrastructure strengthening after the Satsuma Rebellion and Russo-Japanese War, respectively. The rural economic rehabilitation movement that continued for nearly nine years from 1932 to 1941 and rural life improvement on a war footing that followed were literally movements that took place during the period of ravage and confusion for the rural economy caused by the Showa depression and wartime national mobilization. The post-war rural life improvement movement was also a movement that was launched as a part of the three major agricultural reforms after the war and at least its initial stage was implemented during the period of post-war social turmoil and economic recovery.

The second characteristic concerns the relationship between production and rural life improvements or elements thereof in all the movements. In the Houtokusha movement, a movement based on the principle of Houtoku village development method developed by Sontoku Ninomiya was deployed. In this case, production and livelihood cannot be understood if taken separately and therefore one can see that rural life improvement has been incorporated comprehensively with all other related activities. Movements 2) and 3) were strongly inclined towards agricultural improvement (i.e. promotion of economic programs) because of the nature of their emphases of industrial movement, rural autonomy and farmers' association activities. For this reason, the elements of rural life improvement had a strong tinge of psychological movements such as correction of public morals (improvement), diligence, frugality and economizing, although hygiene programs had been incorporated since the Meiji Era as measures against contagious diseases. In general, they were positioned as rural life improvement for securing and increasing production and elements such as diligence, frugality, economizing, moral science, moral behavior, ethics and vice of consumption were brought to the forefront. This is particularly notable in rural life improvement under the rural economic rehabilitation movement and wartime mobilization system.

The third characteristic is related to the characteristic as a movement. In the Houtokusha movement of the Meiji Era, the method of Houtoku life appears to have been generally introduced by the leaders of rural villages (landowners). Otherwise, it was deployed as government policy. For this reason, the organization for delivering the policies that were brought down from the top, receiving them from the bottom and translating them to their own needs became important. In addition, human life has individual aspects and group aspects, and the fact that satisfying the livelihood needs related to the latter aspects requires greater resources, external skills, capital and collective action is another reason why such a receiving mechanism is needed. The above-mentioned rural life improvements must have acquired and deployed their characteristics as a social movement to the extent that these two parties identify their point of agreement.

The fourth characteristic is the succession of various elements of rural life improvement activities that had been taken as a part of the movement. Rural life improvement in the nationwide economic rehabilitation movement and the rural life improvement during the war had as their elements activities such as day nursing, collective cooking, public baths, public entertainment, cooking stove improvement, preserved food, nutrition, maternal and child health and simplification of ceremonies. All of them were incorporated into the post-war rural life improvement as part of the activity menu. However, attention must be given to the fact that although activity menus have the same name, naturally there are great differences according to time and place.

The fifth characteristic involves the long-term effect of the movement's experience on rural villages and farmers. Ihara Village, which is known as a Houtoku village, is said to have succeeded in the results of the movement over a period of more than one century. In addition, the villages that took part in the Houtokusha movement in various regions later became the parent body for industrial cooperatives. Many of them also expanded to become agricultural cooperatives after the war. Nishime Village (present Nishime Town), which was known as a model village of the rural economy rehabilitation movement, thoroughly utilizes its past experience in today's rural development. The post-war rural life improvement movement has already acquired a history of half a century. The group of farm household homemakers that had been formed through this movement and its members

were directly responsible for carrying on the movement itself and are active as central figures in today's village economy boosting endeavors to the extent that revitalization, sustainability and the future of rural Japan is unconceivable without these women. It is a feat made possible by human and social capital that has been formed and strengthened through the experiences of township and village economy promotion.

2. Rural Life Improvement in Rural Economy Rehabilitation Movement

Rural life improvements in Rural economy rehabilitation movement that were developed on a national scale in pre-war rural Japan will be summarized in this section as they are considered indispensable in understanding the post-war rural life improvement movement. The Rural economy rehabilitation movement was set out by the then Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry during the Showa depression in 1930s and carried out based on the Villages Economic Rehabilitation Plan for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries along with the Agricultural Civil Engineering Project for Rescuing the Country and the Temporary Rice Marketing Control Measures. The plan required the township and village governments designated for economic recovery to formulate an economic rehabilitation plan for their own region.

Positioned alongside the economic improvement as elements of this rehabilitation plan were rural education, hygiene, and rural life improvement. Rural life improvement included rural hygiene, collective water service, medical facilities, kitchen improvement and improvement of toilets in the rural hygiene field, and residence improvement, assembly halls, small libraries, consolation facilities and setting up rural public holidays in the rural livelihood field. However, the state policy of rural life improvement in the rehabilitation movement was to give top priority to measures relating to the battered rural economy. For this reason, it was merely a pillar of expenditure cutback on the other end of the major proposition of increasing rural income. In other words, it sought to achieve liquidation of farm household debts and rural relief by means of economizing based on rural life improvement and maximizing the difference with an increase in income including non-agricultural activities and small businesses.

Therefore, rural life improvement in the rehabilitation movement called for economizing and self-discipline based on the standard lifestyle. As a result, ceremonial occasions became the perfect target of economizing and savings were achieved by setting standards for simplified formalities. One can also argue that rural life improvement proposed by the policy makers during this period intrinsically lacked the considerations for basic human factors such as qualitative improvement of life, formation of livelihood identity and enjoying life itself.

3. Post-war Rural Life Improvement Movement

(1) Outline of post-war rural life improvement programmes

1) Origin of rural life improvement programmes

The policy that was implemented toward Japanese agriculture under the instruction of the GHQ immediately after World War II was promoted under the name of rural democratization and consisted of resolute execution of agrarian reform, establishment of agricultural cooperatives, and introduction of the agricultural extension system. The agricultural extension at the end aimed for dissemination of scientific skills and knowledge in agriculture and agrarian life based on the Agricultural Improvement Promotion Law (1948). On the other hand, fostering of rural youth clubs became one of the three main pillars of the extension programs along with agricultural technological improvement and rural life improvement. The purpose of rural life improvement for farm households was to “improve the lives of farm households and foster thinking farmers” through improvement of livelihood skills of farm households. At the backdrop of this was the notion that “improvement of production and improvement of livelihood are on equal footing and that solutions of livelihood problems and upliftment of rural livelihood would lead to the advancement of production activities” in contrast to the production-oriented approach which argued that “improving the existing production would automatically improve the quality of life.”

The Agricultural Improvement Promotion Law (partially revised in 1952) provided that “As for the duty of improvement extension workers who are posted on the front lines of rural villages, such extension workers shall be strongly instructed to take every opportunity to make visits to farm households in the district assigned to her to convey the knowledge and skills necessary for making improvements in farm activities as well as knowledge and skills that are needed for rural life improvement in addition to offering consultation.” This is an indication that “the conventional unilateral provision of agricultural technical guidance from the government based on subsidies in a top-down manner has been reconsidered and that the spirit of this program lies in fostering independent farmers and farmer education through technical guidance.” Thus, extension programs were implemented by making a clear distinction from the then compulsory food delivery scheme and extension of the program was attempted through a more educational manner including radio broadcasts and distribution of printed materials.

Rural life improvement programmes of the then Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry were positioned as a part of agricultural improvement extension programs. However, agricultural improvement extension experienced more expansion and enhancement in terms of organizational systems, relevance with agricultural policy, and close coordination with agricultural research as it dealt with the national issue of increasing food production. In contrast, rural life improvement required much time to prepare its organizational system partly due to its being a new system and coordination with agricultural research institutions

and universities was extremely inadequate compared to the agricultural improvement extension.

2) Development of postwar rural life improvement campaign/programmes

The process of organizational development for rural life improvement can be divided into three periods based on phases of system consolidation, i.e. 1) small district period (1951-57), 2) intermediate district period (1958-64), and 3) broad district period (1965-68).

The name "small district period" was given because agricultural extension workers were posted in each municipality. The number of livelihood extension workers remained at an average of 33 per prefecture in fiscal 1957 despite the efforts to increase their number, with each worker being responsible for 2.5 municipalities or 4,000 farm households. It was a period in which livelihood extension workers themselves were exploring the definition of rural life improvement in their process of probing in the dark and they struggled as they formulated their activities. It was in this process of probing in the dark that the intensive guidance method was devised. This method fosters the formation of groups and concentrates guidance on these groups instead of focusing on individual farm households, and the exchange of experiences between livelihood extension workers became one of the important sources of information for rural life improvement activities. The main areas of activities that were extensively approached included improvement of cooking stoves, kitchens, water supply facilities and baths in improvement of residential facilities, preserved foods in busy farming seasons, promotion of wheat flour consumption, and raising small livestock in improvement of protein intake, and improvement of work clothes and command eradication of flies and mosquitoes.

Expert technical staff supporting livelihood extension workers from the technical side had been assigned since the year following the inauguration of the extension program in 1949. Their number was gradually increased and reached two in every prefecture in 1954 and they shared the extension work with the livelihood skills (later changed to extension guidance activities).

The name "intermediate district period" originates from the establishment of 1,586 extension stations throughout the country following the revision of the Agricultural Improvement Promotion Law in 1958, and these stations serving as the base for advancement of extension activities. This period also overlaps with the launch period of the so-called Agricultural Basic Law Administration. Inclinations towards part time farming, a higher percentage of women and elderly among farm labor, and the outflow of rural youth to urban areas resulted in a reduction in the farm labor force and the expansion of the income gap between industry and agriculture. With this as the basic element, excessive labor, health disorders and declining level of livelihood quality among homemakers of farm households became a serious problem, causing rural life improvement activities to shift toward "securing of nutrition for farmers with emphasis on their health level" in large scale. The number of home living improvement practice groups increased during this period, reaching 14,927 groups in 1964 participated in by a total of 300,000 people. The Farm Household Life

Improvement Fund was established within the agricultural improvement fund system (founded in 1951) on the final year of this period to open the way for offering interest-free loans to farmers and their groups.

The "broad district period" saw an advancement in adaptation of extension organizations to wide-areas in response to expansion of rural economic zones. The health of household members in agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries, excessive labor by women in farm households, delays in rural living infrastructure investment, and enhancement of the appeal of rural life were pointed out because of the outflow of the rural population, urbanization of rural villages, increase in part-time farming, continuation of migrant labor, and the emergence of the farm successor shortage issue. Upgrading the infrastructure to a level comparable to cities, including roads, water supply and sewage systems, public facilities, and the construction of health, welfare and cultural facilities were sought as rural life improvement programmes while introducing Special Programs for Management of Healthy Lives for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Households and Special Programs for Optimization of Family Labor. Moreover, betterment of rural life was included as the subject of the program in addition to that of individual farm households.

3) Results of initial postwar rural life improvement programmes

To take a general view of the initial results of rural life improvement programmes, there were 5,461 home living improvement practice groups (with membership of 130,992) as of the end of March 1956. The most common content of improvement the groups were working on in terms of number of groups was cooking stove improvement, followed by the preparation of preserved foods and the making of improved work clothes.

According to the results of a 1956 national survey on cooking stove improvement, 2.2 million households (38% of all farm households) had already improved their cooking stoves, 1.58 million households (27%) had improved their cooking stove after the introduction of the rural life improvement movement, and 1.47 million households (25%) were planning to improve their cooking stove within one year. Regional differences also existed in the rate of improved cooking stove installment with the rate being low in Tohoku, Kanto and Hokuriku regions (20% mark), highest in Tokai (70%) and on the 50% mark in Chugoku and Shikoku regions. Prefectures in which the number of farm households placed in charge of each livelihood extension worker was smaller had a higher rate of cooking stove improvement. In addition, the percentage of farm households that had made improvements to their cooking stove by 1948 was high in Tokai and parts of Shikoku (a little over 40% of Tokai's average).

The following indication regarding the educational effects of rural life improvement extension activities on the group members has attracted considerable attention. In other words, changing attitudes such as the following were observed among the participating farm households: Few people come to the meeting with clear purpose; They attend meetings because they were told or asked to by others, and because of social obligation in some cases; They want new and sophisticated things in their homes, regardless of whether they need

them or not; They do not try to practice the skills they learned at home; They make improvements to show off as though in competition; They are constrained by the presence of a leader or mother-in-law; Few people express their opinions and it is only a certain few who do; They want to keep useful information to themselves; and Money is needed to make the improvements. As the degree of participation in rural life improvement extension activities advanced, however, all of these turned into positive attitudes such as: Inclination to learn skills that are needed or appropriate for one's home; Always applying the learnt skills at home; Teaching each other the skills they have; Increased variety and degree of skills; Having confidence in one's skills; Becoming better communicators; Fewer rumors and less gossip; Less attachment to position in society and family lineage; Making one's own judgments; Identifying problems in one's own life; Making attempts to solve everything through group cooperation; and Increased interest in the issues of groups and villages. It appears that we can get a glimpse of what post-war rural democratization aspired for and attained through rural life improvement.

(2) Characteristics of post-war rural life improvement movements in post-war Japan

The long history of rural life improvement per se is as mentioned earlier. However, post-war rural life improvement differs from other rural life improvement movements that were discussed in the first section of this paper in that it was originally introduced as a part of the GHQ occupation policy and thus, in that it was based on an exotic policy that had been imported. In this sense, it had a very unique characteristic, although assimilation of imported policy into local regions, i.e. Japanization, occurred in the process of being propagated in the rural communities of Japan. From the viewpoint of rural villages and farmers, however, it was easy to accept without much preconception because they had previous experience of rural life improvement prior to the war. Then what were the characteristics of this rural life improvement movement, especially in the early period of the first ten years or so? Several indications will be made in connection with the present rural development issues of the developing countries.

First of all, the post-war rural life improvement movement owes much to the activities and efforts of livelihood extension workers. Until recently, all livelihood extension workers were women. They jumped into the rural villages in the post-war recovery period with an extremely high sense of mission and explored the new horizon of the rural life improvement movement as they probed in the dark. Supported by new ideas, livelihood skills and information, they played the role of facilitator in rural life improvement in an extremely creative manner.

Secondly, programs and activities employed in this rural life improvement movement were conceived in the field of uncompromising rural life and were deployed based on the studies conducted to grasp the real conditions of farm household life and their results. In other words, it was based on a thorough field-oriented principle.

Thirdly, the approach of placing emphasis on accumulation of concrete improvements and attaining them in a systematic manner was taken. This utilitarianism not only increased understanding and support from the homemakers that participated and her family members

(particularly her husband and parents-in-law) about the rural life improvement activities but also urged the approval of the homemaker in home living improvement practice group activities.

Fourthly, the postwar rural life improvement movement was strongly inclined towards solving the livelihood issues of farm households through improvement of things that already exist, rather than replacing them through external means, which is a fortunate outcome of lack of the so-called subsidy system in the early stages of the movement.

Fifthly, it offered an opportunity for creative problem-solving experience to the homemakers of farm households by placing emphasis on the process of concrete activities in the rural life improvement movement and introducing the techniques. Homemakers of farm households who grew up with and have inherited this process and blossom in their activity experience until today and have become the central figures of township- and village-revitalization activities throughout the country.

Sixthly, the post-war rural life improvement movement was carried out by seeing farm household homemakers as individuals and organizing them into small groups. The activities of these small groups called as home living improvement practice groups supported not only the continuation of the rural life improvement activity itself but also the enhancement of personality of group members and as well as livelihood extension workers.

Seventhly, the post-war rural life improvement movement created, devised, improved and disseminated various participatory rural development methods in the process of its deployment. Among them were many techniques that anticipated various participatory rural development techniques that are extensively discussed in the recent development studies for developing countries (e.g. PRA). To our extreme regret, however, they have never been introduced abroad and remain buried in various parts of Japan's countryside.

Lastly, the post-war rural life improvement movement realized long-term involvement of the policies of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and acquired brilliant female personnel among the bureaucratic structures of central government and prefectures that could become the main leaders on the administration end of such policies. It is no exaggeration to say that dissemination and establishment of the postwar rural life improvement movement would not have been possible had it not been for the creative efforts made by these competent female bureaucrats.

4. Implications in the Rural Development Issues

While rural life improvement in post-war Japan already has a history of 50 years, it is rather a halfway length of time in terms of history. And yet it is already far off from today's daily life, which makes it difficult to obtain information aside from relying mainly on memory of the persons concerned. In addition, farming and rural life have great regional differences, which requires us to collect, sort and analyze materials related with the post-war rural life improvement by taking regional characteristics into consideration. For this reason, it is necessary to continue the accumulation of research and studies on the post-war rural life improvement movement into the future.

Lastly, implications of the experience of the post-war rural life improvement movement for today's rural development issues in developing countries can be seen from the viewpoint that there is a strong demand for learning from the Japanese experience and dispatching its results on an international scale.

(1) Image of the new rural community and formation of its subject

It is necessary to sublimate this experience of rural life improvement to the extent that it can propose the future direction of development assistance for the developing countries. The significance of the close connection between the agricultural improvement extension programs and rural life improvement extension programs have been approached is believed to have important implication to the developing countries today. For instance, while increasing agricultural production and expansion of production activities are proposed as solutions to the poverty problem in rural regions, the reality is that they alone do not necessarily offer sufficient conditions for solving the problem. In view of the emphasis currently placed on the establishment of a sustainable livelihood in rural regions, Japan's experience in rural life improvement (at least that in the early days of the movement) seems to have a large role in drawing the blueprint for the future of rural areas in developing countries and forming their subjects.

While the developing countries have branched out in various ways in recent years, they can be broken down into relatively developed among developing countries and least developed among developing countries. However, we cannot overlook the various economic and non-economic disparities that exist between sectors (e.g. agricultural sector and non-agricultural sector), between regions (e.g. rural areas and urban areas, coastal areas and inland areas), between ethnic communities (e.g. ethnic group in control of government and other ethnic groups) and between genders (e.g. men and women, children, elderly) in relatively developed among developing countries as well as in least developed among developing countries and the fact that these disparities are expanding in the process of development up to now. This paper will tentatively refer to these sectors that have been left out from development as underdeveloped sectors.

The experience of development from the rapid economic growth in 1960s onward and the lessons derived from it will be important for sectors of relatively developed among developing countries in which socio-economic advancement has already taken place. Meanwhile, least developed among developing countries will benefit from Japan's experience of economic development before the war and the experience of development assistance Japan has been offering to developing countries to date. The focus of the issue will therefore be the method of offering development aid to the underdeveloped sectors that have been left out from the development that has taken place up to now. While various attempts including participatory development, development activities through NGOs, microfinance, Gender and Development, and development and environment are being made in the present development efforts for these sectors, the experience and lessons of rural life improvement suggest the importance and possibility of addressing the matter by combining them in a comprehensive and synergetic manner according to the actual and concrete local situation.

(2) Sharing of village development experience

Rural development in Japan has a long history and tradition of village development. It is not possible to apply the Japanese experience to rural societies with socio-cultural systems quite different from those of Japan. However, the future of rural communities is currently placed in an extremely uncertain condition, be they in developed countries or developing countries. It shall suffice to cite an example of the relationship between Agenda 21 and Local Agenda 21 to point out the need for local approach in a global age. Prefectural and municipal governments in Japan are experiencing rapid internationalization in addition to aging, reduced birthrate, depopulation and decline of rural economy in the recent decades. An observation of the details of the stages of internationalization reveals a tendency towards successive development of forming a sister-city affiliation in the first stage, further advancing exchange in the second stage through technical cooperation and acceptance of trainees, and moving on to the third stage in which coexistence, mutual exchange of information and mutual village and regional development scheme used as leverage. The number of municipalities in the first stage referred to in here amounted to 1,373 (in the year 2000), although those that have reached the second and third stage are still limited. However, it is also true that many municipalities are finding themselves in such a difficult situation that they are compelled to seek regional development by incorporating these elements. Considering the fact that only 406 municipalities in the first stage had sister city affiliations with developing countries in Asia in 2000, the viewpoint and mechanism for approaching village development in developing countries and village development in Japan is needed at the same time. The experience of rural life improvement should prove useful for this purpose and would offer an effective mode of cooperation from Japan.

(3) Organization of farmers and development policy

Japan's agricultural development experience illustrates the efforts made by the government in infiltrating the agricultural development policy through organizing farmers. For instance, agricultural associations that were organized in accordance with the establishment and enforcement of Dai Nippon Agricultural Association in the Meiji Era (1881), National Agricultural Association (1896), Agricultural Association Law (1899) and Industrial Union Law (1900) reflected the interests of the landowners that were gaining power at the time, although they served as a channel for development communication that connected the (upper class) farmers and the government while enabling the local (upper class) farmers to participate in agricultural development by being organized into these organizations. Affiliated agricultural associations (named after the three-stage organization of government, prefecture and municipality) and industrial associations were in charge of agricultural technology dissemination and economic projects, respectively. The industrial cooperatives expansion movement was developed and farmer organizations on the scale of today's agricultural cooperatives were formed during the transitional period to the war regime from the 1930s onward. The government built an organizational system for controlling the people from the top through the former Ministry of Interior affiliations and police authority but had not formed an effective communication channel in the economic and industrial sectors including agriculture, particularly being lacking between the government and farmers. For this reason, the

government had been making efforts many years to build a mechanism for dealing with the agricultural development policies. Farmers (mostly landowners and upper class farmers) also responded positively to such efforts as long as it was beneficial for them.

In other words, an effective communication channel for agricultural development (through which agricultural development policies are communicated, accepted by farmers after translating them into their local conditions and the demands from the farmers are sent to the government) did not exist originally between the farmers and the government in the initial stage of economic development in Japan. That is, the development of such communication and the mechanism for accepting policies in the region have been created through government policy (i.e. intentionally) in the process of economic development. As mentioned earlier, the importance of this point is also obvious in the rural life improvement movement. It appears that the importance of such communication channels has not been fully recognized in the present assistance policy of Japan towards the developing countries. In other words, it is teaching us the need to transmit Japan's experience of such lessons that are derived from it in an extensive manner.

Chapter 3 The Evolutionary Process of Extension Initiatives Towards Development of a Thinking Farmer; Livelihood Extension Practice in Postwar Japan

OTA, Miho

1. Introduction

It has been some time since people's participation was first highlighted as the major focus in development initiatives. Since then considerable numbers of useful tools for appraisal, action and evaluation in a participative manner have been developed. With respect to participatory extension practices, several practitioners and researchers have suggested innovative approaches (cf. a series of Farmer-led Extension), but only a few have mentioned strategies of reforming conventional mode. Therefore nowadays there is found a gap between the way participation is practiced in the field and theory. This study therefore proposes some ideas for development agents who face the challenge of managing changes required to transform their approaches.

Aiming at identifying lessons for current development initiatives, this paper examines the evolutionary process of change in extension approaches and their surrounding requirements with the purpose of understanding the validity of the concept and approach for development interventions. In particular this study proposes that the extension practices in postwar Japan were participatory and sustainable, and thus had positive impacts on rural development particularly in respect of gender perspectives. This suggests that these extension initiatives have considerable relevance to the situation found in present developing countries. The main emphases are on reversal of power relationships between extension agents and their beneficiaries, changing roles of field workers, and methods of empowering people, within an overall gender perspective. Through a literature review including current papers and reports by Ministries and development agencies, the paper draws on valuable experience from a series of agricultural and rural life improvement extension interventions from pre- to post-war (1880s-1960s) Japan.

2. Grassroots Movements and Forced Extension in Pre- to Mid-War Japan

A historical overview of extension practices from 1880s to 1960s Japan provides significant contrast between top-down and bottom-up approaches. Under wartime restrictions, the government implemented bureaucratic and directive extension services, which limited liberal movements that had flourished at grassroots level until the 1910s. In what could be considered as a typical model of the Transfer of Technology extension approach, the role of agricultural extension workers was only to transfer modern technologies and enforce regulations on farmers. This process achieved the unfavourable reputation of "the sabre instruction" (Iitsuka, 1993). Farmer supervision was no longer an extension service but rather a means of enforcing official power. Reflecting on poor improvement in agriculture, eradication of farmers' autonomy, and unsustainability as a consequence, the Japanese government created its original version of farmer-to-farmer and on-farm research extension in the 1940s. This initiative could be seen as a taking off attempt to the alternative approach to extension.

3. Value of Surrender and Poverty

By accepting unconditional surrender in 1945, Japan lost some of its territory, reducing available arable land and products. Rapid population growth due to returning soldiers and repatriates to the small islands forced the Japanese to concentrate on intensive farming. There was an extremely strong demand for increasing agricultural productivity but lack of male manpower in the prime lost during the wars was a critical problem for feeding the millions in hunger. Two years after, still only 71% of the population managed to have a meal once a day, and 15% had none at all. The main characteristics of Japanese poverty were the complete loss of almost all resources throughout the nation, the inability to meet even basic human needs, isolation from, and powerlessness in, international relations, and mental oppression caused by the surrender.

However on the other hand, this cruel circumstance gave rise to the powerful driving force towards a better life. The fear of death by starvation motivated people to work as hard as possible. The amazing Japanese diligence in that period proved that there was no stronger motivation for change than poverty. There was nothing for the people to rely upon but themselves, having lost everything they relied on in the past. Moreover, this situation created extremely strong solidarity towards nation building, which was a major factor contributed to the following reconstruction period of Japan.

The immediate postwar national reforms initiated by the external Occupation force inspired a strong desire for democratising oppressed people, and the experiences of harsh poverty generated internal energy for urgent change. Social and political reconstructions of this era also created Japanese egalitarianism as well as a strong sense of identity. Remarkably, these two driving forces; the external power and the internal energy, created a harmonious synergy towards positive reconstruction of the country.

This synergy provided a sound foundation for the entire nation to launch a new concept of the farmer-led extension model. The reform of the extension approach was set to modify the objective from the transfer of techniques into a democratic way of thinking and independence for farmers. In contrast to the bureaucratic policies of the past, passive farmers were respected as active decision makers for the first time in Japanese history. Under the slogan of “develop a thinking farmer”; one who thinks, makes decision, acts, and is responsible for all of these processes, extension staff played an important role as facilitator.

In retrospect, it could be argued that owing to this innovative reform Japan succeeded in dynamic and rapid conversion of the principles of the extension approach from top-down to bottom-up. Having nearly 50 years of authoritative extension experience, it probably was a necessary evil for Japan to have strong external pressure in order to shift its approach. In other words, the undercurrent minority voices of those who had been aware of the drawbacks of the conventional approach made good use of the external initiatives to obtain what had been impossible to achieve by their own efforts alone.

4. Changing Roles of Extension Agents

The reformed extension service has 1) Farmer development for men (Agricultural Extension), 2) Livelihood improvement for women (Rural Life Improvement Extension), and 3) Training for youth (4H Club), as its main pillars. Newly recruited livelihood extension agents were able to take advantage of the nature of their work and the democratic mood of the time. Fortunately or not, they had neither a blueprint nor any expectation. This enabled the livelihood extension workers to work more freely and dynamically than their agricultural counterparts who were recognised by people, from their experience, as directive instructors of modern technologies. Livelihood agents were observed as liberal women working closely with rural women, not at all of a conventional bureaucratic type, and this had a huge impact on society. Fujita (1958), a livelihood extension worker, recalls that, in those days women had no say either in public or at home, the rural people gathered for her activities to “see young women speaking” rather than to “listen to what she says”. Under such a condition, it could be pointed out that the hardships they encountered far exceed today’s imagination.

The Ministry of Agriculture published its famous “Agricultural Extension Handbook” (1949) to explain the changing roles of extension agents in simple words, which is referred to as ‘a bible for extension workers’ to this day (Iitsuka, 1993). It affirmed that the roles of extension workers were to serve farmers with the information and techniques which they required, and to assist them through consultation for self-management of their farms.

Undoubtedly it was as great a shock for bureaucrats to be instructed to ‘serve’ the populace as it was for farmers. This should be emphasised as the primary conversion of the power structure. In addition to advocating rural people to step forward, the ‘new’ professionalism required the replacement of the first people to the last position. This proves the principle of *New Professionalism* which Chambers (1983) proposed was already developed in the 1940s Japan.

5. Gender Analysis; To Improve Living or to Earn a Living?

The Rural Life Improvement Extension Service (RLIES) was carefully designed to address both *Strategic (SGN) and Practical (PGN) Gender Needs* (Moser, 1993). The improvement of actual living standards was regarded as the gateway towards the more essential goal of democratisation of rural populace, the ultimate goal of which was to raise the social status of women by restructuring rural life and changing the traditional ethos.

The gender policy approaches; *Welfare, Equity, Efficiency and Empowerment* (*ibid*, 1993) are not mutually exclusive and there is overlap in how these are applied in RLIES, the complexity of which made the programme substantial. RLIES first undertook the *Efficiency approach* since women’s contribution through their enhanced reproductive role was prerequisite in order to improve agricultural activities through greater efficiency. With hindsight, however, this programme can be seen as a prototype of the *Empowerment policy approach* (Longwe and Clarke, 1994). This approach seeks to empower women through greater self-reliance, by meeting *SGN* indirectly through bottom up mobilisation of *PGN* and by improving the standard of living relating to food, clothing, housing, and ritual life.

6. Methods and Activities Applied in RLIES

The very first livelihood extension workers without any manuals, literally walked around rural areas talking with villagers. Unlike agricultural extension, there was nothing to define and disseminate livelihood techniques. As a result, livelihood agents concentrated on investigating methods of extension approach. This trial could be considered participative. Villagers were asked to identify their problems, and give their own suggestions for what and how they would like to change their own communities, instead of being directed by an authoritative packaged programme. These small voices from local people were taken up to the prefecture, and then to central government. These efforts of grassroots investigation led RLIES to produce activities appropriate to the rural context.

Examples of RLIES activities illustrate the originality, cultural specificity and uniqueness of the programme. The popular 'Mum, it's 9 o'clock!' campaign was a novel attempt. The essential goal was to enable mothers, who were expected to work most in a family even after everybody was asleep, to rest at least from 9 o'clock in the evening. Considering the general background of the time and constraints on women, it is understandable how difficult it was to encourage mothers to take pleasure in longer rest. Therefore, instead of urging the oppressed, the approach was made through raising awareness of family members to be considerate of mother's excessive burden and let others say 'Mum, it's time to go to bed!'. Without cooperation among family members, a mother's role in the household could not have changed. This attempt designed in a non-threatening way for both sexes and all ages was successful, and thus is highly recommended.

Analysis of the group extension method applied in RLIES indicates its effectiveness and efficiency in mobilising weaker voices as well as organising groups for actual movement. Particularly new brides, who tended to be in the weakest position in the family, were encouraged to organise themselves in order to speak out and unite themselves to change their lifestyles to more modern ways. Certainly these women had to go through hardships but group initiatives had great impact on rural communities, coping with changes that came into effect.

Overall examination of RLIES confirmed that a group method greatly contributed toward empowering voiceless women, in other words the programme was conducted in participatory mode. It could be concluded that the programme was and has been highly sustainable, and thus provides valuable lessons for development interventions elsewhere.

7. Recommendations

The recommendations for current extension interventions include:

- i. Well balanced internal and external driving forces, or synergy, are desirable for transformation of power relationships,
- ii. Both strategic and practical gender needs should be taken into consideration from planning throughout the project cycle,
- iii. Development of 'new' professionalism requires not only placing people first, but also in-depth conceptual understanding of replacing themselves last,

- iv. A group method is highly recommended for empowering the oppressed to be agents of change, thus an essential part of a participatory approach, and hence
- v. Facilitators with new professionalism and empowered agents of change are vital if development is to be sustainable.

Some of these lessons could be applicable in other places, yet the Japanese unique conditions which positively affected the interventions should be remembered. For methods and approaches to be effective, careful examination of contexts must be done in order to design appropriate interventions that are relevant to the particular site, location and time.

This study affirms that RLIES experience provides significant evidence of achievement of sustainable livelihood development through a participatory approach, and as such warrants further investigation to enrich perceptions and understandings of alternative framework of development.

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Introduction

It is natural for Japanese people who have worked for manufacturers to come across an improvement movement in the workplaces, especially on the production line, when they hear or see the word, *kaizen*. The *kaizen* movement is one of the most powerful generators that have brought about the present prestige for high quality and low price products made in Japan. US manufacturers learned from the Japanese experience about the *kaizen* movement and utilized the idea to turn their stagnation around and reactivate their power. In the business world, *kaizen* is an international word as well as *kanban*¹, and it is not translated into the word "improvement" because that simple daily word does not represent the profound concept of *kaizen*.

As we study the rural life improvement movement in Japan after World War II, more and more, we learn that the improvement movement is very similar to the *kaizen* movement in Japanese business workplaces. The basics of the both *kaizen* movements were imported from the United States, but they were arranged in accordance with Japanese culture and realities of those days. After all, the thought for improvement in communities and workplaces has been developed and utilized dynamically not in the country that exported the fundamentals, but in Japan. In this paper, the *kaizen* thought will be defined by reviewing the process from the view of the business world where we can find sufficient data.

I. From Deming to the Japanese improvement movement

In 1969, the International Conference on Quality Control (ICQC) was held in Tokyo and the participants visited Japanese factories as one of the items on the program. At that time, some experts from overseas came to our car radio factory, too. During the question and answer session after the introduction of our QC circle, a foreigner raised the following question: "Such improvement should be done by engineers. It doesn't concern the line-workers, does it? I would like to know your opinion." The question made me uncomfortable, but a woman line-worker who did the QC circle presentation answered appropriately with the following: "I think your question is understandable, but I am the person who knows the work in this part of the production line best in this company. I became aware of an unsuitable point in the production line through my routine work, so I proposed that it should be improved. My proposal was adopted by our management, and the improvement was carried out. After that, our defect rate decreased remarkably to one-third. What's wrong with that?" This is the way of thinking of the QC circle. Her answer was sufficient to silence the man. (Karatsu 1981)

The prototype of the improvement movement in companies is quality control in the factories. In the latter half of the 1940s, the Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers (JUSE) created a Quality Control Committee inside the body and started promoting Statistical Quality Control. This trend was accelerated especially at the time Dr. W. Edwards Deming was invited to Japan to lecture on

¹ The word is well known as the just-on-time system of a Japanese automobile manufacture, Toyota.

Statistical Quality Control (1990-1993). W. E. Deming emphasized that quality control should be done continuously according to the PDCA (plan, do, check, action) cycle² in order to reduce defects on each production line. Process-oriented thinking, in this way, was nurtured by collecting data, finding problems with statistics and solved the problems one by one.

W. E. Deming insisted, however, that the people in charge of quality control should be the top management and that laborers should not do anything after the quality of their products was controlled statistically. In short, Deming questioned laborers' control abilities and distinguished managers from laborers as those who manage vs. those who are managed. Since he thought this way Dr. Deming showed his surprise regarding Japanese laborers' self-control abilities with the following comment in a 1981 interview with the magazine Military Science and Technology: "Japanese laborers know what their jobs are. Probably, 80% of American laborers, however, do not know that, and they are even afraid of being asked what their jobs are."

Comprehensive and participatory approaches were the most outstanding characteristics of the improvement movement in Japan that were nurtured through the process of change from Deming's Cycle. The change into the comprehensive approach is explained by the difference in meaning of Total Quality Control (TQC) in Japan and in the United States. The change into the participatory approach is indicated by the birth of the Quality Control Circle (QC Circle) in Japan. On one hand, it is often said that the United States is the country where professionalism and functionality are respected. In this cultural situation, quality control used to be done only by QC engineers as professionals of quality control. In the beginning, they checked each process like, design and production, one by one as to whether there were any defects or not. However, they came to check totally for defects in order to do quality control rationally. They named this method of quality control "Total Quality Control" (TQC) to emphasize the totality. The word "quality" in this TQC only means quality of products. On the other hand, Japanese companies originally adopted lifetime employment and companies were similar to village communities. Japanese people tend to share good ideas with other members of their community, so the method of quality control of products manufactured in factories was adopted also in offices and quality control came to mean control of work quality. As a result, QC came to be practiced in all area of corporate activity; marketing research, designing, ordering, production, sales, after-sale service, financing, personnel services, and human resource development in cooperation with all levels of the workers; that is, managers, office workers, supervisors and laborers. In Japan, TQC means this type of holistic quality control and it was also given the name of Company-wide Quality Control (CWQC) in order to emphasize the difference between the meaning of TQC in the United States and Japan.

² This is also called "Deming's Cycle"

The Principles of QC Circle Activities

The followings are the principles of QC Circle activities that are included in Company-wide Quality Control.

- 1) QC circles will contribute to structural improvement and development of companies.
- 2) QC circles respect humanity and create meaningful and cheerful workplaces.
- 3) QC circles empower human abilities and unlimited potentials.

(The QC Circle Headquarters 1971)

Figure 1.1 The Principles of QC Circle Activities

A QC Circle is a small unit of an apparatus to accelerate CWQC that finds and proposes ideas to solve the problems. The birth of QC Circles can be attributed to the appeal for the formation by the Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers (JUSE) through their magazine, *Genba³ and QC*, published in April 1962. JUSE started extending QC Circles by making the headquarters-registration system and general principles of the QC Circle (See Figure 1.1). The general principles of QC Circles sufficiently represents the idea of QC Circles being created not to increase productivity or for improvement of quality, but to motivate workers and give significance to their own work. QC Circles are formed not on orders from the managers, but by workers' voluntarily will. Management, however, also have made efforts to assist and nurture QC circles in various ways: for example, conferring certificates of commendation or cash prizes and providing members of QC circles space for their presentations. Without a doubt, an ideological aid of the QC circles is *Genba-ism*, a Japanese characteristic ideology, that places significance upon workplace observations, collecting data in sites or fields where things are actually happening, and facilitating workers to have ability of solving actual problems.

II. Innovation vs. *Kaizen*

As one Japanese manager has said, "It is very hard to increase sales by 10%, but it is not so difficult to acquire even better results by reducing costs by 10%. (Imai 1988)

I have been in a QC circle, even though it was only for a short time. I remember that *kaizen* proposals that should be submitted to the QC circle have the following criteria: matters that are at hand, easily solved, and not costly. Especially, it was said again and again that spending money was the easiest way to improve things without using wisdom. I used to work while thinking about how my colleagues and I could work more efficiently, more effectively, and more safely by using our brains. It is also said that to continue working in the same way meant that no progress was being made, so I used to look for things in the workplace that should be improved.

One main factor as to why *kaizen* can not simply be translated into the English word "improvement" is whether or not money must be spent. The word "improvement" can be used for improving things by spending a lot of money. In Japanese, however, *kaizen* means gradual and continual progress in making improvement without much monetary input but by utilizing limited resources with wisdom.

³ *Genba* is a Japanese word that means site or field where things or matters actually take place.

Masaaki Imai, who used to work in the USA as an interpreter for the Japan Productivity Headquarters and as a consultant has pointed out that the difference between Western management and Japanese management can be represented by the difference between innovation and *kaizen*. According to Imai, innovation is a dramatic change with the adoption of new technologies and new management ideas, and it is an instantaneous change that can be represented by such as going up steps. On the other hand, *kaizen* is continuous and inconspicuous change utilizing existent technologies and methods, like climbing a slope. Moreover, Imai emphasizes “process-oriented” and “people-centered” as keywords that can explain the *kaizen* approach. In short, processes should be improved in order to improve the results. In the same way, people who work for manufactures should develop their abilities in order to improve their products. In this way, the Japanese management’s strength is not only thinking about problem solving, but also focusing on the process of problem solving and studying it.

	<i>kaizen</i>	Innovation
effect	Long-term and continuous, but not dynamic	Short, but dynamic
pace	slow	quick
Time range	Continuous and step by step	Continual, but not gradual
change	Gradual and stable	Sudden and explosive
participation	All members	A few elite members
approach	Collectivism, collective efforts and systematic approach	Thorough individualism, personal ideas and efforts
form	Maintain and improve	Scrap and build
Driving force	Existent know-how and technologies	New technologies and theories
necessity	Investment is not so necessary, but efforts to maintain this movement are inevitable.	Big investment is necessary, but efforts to maintain this movement are small.
Direction of efforts	people	technologies
Evaluation criteria	Process and efforts for better results	Profit results
strength	Suitable to economic stagnation	Appropriate for high-growth economy

Figure 2.1 Comparison of *kaizen* and innovation (Imai 1988)

Imai does not conclude that these differences between innovation and *kaizen* are merely cultural ones. According to Imai, American small and medium-sized enterprises used to practice a sort of *kaizen*. Series of mergers and acquisitions (M & A) and listing of stocks, however, forced managers focus on quarterly profit-and-loss statements, and managers became prone to aiming at short-term innovation. Through the two decades of epoch-making economic growth due to new technologies and increased market chances after World War II, many American enterprises have adopted dynamic innovation and ignored “trivial” *kaizen*. According to Imai, innovation is appropriate for a high-growth economy, however, the *kaizen* philosophy can bring about better profit-and-loss results than innovation can in times of stagnancy, which is lead by the high cost of energy and materials, over productivity and static markets. “If there is no money, use brains!” Such *kaizen* thoughts break through harsh economic surroundings. It has been proven successful by leading Japanese companies that have acquired worldwide prestige and trust based on their high-quality and low-cost products that were born out of the oil crisis in the 1970s.

III. Extension overseas of the Japanese improvement movement in the business world

As explained in section 1, *kaizen* is already an international word in the business world. US manufactures that had suffered under stagnation assertively imported *kaizen* thoughts and invigorated their business by means of excellent control, as we can see from the success of NUMMI, a joint venture between General Motors and Toyota.

According a report by Imai, Komatsu, a leading Japanese construction machinery manufacturer, has assertively extended the *kaizen* movement to their overseas factories. Komatsu has reported that it is appropriate in overseas factories to start extending *kaizen* to medium-level managers first, before involving laborers. The report says that laborers in ASEAN and Middle East countries assertively accept the idea of QC circles. On the other hand, it is difficult to obtain participation in QC circles by laborers in the USA and the other industrial nations because they tend to recognize *kaizen* as not a new management method, but an old one they already knew. Moreover, Komatsu reported that Japanese laborers are willing to learn new knowledge and skills and that is their primary interest. However, laborers in other countries tend to be concerned about the results of their efforts, so a high labor turnover rate and laborers' requests for substantial rewards should be considered in the process of extending the *kaizen* movement. In this way, it is necessary to appropriately extend the *kaizen* movement to foreign countries in accordance with their culture and the realities taking time and making continual efforts.

IV. Similarities between the rural life improvement movement in Japan after World War II and the *kaizen* movement in the Japanese business world

Thus far, the *kaizen* thought has been discussed focusing on the *kaizen* movement in the Japanese business world. In this section, what *kaizen* really means will be clarified by finding similarities between the *kaizen* movement in the business world and the rural life improvement movement in Japan after World War II.

The following similarities of both improvement movements are obvious.

- a. There are facilitators who promote both movements.
- b. They are holistic approaches.
- c. They are participatory.
- d. Eliminating waste and inefficiency is strongly encouraged in both movements.
- e. They both center around on-site problem solving.
- f. Administrators support the movements.
- g. They are done voluntarily.
- h. They are group (circle) activities.
- i. Wisdom is recognized in the movements as an important resource to be utilized.
- j. They are human-centered approaches.

By viewing these similarities, the *kaizen* thought should be defined as practicing something continuously and voluntarily with the aim of better conditions by utilizing wisdom learned experientially through daily life.

Then, new questions arise. Why do these two improvement movements have so many similarities? What has nurtured this *kaizen* thought and provided a common recognition among people for promoting both movements after the war? It is assumed that the *kaizen* thought has any relation to Ninomiya Sontoku's philosophy. Before the war, there certainly was a Ninomiya boom in Japanese schools. Ninomiya Sontoku's biography was introduced in morality textbooks, and on many school grounds there were statues of Ninomiya Sontoku reading while carrying firewood. In these regards, it is doubtless that Ninomiya's philosophy was a certain guideline for education in Japan at that time. Ninomiya's philosophy has the same contents as the basic thought of *kaizen*: learning from daily life, facing immediate matters, respecting practical learning, saving money by eliminating waste, and taking a cheerful view of respectable life. It might be said that Japanese people who were educated during those times realized Ninomiya's philosophy in their improvement movements in rural areas and factories. If this assumption is correct, it might be necessary to discuss the mindset of the *kaizen* thought in primary education in order to export the idea of the Japanese improvement movement.

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