

Urban Migrants and Hometown-Based Associations in Japan's Urbanization

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1. Introduction: Urban Migration and the Growing Urban Population

During the inter- and post-war periods of rapid economic growth in Japan, large numbers of rural residents migrated to urban areas, mostly to metropolitan areas, cities along the Pacific Belt Zone, or prefectural capitals.

Excluding the period during WWII, the Japanese population continuously increased from the Meiji Restoration in 1868 to the early 21st century. In 1872, the population of Japan was about 34.8 million (Hayami, 1992). According to the 2010 census report (Statistics Bureau, 2011), the population of Japan grew from approximately 56 million in 1920 to approximately 128 million in 2010. This means that by 2010, the Japanese population had more than doubled since 1920, the date of the first census, and nearly quadrupled since 1872. The growth in total population was accompanied by a substantial increase in the urban population. However, the rural population remained static, hovering in the range of 45 million during the pre-war era, and around 30 million during the post-war era (see Table 1).¹

¹ Japan has a relatively low number of foreign residents compared with other countries. In 2012, there were approximately 530,000 Korean and 650,000 Chinese residents from among a total of approximately 2.03 million foreign residents of Japan, which represents only about two percent of the total population.

Year	Total population (thousands)	Population Distribution		Population ratio in urban area (%)	Urban area ratio (%)	Densely inhabited districts (DIDs)		
		Cities	Towns and villages			Population (thousands)	Population ratio (%)	Area ratio (%)
1920	55,963	10,097	45,866	18.0	0.4			
1925	59,737	12,897	46,840	21.6	0.6			
1930	64,450	15,444	49,006	24.0	0.8			
1935	69,254	22,666	46,588	32.7	1.3			
1940	73,114	27,578	45,537	37.7	2.3			
1945	71,998	20,022	51,976	27.8	3.9			
1950	84,115	31,366	52,749	37.3	5.3			
1955	90,077	50,532	39,544	56.1	18.0			
1960	94,302	59,678	34,622	63.3	22.0	40,830	43.7	1.0
1965	99,209	67,356	31,853	67.9	23.5	47,261	48.1	1.2
1970	104,665	75,429	29,237	72.1	25.3	55,997	53.5	1.7
1975	111,940	84,967	26,972	75.9	27.1	63,823	57.0	2.2
1980	117,060	89,187	27,873	76.2	27.2	69,935	59.7	2.7
1985	121,049	92,889	28,160	76.7	27.3	73,344	60.6	2.8
1990	123,611	95,644	27,968	77.4	27.5	78,152	63.2	3.1
1995	125,570	98,009	27,561	78.1	27.8	81,255	64.7	3.2
2000	126,926	99,865	27,061	78.7	28.1	82,810	65.2	3.3
2005	127,768	110,264	17,504	86.3	48.1	84,331	66.0	3.3
2010	128,057	116,157	11,901	90.7	57.2	86,121	67.3	3.4

Urban migration from 1868 to early 21st century caused a substantial increase in the urban population of Japan. In addition to the natural growth of the urban population, large numbers of rural residents from farming and fishing towns and villages, suburban areas, and Japanese colonies on the Korean peninsula moved to metropolitan areas, provincial capitals (such as prefectural capitals), newly developing urban centers such as port cities, and industrial areas such as mining cities (Machimura, 1990).²

Even after the beginning of Japanese modernization, relatively few foreigners, including those in Japanese colonies, migrated to Japan. Even though the number of migrants from Japanese colonies on the Korean peninsula had increased since 1910, the foreign population in Japan was only approximately two million in 1945 (toward the end of WWII), which represented only about three percent of the total population in Japan.

² Care should be taken in defining town and village areas (countryside) as “villages” and city areas as “urban areas” because some rural regions were merged to form cities as a result of the Act for the Promotion of Merger of Towns and Villages in 1953. Since 1960, the concept of a densely inhabited district (DID) has been used as a statistical measure. Moreover, the merging of towns and villages into cities that began around 2000 started to make it more difficult for urban areas to be referred to simply as “urban cities.”

Even if the number of migrants from Taiwan (under Japanese rule), mainland China, and Western countries were included, the ratio of foreigners in Japan was less than three percent.³

Referring to census records between 1920 and 1970, Kuroda (1979) characterized historical changes in internal migration in 13 regional blocks (See Table 2, Figure 1). As shown in Table 2, only two regions—Minami-Kanto (Tokyo area) and Keihanshin (Osaka area)—had a consistent increase in population. During the pre-war period from 1920 to 1940, the populations of Minami-Kanto and Keihanshin increased by 2.59 and 2.12 million residents, respectively, while during the post-war era from 1947 to 1970, these respective populations increased by 6.23 and 3.21 million. In addition, the population of the pre-war Tokai area (Nagoya area) began to increase after 1960. As shown in Table 2, with the exception of wartime, the rural population mostly decreased during this period.

During the period of modernization starting in 1868, the Japanese population was concentrated in Tokyo and Osaka, which created a polarizing pattern in urban migration. After the war, population growth in the Tokyo area was almost double that of Osaka, making Tokyo area a demographic center of Japanese population.

³ Substantial numbers of residents migrated during the pre-war era. Before the pre-war era, most residents migrated to Hokkaido, followed by Hawaii, North America, South America, the Korean Peninsula, Taiwan, south Sakhalin, northeast China (formerly Manchuria), and other Asian countries (Araragi, 2008). Care should therefore be taken not to limit migration to internal migration from rural to urban areas.

Table 2. Historical changes in population migration by region

Region	1920-1925	1925-1930	1930-1935	1935-1940	1947-1950	1950-1955	1955-1960	1960-1965	1965-1970
1 Hokkaido	- 110,191	+ 48,505	- 24,451	- 56,285	+ 116,417	+ 44,379	- 50,392	- 177,106	- 282,322
2 Tohoku	- 144,636	- 190,239	- 237,642	- 403,672	- 167,042	- 474,175	- 584,078	- 676,982	- 450,519
3 Kanto	+ 512,034	+ 509,627	+ 482,206	+ 609,173	+ 655,536	+ 1,136,386	+ 1,235,373	+ 1,739,245	+ 1,324,720
{ Kita-Kanto	- 93,261	- 109,100	- 136,774	- 141,739	- 246,284	- 336,316	- 344,463	- 177,790	- 31,514
{ Minami-Kanto	+ 605,295	+ 618,727	+ 618,980	+ 750,912	+ 901,820	+ 1,472,702	+ 1,579,836	+ 1,917,035	+ 1,356,234
4 Hokuriku/Tosan	- 191,895	- 181,628	- 300,161	- 281,239	- 316,720	- 496,411	- 421,361	- 397,003	- 322,306
5 Tokai	+ 30,982	- 27,534	+ 7,632	- 16,515	- 53,851	+ 35,598	+ 108,840	+ 215,501	+ 159,012
6 Kinki	+ 410,546	+ 393,610	+ 743,137	+ 359,049	+ 273,608	+ 511,054	+ 622,836	+ 928,752	+ 552,956
{ Keihanshin	+ 455,575	+ 434,396	+ 778,428	+ 453,379	+ 394,786	+ 617,859	+ 732,197	+ 947,644	+ 515,046
{ Others	- 45,029	- 40,756	- 35,291	- 94,330	- 121,178	- 106,805	- 109,361	- 20,892	+ 37,910
7 Chugoku	- 79,751	- 93,619	- 73,447	- 61,200	- 159,987	- 198,217	- 329,288	- 312,255	- 131,566
{ Sanin	- 32,417	- 25,984	- 54,997	- 60,806	- 53,900	- 62,090	- 117,020	- 128,085	- 87,722
{ Sanyo	- 47,334	- 67,635	- 18,450	- 394	- 106,087	- 136,127	- 212,268	- 184,170	- 43,844
8 Shikoku	- 90,501	- 91,757	- 176,899	- 196,896	- 111,049	- 236,757	- 296,543	- 277,751	- 183,065
9 Kyushu	- 165,231	- 59,272	- 185,230	- 145,065	- 99,105	- 384,469	- 778,642	- 1,102,070	- 785,411
{ KitaKyushu	- 89,145	+ 75	- 34,816	+ 104,332	+ 29,744	- 129,957	- 347,170	- 642,234	- 410,632
{ Minami-Kyushu	- 76,086	- 59,347	- 150,414	- 249,397	- 128,849	- 253,512	- 431,472	- 459,836	- 374,779

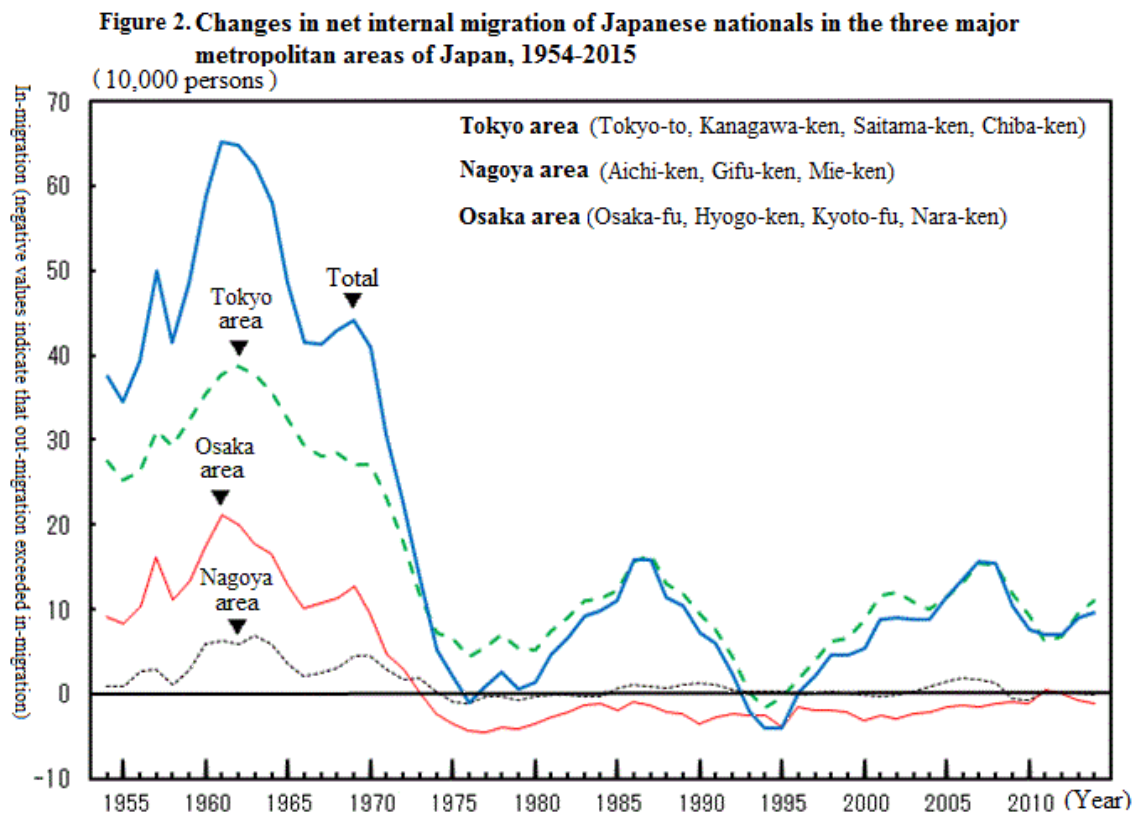
This table shows changes in net migration by region, in reference to prefectural results from the Census and Population Survey Report (Statistics Bureau, 2011, Population Census 2010).

Regional categorization is as follows: Tohoku includes Aomori-ken, Akita-ken, Miyagi-ken, Yamagata-ken, and Fukushima-ken. Kita-Kanto includes Ibaraki-ken, Tochigi-ken, and Gunma-ken. Minami-Kanto includes Tokyo-to, Kanagawa-ken, Saitama-ken, and Chiba-ken. Hokuriku/Tosan includes Niigata-ken, Toyama-ken, Ishikawa-ken, Fukui-ken, Yamanashi-ken, and Nagano-ken. Tokai includes Aichi-ken, Gifu-ken, Mie-ken, and Shizuoka-ken. Keihanshin includes Osaka-fu, Kyoto-fu, and Hyogo-ken. Kinki and others include Shiga-ken, Nara-ken, and Wakayama-ken. Sanin includes Tottori-ken and Shimane-ken. Sanyo includes Okayama-ken, Hiroshima-ken, and Yamaguchi-ken. Shikoku includes Kagawa-ken, Ehime-ken, Tokushima-ken, and Kochi-ken. Kita-kyushu includes Fukuoka-ken, Saga-ken, Nagasaki-ken, and Oita-ken. Minami-kyushu includes Kumamoto-ken, Miyazaki-ken, and Kagoshima-ken.

Source: Kuroda, Toshio. *Nihon Jinko no Tenkan Kozo* [Japan's Changing Population Structure], rev. ed. (Tokyo: Kokon Shoin, 1979), 21. [Caption has been revised.]



Figure 1. Map of Japan divided by region



This post-war influx of population to metropolitan areas, however, decreased rapidly after 1970 in the midst of rapid economic growth (See Figure 2). During the 1980s, only the population of the Tokyo area increased, while that of Nagoya stagnated and that of Osaka decreased. Furthermore, the number of urban migrants declined. This indicates that, after the 1980s, migration from city to city and within the same urban area became a major factor of the increase in the urban population. According to Namiki (1960), Honda (1950), and Nojiri (1942), the majority of rural migrants who moved to urban areas during the pre-war era were farmers. Approximately 8 million people left their farming villages and moved to urban areas between 1920 and 1940, representing an annual influx of about 400,000.

2. Urban Migrants and Hometown-Based Associations

(1) Internal migration for the purpose of education and employment

Rural residents decided to move to urban areas for two major reasons: education and employment. However, these choices were affected by socioeconomic class. For example, during the pre-war era, a considerable number of the children of rural corporate managers, self-employed business owners, and landowners in provincial towns migrated to Tokyo, the Keihanshin area, or prefectural capitals in pursuit of better educational opportunities. Then, after graduation, they used their improved educational backgrounds to become white-collar workers in private firms, civil-service workers, bureaucrats or teachers in metropolitan areas or prefectural capitals. The migrants who pursued higher education in urban areas placed importance on the relationships they built as alumni of the same schools to create social ties in the cities in which they now resided.

On the other hand, during the same period, many children (second sons, third sons, and daughters) of poor farmers (tenant farmers in particular) or those of small business apprentices and laborers, moved out of their rural hometowns in pursuit of urban employment. They migrated to the metropolitan areas and suburbs that had thriving mining and manufacturing industries, where they were hired by small business owners or self-employed business owners as apprentices or workers in back-alley tenements (a pre-modern type of employment relationship), or became miners or factory workers. These migrants therefore transferred the socioeconomic status that they had had in their villages directly to the cities.

(2) Formation of urban hometown-based associations/*do-kyo-kai*

During the pre-war era and soon after wartime, urban migrants sought employment through agents who circulated around rural towns, or used the “connections” that they

had acquired through kinship or relationships with others from the same hometown who had already lived in urban areas. During the pre-war period, many urban migrants regarded their urban lives as a temporary settlement, and therefore transferred their hometown networks to urban areas.

The networks that they maintained from their hometowns became the foundation of hometown-based associations. Migrants depended on the relationships that they had cultivated in their hometowns to survive the labors and severe living conditions of the cities. When urban migration began, social welfare (the Homen-Iin/Minsei-Jido-Iin system,⁴ welfare system, etc.) and regional policies (such as the formation of health unions or neighborhood associations through which neighbors could mutually support one another) were still underdeveloped, and labor movements had yet to be established. Therefore, it seems reasonable that these migrants sought to maintain their livelihoods by relying on support from relatives and individuals from the same provincial towns. As a result, hometown-based associations were founded in urban areas to create and maintain networks or ties among individuals from the same towns or in the same ethnic groups. So-called “*do-kyo-kai*,” “*kyoyukai*,” or “*kyotou*” became the center of these networks, with influential people who had migrated earlier as the core of these groups. These were the ones who transferred local cultural characteristics, behavioral patterns, and group formation patterns to the cities (Dore, 1962). Using such networks, they mutually assisted one another to sustain their urban lives.

⁴ “Homen-Iin” and “Minsei-Jido-Iin” are regional social welfare organizations that were created by Japanese government. “Homen-Iin” was created during the pre-war era, and “Minsei-Jido-Iin” was created in the post-war period. Influential residents of the region were appointed to provide welfare services such as giving aid to the poor.

(3) Early aspects of hometown-based associations and *kenjinkai*

From my perspective, most of the hometown-based associations (*do-kyo-kai*) organized before the late 1890s (Meiji 30s) were established by former samurai or wealthy merchants who migrated to Tokyo or Osaka. Most of these members were influential individuals who lived in former provinces or county areas. The majority of these individuals were alumni of “middle schools” that originated from old province feudal schools. They formed associations in the metropolitan areas such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto or prefectural capitals, where they established contact with those from the same hometown who had migrated to the cities to pursue higher education. In some cases, in addition to regular acceptance procedures, associations accepted those who had returned to their hometowns and those who had remained in neighboring cities. Whether they lived in a metropolitan area or had returned to their hometown, these members made up a group of local notables and “elites.” In some cases, these groups came together and became a core organization of each *kenjinkai*⁵(Sofue, 1971).

Kenjinkai probably have a longer history than *do-kyo-kai*. It is estimated that *kenjinkai* were first formed sometime during the early and mid-Meiji period. In most cases, local elites were the central figures of these associations. Based on their love for the prefecture or old province in which they were raised, they provided a variety of resources to *kenjinkai*. The following events were held or organized at *kenjinkai*: social gatherings such as general assemblies and end-of-year parties; publishing newsletters; preparing food and local products for festivals and fairs; and cheering for hometown teams during *koshien* (high school baseball tournaments) and national *ekiden* (marathon relay races). At present, *kenjinkai* suffer from declining participation among young and middle-age

⁵ *Kenjinkai* are the associations organized by the people from the same prefecture.

fellows. On the other hand, they have strengthened their relationships with prefectural governments through the One Village One Product movement, and thereby provide support for their home prefectures. In addition, each *kenjinkai* implemented support activities in the prefectures affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011. According to my research, no *to/fu/kenjinkai* were organized by those from the metropolitan areas such as Tokyo, Kanagawa, Aichi, Osaka, Kyoto, and Hyogo.

These *kenjinkai* cooperate with *do-kyo-kai* in a variety of ways. Some *kenjinkai* and *do-kyo-kai* are formally grouped together as umbrella or wing organizations. Yet, there are other *do-kyo-kai* that operate independently without any ties to *kenjinkai*. Even if *do-kyo-kai* are associated with *kenjinkai*, they are seemingly involved with each other only structurally or just for the record. In actuality, they maintain their own independent operation procedures with a strong sense of attachment to particular hometown municipalities. Above all, *do-kyo-kai* have smaller, much more complicated structures that consist of closely connected individuals, and have particularly active participation among women, children, and elderly people. *Do-kyo-kai* are therefore based on surrounding living and work environments, blood ties, and neighboring villages (*mura*). Michiharu Matsumoto, the first to study hometown-based associations on a full scale, observed that *do-kyo-kai* or *kyoyukai* are formed by villagers as an archetype of hometown-based associations (Matsumoto, 1994).⁶

(4) Hometown-based associations (*do-kyo-kai=dokyodantai*) after the formation of modern cities

⁶ In addition, elementary and middle school reunions (in the case of rural areas, high school reunions) served as a part of the network among those from the same region, and their members would overlap. In these reunions, there was no gender gap between women and men; women would lead the conduct of general events, including class gatherings, while middle-aged or elderly men were more likely to become board members of the reunions of long-established high schools.

① Activities of hometown-based associations

These hometown-based associations were primarily organized by influential people who migrated earlier and settled in the cities. *Do-kyo-kai* served four major functions for newcomers. First, they provided accommodations (rental rooms or referrals to rental houses, etc.) for their fellow migrants from the same hometown. Second, they assisted in finding employment for their fellows. Third, they mutually supported each other by providing living expenses and the wherewithal to start their own businesses by consulting with each other about personal affairs or by matchmaking with potential partners. Fourth, they organized socials under the name of New Year's parties, general assemblies, cherry blossom viewings, or sports days. *Do-kyo-kai* ranged in size from more than a dozen to over 1,000 members, but most comprised up to about 300 members, including spouses and children.

As associations became more organized, some groups began to issue newsletters, commemorative journals, and mailing lists, plan small overnight bus/train tours, and organize trips to visit their hometowns. Some groups made donations to their hometowns; for instance, they would donate to Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in their hometowns, provide equipment to local assembly houses, or donate books and musical instruments (piano and brass band instruments) to local elementary and junior high schools. They therefore have become very reliable associations to provide for their home cities, towns, and villages.

② Categories of hometown-based associations

These hometown-based associations can be divided into four categories according to the members' residence status (whether they live collectively in a particular community in the city, or dispersed throughout the city) and the types of members' occupations

(whether they work in specific industry or have various career types) as follows:

- i. Collective Living—Different Type of Occupations (This type was the majority at the early stage of *do-kyo-kai* development)
- ii. Collective Living—Specific Occupations (For example, industries related to Nishijin Textiles in Kyoto city, and wholesale and retail kimono industries located in Nihonbashi, Chuo-ku, Tokyo)
- iii. Dispersed Living—Different Types of Occupations (More likely, this can be applied to *do-kyo-kai* that have been established for 10–20 years)
- iv. Dispersed Living—Specific Occupations (bathhouses, tofu producers and sellers, and milk dealers in Osaka and Kyoto, and bathhouses and restaurants in Tokyo, etc.)

3. Previous Studies on Hometown-Based Associations

(1) The discovery of the networks created by the people from the same hometown in urban city

During the pre-war era, Yanagita (1929 [1998]) referred to these associations as “*kyo-yu-kai*”, while Aruga (1929 [1971]) referred to them as “*kyo-to*” and Miyamoto (1984) as “*kyodojinkai*.” Many scholars regarded hometown-based associations as uniquely characteristic of urban formation in Japan. However, sociologists and social scientists had not fully treated hometown-based associations as the subject of their research. It was only after Kamishima (1961) pointed out the formation of fictional “second villages” during the process of modernization in Japan that hometown-based associations became the subject of attention in the social sciences. However, little empirical research was conducted by social scientists, including Kamishima. Only Sofue (1971) included empirical evidence on *kenjinkai*.

(2) Matsumoto's field research on hometown-based associations and towns and villages in Japan

Michiharu Matsumoto, who conducted a sociological study on farming villages and regional communities, came to know "*kyoto toga kyoyu-kai*" while he was conducting fieldwork in Nishijin, Kyoto city, during the 1960s. "*Kyoto toga kyoyu-kai*" was a *do-kyo-kai* organized by twine makers⁷ in Nishijin who came from Toga village in Toyama Prefecture in the pre-war period. After relocating to Kyoto to work for the Nishijin brocade industry, they mutually supported and encouraged each other, living in a remote area far from their home village. For example, they built a common grave in Otani Hombyo in 1933 (Showa 8) and held a joint memorial service (Photo 1). They formed "*kyoto toga kyoyu-kai*" in 1949, soon after the war ended, as a result of their activities over those years. Several years later, their community network started to look like a virtual "village" in the urban city, as they built a community hall (named "Toga Kyoyu Kaikan"; Photo 2) and issued newsletters. Furthermore, they maintained a close relationship with the residents of their hometown and Toga village's administration by occasionally visiting Toyama as a group of natives from Toga village.

⁷ This is the industry in which twine is strung into certain thicknesses for use in woven goods.

Photo 1: Common grave in Otani Hombyo



Photo 2: Toga Kyoyu Kaikan in Nishijin Kyoto



Photo 3: Traditional dance in Toga Kyoyu Kaikan



In the early 1980s, under the direction of Matsumoto, “*Toshi Iju Kenkyukai* (The Study Group for Urban Migration)” was formed. The members of this group, including myself, conducted field studies on groups of residents of Amagasaki, Hyogo, who had migrated from the Kokishima Islands, Kagoshima Prefecture. We divided the subjects into small units according to the settlements of their origin, and collected data on their home settlements in the Kokishima Islands in the East China Sea, and the government office of the administrative village. Through this study, we discovered that the residents of 14 settlements in the Kokishima Islands had formed hometown-based associations according to their home settlements in metropolitan areas—Keihanshin and the Tokyo area—to promote friendship within groups and offer mutual support for sustainable living within those cities.

With this result in mind, in 1984, Matsumoto conducted a nationwide postal

questionnaire survey of 2,604 administrative governments of towns and villages to inquire about hometown-based associations (*do-kyo-kai*) formed by natives in the cities they migrated to. Based on the results (response rate: 52.8%), he found that 43.9% of the local government offices acknowledged the existence of hometown-based associations, whether they were based in settlements, in administrative towns or villages, or in other communities, created by migrants in the cities that they moved to. Through this investigation, Matsumoto also identified 990 existing *do-kyo-kai* nationwide.

Matsumoto (1994) also conducted a questionnaire survey on *do-kyo-kai* board members, receiving responses from 518 groups out of 990 groups.

4. Nationwide Survey on Hometown-based Associations

(1) Research background

Following Matsumoto's research on town and village administrations throughout Japan, I performed a questionnaire survey on 3,250 administrative governments of the cities, wards, towns, and villages (including the wards of Tokyo) throughout Japan starting in 1995. The objectives of this research were as follows:

1. By including city and ward offices as the targets of my research, I aimed to reveal whether hometown-based associations exist in city areas that were formed by merging surrounding villages into the city during the period between 1953 and 1955 as a result of the Act for the Promotion of Merger of Towns and Villages.
2. To delineate the condition of *do-kyo-kai* after the end of the rapid economic growth from that of the bubble economy period, which saw a rapid decrease in the urban migration and a decline in employment for urban migrants.

I received responses from more than 80% of the administrative governments

nationwide.

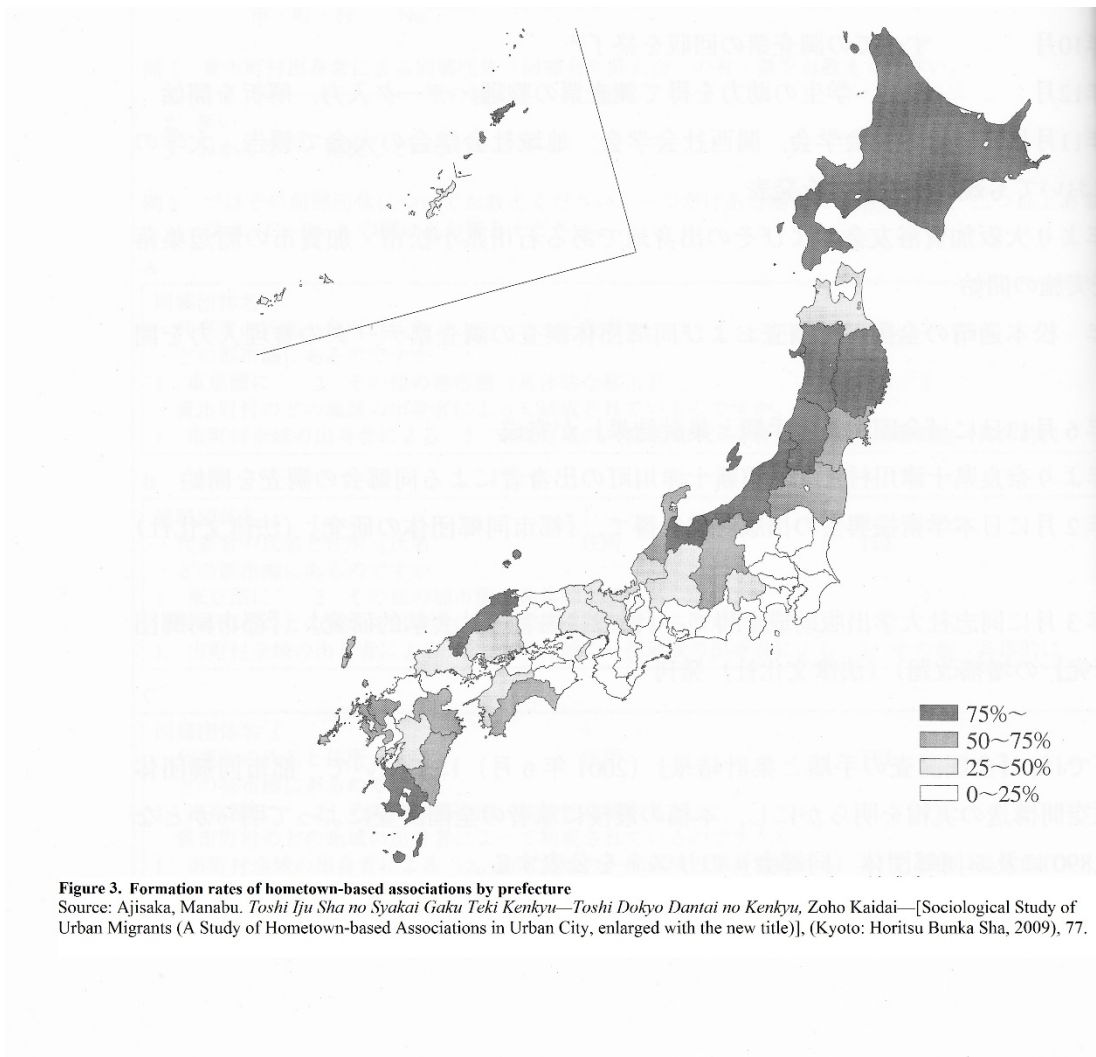
(2) Regional and spatial distributions of hometown-based associations

I conducted a nationwide postal questionnaire survey on 3,255 municipal governments (every government, including the 23 special ward offices of Tokyo, excluding northern territories) of cities, wards, towns and villages (hereafter nationwide survey) from the summer of 1995 to the fall of 1997.⁸ A total of 2,654 governments (response rate: 81.5%) responded. Based on an analysis of the results, 41.5% of municipal offices (city area: 30.2%; town and village area: 44.6%) knew of the presence of hometown-based associations from their area. This result indicates that, while the majority of migrants from towns and villages founded *do-kyo-kai* (44.6%), more than 30% of migrants from the city also formed *do-kyo-kai* in the metropolitan cities that they migrated to. The reasons why those from the city established *do-kyo-kai* may be explained by the fact that some former villages and towns were merged to form cities. Moreover, in the case of provincial cities, it can be said that the natives of those cities nurtured strong networks among the people from the same areas. A total of 1,924 *do-kyo-kai* were identified, only including the response from the cities, towns, and villages (excluding wards). When investigated in greater detail, 25 *do-kyo-kai* were formed across multiple regions (59 municipal offices had multiple answers). Since 34 of the same *do-kyo-kai* had multiple offices, it can be suspected that 1,890 *do-kyo-kai* existed during the period of my survey.

⁸ Here I referred to the most recent version of *Zenkoku Shi Cho Son Yoran* [Directory of Cities, Towns, and Villages in Japan], which is published annually, every time I sent out questionnaires. I have conducted this research for over 2 years, and during that time, some municipalities have merged. Within these 2 years, the number of cities and towns increased by three, while the number of villages decreased by six.

There are regional tendencies for the formation of *do-kyo-kai*. According to this study, natives from Hokkaido, Tohoku (except Aomori), Shinetsu, Hokuriku, and particular prefectures, including Shimane of Chugoku, Kochi of Shikoku, and multiple prefectures of Minami-Kyushu have a high rate of establishing *do-kyo-kai* (See Figure 3 and Ajisaka, 2009). Upon a close investigation of the population size of the municipalities, it is more likely that regions designated as depopulated areas⁹ have a higher percentage of *do-kyo-kai*. According to the survey, 62.7% of *do-kyo-kai* were formed by natives from designated depopulated areas such as farming villages, while 29.9% were established by those from non-designated areas. Nonetheless, it should be noted that about 30% of *do-kyo-kai* were formed by natives of non-designated depopulated areas.

⁹ The national government characterizes depopulated areas as follows: 1) a significant decline in the population; 2) the population of elderly citizens exceeds that of the youth; and 3) weak financial capabilities. These designated depopulated municipalities are able to receive preferential financial treatment.



There seem to be a greater number of hometown-based associations than previously expected throughout Japan, as suggested by the results from Matsumoto’s survey, my study on Niigata natives, Ishihara’s (1986) research on residents of Naha and the Yaeyama region of Okinawa Prefecture, and the survey conducted by Sapporo Educational Committee (Sapporo Kyoiku Inkaei Bunka Shiryo Shitsu, 1990). My postal questionnaire survey was limited because there were some cases in which the respondents simply did not acknowledge whether their former residents had founded a *do-kyo-kai* in the places they migrated to.

While there are provincial differences among members, more *do-kyo-kai* are

established in the Tokyo area, Keihanshin, and prefectural capitals (See Figure 4, Table 3). My survey revealed that 1,890 *do-kyo-kai* currently exist throughout Japan, distributed as follows: 944 in the Tokyo area; 326 in Keihanshin; and 67 in the Nagoya area. Regarding rural cities, there are 131 in the Sapporo area, 34 in Hiroshima, 26 in Sendai, 23 in Kagoshima, and more than 10 each in the cities of Kochi, Fukuoka, Naha, Takamatsu, Nagasaki, and Kumamoto. Furthermore, some *do-kyo-kai* were established in small- and medium-size cities or towns, or even overseas, including the United States.

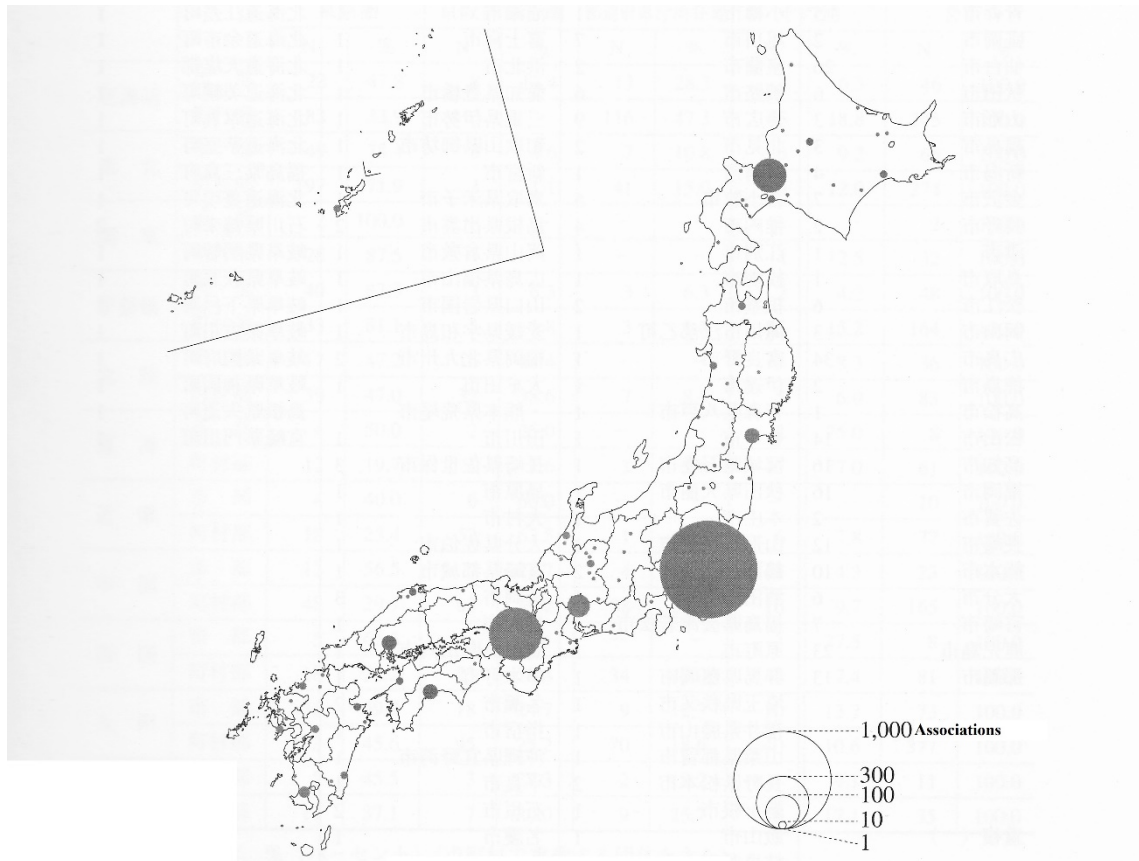


Figure 4. Urban areas in which hometown-based associations were formed
 Source: Ajisaka, Manabu. *Toshi Iju Sha no Syakai Gaku Teki Kenkyu Toshi Dokyo Dantai no Kenkyu*, Zoho Kaidai—[Sociological Study of Urban Migrants (A Study of Hometown-based Associations in Urban City, enlarged with the new title)], (Kyoto: Horitsu Bunka Sha, 2009), 78.

Table 3. Distribution of urban areas in which hometown-based associations were formed

	Based in multiple locations	Based in a single location
Tokyo area	958	944
Keihanshin area	343	326
Chukyo area	67	67
Other prefectural capitals	358	356
Other urban area	119	119
Towns and villages	19	19
Doesn't have particular base for their activity/ Has members nationwide	8	8
Founded within specific prefecture	31	30
N.A.	15	15
Foreign countries	6	6
Total	1924	1890

There are a number of cases in which the same natives from the same home municipalities organized associations across multiple metropolitan areas. As illustrated in Table 4, migrants from towns and villages in Hokkaido and those from cities, towns, and villages in Tohoku, Koshinetsu mainly established *do-kyo-kai* in the Tokyo area and prefectural capitals. This shows that they have two main bases for associations. The Nagoya area, which is included in “Other,” has the highest number of established *do-kyo-kai* in the Tokai region. The migrants from the city of Hokkaido; the cities, towns, and villages of Hokuriku, Kinki, and Chugoku; the towns and villages of Shikoku; and the cities, towns, and villages of Kyushu, Okinawa, having three bases for their activities, are more likely to form *do-kyo-kai* in the Tokyo area, Keihanshin area, and prefectural capitals,. In addition, it is very interesting to note that the people from towns and villages in Hokkaido, Tohoku, Koshinetsu, and Kyushu established *do-kyo-kai* in main suburbs as opposed to those mentioned previously.

Table 4. Urban areas in which hometown-based associations were formed, according to region

		Tokyo area		Keihanshin area		Prefectural capitals		Other		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Hokkaido	City area	22	47.8	8	17.4	13	28.3	3	6.5	46	100.0
	Towns & villages	83	33.9	—	—	116	47.3	46	18.8	245	100.0
Tohoku	City area	49	75.4	3	4.6	7	10.8	6	9.2	65	100.0
	Towns & villages	197	71.9	3	1.1	41	15.0	33	12.0	274	100.0
Kanto	City area	2	100.0	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	100.0
	Towns & villages	28	87.5	—	—	—	—	4	12.5	32	100.0
Koshinetsu	City Area	40	83.3	3	6.3	3	6.3	2	4.2	48	100.0
	Towns & villages	133	81.1	3	1.8	3	1.8	25	15.2	164	100.0
Hokuriku	City area	17	47.2	16	44.4	—	—	3	8.3	36	100.0
	Towns & villages	39	47.0	32	38.6	7	8.4	5	6.0	83	100.0
Tokai	City area	4	50.0	2	25.0	—	—	2	25.0	8	100.0
	Towns & villages	12	19.7	1	1.6	1	1.6	47	77.0	61	100.0
Kinki	City area	4	40.0	6	60.0	—	—	—	—	10	100.0
	Towns & villages	18	23.4	52	67.5	1	1.3	6	7.8	77	100.0
Chugoku	City Area	13	56.5	5	21.7	4	17.4	1	4.3	23	100.0
	Towns & villages	48	29.1	63	38.2	38	23.0	16	9.7	165	100.0
Shikoku	City area	5	62.5	—	—	—	—	3	37.5	8	100.0
	Towns & villages	18	22.2	23	28.4	34	42.0	6	7.4	81	100.0
Kyushu	City area	36	49.3	18	24.7	9	12.3	10	13.7	73	100.0
	Towns & villages	172	45.6	95	25.2	70	18.6	40	10.6	377	100.0
Okinawa	City area	5	45.5	3	27.3	2	18.2	1	9.1	11	100.0
	Towns & villages	13	37.1	7	20.0	9	25.7	6	17.1	35	100.0

Note: Data include associations based in multiple regions.

Source: Ajisaka, Manabu. *Toshi Iju Sha no Syakai Gaku Teki Kenkyu Toshi Dokyo Dantai no Kenkyu*, Zoho Kaidai—[Sociological Study of Urban Migrants (A Study of Hometown-based Associations in Urban City, enlarged with the new title)], (Kyoto: Horitsu Bunka Sha, 2009), 79.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of my survey, I have explained the circumstances surrounding the establishment and existence of *do-kyo-kai*. According to my analysis, it can be said that, for urban migrants from rural areas, particularly those who migrated in pursuit of employment while maintaining networks from their hometowns, the *do-kyo-kai* functioned as their “incubator” and “rhizome” to enable them to survive and smoothly settle into their urban lives. Using Matsumoto’s survey as a reference, the results of this

study confirmed the universal existence of hometown-based associations. This survey also confirmed that many associations were founded during the later period of rapid economic growth in Japan, and that such groups were increasingly active during the 1970s and 1980s. This finding indicates that, in some aspects, the networks between the people from the same hometown were actually strengthened, not weakened, in urban settings. It also seems that, in addition to participating in *do-kyo-kai*, these individuals had a variety of other neighborly relationships in their cities of residence, such as workplace and local community networks. It is therefore inferable that their experiences with *do-kyo-kai* or *kenjinkai* had some impact on their activities or on the way they related to neighboring communities and established occupational relationships.

As my later research shows, substantially more natives from rural areas have founded hometown-based associations. Furthermore, it is clear that almost all of the prefectural *kenjinkai* and their head offices are located in Tokyo and Osaka. However, it is also true that an increasing number of hometown-based associations are becoming inactive. This is not only because the number of migrants from rural areas has declined, but also because of the aging of the original members and the fewer numbers of second and third generation migrants that participate in such associations.

In addition, due to the large number of towns and villages that were merged into cities since 1999, the 3,255 cities, wards, towns, and villages that existed in April 1995 were more than halved to 1,700 by March 2015. In particular, a rural exodus created an increasing number of marginal villages (Ajisaka 2011, 2012), and, as a result of mergers, the number of villages and towns that sent many urban migrants into the cities to form hometown-based associations decreased substantially. Cities therefore became broad municipalities that included large numbers of former villages, and many *do-kyo-kai*

founded during the Showa era became detached from the settlements, villages, or towns of their origin. On the other hand, urban residents who are from the areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquakes actively gave assistance to their hometowns and villages. This indicated that some *do-kyo-kai* networks still function and remain active, despite the difficulties that they face.

In addition, a study on foreign residents and visitors in Japan (Ijichi, 2000) revealed the presence of *do-kyo-kai* or *so-shin-kai* actively run by Korean residents in the Osaka area, and that people of Chinese origin in Japan maintain similar networks led by elder Chinese residents.

Furthermore, as Matsuda (1996), Tanada (1999), Onai (2009) and Ijichi (2000) have revealed, new foreign immigrants, including Chinese, Korean, people of African descent, Japanese Brazilians, and Peruvians, for instance, also create networks and ethnic business among those from the same community. The study on hometown-based associations can therefore be associated with ethnic studies, in addition to existing studies that describe the relationships between migration and settlement and urban cities and rural municipalities.

The presence of hometown-based association and the creation of networks among these urban migrants can provide different perspectives regarding the process of urbanization and the creation of a modern urban society. That is to say, the formation of *do-kyo-kai* and the maintenance of strong networks of people from the same hometowns in urban areas can provide new and complex perspectives to existing theories of urbanism by Chicago school scholars such as Louis Wirth, who claims that urbanity and the urban style of living only has a one-sided influence on rural areas, and that in the urban setting, secondary relationships substitute for primary relationships, leading to the breaking down

of communities.

The formation of hometown-based associations and their maintenance of community relationships are not unique in Japanese urban society. Similar networks are also found in the United States. As Whyte (1943) pointed out, Little Italy in the Boston area continues to hold traditional festivals in reference to their hometowns. As Gans (1962) illustrates, residents of the Boston area who came from southern Italy also maintain networks based on their place of origin. In addition, Hareven (1982) delineates the way people from farming villages of New England relied on those from the same hometown. They used the community to interact with people of the same origin, exchange knowledge for survival in the urban setting, and mutually assist each other in solving problems they faced with their families and jobs as factory laborers. In his recent study, Levitt (2001) referred to migrants who maintain their connection to their country of origin as “transnational villagers.” There are also many cases in Paris in which people from the same hometown engage in the same business, such as restaurants and cafés, and form associations similar to *do-kyo-kai* and *kenjinkai* (Girard, 1979).

In conclusion, by clarifying these situations, I seek to revise the Chicago School thesis arguing that “lives in urban society are spatially cohesive but socially remote.” In contrast, I argue that “lives in urban society are spatially cohesive but inclined to be remote. However, in urban society, people also form new networks, including personal relationships that migrants maintain from their hometowns, to survive the urban environment.” That is to say, urban cities and rural villages are interrelated and mutually assimilate each other in the course of modern urbanization.

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