

**THE SOCIAL ROLE AND POSITION OF ELDERLY IN ORDER TO SUSTAIN
RURAL LIFE IN JAPAN**

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Paper Prepared for XII World Congress of Rural Sociology, Goyang-Korea, July 6-11, 2008

1. INTRODUCTION

As generally known, Japan is one of the most aged society in the world. First of all, we would like to consider the background of the population change in Japan.

Until late of 17th century, Japan had a static population structure, which increased only 10 million in about 200 years. Since Meiji era (1872), total population of Japan reached from 35 million to 127 million people only in about 100 years (Tokuno; 1999) (Figure 1). Besides, it can be said that, since Meiji era, Japan basically promoted the industrialization by using this population increasing as a main source.

Since late of 1950's, during rapid economic development, migration became more remarkable and especially in 1960s, migration was characterized by urbanization that many people from rural areas moved to the larger metropolitan areas in order to get better jobs and education. Therefore, because of this, huge young labor force in urban cities, Japan succeeded economic development in 20 years.

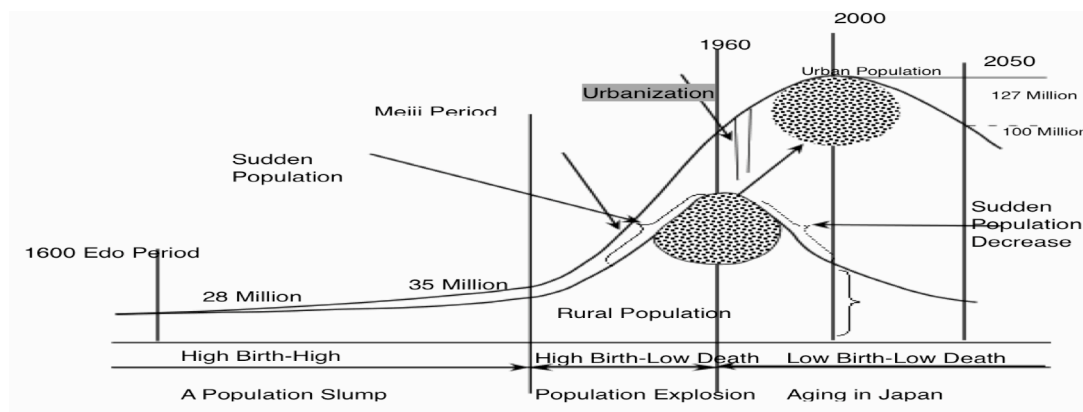


Figure 1: Demographic Change in Japan

Source: Tokuno, S. 1999. "Research of the people in rural society in population increasing times", Kumamoto University Publishing (In Japanese)

Today, Japan is an economical power in the world. At first glance, this period is generally considered from the viewpoints of economical development. However, in 1970's, because of the industrialization and urbanization, Japanese society had to face to various problems such as low fertility and low mortality (i.e., high life expectancy) which caused the population aging.

In 1947 (after WW II), Total Fertility Rate (TFR) was 4.54. Since 1950's, there were many social factors that affected the fertility rate such as the expansion of family planning, high education, increasing in participation of women in the labor force, late marriage, small living spaces, and the high costs of child education and so on. Hence, because of the factors that were mentioned above, TFR decreased about four times from 4.54 to 1.32 within 50 years (MHLW 2007).

Besides, mainly since 1950's, life expectancy at birth completely changed with the development of medical sciences and expanding of hygiene consciousness and some other factors. At the end of WW II, life expectancy at birth was about 50 years for both

male and female. Today (2006), has increased 30 years more and extended to 85.59 years for female and 78.64 years for male (Statistics Bureau, MIC 2007).

In 1970's, with the low fertility and low mortality, Japan became an aging society in a short time. In 1950 only 4.9% of the population was 65 years and older. Then, elder population in Japan accounted for only 7.1% of the total population in 1970, 24 years later in 1994, it had almost doubled in scale, to 14.1%. Today (2008), 21.9% of the total population is over 65 years old (Statistics Bureau, MIC 2008). Moreover, Japanese National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (JPSS) estimates that in 2050 population of 65 years and older will keep increasing and compose about 40% of the total population.

Population change and aging in rural Japan

In terms of population aging, Japanese rural is qualitatively and quantitatively different from urban. Aging is not a new problem for rural areas. Before 1980's, population aging was already existed. It began in rural Japan about 30 years before than the urban and since then, aging in rural has been one of the most important problems (Figure 1).

Since late 1950s rural population in Japan began to decrease and experienced aging by the migration of the young population to urban. In early 1970s, population decrease in rural area began to be held as a problem by Japanese researchers. Particularly, Adachi and others (Adachi; 1981a, 1981b, Imai; 1968) started to research this problem. They mentioned that, because of the decrease in village population, rural community would dismantle in one day. Furthermore, they considered that because of the population movement, rural community wouldn't be able to maintain daily life functions anymore. Then, some problems such as caring of elder people, insufficiency of successor would arise. In late of 1960s, rural community was composed of only children and elderly. As Yamamoto (1996) points out, when population decreasing and aging appeared at first time, it was only concerned with the drift of young population away from rural, which was "Social Decrease". However, in 1990s, the content of population decreasing and aging in rural changed. As time passed, TFR decreased and the rural population switched from "Social Decrease" to "Natural Decrease" (Yamamoto; 1996, 199 - 215).

2. RURAL SUSTAINABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN JAPAN

Up to present, Japanese rural society has been experiencing many social problems such as aging, decrease on fertility rates, succession of household, etc., which based on demographic changes. Up to now, daily life of the rural society has been achieved by making the young population (particularly males) the successors in the village. In other words, in terms of maintaining daily life and agriculture, mostly young male (eldest son of the family) used to have a central role in rural society. However, since 1950-60s, because of the urbanization, young population started to move to urban and as a result of the decrease on fertility rates and increase in life expectancy and aging, rural society has begun to loose its functions in order to maintain daily life and agricultural productivity.

Then, in order to create a new future for rural society, many policies and activities have been carried out in Japan. Most of these policies and/or activities mainly focused on an economical development by increasing rural population with external sources such as urban dwellers (we call them "the strangers"), which are totally irrelevant to daily life

and future of rural society. It is of course deniable that rural society has been declining its ability in order to resolve internal problems and sustain itself within depopulation and aging without effective social policies. However, it doesn't mean that rural society will be maintained and promoted only by economical policies and/or activities, which are based on the population exchanging such as "Urban-Rural Interchanges" or "Green Tourism" (Tokuno 2008). In Japan, there is still common consciousness on regional development policies, which says "the more population the more development". This common consciousness has a background. Japanese population rapidly increased about four times within 100 years and in this period Japan experienced huge economical development and industrialization. In other words, in Japan, it is thought that the increase in population enhanced the economical development. So that, today as it can be seen from many policies concerning rural society, the common consciousness as "Population Increasing = Economical Development" is still very strong. Hence, rural development policies such as "Urban-Rural Interchanges" or "Green Tourism" are also based on the population exchange. However, it is certain that both total and rural population of Japan has started to decrease and there will not be any population increase in the future. Therefore, it is not difficult to say that those development policies and/or projects will not be able to be the main method to make the rural society better. As a result, we can say that creating a new perspective for rural society is getting more important.

"Ghost Members" of the rural society in Japan

On the other hand, "rural elderly", "rural women" and their "children who live in urban" were not given a role as young population had and they were counted as "ghost members" (or "invisible members") in terms of maintenance daily life and creating a future for the rural (Figure 2). In 1950's, there was no population aging and also, there were enough young population in order to maintain daily life, future and agriculture. However, today, aging and low fertility are becoming more serious problems. Besides, elderly population is composing 58.1% of agricultural work force and 31.6% of farmer population. And today, the daily life of rural community is more dependent on the elder people than it was. Through these facts, here, we would like to analyze both elderly and their children who live in urban to understand that whether they have any possibility or not as a source for sustainability of the rural community in Japan.

Rural elderly image in Japan

Elderly people have generally become a subject of the social sciences since the 1970's. Moreover, studies on the elderly in Japan have focused mainly on the individual problems. Social participation and activity in later life, (Fujisaki 1995, Kinoshita 2003, Maeda 2003, Hotta 2003, Koyano 1983, Kagawa et al 1994, Takano 2002, Suda 2003, Sudo 1988), well-being, life satisfaction, social support, and the relationship between generations (Matsuda et al 1998, Weiss et al 2005, Mori 2000, Takano 2001, Inoue 1994) are some examples of the most common researched subjects regarding the elderly. Although these studies usually focused on retired elderly urban male. However, it doesn't mean that there were no studies about the rural elderly. Some researches concerning the rural elderly have been done since the 1980's. Most of these studies showed the correlation between the elderly and agriculture from an economic perspective (Takahashi 2001, Takahashi 2000, Koyama 1986, Kanda 1981, Matsuoka 1989, Hatano et al 1989).

Additionally, some studies have centered on the physical and mental well-being, and life satisfaction from the viewpoints of the individual problems (Isobe 1987, Isobe 2003, Sakuma 1999, Togashi 2007). Hence, it's not hard to figure out that studies concerning the rural elderly have mostly focused on the productivity of the elderly regarding agriculture and individual problems. In other words, most of researches about rural elderly were not interested in social roles, functions and positions of rural elderly in order to maintain the daily life of super-aged rural society in population decreasing era.

Therefore, firstly, we would like to attempt to reconsider the social roles and functions of rural elderly in the daily life of an aged-rural society and discuss their social positions in order to maintain rural daily life.

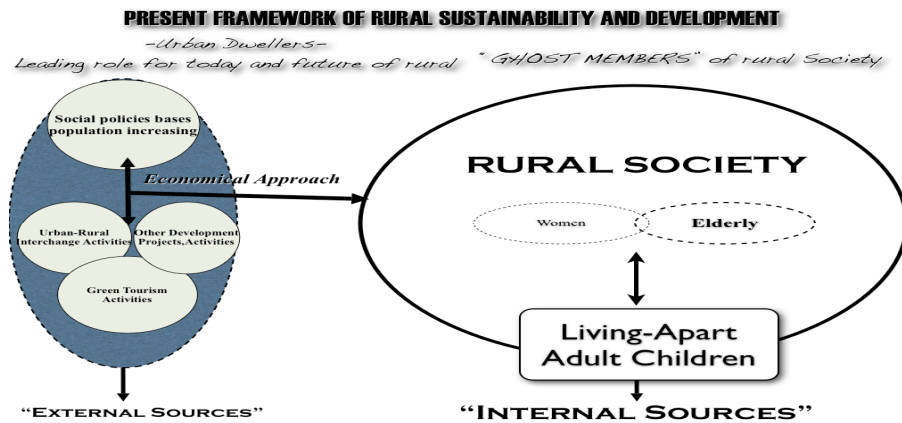


Figure 2: Main Frame of Rural Sustainability and Development

Source: Ozsen Tolga, Kimura Akiko. 2008 "Meaning of Living-Apart Adult Children for Rural Society (for their hometown)", 66th Conferences of Sociological Society of West Japan, 10-11 May 2008, Nagasaki-Japan (In Japanese)

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, we used some different survey data, which were administered by Kumamoto University Sociology Department. Here, we briefly would like to introduce these researches and methods.

Yamato City Social Survey

This Study was designed and administered by Kumamoto University Sociology Department and done in August 2006. In order to collect quantitative data a structured interview method was used. 385 samples were randomly selected from the Basic Resident Registration and 296 of them responded to the survey. The respondents included 150 women and 146 men, ranging from ages 18-80. Among them, 155 respondents are between ages 60 to 79.

Kumamoto City Yamato People Survey

This study was designed and administered by Kumamoto University and Yamato City Office and done in December 2007. The common point of samples was to live in Kumamoto Central City but have a Yamato City resident Registration. Therefore, from Basic Resident Registration form, Yamato City Office randomly selected 305 samples

that moved to Kumamoto Central City. Then “Permission Letter” was sent to all samples by Kumamoto University Sociology Department and 92 of them responded to our letter. Then Kumamoto University Sociology Department Students visited all 92 samples and structured interview method was used in order to collect quantitative data. The respondents included 46 men and 42 women, ranging from ages 18-59.

4. THE RURAL ELDERLY IN ORDER TO SUSTAIN RURAL LIFE

Economical situation of rural elderly

Here, we would like to consider the position of rural elders by using some data from “Yamato City Social Survey 2006”.

Firstly, in this section, we are going to attempt to clarify the economic situation of rural elders. The data given in table 2 show that what kind of occupation rural elderly have. Here, we would like to begin with stating that the meaning of the term “occupation” is different than the “occupation” which was determined by the Ministry of Labor. It is the answer given subjectively by the respondents to the question of what your main occupation is.

So here, we would like to begin with the main type of occupation that the elderly have. 85 of them (54.8%) mentioned that agriculture was their main occupation. Also, when we evaluate the results according to the age group and sex, agriculture was the main occupation for 22 (55%) elderly males and 19 (46.3%) elderly females in their sixties. For the respondents in their seventies, 20 (58.8%) males and 24 (60%) females stated that agriculture is their main occupation. The number of respondents in their sixties who thought agriculture as a main occupation is less than the ones in their seventies.

On the other hand, only 1.2% of the 70 year olds and 30% of the 60 year olds still have full-time employment. The reason of why the 60 year olds are less involved in agriculture than the 70 year olds might be that the 60 year olds are still fully employed. And accordingly, the differences in “occupation” which occurred between these age groups might be attributed for the differences in their social status, roles, and relationships in their daily lives. These data show us that most of elder people in rural area do work/job actively, and as a result contribute to not only his/her life but also contribute to rural society.

Regarding to the “main income”, only 30 (19.4%) of the elderly consider agriculture as their main source of income, whereas, 60 (40.6%) of the elderly consider pension as their main source of income. Therefore, it is clear that pension and salary are the main sources of income for most of the elderly in rural areas. Nevertheless, as can be understood here, a discrepancy stands out. Even though agriculture is the main source of income for 20% of the elderly, more than 50% of them think agriculture as their “main occupation”. Consequently, it is crucial to examine thoroughly the relationship between agriculture and the elderly.

Isolated life or active life

In order to sustain rural daily life, some issues such as mobility or the daily living activities (ADL's) of the elderly, become important. Because, it should be considered that if rural elderly can move independently in daily life, they may have some roles in order to maintain rural life. Therefore, by the using data of “Yamato City Social Survey”, firstly

we would like to consider what kind of places the rural elderly go in their daily life. Secondly, by analyzing their driving ability, we will attempt to consider how the elderly maintain their independence in their mobility. Then, we will be able to discuss whether rural elderly are free in their life or isolated.

As seen in Table 1, it is clear that nearly half of the number of elderly go to the hospital 1-3 times a month. Also, the elderly who go to the hospital almost every day are only 1.2%. By the help of these facts, it is easy to see that the elderly in Yamato town do not have many health problems.

Table 1: Going Out Patterns

%	1-3 times	4-7 times	8-11 times	12- 21 times	Almost Everyday
Hospital	47.7	7.7	3.5	1.2	1.2
City Office	51.6	10.3	3.2	1.2	1.9
Farm, Field	1.9	5.8	3.8	6.4	40
Department Store	27.7	13.5	6.4	4.5	3.2
Restaurant	21.9	3.2	1.2	0.6	0.6
Friends Home	30.3	12.9	5.8	1.9	5.1
Public Hall	41.9	4.5	0.6	0	0
A Spa	23.2	3.2	1.2	1.9	0

Besides, a significant point that we would like to focus on here is “going out to the farmland, field, etc”. As shown in Table 1, nearly half the numbers of elderly go nearly everyday to the farmland and fields. By age groups, 41.1% of males and 52.5% of females in seventies, also 35% of males and 31.7% of females in sixties go to the farm/field everyday. The reason of why the numbers of people in sixties go to the fields is less than the numbers of people in seventies could be that nearly 30% of the elderly in their sixties still have full-time jobs. Moreover, people in seventies, particularly females, have more free time in their daily life than people in sixties have. This is because of some elderly in their sixties still have full-time jobs and other people have some (posts or) duties in the community such as temple/shrine, city/ward office.

Consequently, the elderly, particularly in sixties, in Yamato city are highly active and still have many roles in terms of producing or management in their daily life and most of them go out to the farm. In addition to this, it is not difficult to say that this can be generalized for most of Japanese rural societies. In order to understand whether rural elderly can freely move or not, is also important to consider their status in rural daily life. Besides, the level of independence affects how social relationships are maintained. For this reason, we are going to examine the elder’s mobility by checking their ability to use a car. The data shows that nearly 90% of the elderly males, both in sixties and seventies have a driver’s license, which means that they have the ability to move around independently. On the other hand, 68.2% of female in sixties and 47.5% of female in seventies have driving license.

As a result of this fact, it could be said that nearly half the number of elderly females have the capability to be independently mobile. In addition, today almost all of the Yamato city residents in their 50’s can drive a car. Thus if we think about 10 years later from now, most of the Yamato residents will be independently mobile. This will be an important role for the elderly, not only to lead independent lives, but also to maintain and

improve their social relationships and also manage community. Moreover, by considering that today's rural areas in Japan are changing into "car oriented societies" being independently mobile is very important for these communities. Consequently, it could be said that the elderly of Yamato city, particularly people in sixties, have enough mobility independence to sustain their daily life and relationships within the community.

Relationship in a daily life

To identify the relationship between the elderly and rural community, we need to examine whom they have connection with and the meaning of this connection for them. From these data, it could be said that female elderly have more interaction with their relatives and neighbors than the male elderly have. They also have five times more interaction with their friends than the male elderly have. Besides, it is possible to articulate that male elderly have a more tendency to be dependent on the family (internal) relationship than female elderly in day-to-day life. On the other hand, female elderly have a tendency to be more social in the case of social relationships. In other words, female elderly have quite strong network in rural community, which is valuable in order to sustain the daily life of rural community. As we reveal these facts, the social position and role of female elderly should be reconsidered through the relationship structure.

What do elder people mean to rural society?

As we discussed above, rural elderly (particularly in sixties) in Japan have a high mobility and very active in their daily life. Additionally, female elderly interact with community, which contains relatives, friends and neighbors, more than male elderly do in their daily lives. Masahito Tsuji, Japanese Sociologist, also mentions same that in the case of relationship both in family and community, female elderly is stronger than the male in rural community (Tsuji, 2000; 78-80).

At this point, we would like to discuss what elder population means to the rural community and what they can do in order to maintain/sustain daily life of the rural society. It is possible to explain that the rural elderly have many latent functions in daily life, from the viewpoint of "Manifest and Latent Functions" by Robert Merton. Paul Helm (1971) regards the latent functions as follows: *"It may be that action A has an intended consequence B1, which brings the event B2, however, this is unintended by the agent. But, secondly, it may be that another action C has an unintended consequence D which does not require any manifest, intended consequence of C as one of its necessary condition..."* (Helm, 1971; 52). This perspective makes it possible to discuss the latent functions that the rural elderly have by daily activities.

One of the latent social functions that the elderly have arises from farming and going to fields. For example, when they go to the field, the main intention is to produce agricultural products. However, by farming, the elderly periodically protect and maintain the nature of that area, which is an unintended consequence. Besides, Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries of Japan asserts that agriculture plays many roles in people's life, which is called "Multifunctionality of Agriculture". One of these functions is the "Conservation of Land". As one of the results of this research, we would like to state that "Multifunctionality of Agriculture", particularly "Protection of Nature" is being maintained by periodically farming by the elderly.

Another example for latent functions is mobility situation. The time when elderly go out for shopping or visit a friend's home, shopping and having fun are the main intentions.

However, through these activities “Welfare Function” comes out as an unintended consequence. The elderly can maintain their health conditions by going out that means moving. Also, when elders spend time outdoors, especially very dependent elders, this creates an opportunity to be informally checked out by others. This care, it becomes possible to inspect whether the dependent elders have an urgent need or not. Thus the elderly people are able to take precautions if a sudden and unusual situation arises. For this reason, when an elder person who lives alone passes away, it takes several days to notice in the urban community. But in the rural community it is the opposite. This is because in the rural community, the elderly spends some time outside for socializing, which gives them a chance to observe the local community.

Elder population in rural have not only latent functions, but also a very important roles in terms of management and maintenance of local organizations such as Neighborhood Association, Funeral Group, Chief of Ward, Temple and/or Shrine Managing, The Elderly Club (Senior Citizen’s Club) and they mostly carry on these organizations. From this perspective, we can state that the elderly have vital social positions and roles in order to sustain the daily life of rural community.

However, even though the rural elderly have many important roles and functions in a daily life, it just means that rural elderly have a capability and possibility to maintain the daily life of rural but doesn’t mean that rural elderly can create a future for the rural society. At this point, it is necessary to consider a “new” source for the future of rural community. In present circumstances, it is difficult to create both “external” and “internal” source because of their limitations as mentioned above. Therefore, the new source is supposed to have an economical and mobility power as present “external sources”, also strong social network as present “internal sources”.

5. A NEW PERSPECTIVE FOR THE FUTURE OF RURAL COMMUNITY: The Living-Apart Adult Children

Here, we would like to consider the living-apart adult children as a new source of creating a future of rural community and discuss about this in rural areas (here, Yamato City in Kumamoto Prefecture). From the data of Yamato City Social Survey in 2006, we realized that almost half of adult children, who live in urban, reside in close place that only takes about 1 hour by car (Figure 3).

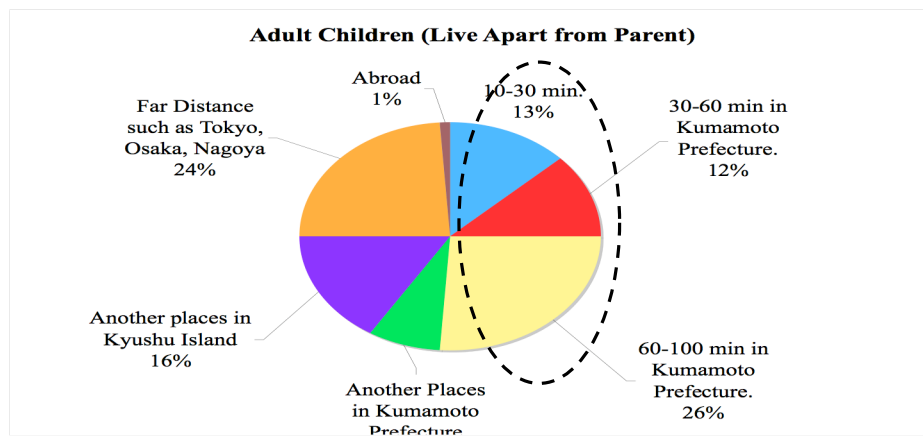


Figure 3: Residence Distance of Adult Children from their hometown

Hence, they can be thought both as an “internal and external” source for rural society. They can integrate with rural society without residing in rural because of their mobility and residence at close distance. These circumstances make roles and functions of adult children live apart in urban more remarkable for rural society as Fukuyo states (2008). Therefore, we would like to consider them not only in terms of agricultural productivity/sustainability, but also from the viewpoint of “creating rural future”.

Before starting to discuss the position and meaning of living-apart adult children to rural community, we would like to review the general position and meaning of these people in Japan.

Living-apart Adult Children Image in Japan

As we mentioned above, rural development policies and/or projects in Japan have been mainly depended on external sources such as urban dwellers and focused on economical development. On the other hand, living-apart adult children are being considered as urban dweller by policy makers and were counted as “Ghost Member” of rural community same as elderly. However they are still member of rural community, organizations and have many kinds of relationships and roles within their hometown. Therefore, it is possible to consider that actually rural society have a big population in urban area and this population is about two times more than today’s rural population.

In Japan, adult children who live in urban have already been research target as a source for the future of rural society in many study fields. Mostly they have been considered as “returnees” that basically means that “residing in rural and being successor of house and agriculture” (Ashida 2006, Araki 1992 and 1994, Sugawara et al 2006, etc.).

However, according to our results from “Kumamoto City Yamato People Survey” in 2007, only 1/4 of adult children who live in urban, are planning to return back to hometown and be successor, sustain family and farming. Besides, as a result of our research in 2007, it is clear that most of living-apart adult children are planning to return back to their hometown “after their children grown up” or “after getting retired” or “when their parents need a care/nursing”. From this fact, it is possible to say that returnee profile will probably change from young age to older age. Consequently, even if adult children return back to hometown, they will be an “elderly” too and the present situation of rural society probably will not change in future. Therefore, we consider that adult children in urban have many limitations and it is quite difficult to depend on them in terms of rural sustainability from the perspective of “return migration”.

Elder support, care and social network are also another fields for which adult children in urban have been a research target (Akagi&Omi 2003, Ishizaka 2002, Ishizaka & Midorikawa 2005, etc.). However, these studies are mostly focused on individual level.

Today, Japanese rural is completely a car-oriented society. According to Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) data, there are 1.55 car for each household (MLIT 2006). On the other hand, researches show that about 3/4 of adult children in urban are living in close distant which is about 1 or 2 hours by car (Ozsen & Kimura 2008, Ashida 2006; 476). Hence, we would like to discuss about meaning and possibility of the living-apart adult children in terms of maintenance rural future.

The Possibility of Living-Apart Adult Children for Rural Future

Because of the scantiness study on living-apart adult children, it is quite difficult to find data. Therefore, here, we would like to consider what the meaning of adult children who live in urban is for their hometown by using data of “Kumamoto Central City Yamato People Case Study”. In this part, we would like to discuss the position and meaning to rural community. In order to consider their meaning and position we will analyze the future plan of living-apart adult children.

Today, one of the most important topics is that whether living-apart adult children go back to hometown or not. In our case study, 26% of respondents mentioned that they had a plan to return back to their hometown. Furthermore, 49% of respondents mentioned that they would return back to hometown when they were “worried about their parents” and 30% of them had a reason such as “protecting the land and family estates”. From these facts, it can be said that the most effective factor for returning back to hometown is family. Therefore, here, we would like to consider the relationship between parents and living-apart adult children.

Figure 4 shows the frequency of visiting parent and hometown. Nearly 20% of respondents visit parent/hometown once a week. Also, half of respondents visit at least once a month. As data show, it is clear that somehow nearly 70% of respondents are keeping in touch with their parents and hometown.

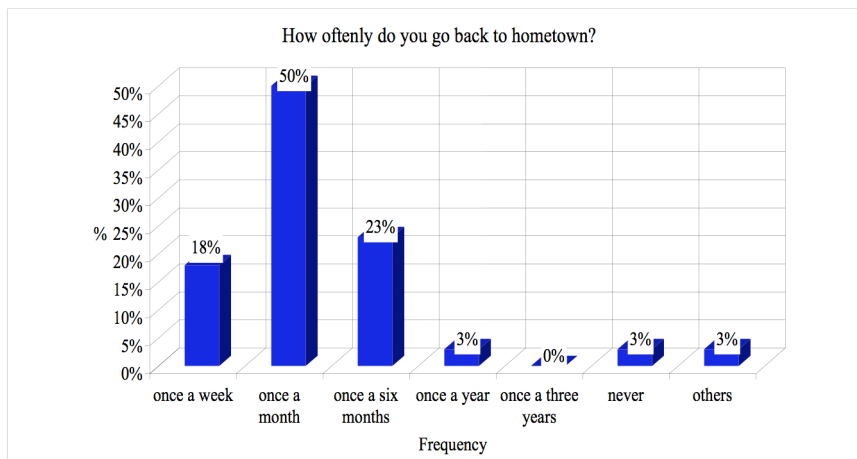


Figure 4: Visiting Parent and Hometown

However, only with this data it is hard to discuss about the relationship between these two. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the content of visits here. Most of children who go back parents' place for a holiday or to visit ancestors' grave and worship. Also, half of adult children who live separately still depend on their parents (mostly elder parents) by taking rice and/or vegetables and so on. Moreover, about half of them still participate in the local festivals and meet with their friends. This means that living-apart children still have a relationship with not only parents (family) but also the community.

Table 2: Content of Visits of Living-Apart Children

Content of Visits	Often (N)	Sometimes (N)	Scarcely (N)	Never (N)
Holidays	69	5	5	4
Visiting a grave	49	22	5	4
Festivals	13	23	8	26
Helping farming	15	20	17	41
Taking vegetables	18	24	5	30
Caring parent	8	10	2	57
For business	7	7	6	54
To meet friends	6	28	10	28
No particular reason	9	24	19	33
Others	5	7	10	44

From the data given above, we can say that the children who live in urban separately still have a relationship with both parents and the community. However, about 62% of them don't have a specific plan for the future of their parents, lands and hometown.

Consequently, from the fact of these data, we should point out that the relationship between the children who live apart and their parents/community is not clear in both qualitative and quantitative manner.

6. DISCUSSION

In this study, we have tried to consider the sustainability of rural society in Japan that is in population decreasing era. During this study, we have discussed elderly who have been seen as a “ghost member” in rural community in case of sustainability. However, as we mentioned before, today elderly have a large population in the rural society. We have considered what kind of roles and position elderly have in order to maintain the daily life of the rural society.

From the results of our case study, it is understood that today rural elderly are active in terms of the social relationships, productivity and mobility. Therefore, it is possible to say that rural elderly might have various kinds of roles to sustain the daily life of rural. In addition, as we mentioned before (Ozsen 2008, Ozsen & Tokuno 2008), people in their sixties might be thought in a different category such as “late middle aged person” than “elderly”. Because they still have a job and are carrying on many organizations of rural community. In summary, we can say that in today’s rural society in Japan, elderly especially people in sixties are still actively taking a part for maintaining the daily life.

However, even though the rural elderly have many important roles and functions in daily life, it just means that they have a capability and possibility to maintain the daily life of rural but doesn't mean that rural elderly can create a future for the rural society.

Therefore, another source is needed in terms of sustaining the future of rural community. At this point, we have considered the living apart adult children who did not get any positions and/or roles in creating rural future and discussed what they mean to their hometown.

From the results of our study, we can say that those adult children still somehow have a relationship with both parents and other community members (particularly friends and

relatives) in their hometown. However, the content of those relationships are not clear yet. Moreover, most of those children do not have a certain plan about the future of their parents and hometown.

Finally, in order to clarify the issues that we have mentioned in this paper;

- a) The relationship of living apart adult children with their parents and the other community members of their hometown should be made clear
- b) The meaning of those two groups for the rural should be analyzed deeply
- c) The roles and functions of those two groups should be more clarified in terms of maintaining today and creating tomorrow of rural society.

As a future study, we are planning to focus on these topics.

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank especially Mr. Takafumi Matsumoto and Ms. Akiko Kimura for assistance during examination.

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