

Functions of "Home" in Occupational Socialization Process : Life Histories of People from an Okinawan Community

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FUNCTIONS OF "HOME" IN OCCUPATIONAL SOCIALIZATION PROCESS — LIFE HISTORIES OF PEOPLE FROM AN OKINAWAN COMMUNITY —

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Life histories of forty five persons were analyzed to examine what function the "home" has for their occupational socialization. The home means both native community and society of people from the same native community. The subjects whose life histories were analyzed had been or have been members of an association of people from an Okinawan community. Through four typical cases, the transition of the form of their occupational socialization was followed up from the prewar period till the present. The main findings were as follows: (1) the forms of socialization shifted from the uniform and isolated ones to the various ones as a result of changes in the socio-historical background surrounding people from the community, (2) in the association of people from the same Okinawan community the members came to desire for its psychological functions rather than for its utility ones, as their life spaces expanded gradually.

Key words: occupational socialization, home (hometown), community, *Bise* (a hamlet in Okinawa), life history, case study.

INTRODUCTION

In the present paper, personal life histories are analyzed in terms of occupational socialization. The subjects in this research were the people who were born and brought up in a hamlet in Okinawa and have worked in mainland of Japan. What kind of job did they get in the urban areas? Have they settled in mainland of Japan which was unfamiliar to them or come home after a short time? What kind of function did "home" perform in the occupational socialization of the subjects? The word "home" means in the present paper both hometown and the society of people from the same hometown.

Our purpose is thus to make clear the functions of "home" in occupational socialization process: the process that an individual, after leaving his home, takes up occupation and gets trained in it in an unfamiliar land whose subculture is different from the cultural pattern in his hometown. We must, at the same time, try to locate the occupational socialization process in the broader socio-historical background in which he lived.

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The concept “socialization” means both passive conformity to social norm and positive participation in society. In socialization process, the group or the system which supplies a model of behavior and facilitates the process is called as agent of socialization. Community is one of the agents as well as family, friend, school, religion, mass media et al. Community has various functions in socializing the members as a medium group mediating between individual and total society. When we regard the community as the agent of occupational socialization, we have to stress the function of community to channel the members to a particular occupation as important.

The major way of approach in the present study is life history method. Bertaux and Kohli (1984) examined the recent developments in the use of life history. Farady and Plummer (1983) indicated that the life history method can grapple successfully with problems of: (1) the subjective reality of the individual; (2) the focus on process and ambiguity; (3) the focus on totality. The present author also adopted this method to describe the individual life trajectories in socio-historical context.

FIELD AND METHOD

Field: The present study was carried out in two research fields: a hamlet named *Bise* in the north part of Okinawa main island and Sakai city in Osaka Prefecture, mainland Japan, where some of the people from *Bise* are living. Fig. 1 shows the location of these two research fields.

Okinawa is now one of the 47 Japanese prefectures, but it was an independent kingdom called Ryukyu until 1879. Thus Okinawa can be seen as having unique culture and social organization which are different from other prefectures in mainland Japan. Okinawan society was once composed of many isolated communities called *shima* (hamlet) in Okinawan dialect, the inhabitants of which have cooperative mind and are closely united even at the present time.

Bise is one of such communities at the tip of Motobu peninsula. It had been a farming and fishing hamlet with the isolated social organization until 15 years ago when a national ocean park was constructed in the vicinity of it. Since then the hamlet has been much modernized and changed to a new phase. It had a population of 679 in 1989.

From the north part of Okinawa, including *Bise*, many people have gone over to mainland Japan for their jobs through the 20th century. They tended to gather in the urban areas like Osaka, Hyogo, Kanagawa and Tokyo, where Okinawans, before the World War II, founded the associations composed of people from same village or same hamlet. These associations was called “*kyoyu-kai*”. Thus, people from *Bise* gathered in Kansai district — an urban district in the western part of mainland Japan — organized “Kansai District *Bise Kyoyu-kai*” in Osaka about 60 years ago. This association of people from *Bise* has a membership of 89 in 1989.

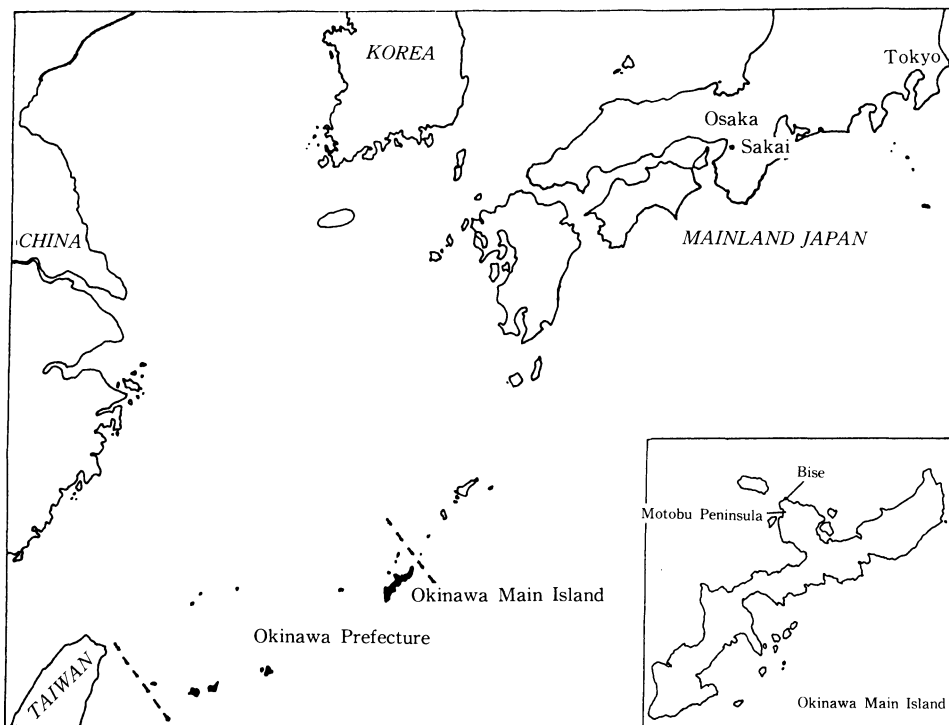


Fig. 1. Location of *Bise* and Sakai.

Subjects and Method: The major method in field study was the interview to 45 Subjects who were born and brought up in *Bise* and have worked in mainland Japan. They were or are members of "Kansai District *Bise* Kyoyu-kai". They were divided into three groups as follows:

- (1) 18 Ss who worked at spinning mills before the World War II broke out;
- (2) 18 Ss who were active in plating circles during the period of rapid economic growth of Japan;
- (3) 9 Ss who went to the mainland from Okinawa for their job after the reversion of Okinawa to Japan.

Table 1 shows the average age, sex, and present address of Ss in these three groups.

The present paper was composed mainly of the personal life histories appeared in the interview, and supplemented them with data obtained by the participant observation. Most interviews were of open-end type: the subject was allowed considerable freedom in discourse. They were recorded. The field study were carried on from April to June in *Bise* and from July through October of 1989 in Osaka.

Table 1. Average age, sex, and present address of *Ss* in three groups

Group (Period)	Number	Average age	Sex		Present address	
			Male	Female	<i>Bise</i>	Osaka
(1) Prewar period	18	73.9	1	17	16	2
(2) Period of rapid economic growth	18	58.2	16	2	8	10
(3) After reversion of Okinawa to Japan	9	34.1	9	0	3	6

THREE PERIODS AND CASE STUDIES

(1) Occupational socialization in pre- and inter-World War II period

Many Okinawan people had begun working at the factories in the urban centers of mainland Japan since the 1920's. In addition to the post World War I economic depression, the Great Depression of 1929, originated in the United States, created serious repercussion in Japan. Especially, many Okinawans in the rural districts got into more difficult conditions. Under the hard economic conditions, a large number of Okinawan youth went to the mainland across sea for their job. They entered the employ of the factories in the urban areas, which had been seeking after cheap manpower. Nevertheless workers from Okinawa were discriminated in Japanese society simply because they were from Okinawa.

In the farming hamlets like *Bise*, many young women departed for the urban areas like Osaka. They worked mainly in spinning mills. Since 1930 the many youth from *Bise* were employed by Yamatogawa spinning company in Sakai city, because they were tempted to come and work there by people from the same hamlet. Working in spinning mills was the almost only chance for unmarried women to get a job except farming.

Case 1; H.U.

Life history: A 71-year-old woman. She was born and reared in *Bise*, the third of six sisters. The older four sisters including herself have worked at spinning mills in mainland Japan. When 17 years old (1936), she was invited by her acquaintance to go up to Osaka with her friends and work in Yamatogawa spinning mill at Sakai city. She was not afraid of leaving home, because some of her sisters and relatives already had worked in the same mill. Later her younger sister also relied upon them to go there. Although workwemon from Okinawa were made a fool or despaired by Japanese in the mainland, they had gradually come to mix well. She returned to home once after three years. But she had been to Osaka and worked in the same mill more two times. At the age of 24, after being asked to come back to *Bise* by her parents, she was married to an acquaintance in the same hamlet. It was took for granted in rural districts like *Bise* that young woman was married in her native hamlet.

At the middle of 40's, she went up to Osaka with her family again and worked for six years in the factory which the friend of her husband carried on.

In 1989 she are engaging in agriculture with her husband in *Bise*. She sometimes remembers her

experience in the spinning mill as happy.

There are other women who have worked in spinning mills and gave different significances to their own experience in the mill. However, the author can indicate, as is seen in Case 1, some common features in their experience :

- i) they got employment in spinning companies through the introduction from their acquaintance ;
- ii) they left home for mainland Japan with their intimate friends or acquaintances ;
- iii) they worked in the mill where natives of *Bise* had already worked ;
- iv) they stayed with their friends in the dormitory;
- v) they came home in the year when they had predefinded before leaving home.

Their occupational socialization process in mainland Japan, thus, was uniform and limited. In addition the process progressed under the isolated circumstances where the network of people from homeland supported them in all directions.

(2) Occupational socialization in the rapid economic growth period

Since the end of the World War II, Okinawa had been under the U.S. military occupation until 1972. Under the occupation, Okinawan people were incapable of going to mainland Japan without "passport". They could, therefore, find work in the mainland almost only by the aid of the local or the blood relationship for a while. But during the period of rapid economic growth in Japan (1955-1970), a great deal of the youth manpower rushed to the mainland. Then Japanese society continued to have a prejudice against Okinawans.

Many men from *Bise* worked at plating factories in Osaka before the war. One of them (brother of Case 2) independently set up his factory in 1934. Since then some people from *Bise*, mainly his brothers and relatives, had come to work there. After the war they started their own workshop one after another (Case 2 is one of them). Since the middle of 1950's they had employed many youth from *Bise*, who mastered the art of plating and set up their workshop for themselves in their turn. It is thought that there were more than twenty factories operated by men from *Bise* in Osaka. Accordingly plating factories were the central place where they were socialized through occupation in mainland Japan.

Case 2 ; T.K.

Life history : A 75-year-old man. He was born and brought up in *Bise*, the fifth of six brothers and two sisters. His family was badly off partly because of many children. After completing the primary school course at the age of 15 (1930), he asked his oldest brother for help to go up to Osaka for his job. He got employment in a plating workshop by help of his brother. After seven years his brother with him started a plating shop for himself, where some youths from *Bise*, mainly his brothers and relatives, came together to work. He was married to a native of *Bise* at 28 years old. Since their shop was burnt down by air raid in the war, he ran away to Hokkaido — the north part of Japan — with natives of *Bise* in Osaka as a member in the cultivation group.

When returning to Osaka after the war, both his oldest brother and he had rebuilt their workshop. When this business was set in the right direction, he independently set up "T Plating

Company" at the city of Sakai with some acquaintances from homeland. He employed many youths from *Bise*, but the most of them could not settle there for long period. His factory came to be a large-scale one in the plating circles in Osaka: there were about sixty workers during prime. Some youths who had worked in his company started independently their own plating business. At the age of 53 (1967), since plating factories in Osaka were excessive, he was forced to rationalize the management: the mechanization and the great personnel reduction from fifty-five to eight workers.

While carrying on his business, he has played the role of chairman in the association of people from Okinawa in Sakai and vigorously participated in the movement to revert Okinawa to Japan.

At the age of 65 (1980), he left the business to his oldest son. It is said that most person from *Bise* were taken care of by him and his oldest brother. He says that he has devoted himself to working till now.

Interpretation: His life history is the typical case containing the mode of behavior which featured natives of *Bise* in mainland Japan. Thus let us consider this case in terms of three points.

(a) We-feeling for natives of *Bise*: He kept on intimate terms with people from his homeland in Osaka as ever. In the mainland as well as in Okinawa, he behaved mainly on the principle that he should make much of his friends and relatives from *Bise*: e.g. setting up a plating workshop with his older brothers, starting his workshop with his friends from *Bise*, employing many youths from homeland etc.

(b) Okinawan self-pride and the accommodation to new environment: It was his intense Okinawan self-pride that supported the intimate relationship to people from *Bise*. This self-pride often caused him to disagree with Japanese in mainland Japan. However, while keeping company with people from homeland on one hand, he had to associate with the mainlanders on the other hand so that he would accommodate to his new environment. For example, the executives of his company were all mainlanders.

(c) The restricted occupational socialization: Not did he choose the right calling for himself out of various ones, but he only followed the examples of his brothers and seniors who already worked in plating workshops. He had no alternative. At any rate he has been intent on the plating work since he set up his own workshop.

The following case is one of people who went up to Osaka in the period of rapid economic growth to work in the factories which their seniors from *Bise* carried on.

Case 3; T.Y.

Life history: A 54-year-old man. He was born in *Bise*, the second of four brothers and two sisters. At the age of 19 (1954), he went up to Osaka as a member of the mass employment to "T Plating Company" (cf. Case 2): ten boys and seven girls who were born and brought up in *Bise*. In the factory he worked 160 hours overtime month after month, because the factory was in the prime then. Although eighty or ninety percent of sixty workers were from Okinawa, all of the executives were mainlanders. He had such a short temper that he had many quarrels with his executives who despised Okinawans. Then most of Okinawan youth suffered from the Japanese standard language; he also could not speak himself understood with the standard language at first.

At the age of 26, he was married to a woman whose parents were natives of *Bise*. After a few months he left the company for a quarrel with an executive. Thus he set up a plating workshop on

his own and brought his brothers and relatives to Osaka, so that they could work together there. He had kept the shop for ten years to transfer it to his brother in part for personal reasons.

He came home in 1971. Since then he has been engaging in fishery. Because of his hard experience around the standard language, he forbids his three sons, not to mention himself, to speak the Okinawan dialect. He will make them get their jobs in the mainland in the near future, which he thinks is the best for them.

Interpretation: The subject was also living under the protection of informal relationship in mainland Japan. He had such an unyielding character that he had set up a plating workshop by himself first of all his colleagues. Most workers in his workshop were natives of *Bise*, including his brothers. It seemed that the closed circumstances hampered his shop from further developing.

He, who has suffered from the standard language, keeps internalizing that Okinawa is behind mainland Japan in all directions.

As is seen in the two cases, not did the people from *Bise* during this period choose plating work independently, but most of them only followed the examples of their seniors. While keeping company with people from homeland, they stayed in the isolated circumstances from outer world to improve their plating skill, to set up their own workshop and to guide their juniors in plating work. In addition, the fact must be overlooked that there was no other way for Okinawans under the U.S. occupation to rely upon their seniors and relatives for getting their jobs in mainland Japan.

Into the plating factories or the association of people from *Bise*, so many cultural patterns of homeland were brought that they feel at home there. It seemed, however, that they tried to internalize different sub-culture from native land to be accepted in Japanese society when they stepped foot in outer world from the isolated circumstances.

(3) Occupational socialization after the reversion of Okinawa to Japan

Okinawa was returned to Japan on May 15, 1972, when Okinawan people became capable of going to mainland Japan without passport. How much had the reversion filled the psychological gap between Okinawan and mainland Japanese? As a result of the policy of Japanese Government to close the economic gap between Okinawan and mainland, less Okinawan people went over the mainland for their jobs in 1980's than in the earlier period of rapid economic growth. On the other hand the youth from Okinawa increasingly returned to homeland. At present the discrimination against Okinawan in Japanese society seems to have almost disappeared.

Around the end of the rapid economy growth of Japan, the plating factories troubling about pollution countermeasures were one after another forced to close or to reduce the personnel for rationalization. Consequently plating circles had lost the power to employ many youths from *Bise*. Now they tend to pioneer various fields in mainland apart from natives of *Bise*.

Case 4 ; N.T.

Life history : A 39-year-old man. He was born in *Bise*, the first of three brothers and two sisters. In his childhood he had wish to go out of a small island Okinawa someday ; after completing a local junior high school, he relied on his uncle who ran a plating workshop to go up to Osaka at the age of 15 (1965). He got employment in an auto-repair shop by help of the uncle. After working there for two years, he turned to his uncle's shop to work with natives of *Bise* for a while. Since then, he changed his occupation one after another : transportation business, taxi driver, management of a supermarket or a fruit store etc. He made bold to leave Okinawans to pioneer new works for himself. This was because he thought that he could not see outer world under the protection of Okinawans. Regarded as a person lacking common sense by mainlanders, he read many books hard to enrich his knowledge. At the age of 33 (1982), he entered a stationer's through the introduction of his acquaintance. In the same year he was married to a woman who was from Yamaguchi Prefecture. Okinawan youth in mainland Japan who do not got married to Okinawan have increased gradually.

Now he acts as vice-chairman in the association of people from *Bise*. First he thought he would return to home in a few years. Nevertheless he has already been in Osaka for twenty-four years. He will go back to Okinawa in future to take care of his parents, for he is the first son.

Interpretation : In this case, too, since some relatives already worked in Osaka, the Subject was not so afraid of going to the mainland. He would go back home in a few years first. After working in his uncle's shop for a while, he decided to step foot on the outer world where there was no people from homeland. He himself gave a positive significance to his working at a variety of occupation, although many changes of occupations were generally unwelcomed in Japanese society.

He insisted that he had learned much from working with mainlanders. Not did he make light of people from homeland, but he highly valued relationship to them. Merely, he intended to separate his occupation from the relationship.

As the youth from *Bise*, like case 4, intend to be self-supported further, more finely their life spaces were differentiated. At the same time they tend to associate with people from homeland according to their circumstances, not through the overall livelihood including occupation. Nevertheless they do not mean to neglect getting on with natives of *Bise* in the unfamiliar land.

DISCUSSION

With surveying the history of Okinawans' occupational socialization in mainland Japan, the author have considered four typical cases in life histories of people from *Bise*. This study can be pushed forward through pointing out the next two findings.

First, the shift of their occupational socialization process from isolated and uniform form in pre- and postwar period to various form after the reversion of Okinawa to Japan resulted largely from changes in socio-historical background surrounding people from Okinawa, especially from the change of Okinawa-Japan relations. People from *Bise* gathered in spinning mills before the war and they gathered in plating circles under the rapid economic growth period. These pooling of Okin-

awans should not be only attributed to their principle of behavior that they made much of people from homeland, but it was also caused by socio-historical circumstances around them. The fact must not be overlooked that to be exact they could not help living in the isolated environments then.

Since Okinawa returned to Japan, the youth tend to work in various fields apart from natives of *Bise*. The variety of their occupational socialization process is, in part, based on Okinawa-Japan new relations: Okinawa became one of 47 Japanese prefectures again. That was to say, it was not so difficult as it used to be for Okinawans to pioneer Japanese society for themselves, because the discriminate images attached to them have slowly declined.

Secondly, the society of people from same hamlet have varied its function corresponding to the expansion and differentiation of its members' life spaces. The society used to be formed mainly as a means of living, like getting a job or a house, rather than owing to maintaining the human relations in homeland (Tomiyama, 1985). The society was related so closely to their livelihood in mainland Japan that people from *Bise* could not part from it. Their life spaces were thereby very isolated from outer world.

After the reversion of Okinawa to Japan, however, they have intended to be self-supported and accommodated to their new environment, so that they have come to internalize the sub-culture in the urban community where they moved to live, and to have a wider circle of acquaintances. The society of people from *Bise* have had less influence upon the overall livelihood of its members with the expansion and differentiation of their life spaces. Consequently the members have, partly because of their aging, come to desire the psychological function rather than the utility one in the society, where they long for home or verify their own Okinawan identity.

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