

## Regional Differences in Japanese Culture : A Statistical Study

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Chapter 7

**Regional Differences in Japanese Culture: A  
Statistical Study<sup>1)</sup>**

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**I PREFACE**

This report is a continuation of the report read by Professor Izumi last year (1962) at the annual meeting of the Kyū Gakkai Rengō Taikai (the Union of the Nine Academic Societies), and is concerned with the results of the questionnaire returned from 1,113 *ō-aza*.

**II METHOD OF RESEARCH AND NATURE OF THE MATERIALS**

(This section is here omitted because the same contents are included in the Preface and Introduction.)

**III PROCEDURES OF ANALYSES**

There are generally two methods of discovering regional differences. The first one makes use of dotted distribution maps, which may include the following procedures: drawing of a distribution map of an item and division of it into areas according to the distinctive pattern of distribution; accumulation of such maps; and the determination of overlapping areas by superimposing these maps. These areas are then used as distinctive units.

The second method formulates an ideal type comprising certain distinctive features and looks for an area whose characteristic features correspond, more or less, to those of the type. Both methods are complementary to each other.

We considered both methods but were faced with particular difficulties arising from the nature of our data. It is true that some of the distribution maps (which we in fact made for almost all the items concerned) show distinctive patterns and thus make it possible to draw some areal boundary lines. The number of samples was so numerous, however, and the distributions of most items thus so continuous and widespread that it was generally impossible to do so.

The second method had to be abandoned from the beginning, because it was these ideal types that we tried to postulate through our analyses and not the other way around. It was also found that completely different features were distributed in

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1) Abbreviated translation of "Nihon Bunka no Chiikiteki Sai," in *Jinrui Kagaku*, vol. 16, 1964.

adjacent areas and thus any attempt to use a hypothetical model seemed unproductive.

From out of these difficulties, however, we formulated a hypothesis which said that cultural differences in the middle of the Meiji era were, excepting a few special items, a matter of degree rather than of quality. To put it another way, the nature of these differences was not one of divisions of distinctive features but of relative and continuous varieties of common features. Its corollary was that the concept of culture areas based upon differences of ethnic origin and/or other factors such as ecological environment and historical development were not applicable to Japan at that period. Or, to be more constructive, if we wish to postulate culture areas, they should be without definite boundaries and vaguely focused, only relatively distinctive areas.

From this basic hypothesis, we introduced the notion of the relative density of items in a unit region; after considering several alternatives we decided to use the present prefectural system (*to-fu-ken*) as the unit. The relative density of an item in one prefecture was calculated according to the standard deviation from the average occurrence. Our formula is as follows:

Key: A = An item of the breakdown of the answers to a question.

P = The percentage of A among all the answers to a question.

M = The average number of samples per prefecture.

= 1,113/45 (the total number of prefectures) = 25

$\pi_i$  = The percentage of A in a prefecture.

d = Standard deviation of A in the prefecture.

Formula:  $d = p \times (100 - p) / M (= 25)$

We have classified the degree of deviation of  $\pi_i$  from P into the five classes;

I	Very high	$P + 3d \leq \pi_i$
II	High	$P + 2d \leq \pi_i < P + 3d$
	Somewhat high	$P + d \leq \pi_i < P + 2d$
III	Average	$p - d < \pi_i < P + d$
IV	Somewhat low	$P - 2d < \pi_i \leq P - d$
	Low	$P - 3d < \pi_i \leq P - 2d$
V	Very low	$\pi_i \leq P - 3d$

One example will suffice to illustrate the method. We take up here question 3-1 which asks for the supposed period of foundation of a sample *ō-aza*. The breakdown of answers to this question and their code numbers are as follows (the item number for this is 19);

0	Don't know	12.5%
1	Ancient period (Before 700 A.D.)	14.8%
2	Middle period (700-1699)	49.9%
3	Premodern period (1600-1867)	22.3%
4	Modern period (1868- )	0.5%

If we take the case of "Ancient period" from the five answers, the standard

deviation 'd' can be calculated according to the formula;

$$d = \sqrt{14.8 \times (100 - 14.8) / 25} = 7.1 \quad (P = 14.8)$$

The degrees of density of this item in a prefecture are indicated by the following figures:

Density degree	The percentage of "Ancient period" in each prefecture P (%)
I Very high	$36.1 \leq \pi$
II High	$29.0 \leq \pi < 36.1$
Somewhat high	$21.9 \leq \pi < 29.0$
III Average	$7.7 \leq \pi < 21.9$
IV Somewhat low	$0.6 < \pi \leq 7.7$
Low	$\pi < 0.6$
V Very low	—

Map shows the relative density of this item in each prefecture. In Nara and Hiroshima, the percentage of villages which are supposed to have been founded in the "Ancient period" is much higher than the average percentage of other areas of Japan, and the map shows a characteristic of the western type.

We used the average number of samples per prefecture ( $M = 25$ ) to simplify the procedure, but as a result of this the standard deviation used for those prefectures of which the samples far exceeded 25 is less than what it should have been. The number of samples from Niigata, for instance, is 75 and therefore its  $M$  should be  $1,113/75 = 15$  and accordingly the actual standard deviation should be 4.1, 3.0 less than the 'd (=7.1)' used by us. On the other hand, for the case of those prefectures of which the samples were much fewer than 25, as the case of Kagawa and Tokushima with 8 samples each, the standard deviation used is more than what it should have been. In the case of these two prefectures, 'd (=12.6)' is about 5.5 more than the 'd' used by us. This may seem too large a margin to be reasonably permitted, but we had to accept it because of the limited time for analyses.<sup>2)</sup>

Procedures of our analyses of 1,113 samples took the following steps:

- 1) Totalizations of all the items both in each prefecture and in Japan as a whole.
- 2) Examinations of statistical correlations of selected items.
- 3) Drawing up distribution maps of selected items.
- 4) Drawing up density maps of all the items.
- 5) Classifications of these two kinds of maps.
- 6) Divisions of Japan into large areas on the basis of the distinctive features of some of these maps.
- 7) Postulation of ideal types of the cultural complexes of these large areas.
- 8) Further divisions of large areas into smaller areas and descriptions of features particular to them.

2) We had to make all the calculations by hand.

## 9) Synthesis.

What we reported at the annual meeting of the Union of Nine Academic Societies in May 1963 consisted of some selected results of the procedures up to the sixth step. We left the postulation of ideal types of large areas for future analysis.

#### IV GENERAL PICTURE OF AN AVERAGE VILLAGE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MEIJI PERIOD

It may not be too bold to assume that the numerically most dominant answer among all the responses to a question would represent a generally common feature of Japanese villages in the middle of the Meiji era. We have listed below the most dominant responses to the questions, in order to present a general picture of how an average Japanese village might have been at that time. For example, "The supposed period of foundation" had five possible answers and the 'Middle period' (50%) proved to be numerically dominant. We therefore assume that an average Japanese village was founded during the Middle period.

##### (1) General

- a) The average density of samples: 3/1000 km<sup>2</sup>
- b) The average number of households: 135 (Item 6)
- c) The supposed period of foundation: Middle period, 50% (Question number 3-1; Item 19)

Note: The density of *ō-aza* throughout Japan: 23/1000 km<sup>2</sup>  
The average area of *ō-aza*: 43.5 km<sup>2</sup>

##### (2) Economic aspects

- a) Mode of production: Agriculture, 33%
- b) The average cultivated land per household: 4 *tan* (1 *tan* is about 0.245 acre)
- c) The ratio of paddy field to total cultivated land: 65% (Item 14)

##### (3) Village organization and sanctions

- a) Mode of selection of the village head: Hereditary, 60% (Question 6-1, Item 28)
- b) Mode of selection of the representative of a village temple: Hereditary, 43% (Q 11-7, Item 85)
- c) *Mura-hachibu*: The custom did not exist, 65% (Q 6-2, Item 27)

##### (4) Succession, inheritance and retirement (*inkyō*)

- a) Successor to the *ie*: The eldest son, 89% (Q 9-5, Item 50)
- b) Mode of inheritance: By one person, 90% (Q 9-2, Item 51)
- c) Time of succession: After the death of the family head, 61% (Q 9-6, Item 52)

- d) Custom of *inkyō*: Existed, 88% (common 36%, special 52%) (Q 9-19, Item 53)
- e) The residence of *inkyō*: In the same house, 48% (Q 9-23, Item 54)
- f) *Inkyō* property: *Inkyō* owned their property, 26% (Q 9-23, Item 55)
- g) Accompanying members with *inkyō*: None, 66% (Q 9-22, Item 53)

**(5) *Honke-bunke* relations**

- a) Non-blood-related *bunke*: None, 49% (Q 8-3, Item 33)
- b) *Bunke* of different surname: None, 54% (Q 8-4, Item 34)
- c) *Honke* and *mago-bunke*: They had maintained social intercourse, 76% (Q 8-5, Item 35)
- d) Perpetuation of *honke-bunke* relationship: Permanent, 67% (Q 8-6, Item 39)
- e) Nature of *honke-bunke* relationship: Hierarchical, 83% (Q 8-11, Item 40)
- f) Nature of inter-*bunke* relationship: Hierarchical, 71% (Q 8-11, Item 40)
- g) Economic independence of *bunke*: Independent, 76% (Q 8-16, Item 44)
- h) *Bunke* as a tenant of *honke* when dependent: Yes, 40% (Q 8-16, Item 44)

**(6) Marriage and affinal relations**

- a) Village endogamy: Infrequent, 55% (Q 9-9, Item 57)
- b) Selection of *nakōdo* (matchmaker): By wifetaker, 45% (Q 8-12, Item 58)
- c) Attendance of the newly married couple at their wedding: Both attended, 72% (Q 9-17, Item 64)
- d) Seating order of affines: Wifetaker or paternal kin took the more honored seats, 59% (Q 9-24, Item 67)
- e) Place for the first delivery: At wife's natal home, 53% (Q 85-1, Item 70)

**(7) Fictitious parenthood**

- a) Existence: It existed, 60% (Q 8-28, Item 71)
- b) Terms for fictitious parent: *Nazuke-oya* (name-giving parent), 19% (Others: *oyakata* 12%, *hiro-oya* 11%, *oyabun* 10%) (Q 8-29, Item 72-73)
- c) Duration: Throughout the life of the parent, 48% (Q 8-31, Item 75)
- d) Purpose: Economic and social support, 42% (Q 8-29, Item 76)

## (8) Age groups and sleeping hut for youth

- a) Existence of age group(s): There existed at least one age group, 85% (Q 10-1 & Q 10-2, Item 78)
- b) The number and kinds of age group(s): Only *wakamono-gumi* (an age group of young men), 58% (Q 10-2, Item 78)
- c) Sleeping house for youth (*wakamono-yado*): None, 64% (Q 10-6, Item 80)

## (9) Possession and supernatural animals

- a) Beliefs in animal or spirit possession: Existed, 60% (Q 11-11, Item 86-87)

Table 6 Statistical correlations of selected items

		Permanent <i>H-B</i> rel.	Hierarchical <i>H-B</i> rel.	Hierarchical <i>B-B</i> rel.	Terms for HBG		
					<i>Maki</i>	<i>Ikke</i>	<i>Itto</i>
<i>Honke</i> and <i>bunke</i> relation	Permanent <i>honke-bunke</i> relation		0	+	++	0	-
	Hierarchical <i>honke-bunke</i> relation	(0)		++	+	0	0
	Hierarchical inter- <i>bunke</i> relation	(+)	(++)		++	0	--
	Non blood-related <i>bunke</i>	0	+	++	++	0	0
	Common shrine of a god	0	0	+	0	0	-
	<i>Bunke</i> as a tenant farmer of <i>honke</i>	0	0	+	++	0	0
Inheritance	By one person	0	0	0	++	0	--
	By the first child	+	0	0	++	--	--
Succession	By the last son/selected child	--	-	+	--	+	+
<i>Inkyo</i>	<i>Inkyo</i> live in the same house	+	0	0	0	0	0
	<i>Inkyo</i> live in a different house	0	+	0	0	0	0
Wedding	Both bride and bridegroom present	0	0	0	--	0	0
	Only bride present	++	++	+	++	+	-
	Only bridegroom present	-	0	-	0	-	0
	Both absent	0	-	0	0	+	-
First delivery	At natal home	0	++	++	++	0	0
	At married-in home	0	--	--	--	0	+
Age group	More than one age group				0	0	++
	Existence of <i>neyado</i>				--	+	0
Possession	Animal familiars attached to families	-	0	0			
	Social discrimination against them	++	0	0			
	Temporal possession	++	0	0			

- b) Types of possession: Individual and temporal, 49% (Q 11-13, Item 88)
- c) Social discrimination of families alleged to have used animal familiars: Not discriminated, 38% (Q 11-14, Item 88)

## V SOME CORRELATIONS AMONG SELECTED ITEMS

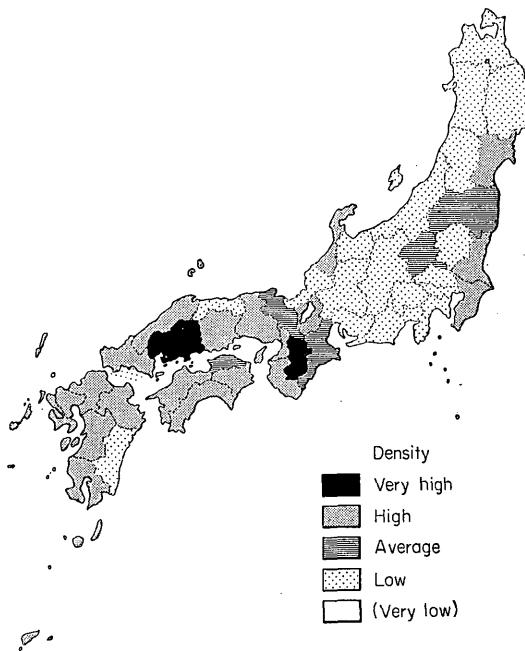
Statistical correlations between different items are, if established either as positive or negative, useful leads for structurally and analytically considering the relationships concerned. Our analyses in this respect have not gone so far as to examine every possible correlation. Here, we present a table (Table 6) which shows some correlations, both positive and negative.

## IV DIVISIONS OF AREAS BASED UPON DENSITY MAPS

In this section, we propose certain possible divisions of Japan into large areas on the basis of relatively common features found through density maps of various items. These divisions are classified into the following types:

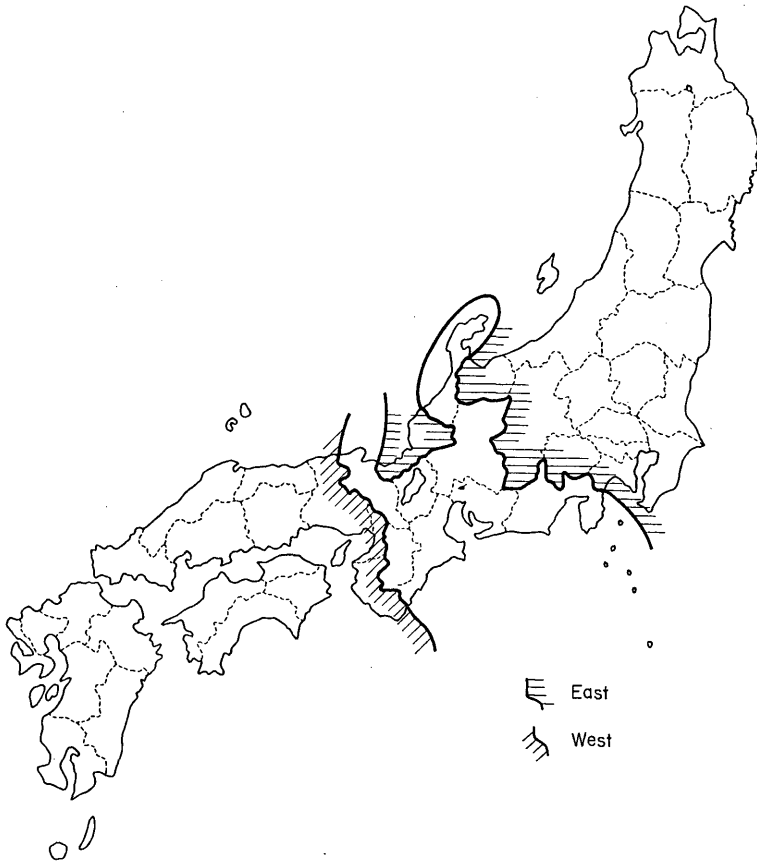
Type A: Divisions which divide Japan into East and West. This type may further be classified into three sub-types:

A1: 'East' vs. 'West' In this type, Central Japan is either included in one side or the other, or forms an intermediary area.



**Map 1** Density of 'Ancient' as the supposed period of foundation of the village





**Map 2** East/West division I Type A1 East vs. West

A2: 'East+Northwest' vs. 'Southwest'

A3: 'Northwest' vs. 'Southeast+West'

Type B: Divisions which specifically separate the central and northwestern parts of Japan from the rest.

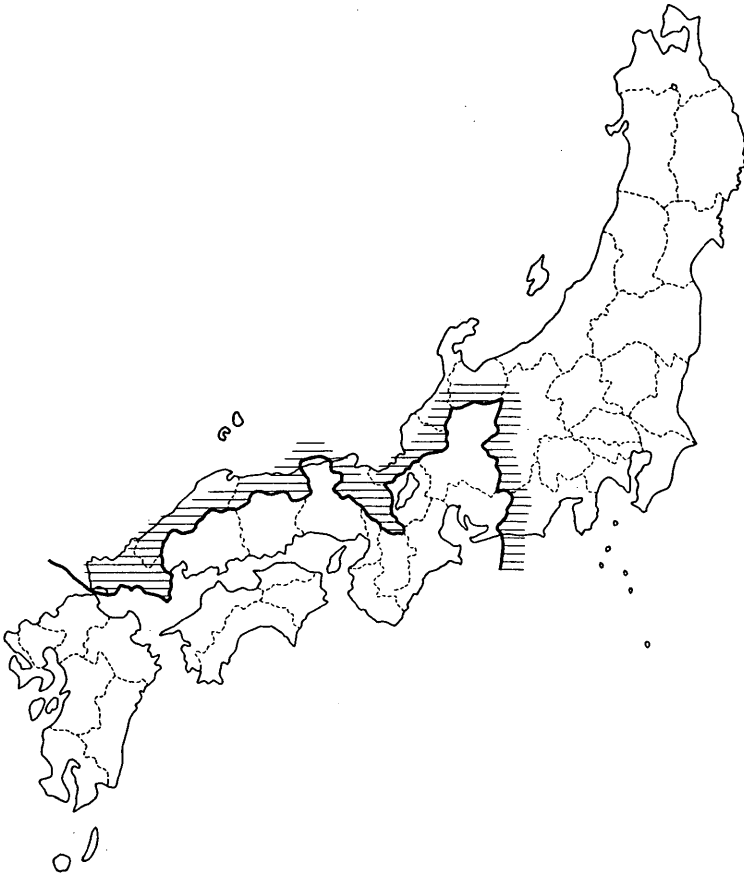
'Central+Northern Coast of the Japan Sea' vs. 'West+Pacific Side of East'

Type C: Divisions along the axis of the mainland which divide Japan into a Pacific side and a Japan Sea side.

Type D: A division which specifically connects a part of the East and a part of Shikoku and Kyūshū.

Type E: A division between suburban areas and remote rural areas.

Many but not all items can be loosely assigned to one or another of these types; these are given below:



Map 3 East/West division II Type A2 East + Northwest vs. Southwest

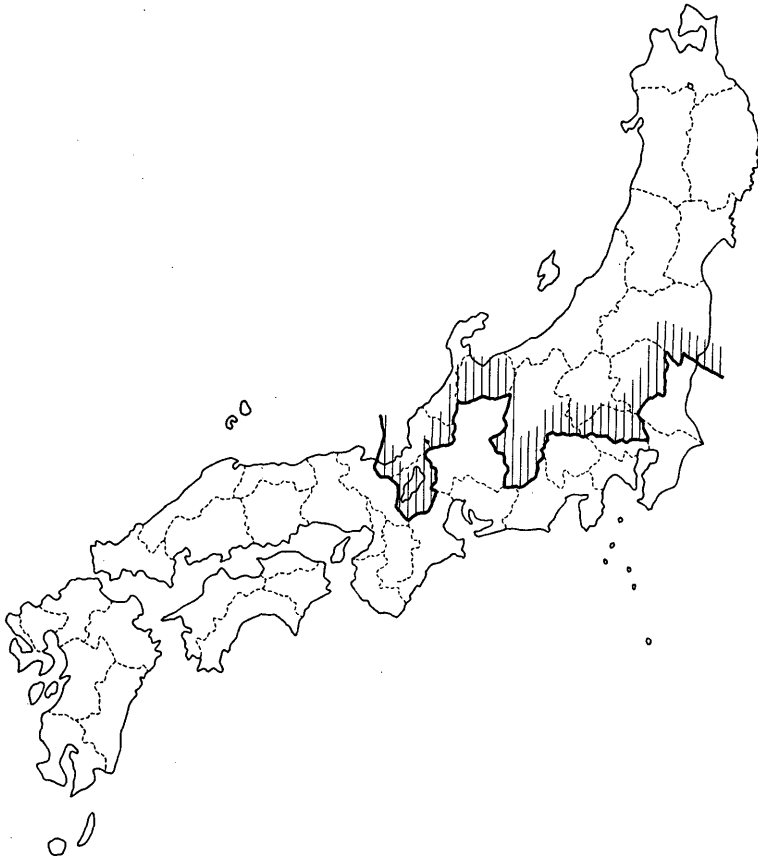
(1) Items applicable to Type A

A1–E Items of high density in the East:

- 1) The term *maki*.
- 2) *Bunke* formed by a daughter.
- 3) *Bunke* as a tenant of *honke*.
- 4) Patrilineal kinsmen occupy the more honored seats as compared to matrilineal (wife-giving) kinsmen.
- 5) Existence of non-blood-related *bunke* (also in northwestern Kyūshū).
- 6) Premodern period as the supposed period of village foundation (also in Miyazaki and Yamaguchi).

A1–EE Items of high density in eastern parts of the East:

- 1) Succession by the first child (daughter).



**Map 4** East/West division III Type A3 Northeast vs. Southeast + West

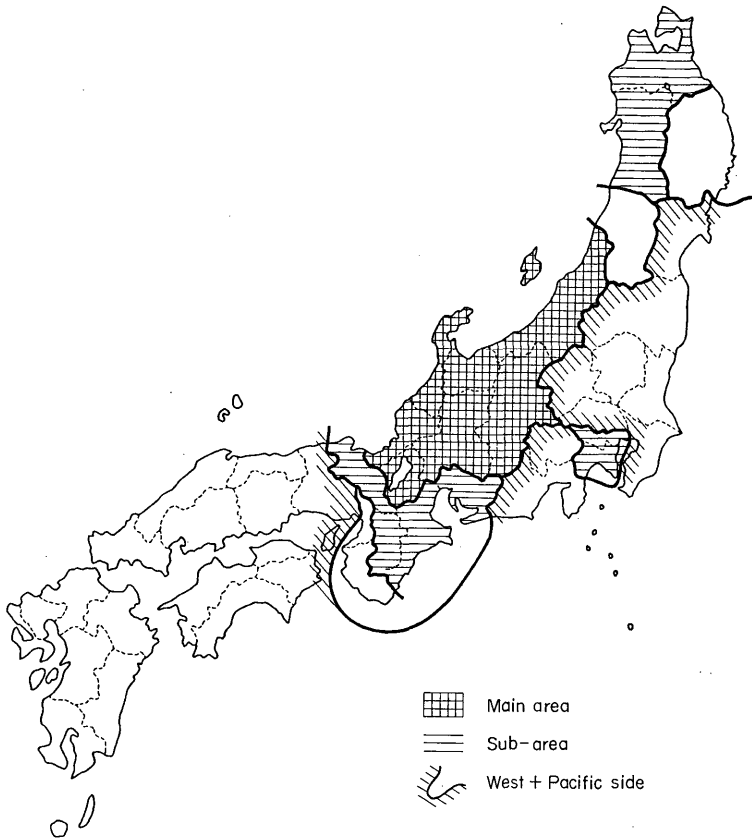
- 2) The term *edōshi* for a *honke-bunke* group.
- 3) Succession by the last child or a selected child.

A1-W Items of high density in the West:

- 1) No hierarchical distinctions in seating between patrilineal and matrilineal kinsmen.
- 2) Marriage by capture (also especially in southern Shikoku and Kyūshū; also found in Gifu and Yamanashi).
- 3) Animal familiars are associated with certain families, which are socially discriminated against.

A2-E·NW Items of high density in the East and Northwest:

- 1) Hierarchical relations between *honke* and *bunke*, between *honke* and *mago-bunke*, between *bunke* and *bunke*, and between blood-related *bunke* and non-blood-related *bunke*.

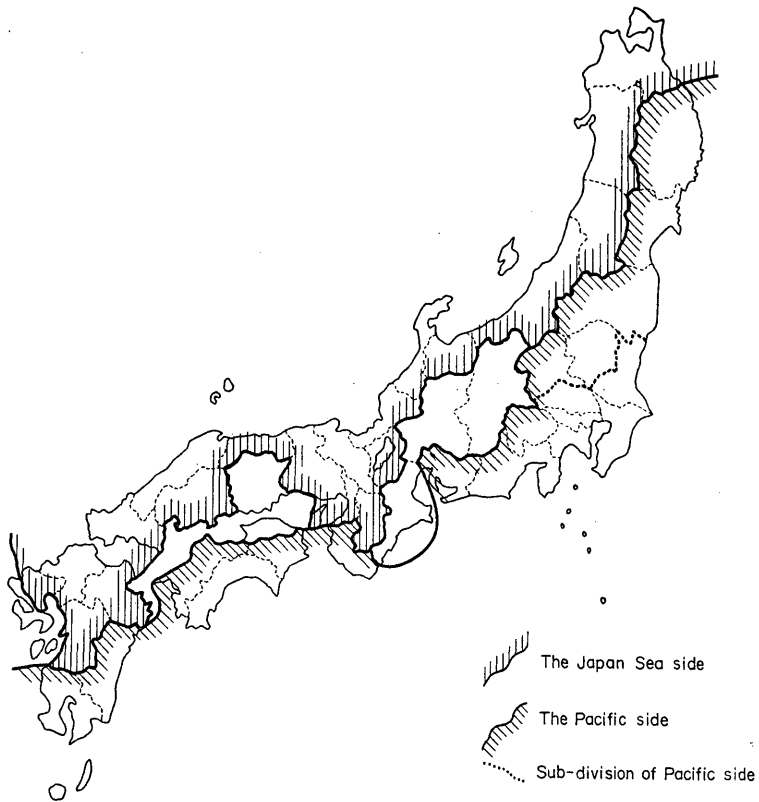


**Map 5** Type B Central + Northern coast of the Japan Sea vs. West + Eastern Pacific Side

- 2) Inheritance by one person.
- 3) Many sons other than the eldest emigrated from the village (not so in Aomori and Iwate).
- 4) The village head and the representative of the villagers' Buddhist temple organization were selected by the hereditary principle.

**A2-SW** Items of high density in the Southwest:

- 1) Egalitarian relation between *honke* and *bunke* and between *bunke* and *bunke*.
- 2) The term *ittō* for a *honke-bunke* group.
- 3) *Bunke* formed by the second son, the third, and so on were frequent (also in Aomori and Iwate).
- 4) *Bunke* was economically independent.
- 5) Inheritance by plural persons.
- 6) The village head and the representative of the villagers' Buddhist temple organization were elected by the villagers.



**Map 6** Type C the Japan Sea side vs. Pacific side

A3-NE Items of high density in the Northeast:

- 1) Permanent *honke-bunke* relations.
- 2) *Bunke* formed by a former employee of the house.
- 3) *Bunke* of a different family name from that of the *honke*.

**(2) Items applicable to Type B**

B-C-NW Items of high density in Central and Northwest:

- 1) Absence of *inkyō* or the social retirement of parents.
- 2) While the bride was present at the wedding, the bridegroom was absent.
- 3) The place for the first delivery was the wife's natal home.
- 4) Lack of belief in animal familiars and in mystical animal or spirit possession.

**(3) Items applicable to Type C**

C-P Items of high density on the Pacific side:

- 1) Low ratio of paddy field among cultivated lands.

- 2) Succession during the lifetime of the father.
- 3) *Inkyo*, the retired parents, lived in a different house than their successor.
- 4) They ate separately from the successor.
- 5) They took with them the last child and/or a grandson when they moved out of the previous house.

C-PS Items of high density on the Pacific side from Ibaragi westward:

- 1) *Bunke* formed by the father.
- 2) *Inkyo* took sons other than the eldest when he moved out.
- 3) Absence of non-blood-related *bunke*.
- 4) Magical relations between fictitious parents and children. (This means that the expectation of the relationship was not primarily economic or for social support, but for good luck.)
- 5) More than two age groups (also in northern Kyūshū).

C-JS Items of high density on the Japan Sea side:

- 1) The ratio of paddy field among cultivated lands was high.
- 2) Matrilateral kinsmen were seated at places of higher status than patrilateral kinsmen.
- 3) Only *wakamono-gumi* (an age group of young men) existed as an age group (also in Aichi).

#### (4) Items applicable to Type D

- 1) *Honke* and *magō-bunke* had social intercourse.
- 2) *Honke* and *bunke* had a common *Shinto* shrine.
- 3) A new *bunke* had to pay for the right to share the communal forest (also in Tottori and Mie).
- 4) Temporary nature of possession by supernatural animals/spirits (also in Ōsaka, Wakayama and Kagawa).

#### (5) Items applicable to Type E

E-U Items of high density around urban areas:

- 1) The density of *ō-aza* was high, reaching more than 400 per 1,000 km<sup>2</sup>. (This means that the area of each *ō-aza* was small, less than 2.5 km<sup>2</sup> on the average.)
- 2) Marriages within the village were not numerous.

E-R Items of high density in areas remote from urban centers:

- 1) The density of *ō-aza* was low, being less than 120 per 1,000 km<sup>2</sup>. (This means that the average size of an *ō-aza* was more than 8.3 km<sup>2</sup>.)
- 2) The average number of households in an *ō-aza* was large, numbering more than 200.
- 3) Marriages within an *ō-aza* were numerous.

## VII CONCLUSION

We have presented in this report classifications of selected items of the questionnaire according to divisions of areas obtained tentatively from the analysis of distribution maps and density maps, reinforced to some extent by statistical correlations. These are contributions which we hope can stimulate more detailed factual studies on the one hand, and further postulations of culture areas on the other.

There are yet bigger problems to be solved in order to place this kind of project in a wider and more interdisciplinary context. We have used the term "Japanese culture," not out of arrogance, but merely as a convenient heading to indicate our ultimate object. We are solely concerned with rural communities at a particular historical time and have mostly dealt with social factors rather than cultural elements *per se*. The first question which arises from this study is: to what extent can this kind of rural study contribute to the understanding of Japanese culture as a whole? The second is: how can it be placed in the study of Japanese cultural history? And the third and related question is: what are the possibilities of its contribution to the reconstruction of the early peopling of the Japanese islands?

We alone cannot answer these questions and we thus sincerely solicit critical assessments both of our data and of our analyses from scholars of different disciplines.