

BULLETIN

OF CONCERNED ASIAN SCHOLARS



Making "orchid flags" for China's Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong (AFP photo/Robyn Beck)

Hèunggóngyàhn—Hong Kong Identity **Japanese Organic Farming**
Western Marxism in Post-Mao China **Kerala People's Science Movement**
Transnational Networks and Hindu Nationalism
Screening China **Not Quite Han—China's Ethnic Minorities**

Volume 29, Number 3 / July-September 1997

The Japanese Organic Farming Movement: Consumers And Farmers United

Organic farmers' groups throughout Japan have formed direct-marketing relations with urban consumers who are interested not only in obtaining "safe" foods but also in helping farmers survive as full-time farmers. This article looks at one such urban-rural coalition, focusing on actions taken by farmers and consumers united in a joint struggle to stop the construction of a golf course resort. Part of that "other Japan" in which people are working together at the grassroots to create an alternative vision of what Japan can become, participants in this movement are fashioning new cultural values and social relations that challenge the dominant culture's hegemony.

by Darrell Gene Moen

The Japanese organic farming movement, which has its roots in the social upheavals of the 1960s against war, pollution, corporatism, and sexism, is today part of a global proliferation of alternative strategies for environmental, social, and personal transformation. Movement participants representing a diverse cross-section of Japanese society are transforming social relations and creating new values, self-identities, definitions of gender, and socio-political assumptions. Earlier village-bounded studies of Japanese rural society emphasized cultural continuity, the masterful blending of modernity and tradition, and the stoic acquiescence of villagers to externally imposed change. My research, by contrast, found organic farmers' groups revitalizing rural economies, forming direct-marketing relations with urban consumers, linking up with farmers in the Third World, opposing Tokyo-directed golf-course and resort development plans, and uniting in a variety of new social movements.

Integral to the success of the Japanese organic farming movement are the networks of grassroots organic foods distributors, retailers, and new consumer food cooperatives, many of which were established in the early 1970s. Japan's largest consumer cooperative, the Japan Consumers' Cooperative Union (Seikyo), was established in 1951. In 1996, the 688 primary Seikyo food cooperatives alone had a national household membership of 14 million. If the family members of each co-op member are counted, more than half of the Japanese population belongs to consumer cooperatives. Many of these have direct-marketing relations with organic farmers. More than 900 grassroots and localized groups of consumers have established co-partnerships, or *teikei* (see below), with local organic farmer groups; these involve face-to-face contact with farmers, risk-sharing, negotiating prices on amounts and varieties of crops, and numerous opportunities for social interaction between farmers and consumers.

The organic farming movement in Japan is extremely diverse, so I will limit my analysis to one group of organic farmers that united with consumers in a movement against the construction of a golf course. Throughout Japan, farmers and non-farmers alike are being influenced by what these unconventional farmers' groups are saying and doing. Employing innovative non-violent strategies, the participants in this case study were able to gain the respect and support of local residents as well as the public at large, support which was essential to their eventual success.

The Japan Organic Agriculture Association (JOAA), established in 1970, has about 4,000 members. Farmers constitute almost one-quarter of the total. Consumers, including academics, agricultural scientists, medical doctors, journalists, and others involved in various aspects of the organic farming movement in Japan, make up the rest. The organization publishes a monthly newsletter and holds monthly seminars on various aspects of the organic farming movement in Japan. JOAA is critical of Japanese agricultural policies and of U.S. agricultural-surplus export policies.

JOAA actively promotes direct interaction between consumers and farmers and believes that the importance of this concept should be communicated not only to people involved in grassroots movements working for social betterment, but also to national, regional, and local government bodies, and consumer and agricultural cooperatives. JOAA advocates the creation of ties between consumers and farmers through direct-marketing relationships that nurture friendships based on trust and mutual respect, going beyond economic interests or health maintenance concerns.

After studying the efficacy of the co-partnership concept at pioneering organizations such as the Miyoshi-Tokyo Co-partnership (described below), JOAA members formulated "The Ten Principles of *Teikei*" in November 1978.

In summary form these principles are:

1. Produce crops in accordance with prenegotiated agreements between farmers and consumers.
2. Build a friendly and creative relationship between farmers and consumers, not limited to their relationship as trading partners.
3. Accept all the produce delivered by the farmers.
4. Negotiate prices in a mutually beneficial manner.
5. Build a lasting rapport based on mutual respect and trust.
6. Manage the self-distribution of produce, either by the farmers or by the consumers.
7. Encourage participatory, democratic involvement by all members.
8. Study the various social and political issues related to organic agriculture as these develop.
9. Maintain a balance in numbers of farmers and consumers in the group.
10. Persevere with the ultimate goal of attaining a balance with nature and a relationship of human equality that is based on organic agriculture and the organic link between farmers and consumers.

The organic farming movement in Japan has been deeply influenced by the activities and publications of the Japan Organic Agriculture Association. JOAA has been instrumental in introducing the co-partnership concept to farmers and consumers throughout the country, and through its affiliation with the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, it has introduced the co-partnership concept to parties worldwide. One such example is the Consumer Supported Agriculture movement in the United States.

Alienating Social Relations of Capitalism

In an interview in the fall of 1991, Ichiraku Teruo—then Senior Director of JOAA—articulated a radical critique of capitalism and the alienating social relations it engenders:

Capitalism fosters the attitude of anything for profit, without regard for the environment or human well-being. If we look around us, we see toxic waste dumps, nuclear power plants, the military-industrial complex and the waste it generates, people working themselves to death....

Teikei is about the process of creating a new culture, a culture not restricted to the profit motive, a culture outside present practice.... Starting with food and a critique of the present food system—a system that is international in scope because capitalism is international in scope—an awareness of the need to change society in all areas emerges, leading to the realization of the need to build a society based on emerging values.

In co-partnership arrangements, we consumers tell the farmers that they can set their own prices and that we will accept the delivery of all the produce grown. The farmers do not take advantage of our trust, and respecting us, they set a fair price and try to grow only the amount of produce they feel is appropriate for the number of consumer members in the co-partnership. This proves that we humans are not inherently profit-oriented and proves that new human relations based on mutual trust, respect, and understanding can be realized.

People tell me, “Look, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) has budgeted money to encourage organic farming. They’ve finally come to their senses.” I tell those people to stop dreaming and come to their senses. MAFF has abandoned farmers



Consumers and farmers collectively harvesting the rice from a field strategically placed to block the development of a golf course. September 1992. Photo courtesy of Suzuki Akira.

and farmers still keep looking to MAFF for assistance. It doesn't make sense. MAFF's sympathies lie with agribusinesses and major corporations. If they're calling for more farmers to convert to organic farming, it's because they smell money to be made, and most of the money will be made by the corporations that control the distribution, processing, and marketing of food. That they are interested only in the economic aspect of organically grown commodities and their potential for generating profits is made obvious by their choice to call organic farming “high value-added farming” (*kofuka kachigata no nogyo*).

Wada Hiroyuki, born in 1934 and a founding member of the Miyoshi Producers' Group, also makes the point that MAFF has neglected the plight of family farmers such as himself:

The village of Miyoshi, lying in a small, secluded valley, was not conducive to the modern agricultural conversion package promoted by MAFF, which required large-scale paddy-land irrigation projects, consolidation of paddy-fields, and extensive mechanization. MAFF bypassed Miyoshi for agricultural modernization because it considered Miyoshi to be inappropriate for development. We asked for advice, and they told us farmers to grow citrus fruits and ginger as cash crops.

When the price for citrus dropped and repeated mono-plantings of ginger led to soil depletion and falling yields, most of the farmers had to give up trying to make a living from farming and were forced to find some kind of job off the farm. Their children didn't give farming a second thought as a possible career.

Paradoxically, Miyoshi's secluded setting was ideal for organic farming. A collectively built and maintained irrigation system, which used clean mountain stream water to flood the rice fields, was already in place. The small-sized plots of upland fields and paddy fields encouraged crop diversity and lent themselves to complex crop rotations. The formation of the co-partnership enabled us to survive as farmers. Thinking back on the situation, I recall vividly the feelings of desperation and depression that accompanied it.

Mr. Wada's generation of farmers in Miyoshi can “recall vividly” the desperate times when they felt that they had been abandoned by the government. Just when their plight seemed

irreversible, the co-partnership was formed, and Mr. Wada and his wife became its first producer members. It is little wonder that Mr. Wada believes strongly in the principles espoused by the co-partnership.

Mr. Wada is convinced that by establishing social relationships based on equality and fairness, people can feel fulfilled and connected. This leads to a true sense of community, he believes. He likes the idea of being able to bypass the conventional market and establish direct-marketing relationships based on trust and mutual respect. He stated that he was opposed to the idea of selling surplus produce on the market:

If we started involving ourselves in the conventional market, I'm afraid we'd be drawn back into the game of betting on the market, holding out for the best price. We'd become dependent on forces beyond our control again. Motivated by profit, we'd lose touch with each other and revert to a "dog eat dog" lifestyle. I enjoy the collective spirit of the co-partnership, the sense of working together for a common goal. I don't want everyone to be out for themselves.

Formation of the Miyoshi-Tokyo Co-partnership

The thriving Miyoshi-Tokyo Co-partnership came into being when a group of 25 Tokyo-area housewives in their 20s and 30s initiated contact with a group of farmers in Miyoshi Village in October 1973 in an effort to acquire organically grown food for health and ideological reasons.¹ These young, mostly middle-class women had been influenced by Rachael Carson's *Silent Spring* (Japanese translation, 1962) and the serialized publication of Ariyoshi Sawako's *Fukugo Osen* (Compound Pollution).² The women had been politicized through their involvement in citizens' movements during the 1960s, and had been studying problems associated with chemical farming from both farmers' and consumers' perspectives at monthly study sessions for over a year.

Some of these women had been involved in the women's liberation movement; others had joined the anti-Vietnam War movement as university students; several had participated in the anti-pollution struggles of the late-1960s. One of the women told me that she joined the study group "to have the chance to be with women who'd been active in various social movements and learn from their experiences so I could broaden my own horizons."

In an interview with one of the founding members of the Tokyo-Miyoshi Co-partnership, I was impressed to learn that these women had formed a study group to inform themselves not only about the technical aspects of organic farming, but also about the international political dimensions of food and agriculture.

The more we studied, the more we saw the connections. We saw how Japan's military alliance with the United States was related to importing more American agricultural surpluses. We saw how increasing agricultural imports were forcing Japanese farmers off the land. We saw how migrant farmers forced to work for near-starvation wages as construction workers, truck drivers, and factory hands helped Japan achieve its "miracle" economic growth. We saw how

the corporations benefited at the expense of the common people. We knew that something had to be done. We realized that we consumers had to form an alliance with farmers to take back the control of agricultural production, distribution, and consumption. We knew that other women were forming consumer cooperatives, but we wanted to work with the farmers directly. That's how we decided to focus our energy into forming a direct-marketing structure between consumers and farmers.

Broad social concerns motivated these women; they were deliberately careful not to limit their interests to what would only benefit them directly. The more they read, studied, and discussed, the more they were able to expand beyond the narrow and exclusionary concerns that many considered the province of the middle classes. As another of the founding members put it, "We wanted to connect 'safe' foods and the support of organic farming with the survival of family farmers, with the preservation of the environment, with opposition to militarism and imperialism, with demands for social justice, and with our need to work collectively to create a better future."

Armed with facts and figures concerning the health hazards associated with the ever-increasing amounts of pesticides in conventional farming, aware of the "politics of food" and the increasing corporate control of the production and distribution of food, and determined to effect the structural changes necessary to counteract the poisoning of the environment, the people, and all living organisms, this group of women looked for a farming village close to Tokyo where farmers might be persuaded to convert to organic farming methods. They wanted to form a direct-marketing structure in which organic farmers would supply them with a variety of agricultural products, from vegetables and fruits to grains and eggs. At the same time, they wanted to form a direct socio-cultural link with farmers in an urban-rural alliance that would work for social change.

Fortuitously, the director of the Chiba Prefectural Training Center for Young Farmers, with whom they had established contact, introduced them to his nephew, Wada Hiroyuki, who was successfully marketing organically grown mandarin oranges at the time and whose farm was located about two hours from Tokyo. As Mr. Wada lived in Miyoshi and had some influence in the village, it was hoped that he could persuade local farmers to convert to organic farming if they were guaranteed a market for their produce.

After six months of negotiations following the initial meeting of about 60 consumers and 40 farmers at Miyoshi Village Hall, the "Group for the Production and Consumption of Safe Foods" (*Anzen-na tabemono o tsukutte taberu kai*) was established in February 1974 with an initial membership of 19 farm families and 111 consumer families organized into "posts." (A "post" is the place where consumers' group members go to pick up their weekly delivery of produce.)³

Both farmers and consumers in the newly established co-partnership anticipated markedly reduced crop yields during the first years following the conversion to organic farming. It was

1. The Miyoshi-Tokyo Co-partnership now consists of 30 farm families (most are extended family households) and more than 1,000 consumer families (as of 1996) residing in the Tokyo metropolitan area.

2. Ariyoshi Sawako's articles, which first appeared in the 14 October 1973 edition of *Asahi Shimbun*, were published in book form in 1975.

3. There were a total of 120 posts to which the farmers made their deliveries in 1996. The number of families within a post varies from five to twenty, with the majority having ten families enrolled. Each post is free to decide its own system of sorting the weekly deliveries of produce and exhibits a remarkable amount of flexibility in meeting the needs of post members.



Preparing to load trucks with fresh produce to deliver to consumers in the Tokyo area. By 1996, the Miyoshi Producers' Group farmers had collectively purchased five delivery trucks. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government paid for half the purchase costs of the trucks through a special grant offered to promote direct-marketing relations between Tokyo residents and area farmers. Photos by author unless otherwise noted.

assumed that during the transition period severe weed infestations were likely to occur, crops would be difficult to establish, and various unforeseen problems would appear.

In order to dispel the farmers' fears and concomitant hesitancy in applying organic farming techniques to all of their fields, the consumers' group members agreed to the following three principles:

1. The prices of the produce were to be determined by the farmers;
2. The bulk of the harvested produce would be accepted by and divided equally among the consumers; and
3. A deposit of ¥10,000 by all new consumers' group members would be available to the farmers as emergency aid, if needed.

With consumers agreeing to share the risks associated with farming and guaranteeing the farmers' income in advance of planting, the incentive for farmers to convert to organic farming methods was established. The farmers, in turn, agreed to form an organic farming study group in an effort to establish viable crop rotations, to meet regularly with consumer members in order to discuss various issues related to food and farming, and to take the responsibility for delivering the produce each week to the consumers.

After the third or fourth year, as the crop rotations became established and problems diminished, the amount and variety of crops increased. Eventually crop yields approached and in some cases surpassed those obtained by neighboring farmers who used conventional methods. The farmers then agreed to negotiate prices of produce with the consumers.

Uniting Consumers and Farmers

Miyoshi village (population 4,500), at the southern tip of Boso Peninsula near the resort city of Tateyama across the bay from Tokyo, enjoys a relatively mild winter allowing for crops to be grown year-round. Because temperatures in the area are not warm enough for a double crop of rice, conventional farmers use some of their winter fields for the production of vegetables for

home consumption. Farmers in the Miyoshi-Tokyo Co-partnership, however, utilize all of their fields throughout the year. More than 100 varieties of crops are grown by member farmers and crop rotations are complex, having been refined through more than twenty years of organic farming experience. Although not as busy as in the summer months, the daily schedule of farmwork is steady throughout the year with husbands and wives working side by side in the fields.

The continual contact between farmer and consumer members of the co-partnership—with their differing perspectives and varied interests—has contributed to the widening of the field of vision of all participants. As one farmer, a member of the co-partnership since its inception, told me:

When that group of women from Tokyo first came to Miyoshi Village telling us farmers that we need to learn about the "politics of food," and the relationship between the increase in agricultural imports from the United States and Japanese imperialism, I wanted to throw up! They sounded like a bunch of "Reds" to me! I didn't want anything to do with them, but my wife talked me into joining because we wanted to survive economically as full-time farmers. Well, we've become friends with some of those women we thought were "Reds." I have a lot of respect for them because they stand up for what they believe is right. They probably still think I'm a diehard conservative, but I've changed my ideas about a lot of things. I still don't like to talk about the "evils of imperialism or capitalism," but I've been actively involved in the golf course opposition movement. So, I wouldn't be surprised [laughing] if some of my neighbors think of me as a "Red."

The farmer and consumer members of the co-partnership have many opportunities to interact. The farmers deliver the produce to consumers on a weekly basis, and the consumers often go to Miyoshi to help with various farm tasks, attend meetings, or just escape from the congestion of the city. The city folk relax in the peace and quiet of the rural countryside, staying in "Everyone's House" (a two-story wooden structure built jointly by the farmers and consumers). Consumers' children also have opportunities to stay at "Everyone's House"; during special events such as "Camping Out," they sleep in tents, learn how to make eating utensils from bamboo, cook their own meals, and survive "on their own." Thus, friendships have developed among the children as well as the adult members of the co-partnership.

Although the two parties have recognized commonalities, differences in values and attitudes between urban and rural members sometimes surface, as the following comments of a farm woman in her mid-30s reveal:

I get tired of hearing consumers' group women say how they envy us farm women, saying that they envy the large houses, the clean environment, the peace and quiet, and the sense of belonging that must come with living in a farm community. Consumers who say things like that would probably become bored with country living in a matter of months, feeling isolated and lacking the distractions of city living such as movie theaters, museums, fancy restaurants, and shopping arcades. I think many of the city women come here with an idealized picture of country living and fail to recognize the hardships associated with it. They stay for a day or two; it's kind of a vacation for them. Just last week, one of our neighbors sprayed



Consumers and farmers with their families at the annual co-partnership harvest festival in Miyoshi. November 1991.

united struggle against the construction of a golf course within the village of Miyoshi.

Miyoshi Golf Course Resort Development Plans

Plans to build a golf course resort in the Momeiri Hills of Miyoshi had been on the drawing boards since the mid-1960s when the huge Tokyo-based developer Sobu Development Corporation started negotiations to purchase land in the area. By 1973, Sobu had obtained from local landowners "notes of agreement to sell" about 40 percent of the 115 hectares (284 acres) they needed. However, the recession brought on by the oil crisis of that year forced them to postpone further action. It was in March 1988 during the "bubble economy" that Sobu Development Corporation reinitiated land purchase proposals, and after obtaining "notes of agreement to sell" about two-thirds of the land needed for the golf course, the corporation filed for permission from the Miyoshi Village authorities to start construction.

One of the ten ward heads of Miyoshi at the time happened to be Watanabe Katsuo, a farmer member of the Miyoshi-Tokyo Co-partnership. At the meeting when the developer's request for permission to begin construction of the resort complex was discussed, Mr. Watanabe raised questions about the danger of chemical use and the advisability of granting immediate approval.

Mr. Watanabe reported the news of the proposed construction to the other farmers in the organic producers' group, and the consumers' group was informed immediately. Most of the farmers in the Miyoshi Producers' Group had not opposed the idea of a golf course initially and they were surprised at the vehement response of some of the consumers' group members. One farmer stated:

I remember the first time the consumers in our co-partnership brought up the subject of opposing the proposed golf course in Miyoshi. We farmers called an informal meeting to talk about the issue, and most of us agreed that a golf course would be a good thing for everyone concerned. We half-jokingly said that when the consumers' group women come out to work the fields with us, their husbands could come out to golf. That way, the family could come out here together and everyone would be happy. We couldn't understand why the consumers' group members were so upset. To us, it was just another golf course. After all [laughing], they don't call Chiba Prefecture "golf course heaven" for nothing!

The Miyoshi Producers' Group farmers, most of whom had never participated directly in any type of opposition, were hesitant to ally themselves with the consumers' group women; some of the farmers saw them as overly confrontational and politically radical, unwilling to consider compromise. The consumers' group women were involved from the start in the attempt to form a national network of anti-golf course groups. By contrast, the farmers in the group told me that they had taken a "wait-and-see" attitude, hoping to avoid antagonizing their neighbors unnecessarily.

Several of the farmers explained to me that they needed to maintain friendly ties with neighboring farmers who were not members of the organic producers' group; they felt that they could not afford to antagonize them. Often, these relationships had endured over several generations, and by adopting an ideological stance too much at variance with that of most of their neighbors, they feared alienating them and causing resentment.

Recalling one of the first meetings in 1988 between co-partnership consumers and farmers held at "Everyone's House," one

pesticides on his fields and although I closed the windows facing the wind, the herbicide dust still settled in the house. I had to spend the whole day cleaning, trying to get rid of the noxious smell and hoping my children wouldn't get poisoned! You know, we have to get along with all of our neighbors, so we can't complain about pesticide drift, we really have no privacy because everyone knows what everyone else does, and as for the big houses, they're difficult to keep clean and they're cold in the winter!

The farm women want the urban women to understand the difficulties associated with living in a rural area. The city women want the farm women to sympathize with the difficulties of living in an alienating and stressful urban environment. Reaching this level of empathy requires a long-term relationship.

Although class differences are at times glaringly apparent (e.g., style of dress, language use, general demeanor), these have not kept co-partnership members from finding the commonalities and forging close bonds of friendship. Although class tensions do surface at times, they appear to be less important than the clearly felt affinity among the farmers and consumers of the co-partnership. As one 50-year-old farm woman related:

When the consumers' group women are staying at "Everyone's House" and working in the fields with us or we're discussing life in general, I really feel close to them and some I consider my true friends. One day, I saw one of the consumers' group women being interviewed on television concerning her opposition to sending Japanese troops to Cambodia and I really felt proud of her. She was dressed so smartly and talked so intelligently that I almost cried with the pride in my heart.

Having gotten to know each other over the years, many of the farmers and consumers in the co-partnership have been able to get through to real feelings. This became apparent to me over time as I listened to farmers talking with consumers about personal issues ranging from problem children and how to handle them to serious illnesses or deaths in the family.

As the years passed, the co-partnership members were exposed to new ideas, different ways of looking at things, and alternative ways of acting out their social existence; the influence of each upon the other was cumulative. Their collective involvement increased in a variety of endeavors, culminating in their

farmer said that when the consumers had called for a joint study session to discuss and evaluate the golf course situation and how best to oppose its construction, most of the farmers in the Miyoshi Producers' Group had attended, assuming that it would be a mutual learning experience and a chance to discuss ideological differences and available options. He then stated that this initial study meeting seemed to the farmers to be a political lecture by consumers' group representatives who had been involved in various opposition movements in the city. He remembers that at the end of the meeting many of the farmers left feeling that they would not be able to work together because the ideological differences between the two groups were too great.

One of the consumers' group women who had attended the meeting in question suspected that some of the men resented the politically provocative language the women used to express their principled determination to fight against the construction of the proposed golf course. One of the farm women told me that some of the older farmers, born and raised with patriarchal beliefs, disliked women who "act as if they know more about politics than men do and try to order men around." A Miyoshi Producers' Group farmer told me that her sister, a farm wife like herself, had been involved in a local movement opposing the construction of a golf course resort complex near her village in Shizuoka Prefecture for more than three years. She said that because most of the farmers in the Miyoshi-Tokyo Co-partnership did not have relatives or know of anyone involved in struggles against resort development, their views on golf course development tended to reflect those of the mainstream media, adding:

Sure, they read the articles in the co-partnership journals and newsletters by consumers' group women involved in anti-golf course activities. Some of the farmers even talked to anti-golf course activists about their experiences when they visited the group and stayed at "Everyone's House." But most of the farmers didn't think much about golf courses, one way or the other, because the issue had never directly affected them. That's why, when this golf course issue came up here, most of the farmers weren't too concerned at first. In my case, my sister's struggle against resort development had influenced me quite a lot. When the consumers' group formed an anti-golf course action committee and asked us to form a farmers' golf course opposition committee in March 1988, I was one of the first farmers to volunteer. I knew it was not going to be easy convincing some of the farmers of the need to oppose the golf course project with all our united energy, but I knew that we had to have all the farmers in the group actively involved in the opposition if we were to succeed.

As the farmers' involvement in the movement progressed, they came to identify the differences between themselves and the urban consumers—even the differences they thought were irreconcilable—as prejudices inculcated from childhood, part of a divide-and-rule strategy of the dominant classes. They came to see the rural-urban dichotomy and class-based divisions as an unnatural and imposed separation of people with common interests and a shared social vision who were attempting to reshape society from the grassroots. Many farmers who had previously harbored resentments against "political women" came to see the male-female split as another aspect of the dominant culture's divide-and-rule strategy.

One farmer in his mid-50s told me that he had never opposed the authorities in his life and that if someone had told him (before the golf course issue had come up) that he would

someday be involved in activities that opposed local political decisions, he would have laughed in their face. He then admitted:

Looking back, I can see how much the consumers' influence affected my way of looking at things. Before, I thought that protesting environmental pollution was only for people with time on their hands who needed to get involved in some kind of "hobby" (*shumi*). Now, I see the direct connection between water pollution, soil erosion, deforestation, golf courses, resort development, and farming. I now realize the need for each and every one of us to take a stand and fight to protect not only our livelihoods, but the health and well-being of our children and grandchildren.

The co-partnership consumers and farmers agreed to an initial strategy of obtaining signatures of village residents opposed to the construction of a golf course resort. Within six months, after a house-to-house campaign, more than 1,700 people had signed the petition demanding the cancellation of construction plans. The village assembly voted to reject the development proposal in March 1989.

The victory, however, was short-lived. In April 1990, the then governor of Chiba Prefecture, Numata Takeshi, announced a prohibition against the use of chemicals on golf courses in the prefecture. With this ban, he hoped to mollify opponents and allow development of the golf course to move ahead. Critics pointed out that the bill prohibiting the use of chemicals was a sham since it did not include provisions for inspection or penalties for non-compliance.

Emboldened by the governor's support, Sobu Development Corporation circulated its own petition supporting the construction of the golf course and obtained 2,100 signatures by January 1991. The earlier decision to reject construction plans was overruled by the village assembly in March 1991. Mizoguchi Hitoshi, an elected JCP (Japan Communist Party) member of the village assembly and one of the Miyoshi Producers' Group farmers, immediately distributed copies of the official announcement to build the golf course to co-partnership members, thus reactivating the opposition movement.

Golf Course Rice Paddy Purchase

In March 1991 co-partnership members formed an ad hoc committee made up of both farmer and consumer members to formulate new strategies to stop the golf course. One effective tactic involved the purchase of 1,500 square meters (about one-third of an acre) of land determined by the committee to be of strategic importance.

One of the Miyoshi Producers' Group farmers had been contacted by a non-group farmer who informed him that the developers had offered to buy three of his abandoned rice fields located in a narrow valley leading up to the proposed golf course site. This farmer was on good terms with the co-partnership farmers and supported their opposition to the proposed golf course. A thorough examination of the construction plans by committee members revealed that the developers intended to construct a catchment pond at that location. The three rice fields were ideally situated to act as a drainage pond to catch the surface run-off of toxic chemicals. No alternative sites for a catchment pond were available, and if the developers could not acquire this land, the plans for the resort would have to be completely redrawn at an estimated cost of ¥100 million (one million U.S. dollars).

In June 1991, the Miyoshi Producers' Group bought the 1,500 square meters of remote upland rice paddies for ¥6 million (\$60,000), twice the going rate for prime lowland rice paddies. The consumers' group agreed to supply the labor needed to prepare the fields, transplant the seedlings, and harvest the rice crop.

The consumers and farmers worked these fields together from 1991 through the harvest of 1993. Participating in the harvest of 1993—in which about twenty consumers' group members and fifteen farmers worked together—I found everyone to be in high spirits as victory was anticipated. Since 1994, the farmers have rented the rice paddies to Kobayashi Noriko, who ran as the opposition candidate in the mayoral election of 1991 (see below). The “rent” amounts to a “taste” of the rice crop and about a case of beer a year.

Meeting with Other Farmers Opposing Golf Courses

A number of consumers' group members had been involved in local struggles against the construction of golf courses in Saitama and Chiba Prefectures, and many of the women who had participated in those struggles felt a need to form a network serving as an umbrella organization to bring together groups opposing specific golf courses. One of the consumers' group women actively involved in the attempt to form a national network explained that she (along with others) felt it important for farmers to have the opportunity to meet and talk with other farmers involved in anti-golf course struggles nationwide. The first national forum on the issue of golf courses was held in November 1988 in Tokyo and the National Liaison Council on the Issue of Golf Course Resorts was formally established. Two nationwide organizations whose coordinating roles were pivotal in organizing the national network were the Japan Organic Agriculture Association (JOAA) and Seikyo, the Japan Consumers' Cooperatives Union (JCCU).

More than 200 participants from nineteen prefectures attended the inaugural meeting of the national network. By the time of the third meeting, held in Kobe in 1990, the number of participants had risen to more than 700 representatives from 43 prefectures. Miyoshi Consumers' Group members involved in local struggles attended all of the meetings. Local campaigns against golf course development were no longer isolated, and activists nationwide were now able to meet in order to discuss strategies and to encourage each other in their struggles.

The Miyoshi Producers' Group farmers sent a delegation of four farmers to the national meeting in Kobe in 1990. One of the Miyoshi farmers offered the following comments:

The farmers we met at those meetings sounded a lot like some of the consumers in our co-partnership. They were talking about social justice, and farmers' rights to farm, and everyone's right to clean water, and political corruption, and the rich getting richer, and the evils of uncontrolled capitalism. At first, it was shocking for us to hear other farmers talking like that. After the study sessions, we would drink [*sake* and beer] with the other farmers and that's when we knew that they were farmers, just like us. They were just trying to survive as farmers and were at the same time concerned for the health of their families. They said that they couldn't fight alone and that they needed to build coalitions with as many different groups of people opposed to golf course construction as possible in order to win.

Another point that impressed me was made by one of the farmers from Nara Prefecture. He said that the farmers there weren't really

concerned with the proposed construction of a golf course at first. None of them golfed so they figured it had nothing to do with them. It wasn't until they started receiving leaflets stuffed into their mailboxes at home, and handouts passed out at train and bus stations by a local citizen's group opposed to the golf course construction that they began to become interested. And it took a lot of time before the farmers became actively involved and actually formed a farmers' opposition group. He said that if they hadn't joined forces with the local citizens' group, they wouldn't have known where to begin, and that only by working together with as many different groups of people as possible can we hope to stop further golf course construction in Japan.

After viewing an NHK (national public television network) documentary program that described the golf course opposition activities of local farmers in Yamazoe Village in Nara Prefecture in the spring of 1991, the Miyoshi Producers' Group decided to send a delegation of four farmers to meet with the farmers there. One of the farmers who visited the opposition farmers in Yamazoe Village stated:

When they [the farmers of Yamazoe Village involved in the opposition movement] took us to the site of the golf course, I was shocked. They [the developers] were almost finished with the construction of the course, and the tops of the hills had been leveled and all the trees were gone. I could see with my own eyes what was in store for the Momeiri Hills of Miyoshi if a golf course were built there. The farmers showed us the water in their rice paddies and it was red from the chemical runoff! I recorded it all on video and showed it to everyone when we returned.

I was told by an organic farmer from Ogawa-machi in Saitama Prefecture, who had just written a book about opposition to golf courses in Japan, that within four or five years after the construction of a golf course so-called “red water” is invariably detected flowing out of surface-water drainage works. This is because during golf course construction in Japan, felled trees are buried intact, and mountain soils with a high iron and manganese content are dug to depths of up to 50 meters and used as soil fill to create level playing terrain. This procedure results in extraordinarily high levels of humic acid which, when mixed with the chloride disinfectant used on golf courses, changes into trihal-methane, a known carcinogen.



Signs declaring opposition to the proposed golf course construction are displayed boldly outside “Everyone's House.” July 1991.

By the summer of 1991, the consumers and farmers of the co-partnership had put up billboards opposing the construction of the golf course in front of “Everyone’s House” and in the fields of Yamana Hamlet and the neighboring hamlets of Ebishiki, Yamashita, and Masuma—all within Miyoshi Village boundaries. They also put up billboards in Zushigaya Hamlet, Town of Maruyama, where one of the farmers’ group members lived. With volunteer labor, the co-partnership decided to publish a weekly four-page opposition movement newsletter to be inserted in the local newspaper and delivered to the 1,200 households in the village of Miyoshi. A consumers’ group contingency fund of ¥300,000 (US\$3,000) was drawn from to pay for the cost of paper, printing, and delivery of the newsletters. A total of 64 issues of news updates on the anti-golf course struggle were delivered to village residents before the developers finally gave up and closed down their office in Tateyama, returning to their main office in Tokyo in March 1993.

The Miyoshi Producers’ Group farmers had met with farmers in other areas of Japan fighting against the construction of golf course resorts and had fully committed themselves to defeating the proposal to build one in Miyoshi. Their enthusiastic commitment convinced many Miyoshi residents to support the farmers in their opposition.

Miyoshi Village Mayoral Election

Since the incumbent mayor supported the plans to build a golf course, the co-partnership members decided to run their own candidate against him. However, they could not find a local resident willing to run for the office of mayor. Wada Hiroyuki, founding member of the producers’ group and respected leader of the community, feared conflict with some of his relatives living in the village if he ran as an opposition candidate and was forced (through familial pressure) to turn down the nomination. Mizoguchi Hitoshi, a member of the producers’ group, also turned down the offer of nomination as he felt that it was important for him to continue as an elected representative on the Miyoshi Village Assembly. He was elected to his fourth four-year term as a Japanese Communist Party village assembly representative in the fall of 1993.

It was not until two days before the official deadline to submit the necessary paperwork that the opposition group found a person willing to enter the contest for mayor. Her name was Kobayashi Noriko, a relative newcomer to the village who had moved to Miyoshi from Yokohama with her husband in order to pursue their interest in organic farming. Most of the farmers in the opposition group felt that her status as a “newcomer” would be an asset since, as one farmer put it, “No local toes would be stepped on.”

The farmers and consumers actively involved in the golf course opposition hastily set up election headquarters at “Everyone’s House” and called a press conference at Tateyama City Hall to announce the candidacy. They prepared a careful statement stating the reasons behind their decision to oppose the incumbent mayor. All the prefectural newspapers carried the story of the “anti-golf course mayoral candidate.”

The farmers and consumers of the co-partnership put up election posters, distributed campaign leaflets door-to-door, and drove vehicles with loudspeakers throughout the village an-



Miyoshi Producers’ Group farmer Ishihata Noriko (far right) with consumers’ group members posting signs on “their” trees during the first Tachiki Trust-labeling event in Miyoshi. February 13, 1992. Photo courtesy of Suzuki Akira.

nouncing the candidacy of Kobayashi Noriko for the upcoming election. The village held the election in September 1991. Ms. Kobayashi received 812 votes against the incumbent’s 2,090. This was an amazing accomplishment, since it usually takes a year (and a prodigious amount of money) to prepare for and run an election campaign.

Both farmers’ group and consumers’ group members expressed satisfaction with the results. They felt that with so many village residents opposed, it would be difficult for the developers to go ahead with construction plans. One farmer told me how gratified she felt when she heard the election results:

I was really nervous going door-to-door talking with people I didn’t even know. But I knew it was for the good of the whole village. That’s what kept me going. I feel good having stood up for my beliefs. I think a lot of people around here feel closer to each other because we ended up taking a stand together.

Despite the local opposition, approval at the prefectural level to begin construction of the golf course in Miyoshi was announced formally by the village assembly on December 15, 1991. Within two months of the announcement, the anti-golf course activists initiated a course of action that turned out to be one of their most effective opposition strategies: symbolically selling trees on privately held forested land within the proposed golf course boundaries to supporters of the opposition movement. Since the trees held in the legally bound trust could not be cut down for a period of seven years, this tactic proved to be the developer’s nightmare come true.

Standing Tree (*Tachiki*) Trust

Suzuki Akira and his wife Fumiko were former consumer members of the Miyoshi-Tokyo Co-partnership who moved to Miyoshi in 1983. Mr. Suzuki explained:

We joined the co-partnership in 1981 and started to come to the village on weekends to help with the farmwork. At first, we both

experienced culture shock. The lifestyle was so different from what we were used to in the city. After about two years of spending our weekends at "Everyone's House," we decided that we wanted to try farming ourselves and we moved out here. We rented a house in Tateyama from one of the Miyoshi Producer Group farmer's older brothers for ¥6,000 (US\$60) a month and started growing our own food, getting advice from the farmers. We built our log house here in Miyoshi in 1988 on land we rent from Sugita Shoji [a Miyoshi Producers' Group farmer] for ¥10,000 (US\$100) a year. He's been very generous to us. I think [laughing] it has to do with the fact that we introduced him to the woman he married, a friend of ours from Tokyo. We're very happy out here. The stress of life in the city was getting to us, and it's a wonderful place for our son to grow up. That's why when we heard of the proposal to build a golf course here, we knew we had to get involved in the opposition. We were part of the opposition right from the start [in 1988] and we started looking into tactics used by other groups opposing golf courses in Japan.

On February 6, 1992, Mr. and Mrs. Suzuki held a meeting at their house in Yamana Hamlet to discuss the adoption and implementation of the Tachiki Trust tactic with other key participants in the opposition. Wada Hiroyuki, Mizoguchi Hitoshi, and Ishihata Noriko of the Miyoshi Producers' Group; Kobayashi Noriko, the mayoral candidate; and several consumer members of the co-partnership, along with several local residents were present. Mr. Suzuki had visited the Tokyo office of the National Liaison Council on the Issue of Golf Course Resorts and had obtained literature explaining how the Tachiki Trust works and saw examples of its use in other parts of Japan. After perusing the literature together, everyone at the meeting agreed that implementing the Tachiki Trust as an opposition tactic was an excellent idea. The Miyoshi Village Mountain Trust Committee was established at the meeting with Wada Hiroyuki as chair and Suzuki Akira as secretary/treasurer.

Unlike previous trusts in which the land itself was parceled and sold to supporters opposing development schemes, with the Tachiki Trust the trees on the land were to be held in trust. The trust prohibits the cutting down of any trees held in trust for a period of seven years, renewable for another period of seven years. Putting the trees in trust, rather than the land itself, was much less expensive and required much less paperwork. Minami Shuji, a farmer/musician living in the mountains of Gifu Prefecture, is given the credit for introducing the idea of the Tachiki Trust in 1989. The Miyoshi Tachiki Trust (the first in Chiba Prefecture) was modeled on the 1990 Tachiki Trust movement in Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture.

Mr. and Mrs. Suzuki started going door-to-door with *hanko* (signature seal), contracts, and cash in hand. In the first week following the meeting, they managed to convince four landowners to support the golf course opposition movement by putting the trees on their land in trust. There was a frenzy of activity at "Everyone's House" as consumer and farmer members of the co-partnership made wooden signs the size of road signs to post at the four trust sites, made wooden labels about six inches by twelve inches in size, wrote messages on them, and attached them to the trees. The farmers took time from their farmwork in turns to clear a path to the four sites located in the remote mountain forest. Mr. Suzuki contacted the members of the press in Tateyama and called the major television studios in Tokyo inviting them to attend and record the first Tachiki Trust labeling in Chiba Prefecture. On 13 February 1992, an NHK television film crew taped the Tachiki Trust labeling event in the Momeiri

Hills of Miyoshi. Children as well as adults took part in the first demonstration of "labeling" trees. By the end of the day, 123 trees at four sites had wooden signs attached to them with the names and addresses of purchasers written on them. Many had messages written on them as well, such as one by a seven-year-old boy that simply stated, "Let's grow together!" NHK broadcast the news tape twice that day during prime viewing time, at 6:15 PM and again at 9:00 PM. Within a week, the Miyoshi Village Mountain Trust Committee had received telephone calls from 373 people nationwide who had seen the televised broadcast; these viewers purchased 1,078 trees at ¥1,500 (US\$15) a tree.

Within six months, a total of 17 landowners with 7.53 hectares (18.6 acres) of land located at 33 sites scattered about the proposed golf course had agreed to join the Miyoshi Tachiki Trust movement. Sobu Development Corporation officials found themselves in a quandary; they could not continue negotiations with other landowners because of the pockets of resistance by the landowners associated with the Tachiki Trust movement within the proposed golf course site. The developers vacated their office in Tateyama in March 1993, and the Miyoshi Village Mountain Trust Committee stopped accepting offers to buy trees at that time. The golf course proposal was officially defeated in March 1994 when the contract to begin construction expired. Co-partnership members had bought more than 1,000 trees, and a total of 3,330 trees had been placed in trust by more than 2,000 individuals representing 1,451 families nationwide.

By 1996, the Tachiki Trust oppositional tactic was being used at more than 100 locations throughout Japan. It is now being employed to stop the construction not only of golf course resorts but also of winter ski resorts, oceanside resorts, nuclear power plants, expressways, and garbage dump sites, as well as to stop the expansion of military facilities.

Conclusion

The example of the Miyoshi-Tokyo Co-partnership demonstrates the efficacy of consumers from urban areas uniting with organic farmers in a long-term relationship based on equality and trust. Farmers are able to survive as full-time farmers and consumers are given a direct connection to the land that produces the food they consume. Both farmers and consumers are able to expand their horizons and engage in a variety of activities that they would not have the opportunity (or, in some cases, inclination) to participate in otherwise. Working together toward an alternative vision of what Japan can become, participants are engaged in concrete actions that create new cultural values and new social relationships and challenge the dominant culture's socio-political assumptions.

The Miyoshi-Tokyo Co-partnership members entered the political arena and raised the consciousnesses of other residents beyond short-term economic self-interests to encompass long-term environmental and social concerns. Farmers and consumers in the group influenced each other, and after ironing out their differences, were able to act collectively. The organizational strength and effective use of the mass media in turn encouraged others, in the city and in the country, to become involved, directly or indirectly. The experience strengthened the bonds between the farmers and the consumers. They fought collectively and were able to realize their collective goal: to halt the proposed golf course.