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# Post-war Seasonal Labor Migration from the Rural Areas in Japan

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## Introduction

The rapid increase in the number of farmers and/or members of farm households engaged in the practice of *dekasegi* or seasonal labor migration to supplement their household incomes in the early part of the 1960's became a national concern. Numerous social and economic problems associated with this practice attracted the attention of researchers and the general public. In the villages, the primary concerns were the problems of the farm households without the heads of households for a long period of time, the education of children, and the problems of a community where a large number of males were absent. In addition, the increasing incidents of injuries, illnesses, deaths, disappearances, and other problems at the work sites to seasonal labor migrants emerged with the growth of seasonal labor migration. Some also feared a decline in agricultural production because of the lack of sufficient labor and preparation for cropping during the "agricultural rest period." Many called for countermeasures to end this practice because of undesirable social problems. Yet, *dekasegi* is still a part of the yearly cycle in agricultural areas. Instead of declining, the number of migrants have continued to increase in some of the rural areas.

The practice of *dekasegi* can be traced to the latter part of the Tokugawa period (Tochihara 1975, 51). But, it achieved prominence during the Meiji period. From this period, *dekasegi* was an inclusive term which covered various forms of temporary migration. Female migrants going to work in the textile mills as well as males going to the Manchurian coal mines and Hokkaido fisheries were referred to as *dekasegi-sha* or labor migrants in the pre-World War II period. The migrants to Hawaii and the United States were also considered to be in the same category. Even today it is used commonly to designate all forms of movement to other employment from the place of residence.

Presently, *dekasegi* is defined officially as "the departure of a *farm household member* going to work outside his village for more than one month but less than one year with the intention of returning to his village once the term of work is completed" (Norin Tokei Kyokai 1972, 18). The comprehensive nature of this definition results in the enumeration of persons who are employed in various

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occupations prior to *dekasegi*. In 1963, only 75 per cent of the seasonal labor migrants were actually engaged in agriculture and in 1970, 86 per cent were in the same category (Norin-sho Tokei Chosa-bu, 1963 and 1970 editions). Also, since most of the *dekasegi-sha* are engaged in this practice during a certain season of the year, they are referred to as *kisetsu dekasegi-sha* or seasonal labor migrants.<sup>1)</sup>

The primary focus of this paper is an examination of the preconditions for the development of post-World War II *kisetsu dekasegi*, its demographic, economic and regional patterns, and its future in the agricultural areas. The critical factors in the evolution of surplus labor, especially during the winter, were agricultural mechanization, changes in production techniques, and the substitution of industrial products for locally produced goods. Simultaneously, the strengthening of ties between the rural and urban areas through the exchange complex (spatial interdependent economy) weakened the negative attitudes toward *kisetsu dekasegi* and also contributed to the seasonal outflow of farmers.

Another aspect of this paper is an analysis of the demographic and economic characteristics of seasonal labor migrants. An analysis of these characteristics will provide an opportunity to understand the changes in regional flows, types of industries involved, and a comparison between the pre-War and post-War patterns. However, the main emphasis will be on the flows after 1960.

The future of seasonal labor migration will be considered in the third part of this paper. Because seasonal labor migration has produced major social and economic changes in the rural areas, there is a need to review the possible courses of development in the future. There is reason to believe that the practice is an adaptive mechanism to overcome difficulties which have occurred as a result of unequal development between the agricultural and industrial sectors. Usually, permanent outmigration of farm households is considered to be a corrective response for this type of imbalance. But, low past outmigration rate seems to suggest that permanent outmigration will not be a significant factor in correcting this difference in the foreseeable future.

### **Preconditions for Seasonal Labor Migration**

The economic recovery in the post-War period was conducive in stimulating and expanding the linkages between the rural and urban areas. The strengthening of the exchange complex resulted in the increasing commercialization of agriculture and a desire to achieve convenience goods. In other words, the farmers began to desire a level of living which was equal to that of the urban dwellers. This has

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1) In this paper, *dekasegi* and seasonal labor migration will be used interchangeably. Also, *dekasegi-sha* and seasonal labor migrant(s) will be used in a similar manner.

been referred to as "noson no toshika (the urbanization of the agricultural village)" (Kudo and Tenmyo 1970, 23 and Tochiyama 1975, 8). In agriculture, surplus labor was being created by successive introductions of improved agricultural technology and products from the industrial sector. The growth of excess labor was further exacerbated by the reduction of local employment also through mechanization and improved transportation. Employment which could utilize the skills of the farmers were unavailable in sufficient numbers locally; however, such an alternative appeared at the beginning of the 1960's with the construction expansion.

The expansion of job opportunities during the period of rapid economic growth has been cited frequently as the main reason for the increase in seasonal labor migrants. Without any doubt, the number of seasonal labor migrants increased dramatically in the period of rapid post-War economic expansion. In actuality, however, this increase was a response from a segment of the economically active population in the rural areas who had to find alternative ways to utilize the excess labor. In other words, the surplus labor was already in existence when the expansion of job opportunities occurred.

The shift toward a larger number of "part-time farm households" in comparison to the "full-time farm households" presaged the growing problem of low farm household incomes in the early 1960's. In fact, the problem of low farm household incomes was recognized by government policy planners and the enactment of the Basic Agricultural Law in 1961 was an attempt to correct it. But, part-time farm households, which are farm households in which a member or members work outside of farming, increased from 50 per cent in 1950 to 66 per cent in 1960 and 84 per cent in 1970 (Norin-sho Norin Keizai-kyoku Tokei Joho-bu, 1950-1974 editions).

The increase in the number of part-time farm households meant that an increasing number of people was being employed outside of agriculture. In this process, women and older persons became the main labor force in agriculture. For example, nationally the composition of the "persons primarily engaged in agriculture" was 44 per cent males to 56 per cent females in 1963 and 43 per cent to 57 per cent respectively in 1970. In the age group 35-59, which contains the majority of "persons primarily engaged in agriculture," the composition was 41 per cent males to 59 per cent females in 1963 and 42 per cent to 58 per cent in 1970 respectively.

Consequently, a shift within the economically active population of the rural areas had occurred and women and older persons became the primary workers in agriculture. This trend was evident by 1963 and was described popularly as "sanchan nogyo" or farming by the wife and grandparents of a farm household. This shift meant that men were being employed in other occupations part-time in addition to farming.

The changes in the economically active population meant that the agricultural income dependency rate or the dependence on agriculture to provide an income to the farm household declined as well. The agricultural income dependency rate was 68 per cent and only 32 per cent from nonagricultural sources in 1950. But, by 1960 this rate was down to 53 per cent and 47 per cent respectively. After 1962, the agricultural income dependency rate declined almost yearly. It was 48 per cent to 52 in 1965, 36 per cent to 64 per cent in 1970, and 32 per cent to 68 per cent in 1973 respectively (Norin-sho Norin Keizai-kyoku Tokei Joho-bu, 1950-1974 editions). The farm households with smaller farms suffered a greater decline in the income dependency rate over a shorter period of time. For instance, the farm household with 0.1 to 0.5 ha. of land received 36 per cent from agriculture in 1965 and only 9 per cent in 1973 while the farm household with more 2.0 ha. of farm land received 83 per cent of its income from agriculture in 1965 and 71 per cent in 1973 (These figures are for the prefectures only) (Norin-sho Norin Keizai-kyoku Tokei Joho-bu, 1965 and 1974 editions). Therefore, this development contributed greatly to the necessity of securing additional incomes for household expenditures which is listed as one of the primary reasons for engaging in seasonal labor migration. In Tohoku, about 52 per cent of the seasonal labor migrants indicated that the acquisition of cash income for household expenses was their main objective (Tohoku Nosei-kyoku 1973, 60).

The strengthening of the exchange complex had a tremendous impact on the utilization of labor. Traditionally, the farmers were busy through the winter period preparing his rice crop for sale as well as producing necessary items for household use. For example, the farmer practically had to labor through winter to thresh his rice crop. Presently, the same work is completed in a matter of weeks during the harvesting period in the fall. Also, the farmers produced *zori* (straw sandals), *mino* (raincoats) and rope from the rice straw. All of these items have been replaced by plastic and rubber goods. The weaving of straw bags to ship rice in was also undertaken during the winter threshing period. However, this has been replaced by hemp bags. In the mountain villages, farmers worked in the forests and produced charcoal during the winter. But, charcoal production declined as the use of fossil fuels increased (Uno 1972, 137). Another example of a change in the labor utilization during the winter was the termination of hauling goods locally by farmers through mechanization and improvements of local roads.

The increased utilization of farm machinery played a vital role in creating a labor surplus in the rural areas. Agricultural machinery reduced the number of hours required to produce a crop as well as relieved the burdens of farming. For example, the hours needed to produce 10 ares of rice declined from 206.2 hours in 1950 to 99.0 hours in 1972 (Norin-sho Norin Keizai-kyoku Tokei Joho-bu, 1950-1974

editions). The reduction in the labor hours for the production of rice has also occurred in the preparation of the field and harvesting. In the case of the preparation of the field, the amount of hours required to plow one *chobu* (0.99174 ha.) was reduced from one day by hand tractor to one-half day by tractor (Asahi Shimbun, November 20, 1975). If a farmer has 2.5 ha. of paddy fields, he could complete his plowing in about one and one-half days with a tractor instead of two and one-half days. In the future, the number of hours required to produce a rice crop can be expected to decline even more as the paddy planter, large tractor, binder and combine are diffused widely. The paddy planter and binder have reduced the labor input by 9.5 hours and 7.0 hours per 10 ares of paddy between 1970 and 1973 (Norin Tokei Kyokai 1975, 61).

The increased use of farm machinery has led to a complex and intricate relationship between machinery purchases and *dekasegi*. Some farmers decided to engage in seasonal labor migration because they were unable to raise sufficient down payment for a new machine. Other farmers have, however, purchased additional or improved version of implements because they felt that they get their farm work quickly to leave for their seasonal work (Akita Sakigake Shimpō-sha Seiji-bu 1965, 8). Thus, some farmers have created a cycle whereby they are purchasing implements to reduce working hours at critical times in harvesting and preparation of fields. In doing this, they are paying for the machinery from the seasonal labor earnings. According to a survey, 5.2 per cent of the migrants from Tohoku stated that the need for funds to acquire farm implements was their main reason for engaging in *dekasegi* (Tohoku Nosei-kyoku Tokei Joho-bu 1973, 60).

This has meant an overinvestment in farm implements (Tochihara 1975, 49). This machinery purchasing behavior is predicated on the fact that it shortens the time of work during a critical time in the yearly cycle of the *dekasegi-sha*. The efficient use of the machinery becomes a secondary consideration in many cases. Other factors in the machinery purchasing behavior includes the desire of the farmer to possess his own machinery, to use it freely, and to maintain it personally. In addition, the farmer may have succumbed to the promotional talks and advertisements of the manufacturers.

Since the end of the War, the self-sufficiency of the rural areas began to decline as a result of the growing dependence on the urban areas for goods and services. In response to this process, the farmers became increasingly commercialized as can be seen by the rising percentage of a crop sold. For example, commercialization rate of paddy rice increased from 44 per cent to 76 per cent between 1950 and 1972, from 35 per cent to 76 per cent for wheat, and from 22 per cent to 55 per cent for soybean respectively (Norin-sho Norin Keizai-kyoku Tokei Joho-bu, 1950-1974 editions). Also, the increasing percentage of the commercialization rate of

the crops reflects the higher productivity from the land. More and more the farmers were being drawn into the exchange complex. Thus, a spatially interdependent economy was expanding and this process began to change rural attitudes and patterns of life. However, income from agriculture was not sufficient to purchase convenience items which the industrial sector was producing for the national market.

*Dekasegi* functioned as a means by which convenience goods were purchased and acted as a diffusion mechanism to enhance the desire to improve the life in the rural areas. Once, a portion of the farm households purchased household appliances, motorcycles, and passenger cars, the whole village tried to emulate this action. In most cases, these items were purchased from the earnings of seasonal work (Akita Sakigake Shimpo-sha Seiji-bu 1965, 11). Thus, the farmers attempted to gain the same conveniences as that of the urban dwellers. In fact, it has been achieved in some items. For example, the diffusion rates are almost identical for passenger cars with 39 per cent in the urban areas and 31 per cent in the rural areas and for telephones with a diffusion rate of 70 per cent and 64 per cent respectively (Iwashita 1975, 47). Even during a period of economic recession, the sales of passenger cars and appliances were reported to be brisk at a sale sponsored by an agricultural cooperative (Iwashita 1975, 47).

As more and more farmers were employed in the large metropolitan areas, they saw, experienced and learned new ideas about living conditions and began to perceive their village life from a different perspective. When they returned to the villages, their stories and experiences enhanced the acceptance of the urban living conditions. The spread of these ideas, re-inforced by the increasing interdependence between urban and rural areas, began to change social attitudes toward seasonal labor migration.

A brief description of the village behavioral pattern is necessary to understand the changes in social attitudes toward *dekasegi*. Generally, the traditional village society attempted to move singularly within the prevailing opinions and views. Also, the *buraku* or hamlet was the basic social unit which basically dictated the prevailing opinions and views. Consequently, villagers who acted contrary to or outside of the prevailing opinions were treated accordingly and/or looked upon as a "strange" person. In order to stay within the mainstream of the *buraku*, an individual and a farm household were constantly concerned about what the neighbors thought of them (Seken-tei o ki ni suru) and, therefore, attempted to behave according to the accepted norms (Seken nami)<sup>2</sup>). Thus, there was an

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2) The author would like to express his appreciation to Mr. Eiji Kishi and Mr. Tadayoshi Uno, Norin-sho Nogyo Sogo Kenkyu-sho, Sekisetsu Chiho Shicho Shinjo, Yamagata Prefecture for the suggestions regarding the changing village ideals.

attempt to maintain the proper relationship (individual to the family, farm household to the hamlet, etc.) within the *buraku*.

A considerable change in social attitudes toward seasonal labor migration and migrants had to occur within this tradition for the increase in seasonal labor migration in the post-War period. The attitudes toward the heads of households of small farms and tenants engaged in *dekasegi* were negative during the pre-War period because they were viewed as working outside of their main occupation which was agriculture. The exceptions were daughters, second, and third sons of households who were excess labor in a household. Thus, to attribute the increased in seasonal labor migrants during the 1960's to economic differences between urban and rural areas overlooks an important aspect of social change in the rural society. In Tohoku, for instance, this change had, probably, occurred by 1961.

*Dekasegi* has become the normal pattern in the yearly cycle of many villages, especially those in the major *dekasegi* regions. Because seasonal labor migration has become an acceptable activity, those farmers who do not go to seasonal work now are in the minority. Thus, they begin to wonder about what their neighbors are saying about their presence in the village during the winter. Some have come to feel that it is a *haji* (shame) to remain in the village. In fact, the village is a stressful environment for those farmers who remain because of the development of a vocabulary which set them apart. For example, the terms, *hiyami* or *seiyami*, are sometimes used in Yamagata and Akita Prefectures to denote a person who remains in the village during the winter and the implication of the terms is that the person is lazy or inactive. In addition, farmers who remain in the village gradually begin to feel isolated since they are not a part of the group which have come to develop a feeling of camaraderie through their *dekasegi* experiences.

There are other social pressures which tend to push some of the villagers to engage in seasonal labor migration. The feeling of loneliness is one (Akita Sakigake Shimpo-sha Seiji-bu 1965, 12). Some of the seasonal labor migrants explain this as the lack of men in the village during the winter. Another kind of social pressure is the comparison of the amount of cash which is brought home by the neighbors also, eventually, forces other villagers to consider seasonal labor migration. Also, the seasonal labor migrant is viewed as a sophisticated person who has lived in the city and, in addition, obtained cash for the household.

The inadequacy of other cropping and livestock enterprises as cash income producing alternatives was another factor for the increase in seasonal labor migrants. The possibility of increasing household incomes through changes in agricultural production and intensification of land use was, and still is, small under the existing conditions. Livestock was, for example, encouraged as a part of the selective growth aspect of the Basic Agricultural Law of 1961. The further



intensification of land use in the snowy areas by acquiring dairy cows is difficult because of high feed costs, the requirement of large capital investment, the uncertainty of production and prices, and low technical skills for dairying among farmers. Also, the keeping of milk cows means long hours of work, returning only about 1,336 yen daily per head if a farm household kept 1 to 2 animals (NNNKT 1970, 96-97). However, seasonal work in the industrial areas provided daily incomes of 2,000 to 3,000 yen in 1971 (Author's Field Notes, August 22-25, 1973).

Wheat production would be an alternative as a second crop in the warmer areas. But, wheat production has been declining and by 1973 the total acreage was only 10 per cent of 1950 (Norin-sho Norin Keizai-kyoku Tokei Joho-bu, 1950-1974 editions). In 1973, the daily remuneration for wheat production was 1,539 yen, while the wages from temporary agricultural work was 2,412 yen per day (Norin Tokei Kyokai 1975, 63). The seasonal labor wages were 2,500 to 4,000 yen daily. Thus, *dekasegi* was recognized as the least costly, or the simplest method of earning cash incomes.

These technological, economic and social factors simultaneously produced the increase in seasonal labor migration and the consequent patterns and problems in the early 1960's. For the farmers, however, seasonal labor migration was the best way to adapt to the economic conditions which had overtaken them since the possibility of earning an adequate income from farming was small. The commercialization of excess labor was the most successful alternative.

The delineation of the precise reasons for the farmers' decision to engage in *dekasegi* will be possible only when detailed studies of the decision-making process within the household are undertaken. However, the farmers, most likely, decided on seasonal labor migration in response to a combination of these factors. The reasons for continuing *dekasegi* will, of course, change with the needs of the farmers. Thus, once the farmer starts this employment practice, he will attempt to continue it as a part of his yearly cycle.

### **Seasonal Labor Migration: Demographic and Economic Characteristics**

Seasonal labor migration was an established practice during the Meiji period (1868-1912). In fact, such migrants were the core of Japanese industrial labor between 1868 and 1926 (Midoro 1970, 34). During this period, unmarried female migrants who were employed in silk and textile mills constituted 60 per cent of the labor migrants. Among the male migrants during the same period, about 70 per cent were small farmers and tenants who were unable to earn sufficient incomes from farming (Midoro 1970, 34).

Statistics on seasonal labor migration in the post-War period have indicated an increase in the number of male migrants. Unlike the pre-War situation, the

migration of females had declined because: (1) the demand for seasonal labor is mainly heavy manual labor, (2) the wife of a farm household is responsible for the care and maintenance of the household in the absence of the head of household, and (3) female middle- and high school graduates tend to migrate on a permanent basis and are not enumerated as seasonal migrants. In 1963, males accounted for 93 per cent of the total seasonal labor migrants and the percentage remained unchanged in 1970. In terms of the position of migrants in a household, 47 per cent of the males were heads of households, 43 per cent were successors to the heads of households, and 10 per cent were classified as others in 1963. In 1970, 59 per cent were heads of households, 35 per cent were successors to the heads of households and 6 per cent were classified as others (Norin-sho Tokei Chosa-bu, 1963 and 1970 editions). The large percentage of heads of households and successors to the heads of households was in contrast to the pre-War period when daughters, second, and third sons constituted a large part of the flow (Kudo and Tenmyo 1970, 22).

An analysis of the distribution of the male seasonal labor migrants by age indicated that the age group 35-59 contained the largest percentage.<sup>3)</sup> Nationally, this age group had 42.7 per cent, followed by 17.2 per cent in the age group 30-34, 14.8 per cent in 20-24, 13.8 per cent in 25-29, 9.5 per cent in under 19, and 1.9 per cent in the age group 60 and over in 1963. This distribution changed by 1970 to show an even higher percentage of migrants in the 35-59 age group. In 1970, the age group 35-59 constituted 60.2 per cent of the total seasonal labor migrants, followed by 11.4 per cent in the 30-34, 10.1 per cent the 20-24, 7.1 per cent in the under 19 age group, 7 per cent in the 25-29 age group, and 4.3 per cent in the 60 and over age group. In addition to the large percentage increase in the 35-59 age group, an increase in the 60 and over age group is noticeable. In terms of actual numbers, there was an increase from 118,200 persons to 162,900 in the 35-59 age group and from 5,500 to 11,600 in the 60 and over age group between 1963 and 1970 (Norin-sho Tokei Chosa-bu, 1963 and 1970 editions). But, there was a decrease in all other groups. In the age group under 19, there was a decrease from 26,400 to 19,000 from 1963 to 1970, 40,900 persons to 27,300 persons in the 20-24 age group, from 38,200 persons to 18,900 persons in 25-29 age group, and from 47,600 to 30,500 persons in 30-34 age group. A partial explanation of this change in the age distribution is the upward movement of persons who were in the younger age group in 1963. Another reason is the decline in the number of "persons primarily engaged in agriculture." Though the total economically active population in

3) In the Noka Shugyo Doko Chosa Hokoku-sho, the population between 35-59 was aggregated into one group and this was changed after 1969. But, this writer aggregated the population between 35-59 in the 1970 data for comparative purposes.

the rural areas remained relatively stable during these two years, the number of persons primarily engaged in agriculture declined by about one-half in the seven period (Norin-sho Tokei Chosa-bu, 1963 and 1970 editions). This means that the persons in the younger age groups have found employment locally or migrated to other areas for permanent employment and, therefore, this has contributed to the decrease in the number in these age groups.

A large percentage of the pre-War male migrants were small farmers and tenants. This is not the case among the post-War migrants. Between 1963 and 1971, the number of seasonal labor migrants increased from all classes of farm size. Most significantly, however, the larger farm size classes also began to contribute a larger share. In 1963, farms of less than 0.5 ha. contributed 23 per cent of the migrants while those of 0.5 to 1.0 ha. contributed 38.4 per cent, those of 1.0 to 1.5 ha., 20.4 per cent, 1.5 to 2.0 ha., 9.5 per cent and farms of more than 2.0 ha., 8.6 per cent of the seasonal migrants (These figures are for the prefectures only) (Norin-sho Tokei Chosa-bu 1966, 270-275). In 1971, farms of less than 0.5 ha. contributed 24.5 per cent of the migrants, while those of 0.5 to 1.0 ha., 29.1 per cent, those of 1.0 to 1.5 ha., 19.9 per cent, 1.5 to 2.0 ha., 12.3 per cent and farms of more than 2.0 ha., 14.1 per cent (Norin-sho Norin Keizai-kyoku Tokei Joho-bu 1973, 20-21). Farm size of more than 3.0 ha. contributed about 4.3 per cent of the total. Also, the number of seasonal labor migrants per household by farm sizes exceeded more than one member for all farm sizes (Norin-sho Norin Keizai-kyoku Joho-bu 1973, 20 and 28).

The destinations of seasonal labor migrants have changed from the local areas and some of the large metropolitan areas to the large metropolitan areas mainly. For example, in 1958 more than 84 per cent of the seasonal migrants from Tohoku were employed in non-metropolitan areas; whereas, only 13 per cent were employed in a metropolitan area such as Keihin (Tokyo-Yokohama) (Norin-sho Tokei Chosa-bu, 1961-1963 editions and Norin-sho Norin Keizai-kyoku Tokei Joho-bu 1973). However, by 1963 the metropolitan areas, especially Keihin, were attracting about 50 per cent of the migrants while that of the non-metropolitan areas declined to 39 per cent. By 1971, the Keihin area alone attracted 70 per cent of the migrants while the share of non-metropolitan areas declined to 17 per cent (Norin-sho Keizai-kyoku Tokei Joho-bu 1973, 52-53). The incentives for changes in the destinations were largely due to the higher wages paid in the metropolitan areas which were related to the increasing number of employment opportunities associated with industrial and construction expansion in the post-War period. A result from one survey indicated that 15.4 per cent of the respondents from Tohoku were engaged in *dekasegi* over local employment because of low local wages (Tohoku Nosei-kyoku Joho-bu 1973, 60).

The flow of seasonal labor migrants to the metropolitan areas meant a change in the occupational pattern also. In the pre-War period, 65 per cent of the employment for seasonal migrants was provided by industries, 20 per cent by agriculture, forestry, and fishing, and 6 per cent by iron and steel (primarily mining), and 3 per cent by construction (roads, *etc.*) (Midoro 1970, 33). In 1971, however, 70 per cent of the seasonal migrants were employed in construction, 18 per cent in processing and manufacturing, and 3 per cent in agriculture, forestry, and fishing (Norin-sho Norin Keizai-kyoku Tokei Joho-bu 1973, 60-61). In summary, the share of seasonal migrants employed in the primary industries declined considerably while the share in construction increased. Thus, the occupational pattern was reversed in comparison with the pre-War period. But, similar to the pre-War seasonal employment, the main role of seasonal labor migrants is still to provide manual labor.

The demographic and economic characteristics of the post-War seasonal labor migration are indicative of the changes from the pre-War period. There is a dominance of males in the post-War period, but most significantly the large share of migrants are the heads of households and successors to the heads of households. Though the percentage of successors to the heads of households has declined, it is a possible indicator of the manner in which some of these successors will eventually earn additional incomes for their households. In terms of the age distribution, the age group 35-59 has the largest percentage of migrants which corresponds to the large share of the heads of households and their successors. Perhaps, the most salient change in the post-War seasonal labor migration is the entry of seasonal labor migrants from all farm sizes while generally it was limited to the small farmers and tenants previously. This is a confirmation of the change in the attitude towards seasonal labor migration. The post-War seasonal labor migration destinations have changed considerably in a few years from local areas and some of the metropolitan areas to the large metropolitan areas. In conjunction with this change in destinations, the employment of seasonal labor migrants have shifted to construction and manufacturing while manufacturing and primary industries were the major employers in the pre-War period.

### **Regional Patterns of Seasonal Labor Migration**

The identification of the major *dekasegi* regions will be undertaken on the basis of the number of persons from a region and the percentage of farm households in each region engaged in seasonal labor migration. Once these regions are identified, the regional contributions, the directions of flows, the periods of departures and returns, the length of *dekasegi* period, the number of persons per household and the number of times a person goes to seasonal work during a year in 1963 and 1971

Table 1 Intra-regional and Inter-regional Migration of Seasonal

Year	REGIONS				
	Total	Hokkaido	Tohoku	Kanto	Hokuriku
1958 <sup>c</sup>	194,600	24,550 (400) <sup>b</sup>	63,000 (5,500)	6,900 (2,100)	52,100 (11,500)
1959	182,100	23,100 (5,400)	62,000 (9,000)	4,500 (1,500)	48,700 (11,100)
1960	174,800	20,400 (7,000)	66,300 (9,900)	2,900 (1,200)	42,300 (7,401)
1961	190,100	19,600 (4,200)	69,900 (9,400)	4,200 (1,600)	50,400 (9,500)
1962 <sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>
1963 <sup>d</sup>	298,300	17,800 (2,800)	147,000 (7,600)	12,800 (1,200)	42,400 (6,100)
1964	286,700	13,500 (1,900)	147,400 (9,600)	10,600 (1,300)	43,500 (5,200)
1965	230,200	10,900 (1,700)	117,600 (8,300)	6,200 (900)	32,700 (4,200)
1966	235,400	14,100 (1,800)	119,800 (6,900)	4,300 (700)	40,000 (6,200)
1967	218,800	8,300 (1,300)	120,200 (9,000)	2,200 (200)	35,800 (4,300)
1968	236,100	4,600 (600)	135,600 (9,500)	3,300 (300)	36,900 (4,000)
1969	275,200	8,800 (1,800)	156,500 (12,400)	2,200 (-)	31,200 (2,600)
1970	291,500	11,300 (1,900)	167,000 (13,100)	1,400 (-)	33,600 (2,600)
1971 <sup>e</sup>	341,924	15,641 (1,354)	191,082 (13,924)	5,628 (341)	32,100 (3,297)

a=Data Not Available.

b=Number of Women.

Sources: <sup>c</sup>Norin-sho Tokei Chosa-bu, *Noringyoka Shugyo Doko Chosa Hokokusho*,<sup>d</sup>Norin-sho Tokei Chosa-bu, *Noka Shugyo Doko Chosa Hokokusho*,<sup>e</sup>Norin-sho Norin Keizai-Kyoku Tokei Joho-bu, *Dekasegi Jokyo Chosa*

will be examined for changes within a region as well as inter-regional variations.

The major *dekasegi* regions, if delineated according to the number of persons from a region, would be Tohoku, Kyushu, Hokuriku, Chugoku-Shikoku, and Hokkaido in 1971 (Table 1). These six regions accounted for 92.4 per cent of seasonal labor migrants. The delineation of major regions on the basis of the percentage of farm households in each region engaged in *dekasegi* showed that Tohoku has 21.7 per cent, followed by Hokkaido with 8.9 per cent, Hokuriku with 7.4 per cent, Kyushu with 5.7 per cent, and Chugoku-Shikoku with 5.1 per cent (Norin-sho Norin Keizai-kyoku Tokei Joho-bu 1973, 7). Consequently, the major *dekasegi* regions are Tohoku, Hokuriku, Kyushu, Chugoku-Shikoku, and Hokkaido.

The intra-regional and inter-regional migration patterns have changed considerably, especially between 1963 and 1970, years for which comparative data are

## Labor from the Agricultural Areas of Japan, 1958 to 1971

Tozan	Tokai	Kinki	Chugoku	Shikoku	Kyushu
16,600	1,100	12,200	3,500	5,900	8,800
(6,700)	(500)	(1,800)	(500)	(800)	(3,000)
13,300	1,200	13,300	3,400	5,000	7,600
(5,000)	(300)	(1,100)	(400)	(800)	(2,600)
12,500	600	14,000	3,500	3,400	8,900
(3,500)	(200)	(800)	(500)	(1,100)	(1,600)
11,400	300	14,100	3,600	6,700	9,900
(3,300)	(200)	(1,700)	(700)	(400)	(2,100)
a	a	a	a	a	
6,800	4,300	11,600	14,300	11,300	30,000
(1,000)	(400)	(100)	(600)	(300)	(1,600)
5,000	4,100	12,800	12,500	10,300	27,000
(1,100)	(400)	(100)	(700)	(300)	(900)
4,400	4,600	12,300	12,500	10,000	19,000
(400)	(100)	(200)	(400)	(300)	(700)
3,100	400	12,900	11,900	12,500	16,400
(400)	(-)	(400)	(300)	(100)	(300)
2,200	700	8,500	10,800	10,600	19,500
(200)	(100)	(200)	(600)	(300)	(700)
1,500	1,300	7,300	10,600	10,500	24,500
(200)	(400)	(100)	(800)	(400)	(500)
1,100	2,500	9,400	11,700	16,900	34,900
(-)	(500)	(600)	(1,100)	(400)	(300)
900	1,600	7,900	13,200	15,600	39,000
(-)	(40)	(200)	(800)	(600)	(1,400)
a	1,374	11,553	33,166		51,380
	(303)	(527)	(33)		(996)

1961-1962 editions.

1963-1970 editions.

*Kekka Hohokusho*, 1973.

provided in Tables 2 and 3. The Tohoku region has been the major contributor of seasonal labor migrants with more than 50 per cent of the total after 1964. In 1971, it contributed 56 per cent of the national total. A comparison of the *dekasegi* flow patterns of Tohoku indicated a decrease in the number of migrants working within the region (14 per cent in 1963 to 3.9 per cent in 1970), while there was an increase in the flow to the industrialized areas of the Kanto region (56 per cent in 1963 and 77 per cent in 1970). The Kanto region became the main destination of seasonal labor migrants after 1963 because of its nearness to Tohoku as well as the recruitment efforts by companies located in the Kanto region. Most noticeably, migration flows from Tohoku to Hokkaido (10.9 per cent in 1963 to 2.5 per cent in 1970), Hokuriku (1.3 per cent to 0.8 per cent in 1970), and Kinki (3.4 per cent in 1963 to 2.6 per cent in 1970) declined. These patterns of migration

Table 2 Intra-regional and Inter-regional Migration of Seasonal Labor from the Agricultural Areas in Japan-1963  
(Percentage)

		REGIONS									
To \ From		Hokkaido	Tohoku	Kanto	Hokuriku	Tozan	Tokai	Kinki	Chugoku-Shikoku	Kyushu	Other
REGIONS	Hokkaido	94.32	—	0.57	—	—	0.57	—	—	—	4.54
	Tohoku	10.95	14.08	55.92	1.29	0.68	13.47	3.40	0.14	—	0.07
	Kanto	17.05	—	73.64	—	—	2.33	1.55	—	—	5.43
	Hokuriku	1.18	1.90	34.36	19.19	6.16	18.96	14.45	3.32	0.47	—
	Tozan	—	—	16.42	2.99	64.18	7.46	7.46	—	—	1.49
	Tokai	—	—	2.33	—	—	95.34	2.33	—	—	—
	Kinki	—	—	3.45	0.86	—	0.86	88.79	6.03	—	—
	Chugoku-Shikoku	—	0.78	7.36	—	1.16	12.02	38.76	39.53	0.39	—
	Kyushu	—	—	22.85	2.32	0.66	17.55	28.15	4.30	23.18	0.33

Source: Computed from Norin-sho Chosa-bu, *Noka Shugyo Doko Hokoku-sho* (1963) (Tokyo, 1965).Table 3 Intra-regional and Inter-regional Migration of Seasonal Labor from the Agricultural Areas in Japan-1970  
(Percentage)

		REGIONS									
To \ From		Hokkaido	Tohoku	Kanto	Hokuriku	Tozan	Tokai	Kinki	Chugoku-Shikoku	Kyushu	Other
REGIONS	Hokkaido	33.33	0.88	33.33	0.88	0.88	23.68	5.26	0.88	—	0.88
	Tohoku	2.57	3.89	77.00	0.78	0.36	11.38	2.57	—	—	1.44
	Kanto	—	—	86.67	—	6.67	—	—	—	—	6.67
	Hokuriku	—	1.19	49.26	7.42	2.97	21.66	12.56	1.48	—	3.56
	Tozan	—	—	44.44	—	44.44	—	11.11	—	—	—
	Tokai	—	—	5.88	5.88	—	82.35	5.88	—	—	—
	Kinki	—	—	—	—	—	5.06	75.95	1.27	—	17.72
	Chugoku-Shikoku	—	0.35	2.78	—	—	9.37	48.26	23.26	0.69	15.28
	Kyushu	—	—	14.36	—	0.26	21.28	50.00	5.38	0.77	7.95

Source: Computed from Norin-sho Tokei Chosa-bu, *Noka Shugyo Doko Hokoku-sho* (1970) (Tokyo, 1972).

resulted from the shift in employment from agriculture, forestry, and fishing to construction and manufacturing in the industrialized regions.

The Tohoku pattern of departures and returns from the work sites reflects a winter seasonal labor migration. The majority (66.2 per cent) of migrants left for seasonal work between October and December with 51 per cent leaving in November. They returned to their villages between March and April (64.5 per cent). The reason for this pattern was for the migrant to leave after the rice harvest and other associated work (November 10 to 15) and return home prior to the rice planting period (April 10 to 15) and to accumulate an equivalent of six months of work time to receive workmen's compensation later. The statistics on the number of months engaged in seasonal work confirm the farmers' desire to accumulate six months of work time. In 1963, 17.9 per cent were engaged in seasonal work for 1 to 3 months, 61.7 per cent for 3 to 6 months, and 20.4 per cent for more than 6 months. In 1971, the percentage of seasonal labor migrants working for 1 to 3 months declined to 10.0 per cent, increased to 63.7 per cent for 3 to 6 months and to 26.3 per cent for those working more than 6 months.<sup>4)</sup>

Two additional aspects of seasonal labor migration from Tohoku are the number of person(s) per household engaged in *dekasegi* and the number of times a person goes to seasonal work during a year. In 1963, 87 per cent of the *dekasegi* households had only one person engaged in seasonal labor migration, 11 per cent with 2 persons and 0.8 per cent with 3 persons. In 1971, this pattern changed to 82 per cent with one person, 15 per cent with 2 persons, and 3 per cent with 3 or more persons. In terms of the number of times that a person went off to *dekasegi* work, it was about 92 per cent once per year, and 8 per cent twice in 1963 while in 1971, it was 89 per cent once per year, 9 per cent twice and 2 per cent three times. The pattern of the number of person(s) per household engaged in seasonal labor migration indicates that the one person per household situation continues to dominate, while the 2 persons and 3 or more persons per household situations have increased. A reason for this development is the increase in households with labor migrants combinations involving the head of the household, the successor, the wife or another family member going to seasonal work. This may be true among small farmers who leave their children with the grandparents. Also, the percentage of seasonal labor migrants going to work more than once per year has increased. This may be occurring among the smaller farmers which seem to be the case in other regions.

The Hokuriku region was the fourth major *dekasegi* region in terms of the total number, but its share of labor migrants declined from 14.2 per cent in 1963

4) The regional patterns were computed from *dekasegi* statistics published in the *Noka Shugyo Doho Hokoku-sho* and the *Dekasegi Jokyo Chosa Kekka Hokoku*.



to 9.4 per cent in 1971. However, the patterns of movements from Hokuriku were similar to that of Tohoku. Only a small number of migrants (19 per cent) were employed within the region in 1963, but by 1970 this had declined further (7.4 per cent). The majority of Hokuriku's seasonal labor migrants went to the three major industrialized regions of Kanto (34.4 per cent), Kinki (14.5 per cent), and Tokai (18.9 per cent) in 1963. This trend persisted in 1970 (49.3 per cent, 12.5 per cent, and 21.7 per cent respectively) and by this time the seasonal labor migration from Hokuriku to Hokkaido had ceased. The majority of migrants left the region between October (22 per cent) and November (48 per cent) and returned in March (18 per cent) and April (53 per cent) of the following year (Norin-sho Norin Keizai-kyoku Tokai Joho-bu 1973, 48-51). The distribution of the length of time at work destinations was 23.9 per cent for 1 to 3 months, 60.5 per cent for 3 to 6 months and 15.5 per cent for more than 6 months in 1963 while the distribution was 6.6 per cent for 1 to 3 months, 71.9 per cent for 3 to 6 months, and 21.5 per cent for more than 6 months in 1971. Similar to Tohoku, the migrants were engaged in *dekasegi* for a longer period in 1971 and were mainly in the 3 to 6 month time period.

The Hokuriku patterns for the number of person(s) per household engaged in *dekasegi* and the number of times a person went to seasonal work during a year were similar to Tohoku. In terms of the number of seasonal migrants per household, 88 per cent of the households have only one person, 11 per cent with 2 persons, and 1 per cent with three or more persons in 1963, but in 1970 it was 90 per cent with one person, 9 per cent with 2 persons, and 1 per cent with 3 or more persons in 1970. Unlike Tohoku, however, the number of households with 2 persons declined. The number of times during a year that a person went to *dekasegi* work changed also. For example, 84 per cent engaged in *dekasegi* once per year and 16 per cent twice; however, in 1971, 88 per cent engaged in seasonal labor migration once, 10 per cent twice and 2 per cent three times.

Kyushu is the second major *dekasegi* region in terms of the number of seasonal labor migrants. Its contribution in 1971 was 15 per cent of the total. The destinations of labor migrants of this region have changed considerably between 1963 to 1970. In 1963, the main destinations of migrants were Kyushu (23 per cent), Kinki (28 per cent), Tokai (17 per cent), and Kanto (23 per cent). During this period, the labor migration within the region was because of the job opportunities in the region's industrial areas. However, in 1970 the flows of migrants were mainly to destinations in Kinki (50 per cent), Tokai (21 per cent) and, to a lesser degree, Kanto (14 per cent).

The pattern of departures was much more complex than that of Tohoku or Hokuriku. For example, in 1971 only 14 per cent of the migrants departed in

November while 24 per cent left in January, 9 per cent in July, 18 per cent in August, and 12 per cent in September. This also meant that the pattern of returns was different with 26 per cent returning in December, 13 per cent in May, 12 per cent in April, 11 per cent in October, and 11 per cent in March. These patterns of departures and returns of migrants in Kyushu reflect various factors such as the multi-rice cropping periods, the smaller size of farms, and the proximity to industrial areas (Norin-sho Norin Keizai-kyoku Tokei Joho-bu 1973, 10). Reflecting the complex patterns of departures and returns, the distribution of *dekasegi-sha* according to the length of time at the work sites was quite even with 27 per cent for 1 to 3 months, 38 per cent for 3 to 6 months, and 35 per cent for more than 6 months in 1963. In 1971, only 18 per cent were engaged in *dekasegi* for 1 to 3 months, 35 per cent for 3 to 6 months, and 47 per cent for more than 6 months. The length of time at seasonal work sites increased among those working for more than 6 months.

There were noticeable changes in the number of person(s) per household engaged in *dekasegi* and the number of times a person went to seasonal work during a year. In 1963, 91 per cent of the households had one person engaged in *dekasegi*, followed by 7 per cent with 2 persons, and 2 per cent with 3 or more, but in 1971 this changed to 96 per cent of the households with one person, 4 per cent with 2 persons, and none with 3 or more persons. As in other regions, the percentage of households with one person per household engaged in seasonal labor migration dominated. However, there was a change in the number of times a person was engaged in seasonal labor migration. In 1963, 84 per cent of the *dekasegi-sha* were engaged in seasonal labor migration only once per year, and 16 per cent twice. In 1971, this changed to 62 per cent only once per year, 27 per cent twice and 10 per cent three times. This change in 1971 seems to confirm the fact that in Kyushu various factors such as the multi-rice cropping period, the smaller size of farms, and the proximity to industrial areas contribute to a greater percentage of labor migrants going to work more frequently during a year.

The Chugoku-Shikoku region is the third major contributor with 9.8 per cent in 1970. The flows of seasonal labor migrants from the region in 1963 were to Kinki (38.8 per cent), Tokai (12.0 per cent), and within the region (39.5 per cent). By 1971, 9.4 per cent went to Tokai, 48.3 per cent to Kinki, 23.3 per cent remained within the region, and 15.3 per cent were classified as going to unspecified destinations.

The patterns of departures and returns approximated that of a rice producing area such as Tohoku. The departure of seasonal labor migrants occurred mainly in November (14 per cent) and January (24 per cent) and their returns were in March (15 per cent), April (20 per cent), and May (13 per cent) and December

(16.8 per cent). The agricultural cycle was reflected by a large number of migrants departing after the rice harvest in November and returning in March, April, and May. However, there was a major change in the length of *dekasegi* period in 1971. In 1963, the length of time at the *dekasegi* sites was 22 per cent for 1 to 3 months, 50 per cent for 3 to 6 months, and 28 per cent for more than 6 months; however, it was 10 per cent, 40 per cent, and 50 per cent respectively in 1971. Though the Chugoku-Shikoku pattern of departures and returns may be similar to that of the single crop rice producing areas, some of the same factors which are contributing to the lengthening of the *dekasegi* period in Kyushu seems to be operating here also.

The number of person(s) per household engaged in *dekasegi* was quite similar to that of the pattern in other regions, but there was a shift to a greater times of *dekasegi* periods per year. In 1963, the migrant households with only one person engaged in *dekasegi* constituted 92 per cent of the total, followed by 7.5 per cent with 2 persons and 0.5 per cent with 3 or more persons while it was 93.7 per cent with one person, 6 per cent with 2 persons, and 0.1 per cent with three or more persons in 1971. In terms of the number of times that a person is engaged in *dekasegi* per year, it was 84 per cent once and 16 per cent twice in 1963. In 1971, it was 58.3 per cent once, 30.1 per cent twice, and 11.6 per cent three times. This shift toward a greater number of times per year contributed to the longer *dekasegi* period.

Hokkaido contributed 4 per cent of the seasonal labor migrants in 1970 while in 1963, its contribution was 6 per cent. However, the patterns of labor migrant flows have changed between 1963 and 1970. In 1963, more than 90 per cent of its seasonal labor migrants were employed within Hokkaido. But, by 1970 only 33.3 per cent of the migrants were working in Hokkaido. More than 60 per cent of the seasonal labor migrants were employed in Kanto (33.3 per cent), Tokai (23.7 per cent), and Kinki (5.3 per cent). A large percentage of migrants left for their destinations in April (13 per cent) and May (15 per cent) and November (28 per cent) and returned in March (23 per cent) and April (13 per cent) and in November (12 per cent) and December (19 per cent). According to the number of months engaged in *dekasegi*, 49 per cent of the migrant households were engaged in *dekasegi* for 1 to 3 months, 29 per cent for 3 to 6 months, and 22 per cent for more than 6 months in 1963. But, in 1971 it was 15 per cent, 48 per cent and 37 per cent respectively. In the case of Hokkaido, the period of *dekasegi* increased from the short period in 1963 to much more longer periods of 3 to 6 months and more than 6 months in 1971. This was, of course, the trend which was seen in other regions also.

The patterns of the number of person(s) per household engaged in seasonal

labor migration and the number of times a person went to work during a year indicate some changes between 1963 and 1971. The number of persons per household engaged in *dekasegi* was 82 per cent of the households with one person in 1963 and 88 per cent in 1971, 15 per cent with two persons in 1963 and 9 per cent in 1971, and 2.4 per cent with three or more persons in 1963 and 2.9 per cent in 1971. In this case, there was an increase in the households with one person and, also, in the households with three or more persons. The increase in the percentage of households with three or more persons may be due to the smaller farm households sending out more members. There was a similarity with the other regional patterns in the number of times per year the seasonal labor migrants went to seasonal work. It was 91 per cent once per year, 10 per cent twice in 1963. In 1971, the pattern was slightly altered in that 85 per cent went to seasonal work once per year, 15 per cent twice, and less than one percent three times.

The regional patterns of seasonal labor migration, which were discussed above, will not be considered for the Kanto, Tozan, Tokai, and Kinki regions because of their relatively small contributions to the total *dekasegi* picture. In 1970, these regions contributed less than 5 per cent of the total. However, with the exception of Tokai, the share of these regions were larger in the past. For example, in 1958 their contributions were 3.5 per cent, 8.5 per cent, and 6.3 per cent respectively. Of course, in these regions commuting most likely replaced seasonal labor migration as a way of earning supplemental income for the farm households.

In summary, the following observations can be made regarding the regional patterns of seasonal labor migration. During the period between 1963 and 1971, Tohoku, Hokuriku, Kyushu, Chugoku-Shikoku, and Hokkaido began to dominate in terms of the number of seasonal labor migrants. The dominance of Tohoku is especially noticeable after 1964. On the other hand, regions which are close to the industrialized areas declined in their positions as contributors to seasonal labor migration and this was due to the expansion of local employment opportunities as a result of their proximity and improved local transportation. The patterns of departures and returns of seasonal labor migrants differed mainly with the agricultural patterns. In regions such as Tohoku, Hokuriku, and Chugoku-Shikoku, the majority of migrants left between in October and December and returned between March and June of the following year. Migrants tend to leave after the rice harvest and return home prior to rice planting period, thus, accumulating sufficient working time to receive workmen's compensation later. This pattern also contributes to the large portion of seasonal labor migrants going to work only once a year. In Kyushu, however, the largest percentage of migrants left during the months of November and January and returned in either March or April or October and November. These patterns of departures and returns reflect such factors as the timing of the

rice crop, smaller farm size, and the nearness of the industrialized areas. These factors may have also affected the flows in the Chugoku-Shikoku region.

In every region, farm households with one person working as a seasonal labor migrant dominated and it was usually the head of households as indicated by the 47 per cent in 1963 and 59 per cent in 1970. The length of time at the destinations has increased in every region. Generally, most of the seasonal labor migrants worked up to six months. The exception among the major *dekasegi* regions was Chugoku-Shikoku where the percentage of seasonal labor migrants were away from their homes for more than six months increased between 1963 and 1971.

### The Role of Seasonal Labor Migration in Changing the Villages

Seasonal labor migration has been, and will continue to be, an important factor in changing the villages (Iwashita 1975, 47). It will continue to induce changes in labor utilization, agricultural production and the social and economic conditions. Because of these changes, its consequences can be expected to influence certain aspects of national agricultural policy.

The expenditures of *dekasegi* earnings may provide some ideas about the aspects of life and agriculture in which the seasonal labor migrants "invest" their earnings. Nationally, the main expenditures of *dekasegi* earnings by percentage of households were 80.5 per cent considered the expenditures for general living expenses as a major expenditure, followed by 15.1 per cent for agricultural machinery purchases, 14.8 per cent for education, 13.4 per cent for the improvement of homes, 7.2 per cent for loan repayment, 6.8 per cent for cars, *etc.*, 5.8 per cent for savings, 5.0 per cent for wedding expenses, and 3.3 per cent for electrical appliances in 1971.<sup>5)</sup> During the same year, 78.3 per cent of the households in Tohoku considered the expenditures for general living expenses as a major expenditure from *dekasegi* earnings, 18.2 per cent for agricultural machinery purchases, 12.7 per cent for improvement of homes, 12.1 per cent for education, 9.2 per cent for cars, *etc.*, 6.6 per cent for for loan repayment, 4 to 5 per cent each for wedding expenses, taxes, and savings, and 3.5 per cent for electrical appliances (Tohoku Nosei-kyoku Tokei Joho-bu 1973, 56-57). Of course, these expenditures are for a one year period, but it is an useful indicator for anticipating future changes as well as understanding the past changes. For example, expenditures for general living expenses, education, home improvement, cars, and electrical appliances may represent the "urbanization" of the agricultural villages. Expenditures for agricultural machinery purchases and loan repayment are, on the other hand, factors which will contribute to change in production

5) This is a percentage calculated on the basis of the first two main expenditures stated by the farm households regarding the expenditures of the *dekasegi* earnings.

and affect the utilization of labor.

The accentuation of "sanchan nogyo" is one of the effects of seasonal labor migration and other part-time employment opportunities. Nationally, the overall composition of males to females who were classified as "persons primarily engaged in agriculture," using the years 1963 and 1970 as comparisons, was 44 per cent to 56 per cent and 43 per cent to 57 per cent respectively (Norin-sho Tokei Chosa-bu, 1963 and 1970 editions). An examination of age groups 35-59 and 60 and over, which contain the highest number of "persons primarily engaged in agriculture," shows an identical pattern during these two periods. Nationally, it was 41 per cent males to 59 per cent females in 1963 and 39 per cent males to 61 per cent females in 1970 for the age group 35-59. In the age group 60 and over, the composition was 63 per cent to 37 per cent in 1963 and 64 per cent to 36 per cent in 1970. In Tohoku, for example, there were 45 per cent males to 55 per cent females in 1963 and 42 per cent to 58 per cent in 1970 in the 35-59 age group, while in the age group 60 and over it was 65 to 35 per cent and 71 to 29 per cent respectively. In this region, consequently, the percentage of female agricultural workers in the 35-59 age group increased as well as the male and female agricultural workers in the 60 and over age group. As mentioned previously, the shift toward "sanchan nogyo" had already occurred by the time there was a large increase in seasonal labor migration, but the shift may have been accentuated by the increased number of seasonal labor migrants as indicated the higher percentage of female agricultural workers in the age group 35-59. In addition, there was an increase in the percentage of males in the 60 and over age group.

The distribution by age groups shows an upward trend. For example, 49 per cent of the males who were classified as "persons primarily engaged in agriculture," to 56 per cent females in the age group 35-59 while it was 21 per cent of the male agricultural workers and 10 per cent of the females in the age group 60 and over in 1963. In 1970, 53 per cent of the male agricultural workers and 64 per cent of the female agricultural workers were in the age group 35-59 while the distribution was 27 per cent and 15 per cent in the age group 60 and over. In the Tohoku region, 51 per cent of the male agricultural worker population was in the 35-59 age group was 52 per cent for female agricultural workers and 13 per cent male and 6 per cent of females in the 60 and over age group. In 1970, it was 53 per cent of the males and 64 per cent of the females in the 35-59 age group and 27 per cent of the males and 15 per cent of the females in the 60 and over age group. By 1970, the aging of "persons primarily engaged in agriculture" had occurred. These two trends are highly suggestive of an "institutionalizing" effect of the female workers in the age group 35-59 and male and female workers in the age group 60 and over becoming the main labor force in agriculture. In response

to the "sanchan nogyo" characteristic, there appears to be an appeal by manufacturers to the female agricultural workers in the TV ads by emphasizing that their implements can be operated by a female or the wife of the eldest son.

These trends have contributed to the winter labor adjustment within the farm households by limiting or reducing the production of certain crops. In the process of deciding to engage in seasonal work, the farmers adjusted the amount of work for those remaining at home. The non-competitive crops, in terms of cash income in comparison to that from seasonal labor migration, were abandoned or limited in production. Thus, the self-sufficiency rate of some of the secondary crops was affected as a result. The national self-sufficiency rate of wheat, for example, dropped to 4 per cent in 1973 (Norin Tokei Kyokai 1975, 28). Wheat production acreage in the paddy and upland fields has declined since 1950, but the decline has been large between 1965 and 1973. In fact, some of the major wheat producing regions have shown a reduction in the acreage in the magnitude of 30 to 50 per cent between 1965 and 1970. During this period, the self-sufficiency rate dropped from 28 per cent in 1965 to 9 per cent in 1970 (Norin Tokei Kyokai 1975, 28). Wheat production was, thus, being replaced by cash income employment.

Secondary crops as a second crop in the rice paddies are not feasible in the cold snowy areas. In the snowy areas, the production of milk has been promoted by the government. However, the original hopes of large expansion in regions such as Tohoku have not materialized because of many serious difficulties in the development of an infrastructure for dairying (Oshiro 1973, 202-206). In addition, external forces such as the high costs of commercial feeds and the rising prices of beef were the main causes for the decline in the number of dairy cows after 1973. However, the engagement of the head of household in seasonal labor migration does not necessarily mean the end of dairying if a household kept dairy cows previously. Instead, the size of the herd is limited or adjusted to the available labor during the winter period. The cattle are cared for by the wives and those who remain at home. Generally, the herd size remains at 1 or 2 heads of milking cows because a farmer must remain at home when his herd is increased to about 5 to 6 milking heads (Author's Field Notes, January 3, 1976). Thus, even if public dairy cattle rearing facilities were available, the number of dairy cattle can not be expected to increase in a village which has a high percentage of seasonal labor migrants.

The investment of *dekasegi* earnings in agricultural machinery will about changes in the relationship between farm households. Past social patterns can be expected to be modified as a result of increasing mechanization of agriculture. The use of certain types of implements will bring changes in the behavioral pattern of the farmers toward his neighbors. For example, a likely possibility from the widespread use of planting machines, binders and combines for the rice crop will be

the loosening of the past neighborhood bonds which existed because of the need to exchange labor for planting and harvesting of rice. This cooperative effort, which was necessary for survival, is gradually being replaced by the development and purchase of farm implements which lessen the need for manual labor. However, this is not to say that close social relationships between neighbors will disappear entirely.

During the early stages of mechanization in the post-War period, a surplus labor was created as a result of the introduction of general type of machinery. But, the improved farm machinery such as the large tractors have began to replace the hand tractors and newer types of implements such as binders, rice planters, *etc.* have started to replace the manual operations in rice cultivation. Consequently, the same kind of close knit ties between households are no longer necessary. Thus, this will lead inevitably to a change in the social relationship.

*Dekasegi* has functioned as a diffusion mechanism, especially in advancing the "urbanization" of the rural areas. The acceptance of urbanization or things and values associated with the urban areas is in itself important, but herein lies an additional problem for the farmers. This problem is the need to maintain a higher level of income than that which farming can provide given the small size of many farms. Many of the household appliances are purchased from funds from earnings of seasonal jobs. Also, farm machinery are purchased on an installment basis so that the farmers will repay from the *dekasegi* earnings. This means that the income of the household have been committed for some time and, thus, it will have to remain stable through yearly *dekasegi* earnings for a number of years to pay for these items. The 1971 expenditures of *dekasegi* earnings in Tohoku indicate this problem. For example, 18.2 per cent of the households indicated that expenditures for agricultural machinery purchases, but another 6.6 per cent of the households indicated loan repayment which can be assumed to include repayment for past agricultural machinery purchases. Also, again from the 1971 data, only 3.5 per cent of the households indicated the purchases of electrical appliances, but when this considered along with the 78.3 per cent which indicated that general living expenses as one of the major expenditures the higher level of living can be seen. The result is the need for a higher level of income than that which farming can provide. Thus, though *dekasegi* was instrumental in making convenience items and farm implements available to the farmer and his household, it also meant that the farmer committed himself to working away from home during the winters.

In summary, the practice of seasonal labor migration has initiated and produced significant changes in the rural areas. The process of change seems to have started with the commercialization of excess labor during the winter period. This led eventually to the re-adjustment of the utilization of labor so that they



either abandoned or limited the production of unenumerative crops. But, as a larger number of farmers entered the seasonal labor market, the effects of this process became evident in food production such as dairying and wheat production. The financial rewards of seasonal labor migration were the purchase of items, better general living conditions and the easing of the burdens of farming. Farm implements were purchased to ease the burdens of farming, but the ramifications of some of the newer implements will extend beyond the reduction of hours of producing a crop and the rapid completion of certain tasks during a critical period. These newer implements can be expected to modify the behavior of the farmers toward his neighbors through the elimination of the need for cooperation in undertaking mutual agricultural tasks. Finally, the most crucial change in this process has been the acceptance of seasonal labor migration as a part of life in the rural areas.

### The Future of Seasonal Labor Migration

Problems in the agricultural sector of Japan are a result of a reduction in labor inputs through mechanization, higher capital investment in machinery and a shift in consumer demand from staple foods to livestock products, fruits, and vegetables. Researchers have identified similar problems in the United States during the 1940's and 1950's (McDonald 1953, 376). During these two decades there was developed an excessive supply of labor in agriculture which, in turn, contributed to the low level of per capita farm income. Under these conditions, improvements in per capita income could occur only when a significant proportion of the farm population migrated from the rural areas. A large outmigration of farm households did occur and this movement was instrumental in achieving this goal of higher per capita income while serving as an integrative mechanism through which agriculture was integrated into the industrial economy (McDonald 1955, 123-126).

The outmigration of farm households in Japan has not occurred in the magnitude comparable to that of the American farm outmigration of the 1940's and 1950's. Seasonal labor migration provided a way to earn a supplement income. For the farm households engaged in seasonal labor migration, the practice is similar in effects to outmigration to better paying jobs and/or the enlargement of farm size. As a result, the future of *dekasegi* and its role in the rural areas is of paramount importance. However, the assessment of the future role of *dekasegi* depends on the interpretations of the phenomenon.

The practice of post-War seasonal labor migration can be interpreted as a permanent or a temporary feature of the rural areas. The possibilities in this context are: (1) *dekasegi* is a part of the modernization process of agriculture and, therefore, is a temporary phenomenon, (2) it is a temporary phenomenon reflecting

the need for labor in construction and other industries and, thus, it will diminish when the demand for labor declines, and (3) it is a relatively permanent practice because it is an adaptive mechanism by which farmers have achieved desired income levels and re-inforced by spatial and cultural factors.

If the recent *dekasegi* is considered to be merely a part of the overall change in the rural areas, the future of *dekasegi* is clear. It will continue for some time and disappear when a re-allocation of agricultural resources has occurred to provide the remaining farmers with an adequate income from farming. The course of this re-allocation process will involve the decline in the number of farm households over time as a result of the outmigration of families. The outmigration will occur as new social and economic ideas are diffused into the rural areas and the attitudes of some of the smaller and marginal farmers change toward living in the urban areas and depart from agriculture as a way of life, employment, and residence. In addition, there will be withdrawals from farming as the older population retires from farming. The re-allocation process will have achieved its optimal level when there is a reduction in farm households and the operational unit per farm household is sufficient to produce an adequate income from agriculture. However, this process is a continuous one and will depend heavily in the level of integration of agriculture in the national economy.

When the question of farm household outmigration is considered, major difficulties can be foreseen for the farmers. The outmigration of farm households in Japan is not an exception. Two problems will be considered here: (1) the farmer's view of himself as a worker in an urban area and (2) the chance of the "middle-aged" farmer to change his occupation successfully. Generally, most farmers are reluctant to abandon for another in the urban area. They have expressed feelings of stress, uncertainty, and an awareness of the hardships associated with finding and adjusting to acceptable employment off their farms. A change in occupation means a change in the residence as well as the daily routine. Most importantly, it means the breaking away from a way of life. Farming is a way of life rather than just an occupation for most farmers. In most instances, farmers also do not have the skills or training to be employed in a suitable position. This acts as another obstacle to his perception of his ability to live in the urban area and find a full-time job.

If the post-War seasonal labor migration is viewed as a temporary situation reflecting the need for labor in the industrial and urban areas, the flow of seasonal labor will be characterized by periodic fluctuations. This interpretation implies that seasonal labor migration is a response by the agricultural population because there was an expansion of job opportunities. This is the frequently cited reason for the growth of seasonal labor migration. The demand for seasonal

labor in construction (roads, apartment complexes, golf courses, etc.) will show considerable periodic fluctuations in response to construction activities which are related to public and private spending. Public and private spending for large construction projects fluctuate with the state of the economy.

The recent downward turn in the number of seasonal labor migrants can be viewed as supportive of this view. The number of *dekasegi-sha* declined from 341,924 in 1971 to 339,000 in 1972 and still further to 300,400 in 1973 nationally. In Tohoku, there was a decline but it was noticeable in 1973. In 1973, the number of labor migrants declined to 189,300 from 203,100 in the previous year. While it is true that the flow of *dekasegi-sha* will exhibit periodic fluctuations in response to the level of economic activity. However, this view overlooks the fact that seasonal labor migration in its developmental process has created new demands and ideals regarding the economic achievement among the farmers. As an evidence of this, witness the number of farmers who have attempted to find seasonal employment even in a period of economic recession.

Seasonal labor migration can be viewed as an adaptive mechanism in contrast to the outmigration of farm households. The immediate objective of seasonal labor migration and outmigration of farm households is an improvement of the economic status of the farmers. Under the prevailing conditions, seasonal labor migration has provided a way to achieve the economic objective without resorting to outmigration of farm households.

The practice of *dekasegi* will continue to be an important part of the rural areas because it is re-inforced by socio-economic forces in addition to satisfying the immediate goal of supplemental incomes. A significant factor is the accentuation of the women and older persons as the primarily agricultural workers. This group has established itself as being capable of handling the necessary agricultural work; consequently, the men must find additional employment especially during the winter period.

The acceptance of seasonal labor migration as a part of the yearly cycle in the rural areas is one of the important feature of the post-War social change. In Tohoku, for example, about 80 per cent of the respondents in a survey indicated that they practiced and intended to continue seasonal labor migration (Tohoku Nosei-kyoku Tokei Joho-bu 1973, 60). The reason for this attitude toward seasonal labor migration is an improvement in the conditions associated with the work and workmen's quarters. Though many jobs involve high risks, however, most types of jobs are relatively safe. Some of the seasonal labor migrants have acknowledged a preference for working in the milder weather of the Kanto area. They feel that it is much better than working in the snow and cold winds of the Tohoku area. Also, a tendency to hire workers from the same village has aided

in reducing the lack of companionship and tension in the worker's quarters. In seasonal work, the farmer realizes that he can receive cash income regularly in contrast to once a year in farming when he sells his crops. Also, he can see how much his labor is worth rather than as farm income which is determined by a mixture of management skills, market prices, and weather conditions. Above all, the chance to send or bring home cash is another factor.

A higher level of income must be secured in order to maintain and continue the level of living which additional income from seasonal labor migration has provided them (Hagimoto 1972, 18). The purchase of goods such as appliances to ease the burden of household chores will require maintenance as well as goods to use it. When a level of living is established, the lack of employment prospects to earn supplemental incomes will not be sufficient to slow down the number of farmers from looking for work or lower the consumption of goods. If employment is unavailable, the problem of an "adequate income" will be aggravated and the anticipated reaction will be agitation for governmental action and the disillusionment of farmers who are frustrated in their search for jobs.

The perception of land as more than a means of production by the farmers will be a critical factor for the continuation of seasonal work. There seems to be two fundamental reasons for this perception. First, the farmers are aware of the question, "What is a farmer without land?" In other words, he must own land to be considered a farmer. This feeling seems to be very strong among Tohoku farmers (Tochihara 1975, 51). Second, the belief that land ownership will provide the basic necessity of survival in very difficult times (Takahashi 1972, 9). The desire to hold onto land may have another root which is the relatively recent ownership of land dating from the period of land reform in the post-War period for some farmers. Still another factor for land ownership is the preservation of the "ie" by the family and the land is a part of it. The important role of the "ie" can be still seen clearly by the number of people who return to their "homes" during the *Bon* (Festival of the Dead) and the New Year's. Furthermore, the experiences of the wartime migration back to the rural areas by many families are relatively recent in minds of many.

The rise of land prices has been phenomenal in recent years. As a consequence, land has become also a source of wealth for the farmers. This factor was recognized by 1965 as a bottleneck in the outmigration of farm households (Economic Planning Agency 1968, 58). Though the demand for land higher closer to the urbanized areas, the price of land in rural areas has been bid upward by purchasing of agricultural land for other uses away from the urbanized areas. This rise in land prices has made it difficult for farmers to buy land to enlarge their farm size. If they were able to locate a seller, the parcels would be

scattered and, therefore, they must be willing to incur additional cost of transportation. Also, in some instances the price of agricultural land is too high to be profitable for agricultural use.

The *atotsugi* or the successor to the head of the household may be also a factor in the continuation of *dekasegi*. Nationally, the rate of seasonal labor migration among the successors was 42 per cent in 1963 and 35 per cent in 1970 (Norin-sho Norin Keizai-kyoku Tokei Chosa-bu, 1963 and 1970 editions). Generally, the successor is usually the eldest son who is expected to take over the function of the head of household in the future. Also, he is, most likely, engaged in operating the family farm during the summer. In this situation, the successor will have confront the problem of an "adequate income" when he is established as the head of the household. If he intends to remain in farming, he must enlarge the farm size or supplement his income from other sources. The former course of action is difficult to achieve under the present conditions of high land prices and low availability. The latter course of action is a distinct possibility because he may have been engaged in *dekasegi* for some time. On the other hand, if he received an education beyond high school, it would be geared towards farming and associated employment. His future is again strongly oriented toward farming. But, if he receives an education which may provide him with the opportunity to be employed in another field than agriculture he may abandon farming. But, once an *atotsugi* is established in his position as a head of a household and in farming, the possibility of moving and adapting to another type of work in an urban area is reduced significantly. In addition, social pressures against the head of a household who attempts to move away will, most likely, preclude any possibility of actually moving out. In his middle age years, he will become practically immobile because of family responsibility, social pressures, his feelings of uncertainty regarding employment in the urban area, and bonds of established routines. In fact, this is the situation which most seasonal labor migrants face today since most of the labor migrants are in the 35-59 age group. Thus, he will, very likely, begin to rely on the fact that he has the means to provide the lowest level of survival from his land, therefore, the release of his land becomes difficult.

These factors suggest that seasonal labor migration will be a part of the yearly cycle of life in the rural areas for the near future. In spite of difficulties for the family and the seasonal labor migrant, some households have twenty or more years of experience as seasonal labor migrants (Yamagata-ken Kenmin Seikatsu Kankyo-bu 1975, 17). In this period of twenty years, especially after 1960, *dekasegi* has received a considerable amount of attention regarding its characteristics, problems, and countermeasures. However, realistic and practical alternatives are few. The most realistic course of action will be the attempts to modify the

conditions which cause difficulties for the seasonal labor migrants and their households. One of the ways to reduce the difficulties from the long separation of the *dekasegi-sha* and their families, for example, would be to systematize more frequent visits for the families and the migrants during the work period (Kishi 1975, 4-5).

### Conclusions

Seasonal labor migration has become an adaptive mechanism which has enabled farmers to adjust to the economic and social conditions associated with rapid economic growth. The effects of seasonal labor migration are far ranging in nature and widespread, but it will continue to introduce other changes, directly and indirectly, as a result of its function as a diffusion mechanism as well as a source of funds for the betterment of agriculture and living conditions in the rural areas. As *dekasegi* induces changes, the characteristics as well as the motives for engaging in seasonal labor migration will change and conform to the needs of the migrants. *Dekasegi* will continue to be important in areas away from the industrialized and industrializing areas; thus, measures should be taken to reduce the social difficulties of the seasonal labor migrants and their households.

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