

**Hokkaido Dairy Farm:
Change, Otherness, and the Search For Security**

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Acknowledgements

Much has been said about the difficulty that native English speakers encounter when attempting to learn the Japanese language. I am no exception. However, through the four years I have lived in Japan, and the five I have spent as a doctoral student focused both in and on Japan, I think I have come closer to understanding the nuance of *sumimasen*. The word, depending on context, can be a declaration of gratitude, of indebtedness, and foremost apology. All are fitting in what follows.

To the people of “Gensan” and “Grand Hopes Farm”, to my family, to my friends, to my cohorts at SOAS, to professors and business people in Japan who generously gave their time, to fellow conference participants, and to my advisers past and present, notably Professor Ian Reader, Professor Delores Martinez, Professor Johan Pottier, Professor Takami Kuwayama, Professor John Mock, and Professor Kazunobu Ikeya, I offer my heart-felt *sumimasen*. If this should ever find its way to publication, beyond a being a doctoral thesis, I will endeavour to be more specific in declaring my gratitude to in particular.

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As is academic convention, although many helped to make this dissertation possible, I am responsible for choices made and for what follows.

Paul Hansen

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Abstract

Hokkaido has been essential to Japan's modern nation-state building project. The region's importance was initially promoted through a polysemic quest for macro security; to secure, or fix, the northern island into the structure of modern Japan and in-so-doing to provide safety or security. Security was sought politically, militarily, and through linking economics and recourses, notably the extraction of coal and lumber and the production of food. Dairy farming became a key industry, central in defining the contemporary popular image of Hokkaido. Ironically, despite the importance of securing and security, the industry, and perhaps Hokkaido itself, remains 'Other' within the context of Japan; home to livelihoods and locations that cannot be reconciled with essentialist Japanese discourses, for example idealized images of regional cultural homogeneity, harmony, village or rural life.

Today (2005-2010), Hokkaido's dairy industry is rapidly changing. Influenced by macro insecurities and uncertainties, dairy production based on pastoral mixed family farms is shifting to joint shared industrial mega and mono culture farms that require high overhead and technology, as well as workers from outside of the community. These shifts alter community, family, values, alongside relationships, both human and animal. Thus, the region has become a site of intense individual meso and micro security searching for locals, outsiders, and what I term "lo-siders" and "no-siders". All but locals can be seen as 'tourist' workers who come from across rural and urban Japan, and increasingly, from abroad. This thesis documents and examines these shifts historically. It provides a contemporary ethnographic example of one farm at the heart of change, otherness, and the search for security, where the author was employed as a dairy worker. It suggests that the triad of change, otherness, and security can be utilized as a comparative analytic frame for other 'frontier' areas - spatial and biological.

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Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Youkoso Hokkaido¹

Flying into Hokkaido's Chitose airport from Osaka in February is like flying from Japan into another country.² Below there are none of the symbols of a stereotypical Japanese landscape. The ubiquitous sky scraping neon cityscape is absent. There are no bamboo forests, stratified paddy fields, or elongated hamlets clinging to the walls of lush valleys. Looking down, no picturesque temples or meticulously manicured gardens are seen. In fact, there is little mid-winter colour at all. The choppy greenish white-capped sea is followed by a vacant rock-strewn coast and then by occasional collections of red and blue rooftops. Geometrically calculated roads and fences sparsely cut through the gently undulating snow blanketed land for as far as can be seen. From above the landscape appears like a patchwork quilt; square and rectangular sections are clearly separated with fences evocative of stitching. And, reminiscent of handmade quilts, proud artefacts of North American pioneers, each patch has its own story. Every staked out section of this land has its own fabric - its own pattern of buildings, its own equipment, and its own well-worn tracks that betray the daily patterns of work and homestead life. Each patch is unique.

As the plane lands, off in the distance, leafless birch and poplar trees stand as wind breaking field markers; sandwiched between the wide grey skies and the expanse of white terrain, their bare branches become indistinct. And looming in the far off distance, beyond the bustle of the 'new' international airport, with no leaves, buildings, or hills to obscure one's winter view, are jagged mountains. These mountains are covered with dense pine forests except at higher altitudes where they gradually give way to bare rock and snow. Had I slept on the plane and awoken looking out the

¹ *Youkoso* Hokkaido simply means 'Welcome (to) Hokkaido'. '*Youkoso*' has been deployed as a recent advertising campaign in Japan. '*Youkoso* Japan' pervades everyday advertising culture, especially in places of transit such as airports. This foreshadows a theme developed in Chapter Two and Three, notably the importance of how Hokkaido is envisioned as 'outside' Japan.

² I arrived February 15th of 2006 and the notion of Hokkaido 'looking like' a foreign country is not my impression alone. It is promoted as such. [*G*] *aikoku ni kitamitai to omoudarou* (you will think you are in a foreign country) or variations, is endlessly stated in tourist pamphlets. For example it can be found in *Toakchi de asobu: kurukuru hando bukku* (Have Fun in Tokachi Tourist Handbook). Foreignness as an image is consciously promoted

window, I could have just as easily believed that I was returning from Osaka to my prairie hometown near the Canadian Rockies, an area famed for rodeos and beef production, and not heading to Hokkaido, an area famed for nature and dairy production, to spend eleven months 'doing' anthropological fieldwork by working full-time on an industrial dairy farm.

Although Hokkaido is distant and distinct from both the North American Rockies and its settlers, the regions and the people do share some surprising connections and similarities.³ Hokkaido was, and I will argue below still is, imagined by many Japanese as a 'frontier'.⁴ It is an 'open' space where *kaitakushya seishin* (the pioneering spirit) – a make it your own way existence, often defined by independence and being an outcast – can be attempted, tested, and confirmed. It is also perceived as a place where newcomers can make a fresh start. Hokkaido, throughout its history, has been viewed as a distant place, a place that is thought of as 'other'. Geographically, for the majority of Japanese, Hokkaido is on the periphery of the country. It is due west of the Siberian steppes and its capital city is closer to Russian Vladivostok than the nation's capital. When I landed at the airport the mid-day "-8 Celsius" indicated on the airplane's video monitor was a poignant reminder that this was neither Kinki nor Kanto, the densely populated regions around Osaka and Tokyo. Moreover, the mounds of snow and sand that sidelined the airport's runways were an equally clear sign of a different topography.

Walker (2001) and Bay (2005) disagree with the idea of Hokkaido as a frontier, as a region of bounded space separate from Honshu.⁵ They describe the north of Japan, following Barth's discussion of space (1969), as a historically contested and shifting boundary; a region permeated by the migrations, co-operations, and conflicts of native peoples and Japanese (neither being culturally or ethnically homogeneous). As historians, their claims are insightful and the colonisation of Hokkaido does differ from other modern colonial projects, such as the British colonisation of North America, India, or South Africa; at least insofar as the Japanese colonisers did not need to travel great distances and they had previous contact with the native inhabitants before sustained attempts at colonisation.⁶

³ These points of Similarity and dissimilarity are elaborated on throughout this thesis.

⁴ My use of frontier and colonisation is outlined in Chapter Two with other key macro level terms.

⁵ See also Guo (2005 ed.) for contemporary examples of regional diversity on both sides of the Tsugaru Strait, the sea that separates modern Hokkaido and Tōhoku (the northern mainland). Notions of the 'frontier' will be raised throughout this dissertation.

⁶ This history is elaborated upon in Chapter Two and Three.

Japanese colonisers had had previous contact and shared a close proximity with another enduring conquest, the islands of Okinawa (formerly the Ryūkyū kingdom). Japanese also colonised regions that are no longer part of contemporary Japan, for example present day Taiwan and Manchuria. However, I suggest that Hokkaido, or as it is popularly known *Kitanokuni* (north country), is different from these regions in that it is viewed much like North America's 'Wild West' in terms of being home to a 'frontier' image and narrative in Japanese culture. Whether this popular notion of frontier is politically correct or historically accurate is another matter. The point made here is that the climate, landscape, and history of Hokkaido alongside the enduring industries and practices that are found there today are comparable with Canadian or American pioneering history and, as will be documented in this dissertation, such comparisons are frequently made by Japanese themselves. Moreover, Hokkaido is promoted in domestic tourist media as "looking like" a foreign country; a point raised above and expanded upon in this thesis. This is quite unlike the domestic tourist media discussed by Bestor (2004), Robertson (1998b), Ivy (1995) where the search for a 'real', 'pre-modern', and 'nostalgic' Japan takes centre stage.⁷ A brief history of Hokkaido is offered in Chapter Two and Chapter Three outlining why - in terms of climate, industry, history and politics - Hokkaido holds a specific outsider status in Japan. However, a brief investigation into Hokkaido's image and ways of looking at Hokkaido might be helpful to 'place the space' for the reader before I 'place myself' there.

In Dorst's work on visual history in the American West, notably Wyoming, "a discourse of looking" (1999: 79) is utilised. He claims that several iconic images of the American West are deployed in creating a unique visual identity; the 'Indian', the cowboy, cattle, the open range, and dangerous rattlesnakes amongst other stereotypes are used to produce a dominant visual narrative of the region. This story plays out in, for example, folk art or museum representations and presents a dominant material discourse of identity linked to landscape, both human made and natural. On the one hand such interpretations reinforce the dominant narrative but Dorst notes that representation can also be used to reinterpret this narrative through novel displays. His view is shared in the context of the Canadian West by Francis (2004: 29-49) and Davis (2004: 51-65) in terms of landscape, artwork, and identity. Moreover, like Dorst, Francis notes that dominant discourse of images change over time:

⁷ Here see Vlastos (1998 ed.) notably the comparative perspective of Chakrabarty (*ibid.* 285-296).

At one point in time, that imagined landscape may be a wilderness, chaotic, and free of human habitation; at another time it may be a garden, a pastoral landscape where nature is orderly and tamed...the reason for this dramatic change in landscape imagery and regional identity was the purchasing of the North West (Rupert's Land) by the Canadian Government from the Hudson's Bay company in 1869-70 and its subsequent incorporation into Canada.

(Francis 2004: 30)

While this underscores a shift in frontier imagery in the context of Canada, methods of colonisation, industry, and the image of the landscape were remarkably similar in early modern Hokkaido and North America as this thesis will attest to. To understand this point fully, it is helpful from the start of this monograph that the reader think of Hokkaido's image and 'development' in terms of this comparative time frame and landscape. That is to say, the region was officially incorporated into the new modern Japanese nation-state the same year the Canadian 'frontier' (including my native province of Alberta) was incorporated by the central Canadian government into the new Canadian nation-state. In short, beyond other similarities outlined in the second, third and fourth chapters of this document, these regions share temporality, and interestingly, many of the visual tropes seen in 'frontier' Hokkaido are shared with those of the American and Canadian West. For example, Hokkaido is depicted as pastoral on the one hand, with 'foreign' domesticated animals (sheep and dairy cows especially), while at the same moment it is viewed as "wild" and natural, as referenced by the region's indigenous populations, notably the *Ezo Guma* (Hokkaido bear) and the native Ainu people. It is not necessarily important that these dichotomies change over time – as the Canadian and American cases above show this would hardly be spectacular. What is interesting, however, is how shifting images have blurred into particular contemporary Hokkaido frontier imaginaries; space popularly promoted and viewed in terms of change - from wild, to natural, to domesticated, and shifting back and forth between these markers depending on context. That is, meaning is dependent upon *who* does the looking and *what* they are looking for (Dickin 2004).

Tokachi where I did my fieldwork, for example, is a location that, over the last 100 years, has been home to some familiar Japanese rural tropes yet it also houses many unfamiliar rural lifestyles in the context of Japan. This thesis explains how the dairy industry is front and centre in blurred images of Hokkaido. It underscores how

Hokkaido, dairy farming, and dairy cattle mean many things to as many people working in the industry, be they locals, newcomers, or tourists passing through.

In visual terms, the shifting outsider image of Hokkaido, its landscape, and its inhabitants, human or otherwise, can also be witnessed in other visual representations of the region. In Chapter Two I define the frontier and in-so-doing note early modern cartographic representations of Japan, with Hokkaido then seen as a border land for example in Hayashi Shihei's 1785 map 'making' what is now known as modern Japan.⁸ Alongside earlier mapping efforts, otherness was also represented in terms of art; notably the *Bankoku* (a thousand lands) screens that depict foreign people, real and imagined, as well as early encyclopaedic references defining *Jinrui* ("anthropos") (Toby 1998). Such works outline the shifting gaze in terms of Japan and others, including Ryūkyū and Ezo (today Okinawa and Hokkaido), from the mid-1500s until the close of the 1800s. Through such imagery one can trace the shifting register of otherness as understood by Japan's "anthropo-political" elites, into a developing global awareness – notably the slow inclusion of Hokkaido and Ainu, as well as Okinawa and its population into near, but clearly foreign peoples and lands (*ibid.*: 22-37; Morris-Suzuki 1996: 81-94). Portrait paintings also provide a method of looking at how early modern notions of Japanese self and other developed (See Yoshida and Durrans ed. 2008).

As highlighted in Chapter Two, mid-modern posters (Meiji period 1867-1912) promoting settlement in Hokkaido, were an attempt to shift the image of Hokkaido from barbarous outpost to an 'Americanized' land of plenty. Visual and pop-cultural representations of Hokkaido as peripheral continue today as documented by popular comic books such as *Ushionegaiyo* (*Thank-you Cows*) a series about young dairy farm workers, on film, for example *Kitanokuni* (North Country) an extremely popular Japanese television series (running 1981-2002), and internationally known novels such as Murakami's *A Wild Sheep Chase* (1982/2003).⁹ Thus, Hokkaido is peculiar in the context of contemporary Japan and in the popular mythology of frontier space found there, yet it also has much in common with other frontier regions:¹⁰

⁸ See Chapter Two Section 5.3. for the map.

⁹ These popular works all portray Hokkaido and people residing in Hokkaido, in terms of otherness and liminality more visual examples are found in the second and third chapters in terms of theory and ethnography see Chapter Six through Nine.

¹⁰ Hokkaido and Okinawa are both relatively recent colonial possessions of Japan (in official terms about 150 years old). See Kerr (2000) for a concise history of Okinawa. Comparisons between Hokkaido, Okinawa, and Alberta, Canada are discussed in the following chapters.

In the following description of my arrival at the farm, and in the presentation and analysis of my ethnographic fieldwork, I demonstrate that Hokkaido's history, space, imagery, and those individuals who live and work there, notably in the dairy industry, are peripheral, outside, and other to commonly accepted ideas of Japan and Japaneseness.¹¹ However, I argue that this status of otherness is a paradox. Despite being counter to essentialist ideas of Japan, the dairy industry, its products, and its history are actually central to the cultural life of the contemporary nation. Thus in considering this industry and the relationships of those involved in it, essentialist theories of Japanese uniqueness are questioned.

I.2 Arrival

After making my way out of the airport filled with advertisements for fresh food and outdoor adventure sports, I collected my bags, decoded the train schedule, and stood outside waiting – body tensed and exhalations visible. In Hokkaido winter is clearly winter, and I was to learn that a characteristic Hokkaido spring, summer and autumn would follow. In short, Japan often sells itself as a tourist destination by referring to its distinct four seasons. Japanese have many religious and cultural celebrations such as *Hanami* (blossom viewing season) to mark the shifting seasons. However the climate where the majority of Japanese live is quite moderate, and while Tōhoku (northern) areas such as Akita are famed for harsh winters and heavy snowfall, they are not prone to winter temperatures of 30 below zero Celsius as in Hokkaido's Rikabetsu area or ice flows as in Wakkanai, Hokkaido. Alternatively, summer in Hokkaido is neither wet nor humid, such as those famed in Tokyo or Kyoto, but dry and warm teetering in the mid-20 degree Celsius range. Hokkaido's climate, and so its seasons, differentiates the region from much of Japan.

Another clear contrast came with my train journey: unlike the private trains I was accustomed to riding around in Osaka or the packed Hiroshima connector trains, the coach of my first Japan Rail Hokkaido train had the aged look and smell of being in service since the 1950s. The warm air coming from under the seats was comforting as the trip from the airport to Obihiro, the nearest 'big' city to the *Gyuu nyuu no bokujoyou* (dairy farm) where I was to work took over three hours. There is no *shinkansen* (high-

¹¹ Japaneseness and *Nihonjinron* are discussed in the following chapter and in detail in Chapter Six.

speed 'bullet' train) to Obihiro. In fact, in 1987, due to lack of demand and despite the town's protests, trains stopped running to Gensan, the town I was to call home for a year of research.¹² The three-car train rocked and snaked along, occasionally stopping to switchback its way over the Hidaka mountain pass that separates the massive Tokachi planes from the more densely populated Ishikari plane and Sapporo. Throughout the long journey I sat reflecting on the landscape, my preparatory pre-fieldwork research, and what might lie ahead.

Over my nineteen months of fieldwork, eleven working in Gensan and eight based at Hokkaido University in Sapporo, I discovered that the population of the entire prefecture of Hokkaido (Japan's largest prefecture by far in terms of geographic area at 22% of Japan's landmass) is home to less than 5 % (six million) of Japan's 130 million people. Nearly one-third of Hokkaido's population lives in Sapporo, Japan's fifth most populated city with approximately 1.8 million people. Adding in cities like Obihiro in Tokachi district, Hokkaido's fourth largest at around 180,000 people, to the overall demographic one quickly notes that the majority of Hokkaido's population is urban.

Simply put and statistics aside, Hokkaido is rural in the way one might think of rural America or Canada. It is physically isolated and socially and politically marginal. Locals and tourists alike refer to it as '*inaka*' (rustic or country side), although it will become apparent in what follows that the interpretation of this term, however, varies widely amongst individuals and social groups. Tokachi is a fertile plain surrounded by mountains on three sides, and sea on the fourth, and it is often referred to with an expressive '*hontoni inaka*' (really countryside). The implication being that given Hokkaido is Japan's periphery, its margins, or its 'middle-of-nowhere,' Tokachi is an area that is physically cut off within Hokkaido by its terrain, making it an expressive 'really' in the middle-of Hokkaido's 'nowhere.' Gensan, as a destination, prides itself on being in the centre of 'that' middle.¹³

For example, when travelling in Hokkaido, and certainly in Tokachi, mountains, like towns, are usually seen in the distance. One does not feel hemmed in or enclosed in Hokkaido. Movement to and from towns is experienced through discrete sensations of approaching, entering, and leaving. For anyone who has widely travelled in Japan, this contrasts with much of Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu, - the Japanese mainland(s). In

¹² Gensan is a pseudonym.

¹³ Tourist Pamphlets frequently point out the benefits of the town's closeness to nature, sport, 'country living', and its central Hokkaido location.

the rest of the mainland(s), a cartography that elderly Gensan residents occasionally referred to as *zaichi* or *gaichi* (outside land), there is, quite literally, a feeling of being *naichi* ('inside' land). In essence, in much of Japan, one is enclosed by mountains or one is enclosed within cities; cities that often give way to indistinct suburbs and then to indistinct towns that meander through valleys beside train lines and roadways. For many Japanese, a feeling of 'landlocked' or isolation due to open space is rare on the mainland(s).¹⁴ However, in Tokachi, one seems bordered or shielded by the mountains, always heading 'towards' or 'from' them with an expanse of open space in between. Related to the aforementioned notion of frontier space, I was to learn that *hiro-i* (wide) was a common refrain as to why people want to live in Hokkaido. Unlike the majority of other Japanese areas the land of *kitanokuni* is open, wide, and spacious. The adjective *hiro-i* was often used to contrast Hokkaido with the rest of Japan.¹⁵

The voyage through towns became increasingly slow as the train neared Tokachi. Snow had to be cleared from the tracks and some small town rail stations had only one line of track. As the train crept along, I saw rotting hand hewn log barns sagging through a combination of neglect and age but in more affluent areas, these relics of Hokkaido's pioneering past often yielded to newer galvanised metal structures. Similarly, colourful new tractors sat alongside ones rusted and abandoned after years of toil in the dark wet volcanic soil of the Tokachi district; a district which is famous throughout Japan not only for its milk but also for tubers such as *daikon* (a white radish) and potatoes as well as pork, beef, and recently, wine and artisan cheeses. American style houses with metal or shingled roofs were part of the landscape mixed in with polyurethane greenhouses, cows, horses, dogs, and occasionally, people. Having, until that point, only lived in large cities in Japan (Hiroshima for a year and Osaka for four months), I was struck by how few people I saw from the train, not to mention on it.¹⁶ In Hokkaido, not everyone lives in a town. Automobiles are a necessity. It was clear to me as the train crawled along that I was passing by modern farms that had sprung from original isolated homesteads staked one hundred years ago.¹⁷

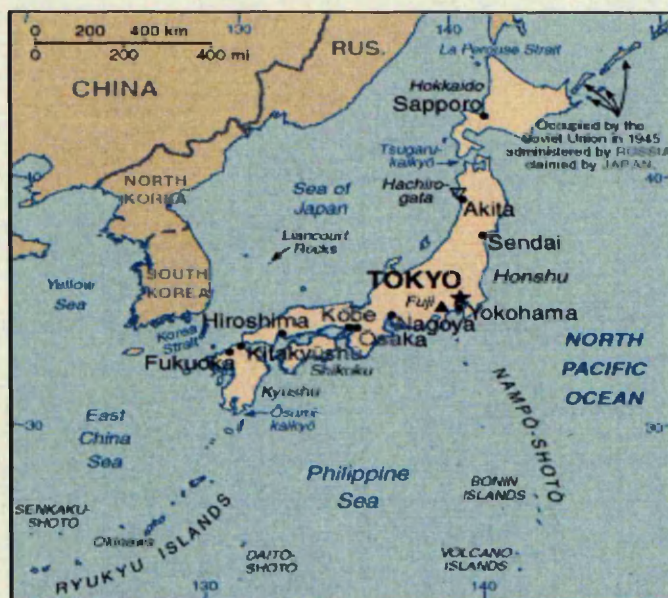
¹⁴ There are feelings of alienation as well, well-documented social ills in Japan (*Hikikomori* (shut ins) or *NEET* (youth not in employment, education, or training)). Open space exists – for example in Tottori. However, this is not on the same scale as in Hokkaido. Takata notes that Hokkaido is populated in a "Scattered Modern" pattern not "clustered village" pattern as in Honshu (2004: 146). He, and others, compare Hokkaido settlement to that found in North America.

¹⁵ 2000 Genius Dictionary.

¹⁶ For Sapporo's History see Mock (1999).

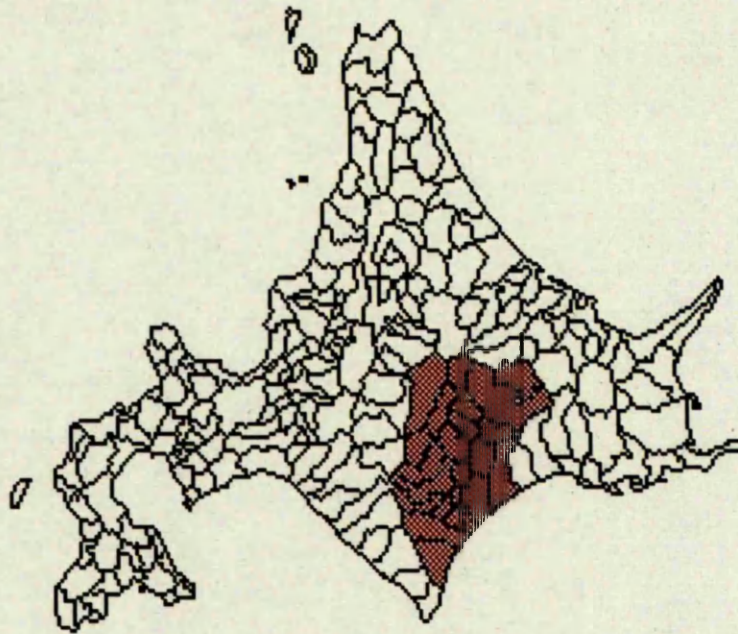
¹⁷ For homestead staking history see Fujita (1994), Mock (1999), Russell (2007), and Takata (2003, 2004).

Travelling through Hokkaido one can literally see the history discussed in this thesis. For example, pioneer settlements mirroring, quite intentionally, North America. Mixed farms with animals and humans working in concert, horses for traction, sheep and cattle for sustenance, were the norm only forty years ago. However, industrial dairy farming, with an ever-increasing technological separation of human, bovine, and even land is rapidly replacing these earlier practices. These changes can be noted in a 'passive' or even 'passing' archaeology of space. To phrase it differently, the material history of the early frontier remains alongside the new and this is a tactile reminder of the location's history immediately available to anyone looking out the window of a Tokachi bound train. Hokkaido is an area where shifting populations have, certainly since 1700s, searched for security on many levels - from individual, group, and national to economic, physical, and ontological. Homesteading is a little over a century old around Gensan, and as in any frontier region, security (to secure and be secure) has been ever-mediated by the two perennial conditions of Hokkaido's past and its present – change and otherness.¹⁸ Change, otherness, and the search for security form a conceptual triad in this thesis that is utilised to understand the making of the Hokkaido frontier in general and the contemporary workers in the Tokachi dairy farming industry in particular.



(I.2.a.). A map of contemporary Japan and its 'neighbourhood'. Accessed on the CIA website via Google June 15, 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>

¹⁸ All terms expanded upon in the following chapter.



(1.2.b). The Tokachi region of Hokkaido. Gensan is located in the north central area. (Scanned from the Tokachi International Info Guide Index).



1.2.c) Mountain ranges splitting East and West Hokkaido and encompassing the Tokachi region. <http://www.caiks.com/print/noutore.html> accessed via Google May 12th 2010.



(I.3.d.). Material culture on an ever-changing frontier; old barns give way to newer structures.

I.3 Meeting

The *sachyou* (company president) met me at the station, catching me somewhat off guard as I arrived in Obihiro about two hours ahead of schedule and was hoping to look around the station and have something to eat. I had dug out the phone number of the *bokujyou* (farm), just called it, and was in the process of describing my early arrival to a somewhat bewildered and slightly panicking staff member when I heard a voice from behind: “*Sumimasen ga... Po-ru san desu ka?*” (excuse me, but are you Paul?)

Startled, the best stammering response I could muster was: “*Hai ... ahm, sou desu*” (Yes...It’s certainly true).

A short and slender, clean-cut, smart looking casually dressed Japanese businessman, was peering at me overtop of thick glasses. He replied, nodding: “Uhh...OK, OK”.

There was a pause, silence for a few seconds, when time seemed to stop. Then, adding nothing else but a few more nods, Wada-san (Mr. Wada) handed me a business card and quickly walked off with one of my bags. I uttered something into the receiver

to my soon-to-be co-worker along the lines of: “*Ima daijyobu desu. Hito ikimasu.*” (Now it’s OK – man goes), with the grammar and meaning being as confused as that portrayed in this English translation.¹⁹

I hung up the phone and shuffled after Wada-san, trying first and foremost to decipher the Japanese name on the card he had just placed in my hand, whilst at the same time attempting to pull both my stuff, and self, together. Whoever he was, it was clear he was taking me somewhere, but from the look of him he could not be a farmer I silently reasoned. At the station exit, I scanned the parking lot for him. At the time, I had no idea who this middle-aged Japanese stranger was, but later would discover that he was one of the owners of the farm. I was also to learn that Wada-san²⁰ had hired me against the will of some other owners. He was *the* boss and he was also to become a key research informant

Searching the horizon for the ubiquitous Toyota Bongo - a small, white, boxy 1000 cc mini truck used by farmers across Japan - I spotted Wada-san waving, palm down with a strained smile on his face ushering me towards a newer white Toyota Grand; the emblematic conservative, middle management, 'salaryman' luxury sedan, complete with white doilies on the head rests. We were soon outside of Obihiro proper: The city is like many Hokkaido towns with streets constructed in a highly functional and none-too-interesting grid pattern. Betraying these modern beginnings, the town was like several other hundred year old frontier towns and cities in Hokkaido. The streets and avenues lead past rundown stores mixed together with auto centres, pachinko parlours,²¹ convenience stores and the odd derelict warehouse – a common theme of Japanese post-war mid-size city sprawl. However, after crossing a four-lane bridge spanning a wide river valley we entered a newer shopping suburb reminiscent of an overgrown American style strip mall.

Unlike Obihiro the stores across the river are booming and bustling. Newer do-it-yourself home stores, a MacDonal’d’s, large supermarkets and drugstores, a Mr. Doughnuts, and family restaurants, with names like Victoria’s Station, attract both

¹⁹ By the end of research, my Japanese trumped all but a worldly town doctor (Oda Sensei introduced in Chapter Eight). Communication was carried out in Japanese; not poetic, melodic, or even grammatically sound, but Japanese.

²⁰ Pseudonyms are used throughout this monograph.

²¹ Pachinko is a mix between pinball and video lottery. It is a popular pastime for many Japanese and many local *bokujyō* workers were avid players. It allows one “...to be alone in a community of singularity...Pachinko resembles not only drink, but also drugs, sex, fast driving, and religion...it affords relief from the self, now that this self is constricted, conscribed yet denied both security and certainty...” (Richie: 2003: 122-123).

farmers and city dwellers alike. The town is an area famous for its *onsen* (hot springs) and it is also the main Tokachi area crossroads. As well as being a conduit for traffic south to Obihiro and north to the Daisetsuzan National Park, Hokkaido's largest, it is the main thoroughfare that connects to the eastward and westward running highway that links Sapporo, with numerous tourist attractions, such as *onsen*, wineries and the Pacific Ocean, to the east. In short, it is a busy and important junction for traffic heading in any direction and although the road has only one official lane heading north/south cars double up as the area is choked with traffic during both rush hour and weekends.

Heading north through town for four kilometres there is another important intersection where one can choose to either head south back to Obihiro *via* a more scenic route, passing a famous bakery that has become a major tourist attraction due to its cheesecake, or head further north toward land pioneered one-hundred years ago. The road sign is clearly posted in both Katakana and English – Frontier *Dori* (Road). We turned north towards the mountains and the *Gurando Ho-pu bokujyou* (Grand Hopes Dairy Farm). While the name is a pseudonym, it is common practice, like the road sign pictured below, to have English names written in Katakana, a script further underscoring the foreignness of the space and industry. Great North Farm or Big Field Farm might serve as good examples, but Grand Hopes Farm, with a bit of interpretive license is similar to the real name of the dairy farm. In the section that follows I explain why I was heading there, with Mr. Wada, in the dead of winter.



(I.3.e). A road sign outside of Obihiro with the winter landscape in the background.



(I.3.f). Looking North over the Tokachi region in May of 2006.



(I.3.g). Looking South over the Tokachi region in January 2008.

1.4. Why Me, Why Now, and Why Hokkaido?

Having briefly introduced Hokkaido, my fieldwork site, and Wada-san, it is important to position myself as the narrator of this thesis. The reason why I chose this topic relates to my personal history, and so to a large degree chance; my own experiences of community, identity, home, Japan, and work. In the following two sections I endeavour to explain my reasons for selecting this topic, my personal history as it relates to the study of frontier regions and livestock agriculture, and my embodiment in a reasonable amount of detail. The final section and the following chapter underscore the methods, materials, and theory used in this study. However, my intention is not to outline a voyage of self-discovery as have some ethnographers of Japan (e.g. Hamabata 1986; Kondo 1990; Macfarlane 2007). Nevertheless, I do think that this is inextricably part of anthropology as a reflexive human endeavour. In essence, I suggest that there is no way to come out of fieldwork experience unchanged as it is an intensive and long-term period of one's life spent 'outside' of one's 'usual' community (Okely and Callaway ed. 1992). This is the case for native anthropologists as well (Dahal 2004; Kuwayama 2004) – and indeed as noted below, there arguably are some points that I share with native anthropologists in my choice of selecting a frontier area and focusing on a cattle based economy.

Ethnographic data is in large part extracted from personal experience. It is essential in most anthropological projects and there are ethnographic elements in all the chapters that follow. Here I write myself into this account in the hope that it offers, at the least, a partially informed space in which the reader can interrogate the actions, assumptions or shortcomings that I may fail to recognize and declare throughout this text. I view this act as ethical (Fassin 2008: 333-344), not an attempt at, or under the pretence of, presenting my ethnography objectively. It is an attempt to position myself in the text for the critical reader who must read this text with their own bodies, histories, and thoughts, leaving them with their own understandings and impressions.²² During fieldwork I was a “fully embodied” long-term participant undeniably effecting events and affecting interactions in a demanding and occasionally chaotic work situation.²³ My embodiment was central to the bodily nature of such research: engaging with

²² I come to this notion of “positional reflexivity” from my interpretation of Grbich (2004: 71). Also see also Denzin (1997), Jackson (1996), Rabinow and Marcus (2008), or Rapport (1997, 2000, 2003).

²³ Markowitz (2006) outlines how life experience and embodiment affect ethnographic research. See also Hansen (2007) on this point.

materials, disciplining and interacting with human and animal bodies, and doing demanding physical labour.²⁴ The writing process demands reductionism, interpretation, and representation. What follows is, and can be nothing more than, my own disclosure of what I understand as my motivations, the way I perceive (and the way that I perceive I was perceived), and methodologies, theories and themes of my own choosing. It is dependent upon participation foremost, and in no particular order; observation, good and bad fortune, how I selected and edited field notes, compiled them into this dissertation, and how these were melded and moulded by particular paradigms of representation at a given historical moment.²⁵

My topic was chosen due to a personal interest in the history of change in 'frontier' thinking and spaces, individual agency along with cultural / social / individual diversity and identity,²⁶ and the practical and philosophical issues that arise from the use of anthropological methodologies in the writing of embodied experiences (*cf.* Bourdieu 1977, 1984, 1990; Ingold 2000, 2007; Jackson 1996, 2005; Lave and Wenger 1991; Markowitz 2006; Rapport 1997, 2003). Both dairy farming and Japan were, as explained below, chosen for pragmatic reasons.

1.4.1 Placing Me:

It would be misleading if I were to claim that I was born a rancher. However, I was born into surroundings, both urban and rural, where cattle ranching played a large role in the image, economy, identity and lifestyle of the two frontier communities that I consider my Canadian homes. Calgary, Alberta, my urban hometown, is a little over one-hundred years old and noted for being one of Canada's fastest growing cities as well as being home to the largest rodeo in the nation, billed as nothing less than, "The Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth."²⁷ It is a 'new' city of one million people full of seeming contradictions. A place where hotels are still legally bound to board horses if they arrive with a paying customer, the professional sports arena is called the 'Saddle

²⁴ Wacquant (2000) also details a similar embodied approach to ethnographic knowledge training as a boxer. Grasseni underscores the importance of embodied understanding, often neglected by scientists and policy makers, in the context of dairy farming in the Italian Alps (2005, 2007).

²⁵ See Foucault (1977), and in terms of anthropology see Geertz (1988) and Rabinow and Marcus (2008).

²⁶ These points are further discussed in Chapter Six through to the Conclusion.

²⁷ Calgary Stampede information <http://calgarystampede.com>, city of Calgary Information <http://www.calgary.ca/portal/server.pt> both accessed via Google March 19, 2007. These sites underscore the juxtaposition of the image of modern cosmopolitanism and ranching traditions.

Dome,' and it is customary to offer famous visitors a white cowboy hat, the *ipso jure* culturally symbolic key to the city. These incongruities, of the past co-mingling with the present, are the product of a particular history; a mix of modernity and colonization that has resulted in a contemporary pastiche identity of rural tradition in tandem with cosmopolitan aspirations and a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural reality. In short, it is the individual, and so collective, interpretation and memory of a particular place.

The construction of this particular 'placeness' - a community and identity linked to a space and history - is what Anderson might call an "imagined community" (1983); Hobsbawm could claim as "invented tradition" (1983); Shapiro would add, with "colonised" street names like Crowfoot or Shaganapi Trail, a "violent cartography" (1997: 173-177); Smith might describe it as a melding of "myth and memory" (1999); and Augé, would claim it as a non-place or a space of supermodernity: one divorced from its authentic origin to become a pastiche of practices (1995).²⁸ Theoretical abstractions aside, Calgary is a frontier city - and simply put, it is an area of constant change; interpretations and reinterpretations of practices, spaces, with highly mobile and individualistic inhabitants. 'Cowtown', Calgary's unshakable popular handle from its ranching history, *is not an agreed upon space*. It has grown, much like Sapporo, Hokkaido's capital city, from a few hundred inhabitants at the end of the nineteenth century to over a million people today. It is an individually interpreted patchwork of dis-located symbols and meanings, and a meeting place and a battle ground of globalizing multi-cultures and sub-cultures - it is, in short, a 'typical' North Western American city.²⁹

From my childhood into my mid-twenties, I spent nearly every weekend with my grandfather at what I consider to be my second home; a family farm near a town of 6,000 people. Rocky Mountain House, Alberta is the last stop before a smaller town, seventy odd kilometres through mountain wilderness, heading west along a thousand kilometre stretch of highway ending in Vancouver. It is very rural, very conservative,

²⁸ "Imagined community" and "invented tradition" are commonly referenced in works on Japanese history (cf. Gluck 1985, Morris-Suzuki 1998, Vlastos ed. 1998) and insofar as Smith and Shapiro's work, the claim is that, for example, adopted place names usurp original readings, meanings, memories, and so indigenous identities linked to those spaces. For example Miyajima notes that in Hokkaido: "...Many Japanese visitors to Hokkaido have difficulty reading place names. That is because most of them are Ainu words that have Chinese characters forced upon them" (1998: 1). The notion of Gensan as a non-space - or a space divorced from original or shared practices is obvious in what follows, notably the final chapter.

²⁹ One could say an average contemporary civil democratic North Western American mid-sized city of approximately the same age - say, Denver or Edmonton. Mock (1999) and Irish (2009) outline similarities in the history of Sapporo linked to rapid growth and new neighbourhoods.

and very proud of both. The surrounding homesteads are isolated. Most people are employed in ranching or the production of oil. Today there is a steady trickle of urbanites buying cottages and hobby farms. However, in the past people were socialised to mind their *own* business. Family units were close and multigenerational and there existed very little question of what was considered right or wrong – one was brought up to *know* what is right and wrong. Today, with increased oil revenue, globalisation, and a growing number of urban-born newcomers it remains a typical ‘traditional’ rural setting but one that is rapidly changing and many residents disagree if such changes are for the better or the worse.

As noted in what follows, the above description of my native frontier city and rural town shares many similarities with cities and towns in Hokkaido; notably Sapporo and Gensan. Speaking regionally, or ‘thinking Alberta,’ rural or urban, is also similar to the depictions of Oklahoma in Stein’s article on US Midwestern, masculinity, ethnicity, and identity (1987). His article is heavily influenced by Benedict’s notions of personality and culture.³⁰ *Volkgeist* (the spirit of a people and of place) is not a new concept. It came from Herder (1800) to Boas (1887/1940; 1904) and so is at the heart of early anthropology (Zammito 2002).

In the context of Japan, the linking of space and identity is an extensive literary / research genre popularly known as *nihonjinron* (studies of ‘unique’ Japaneseness). This is defined in detail, alongside the burgeoning flipside of such research *Otaku* Studies (Studies of ‘uniquely’ a-typical Japaneseness) which is covered in Chapter Six. Here it suffices to say that the reaction to *nihonjinron* texts has tended to be bi-polar. People either support or refute essentialist claims; its opus is treated as literature that only Japanese could understand, or alternatively, as literature only Japanese could believe. Such literature underscores essentialist ideas of identity and community; commonly held narratives of Japaneseness. Such works attempt to simplify and solidify conceptions of a homogeneous Japanese identity.³¹

Indeed, the link between personality, culture, and landscape has recently enjoyed renewed interest in Japanese philosophy; notably the Kyoto school of agricultural philosophy. Soda, borrowing from Sakamoto, calls this social and ecological concept *ba* “...the place in which we pursue ‘human life’...including its internal situations and

³⁰ Benedict (1934, 1946); Mead (1974); Rosenblatt (2004); Wilk (1991); or Yong (2005).

³¹ Many works are discussed in the following chapters however Befu (2001) stands out as a fantastic introduction to these issues.

circumstances” (2006: 7).³² In this thesis I suggest that Hokkaido dairy farming and the young workers employed in the industry provide a novel way of looking at contemporary Japanese identity, one open to individual interpretations and contemporary experiences of Japan. This is certainly the case with reinterpretation in other ‘frontier’ areas.

While Stein insists on a ‘spirit of Oklahoma’, and I, like van Herk (2001) and Francis (2004), contend that in Alberta, there exists ‘Albertanness’, and further, this notion of “placeness” (area) is also linked with a perceived and interpreted ethos, or *volksgeist*, there is nothing unique about essentialist categorizing in itself. Oklahomaness, Albertanness, Naganoness (Gluck 1998), Englishness (Fox 2004), or Japaneseness all tell an idealized story; the histories of locations, livelihoods, heroes, values, social or behavioural expectations, and so on. Such stories are often agreed upon collectively, as in the adage “When in Rome do as a Roman,” however, I suggest that ‘collectively’ is also *superficially*. These ‘epic’ discourses, to pre-empt my borrowing from Bakhtin (1981 3-40) in Chapter Three and Chapter Six, do not focus on ‘novel’ new stories, on new spaces, or individual lives – instead they tell old unalterable tales and general expectations. But in new spaces, new narratives must be made, or alternatively they become spaces where ‘epic’ or mythic tales come to be reinterpreted in highly individual ways. Below I suggest that Alberta is such ‘novel’ space, and throughout this thesis I outline in greater detail that the same holds true in Hokkaido.

Returning to ‘placing me’, in Alberta many people take pride in collective history of being descendants of pioneers and cowboys, though most Albertans have neither broken sod nor a horse themselves.³³ Many identify with being independent and resourceful, in possessing a strong work ethic and a heartiness of character that continues to be part of the popular lore; that ‘we’ are unlike ‘lazy easterners’ or ‘hippy west coast dwellers’ and that ‘we’ are all somehow linked to renegades, ranchers and oil riggers present and past. Albertans are the spawn of risk takers – immigrants looking for a new start or gamblers and gunslingers (van Herk 2001) or less positively, scoundrels and scallywags (Brennan 2002) dreamers and second sons (Zuehlke 2001). And, further that this independent – some might say stubborn or incorrigible –

³² Nakane also used the concept of *ba* but states “...my term frame is the English translation of the Japanese *ba*...in all cases it indicates a criterion which sets a boundary and gives common basis to a set of individuals who are located or involved in it” (1973: 1).

³³ For a history of Alberta see Dickin (2004), Palmer (1990), and Russell (1993).

person(a) is linked to the landscape – stoic, strong, and immovable. However, outside of this ‘epic’ story of Alberta, interpretations of Albertanness vary just as individuals and their histories vary.

On our Alberta farm we, in theory, reared beef cattle - in theory because unlike the surrounding farms many of our cows had names. Polly was a red Angus that I used to ride around the pasture like a horse. Never to end up on a dinner plate, despite my older cousin’s teasing, Polly, Molly, Dolly, and our other favourite cows died peacefully of old age. My grandfather had his own interpretation of what being an independent rancher meant. He had an individual interpretation of *volkgiest* and of ‘placeness’. How such notions link with change, individual identity, and community are at the heart of this dissertation. My grandfather’s story – which becomes my story as well – serves as a familiar (literally) way to introduce these issues as well as my position as researcher and narrator.

Similar to many ‘ideal’ Alberta success stories, my Grandfather, Edward O’Toole, was a hard-working and clever immigrant. He had moved from Ireland in 1954, a location he returned to only one time for a funeral. He *made* his new life and identity in Canada and often described Ireland, animatedly, as a backward country with oppressive religion and poverty.³⁴ He refused to believe, or, more honestly admit, that the Ireland of this millennium could be any different than the dark ‘epic’ image Ireland held in his memory. Canada was his home of choice and he *became* a Canadian citizen never to renew his Irish passport. Two of his sons, although they were brought up in Canada, never became Canadians – one returned to Ireland and the other maintained his status as a landed immigrant until his death. In their lives, choice was central. Making a new life and becoming a new person were common features of the immigrant families that I grew up around.

My grandfather was to form a successful, if not slightly renegade, construction company in the Canadian ‘frontier.’³⁵ He spent his weekdays in the city clad in a sports coat. But every Friday he drove two and a half hours to the farm. Often this trip was

³⁴ Martinez (2004) uses the concepts of making and becoming in Japanese contest both at the social and individual level focusing on divers in the village of Kuzaki. This is returned to in Chapter Six through to the Conclusion of the thesis.

³⁵ My grandfather, laughing, would frequently recount how he had cheated someone out of a contract or been duped himself. The history of the Hansen side of the family has a more conventional ranching history. My Great grandfather had moved from Kansas to Southern Alberta to ranch. His wife’s family, like many in Hokkaido, had moved from the ‘old country’ of Atlantic Canada to pioneer ‘new’ land ‘out west.’

made with me in tow sleeping on his lap or keenly wide-eyed waiting for the scheduled halfway stop and the promise of whatever junk food my mother would not permit. He always made it in time for the television news and the 'meat and potatoes' dinner followed by a fresh chocolate cake prepared by my doting grandmother, the only full-time human resident at the farm. He returned to urban life after dinner on Sunday - religiously.

He was a hobby rancher or 'part-time' farmer and the farm represented his life's work and meaning.³⁶ I suspect he cultivated the weekend frontier's man image - a tasselled leather coat, cowboy hat, and so on - partially living out of a boyhood fantasy born from harsh want, partially for the amusement of his admiring grandchildren, and occasionally to revel in the embarrassment it caused our young urban parents and his wife: "Ah be Jaysus would'ja' look at the state of him, Matt Dillon he thinks he is - da ijit." Nevertheless, with his wife's ceaseless patience, humour, and innate kindness, in tandem with his look, accent, and outgoing quirkiness, he fit into the area. Although many neighbours did, and do, derive their incomes from a mix of oil industry work and cattle ranching, he was a successfully accepted local oddity.

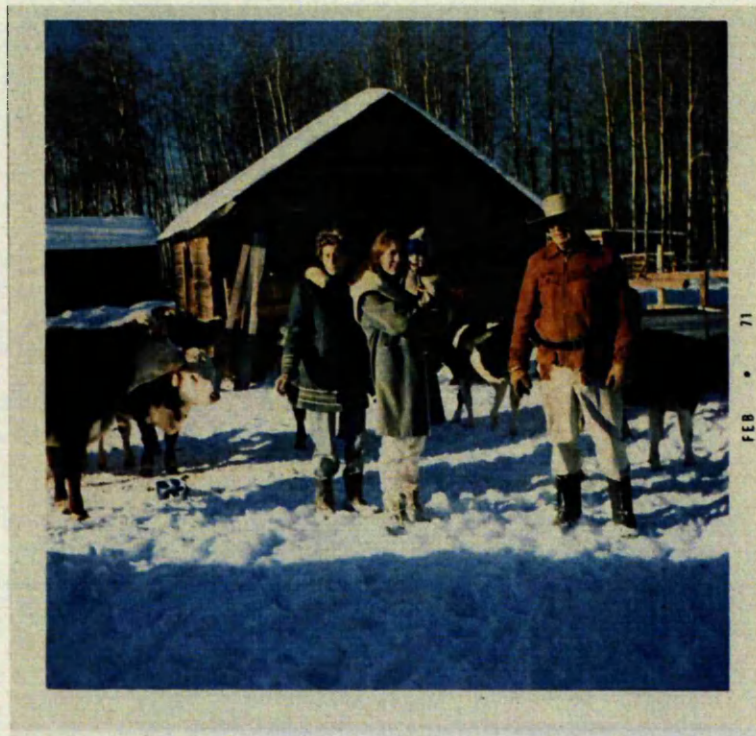
My grandfather became a widower and then great grandfather. He retired to live alone on the farm near his wife's resting place. Family farm visits became less frequent. It was clear, and I sadly suspect disappointing, that none of the grandchildren wanted to become farmers or ranchers. My grandfather's interest in hobby farming decreased alongside his ability and its profitability. And eventually, the land was leased out for intensive grazing with joint shares held in a herd managed by an industrious neighbour.

When my grandfather passed away in 2002 I returned to Canada from Japan. I was placed in charge of my grandfather's 'cattle ranch' with the assumption that this would be short-term; I would be living on the property for a few months in order to tie up loose ends, rent the house out, and re-sign the lease agreements on behalf of my mother. Unfortunately, as soon as I took the reins, North America's Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) crisis began, in large part due to Japanese reluctance to import American beef. Canadian ranchers were furious at Japan's seemingly irrational fear of beef products in defiance of economic sanctions, of science, and of international public

³⁶ Hobby farmer refers to a farmer who approaches farming as one might approach a pass-time or part-time job not a main source of income. See Holloway (2001, 2003) for an analysis of Hobby farming in the context of Wales and England.

opinion. Looking back on 2003 from 2010, I suspect that this was the first seed of my dissertation topic. I was intrigued by the Japanese reluctance to import, despite – and many Canadians thought ‘for’ spite – of the ‘science’ (a monolithic rhetorical noun seldom to be expanded upon). I was well aware that Japan had had several domestic cases of BSE.

I wanted to know why this was the case, being less concerned then with how. What was the fear underlying the importation of low risk beef products? Why was one of the world’s most scientifically advanced nations living in denial of simple scientific facts. Though these questions were on my mind at the time, I was focused on more pragmatic concerns. As long as the export ban continued, the profitable sale of land, cattle, or equipment was impossible, and through this situation, combined with other legal complications regarding the dissolution of my grandfather’s estate, I came to live on the farm, and in rural Alberta, as a reluctant ‘rancher,’ for nearly two years.



(1.4.h). Family Photo: 1971 Alberta Farm life. Pictured here is my grandmother (far left), my mother Siobhan, who is holding me, and my grandfather Ed O’Toole and his furry friends.

I began doctoral studies in 2004. Meeting with my adviser it became apparent that an initial plan to focus on Brazilians in Japan would, for linguistic, logistic and

economic reasons, prove too difficult in the one year allotted for fieldwork. I needed a new topic. Speaking with a Japanese language exchange partner about our own personal histories, I was told that some of her friends had worked on cattle farms in Hokkaido. Interesting, I thought, but young urban Japanese working on rural farms? Surely, I presumed, this was a rarity. I phoned a friend, a photographer and English teacher in Hiroshima. Having driven around Hokkaido the year before, she too knew of many people who had done such work, and moreover her father was friends with the owner of a large dairy farm in Hiroshima. Over the winter vacation of 2004 – 2005, still unsure of my thesis topic, I visited the Hiroshima farm and interviewed the owner. I spoke to some Japanese friends about their impressions of Hokkaido. Using the Internet I found numerous farms across Japan that hired urban workers – especially in Hokkaido. I learned that many of the ‘personality’ traits people mentioned in relation to people in Hokkaido; independent, resourceful, strong willed, hard working, alongside descriptions of place; frontier, cold, expansive, beautiful, as well as industries; ecotourism, outdoor sports, and of course cattle rearing, echoed popular descriptions of my home province.

Indeed, Alberta has a twin province relationship with Hokkaido. Both places were, and still less numerous are, inhabited by native people. And similar to the infamous atrocities attributed to colonisers against the colonised in the Americas, I soon learned that Japan had its own history of indigenous Ainu conquest. Occupation officially started in the late nineteenth-century, with unofficial roots running much deeper into the annals of time (Fugita: 1994, Irish: 2009, Siddle: 1996, Walker: 2001). I was intrigued to see how similar or how different Hokkaido was from Alberta. My personal history certainly fit the bill for the dairy farm “help wanted” advertisements. I viewed ‘working to live and living to work’ as a practical way to pay the bills and cut my anthropological teeth doing rural research as opposed to urban. At the outset of research I was not funded beyond a four month language study grant and although funding did fall into my lap later, I wanted to do something other than teach English to get by.³⁷ Given my background and my theoretical interests Hokkaido dairy farming seemed the most do-able.

This brief personal history underscores how my experience of Alberta frontier life, as a member of an émigré family, and as an individual who has lived in between a strict

³⁷ Details regarding funding are explained in the *Why and How* section of this chapter.

rural or urban divide (a divide resistant to class distinctions as an ever-changing frontier area) has influenced this research project. Also important, it notes my lifelong experience in interacting with cattle ranchers and cattle, and my being a person who has worked and managed (and today owns) a cattle farm in a time of a rural identity and economic crisis (Berry 2005). Thus, much in the way that Berry (1996) and Grasseni (2005, 2007) underscore how policy makers and scientists tend not to understand agricultural issues as local and embodied processes, I grew up on the Canadian frontier, worked as an Alberta farmer before fieldwork, then worked as a Tokachi farmer during my fieldwork, and still own a farm that is in the process of changing from a focus on cattle to a focus on growing fruit trees. I embody, at least to some degree, what Ingold calls a “*Sentient Ecology*” of the frontier “...knowledge not...[based in language, class or]...of a formal, authorised kind, transmissible only in contexts outside those of its practical application ...[but]... based in feeling, consisting in skills, sensitivities and orientations that have developed through long experience of conducting one’s life in a particular environment” (2000: 25-26) – that of migration, farm employment and ownership, and being around cattle and people who make a living from them.

Moreover, the above description also underscores that I lived in urban Japan and met a great number of young Japanese who told me of their impressions of Hokkaido before choosing my topic. Finally it brings to the foreground how, in need of finding a dissertation topic, I stumbled across people who had been to Hokkaido. These people intimately knew other urbanites who had worked in Japanese dairy farming. Official links, unofficial links, the use of similar descriptive language and history, all conspired, contributed, and buttressed my interest and the eventual selection of this dissertation topic; along with the day-to-day ethnographic research itself and its final production as a document.

Declaring my ‘placement’ in this section opens what follows to greater critical analysis for the reader.³⁸ The research undertaken for this dissertation was in large part based on participant observation with a *very high* degree of participation in this case. Indeed, if I did not participate I would have lost my job, my income, my visa, and any access to data. This style of research is difficult to consider in ‘impersonal’ or ‘impartial’ terms – attempting to do so would seem rather deceptive. In research based

³⁸ See Abu Lughod (1991); Cohen (1994); Grbich (2004) Ingold (2004); Jackson (1996); Kuwayama (2004/2008); Markowitz (2006:46); Nietzsche (1913: 86); Rapport (1997:1-12, 2003); and Richie (1991) as a sample for examples of lengthy declarations of self see Bestor (2004: 1-17); Hamabata (1986: 354-368); for book length ‘declarations’ see Kondo (1990) and Rabinow (1977).

on participant observation every researcher is perceived in different ways; one's access to certain groups and individuals is specific to the historic moment, and specific to one's embodiment.³⁹ Admittedly, any self-declaration is partial, and indeed, one cannot explain every aspect of their personal life in the study of other people, but to avoid discussing one's placement, for whatever reason, is, from my perspective, even more problematic. Clearly I am aware, to some degree as noted above, of my own culture and class "distinctions" (Bourdieu 1984), and so, while I use the *habitus*⁴⁰ concept in my work, I utilize it sparingly (Bourdieu 1977, 1984, 1990, 2002). There are reasons related to both the individualizing nature of industrial dairy work and the context of the frontier that make applying social constructivist theories inappropriate.⁴¹ This is addressed throughout this document but most notably from Chapter six through to the Conclusion.

Finally, participant observation is not a one-way street. There is no 'generic' researcher extracting information from interlocutors, without two-way dialogue and without the interlocutor forming any impression of or reaction to the researcher. Participant observation is a very vague reference to a highly individualistic methodology. The salient point to be made here is that my personal history and interests are, like all humans, unique. They have guided this project from start to finish, and the above underscores a particular narrative of "self-making" (Appiah 2005: 23), "life script" (*ibid.* 2005: 109), "Lifecourse" (Plath 1983: 2-5), or "life trajectory" Rapport (1997/2003). That is – like all individuals – specific to one life and a viewpoint, or perhaps better put, a perspective.⁴²

1.4.2. Facing Me:

Clearly, both personal and political history played a role in the choice of a modern Hokkaido dairy farm as a research site; and my own *habitus* (upbringing, history, class, embodiment, abilities) prepared me to take on such research. This does not mean, however, that I 'fit in' in rural Hokkaido. Adding to the above, at the time of fieldwork

³⁹ My embodiment is discussed below.

⁴⁰ *Habitus* is a central borrowed and built upon theme used by Bourdieu and those influenced by him such as Charlesworth (2000, 2005). Latour notes that post-structural approaches deal poorly with charting change (2006: 11-13). These arguments will be returned to in Chapter Six.

⁴¹ See DeLanda (2006) for a book length discussion of their inappropriateness.

⁴² The conceptual and theoretical implications and biases regarding individual agency and social structure will be discussed in the Chapter Six.

I was a thirty-six year old, 183 centimetre tall, 90 kilogram, Anglophone, blond haired, blue eyed, heterosexual male. Gensan is not Tokyo or Kyoto. There was little chance of going unnoticed. I was a memorable anomaly. My Japanese at the start of field work was basic and by the end low-intermediate.⁴³ Due to the specialised vocabulary and embodied experience (knowing ones way around the body of a cow for example), I sound slightly less inept in discussing the world of cattle and dairy. Reading is possible only with the assistance of a dictionary and time. Some readers will see this immediately as a drawback and I cannot but agree. Moreover, as will be seen in what follows, fluent Chinese would have been extremely useful as would Portuguese. Unquestionably language ability is a part of communication, but it does not equate with communicating or understanding.

Having learned Japanese late in life, and mostly from listening and talking with friends, my Japanese is flawed with an extended vocabulary, quirky regional expressions, and a pidgin grammar. It is, as a Japanese classmate in London has commented, affected and comically 'camp' (*chotto onanopoi*). Judging by giggles and strained expressions that I occasionally get from both children and elderly interlocutors, I imagine it exists somewhere between sixteenth century Portuguese missionary and inarticulate middle school student (for a more extreme account see Briggs 2008). On a bad research day it can be inaccurate or offensive, I can miss banter or nuance or I can say to the president of a company 'hey buddy' as opposed to 'excuse me sir'. However, on a good day it can cause reserved people to open up by seeing that I have my own failings and I am trying. Indeed, I must really want to know what I am asking if I am willing to look that silly doing it. *Sumimasen, chotto wakarimasen mo ikai hanashite mo iidesuka / kudasiai* (Sorry, I didn't understand what you said, could you say it again), became a daily mantra. However, a hearty laugh at your expense is a good way to 'break the ice', breach the walls of taboo, or to have complicated or serious subjects expressed frankly and plainly. To pretend my language skills are otherwise would be false, but to assume that communication – especially existential communication - is dependent upon grammar or even text is equally false (Bruner and Turner ed. 1986; Miller 2006; Wikan 1993; Wittgenstein 1953; and in the context of Japan Bestor *et al.* 2003).

⁴³ As tested on the Japanese language proficiency exam at Hokkaido University in 2007

I situate myself between these planes as being less textual and more phenomenological and interpretive. This methodological, theoretical, and representational situation is not rooted in my aforementioned 'Sentient Ecology' or the limitations of my language skills alone. As noted below, more often than not, like my co-workers I was literally 'hands on' while existing in spaces of lengthy silence. This lack of verbosity was *conditioned by the setting* that I conducted research in (explained in detail in the following chapters) and was *part-and-parcel of the lives* that I encountered. *Explanations were often found in the doing of acts with minimal instruction where one spent a great deal of time apart from human company.*

Embodiment was central to being allowed to engage in this research. I am not certain that researchers would be offered the chance to do such research on the grounds that they spoke flawless Japanese, especially if they knew nothing about ranching, had not worked labour before, disliked rural life, found cold mornings intolerable, did not present themselves as a moderately hardy male, or did not have the fortune to stumble into a rather unusual rural topic and so on. Similar to Cassidy's work on human and racehorse relations in Newmarket, my past experiences living around cattle, and living and working with those who derive a living from them, went a long way towards my being accepted by informants (Cassidy 2002).

The ethics of working with the details of people's lives is another contentious issue. I used the American Anthropological Association and the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth ethics guidelines as a benchmark for my research and I was questioned about ethics by an upgrade panel before fieldwork. I have used pseudonyms for the people I met and those I worked with and for. I also have used pseudonyms for the town and the local farms. For eleven months my life was essentially inseparable from my study – the lines between my personal life, the worker, and the anthropologist were indistinct and often in conflict. I seek to protect the identities of those I worked and lived with because some continue to work and live in Gensan and some are close friends. In a few rush hour minutes at Shibuya intersection (Tokyo's busiest) a disinterested and anonymous population equivalent to Gensan proper crosses the street. However, in a small town gossip can and does have the ability to influence and injure lives.

Finally, though 'frontier' life is not a new experience for me, for many of my informants Hokkaido it is a 'new world'; an 'other' world – the *hiro*i life of *kitakuni* and its free pioneering spirit. This space and lifestyle attracts and repels different

people for different reasons. The freedom of 'the open frontier', real or imagined, is often viewed as a "safe adventure", an escape, or as a place to make, discover, or create a new identity depending on the person and their capabilities.⁴⁴ Their experience can be somewhat like an ethnographer's; it is a time and place of extreme *chosen change and learning about others and one's self*.

The work community is constantly changing. Some workers stay, sometimes gradually forming or 'securing' a new individual and/or community identity. Others are insecure about their position on the farm, or put another way they secure (reaffirm) their identity as urban and last only a short time – even a few days – as part of a revolving door of transient staff. Still others remain liminal (*in or un secure*). Change, otherness, and a quest for security underlie the macro history of Hokkaido but also the micro day-to-day experience of these young workers.

1.4.3 Why and How ?

Why ?

Hokkaido is understudied in the context of English scholarship on Japan. For example, as of 2010 there is one general history book on Hokkaido (Irish 2009) and no books published on specific regions within Hokkaido in English.⁴⁵ In terms of ethnographic research on dairy farmers in Japan there is nothing in Japanese or English, though there have been numerous studies of Ainu.⁴⁶ In his study of settler communities in the Russian far north, Thomson (2008) builds off of Ingold's (2004) call for a new focus on *all* the people of the North, and not only indigenous people, in order to better understand what it means to live, or dwell, in these areas. Research trends in Hokkaido are similar; with a focus on Ainu as 'other' and focus on 'proper' Japanese agriculture as confined to Honshu.⁴⁷ I suggest that Hokkaido and the dairy industry are 'uncomfortable truths'⁴⁸ for those seeking a unique, shared, and timeless Japaneseness.

⁴⁴ For the capabilities approach see Nussbaum (2006: 69-96)

⁴⁵ A regional history is presented in Chapter Four and Five.

⁴⁶ More is mentioned regarding ethnographic and historical studies of the Ainu people in Chapters Two and Three. However, I did not encounter any Ainu dairy farms or farmers, though many young tourist farmers had visited an Ainu *kotan* (village) during their dairy farm working tenure.

⁴⁷ This point is elaborated in Chapter Three.

⁴⁸ The notion of 'uncomfortable truth' is a reference to Al Gore's famous lecture series on global warming. In a similar vein, Chomsky calls this the belief in "comfortable myths" (Chomsky 1988). I contend that for people seeking an easier to define and more comfortable category of Japaneseness, it is

I argue that the dairy industry and Hokkaido are inextricably part of contemporary Japan through a history that is intimately intertwined with Japanese macro, meso, and micro security interests alongside trends in consumption. Expanded upon in every following chapter, Hokkaido and dairy do not fit the 'homogeneous' discourse of Japan and so both the area and industry have become individual sites of security seeking; the quest for financial, physical, and especially in terms of incorporating change and outsiders, ontological, security. Of course, this is an issue that has been raised by many scholars recently in relationship to many communities within Japan – Japan's outsider communities.⁴⁹ Hokkaido and dairy farms represent extremes in this sense – extremes because they are so clearly part of what is acceptable as typical contemporary Japan and yet so clearly outside of its 'epic' discourse.

How ?

The majority of the ethnographic fieldwork for this dissertation was carried out while working for six months as a full-time farmhand and five months at a negotiated three-quarter-time rate on a single factory style dairy farm in Tokachi, Hokkaido from February of 2006 to December of 2006. The results of the research are inescapable from the methods used and they are detailed in the chapters that follow making description in detail here redundant. I also carried out some brief comparative research in Hiroshima prefecture in December of 2004 and in Kumamoto prefecture (Kyushu) in October of 2005 (Supported by the Japan Foundation). From August of 2007 until March of 2008 I was a visiting JSPS (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science) scholar at Hokkaido University in Sapporo during which time I was able to return to my field site nearly every weekend and rely upon the kind assistance of fellow researchers, Japanese and foreign alike. After defending the thesis I was funded by the Japan Foundation to be based at the Japanese Museum of Ethnology in Osaka to conduct research on urban dog and human relations (June 2009 – June 2010). During this period I made three short return trips to Tokachi and reworked sections of the original thesis.

far easier to exclude Hokkaido than include Hokkaido (Mock 1999: i-iii). This is particularly true in terms of agricultural policy (Soda 2006 – also personal communication 2007-09-13). These points will be elaborated upon further in the following chapters.

⁴⁹ Specific reference to such 'outsider' communities will be outlined in the following chapter.

I draw heavily on my own embodied experiences as a participant and observer. I also use data extracted from interviews and conversations that I had with owners and workers from other dairies in Hokkaido. Some interviews were planned encounters, while others were not. I made arrangements to meet professors, company employees, or dairy workers and owners outside of work hours, and on such occasions I used a tape recorder and a semi structured interview schedule. But more often than not, due to both the constraints of the rigid dairy work schedule and the physically rigorous nature of dairy work itself, meetings and conversations were *impromptu*; observations during work, conversations during coffee or lunch breaks, running into a co-worker at the convenience store, or simply driving unannounced into a farmer's yard to ask questions. I also make use of tourist brochures, employment magazines, the Internet, popular media, and of course scholarly texts and journal articles.

1.5. Dissertation Outline

Again, this thesis focuses on the themes of change, otherness, and the search for security in the context of frontier Hokkaido and its dairy industry, notably as found in Tokachi, Gensan and Grand Hopes Farm. Concomitantly the focus, the scope and level of analysis tends to shift from macro, meso, to micro and from the past to the present.

Chapter Two and Chapter Three examine Hokkaido's frontier history from a macro perspective; the change from a "wild" and "unsettled" frontier land to one being progressively secured as a "domesticated" and "internalized" space – not relinquishing earlier markers of otherness but adapting them. These chapters map the ever-changing and ubiquitous images and imaginings of otherness in terms of its geography and climate and in terms of human and animal populations. Internal otherness is well represented by the dairy industry and the policies and products associated with it. Macro economic, political, military, and finally food security came to a modern culmination point with homesteaders. Hokkaido's settlers formed mixed farms with a symbiotic and symbolic - and in retrospect certainly iconic - relationship to dairy cattle in their attempts to secure new lives in this 'new' land.

Building from these previous chapters, Chapters Four and also Chapter Five focus on a pastoral lifestyle that is comparable to 'frontier' areas of North America, but different from, and even opposite to, other Japanese colonialist projects such as Okinawa. It maps dramatic changes in Tokachi and Gensan's population and industries. New

technologies were introduced to these rural communities; electricity, tractors, and automobiles. This period also saw a shift in basic milking technologies, a move to automated inline or herringbone systems (Dempster 1966). Tokachi, and even more so Gensan, remained relatively insular however. Dairy farms continued to be single family owned and operated until the middle of the 1990s.

Chapter Six through to Chapter Nine, focus on the recent shift to mono-culture mega farming, and the security debates that surround it. Such shifts have also affected the former insularity by bringing two new 'frontiers' front and centre in the area and to the dairy industry; the technological frontier of rotary dairy technology and the frontier of human and animal otherness. How to secure, and be secure with, other thinking, other bodies, and other ways of doing things have become key issues for the people of Gensan, dairy owners, and the young workers they employ. This section of this thesis focuses on such issues at the meso and micro level in terms of individual dairy farmers, their interactions, and the loose groups that they form.

The conclusion of this thesis looks at this change in production and increase of otherness, human, animal, and technological and how it is currently impacting, and may impact the future security of the region and individuals residing in it.

Chapter II

Finding 'Frontier' Hokkaido: The Groundwork for Fieldwork

II.1. Defining and Refining

This chapter clarifies how key terms, concepts, and ideas introduced in the Introduction are used in this thesis. The purpose is not to enter into the detailed academic debates surrounding these terms and histories but to outline how they are understood, theorised, and used in this work. The goal is to better understand dairy farming in Hokkaido; specifically, *to interpret the lives of young dairy farmers on the rapidly industrializing Tokachi 'frontier' with an eye towards future detailed comparative historical and ethnographic research on regions and industries that fit within the definition of a 'frontier colony'*. A conceptual triad of change, otherness, and security can be used to compare Hokkaido with different frontier contexts - Alberta cattle ranching for example. I will also focus on the 'frontier' between individual living bodies.¹ This requires, on the one hand, terms, concepts, definitions, and theories that are specific enough to compare, but on the other hand, ideas and usages that remain malleable enough to be adapted to different cultures, societies, individuals, and in the end I suggest, species. Such a research focus is admittedly ambitious and in this spirit some definitions might best be thought of as 'loose' or 'metaphoric.'²

Anthony Giddens, in discussing the role of metaphor, has coined the phrase 'double hermeneutic' (1984: 374). He contends that terms used in the social sciences often become terms that are used in the everyday language of popular culture and vice versa. Thoughts are often not articulated in language but are frequently expressed through acts (Wenger 1998: 53). Given this interpretive path to knowledge (as obviously acts do not literally 'tell' observers anything) the analysis of non-verbal actions and interactions are not direct linguistic realisations but 'metaphoric revelations' - they are the hermeneutics of phenomenological understanding. Similar to Giddens' notion of the

¹ The notion of a bio frontier is not unpacked in this chapter with the notion of geo-political frontier (as boundary) and frontier (as space and ideology). Chapter Ten details the concept of the shared bio-frontier.

² The need of metaphor in the humanities and social sciences is also discussed in Jackson (1996) and Lakoff and Johnson (1999).

double hermeneutic, Michael Carrithers, outlines the notion of conceptual 'slippage' (1992) in anthropology— words that have meanings that can shift depending on context — making them malleable concepts for interpreting and explaining shifting individual actions and meanings that may, or may not, be articulated in language. Indeed using the term 'slippage' itself as a metaphor underscores the above points; words do not physically slip but the meaning and imagery of slippage is clear.

Anthropology has traditionally focused on the social or the cultural — both being amorphous, hotly debated, and difficult to define concepts³ — and it has tended to focus on groups and structures in favour of individuals, interactions and their interpretations.⁴ However, I suggest the triad of change, otherness, and the search for security provides an interesting way — a less structurally static and more comparative mode utilizing insights from psychology, history, philosophy, social theory, and ethnography — to understand individuals *as individuals* first and foremost before categorising individuals into roles or groups.⁵ In nearly all of the ethnographic and historical data that follows, individual agency, environmental contingencies, and personal choices outstrip more socially oriented explanations as to what motivates people to act or to form shifting alliances (groups) with one another. In what follows the individual plays a far more determinative role over and above the 'usual suspects' of class or caste for example. The daily interactions shared between individual agents were of central importance over meaningful social communities — if there were any such groups in some cases.

³ See Overing and Rapport (2000) for a basic guideline of these debates in anthropology. For a pro-social account see Kuper (1994: 537-554). For a pro-cultural account see Sahlins (1999). While the concepts I deploy are not agreed upon, the claim that the indeterminate or flexible nature of change, otherness, or security makes for bad theoretical grounding (due either to their being somehow less agreed upon or not as definitively defined as culture or the social) is, given the indeterminate nature of either 'culture' or 'the social', a poor argument.

⁴ Social anthropology has traditionally favoured social explanations. These "explanations" (distinct from cultural anthropology's "interpretations" (Kuper 1994: 541) are often influenced deeply by Functionalist, Structuralist, and Marxist, thought (Ingold 2000: 157-171). Rapport has accused contemporary anthropology, notably of a Bourdieuan (1977, 1984, 1990, 2002) ilk, as viewing humans as having little agency or being 'trapped' in social structures (1997: 1-12 see also King 2000, and Ortnor 2006: 16-18, 108-112). Rapport and Overing, contend that "...Social structures produce culture which, in turn, generates practices which, finally, reproduce social structures...[this theorisation of agency]...ends up being a structurally causal model based on reified abstractions and materialist determinations" (Rapport and Overing 2000: 2-3). Latour (2004, 2006) makes a similar point but also sees focusing on the individual over the social as no better. DeLanda also offers a book length critique (2006). See also Judith Okely and Helen Callaway (1992) for several British anthropologists supporting the individual and autobiographical as a neglected focus in anthropology.

⁵ Such notions of identity politics are focused on throughout this thesis but in detail in Chapter Six and Chapter Nine.

II.2 Change

In its simplest form, change is used in this dissertation as a verb defined by the Oxford dictionary as “to make or become different,” or “to move from one system or situation to another”.⁶ In what follows I suggest that the search for security and the realisation of otherness meet in the ubiquity of change, at *both the individual and societal levels*. This thesis will document how Hokkaido’s dairy industry is rapidly changing while Japan is undergoing rapid social change in and outside of Hokkaido.⁷ These changes are related to a constant engagement with the state (macro), group (meso), and individual or self (micro) politics of otherness and social and individual searches for security. I claim that from the 1990s there has been a change from macro notions of otherness and security in the region to more personal searches for security amongst young dairy farm workers.

In this thesis, the terms ‘personal’ change or ‘individual’ change equate with micro change. ‘Group’ or ‘community’ change equates with mid-macro or meso change. And ‘state’ change equates with macro change. While all three levels of change are present in the chapters that follow, I focus more on macro change and meso change; in terms of nation-state politics and economics both international (such as constant engagement with military threats or trade) and domestic (such as shifting agriculture policies) for example in the first half of the thesis. Thus in the early chapters the focus is more historical and less ethnographic, setting the stage for a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the people involved and the Tokachi area. What is important for the case at hand is to understand how macro changes have historically influenced, currently influence, and may in the future influence, meso changes (such as demographic shifts and changing community values), and how these shifts have or could impact individuals in the dairy industry. Equally poignant, however, is that such collective shifts are far from determinative in the day-to-day contingencies and choices made by actors on the dairy farms. Simply put, in the context that follows, while communities might or might not influence a particular actor, individuals make choices and these choices are frequently counter intuitive to outside observers.

⁶ Oxford Dictionary Online. http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/change?view=uk. Search “Change” Accessed June 20th 2009 via Google

⁷ Many texts regarding the specifics of change are used throughout this thesis – one early and general text that flags up such post 1990s changes in Japan is an edited edition by Eades, Gill and Befu (2000).

This document will outline the effects on both community and on individual actors of the steady move in dairy production from pastoral mixed family farms to joint shared industrial mega and monoculture. These farms require high overhead and technology and are profoundly influenced by public wants and macro political policies. This marks a number of shifts in how the frontier, defined below, is deployed in Tokachi's never-ending transitions; constantly becoming and ever-contemporary, resulting in a work space where social alienation and the individuation of workers, animals, and technology have come to play a central role. Industrial dairy farming is an occupation where agents have become progressively more 'individuated' in their actions and individualist in their thinking - often by choice, but at times also necessitated by the mode of production.

Chapters Six through to the Conclusion demonstrate these points ethnographically. While there has been a move away from older community structures based on earlier mixed farming, the shift has not led to shared values or a new 'group' consciousness. There is no 'we the dairy workers' mentality shared amongst contemporary young dairy workers. There is no dairy farm worker union, and when asked about the prospect of forming a union, nobody I interviewed expressed any interest despite the difficult work conditions described throughout this thesis.⁸ Moreover, the macro trend in the change in production from mixed to monoculture and from family to corporate agriculture, clearly relates to the need for workers from outside the local community, Hokkaido, the agriculture industry, and even Japan. While these trends change lives from the 'top-down' so-to-speak, individuals often think, choose, and act in ways not in concert with their peers, respective communities, or macro expectations. Indeed, even the essence of what it means to be Japanese is questioned by these individuals living on the periphery of Japan.

Macro changes, it will be demonstrated, have rapidly altered mid-macro groups, such as community and family. As a consequence of these changes in Hokkaido dairy communities, specifically in Gensan and on Grand Hopes industrial dairy farm, such places have become sites of intense micro security searching for young people and even for some local elders. In other words, dairy farms have become places where regional otherness in the context of Japan (Hokkaido or the dairy industry) and individuality and individualism in the context of being Japanese ('each otherness' and self) are

⁸ The question was put to a dozen or so dairy farm workers in Tokachi in January 2010.

challenged and questioned amidst shifting town demographics, farm policies, and a roster of co-workers always in flux. The present, let alone the future, is uncertain for the industry and the choices involve complex risk analysis.

A survey of social scientific research on Japan tends to show an earlier focus on the 'unchanging' nature (the socio-cultural core) of Japan while recent materials tend to exaggerate change (the demolition of this core) (Cave 2007: 24-43, Hansen: In press). I will refer to such materials in more detail in defining *nihonjinron* and *otaku* studies respectively as central conceptualisations in research on Japan in Chapter Six. The point made here, and elaborated upon in the thesis, is that Japan is undeniably changing (Harootunian and Yoda 2006: 1-15), and dairy farming is changing rapidly in Japan as it is elsewhere in the world (Berry 1996, Grassenni 2006, Harper 2001, Holloway phone interview February 23, 2010, Pollan 2006). In this environment of change, the questions of how and to what degree young Japanese dairy farmers desire to fit into a 'group' or 'community' are central; that is, how do these co-workers relate with the frontier environment of Hokkaido, the animal bodies that they are in daily contact with, and each other?

II.3 Otherness

The Oxford Dictionary defines Otherness as a noun meaning "the quality or fact of being different" – though there is a considerable amount of social theory written in regard to the concept.⁹ Through a detailed examination of the dairy industry in Tokachi, Hokkaido, this monograph questions overly static and harmonious or misleadingly discordant representations of contemporary Japaneseness.¹⁰

Hokkaido from the 1300s until today has been marked as a spatial, human, and animal periphery. Contemporary Hokkaido's image is that of being a frontier zone. It is, as noted in the previous chapter, viewed as an 'open' or 'new' region; a space of 'otherness' – literally in terms of being an island incorporated into contemporary Japan, but also in terms of its history as being 'wild', natural, or barbarian (*ezo*). This notion

⁹ Definition from Oxford Online Dictionary http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/otherness?view=uk search term "otherness" accessed via Google June 20th 2009. Haraway (2003; 2008) and Žižek (2003) provide book length meditations on the subject. Mathews (1996, 2006) and Willis and Murphy – Shigematsu (2008) are an excellent review of otherness in the context of Japan.

¹⁰ Sumi notes that in terms of Japanese labour and organisational studies two poles, similar to (*nihonjinron* and *otaku*) are the "consensual" and the "conflict" approach. Sumi calls for a less dualistic vision of Japanese organisation and workspaces (In press).

of being outside or peripheral is not constant, it changes. It blurs and shifts – from the land of Ainu, to land of colonial pioneer, to land of dairy farmers, to miserable backwater, to land of opportunity, to hometown. Such notions are a matter of context, experience, and individual interpretation. In broad strokes, it can be the land of the ‘other’ (the foreign or barbarian), the land of the exotic ‘other’ (as Milkland), and/or home – depending on the individual dairy worker being asked about the area. This dissertation outlines how Hokkaido and the domestic dairy industry, despite being marked as peripheral, have in fact become central to the material culture of daily life and the modern nation-state narrative of Japan. However there are other Hokkaido residents who are central to the identity and the interpretation of otherness on the island that must be noted *despite* their general absence from the dairy industry itself.

Many Ainu, the once ‘so-called’ barbarians, separate themselves from Japan and Japaneseness.¹¹ Nevertheless, some do not. (Sjöberg 2008: 202-205). This is a situation loosely mirrored in Okinawa with the *Uchinānchu* movement, people searching for genealogical and cultural origins and identities. Spokespeople for both groups claim that they form a *minzoku* (a people or nation) separate from ‘Japaneseness’ (Siddle 2003: 133-147). For example, not all, but a commanding 72% of Okinawans claim there is a difference between Okinawan culture and Japanese culture (*ibid.*: 133). Thus, in both examples it is not simply a case of Japanese demarcating otherness. The majority of those demarcated as outsiders, both Ainu and Okinawan, also distinguish themselves as different. They disclose and proclaim themselves as something other than culturally Japanese in groups of commanding majority. They separate *themselves* from typical Japanese categories *as well as being separated* out through the homogenising discourses of Japanese identity. Moreover, taking the Ainu as an example, despite their active acquisition of a contemporary identity (they were legally declared an indigenous people in 2008) – whether self-declared as other or self-declared as Japanese – their identity is not solely that of a modern people.¹² They, and their

¹¹ “The goal of the Ainu people is not only to revive old traditions and pass them on to new generations, but also to recover their identity and rights as indigenous people with a view to achieving a future where they can live a free, human life in accord with their own culture, traditions, and values....The Ainu people are seeking to be in solidarity with other indigenous peoples and oppressed minorities throughout the world (Watanabe 1998: 4-5). For a list of wide ranging examples consult the *The Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture* website <http://www.frpac.or.jp>. Accessed via Google March 27th 2009.

¹² As noted below, this can be compared with the long history of Okinawa (Ryūkyū) as a kingdom dating from the thirteenth century (Toshiaki 2003).

cultures, were a pre-modern fixture in the northern regions of Japan.¹³ Moreover, Ainu cultures were not (in early-modern terms at least) related to regions to the south of Tōhoku (the northern prefectures of Honshu). Thus, if Ainu claim an origin as Japanese, then they do so as northern Japanese. No Ainu claims that their distinctiveness based on language, narrative stories of hunting grounds, salmon fishing, or bear worship is centred on the southern island of Shikoku. While regionally and historically illuminating in terms of defining colony and frontier returned to below, these are identity issues quite unlike those facing young Hokkaido dairy farmers.

Hokkaido dairy farmers are *only* modern without *direct pre or early-modern precedents*. These young workers come from every part of Japan; Okinawa, Shikoku, Honshu, and Hokkaido. They do not, to be sure *cannot in any way*, separate themselves from a contemporary pan-Japan identity. They may, and many do, disagree with what they view as '*futsuno nihonjinno kangaekata*' (typical Japanese thinking), but nobody claimed that they were not Japanese. To be a Hokkaido dairy farmer, a few exceptions aside like Chinese temporary workers, was to be a *Japanese* dairy farmer.

However, there is an extraordinary paradox at work here. Dairy farming is a form of employment or lifestyle historically viewed, indeed promoted, as 'other' in Japan. It is an industry that is deeply dependant on 'foreign' markets and know-how to produce domestic products that are constantly indexed (if not labelled) as 'foreign'. Hokkaido "*Mirukurando*" (Milkland) is the heartland of the dairy industry; a region viewed and promoted, for example to tourists, as foreign-like.¹⁴ Yet, while 'dairy farmer' is an identity that is viewed by many Japanese as external to essential notions of Japaneseness, *unlike* most Ainu or Okinawans, dairy farmers do not resist or rebel against their Japaneseness in any organised group or community fashion. They are *made* outsiders by proxy, practice, and proximity. It is for these reasons, their daily social, historical, economic, dietary and cultural belonging in the fabric of contemporary Japan juxtaposed with their otherness to its essentialist discourses, that they are an interesting 'group' to try to understand. Though extremely varied, they are a key to understanding contemporary Japan and the changing notions of what *being* a

¹³ See Guo (2005), Howell (1994: 69-93), Morris-Suzuki (1998: 9-33; 79-109), (Siddle 1996) and Walker (2001). Cultures is purposefully plural – the Ainu were not a single culture.

¹⁴ For example the Tokachi guide book outlined in the Introduction of this monograph and more visual examples follow below. Morris-Suzuki (1998) and Walker (2001) provide excellent historic accounts of pre-modern and early-modern Hokkaido foreignness.

Japanese individual, outside of dominant, essentialist, and group centric discourses, means (Hansen 2010; In press).

In a recent book that discusses the many groups of what might be called the 'prominent' others of Japan - Ainu, Burakumin, Okinawans, and more broadly racial and ethnic others, such as Brazilian, Korean, or Chinese hyphenated Japanese (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008) - Goodman writes:

There is a long tradition in social anthropology of studying the margins of a society in order to understand what happens at its core. The study of minority groups in a modern industrial society exemplifies this tradition very well; looking at the way that these groups are defined, excluded, and incorporated by mainstream society provides important insights into the changing nature of what constitutes the core values of that society
(2008: 325).

Dairy farmers in this sense are much like the *ama* (women divers) of Kuzaki investigated by Martinez (2004).¹⁵ They are treated as external in spite of that group's productive efforts to be in some ways central to the core of Japanese daily life. In the case of the *ama* their 'exotic' image and the sea goods they harvest are tied, *via* historical links whether embellished or not, with the Ise shrine; a complex that is central to both native Shinto and the pre-modern and modern Japanese state. Correspondingly, Hokkaido dairy farmers produce government sponsored products that are consumed in some form by nearly every Japanese consumer in a market that continues to grow. Yet despite the *ama*'s link to nationalist tradition or the dairy industry's wares being daily consumed, culturally and materially, from morning coffee mixer, to publicly funded school lunches, to popular after work *izakaya* (pub) snack foods, to baby formula, both groups, though clearly Japanese, are excluded from fitting in with 'proper' notions of Japan and Japaneseness.¹⁶ Yet, 'ethnically' or legally, they are Japanese. Nobody questions this. As outlined in this thesis, some dairy farmers may rebel against an image of Japaneseness, what many consider to be 'typical Japaneseness,' but they are not proclaiming themselves to be somehow 'non'-Japanese. This suggests that they are central to understanding something 'novel' about contemporary Japan and Japanese

¹⁵ *Ama* might be related to Korean divers and a potential cross-over here could exist with Burakumin and their legal definition alongside the history of immigration in Hokkaido (Irish 2009: 115-142, 216-244). I did not follow this line of research (Hah and Lapp 1978) as the search for 'lost' origins becomes problematic - for example the mythical account of the rise of Japanese royal family is found in the *Kojiki* while the historical record places them as coming from Korea or China. Whether the first empress (the most Japanese of Japanese) descended from a sun goddess, a Korean noble, or a Chinese courtesan is debateable (perhaps) but *ama*, dairy farmers, and the first family are all legally considered Japanese today and none are attempting to claim otherwise.

¹⁶ As defined in Chapter Six.

identity. Augmenting Goodman's claim, these people are certainly marginal. However they are not external: they are already at the core of Japanese material and political culture.¹⁷

Similar to *ama*, dairy workers are essential pieces in a cultural jigsaw puzzle. Faced with a popular and essentialist image of Japan, they are pieces that cannot be made to fit, yet their absence leaves gaping holes in any discourse of contemporary Japan. From history to production to consumption, or from imagery and imaginary to official state policy, the long and short of the picture is crystal clear. Hokkaido is part of Japan's contemporary national story. Dairy is central to that story. And the majority of dairy farmers are undeniably Japanese – despite being separate from popular essentialist *ware ware nihonjin* (we Japanese), *gaikoku*, or *otaku* (unique or weird but internally other) categories never endingly promoted in domestic media in the attempt to 'secure' spaces of separateness; essential Japan and Japaneseness verses any alternate typology or hybridity (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008: 205-324).¹⁸ The people and spaces of Hokkaido dairy farming are 'oddly central' however, and their exclusion offers an incomplete at least, distorted at worst, picture of contemporary Japan.

In this thesis otherness is also represented at the level of an individual's day-to-day interactions and bio-politics; what Fassin calls "the biopolitics of otherness" (2001: 3)... "Based on the recognition of 'difference of bodies' which have...[at least]...race, sex, ethnicity, and genes as their foundation...internal frontiers founded on physical difference" (2001: 7). This can be viewed at the level of the individual and the social¹⁹ and at the phenomenological level of individual(s) and action,²⁰ and social and individual interactions with the environment and other species.²¹

¹⁷ Indeed an intriguing paradox is how key people at the core – are in fact – marginal from it such as the Imperial family (personal communication with Professor Martinez (September 10th, 2009).

¹⁸ See Bêfu 2001 or LaMarre (2006: 358-394) the essential point here is that dairy farmers are not actively seeking to set themselves outside of Japanese society. This is a theme revisited often throughout this monograph.

¹⁹ In the context of Japan (as examples amongst many) Hamabata (1986) focusing on Tokyo's upper class and Gill (2001) dealing with day labourers; Hendry (1986), Kondo (1990), and Rosenberger (1992, 2001) focus on the social construction of self and gender; in terms of nationality and / or race see Douglas and Roberts (2000), Fukuoka (2000), and Willis and Murphy-Shihematsu (2008 ed.) for the social and individual construction of other nationalities in Japan.

²⁰ In the context of Japan (as examples – though far fewer exist than those focused along more social centric lines) Chapman (2008) with Korean Japanese as a non-reducible group, Gottlieb and McLelland (2003 ed.) with network societies as difficult to pigeon hole or neatly track, Plath (1983 ed.) focuses on individual lifecourse and employment, Ōyama (2005) plots his individual experience as a day labourer and Richie (1982) focuses on individual personalities and his interactions with people in the artistic community.

²¹ See Haraway (2008) and Ingold (2000) for examples.

This dissertation outlines that otherness, and acceptance of it, is a daily challenge that must be overcome by individual dairy workers for the dairy industry to function. Rich youth from Tokyo proving their mettle, local kids from the wrong side of the tracks, and recently Chinese economic migrants with promise of other nationalities to come must all communicate and often co-operate in ways that five years ago would have been hard for many of them to imagine. While it will become clear to the reader that cattle and technology play key roles in enhancing, negotiating, and erasing otherness at different points in time and space (from Chapter Six but in the Conclusion most notably), human otherness is *each* otherness – individuality, interpretation, and agency played out with the surface patina of shared goals in a shared space.

II.4 Security

Security has a more complicated definition than the previous two key terms. There is an inherent ‘play’ between subject and object in the term and perhaps this notion of capturing both a state of being and an action has made the term attractive to the social theorists. As the Oxford dictionary defines it, to secure is “to actively fix with certainty, to protect, or to succeed in obtaining a desired goal” and to *be* secure is “to experience the certainty of safety, to feel unthreatened, or to be free from fear or anxiety.”²² Security is central to the social theorisation of Beck (1992, 2007), Dillon (1995), and Bauman (2000, 2007) whose concepts of ‘risk society’, ‘(in)security’ and ‘liquid modernity’, respectively, underscore the insecure nature of what they call second modern or postmodern society respectively. Security is a term, especially in the post 9/11 era, that is perhaps over used, especially in relation to the ‘war or terror’ – a limited but vague context tinged with Euro-American political concerns. In what follows I contend that security and securing can be utilised as key concepts in looking at contemporary Japan, Japanese, and Hokkaido’s relationship to both. Security is used, and justified historically and socio-culturally, as a concept as in the case of Hokkaido’s historical geopolitics below. This usage is common. However I further suggest that this application of theory and method ought to be a broader comparative anthropological concept focusing on what human security is and what it means to people beyond limited, often macro, military, political and economic frameworks.

²² Search word “secure” Ask Oxford Online Dictionary
http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/secure?view=uk accessed via Google June 20th 2009.

For example, security is a term frequently used in reference to Japan. Indeed, Chie Nakane, one of the most frequently cited native Japanese anthropologists to have written on Japan, uses the word security, without unpacking its meaning, no less than eighteen times in her seminal work on Japanese society;²³ utilizing it to discuss social security, psychological security, emotional security, and so on. It is often claimed that being 'secure' is historically an important value in Japan. For example, generalizing about Japanese history and its link to 'a cultural personality' Benedict noted:

[t]he Japanese, more than any other sovereign nation, have been conditioned to a world where the smallest details of conduct are mapped and status is assigned...The Japanese learned to identify this meticulously plotted hierarchy with safety and security...[and if such rules and proprieties were followed]...the Japanese loved and trusted their meticulously explicit map of behaviour, they had a certain justification. It guaranteed security so long as one followed the rules.

(Benedict 1946: 70-73)²⁴

Of course all people, Japanese, Jamaican, or Jordanian have societal norms and security concerns. The salient point here is that in Japan the value of predictability and security has been held in high regard *over the previous century* according to the anthropologists Nakane and Benedict and the many academics, native and non native, who cite them.

This should not be surprising. Historically, Japan has been the site of intense macro security concerns, political, military, ecological and economic. These trends continue today and will be discussed below. In so doing however, Hokkaido will be contrasted and compared to Okinawa, the nation's other lasting colonial project. In terms of micro security (financial, physical ontological *etcetera*), post-1990s Japan has become increased, or ever-increasingly, concerned (Leheny 2006, Harootunian and Yoda 2006). Applicable here, and linked to the shifts from macro, to mid, to micro security is Giddens' notion of "*Ontological Security*: a sense of continuity...[of space, narrative, and self]...and order in events, including those not directly within the perceptual environment of the individual" (1992: 243).²⁵ That is to say one's sense of self is

²³ See pages 19, 20, 44, 76, 83, 109, 118-120, 127, and 136 (Nakane 1973).

²⁴ Benedict's work on Japan is controversial and will not be focused on in depth in this monograph (Hansen: In press). It is clear, however, that her work was central to notions of Japanese uniqueness. Befu goes so far to say that he... "is tempted to claim that the post-war anthropology of Japan is in large made up of footnotes...[in agreement and disagreement]...to Benedict's classic" (2001: 51). Ryang (2004) has a similar view. The work was influential both outside and inside Japan, for example see Doi (1973; 2007) or Lebra (2004).

²⁵ More detail is found in Giddens (1992: 35-69).

influenced by the 'times' and space they live in and post-1990s Japan is a very different place in terms of self and security from pre-1990s Japan (Rosenberger 2001, Yoda 2006: 16-53). Throughout the history of modern Japan, and certainly in the context of frontier Hokkaido, one can witness the shifting of security concerns between macro, meso and micro registers. The region was a site of macro struggles for political security and economic security in the pre-modern and early modern periods (Blaxell 2009; Irish 2009; Walker 2001) as in the early modern period, Japan sought to secure a position for itself in the world order of nation-states (Gluck 1985). While inside Japan, contact with the West led to an insecurity of identity followed by a sense of superiority and 'over' security leading to war first with China and then the allied forces (Victoria 2001). After the Second World War, securing communities and identities became key concerns along with issues of food, ecological, and physical security (Dower 1999). While the 1950s to 1980s were periods of general stability and economic growth, today, Japanese exist in the wake of a turbulent 1990s.

However this thesis primarily focuses on a generation of contemporary young Japanese dairy farmers. This is a generation that is vividly documented and described in the aptly titled text "Japan after Japan" (Harootunian and Yoda 2006). It is a period heralded by the economic recession from which the nation had been slowly recovering until another crash in 2009, with no hope of the return to the rapid growth and securities it fostered and no escape from the insecurities produced. For example the economic and job security that had been brought about by rapid industrialisation and mass manufacturing in the late 1950s and 1960s created negative insecurity spin-offs. Such as environmental insecurity, polluted water created by this rapid development, along with dense urban crowding; or increased employment insecurity brought about through a rise in urban competition and a decline in the availability of full-time employment (Kousugi 2008, Genda 2005). These are very real and palpable insecurities discussed by young people in Japan, seen as a form of ontological insecurity and a lack of 'hope' amongst some youth (Genda 2009). Beyond the early 1990s economic crisis, and the end of the Cold War (with the sudden realisation that Japan was no longer the only regional player in a US dominated world) two traumatic watershed events occurred in 1995; the fatal terrorist gas attacks by a religious cult in Tokyo along with a massive fatal earthquake in Kobe (Reader 1996, Harootunian and Yoda 2006). These events shook the nation and its collective and personal sense of security. To citizens used to depending on the state and feeling safe under its strictures, these events underscored the

popular notion of the complete inability of the Japanese government to prevent, prepare, or contend with these situations of extreme insecurity (Leheny 2006; Yoda 2006: 22-51). This does not begin to address the list of security concerns inherent in location; Japan's natural environment as an island nation with few natural resources but frequent earthquakes and tsunami.

Through this history I suggest that Japanese have deeply questioned their societal and individual security. More to the point, influenced by these more recent events young Japanese, for example those under the age of forty, have questioned their ontological security (Giddens 1992) in ways that their perhaps more group-centred Japanese forebears have not had cause to (Arai 2006; Genda 2005; Kosugi 2008). For example the lack of societal goals such as those of the past; the building of the nation (1868-1932); the expansion and defence of the nation (1933-1945); the rebuilding of the nation (1946-1970); and the promotion of the nation (1970-1990), all ring hollow to many young Japanese in the eye of globalisation (Yoda 2006). Globalisation brought unprecedented numbers of foreign others, and so foreign lifestyles, ethics, aesthetics, expectations and worries, into Japan (cf. Arudo 2006; Brody 2002; Douglas and Roberts 2000; Lesser 2003; Tsuda 2003). Added to all of these security concerns is an endless parade of present day food security scares, public confidence scandals, concerns about the aging population, a perception that crime has increased, and the growing awareness that Japan's neighbours – nations with whom Japan has 'normalised' relations after a history of war and colonisation – are growing in economic and political power and influence while Japan's greatest ally and protector, the USA, is in decline, prompting Japan to 'rearm' in order to defend itself (Drifte 2003; Masaaki 2003: 56-73 and especially notably in the spring of 2010 when the Prime Minister resigned over his inability to dislodge the American military from Okinawa).

In short, contemporary Japan is an increasingly risk prone and risk weary society (Beck 1992).²⁶ One aware of its (in)security (Dillon 1995). That is to say people are aware that they are 'in' or a part of macro to micro projects of security building. These issues of security and securing have been, and are increasingly becoming, central concerns to individuals in Japan. As a noun or verb security can be fruitfully applied to understanding the dairy industry and the lives of its young workers – and perhaps

²⁶ Beck's notion of risk and anxiety (1992) does not focus specifically on Japan but on liberal democratic societies of 'Second Modern' period with "sub-politics" (1994). References to Beck in the context of Japan can be found in Harootunian and Yoda (2006: 412) and Lenhey (2006).

beyond this – perhaps shed some light on broader existential conditions in contemporary Japanese society.

II.5 Moving Towards Modernity: Shifting People and Frontiers

This section focuses on drawing the three themes of change, otherness, and security together in relating the history of Japan and its colonial projects. Pre-modern, in the context of Hokkaido certainly, equates with the pre-Tokugawa era (before 1603). During the Tokugawa period (1603-1867), Japan was to become an increasingly unified nation, essentially the seed of the nation-state recognised today. The following summary condenses 1500 years of a complex, and in many instances debated, cultural, social and political history. It is not intended, nor should it be considered, an exhaustive account. It is a brief précis.²⁷ The intent is to offer readers with little knowledge of North East Asian history a glimpse into the development of Hokkaido with the purpose of presenting a context in which to understand how ranching and dairy farming began in Japan in general and on the Tokachi plain specifically in the following chapters. It explains how and why macro security concerns were and are central to the area, how they have changed, and how shifting conceptualisations of otherness have played a constant role.

II.5.1. From Ezo to Hokkaido: Land of Barbarians, Exiles, and Outcasts

The first recorded documentation of Hokkaido is as *watari shima* (island across the water) during the Heian period (794 – 1192 C.E.). The region's name was changed to *Ezo*, *Yezo* or *Yesso ga shima* (barbarian or wild island) when the political prisoners of the Kamakura (1192-1333) military government were sent into exile on the distant northern island (Harrison 1953). These early southerners essentially stuck to the shoreline near the present day towns of Hakodate and Matsumae, as they were vastly outnumbered by indigenous peoples who were considered dangerous.²⁸ The interior of the island, like much of the Tohoku area of northern Honshu, was dominated by the Ainu and, from the thirteenth century onwards, small coastal settlements of banished

²⁷ Throughout much of its history Japan is not a unified nation. I use Japan (Nippon) to refer to all historic periods to avoid unneeded detail and confusion for the said purpose of this thesis.

²⁸ Skirmishes between Ainu and Japanese (*wajin*) on Hokkaido have been a common historical theme in regions north of Sendai (Guo: 2005).

Japanese existed alongside and increasingly in conflict with them (Irish 2009; Siddle 1996; Sjöberg 1997; Walker 2001). In short, the Japanese and Ainu did not lead separate and isolated lives, with the former *Ezo* and the latter in Honshu, until the modern period and mass Japanese colonisation; though this story of separatism is a popular and persisting frontier (Japanese) and nationalist/ethnic (Ainu) myth.²⁹

When Japan was unified by the Tokugawa shogun from 1603, a strict system of official residence was enforced. Feudal leaders from across the nation were expected to reside in the capital *Edo* (Tokyo) for half of the year with their families remaining as 'collateral' for the other half. This was not the case for every Tokugawa domain ruler however. Occupying a fraction of southern Ezo, the Matsumae were the only feudal family exempt from this policy of voluntary hostage offering.³⁰

It is clear that from the perspective of the Tokugawa *bakufu* or military government, that Ezo was considered a hinterland. First, the area was essentially occupied by the Ainu who were not recognized as Japanese – or human for that matter. Second, from the Kamakura period onwards, scattered coastal areas were occupied by cast off political dissidents not recognized as supporters of the 'unified' Japanese nation and 'outlaw' Ainu/Japanese traders engaged in illegal trade under the *bakufu* seclusion policy. Finally, Ezo was home to the Matsumae domain, rulers who, though clearly related to the southern Japanese, were also clearly peripheral (Siddle 1996; Mason and Craiger 1997: 202-209). The Ando, originally at the heart of this tiny empire, professed to be of mixed Ainu and southern blood, and thus, claimed that they were heirs to a kingdom that was separate from the southern island. This claim was obviously believable and partially the basis for the particular treatment of the Matsumae domain. The Matsumae did not contribute taxes in the form of rice as did all other *daimyō* (a feudal fiefdom). The crop simply did not grow in Ezo. The Matsumae were not required to maintain a household in Edo as did other *daimyō*. They were not required to pay yearly homage but only once every five years. Thus, the Ainu were clearly considered 'Others' while the Matsumae were viewed as not quite Japanese yet

²⁹ At the December 2007 Hokkaido University Symposium titled "Ainu Culture Promotion Law: Its past Present and Future," the issue of land claims frequently arose. Again this is clearly similar in other frontier areas. At my field site I was told that some isolated lands might be handed over to some resident Ainu in 2009. As of January 2010 this had not yet happened.

³⁰ See Harrison (1953) for more detail. The Historical Museum of Hokkaido claims the Matsumae domain was about 80 square kilometres with the real seat of power only in the castle town despite the small trading forts dotting the south coast.

not quite foreign (Morris-Suzuki 1998: 12-13). They were betwixt and between the binary definition of Japanese or not Japanese.

However, from the late 1700's, Ezo became increasingly important in the eyes of the Edo *bakufu* due to its significance for both economic and military (mostly naval) security. Owing to these concerns the colonisation of the northern land moved beyond banishing political exiles there and appeasing self-proclaimed sovereigns of dubious heritage to early attempts at full-scale occupation. One reason for this policy was that by the 1780s the *bakufu* was slowly slipping into bankruptcy. However, in stark contrast to the declining economy of Edo, the Matsumae were becoming wealthy from fisheries as well as through trading – among other things, salmon, skins and natural medicinal goods – with Ainu when they were not waging war with them (Walker 2001). Moreover, Russian trading posts had opened in Nemuro (Western Hokkaido) despite strict *bakufu* regulations countering foreign trade.

Rapidly going broke and progressively angered by the economic success of the northern 'outlaws,' in 1789 "Edo assumed direct control of Yezo" (Harrison 1953: 29); that is to say the *bakufu* took direct control of all Ezo land including the lands outside of Matsumae's southern territory. By 1798 money was set aside for "Ainu education...[and]...laws were promulgated for the administration of Yezo, and the area was recognized as a colony" (*ibid.*: 30). Powerful samurai in Edo, such as Honda Toshiaki, were vociferous in their support for both colonising through agriculture in vast Ezo, as well as to the northwest and northeast, the present day Sakhalin and Kuril islands (Cullen 2003: 138). Upon usurping Matsumae's control, approximately 60,000 pioneers were sent to the island. Most settled around the former Matsumae domain on the southern peninsula, but some settled as far as Sōya, the island's northernmost point. They attempted to establish farming homesteads. Fishing settlements and military outposts were set up beyond Sōya in Sakhalin and the Kurils. Climatic conditions, however, proved too difficult for farming this far north. Many settlers died and most abandoned inland areas choosing to work in fishing villages. Thus, the early attempt at full fledged colonisation had failed and the land of Ezo was returned to Matsumae jurisdiction in 1821 (Cullen 2003: 31).

Japan's *sakoku*, or closed nation policy, made securing the land a key priority. The nation, resource poor with a growing population, needed to be controlled. Thus related to these first attempts at settlement and agriculture in Ezo was an issue broader in scope than economics alone; it concerned the entire Tokugawa domain. Though the quest for

enhanced economic security was an important factor in sending settlers north and attempting to dominate trade, there was also a growing awareness of the military power of other seafaring nations, notably Russia to the north (Irish 2009: 264-289).

This military and political insecurity was not limited to threats from those outside of Japan's sphere of influence. It was also an issue within Ezo. In 1789 some Ainu mounted a large revolt in *Kunashiri* and this also prompted the push to settle and secure the region. The Japanese existing on the island were outnumbered and called for reinforcements from the south under fear of being overrun. This protracted conflict underscored a unified Japan's vulnerability to its north. Russians also attacked Japanese settlements in 1806 (Cullen 2003: 147). Moreover, the Dutch, who were in perpetual conflict with England, relayed their own nation's interest in expanding trade relations with the 'closed country'. Using the fresh and pertinent example of the French and English defeat of the Chinese in the Opium War (1840-42), the Dutch argued that stronger relations with their nation would be more benign and in the interest of the *bakufu* in Edo.³¹ Added to this political instability, English ships occasionally tried to dock in Hokkaido for trade and American ships were spotted off the coasts of Ezo and Honshu. As noted above, the Matsumae had already engaged in trade with the Russians, possessors of the most formidable navy in the North West Pacific, and by the early nineteenth-century Russian ships frequently sailed freely past Ezo, not only into the Pacific, but unchecked in the Sea of Japan.

These macro military, political, and economic security threats were what the *bakufu* hoped to assuage with its first attempts at colonisation in the north. Moreover, shipwrecked Japanese fishers, stowaways on Dutch ships, and other adventure seekers had been to, and returned from, Europe and North America despite the *bakufu* policy of isolation (Cobbing 1998). If they managed to return to Japan, and avoided the execution expected for such an infringement, they were summoned by the military rulers to inform them about what they had seen of the outside world. Therefore, when Commodore Perry's four famed gunships arrived in Edo bay in 1853, as shocking as this brazen display may have been, the writing had long since been on the wall. It was already clear to many in Edo that Japan could not remain the relative hermit kingdom it had been. Important for the points that follow, it was clear that the national security of the soon-to-be modern nation-state of Japan was intimately linked to Ezo. The

³¹ The importance the Dutch are discussed below and in the following chapter.

northern island was the site of attempts at shoring up economic security for a financially faltering *bakufu*, military security for a nation in fear of, and seemingly on the cusp of, foreign invasion, and also political security as the Tokugawa *bakufu* could not recover from the external or internal threats and was forced to engage in 'unequal trade' agreements to buy immediate safety from invasion and time to plot a response to the 'new' overseas barbarians (Perez 1997). Trade agreements would open Japan and it would take three decades for the Japanese to gain more favourable trade terms (*ibid.* 327-334). The opening of Ezo's Hakodate, Japan's second international port, isolated as it was, underscores these economic, military, and political factors, and the intimate links they have with Hokkaido.

The Meiji period (1868 –1912) was a period of unrivalled change in Japanese social and political history, and the transition from military feudal nation to modern imperial nation-state rule was not a smooth one. Many samurai, remaining loyal after 250 years of family service to the defeated and fragmented former Tokugawa *bakufu*, fled the capital and nearby provinces to lead insurrections across the new nation-state. The final rebel was Enomoto Takeaki, the head of the *bakufu* navy. Refusing to submit to imperial Meiji authority, Enomoto fled with his retainers to the newly opened Hakodate port.

The Meiji troops under the command of a 28-year-old Kuroda Kiyotaka gave chase and defeated Enomoto's forces in December of 1868. Interestingly, as Fujita points out:

In August 1869 the Meiji leaders reorganized the central government and created the department called Kaitakushi, which would be in charge of developing Yezo...Yezo was renamed Hokkaido, meaning the "Northern Sea Road"...The irony was that Enomoto and several other rebels were soon to occupy high positions in the Kaitakushi through Kuroda's good offices, and they worked for the regime that they had once so desperately fought...

(Fujita 1994: 2-3)

Thus, the last holdouts of the *bakufu* – defeated but hardly loyal to the new Meiji government – were to play key roles in the colonisation of the newly named frontier of Hokkaido.

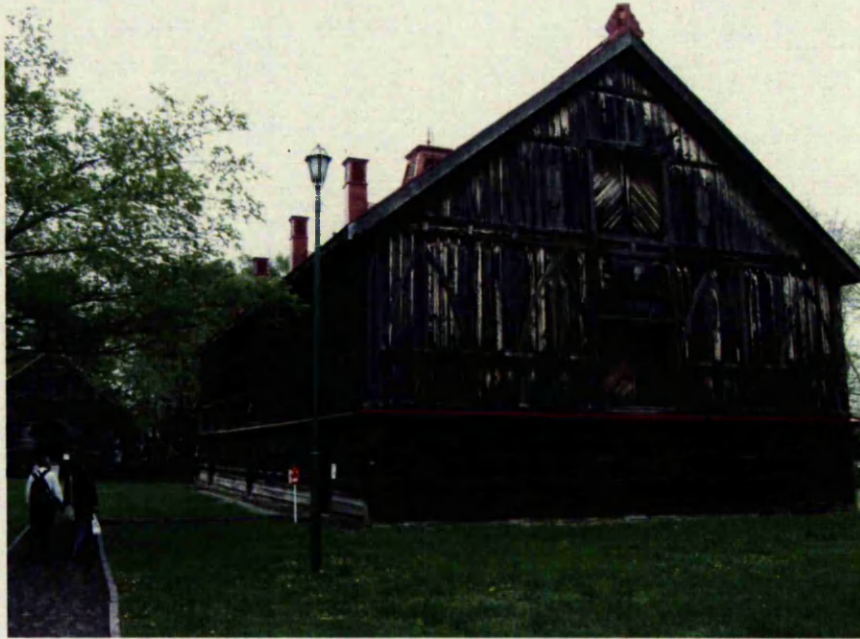
Thus, from the birth of Japan's modern period, the government played an active, indeed a central role in the development and promotion of agriculture on the island. Hokkaido, the home of many previously exiled independent thinking and resourceful

samurai, now became home to a new breed of ex-samurai (Harrison 1953). Cut off from their former prestige, not to mention hereditary financial stipends, by the establishment of a conscripted military by decree in 1876, many former samurai came to Hokkaido as *tondenhei* (farmer warriors) to work alongside criminals doing forced labour, impoverished pioneers from depressed areas of Japan – all sponsored by the former rebels – the *kaitakushi*, and later, Korean and Chinese forced labourers would arrive (Irish 2009, Fujita 1994, Mock 1999, Takata 2004, Russell 2007, Shigematsu 2004).

Thus, much like migration to the ‘new worlds’ of America, Hokkaido was, generally speaking, the chosen route of a very few well-to-do. Like the West and Midwest of Canada and the United States, Hokkaido was built through the elite’s trial and error and the blood, sweat, and lives of the desperate. It was also the route taken by, or thrust upon, independent thinking exiles and ambitious (or ruthless) merchants and military men. The history of Hokkaido’s coming into being and its early population ultimately relates to early modern and modern issues of military, political and economic security. Ezo became Hokkaido, but it continued to be on the political periphery; a home for political exiles and outcasts.

When I asked Professor Osamu Soda, a respected scholar and founder of Kyoto University’s Department of Agricultural Philosophy (see Soda 2006), why people chose to move to Hokkaido I was promptly corrected. “Even fifty years ago things were very different. Nobody *wanted* to move to Hokkaido. People went because they had no choice but to move to Hokkaido” (Professor Soda interview 2007-09-13 Fukui University); leaving one known insecure situation, often a life of poverty, to face change, otherness, and a search for security in the new frontier. A visit to a museum such as the Obihiro City Centennial Museum, Abashiri Prison Museum, Sapporo’s Historical Museum of Hokkaido, or Sapporo Agricultural College Model Dairy Farm serve as vivid testaments to Professor Soda’s view; such displays convey the political considerations and aspirations, conflicts of interpretation, desperation, visionary spirit, and the harsh conditions faced by pioneers, prisoners and the indigenous inhabitants during Hokkaido’s early modern history.

While these museum displays might not accurately portray Ainu and Japanese relations – Hendry (2007), Kuwayama (2004) and Van Herk (2001) – they do provide an embodied way of experiencing some flavour of history.



(II.5.1.a.) Tourists outside of Hokkaido University's Sapporo Agricultural College Dairy farm. The building was erected in 1900 to train future agricultural experts in Hokkaido and looks much like a, albeit oversized, typical North American Barn.



(II.5.1.b.) Inside the old milk barn charts and tools are set out alongside the training materials early dairy farmers would have been shown.

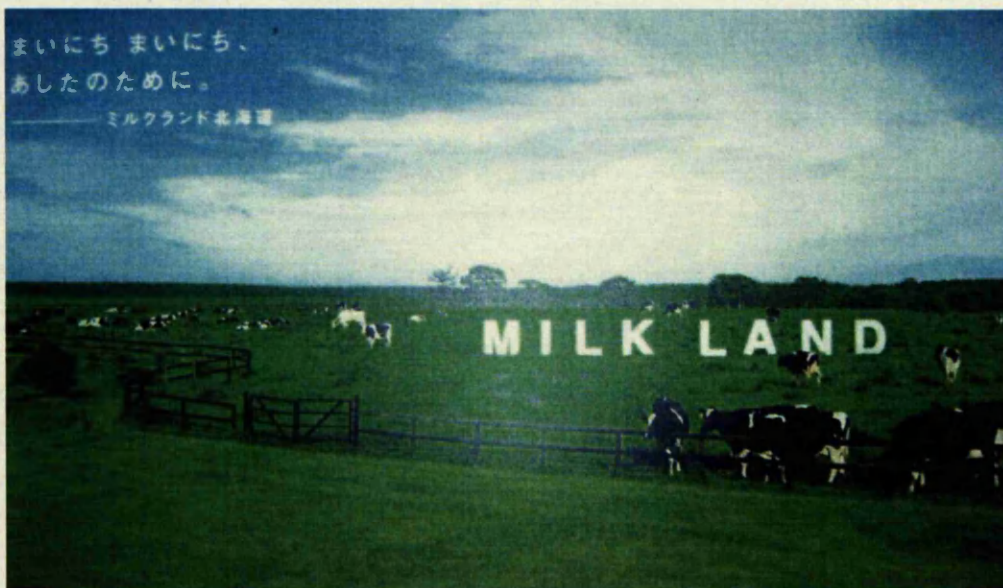
Through touching tools or the smelling of wood and soil, the material culture of early Hokkaido is preserved. One can see, smell, hear, and even touch, the equipment used during past eras, walk through life sized displays of settlers working, read about the history of particular regions, and see graphs and charts outlining immigration patterns. One point is obvious and clear in the early promotion posters of the region. Hokkaido was symbolic of both otherness and of opportunity – a new life in a new world in the context of Japan. A space where individuals could make a living, create a family, a home, an identity, if they were willing to face the unknown.



(II.5.1.c.) The early promotion of otherness, change, opportunity, and hope: pastoral imagery (no rice paddy here) and the lone pioneer with the key to securing a new future (scanned from Seki et.al 2006: 6).

This imagery has changed in that today the unknown is now, to some degree, known. A popular children's book in 2006-2007 outlines the differing products and practices that separate Hokkaido's regional areas; for example, potatoes in Shihoro, horses in Hidaka, Santa Land in Hirō, and as will be seen below hot air balloons over dairy farms in Gensan (Horikawa 2006) In short, though Hokkaido has remained 'wild' in the

public's perception, in terms of the symbols of a natural environment – such as the Hokkaido bear (*higuma*) and the various 'tourist' Ainu villages (*kotan*) such as that near lake Akan (*akanko*) – today Hokkaido is also popularly associated with different symbols of otherness, rolling hills, grazing cattle, and fresh dairy products associated with pastoral life. Hokkaido has become another other: Milkland.



(II.5.1.d.) A Present day poster promoting Hokkaido's other and pastoral image. The caption reads "every day, every day, because of tomorrow" – Milkland Hokkaido (photo taken by the author in the Tokachi airport).

II.5.2 Modernity

The modern period is usually divided into the early modern period, roughly the Tokugawa period which includes the first systematic attempts at Japanese colonisation of both the Ryūkyū islands (contemporary Okinawa) and Ezo (contemporary Hokkaido) (*cf.* Bellah 1957; Bix 1986; Toby 1984; Totman 2000; Walker 2001; Wigen 1995) and the modern period which is generally accepted from the Meiji Period to present day (*cf.* Bix 2001; Tipton 2002).³²

³² Many scholars also add the post-modern period from the 1980s on; for example see Yoda (2006). I will not be entering into the modern / post-modern debate in depth.

Modernity in the context of Japan, however, is less clear cut. What is offered here is a skeletal depiction of over one hundred years of political, philosophical, and social thought. The early Meiji era leaders wanted to develop Japan into a modern nation state. They sought to form an imperial power, freely borrowing from, yet desiring to be comparable with, the colonial European nations or America. This shift, from a feudal and fragmented collection of regional identities into a unified state, complete with a directed political will (beyond the local), necessitated much 'inventing' at a national level as noted in the seminal work edited by Vlastos (1998). National identity and agriculture are important to highlight apart from other 'modern' concerns as they are central to understanding what underpins the essentialist '*nihonjinron*' image of Japan.

From the early modern period Japanese elites were torn between *sakoku* – and the xenophobic exclusion of otherness related to nativist scholarship, and *rangaku* (Dutch studies) – the desire to open the nation, and at the least at least learn from, foreigners (Willis 2008: 239-263). This came to a head with the above noted shift between Tokugawa and Meiji rule. The Japanese government needed to unite the people it now governed. Vlastos (1998: 1-18, 79-94), amongst others in his edited volume, argues that this was accomplished through inventing – 'valorising' and 'historicizing' elements of national belonging and identity (Japan as harmonious and agrarian for example). Victoria (2001) and Heisig and Maraldos (1995) explain in detail how top-down national projects of unification were also attempted through force, for example, with the persecution of Buddhist sects and the development of a national state Shinto religion.

The benefits and costs of modernity were debated, most notably in terms of modernization coming through foreign (Euro-American) channels (Pedlar 1990). Against rapid modernisation in terms of agriculture policy was Yokoi Tokiyoshi (1860-1927), considered the father of modern Japanese Agricultural Sciences and publisher of *Nihonshugi*.³³ In the work, he cites the negative effects on agriculture and the security (national, social, and economic) of the new nation state in its drive to modernize and industrialize (Vlastos 1998: 82-83). This prompted a continued search for (then viewed as salvaging) distinct Japanese socio-ethno-cultural origins through ethnology underpinned by opposition to the rapidly shifting technological and socio-cultural norms that were being brought about by Japan's drive to modernize. This is reflected most famously (or notoriously) in the school of ethnology as practiced and promoted by

³³ For a detailed history of these debates from the left and right see Vlastos (1998: 79-94).

Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962) (Ivy 1995, Harootunian 1998: 144-159). Yanagita focused on agriculture in increasingly remote regions of the nation, in a search for Japanese “*minzoku*” – a notion similar to that of the German *volk* (Morris-Suzuki 1996: 88). From around 1910, the publication date of Yanagita’s influential ‘*Tōno monogatari*’ or Tales of Tōno, throughout the 1930s, this search for security in the face of modernization - that is, securing ‘the folk’ of Japan as it were - shifted and became closely correlated with a rise in Japanese nationalism and an escalation in colonial expansion - ergo the securing of the expanding state.³⁴ During this period the focus of nativist ethnology transformed from a focus on uncovering Japan’s origins in the ‘open’ representations of ‘untainted’ rural folk, to increasing attempts to ‘place’ Japan in terms of both a regional and global ‘centre to periphery’ notion of civilisation and culture (Figal 2000, Hashimoto 1998: 134-143).

Influenced by nation building and colonial expansion, newly internalized others (Korean, Okinawans, or Ainu for example) were no longer a distant and barbarian peoples, extensions of a geographical discourse moving from the centre of Japanese culture ever outward (*i* and *ka* respectively); now the radiating centre and periphery was based on *bunmei kaika* (civilisation). This meant that moving out from Honshu was “reinterpreted in *temporal* rather than *spatial* terms, as ‘backwards’ rather than ‘foreignness’” (Morris-Suzuki 1996:90) because the newly colonised needed to be incorporated into the nation state.³⁵ This burgeoning nationalism need a ‘folk’ to rally around and the agrarian *minzoku* were the key to the agrarian soul of Japan (Vlastos 1998: 79-94). These folk could be utilized in propaganda forwarding Japanese imperialism through the *Daitōakyōeiken* (Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere), liberating Asian nations from Western modernity through Japanese rule/modernity. Six months into the Pacific War a *Kindai no Chōkoku* (overcoming the modern) symposium was held in Kyoto wherein key Japanese intellectuals debated what modernity meant for Japan. The key question being, how could modernity be incorporated into a particular ‘Japanese’ context or, how could, should, its Western guise be resisted (Harootunian 1989: 63-92). Thus, the symposium built upon a long discomfiting discourse regarding East (Japan) and West (a shifting monolith, at this time Europe and America, but post-war decidedly

³⁴ Many of the sources above focus on this history, notably Bix (1986; 2001) and Dower (1999). For a recent BBC documentary on this topic see *Timewatch: Emperor Hirohito* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6r4Fh4UghNo&hl=ja> accessed via Google October 1 2009 which includes comments from the historian Carol Gluck.

³⁵ This is further explained below.

America) – and ‘pre-modern’ East and the ‘modern’ West. In essence, this was a search for modernity, and so security (economic, social, and political), in local/national terms in what was seen as a legacy of Western domination through supplanting a particular history and vision of progress and modernity in Asia. However, at the end of the Second World War Japan needed to re-evaluate these national inventions in terms of the reality of military defeat and physical, political and economic domination. Nationalism, the ‘pre-modern’, the folk, and the agrarian would need to be reinvented to ‘embrace defeat’ (Dower 1999).

However, with Japanese prosperity in the 1960s-1980s these tropes began to emerge again, notably in the 1980s, in the popular notion of ‘the Conquering of Modernity’; which viewed Japan as home to a ‘particular’ modernity, one trumping the West in terms of economic growth, with agrarian and communal values at the heart (Harootunian 1989: 78).³⁶ This time the modernity promoted was not in terms of farmers being good soldiers due to their tight link with the land (Vlastos 1998) but as good citizens who embody values of ‘we Japanese’. In this way, it is argued, ‘we Japanese’ is seen as a singular entity “...in which the agents are linked together in a national subjectivity devoid of regional, class, or even gender distinctions, let alone individuals “by being deprived of any mark of their opposition to one another” (Harootunian 1989: 89, internal quotation his). In this thesis I agree with Harootunian’s opposition to the ‘epic’ ‘we Japanese’ as a demarcation of identity. However, I suggest that in the case of young dairy farmers, ‘we dairy farmers’, ‘we women’, ‘we Tokyoites’, can be equally misleading if thought of without the ability to oppose these, albeit less inclusive, labels (Hansen: In press). Workers ‘shared’ being Japanese, relative age, and working in Hokkaido – but little else.

II.5.3. Defining a ‘Frontier Colony’

There are two final key terms that need to be added due to their central importance in the history of Hokkaido and its agriculture, as well as the change, otherness and search for security: frontier and colony. In the Introduction to this thesis I outlined several similarities shared between Hokkaido and North America, particularly Alberta. Here I will look at colonial spaces closer to Japan.

³⁶ An excellent example of this offered in analysing Watanabe’s *Peasant soul of Japan* (1989) in Chapter Six.

The Oxford Dictionary on-line defines how flexible the term frontier is.

1 a line that separates two countries, etc.; the land near this line: the frontier between the land of the Saxons and that of the Danes: a customs post on the frontier with Italy: a frontier town / zone / post.

2 *the frontier [sing.] the edge of land where people live and have built towns, beyond which the country is wild and unknown, especially in the western US in the 19th century: a remote frontier settlement.*³⁷

(italics mine The Oxford Dictionary Online 2005).

It is obvious how the first definition relates to Hokkaido and to the notion of frontier boundaries and borders noted in the Introduction (Barth 1969; Walker 2001). As islands a natural boundary separates Honshu and Hokkaido. Yet, in terms of history this boundary should not be thought of as impermeable. This could also be said of the Ryūkyū or Shikoku as well. However it is the second section of the definition that is important in what follows.

Hokkaido is thought of as a frontier in a very North American sense. This image is central to the popular conception of the region today and as will be seen in the remainder of this thesis, within the dairy industry especially. Significantly, the island was officially Ezo until the Meiji period. This term, marking externality, is still in popular use such as the yearly Ezo Rock Festival. The notions of 'wild' and 'unknown' were, and continue to be, key elements in defining Hokkaido as set apart from the mainland.

A second term key to understanding Hokkaido is colonise and the Oxford University dictionary defines it as follows:

1. To take control of an area or a country that is not your own, especially using force, and send people from your own country to live there.

(The Oxford Dictionary Online: 2005)

It is essential to underscore how the notion of the frontier and colonisation compares and contrasts between Hokkaido, and the other long lasting project of colonisation, Okinawa.³⁸ On a geopolitical level Ezo and Ryūkyū were considered to be on the

³⁷Oxford University Dictionary http://www.oup.com/oald-bin/web_getald7/index1a.pl accessed via Google (2009-02-27).

³⁸A comparative history of Okinawa and Hokkaido would be a fascinating project. However the purpose here is to outline salient comparisons with Okinawa for a discussion of the dairy industry in Hokkaido.

periphery of the early Japanese state (Howell 2005; Morris-Suzuki 1998; Toby 1984, 1998; Walker 2001). Geographers such as Hayashi Shihei (1738 – 1793) or Honda Toshiaki (1744-1821) promoted the notion of otherness through the visual media of mapping.



(II.5.3.e.) Hayashi Shihei's 1785 map of three regions
http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/zoomify/beans_1785_1.htm
SANGOKU TSURAN YOCHI ROTEI ZENZU: (General map to view three regions) Copy requested from the University of British Columbia archives – The map is positioned here to mimic contemporary cartographic representations with north at the top of the page.

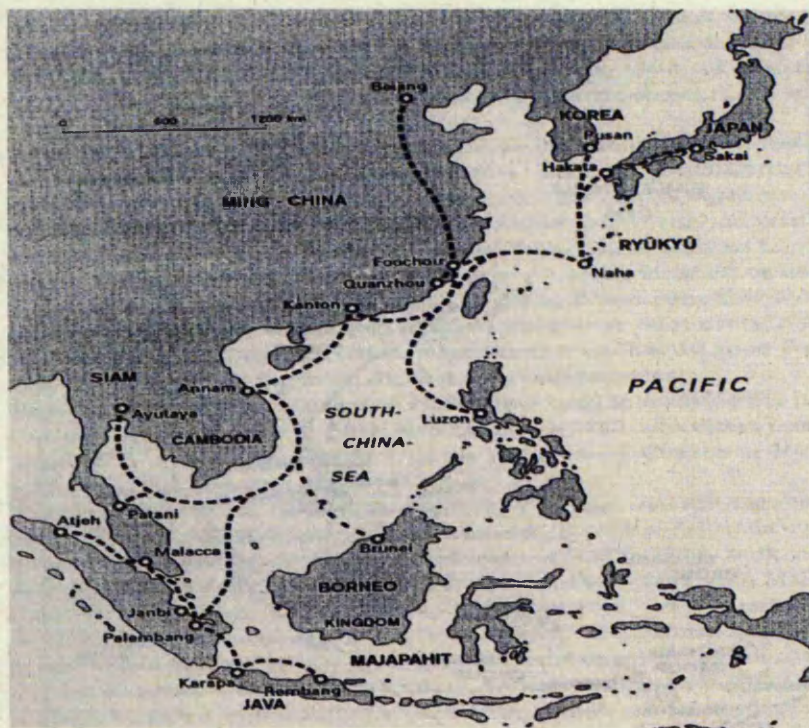
On Shihei's 1785 map of "The Three Regions" one can see the Chinese notion of *ka* (civilisation) and *i* (barbarism) cartographically deployed through the use of colour.³⁹ The maps outline the borderlands by using, for example orange or yellow, to indicate regions that were not civilised (that is to say not part of China or Japan). Pink was utilized to outline the borderlands of China, as opposed to green indicating, from the Japanese perspective, the civilised nations of Japan and China. The Ryūkyū Islands are

³⁹ See Toby (1998).

green in the north and orange in the south. Hokkaido is green where the Matsumae domain existed, but is orange in the expansive north. This clearly outlines that both Ryūkyū and Ezo were seen as peripheral entities; on the 'frontier' or boundary of state control. However, what is important lays beyond the colouring of the maps alone, for example, there are the shipping routes clearly outlined in the south between China and what was once an independent kingdom in Ryūkyū. This is not the case in Ezo and this underscores a key difference in terms of defining a frontier and colony.

The Ryūkyū kingdom was an independent kingdom with an economy based on trade first with South East Asia, China, Japan and from the 1500s European powers, namely the Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch (Hook and Siddle *ed.* 2003, Kreiner *ed.* 2003, Kerr 2000, Mathews et.al. 1992, Shepherd 1993, Summerhayes and Anderson 2009). Ryūkyū was considered home to independent 'local lords' by both the Chinese and Japanese at least as early as 753 CE (Kreiner 2003: 2). The inhabitants lived in agricultural settlements (Mathews et.al 1992) with some in the southern part of the chain (north of present day Taiwan and possibly colonised by indigenous Taiwanese not Jomon) possibly dating back to pre-historic times (Summerhayes and Anderson 2009: 84-88). Origins aside, by the tenth century local lords had erected at least 135 castles (Kreiner 2003: 3). Kerr points out that from the 1300s China had official links with the Ryūkyū Kingdom. By 1396 Naha was recognised as the region's capital city with envoys and scholars sent between it and China (Kerr 2000). The people within this domain engaged in agriculture while living in permanent settlements with a system of economic and political succession (*ibid.*: 240-245). The region... "was known as *Koryūkyū* (ancient Ryūkyū), starting from around the thirteenth century and was part of a regional trading zone with China" (Toshiaki 2003: 24).

'International' recognition, the development of a capital city, a unified kingdom, and agricultural settlements is completely at odds with the pre-modern history of Hokkaido and the Ainu people. Thus, the definition of the frontier as similar to nineteenth century North America does not apply to Okinawa. Indeed, as opposed to the unknown, wild or unsettled, context of the frontier, Ryūkyū was well known as central in an international system of trade with long established patterns of settlement.



(II.5.3.f.) Map of early trade routes on a modern cartography copied from Kreiner ed.: 6).

However, Toshiaki (2003: 21-38) considers Ryūkyū and later Okinawa as a ‘frontier’ in another sense at the pre-modern border of *Pax-sinica* (see also Morris-Suzuki 1996: 81-94). His use of the term frontier is specific to the world systems theories of Wallerstein (1974) and later Chase-Dunn and Hall (1997). Again, this is not the context in which I am using the term frontier in relation to Hokkaido and dairy farming. Nevertheless, this macro-geo-political context of ‘frontier as border’ can be revealing if utilized in a comparative context. In fact, Ryūkyū was not a Japanese frontier (borderland), but was originally a Chinese frontier. Taiwan, part of the same island chain, was also perceived as a frontier by the Chinese, and perhaps even a similar frontier in terms of Japan and Ezo’s relationship at least in terms of the ‘untamed people and place’ metaphor (Shepherd 1993: 240-307). Taiwan, unlike Ryūkyū but like Ezo, was envisioned as an uncultivated land, with formidable natural boundaries, and inhabited by indigenous people with whom the colonisers traded and often fought. Moreover, this land was eventually opened to agricultural production by early Chinese colonisers and not to a great extent by the original inhabitants. The key point here is that while Ezo and Taiwan were little known, untamed, ‘backwaters’,

Ryūkyū was the opposite, an acknowledged kingdom at the fulcrum point of pre-modern pan-Asian trade.

The lack of northern detail in the 1785 map underscores the lack of a 'frontier' (wild and unknown) history. While Okinawa looks much as it does in contemporary maps of Japan, Hokkaido is completely indistinguishable when compared to its modern cartographic appearance. Moreover, beyond being little more than a rectangle in the sea, Ezo is greatly exaggerated in size. Viewing Kreiner's map, Ryūkyū, had longstanding ties that required negotiations with Japan, Korea, and China, and trade with other South East Asian islands. Such official links were not to be found in Ezo (Morris-Suzuki: 1998: 23-25). For example:

...in 1869...the government unilaterally...[without consulting Ainu]...declared Ainu Mosir (Hokkaido) "unowned land" and, when it began its period of colonization, the Christian churches were so pleased with the opportunity it provided that they competed with one another in doing evangelical work to the extent that, in the Meiji period alone, more than one hundred churches were established in Hokkaido.

(Miyajima 1998: 6)

In 1609 Ryūkyū fell to Shimazu clan of Satsuma (modern Kagoshima) and from this point became seen as a tributary possession of this fiefdom (Yasunori 2003: 140-141). It was no longer a Chinese borderland but a Japanese one. Despite the domination of Ryūkyū it continued its close trading relationship with China. Indeed under the seclusion policies, of *sakoku* (Toby 1984: 12-14), the Tokugawa regime considered the region to be "under both the jurisdiction of Japan as well as China. This became known as the *ryōzoku kankei* (dual relationship)"...and... "disputes about the *ryōzoku kankei* took place between pro-Japanese and pro-Chinese groups...both acknowledged the uniqueness of Ryūkyū" (Toshiaki 2003: 25-26) as a middle ground and essential for trade. Ryūkyū was in essence a proto-colony but not a frontier, the power structure, beyond sending taxes in rice and tributes to the Shimazu, was more or less left in place until 1872. There were no continuous incursions into the area as in Hokkaido. Indeed the Japanese attempted to keep their influence over the region a secret from the Chinese so as to maintain their image of seclusion. This in turn allowed Chinese culture to flourish on the islands as it had for centuries maintaining the basis for a strong and independent Ryūkyūan culture and identity today (Allen 2002: 5-7).

The social and political organisation of early colonial conquest was quite different in Hokkaido. The Ainu did not live in villages of over ten families and these villages

were not permanent year round, but changed with fishing and hunting migrations (Watanabe 1972: 8-10). When elders passed away their home was burnt to the ground and their possessions buried with them (Miyajima 1998: 32). Also, the Ainu were not a single social or political group, but a series of loosely related groups speaking different languages under different clan leaders. While they did trade 'internationally' (notably with Japanese and Russians but also Chinese) this was not carried out through official envoys, educational exchanges, or established political channels (Howell 2005: 132). Beyond the fact that both regions were physical buffer zones, there is very little similarity, politically, economically, culturally, or in terms of climate or landscape, to be found in comparing the "The ancient Ryūkyū kingdom" and "Ezo, the barbarian island."

However, the modern imperial rationale underlying the annexation of Ryūkyū in 1872 is in some ways comparable to the colonisation of Hokkaido in 1869. Modern empire building and security concerns pervaded and pervade both modes of domination as noted above in discussions surrounding Japanese modernity. The regions were both colonised with the notion of security in mind, military, economic, and political, yet the emphasis on these factors, then as now, are completely different in either region. It is in this regard that the modern demographic history of the islands is a clear and deciding point in drawing together change, otherness, the search for security and in defining Hokkaido as a 'frontier colony' in the Japanese context.

In general the formative history of Okinawa in the modern period is one of emigration. "The number of emigrants from Okinawa between 1899 and 1941 was...11 percent of the total number of emigrants from Japan...by 1938 12 percent of Okinawa's population had moved overseas." (Sellek 2003: 77-78) This does not include the thousands of migrants inside the Japanese empire, to the Pacific island colonies and to labour in areas such as Osaka (*ibid.* 2003). On the flipside, the modern population of Hokkaido is nearly completely based on shifting waves of immigration (cf. Irish 2009, Mock 1999, Walker 2001). Thus, as is argued in ethnographic detail in this thesis, Hokkaido has a history of people arriving keen to start a new life while Okinawa has history of local people leaving who are keen to do the same. In the case of Okinawa, through distance of migration there has been a reinforced emphasis on origins; a longing for culture, such as Okinawan music, dialect, and cuisine, including sweet potatoes and pork (Inoue: 293-301). This has been nurtured alongside a local history of regional exploitation and domination; Japanese annexation and betrayal

during and after the World War Two and American Occupation until 1972 (Allen 2002; Uenten 2008: 159-167). There are indeed periods of overlap in this story where I could be accused of eliding for the sake of brevity, for example early modern Japanese agricultural migrants and administrators to Okinawa and the post Second World War wave of resettlement, but few would argue the patterns of colonisation or settlement, beyond this, have much in common.

In recent years however, the injection of young Japanese workers from outside of Okinawa and Hokkaido who seek adventure or escape from conservative social constrictions, or who are in search of 'healing', or just to break from boredom, on both islands have risen. Numerous such examples are cited in the following chapters and added to this is also an individual quest to make money or 'search for themselves'. In both contemporary Okinawa and Hokkaido local industries, agro-industrial industries in Hokkaido and notably seasonal tourist industries on both islands, are in need of young employees that the local area cannot provide (Allen 2003: 207-229; Takata 2003; 2007). Both locations 'sell themselves' paradoxically as 'internal yet other' locations; Okinawa an idealised space for beach side honeymoons and mingling singles (Allen 2003: 218) and Hokkaido a '*gaikokuesque*' space for gourmet tourism, nature viewing, and outdoor pursuits – with both sharing a backdrop of cultural – even ethnic – 'otherness' in terms of local Okinawans and Ainu. Allen notes that;

Within Okinawa today, foregrounding local festivals, language, dance, ritual, music, and so on is taking place as the so called Okinawa Boom (*buumu*), an ill-defined but substantive resistance to the homogenizing influences of Japan and the United States, occurs...The production of formal and informal counter narratives to Japanese history has led to the emergence of a number of essentialist representations of "Okinawan-ness:" Okinawa is represented as peaceful, linguistically unique, a marine paradise, culturally distinct (from mainland Japan), an excellent investment choice, an "international" community, the home of Karate, and so on. Yet, the concepts of regionalism and locality remain dominant motifs within Okinawa."

(Allen 2003: 10).

This contemporary image of Okinawa resonates with similar themes in Hokkaido, a place popularly viewed as 'outside' the typifying discourses of Japaneseness alongside a view of the space and culture as a site of escape or fantasy – a Japan that is somehow "ill-defined" as not quite Japan.



(II.5.3.g.) A travel brochure selling Okinawa as a destination. Historic villages, cultural events and a picturesque beach scene.



(II.5.3.h) A Hokkaido travel brochure picturing Furano (an area on the West side of the Tokachi mountain range) homesteaded farms, snow capped mountains and pastoral space.



II.5.3.i) Cowboy Up: consciously emulating the American West in northern Tokachi through a horse trekking tour company based in Sahoro town.

Even the notion of contrasting with the United States – though in Okinawa the US military presence plays a central role in terms of macro and micro security (from land disputes to physical assaults) – this quest for security in the face of a ‘internationalisation’ is shared in the Hokkaido dairy industry, in as much as America plays a large role in the ‘securing’ and search for ontological security in Okinawa the American beef and dairy industry have played a central role in defining a mirrored Other in the Hokkaido dairy industry.

II.6 Conclusion

This chapter has set the groundwork for understanding Hokkaido; its changes, inherent otherness, and its particular macro level search for security. Closing this rather dense chapter a ‘bullet point’ style summary might be helpful. First, the history of Hokkaido is quite unlike other regions in Japan. It is a frontier colony. Second, throughout the long history of social, economic, and political changes in the region, the indigenous people and the people drawn to Hokkaido have been demarcated as others in the context of broader Japanese society. Third, Hokkaido is unlike Okinawa in numerous ways; in terms of its history of security and ‘inter’ and ‘inner’ national relations such as history and brokering between coloniser and colonised, and

immigration verses emigration. Fourth in terms of a frontier metaphor, while I am not making any claims about world systems theory in the remainder of the thesis, Okinawa was colonised, and it may be a frontier in these terms, yet it is very clearly not a “colonial frontier” in the way the settlement of Hokkaido mirrors, indeed was designed to mirror that of the North American West (Irish 2009, Fugita 1994, Maki 1996, Mock 1999, Russell 2007). And finally, despite the numerous differences between Okinawa and Hokkaido, there are idealised spaces that house specific counter ‘epic’ narratives of Japaneseness. Such narratives are open to interpretation and attract young Japanese workers who have their own experiences of these places. While this dissertation focuses on Hokkaido’s ‘tourist’ dairy workers, a future comparison of ‘tourist’ workers in Okinawa would prove not merely a fascinating aspect of research but a fruitful one.

Chapter Three

From Traction to *Teishyoku*:¹ A Human and Bovine Trajectory

III. 1. Introduction

This chapter fleshes out how the dairy and related beef industries were historically introduced and promoted in Japan, especially in regard to Hokkaido under the shifting macro security conditions outlined in the previous chapter. It sketches how dairy practices were established and why cattle farming, as a livelihood, developed at such a late stage in Japanese history relative to Europe and its former colonies as well as much of continental Asia. Furthermore, this chapter underscores why Japan is an anomaly with regard to beef and dairy consumption and production. Not because these products are rare. They have become increasingly central in the Japanese diet. Japan is remarkable because despite the late establishment of dairy production and the general silence about the importance of this industry, it is the only Asian nation to have, not just one, but two of world's top twenty dairy production companies: Meiji Milk and Morinaga Foods – ranked, in terms of Euros, at number eleven and number fifteen, respectively.²

This chapter also focuses on the structure of the industry in Japan and discusses how and why Japanese people today are willing to pay dearly for what many perceive as the safety and security of Japan's food supply. The agricultural industry in contemporary Japan, as in the previous chapter's explanation of the *Kaitakushi*, is promoted from the top-down through macro level promotion of an official discourse of security and safety through the government, industry, and the media. However for reasons underscored in this chapter, such policies affect the dairy industry more than other agriculture industries, most notably the production of rice.

¹ *Teishyoku* is a set meal.

² Moruninga and Meiji Milk, see Danish Dairy Board Statistics at http://www.mejeri.dk/smcms/danishdairyboard_dk/Facts_figures_key_figures/World_s_top20/Index.htm?ID=5160 accessed via Google February 10th 2007. Japan accounts for 48.5 % of Aisian market Milk as of 2005. Hokkaido accounts for nearly 50% of this.

III.2. A History of Japanese Beef Cattle³

Although cattle are not central to the image most people hold of traditional or even contemporary Japan, the history of the relationship between human and bovine on the islands is longer than many people imagine. Indeed, while it is common to associate Japan with sushi or Buddhism, cattle rearing is seldom mentioned despite the fact that the practice of keeping cattle far predates the introduction of these and many other well-known 'Japanese' practices.⁴ Japan's pre-modern⁵ borrowings from the *Paekche* and *Silla* (676 – 918 CE) Kingdoms (Korea) and *Han* (206 BCE – 220 CE), *Sui* (581 – 618 CE), and *T'ang* (618 – 907 CE) dynasties (China) are too numerous to enumerate.⁶ Yet, any discussion of livestock, even with an eye to the modern era alone, must reference the initial impact that these neighbours had in relation to the Japanese development of animal husbandry and consumption.

Chinese settlers introduced cattle and horses to Honshu in the *Yayoi* period (400 BCE – 250 CE).⁷ The initial introduction of these animals has been linked to the need for their large bones as early Japanese court nobles placed great faith in oracle bones and recent archaeological findings suggest cattle were imported for this purpose.⁸ Thus, the early importing of cattle was linked to security issues, evidenced by religious practices in Japan that utilized their bones to predict fates and ward off risk. Also, cattle were valuable as a means of traction to produce and transport food. However, they were not used *as food per se*. There are some recorded incidents of religious animal sacrifice and consumption, particularly cattle, as practiced by peasants at the start of the rice cultivation season during *Yayoi* times (Ishige 2001: 55).⁹ But these were rituals at annual celebrations and do not reflect a habitual mode of sustenance for

³ See Mason and Craiger (1997), Steele (2003), Tipton (2002), Totman (2000), for excellent, recent, and readable overall histories of Japan.

⁴ More regarding Buddhism and Sushi below; many quintessentially Japanese practices from calligraphy to tea ceremony arrived in Japan hundreds of years after the domestication of cattle.

⁵ At this point this small 'kingdom' is referred to as Yamato (Mason and Craiger 1997: 37).

⁶ Prior to 676 in Korea and between 220 and 581 in China, factional warring periods draw out complexities well beyond the scope of this thesis. In English and the context of Japan Sansom's *History of Japan* (1961) is a standard set of texts.

⁷ Livestock were likely introduced from the island of Kyushu.

⁸ Personal Communication with UCLA Professor Li Min at the *Animals: Past Present and Future* Conference University of Michigan April 18th 2009.

⁹ Ainu people 'domesticated' bear. Although the animal is consumed, it is a form of religious ritual not sustenance.

the early Japanese. In short, the link between human and bovine was an interdependent one - summed up as work to eat and eat to work perhaps. The Yayoi people developed a system that ingeniously combined agriculture and fishing, whereby 'domesticated' fish lived in and so fertilized the wet rice paddies. The Yayoi also occasionally hunted wild game such as boar – an animal still keenly hunted by some people and plentiful in mountainous Honshu (Knight 2003; Walker 2005). However, they had no history as organized pastoralists before the introduction of the practice from the Continent.

Japan's indigenous and eclectic matrix of spiritual beliefs, loosely organised under the rubric of Shinto from early modern times, contains few examples of animal sacrifice, but has a well documented history of animal anthropomorphism and deification; such as shape shifting foxes or money attracting cats (Seki 1963). Moreover, Shinto's emphasis on *kegare* (ritual purification) would make the routine slaughter of animals an undesirable practice for the majority of the population.¹⁰ Throughout Japanese history Buddhism has also buttressed the relative lack of animal husbandry practices geared towards consumption.

Buddhism officially entered Japan in 552 CE, during the late *Kofun* period (250 – 710), as a gift from the *Paekche* kingdom under the guise of being a particularly potent form of practical court protecting magic (Reader and Tanabe 1998).¹¹ It flourished under the auspices of the *Soga* clan, the new regional hegemonic power. Soon after the introduction of Buddhism, continental cultural and religious practices were further reinforced when scores of *Paekche* loyalists fled to Japan after their defeat by a *Silla* and *Sui* coalition. Despite the fall of the *Soga* in 645, the political influence of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism proliferated amongst Japan's elite, as did the Buddhist precept of *ahimsa* (non-harm). And accordingly, in 675 the Japanese emperor Temmu declared "...an outright ban on hunting... [certain fishing traps]...and a prohibition during the fourth through ninth months of the eating of beef, horse, dog, monkey, and chicken...on pain of execution" (Ishige 2001: 53).

In the Nara period (710 – 794) the Japanese court began to incorporate continental culture en masse from the *T'ang* Chinese, often by way of the *Silla* kingdom on the Korean peninsula. Numerous delegations were sent to the mainland to learn everything from language to methods of governance; by the Nara period many *Silla* and *T'ang*

¹⁰ This point is elaborated on below regarding the development of the *eta* caste.

¹¹ It is likely that Buddhism entered through lay merchants before its official acceptance.

nobles were devoutly Buddhist and had converted to a vegetarian diet. Rural peasants in Japan, through necessity, continued to hunt and eat feral meat as well as consume aged draught-stock. But slowly, after numerous imperial decrees were issued banning the consumption of four-legged animals and Buddhist notions of karma began to enter the rural consciousness, the practice, even of ritual beef consumption, decreased. The majority of Japanese subsisted on a seafood and vegetable diet while infrequently consuming other forms of animal protein such as wild or domesticated fowl.

Throughout the Heian period (794 – 1192) hunting was discreetly carried on by the peasantry - as was the eating of work-worn beasts of burden. According to Walker (2005), the Japanese aversion to eating four legged animals might be overestimated in earlier academic works as recent archaeological evidence has uncovered the existence of wild boar hunts and by the 1600s domesticated pigs.¹² It is certain that for those in society's higher echelons, the consumption of beef for medicinal purposes, called *kusurigui*, was tolerated. Although the rationale of tying the eating of flesh to therapy may have been a ruse for those with money who simply enjoyed the flavour of domesticated meat to indulge their wants, the official logic was that the consumption of beef cured vague illnesses, such as "weakness" or the disposition of a "delicate nature" (Ishige 2001: 58).

In the thirteenth century the Mongols conquered continental Asia and brought with them a long tradition of livestock farming. They also introduced a 'barbequed' meat eating culture including, but not in any way limited to, beef. This culinary tradition has continued in North East Asia until the present day, most famously perhaps as *kalbi* (ribs) and *bulgogi* (sliced beef) in Korea. Although the Mongols made two attempts, first in 1274 and again in 1281, to invade Japan, typhoons or the *kamikaze* (divine winds), repelled them. Thus, the meat loving invaders and their culinary ways stayed across the seas.¹³

During Japan's feudal period, from the Kamakura period on through to the late Tokugawa period, indigenous adaptations of Buddhism developed that appealed to both

¹² James Taylor was also carrying out unpublished doctoral research on these topics, notable the Okhotsk (pre-Ainu) and pig consumption at The University of Washington and (2007-2008) Hokkaido University.

¹³ The Mongols did push their way into present day Sakhalin. Early inhabitants of Northern Japan, reaching into Tohoku, ate domesticated animals such as pig, raised hunting dogs and avidly hunted wild game.

the ruling military elite and the lay public.¹⁴ The rigid austerity and emphasis on praxis and experience, over and above the more esoteric ritual pursuits that allured Heian era nobles, made *Zen* Buddhism, an interpretation of Chinese *Ch'an* Buddhism, appealing to the pragmatic rough-and-ready new military rulers. The *Jodo Shu* and *Jodo Shin Shu* schools (Pure Land and New Pure Land respectively) were forms of Buddhist devotional belief based on a doctrine of salvation and rebirth provided by *Amida* Buddha who resided in a 'western heaven of light' where the Buddha preached for eternity.¹⁵ Thus, combinations of magical folk practices and forms of devotional Buddhism appealed to the masses and surely bolstered some resistance to habitual mammal consumption. Although hunting game, especially deer and wild boar, grew to be an increasingly popular sport for the minority elite of the *bakufu*, the life of the rural peasant remained dire and the majority of their diet was based on crops not mammal proteins.

In addition to the religious aversions present in doctrines of karma and purity, the eating of mammal meat remained illegal for the common people, and moreover, the progressive increase in rice tax levies and decrees that commoners could not carry weapons further aided in curbing clandestine hunting.¹⁶ In addition, an under-caste, the *eta*, developed from the negative stigma attached to those who worked with animal by-products, such as leather, rendering them *persona non grata* and forcing them to live outside of Japanese settlements.¹⁷ The above was augmented by another basic political and economic condition: all land was owned by feudal lords keen to keep tax monies

¹⁴ I am greatly simplifying a complex history. Schools of Buddhist thought tend to be separated for the sake of explanatory simplicity. Actually older schools continued to exist, Shinto was intermeshed with Buddhism, and by the end of the feudal period new 'charismatic' religions – the first wave of new religions – developed widely in Japan. In the feudal period temples acted as *de facto* feudal powers – employing armies and waging wars. By the end of the feudal period temple power had deteriorated to the degree that they were viewed as administrative centres, tax collectors and an arm of the *bakufu*, opening the road for new religions and the persecution of early Meiji Buddhism (Kettlar 1993; Victoria 2000).

¹⁵ The difference being the founders of the schools, Shinran and Honen, and the notion that salvation is worked out *via* daily practice of reciting *Amida* Buddha's name or submission to the saving grace of *Amida*.

¹⁶ There is disagreement as to whether disarming peasants had more to do with an attempt to reduce the increasing rebellions or to keep the poor from killing livestock or hunting prized wild game (Vlastos 1986).

¹⁷ Other groups face discrimination from homosexuals to *eta* or *burakumin* see (Gromer 2001; Ito and Yanase 2001; Lesser 2003; Ryang 2000; Siddie 1997; and Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu ed. 2008). 'Castes' may have long existed, however under the strictures and structures of the Tokugawa regime the need to be registered to a Buddhist temple codified discrimination.

rolling in and to protect their hunting stock. This too kept would-be peasant hunters toiling in the fields despite the nation's numerous famines.¹⁸

Thus, Japan retained its particular form of religion (a syncretism of Buddhism and what was later to be called Shinto)¹⁹ and also retained the reluctance to consume mammal flesh without encountering the radical cultural fissure that Mongol domination, and their roasted meat eating habits, had furnished on the mainland in areas such as Korea for example. Livestock was kept alive to be utilized for traction alone. Only reluctantly was beef eaten. It was not until the modern period, and especially during the post-Second World War period, that beef was popularly considered a food fit for daily consumption.

III.3. A History of Japanese Dairy Cattle

Contrary to the popular belief that dairy is not historically important to the Japanese diet (Ashkenazi and Jacob 2003), there are in fact precedents for dairy consumption in pre-modern Japan. During the Nara period imperial banquets, "Chinese cakes" (*Tōgashi*) and dairy products were served" (Ishige 2001: 48). Also, a type of milk butter, reduced to semi-solid form through boiling, called *so* (resembling Mongolian *ulm*) was produced on the advice of an early Heian court Chinese-born chief medical officer (*Yamato no Kusuri no Omi*). By the middle of the tenth century the court possessed around 1500 dairy cows for medicinal purposes (*ibid.* 61-62). Hence, like beef, dairy products were associated with the promotion of health and the high culture of the Continent during the Heian period. By the thirteen century however, many of the effete practices of the imperial court nobles were not embraced by the more rough and pragmatic incoming Kamakura era *bakufu* and, as a consequence, the influence of these health inducing dairy products waned.

Despite the *sakoku* policies of the Tokugawa regime, dairy was again to return through a powerful foreign influence. After initial contact with European travellers, and in this sense most notably the Portuguese, the *bakufu* viewed European nations and

¹⁸ See Bix (1986), Vlastos (1986), and Walthall (1991) for historical accounts of peasant uprisings. Rebellions during the reign of Tsunayoshi Tokugawa (1646-1709) were directly related to his edicts against the killing of animals (notably dogs as he was born in the year of the dog). While peasants were starving, dogs, in the hundreds, were kept in kennels on the outskirts of Edo and fed rice and fish!

¹⁹ For a general history of Japanese religion as syncretism see Kasahara *et. al.* (2001).

especially their Christian missions, as a threat to the security of the country. The *bakufu* issued various edicts expelling and then eventually executing early missionaries and traders with the Dutch being the exception to this general rule of xenophobic expulsion.²⁰ Although unable to reside 'in' Japan, they were able to reside 'by' Japan on a manmade island called *Deshima* near present day Nagasaki, Kyushu (Willis 2008). The significance of this, in terms of dairy production, is twofold. First, beyond the odd shipwreck survivor, the Dutch were, for over two-hundred years, the main *bakufu* window to the European colonised world. Through 'Dutch learning', Japanese rulers were becoming increasingly aware that European nations had been making tremendous advancements; surpassing Japan in technologies, including science, manufacturing, economics, nautical know-how, armaments, and medicine. The second, and closely related point, is that the Dutch had a long tradition of dairy production and a taste for beef. By 1727 the shogun had imported milk cows and, under direction of Dutch physicians, *hakugyuuraku* (white butter) was produced and consumed as a 'scientifically proven' health tonic to combat tuberculosis and syphilis (Simpson *et. al.* 1985). For the second time in Japanese history the health benefits of dairy were promoted by powerful outsiders. As noted below, the modern period would again see the consumption of dairy products promoted, not just as an elite practice mimicking other elites, but as a daily dietary element, and this was again brought about through powerful foreign influences.

III.4. Modern Dairy and Beef Consumption²¹

In the modern period perhaps the food most associated with Japan is sushi. However, *nigiri* sushi, the well known rice ball with fish on top, was created in Edo by Hanaya Yohei around 1825. The first Japanese ground beef hamburger was introduced by one of Perry's Black Ship cooks to Japanese delegates in 1853. Thus, both of these modern and quintessential 'East meets West' creations are, in essence, merely a generation apart in Japan. This culinary trivia accentuates the less than trivial fact that

²⁰ Clandestine trade did continue with Asian and, to a lesser extent, western merchants and pirates as well. Ship wrecked fishers occasionally appeared on Japanese shores too, filtering information outside of Dutch influence. Such information was likely patchy as late Tokugawa scholars were shocked that Dutch was not the global *lingua franca*.

²¹ A version of this section was published (Hansen 2006).

the Meiji Period was a watershed era of change. It propelled a feudal inward looking nation into one that both absorbed the technology and cultures of other nations and imposed its own culture through its rapidly developing technology on others. When the young emperor Meiji, purported by his supporters to be divine, took control through a protracted coup from below, Buddhism was equated with the 'old guard', the Tokugawa regime. The government's new rulers, ill-advisedly in retrospect, pulled the power from the Buddhist clerics and placed it in the hands of Shinto 'priests' who were, in retrospect, ill-prepared to wield it (Victoria 2000). However, at the same time the emperor, the head of the now empowered Shinto religion, proclaimed that in order to have strong bodies like those from 'the West', Japanese would have to eat beef and drink milk. The thought being in modern, vogue, evolutionary, and 'you are what you eat' terms, was that the rich protein and fat content found in dairy and beef produced strong people. A people with whom a nation could be built, a people who were up to the task of catching up to the rich nations – in terms of finance and know-how. –The idea was, in essence, that eating rich would produce the desired riches (bodies and minds, and so, abilities) of the desired West. This 'eat the rich' promotion by the emperor was better than a modern dairy board could muster. Common Japanese, who could afford to do so, began consuming more beef and dairy – it was the Japanese thing to do.

At the same time, Japan's drive to import anything and everything 'modern' was insatiable. Everything from armaments to automobiles, along with specialists of every stripe, was brought from America and Europe to Japan. This included William Clark who came to Sapporo (then a town of a few hundred and now Hokkaido's capital and Japan's fifth largest city at 1.8 million people) from America to establish an animal husbandry program at what is now Japan's Hokkaido University, the research core of Hokkaido's dairy industry (Irish 2009: 143-159). In short, American and European outsiders and expatriates, at the behest of the *Kaitakushi*, were responsible for the development and design of Hokkaido's first cattle, sheep, and dairy farms.²² Soon, Japan took up the eating of beef, and later dairy, with zeal, even inventing foods like *sukiyaki* (broiled beef) and copying the building of American style cattle ranches and European style dairies. But, as noted in the previous chapter, rapid modernisation had

²² Fujita 1994; Maki 1996; and Russell 2007 all provide fascinating histories of the prominent American agriculturalists who moved to, and in the case of Edwin Dunn, remained in Hokkaido.

its popular critics, noted in the previous chapter such as Kanagaki, the author of the satirical article 'Eating Beef Stew While Cross Legged', who feared that Japan was losing its identity by eating up (literally and figuratively) what came from the outside (Ohnuki-Tierney 2002: 64-67).

After 'reclaiming' Hokkaido 1867, annexing Okinawa 1879, and defeating China in 1895 and Russia in 1905, the country's fascination with all things western slowed and Japan became more steadily involved in its own projects of empire building with a top-down cultivated vision of itself as the divinely governed liberator of Asia. This led to the annexation of Korea in 1910, the invasion of Manchuria in 1932, colonisation in the Pacific from 1937 to 1945, as well as the Second World War and the eventual surrender in 1945. The Allied Occupation from 1945-1952 had the unintentional consequence of transforming Japanese eating trends radically (Dower 1999). Under the Occupation, which was largely American led, primary school was made mandatory, as were school meal programs serving *healthy* food. Healthy by US standards meant rich foods modelled on a rich nation. For Japanese children it meant, as it does for most today, milk at every lunch time and even the occasional serving of beef. From this point on in Japanese history, it seems reasonable to assume that the introduction to beef and dairy at a young age served to open the Japanese palate to beef and dairy later in life.

After the Occupation, with a more liberal Constitution in hand and heavily subsidized by the USA, Japan began to rebuild itself. As soon as the early 1950s the economy was on its way up as the Korean War brought increased affluence through the manufacture of armaments and services for the American military. This increased foreign investment and cash flow, along with the steady flow of American service personal in and out of Japanese society, brought about an upsurge in contemporary American trends. Meiji era *Mirukuho-ru* (milk halls) were followed by 'contemporary' *Kissaten* (coffee shops). Both had existed across Japan long before the war, and even today quieter and quainter *Kissaten* can be found that always serve a snack with coffee - often a Danish-style butter cookie. However, after the war, many *kissaten* began to serve milkshakes, soft drinks, cakes and American style sandwiches. These establishments began to pop up everywhere, and by mid 1950s they offered teens a place to 'hang out'; a place where they could listen to music and meet with friends while enjoying their 'imported' beef and dairy foods of choice. They were the harbingers of today's popular Japanese family restaurants such as Gusto or Royal Host

– restaurants that sell ‘*Nihon-no-fried*’ American-style fast foods. In essence, these shops became a place to eat ‘rich’ food – imbibing high calories and the cultural capital of wealthy America - with new riches earned in an economy fuelled largely by the booming US economy and consumption.

Indeed, “between the mid-1950s and the early 1970s, the Japanese economy grew at 10 per cent annually” (Odagiri and Goto 1996: 37). And by the 1960s Japan was the darling of America’s Asian policy, spurred on not only by the procurement of weapons and services during the Korean War, but as a beacon of Asian democracy and a regional bulwark against the red menace of China and the USSR. Riding on the coat tails of the ‘American Dream’, Japan was able to produce cheap consumer durables – scooters, refrigerators, and stereos - for sale abroad. When the profit from those sales returned to Japan it instigated similar trends of upward mobility, urban migration, and mass consumption in Japan much as it did in the USA (*ibid.* 36-42). Japan served as a willing entryway of American tastes and trends into Asia. It played host to the 1964 Olympics introducing people and cuisine from around the world to the Japanese. It also played host to the World Expo in 1970 and similar to the Korean War the conflict in Vietnam brought much needed foreign investment to Japan. One could say that the insecurity of Asia led to the increasing changes in the macro security of Japan in military, political, and financial, terms.

Moreover, throughout the post-war period the USA sold technology cheaply to Japan allowing the nation to develop a thriving and cutting edge research and development culture. By 1971, slightly less aggressively than in 1853 perhaps, the ‘real’ American burger was promoted in Tokyo, and soon after the “Golden Arches” had arrived, local and global competition appeared. The 1980’s saw Japan become an economic superpower and more than ever before, ‘foreign’ foods flooded Japan. From Denny’s to TGIF’s and from 7/11 to Mr. Donut, food chains entered Japan modifying Japanese tastes and being modified to fit theirs; often this modification involved making portions smaller in size, lower in flavour, and higher in fat.

Today, many Japanese still feel that, insofar as dairy and beef are concerned, the richer is still the better. Japanese consumers buy buttered fatty steak, whole fat cheese, and, until recently, finding milk under 3.7 % fat content was a near impossibility – and today low fat milk is always significantly cheaper due to the equation rich equals rich or in other words, fat equals high quality. This image has recently become a problem

as globalisation has taken a firmer hold. In short, to the majority of Japanese dairy is delicious mainly because of its richness, not only in terms of being a luxury product or through the hazy allure of connections to foreign places as in the past, but simply, in terms of its fat content.

During the Occupation high calorie foods were a necessity for an undernourished nation, but contemporary Japan has become rich itself – transformed into a fully developed nation with an increasingly overweight population. Fat sells the flavour, but unfortunately for the Japanese dairy industry it promotes the expansion of fat cells as well, and many Japanese, like many in the Americas and Europe, are becoming more health conscious. The eating of the rich has not completely lost its attraction – but Japanese are consuming less domestic dairy. Unlike North America or Europe, low fat dairy has been slow to catch on and in part this is due to the inflexibility and ineptitude of the top-down Japanese corporate structure.

III.5. Presently Tense in the Present Tense

With the declining rural population, high and ever-increasing production costs, and the need for extensive and expensive infrastructure and maintenance – especially in Hokkaido (MAFF 2005) - nobody debates *if* the Japanese government plays a role in agriculture today. “[In] Japan’s Agricultural sector, the question of whether the state intervenes to determine economic outcomes is not contested. Agriculture is the most ‘intervened’ industry in Japan” (Mulgan 2006: 1). This intervention is prevalent nationally and internationally. A recent example of government intervention on both these levels is the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) crisis that halted the trade of beef from North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) countries - Canada, the United States, and Mexico - to Japan.²³

As noted in the Introduction to this thesis, in April of 2003 a Canadian beef cow from Alberta died and was diagnosed post-mortem with BSE. It was quite unusual that this downer cow was inspected at all and not rendered into pet-food, but the Japanese quickly suspended all imports of beef or beef products from NAFTA nations. Japanese trade bloc countries such as Korea soon followed their lead. Sidestepping the

²³ The purpose of looking at the BSE issue is to express the extent to which Japanese are concerned over food safety and security issues. The third through fifth chapters focus on how beef and dairy industries are intimately linked.

numerous political issues that arose within NAFTA, in Japan the issue was, *on the surface*, presented as a simple one - food safety and food security. This rhetoric was 'on the surface' because the issue was the tip of a larger security iceberg.²⁴ Food safety and security, as explained below, are intimately linked with a long history of economic, political, and military security in Japan. In the case of BSE, despite numerous incidents of domestic 'mad cow' disease in Japan; despite numerous Japanese and North American government, industry, and independent scientific studies underscoring the impossibility of contracting BSE from many of the banned products;²⁵ despite beef shortages, price hikes, and complaints from consumers and massive beef food conglomerates within Japan like *Yoshinoya*;²⁶ and finally, despite pressure from the World Trade Organization (WTO) outlining that Japan was in breach of the General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs (GATT), membership obligations, and moreover, under the threat of legal sanctions and/or embargos: Japan remained defiant. To Japanese officials it was a food safety and security issue and *not* a trade issue. The ruling LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) was clear in its rhetoric. The government was protecting Japanese consumers and the borders would not be opened for business to North American beef. By no coincidence the same party is heavily supported by Japan's rural electorate, and the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), the government's main agricultural policy branch, was quick to coalesce with the official party line.²⁷ Tellingly, the opening chapter of MAFF's 2004 annual report on 'Food, Agriculture and Rural areas in Japan' ran with the title 'Ensuring Food Safety and Consumer Confidence: Establishing a System for a Stable Food Supply'.²⁸ Recently, owing in large part to food safety scares, international ones being key as domestic scandals are played down and vanish with clever marketing, the idea that Japan must improve its margin of self-sufficiency has gained both popular and political

²⁴ American lobby groups pointed to a Canadian cow, Canadians pointed to its shipping from 'down south' raising jingoistic rhetoric on both sides of the border. Mexican officials claimed there was no link with their beef and ought not to be penalised with trade barriers, at which point American officials hinted that a crack-down on illegal workers in the livestock industry was overdue. Political posturing aside, in the end all agreed the given NAFTA laws and tracking the culprit cow could potentially be Mexican more, fed in Canada, and rendered in the US.

²⁵ Young beef and products not containing spinal residue are considered BSE free.

²⁶ *Yoshinoya* is a large *gyuudon* (beef on rice) fast food chain. They have begun to focus exclusively on pork.

²⁷ LDP, MAFF, and agricultural co-operatives are detailed below.

²⁸ MAFF 2004 report found at <http://www.maff.go.jp/eindex.html> accessed via Google January 15th 2006.

support in Japan, for example in the *Food Action Nippon* campaign (Assman 2009, MAFF 2008).

Given this series of events, beef and dairy producers in North America were furious at Japan's 'ignorance of science'; Japanese producers were relieved as they were temporarily freed from the competition of North America's cheaper imports; and in Australia and New Zealand producers were elated by the newly open markets in Japan. Bitter trade negotiations continued between NAFTA and Japan for three years, with Japan constantly stalling and balking at decisions. The issue culminated with America's own linking of security and trade issues through hinting that all US troops might be taken out of Okinawa, a move which would leave Japan with no legal military and with uneasy neighbours in North Korea and China.²⁹ Indeed, in the Japanese media the two issues 'ping-ponged' throughout my first fieldwork year. Stories about the pulling of NAFTA beef out of the Japanese market were followed or preceded by stories related to the pulling of US troops out of Okinawa – raising emotions, unbridled jingoism, and rhetoric linking food, economic, and military security.

Though Japan engages in national and nationalist agricultural protectionism (Mulgan 2006), America, Canada, and many member states of the EU (through Codex for example) engage in trade that is far from 'free' (Maclachlan 2001: 326-330; Millston and van Zwanenberg 2003: 38-53; Pawlick 2006). There is nothing 'particular' about nationalist agricultural protectionism as such, it is found in nearly every nation, including developing ones (Pollan 2006; Pottier 1999: 11-40). Often, as in Japan, it is linked with insecurities brought on after military conflict or perceived isolation as in the UK (Draper and Green 2003: 55-58; Humphrys 2002). Also, like Japan, it can be associated to specific ideas linking food type to nation as in France, England, and Zambia (Freidberg 2004). However, what is particular about food security in Japan is the zeal with which the Japanese government protects the food industry. Rice production is essentially a part-time occupation, treated much like a hobby with farmers often producing just enough rice for their family (Jussaume 1991). The government will protect this form of agriculture ignoring tangible and devastating

²⁹ The issue is complex and beyond the scope of dairy farming but since the Occupation (1945-52), Japan has not 'officially' been able to support a standing military. This is outlined in the nation's post-war Constitution, specifically Article 9 (Dower 1999: 82-83, 244, 394-399). Japan does have a 'Self Defence Force' and has been 'encouraged' in the post Gulf-war and 9/11 era by the US administration to play a more prominent role in its own defence. (Berger et al. 2007; personal communication with Richard Siddle May 17th, 2010).

risks such as American military pull out or trade embargos. This is combined with the popular daily media emphasis, and discourse, on the *shyokuryou mondai* (food stuff problem) or *kiki* (crisis or danger). This underscores a particular polysemic relationship between security as noun (prefaced by, for example, economic or food) and security as a value or verb (ensuring safety, predictability, or fixity) that is popularly expressed at a grass-roots level with an uncommon passion. Americans may want to save the heartland, the UK may promote 'Buying British', and Albertans may sport a number of 'UFA Back Your Beef' bumper stickers – but none are seemingly as willing (or as seemingly 'vulnerable') to destroy trade relations or unquestioningly pay exorbitant prices.

The BSE issue highlights these points. In October of 2006 NAFTA beef trade with Japan resumed with much fanfare.³⁰ In front of the US embassy a flock of pigeon-toed young Japanese women in tight fitting red, white, and blue low-cut jumpsuits waved their silver pom-poms and giggled and chanted: "*Yakiniku daisuki*" (I love Barbeque beef). Across Japan McDonald's advertisements had to be changed. They could no longer advertise that *anzen* = *zero yen* (safety or security = no charge) as this great beacon of American pop-culture no longer served Australian beef alone.³¹ By the end of the dispute, if anything was clear to all involved – and to anyone following the issue in the news – it was that this was indeed an economic and political security issue. Moreover, the US had handily turned it into a military issue. Yet, despite the lack of any tangible health risk, this issue remained earnestly viewed by many in Japan as a food security and safety issue. The underlying question was whose security and safety? Was it the safety and security of the consumer, the farmer, the government, employees in Japan's many redundant agricultural co-operatives, or all of the above – the Japanese nation itself?

At the national level one way that protectionism is fostered is through product labelling laws. Japan has some of the world's most protectionist laws regarding food product imports and labelling. Illustrating this point, Vogel has noted:

³⁰ NHH notes; in January of 2008, shipments of US beef were turned back under Japanese standards for importation despite an ongoing domestic meat scandals. For example the well published Meat Hope scandal in Hokkaido – in short, a company selling 100 % beef products was found to sell products containing, pork, chicken, and shockingly Russian rabbit meat.

³¹ *Anzen* is translated as safety and security alternatively.

...[t]he debate over health and safety regulation in Japan has an important nationalist dimension. Many Japanese appear to regard foreign products and technologies as inherently less safe than ones produced in Japan: they trust neither foreign manufactures nor foreign regulatory authorities. Consequently, many pressures to liberalize imports are viewed as threatening the health of the Japanese public and, by extension, the uniqueness and self-sufficiency of Japanese society.

(Vogel 1992: 153)

One is tempted to invoke the purity and danger symbolism of Douglas (as indeed Vogel does in his paper) or on the structuralist binaries of Lévi-Strauss (1970); the raw and cooked, the self and the other, domestic and foreign, or, of course in the context of Japan, *soto* (outside) and *uchi* (inside) (Nakane 1973).³² The idea of insider and outsider has been a perennial theme in studies of Japanese culture proclaiming the Japanese to be 'insecure' or 'insular' at one pole and 'xenophobic' or 'racist' at the other with more nuanced comparisons located in between.³³ However, I contend that one way to view the seemingly paradoxical nature of Japanese nationalist discourse – that is, the ability to accept or reject science as 'national' interest dictates, or to ignore the voices of the electorate for their own safety – lies not through examining these many possible lateral dialectics, but in looking at the vertical discourses of top-down power relations. Nakane's notion of "vertical stratification" (1973: 90) is useful in this regard and is expanded upon below.³⁴ The question raised is not if the government manipulates agricultural industries, as the above history and the examples of the BSE crisis and labelling emphasize, this much is obvious. The question is: How does it intervene and why? The how and the why are intimately linked, but attempting to address the two together is unnecessarily confusing. Broadly put, the 'how' is related to structure and 'why' is related to function but the two neatly dovetail.

³² The classic source discussing the concepts of *soto* and *uchi* can be found in Nakane (1973). Davies and Ikeno (2002) offer a simple, if refreshing, book based on these concepts explained by Japanese students. Also see Lebra (2004).

³³ More in Chapter Six and the Conclusion.

³⁴ I suggest that the media plays a Homogenising role in Japan. Nevertheless, there is nothing particular about nations pursuing national interests while disregarding 'facts' (Chomsky and Herman 1988). The reason why science is ignored is related to the end goal; to protect an inefficient industry the nonetheless is deemed essential. Thus, obligation is to the protection of the industry not some broader principle of 'truth'.

III.5.1 Why?

I start with 'Why?' It is the most empirical and simple question to answer, although for the Japanese food producer it is likely the hardest to swallow. Japanese agriculture, and the Japanese beef and dairy industries specifically, cannot compete with most other agriculture producing nations, on a level, open, or free trade playing field. Without significant structural support from above in the form of import tariffs, production cost subsidies, nationalist rhetoric and without considerable propaganda directed at consumers to spend more for less products, the industry would quickly cease to exist.

There have been studies on how and why the Japanese government protects domestic rice markets through subsidies, tariffs, and propaganda.³⁵ This research is significant in terms of dairy production as well. Japan is self-sufficient in producing only two staple food commodities; rice, for which the Japanese consumer pays up to seven times the world market price, and drinking milk, for which Japanese consumers pay approximately three times the world market price.³⁶ Shockingly, even with these ratios of exchange, the costs of these two foodstuffs are capped as they are deemed essential products, thus disabling market prices to even determine costs within Japan. Both milk and rice retain inflated world market prices despite the substantial tariffs and subsidies designed to bring costs down.

Hokkaido is the most important dairy production area in Japan. It produces 40% of Japan's raw milk. However, due to its relative isolation only 15% is used as 'drinking' milk and 85% used for product manufacturing. This relates directly to the prices milk producers are paid. The drinking milk price is up to 33% higher than the product milk price. Thus Hokkaido producers, under strict regulations, are paid less for the same output of milk than other areas of Japan. Still, within Japan, Hokkaido is the fifth largest producer of drinking milk, far beyond the capacity of its population to consume, and doubles any other agricultural region in the output of milk utilized for dairy products.³⁷ Moreover, the dairy cow plays a central role in the production of images for the tourist industry in Hokkaido – pastoral romance and nostalgia (Takata 2005). In

³⁵ See Moore 1990 and Ohnuki-Tierney 1993, 2002.

³⁶ Sometimes Japan needs to import rice Ohnuki-Tierney 1993: 26-27.

³⁷ See MAFF 2003 statistics at <http://www.maff.go.jp/esokuhou/index.html#6> accessed via Google February 6th 2007. Areas near major urban centres such Kanto produce more drinking milk due to the transportation issue related to 'fresh' milk.

Tokachi, dairy production and its related images play a central role in both the real and symbolic economy. However, there are many disconnects between these positive images and reality.

A recent study has compared the dairy industry in New Zealand to Hokkaido (Ozawa *et. al.* 2005). In New Zealand production costs for raw milk are 29% of Hokkaido's and herd size in New Zealand is roughly four and a half times as large. The climate and landscape of New Zealand allows for year-round grazing, self-sustainable feed production on farm, and a minimum of animal housing facilities. In Hokkaido feed alone accounts for 82% of production costs; costs that continue to rise while the price of milk is kept artificially low within Japan. Other studies (cf. Beghin 2006, Obara *et.al.* 2005, Simpson and Onōchi 2002, Suzuki and Kaiser 1994) focus on comparing Japan as a whole with the rest of Asia, the USA, the EU, and Australia and while statistics vary the message is clear;

...[T]he WTO 2007 / World Liberalization Scenario indicates the order of competitiveness of Asian dairy economies from least to most competitive is Japan, Korea, South East Asia, South Asia, China and India...[with trade liberalization]...net imports would increase most of which [in Asia] would come from Australia and New Zealand.

(Peng and Cox 2005: 20)

Studies focusing on India and China outline that the market for dairy products in both, and beef in the latter, are increasing in terms of production and consumption (Dong 2006), while in Japan the demand for dairy has remained more or less stable over the last ten years. The consumption of drinking milk has slightly decreased while the consumption of imported and domestic dairy products (for example cheese or pizza) and beef has increased. Taking this stagnancy, or worse a loss of domestic market shares, into account, adding topographical factors that cannot be easily altered – such as the low density of arable land and land suitable for building (not mountainous) or the climate – and considering the high cost of labour, building, equipment, feed, and transportation, it is abundantly clear that the dairy industry in Japan would not be able to survive without significant intervention. Dairy subsidies and import tariffs are a safety and security issue, but ones beyond considering the wellbeing of consumers, the food security rhetoric and system supports the continued livelihood of dairy and beef farmers and producers.

Thus, 'why' the government intervenes in Japanese agricultural production is a reasonably straightforward issue embedded in obvious economics, a popular discourse of national necessity, and perceived public safety and food security fears. The Japanese government demands that Japan needs to be self-sufficient and secure in its ability to produce food, and towards these ends, it protects Japanese food producers at the expense of international relations and cost to consumers.

Japanese consumers tolerate this and there are reasons (that might seem to many observers both logical and illogical) underscored below, but despite what critics may argue about Japanese import policy, it is clear that if Japan intends to maintain a domestic agriculture industry it presently has no choice but to play the role of protective parent and to continue its top-down protectionist agenda (Assman 2009; Mulgan 2006). There are tangible and frequently vocalized reasons why the Japanese public is willing to pay more for less.

Japan has had a history of famine. Japan is an island nation with few natural resources and generally poor farming conditions (Soda 2006). Severe food shortages were experienced during and after the Second World War and general resource shortages during the world energy crisis in 1973 and 1980 and these events happened within the lifetimes of my informants, certainly their parents. In short, this is not distant history. And the notion of Japan as misunderstood and an isolated victim is a common media trope – notably during the August Sixth A-bomb memorial services in Hiroshima which are televised yearly on NHK.³⁸ Linked to this popular sentiment as victimised people, the island of Japan is surrounded by nations it formerly colonised and it has, expectedly, uneasy relationships with most. There are disputes over land, trade, human rights and reparations with South Korea and China. This is worsened by the lack of an acceptable Japanese apology and growing nationalism in all three nations (Wu 2007). There is constant North Korean posturing; along with heated debates over former kidnappings and the repatriation of human remains. There are occasional North Korean missile tests over Japanese airspace (some landing off the coast of Hokkaido killing Japanese fishermen during my fieldwork) and there have been submarine crashes on Japanese shores. The media veraciously reports on these issues. Finally, Japan has remained officially at war with Russia since 1945 due to confiscation of the

³⁸ Pollack (1992) discusses how this notion of victim plays out in modern Japanese literature while the role of victimiser is played down.

Kuril Islands. In short, North East Asia is a politically insecure area and Japan has historical enemies and animosities with growing regional powers and recent frictions with its main protector, America. Thus, the 'isolated and resource poor island' rhetoric is a powerful one supported with many tangible and popular fears for the future and historical examples to exacerbate such anxieties.

Beyond this historic and potential political, economic, and military unease, there have been many recent food safety scares; some major, such as the 1995 seafood *E. coli* 0-157 outbreak or the 2000 'Snow Brand' incident (the sale of various contaminated dairy products resulting in over 14,000 people falling ill) both of which resulted in deaths from contaminated foods. There has also been an endless parade of less deadly ones such as the Hokkaido 2006 'Meat Hope' beef scam and the 2007 'Shiroi Koibito' (white beloved) cookie scandal.³⁹ It seems that many Japanese distrust foreign food safety regulations, but domestic ones are not particularly effective either. Domestically, cover-ups are the common response; and all of the above scandals were accompanied by attempted cover-ups. When caught, tried, and accused – as there are rarely openly admitted wrongs – the result is generally a deep bow in a wash of clicking cameras and media limelight. Then there follows the predictable political apology. First, there is generally a claim of 'we didn't know' (whatever infringement) was wrong (with the cover-up before getting caught often ignored). This is followed by 'now we do see our wrong doing and *moshiwakegozaimasen*' (a polite apologetic excuse literally 'there is no excuse'). This is capped with 'we will *gambatte*' (do our utmost) to set it right' and is followed by a slap-on-the-wrist usually in the form of a minor fine. Weeks later, with some media promotion, these 'dangerous' products are often back on the shelves with consumers consuming.

None of this is lost on Japanese popular consciousness however. Every year a religious leader in Japan is asked to produce a Kanji (a Japanese rendering of a Chinese character) that they feel best represents the year. At the end of 2007 the Kanji *nise* (fake or false) was chosen in large part due to food safety and labelling scandals

³⁹ The *E. coli* outbreak was a contamination of fish products in the summer of 1995 in Osaka. Snow Brand was mixing past date products with fresh products in 2001. Meat Hope scandal was outlined above and in October of 2007 the issue was cookie packaging for *Shiroi Koibito* (white lover) with officials acknowledging this practice had been going on for ten years before anyone got sick! A week later a candy maker was accused of the same charge. In short, domestic food security issues are a perennial theme in Japanese popular media.

(Funabashi 2007). However, in speaking with Japanese one quickly notes that it is not such a simple issue. Japanese people are not being hoodwinked. Deeper emotive chords are being played in the presentation of these issues.



III.5.1.a) False or fake chosen as the Kanji to sum up the year.

Source of photo Asian Off Beat -

<http://www.asianoffbeat.com/default.asp?Display=1270> accessed via Google January 20th 2009.

In interviews with dozens of Japanese people about food security – teachers, professors, friends, and random people on trains – the common claim is that food product safety is a huge problem in Japan. But (and *but* is the key), Japan as a commonly evoked island country must endeavour to produce its own food supply. The obvious question stemming from the above information is why produce overpriced food – produced at an incredible net loss – if you can produce other manufactured products that enable you to buy ‘safe’ food more cheaply? The Japanese consumer could pick nearly any country that they deemed to have a safe food supply and be

further ahead economically as they already pay well over market price for most food products – let alone those from other parts of Asia. One patented response is that food produced in Japan tastes better because it is grown in Japan. This brand of ‘nationalist’ logic (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993) is difficult to understand in non-symbolic terms. However, it is also reasoned by many Japanese, whether from the historical factors, the media circus of present food scandals, or worries about the political, military, and economic future, that Japan *should be* anxious about food security and food safety.

Despite the internal breaches of food security and safety, Japanese prefer to have faith in themselves. This may or may not be obvious from the BSE crisis or labelling laws. Here are some ethnographic examples. During my fieldwork I asked numerous co-workers what they thought about the future possibility of drinking milk being imported from China. The boss at the dairy farm, Wada-san, laughed and replied that it would be,

“*Muridayo.*” (impossible).

“Why? Because of the shipping costs or know-how?” I queried.

“*Iie*” (no), he replied, “*Abunain dakara, chugoku ha kitanai.*” (Because it is dangerous, China is dirty).

He went on to describe how Japanese would never buy milk from outside of Japan even if it was cheaper, underscoring his faith in the quality of Japanese products and loyalty to products ‘made in Japan’.

Another co-worker told me that he refused to buy food in 100 Yen stores.⁴⁰

“Why?” I asked.

“*Zenbu chugoku o tsuru. Abunai yo!*” (It’s all made in China – it’s dangerous I tell you!), was his emphatic reply.

I immediately responded: “I eat food from 100 Yen shops, look at me.” He poked my bulging belly and I told him that I did not buy 100 yen beer. We both laughed, and I dropped the subject. However a few days later, unprompted by me, he recalled our conversation. He showed me a website with compelling online photos; a brown lawn being painted green in front of a portrait of Mao, a dried out river with people collecting thousands of dead fish – presumably to sell or eat, and a two headed fish in a tin. He informed me that this was: “*Nihonjin no chugoku no ime-ji*” (the Japanese

⁴⁰ A shop similar to a one-pound shop in the UK or a dollar store in North America.

image of China) and that “*Kono pe-ji wa minna wakaru. Chugoku wa totemo kowai da*” (Everyone knows this web page. China is scary).

His opinion on this topic was direct and clear. The danger of Chinese pollution, the danger of Chinese people, and the unsuitability of Chinese products, along with the possible threat to Japan and my health were points he wanted me to consider seriously.

In short, most of the Japanese that I have interviewed or informally chatted with are concerned about the fragility and insecurity of the nation’s food system through historical, topographical, economic, and political modes of thinking that do not concern the lion’s share of North American or European consumers as deeply. Of course there are those in the world for whom food security is an immediate and daily life and death concern (Pottier 1999; Runge *et.al.* 2003). Yet, this is clearly not the case for the majority of even the most marginal of Japanese (Fackler 2010; Gill 2001; Ōyama 2005). There are of course ‘foodies’ – those who engage in ‘slow food’ movements or promote regional diets for personal health and the good of environment – however, these movements are not shared as a discourse by the majority of Japanese consumers.⁴¹ But sidestepping the food security concerns of both the extremely desperate and the culinary bourgeois, food is taken as a serious business for many people in Japan and the adage of ‘you are what you eat’ takes on an entirely other significance related to financial, personal, and ecological feelings and images of security. ‘Why’ the government intervenes and why this intervention is tolerated – even defended and promoted – by Japanese consumers is clear. And this is intimately related to ‘How’ the government achieves its protectionist agenda.

III.5.2 How?

Nakane (1973) discusses the top-down vertical hierarchy of Japanese society, particularly in terms of family, corporate, and government structuring. One needs to be careful not to overstate the rigidity of these vertical bonds in individual, interpersonal, and familial in these contexts, a point returned to in discussing personal and work relationships in an industrial dairy farm in Chapter Nine. There have been numerous scholars who have both built upon and critiqued Nakane’s work. Hamabata has written on the importance of class consciousness and gender as a form of social structuring

⁴¹ For more see the BBC film by Hamed (2006) or the book by Pollan (2006).

(1986); Rosenberger's edited work focuses on socially and culturally fluid structures of self (often posited against a 'western' self) – in essence, a focus on various context dependant personal relations (1992; 2001); Kondo has examined issues of self-identification and emotional commitments of belonging (1990); Lebra building on her theories published in 1976, explored concentric circles of – vaguely horizontal – social relationships (2004), and Hsu focused broadly on Nakane's concept of the nature of the *ie* comparing it to relationship structures (again concentric circles) in American, China, and India (Hsu 1975: 135-159). In short, it is difficult to find a book on social structure in Japan that does not in some way engage, positively or negatively, with Nakane's notion of top-down hierarchies. However, for the most part these studies pre-date major turning points in contemporary Japan as noted in the previous chapter; the economic collapse of the late 80s early 90s, the dwindling of the salary man ideal, Aum gas attacks, the Kobe earthquake, and, for the most part, even the influence of the internet on youth constructing identities.

Nakane discusses relations at length using the word *frame* as the structure, while her *attribute* refers to the individual's position acting within these structures. I suggest that while the *attribute* of many Japanese young people is in flux, the *frame* often proves to be more resistant to change (whether positive or negative). Popular media in Japan ought to be viewed in this light. It is a unifying pop-cultural political tool. Media in Japan is, by default, more local than global (Martinez 1998) and it is often used to promote 'Japaneseness' or the uniqueness of Japanese customs or areas (Ivy 1995). Regional promotion is nearly always linked with 'local' foods; as tourism and food are intimately linked in the Japanese media and programs on regional foods are presented daily, if not hourly. This links to a regional longing or 'nostalgia' for imagined communities and golden ages (Robertson 1998: 110-132). I do not wish to exaggerate the role of the media as a homogenising agent, much as the aforementioned critics of Nakane do not wish to emphasise hierarchy alone as a structuring factor in Japanese society. Martinez (1998: 5) points out, that the media is always individually interpreted in Japan or elsewhere. Nevertheless, due in part to the limited global use of the Japanese language, general political disinterest or defeatism in political affairs, and through governmental ministerial will, the media, and it has also been argued educational materials and programs (Ben-Ari 2003), serve to unify public opinion and promote cultural conformity in Japan.

Chomsky and Herman propose a propaganda model of the media that underscores the top-down nature of news production leading to disengagement with political action. They discuss how American media “Manufacture Consent” by “fixing the premises of discourse” (1988: xi) by “filtering” how supposedly unbiased and factual information is disseminated. The fact that the Japanese media promotes a homogeneous sense of belonging and regional nostalgia or longing is noted in the Introduction to this thesis. However the flipside to this ‘positive’ notion of belonging is that the media also plays a direct role in manufacturing shared feelings of anxiety or crisis about food. This crisis creation also motivates many Japanese to suggest that actions from above (often *via* the government) ought to be directed towards solving whatever crisis is presently being promoted, and so, popular (Leheny 2006). Leheny focuses convincingly on the frequent media portrayal of “youth culture gone wild” (mainly in the form of child prostitution and violence) and “Vague Anxiety” (ibid. pp. 27-49)⁴² directed towards internal outsiders, such as foreign workers, or external threats such as China’s growing economic power or North Korea as a military threat. I suggest food security and safety should be added to this top-down media fear mongering. When neighbouring nations and nationals are represented as threats to security, the Japanese media feeds into and off of seemingly related vague anxieties about Japan’s food supply, the only concrete evidence being outlined by the aforementioned government programs such as *Food Action Nippon*; forwarding the rhetoric that Japan and Japanese must be self-sufficient and not dependant on the goodwill of near or global neighbours. This leads numerous Japanese to worry, and though frequently disappointed, many expect that the government is looking out for them or they feel *shi kata ga nai* (nothing can be done) about these complex and intertwined economic, military, and food security issues.⁴³

Also *via* the media, the official voices of Japanese nationalist agricultural rhetoric are heard via the agricultural “iron triangle” – the MAFF, the LDP, and the numerous *Nōgyō* (agricultural cooperatives with HOKUREN being the most powerful in Hokkaido) scattered throughout Japan (Mulgan 2006).⁴⁴ These are powerful bodies supported in large part by votes and funds from rural areas. Obviously a constant state

⁴² Yuji (2005) refers to a ‘nagging sense of job insecurity’ also promoted by the media. Related to the theme of otherness and danger in Japan see Arudou (2006) and Arai (2006: 216-238).

⁴³ See Orpett-long (1999) for an excellent discussion of *shikata ga nai*.

⁴⁴ It remains to be seen how the urban biased and left leaning Democratic Party of Japan elected in September of 2009 will or will not change agricultural policy.

of food crisis heightens their profile and importance in terms of re-election or simply self-serving job security. Beyond the LDP being voted out of power in the fall of 2009, MAFF is a 'permanent' branch of government responsible for the various livelihoods across rural economic sectors. The economies under the purview of MAFF are often in conflict, for example agriculture and forestry. The *Nōgyō* essentially function as 'go-betweens' for producers, MAFF (and so the government) and wholesale buyers such as food processors and supermarket chains. By promoting food crisis after food crisis the media gains access to these high profile bodies and to news stories that are 'essential' to the daily interests of their consumers – in a word, food.

These collectives set the price and quota limits to which farmers must adhere. It is not a system based on letting markets, producers, and customers negotiate prices, but a top-down governmental and bureaucratic regulation of production, cost, and supply. Generally, farmers do not sell or produce independent from government controls and the frustrations that more ambitious agriculturalists feel about this lack of control are palpable and expressed in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. Until the summer of 2009, the price of drinking milk in Japan was capped despite rising costs in cattle, fuel, land, feed *etcetera*.⁴⁵

Finally, for comparative purposes it is of prime importance to note that the production and promotion of rice and of dairy are very different processes. First, milk products, unlike rice, spoil quickly; raw milk cannot be stored, except in powdered form which radically reduces its value. As a necessarily fresh product it is more susceptible to rises and falls in the market.⁴⁶ Thus, hedging bets on the market is far more risky in the dairy industry. Second, rice production is seasonal and often conducted by families on a part-time basis whereas dairy production is a daily task and there are very few part-time dairy farmers.⁴⁷ Therefore dairy farm families are usually dependent upon the income brought in from dairy farming alone. They are far more at

⁴⁵ Price caps were withdrawn in 2009. This was expected to drive prices up, good news for producers bad for consumers. Dairy owners, as of May 2010, claimed that there was little change in the price offered to them for their milk – this is reflected in store prices as well where milk has remained constant. Due to China's hunger for raw materials and the ongoing American 'war on terror' however, prices for everything from fuel to feed have steadily risen year after year.

⁴⁶ It costs to dry milk and once done it is no longer fresh and its value as 'drinking' milk is lost. It can only be sold as 'product' milk.

⁴⁷ In an interview with a manager at the Holstein Association of Hokkaido, I was told that there were no part-time dairy farms in Hokkaido, moreover MAFF statistics outline that if any exist they are below MAFF's radar.

risk regarding the insecurities of production prices and market limits, but moreover unable to work elsewhere to make-ends-meet if the milk market, so-to-speak, sours.

Ohnuki-Tierney claims, borrowing from Turner, that for Japan rice is a “dominant symbol”...[that is to say]... “rice as *our* food and on the other hand rice paddies as *our* land...[and these symbols]...reinforce...each other” (1993: 4-5 italics in original). It seems that Japanese will go to great lengths to sustain foods associated with their identity – rice as self – but here too, despite the official and obvious importance of dairy products in modern Japan, Hokkaido dairy farmers are at an extreme disadvantage. While in Tokachi the cow may be queen, outside of the area she is but one foreign seeming monarch among many. In Japan’s historically entrenched symbolic system fish rules and rice governs. In the top-down structuring of media representation and government policy, milk is deemed as ‘essential’ in Japan, yet it remains a symbolic ‘other’ and treated as an economically marginal industry located in peripheral places.

III.6. Conclusion

The consumption of bovine products has increased throughout the history of Japan. This has happened to the point where milk production is considered an essential industry, at least essential enough to subsidize and include its ‘material cultures’ in national school lunches, and beef importation issues are considered central enough to jeopardize international military, political, and economic security in the name of domestic food security. These increases in production and consumption were always brought on through the acceptance of foreign influence. The Chinese brought milk as a product of high culture, court aesthetics, and for medicinal purposes. The Dutch promoted the health benefits of dairy as a scientifically proven product of the enlightenment. During the ‘opening’ of Japan from its relative Tokugawa slumber the production of dairy products under American and European influence were widely promoted from the early-modern period as a symbol of modernity. After the defeat of Japan in the Second World War the Occupation Force, amongst numerous changes regarding Japanese society,⁴⁸ sought to feed undernourished Japanese children with

⁴⁸ See Bix (2001) and Dower (1999) for detailed explanations of broader political, social, and cultural changes.

school lunch programs including beef and dairy. However, though dairy has become increasingly important and central to the diet, the cattle industry in Japan has always been promoted and represented as the consumption of the foreign; an acceptance and adaptation of what was once outside despite the lengthy domestic relationship between cow and human in Japan.

Throughout Japan's affluent and 'international' 1980s, its turbulent 1990s and into the anxious new millennium, globalisation has brought a host of new global milk products, both imported and domestically produced, into the Japanese diet. Japanese continue to eat the exotic: French brie, Bulgarian yogurt, Mexican burritos and American-style pizza all contain dairy and all are found in contemporary Japanese restaurants and supermarkets, but these foods are often suited to Japanese tastes by being made in Japan with Japanese dairy. These foods are not thought of as 'properly' Japanese – they are labelled *youshyoku* (western foods). Then again, unless imported, they are not 'properly' foreign either. Burritos are bland and pizza might have mayonnaise, potato, and seaweed in place of, or terrifyingly alongside, pepperoni. The consumption of this food remains 'other'; existing outside of what is considered proper Japanese cuisine. In popular culture, however, dairy products have been adapted and accepted by most Japanese as part and parcel of contemporary Japan. For young Japanese it is an essential part of their diet and of the affluent and troubled Japan they have grown up in.



III.6.b.). A typical Hokkaido 'youshyoku' dairy product.

Ohnuki-Tierney convincingly claims that rice has long been linked to the Japanese self (1993). The production of rice is popularly linked with the formation of Japanese society and values.⁴⁹ Cooked rice, *gohan* in Japanese, is also the word for meal. *Mochi* (a chewy pounded rice flower 'cake') and *sake* (rice based wine) are central features in Japanese celebrations such as New Year's Day. Metaphorically speaking as Ohnuki-Tierney does, if rice is the Japanese self, the popular representation of *our* land, *our* food, and so, *our* bodies, then perhaps milk, its production and imagery can be thought of as another Japanese symbol – one of an internal and growing otherness inside Japan.

Building off Bakhtin and his theory of 'the epic' and 'the novel', it can be argued that rice and the political discourse that surrounds it can be thought of as Japan's 'epic' story; the valorised peak of hierarchy, the historical, the origin of identity, and the antithesis of change, heteroglossia, and alternative interpretations. It is a unique, or so it is claimed, story of social, aesthetic, and value origins that cannot be altered.

There is no place in the epic world for any openendedness, indecision, indeterminacy...Temporal and valorised definitions are here fused in the semantic layers of ancient languages...authentic essence and significance ...conclusiveness and finality...preserved and revealed only in the form of national tradition...Epic discourse is...handed down by tradition...By its very nature the epic world of the absolute past is inaccessible to personal experience and does not permit an individual, personal point of view or evaluation. It is given solely as tradition, sacred and sacrosanct, evaluated in the same way by all and demanding a pious attitude towards itself.

(Bakhtin 1981: 16-17)

If rice and its mode of production can be used as a metaphor for the Japanese self, then rice and its associated images can be viewed as the main character of the Japanese epic. It stands in for the timeless hero of Japanese social structure and culture. However dairy, despite its history, despite its essential position in the social structure and culture of modern Japan, is not allowed a role in this epic depiction. Dairy is like the modern novel.

The novel is "[t]he genre of becoming" (ibid: 22) and results in "...a radical restructuring of the image of the individual" (ibid: 35). As a particular entity at a particular time in a particular setting it focuses on the individual who "...cannot be completely incarnated in the flesh of existing social-historical categories...[t]here always remains an unrealised surplus of humanness; there always remains a need for

⁴⁹ The degree to which this is, or is not, the case is debatable as outlined from Chapter Five on.

the future, and a place for this future must be found” (ibid: 37). Consumers expect Hokkaido to be something ‘other’ – other images, products, and histories – but Hokkaido is essential in the story of modern Japan much as beef and dairy are a key, indeed officially ‘secured.’ They are fixed and protected elements of modern Japanese culture.



(III.6.c.). *Youth, manga and Milk: a popular television series made into a popular comic book series depicting the life of young urban tourist dairy farmers ‘finding themselves’ while trying to understand rural life against the backdrop of ‘typical’ pastoral Hokkaido otherness.*

Herein is the inescapable paradox for essentialist representations of Japan, or of Japaneseness, examined in all of the chapters that follow. Hokkaido and dairy have, and continue to be, essential to the securing of a modern Japan and its macro security concerns, political, military, economic, and food, but it is equally clear that Hokkaido and dairy are not, and can never be, included in the ‘epic’ rice-as-self Japanese discourse. The identity of dairy and Hokkaido are part of a living contemporary narrative of becoming – a ‘novel’ Japan – but still an inescapable element of today’s Japan. And, much like the ‘personalities’ and narratives of other frontiers, the Oklahomaness and Albertness mentioned in the Introduction to this dissertation, what

follows will underscore that Tokachi, Gensan, and Grand Hopes Farm are changing, liminal, ever-becoming, entities. The individuals who reside in these places are those who make up the many disparate life stories of the past, present, and future of Hokkaido. They are people who interpret their lives and the lives of others, and at the same time house many contradictions and conflicts. They are representatives of numerous Japanese narratives that comprise true tales of a non-epic Japan and Japaneseness.

Chapter Four

Farm Structures

IV.1. Introduction

The historical and ethnographic analysis in this chapter is restricted to Gensan and the region of Tokachi specifically. This is done for two key reasons. The first reason is scope. Japanese are avid diary writers and record keepers. Every town in Hokkaido that has a library also has at least one official book about the town's history. What remains in this thesis is a detailed investigation of a specific industry in a specific area and even, for the most part, based on a specific farm and bracketed within a specific time. I am not a historian, nor am I linguist or translator. Thus, this chapter serves as a focused summary giving context to ethnographic research. The second reason is related to the first. There are very few histories in English on Hokkaido and none on the specific region of Tokachi. Such work is desperately needed, but I am not at in a position to do it. The history offered here, as well placing this work into a time and space, can perhaps serve as a springboard for, or be incorporated into, the future research of others.

However, the key reason I restrict my focus to the development of the Tokachi region generally, and the town of Gensan specifically, is anthropological. Gensan became a century old during my research (1907– 2007). It reached its population peak in the late 1950s and also began its decline within the lifetime of many of my informants. Thus, while I use texts as a touchstone, much of the history offered in this chapter comes from the mouths of Gensan's older residents, both in terms of gossip and interviews, and visits to local museums.

Below there is a move away from the broader issues of change, otherness, and the search for security in terms of Japan's or Hokkaido's history and agricultural policy. The focus is more squarely on the particularity of the dairy industry and Tokachi. It describes and analyses *Gensan* area dairy farms in general; for example how staff is recruited and what sort of conditions workers can typically expect. As noted in the Introduction to this

thesis, the focus is progressively shifting from the general to the specific; from Japan, to Hokkaido, to Tokachi, to Gensan. This also means that the methodology used to access this information is also shifting, from historical and academic sources to ones based more on ethnographic fieldwork and embodied interactions with people and places. This chapter is important because it serves as an axis point before the focus narrows further to describe and analyse the workings and the beings housed in one industrial dairy operation, Grand Hopes Farm, focusing on the years 2006 to 2010. In broad strokes, the move is made from the historic to the contemporary, and from the macro, to the meso, and in the end, to a micro level of analysis – or from the nation of Japan to specific interactions of select Japanese people.

IV.2. The Development of Gensan, Tokachi and a Modern Hokkaido Industry

There are considerable parallels between the history of Tokachi and the history of Kushiro in the eastern part of Hokkaido (Takata 2003, 2004, 2007). Tokachi's capital city was originally an Ainu settlement called *Oberiberi*. In 1883 Benzo Yoda and Watanabe Maseru, both land speculators from Honshu dedicated to the government's project of modernisation, arrived in *Oberiberi* and renamed it Obihiro. Benzo, having come to Tokachi *via* the sea from Yokohama, claimed his land with mixed blessings from the Meiji powers.¹ Watanabe, also a wealthy adventurer, inched his way along the southern coast by foot from Hakodate to do the same. By 1890 the population of Obihiro was around 300 people. It consisted of Ainu traders, some *Tondenhei* (colonial farmer/warriors) and their families. There were also desperate peasants brought in by the new land-owners who were seeking a new start, or to at least survive after the collapse of Japan's feudal system. Ill prepared for the harsh climate many perished, but in 1895 construction was completed on a national prison in Obihiro much like the famed prison of Abashiri in Hokkaido's north (Shigamatsu 2004). Within three years Obihiro's prison population of 1500 people had

¹ Benzo started a company called *Bansei* and was offered land in Hokkaido provided he could make it productive. This raised the ire of the declining *Kaitakushi* who, despite central governmental decree to open the land to private ownership, saw vast Hokkaido as their own. With private ownership adventurous well-off Japanese set out to stake land and later tenant farmers from poor areas came.

cleared 72 hectares of land and 450 farms were established, some by former inmates.² Like much of Hokkaido, prison labour was essential to the development of the area. After clearing land, inmates were utilized to build roads and lay rail track. Thirty years later the convicts would be joined by forced labourers from the colonised nations of China and Korea to engage in 'three D' (*san kei*) occupations – dirty, dangerous, and difficult – associated with building, mining, farming, and forestry (Seki *et al* 2006). Due to the success around Obihiro, other well-funded elite 'pioneers' staked out huge territories of land, and then brought peasants to work with the promise of eventually owning the land.

One of the more compelling elite pioneer stories is the story of Seki Yutaka, which is proudly displayed in the Obihiro museum and one that catches the essence of this Meiji frontier pioneering spirit. Born in 1827 in Chiba (near present day Tokyo) he was a middle aged medical doctor when the Emperor Meiji took the throne in 1867. By 1869 Seki had moved to the southern island of Shikoku to start a new modern hospital in Tokushima where he worked until 1902. At the age of 74 he made the journey, not just to Hokkaido, an impressive feat to accomplish alone at the time, but through the harsh 'new' lands of Tokachi to Rikabetsu, its northernmost and coldest post (with drops in temperature to minus thirty degrees Celsius). Here he staked his claim and started to clear land by hand. He made arrangements the following year for peasants and horses to come from Shikoku. In 1910 he died, happy it is said, at 82 years of age – truly having lived a life in the adventurous and ambitious spirit of the times.

Similar to these stories of adventure mixed with individual fortitude, hardship and determination, the early pioneers around Gensan have origins stretching back over one-hundred years to the Japanese mainland. The first settlers arrived in Gensan in 1907. Many of the initial settlers came from Gifu prefecture in central Honshu with a well-off farmer named Ogura, but soon settlers were coming from areas across Japan and the population of Tokachi rose from 10,852 in 1897 to 147,126 by 1926.³ Most settlers survived by creating small mixed farms (livestock and various crops). Hogs, chickens,

² There are obvious links here to the utilisation of prison labour in the founding of Australia and the Americas (Buckley 1992; Robson 1965; and Shigematsu 2004).

³ Near Shihoro there is a small museum dedicated to pioneering and the Ogura family. Obihiro Museum offers an interesting map noting where groups of settlers originated. As they often came in groups from the same area, some regions of Tokachi were based on original settlers from Shikoku or other areas of Honshu. Gensan's could trace its roots to settlers from Gifu and Fukushima.

dairy cattle, beef cattle, and, as will be seen below, horses were essential. Influenced by both the European and American styles of farming promoted early on by the *Kaitakushi* and tested in Hokkaido and Tokyo Universities (Tanimura 1922), and due also to the climatic conditions, generally wheat, barley and potatoes were harvested in lieu of rice (Watanabe 1966, Takata 2004). This was a new form of agriculture, in a new area, requiring a new form of dietary sustenance. Different from life on Honshu, milk, meat, and potatoes, but not rice or even cereals, were, through necessity, the staple diet of these northern pioneers. In less climatically harsh regions of Hokkaido, such as the Ishikari region near Sapporo, the harvest of rice was unpredictable until recent decades (Irish: 2009).

Originally Tokachi was one administrative zone. But as the population increased, areas began to segment in sections slowly separating from the vast north. First Obihiro separated as a region from the further outlying areas. It was followed by neighbouring Otofuke town. Village after village, moving from central Obihiro outward, regions staked their claim as separate municipalities standing against the vastness of untamed land. In 1931 Gensan was declared a village. It had won its own identity in the greater area of Tokachi. Dairy farming began in earnest in 1933 with the government's promotion of the 'five year agricultural development plan' implemented across Hokkaido. Forestry and mining were originally the most important elements in the area's economy. Dairy farming, in terms of an industry, and not for self-sufficient survival, developed slowly. German and Danish farmers came to Hokkaido sponsored by the government in the mid 1930s to teach modern dairy practices to the new pioneers – many of whom had never seen a milk cow until their arrival in Hokkaido.

However, as Japan's military machine was expanding across Asia many new dairy farmers turned to the more profitable rearing of military horses.⁴ Even with the end of the war there was still a market for horses as they were the only form of traction until the early fifties. With the end of the war, and due to the destruction of many of Japan's major cities, repatriated soldiers from Manchuria and Korea began life anew in Hokkaido (Dower 1999).

⁴ I am glossing a complex history. The annexation of Okinawa, Taiwan, Hokkaido, Korea, Manchuria, and then into the Pacific islands meant the Japanese war machine required resources. There are excellent references to this period in history, see (Akamatsu 1972; Bix 2001; Dower 1999; Gluck 1985; and Victoria 2000).

By 1954 Gensan was officially declared a town by law. No longer a mere village, it grew rapidly with the massive construction project of the *Nukabira* hydro-power dam (*Kamishihorochoushihen iinkai* 1992). The population of the town grew to around 13,608 people in the mid-fifties (*Zaidanhoujin Hokkaidou Shichouson shinkou kyokai* 2004). Like other parts of Hokkaido, local elders related that it was a colourful if rough-and-tumble time (Mock 1999).

The story of Yuji-san, who was in his mid-seventies during my fieldwork, is a good example of the 'type' of person who grew up in Hokkaido during this era. His parents had come from Kochi (Shikoku) before the war, as funded settlers who were given ten acres of free land and 350 Yen with the promise of title to the land if it was cleared after five years. Yuji-san was an interesting character. He was a skilled craftsman, making *tatami* (rice straw) flooring, but his real passion was freshwater fishing. I met him through his 60 year-old companion who, after a particularly difficult divorce had moved to Gensan from Osaka for a change. In order to learn more of the area's history, I arranged a long interview with Yuji san at his home.⁵ In exchange for his information, he politely hinted that he would not protest if I toted and served some *sōchu*—a 25 percent spirit—in return he would offer up fresh grilled lake fish and hours of access to his memories. Needless to say, it was a more than reasonable exchange for an unforgettable and informative ethnographic encounter.

He told me that until the 1960s, after which transportation and production methods improved, there was no money to be made in dairy farming. Milk cows were kept by many families to supply the family and local markets and to augment an essentially self-sufficient diet. The human and animal survival link was extended beyond cattle alone however. There were no tractors until the early 1960s and so all draft work in farming and forestry was accomplished through human and equestrian toil. Yuji-san had never worked in dairy farming. Early in our discussion he produced faded photos from his first job working as a labourer for a forestry company. Much like the fieldwork methods deployed by Harper (2001) in using photos to prompt informants to discuss how dairy agriculture had changed in the United States, Yuji-san and I would look at the photos and he described

⁵ November of 2007 was our first encounter – but we have talked and he has clarified points many times since, the most recent being May of 2010.

how the area was in his younger years as contrasted with the present. Some photographs showed row upon row of muddy streets and snow covered logs – in fact the logs were even used as makeshift roadways to get across snow or mud to access more lumber.



4.2.a.) A circa 1950s photo of intensive forestry propelled by horses and hard work – a copy of Yuji-san's photo.

There were pictures of young workers with crew-cuts looking thin and cold and family photos with children wearing dirty and patched clothes. The images reminded me of depression era photos of my own hometown. Yuji-san assured me that the times were hard and living was spartan. He could recall the introduction of trucks, rare as they were in the early 1960s, electricity in the late 1960s and telephones soon after.



4.2.b.) *Yuji-san's very happy friend and his new truck circa 1960 – a radical technological shift in the forestry industry.*

During the building of the *Nukabira* dam, located about twenty odd kilometres north, the town became home to numerous labourers including many Koreans. As in the frontier towns of the Canadian Prairies, social ills came in tandem with the boons of expansion. (van Herk 2001). *Yakuza* (gangsters) on-the-lam from larger centres were frequent visitors to the town as it had a reputation for having a thriving red light district right behind Yuji-san's house.

However, like all small towns in northern Tokachi, Gensan's population began to steadily decrease after the 1950s. This decline in is not unusual for the area and *Hokaidou 212 infome-shyon (Hozonban)* (2004) contains many historical and statistical comparisons.

The inhabitants of nearly all Tokachi towns north of Obihiro have seen their numbers decrease by approximately two-thirds from the mid 1950s until the year 2000. While Obihiro and the larger 'sleeper' towns, essentially suburbs such as Otofuke, have grown, the population of smaller towns is decreasing. It is evident that larger urban centres such as Obihiro or Sapporo lure many of Tokachi's youth – especially young women – where opportunities for non-labour jobs, education, or attractive romantic partners are perceived as being more plentiful (Mock 1999; see also Knight 1995 for a comparison in rural Honshu). Various night spots, indicative of previous prosperity, have disappeared, the town's cinema has closed and a derelict pachinko parlour stands beside the newer one that is already showing its age. While some less than reputable remains of a red light district still exist in Gensan in the form of rundown *sunaku* (snack bars), with matron-like owners, catering to well-weathered patrons, these remaining elders remember better times – and all are aware that many of the young do not see their future in the town. Again, since 1960 there has been a steady yearly decline in the town's population and some residents question if the town has a future at all. In 1987, for example, a time when the rest of Japan was still enjoying the fruits of the 'Bubble Economy', Gensan lost its rail link. By this time, the population had dropped over sixty percent since the building of the *Nukabira* dam. Co-workers and friends from other areas of Japan, often tourist workers described in the following chapters, would joke about how after nine in the evening nobody could be seen on the streets. Locals would not laugh however. Like the other small towns in Tokachi surrounded by agricultural industries, Gensan seemed like a ghost town after dark; and to many it felt as though it was truly becoming one.

IV.3. Town and Country

There are many attractive features to be enjoyed around Hokkaido in any season. Japanese flock to Hokkaido as a tourist destination year round. They are drawn, by and large, to the 'otherness' of the area. Tourists, and tourist workers, come to Tokachi for outdoor adventures, to enjoy a cool summer or engage in winter sports, to enjoy the pastoral scenery and to sample local foods, especially dairy products. Understandably, Gensan's central location was viewed as a boon by most employees and an attractive lure

by local employers. *Bokujyou* websites are geared to attract would-be employees and they generally list the locations of nearby attractions and the estimated time to drive to them.⁶ Rustic *onsen*, ski hills, national parks, and an expansive and natural landscape, grace the pages of many Hokkaido area tour guides. The local cuisine is always a draw for Japanese tourists, especially in such a *shizen* environment (natural, but it can also mean 'fresh'), even if the food is occasionally disappointing.

In 2006, Gensan was a small town with a population of approximately 5,500 people, as of April 2009 the population had declined to 5,229, underlying the long-term trend of steady depopulation discussed below. The streets were set out in a grid pattern with highways angling the town off at its corners. The town was home to a large Shinto shrine, three Buddhist temples, and a new Mennonite church that, mysteriously, was never used. Indeed many informants knew nothing about the church. In fact, alarmingly in such a small town, a number of residents did not even know of its existence on the main street! Contrary to this building, a location often in use was the town library where, due to its open space, heated interior, and central location, students from the local elementary, Junior high school, and high school congregated.

The town had a local chapter of JA (the national agricultural cooperative), a post office, a bank, a sports centre, an *onsen*, as well as a few small supermarkets, gas stations, convenience stores, clinics, and clothing shops. It had a pair of coffee shops, neither attractive enough to warrant a second visit, a few pubs, one of ill repute for good reason, and a half a dozen restaurants serving typical fare, from affordable ramen to pricey, but outstanding, sushi. For Japan, and moreover Hokkaido, the town was in a word 'unremarkable'. Although, given its population, Gensan did have disproportional amenities as it also served the surrounding area which was distant from any other major town.

The surrounding area was remarkable however. The town had an expanse of park space, wide roads, and the air was fresh with a hint of *bokujyou* aroma for earthy effect. There were parks designed for the viewing of the beautiful *momiji* (turning leaves) in the fall and *hanami* in the spring (though both of these seasons are short in Hokkaido). It offered open green fields in the summer and pure white snow cover in the winter, and in

⁶ Examples of such websites are offered below.

two directions the town had a clear view of the nearby jagged mountains. The surroundings were not remotely urban and the town itself seemed, to me, a necessary detraction from otherwise idyllic Hokkaido post card worthy views.

Beyond the picturesque location and the odd senior's gate ball tournament there was one other main tourist attraction within the town itself. In fact, the event drew large crowds from across Japan. Every June the town bursts at the seams, with its camp grounds filled and shops packed, as the host of Japan's largest hot air balloon show. This bi-annual festival is also held in February. The turnout in the Tokachi winter is only for the more diehard of balloon enthusiasts; the summer season draws less intrepid tourists.

The festival began in 1974, and in June of 2006 it boasted thirty-three hot air balloon teams.⁷ For three days these teams competed in various races testing navigational skills and control. The numerous spectators were entertained with the usual array of Japanese small town festival goings-on. There were food tents, beer tents, tents in which cheap toys and T-shirts were sold, and a local talent show, wherein a hodgepodge of entertainers plugged their acts. Numerous discordant *enka*⁸ singers crooned about heartache, straining their quavering voices while clutching at the air, presumably snatching the time when their imagined dreams lay shattered. Legions of hope-to-be pop-stars of varying ages and talents danced, pranced, and yelped around the small stage looking for their break in Gensan. The most intriguing entertainer for me was a young rapper who furnished the look of 'urban gang-star' whilst extolling the virtues of eating barbequed lamb and linking this love of lamb to Hokkaido identity. I was later to hear recordings of his "*Jin, jin, jin, ji, ji, jin gisu kan*" song in my local supermarket.⁹ The spectacle was presided over by a middle aged woman with immovable hair and a penchant for ending every sentence with an extended and overly spirited "*nee*" (isn't it so). Very few people were absorbed in the seemingly eternal entertainment and some local male elders, their stoic defences

⁷ This festival was started by students from Kyoto University who belonged to a balloon club. They thought the flat land surrounded by mountains and the low frequency of air traffic made *Gensan* an ideal place to meet.

⁸ Enka is a type of folk music similar to early American country-western or Portuguese fado.

⁹ *Jingisu kan* is barbequed lamb named after Genghis Khan. Jingles are a perennial theme in Japanese stores. There is the *sakana jinguru* (fish song) or the *kino ko ko ko* (mushroom) song. As noted above, Hokkaido was popularly linked with sheep via history and through the media. Lamb is thus a regional specialty known across Japan. The song lyrics relate to Hokkaido identity "*Hokkaido Jini wa jingusu pipuru*" (People of Hokkaido are Genghis people – outsiders, or alternatively *jingusu pipuru* eat lamb unlike people in Honshu).

temporarily numbed by heat and drink, offered the occasional hushed *urusai* (too loud, or alternatively ‘shut up’) in lieu of applause or the more normative blank stares and silence. This spectacle was set against the less than common background of aerial acrobatics; gliders, parachute jumpers, and the local helicopter rescue service.



(IV.3.c.). “Naito Gurou” (night glow) balloons set up in a in a semi-circle the first night of the festival – behind this was a fireworks display at the town office.

Perhaps predictably, Gensan had a rather unique balloon theme guiding the decor and identity of the town. At first, the balloons painted on, and inside, many of the town’s buildings, the balloon manhole covers, the balloon streetlamps, a smiling cartoon balloon on the town’s natural gas bills beckoning residents to pay, and the town’s entrance sign depicting balloons flying over a field full of unwary cows, seemed an odd rural fetishism remaining beyond my comprehension until my initiation into the world of Tokachi ballooning.¹⁰

¹⁰ I was invited to join a balloon team in the summer of 2006 and it became abundantly clear that this event was central to the identity of the town. Given their long work hours few *bokujyou* employees were able to attend, but the people of Gensan and thousands of tourists enjoyed the festivities. Some arrived as early as



(IV.2.d.). Gensan's manhole covers, streetlamps, and sidewalk balloon theme.

Through the balloon festival the identity of the town is secured, at least at the official level, since Gensan is widely known as the 'air sport town'. However, as depicted on the official town sign, the balloons do not fly over empty fields, they fly over the more ubiquitous Hokkaido landscape dotted with dairy cows and dairy farms.

VI.4. The Range of Bokuiyou:

Like the people who own and work on them, no farm is the same. *Bokuiyou* conditions in Hokkaido vary in terms of size, ownership, production level, and age. On numerous occasions at Grand Hopes and on other farms, workers compared the real or perceived

4:30 am to watch the balloons prepare to take to the sky, and for the three days that I helped the balloonists my team mates and I enjoyed 'lunch' with copious beer chasers at 9:30 AM!

attributes of employment on one workplace in favour or against another. Such conversations were always carried on outside the earshot of owners and bosses, but of course they too were well aware of typical farm work conditions and where their farm fit, or conceivably fit, within the continuum of desirable workplaces. Locals often had friends working on other farms, or had come from family farms themselves, and were aware of the work situations nearby. And many from outside of the locality had also come from, worked on, or knew friends who had worked on farms elsewhere in Japan. Whether done overtly or covertly, comparing farms was a common practice for owners, locals, and staff alike. Yukiko-san, a tourist worker discussed below whose boyfriend worked at Murakami farm, and Limbo-san, a good natured if exploited local worker also discussed in the following chapters, had the following exchange one morning on the way to the catch barn:

Limbo-san: "*Murakami no bokujyou wa ii desu yo. Shigoto wa kantan dashi Murakami san totemo yasashii...*" (Murakami farm is great, the work is easy and the owner is a nice guy...)

Yukiko-san: "*Ee, sou jya nai yo, hen na sekebei na ojisan.*" (No way man, the owner is a weird pervert)

Limbo-san: "*Eeee (giggles) Hontou ni? Murakami o toshiyori da...*" (Come on, really – that old man)?

Yukiko-san: "*Un, Ikeya kun wa ne, BiguYama mae roka getsu gurai Murakami de hataraita – yappari dame desu - totemo kitanai moe, furui pa-ra dakara...*" (Yeah Yeah, before Ikeya worked for Big Mountain Farm he worked there for about six months, jezz, it's filthy, it's old and...)

Limbo-san: (giggling still) "*Mada genki da na...Usu, Uso! Otonan no tomodachi yo*" (He's (still) lively then...(you're) joking/lying. He's my dad's friend you know...)

Light hearted banter was common while heading to do tasks that were, as will be seen in the following chapters, often done solo with little or no social contact. What did you do on your day off? What is work like on other farms? Or do you know so and so on X or Y farm? were frequent chit chat fodder – and for the most part – people agreed that as far as farms go Grand Hopes was fair, if not a bit better than average. Nonetheless, despite this substantial base of informed gossip, I was occasionally asked what sort of conditions I encountered at farms during my research trips to the north and south of Hokkaido.

Grand Hopes Farm was less than four years old when research for this project began. It was a product of the shift to ‘incorporated’ or joint stock farms described in the following chapter and explained in great detail by Mulgan (2006). Grand Hopes was on the grand side of scale and the owners had high hopes for the expansion and profitability of the business. The organizational structure of the farm was, or more precisely *was intended to be*, organized along the lines of a set of clear managerial top-down hierarchies. While the rest of this thesis will attest to how in practice it seldom functioned this way, it was accurately viewed by its owners as a company which was run by families as opposed to the more traditional notion of a family run company.¹¹

When I began fieldwork in 2006 there was a fluctuating full-time staff of just under thirty people and an adult dairy herd nearing 1000 head. By January of 2010 the herd had surpassed 1700 head and there were thirty-two full-time staff members. While the farm has one of the highest milk production outputs in Japan – an output that was, moreover, always increasing - it was not a typical family *bokujyou*.¹² By comparison, the average family dairy farm in Hokkaido – with Hokkaido being approximately three times above the national average - is 97.1 head in total (MAFF 2005). Grand Hopes was clearly a *mega faamu* (mega farm). And the founding president of Sapporo Agricultural College William Clark’s century-old famous parting words, known across Japan and always in English, “Boys be ambitious,” were brought to present-day fruition by two of the farm’s owners.¹³

¹¹ Bestor 2004, Kondo 1990, and Martinez 2004 offer book length ethnographic studies of family food businesses in Japan. Top-down hierarchies were promoted by owners but not followed in practice as outlined in Chapter Nine.

¹² I avoid exact numbers to protect sources and avoid needless confusion for the reader. The farm by any international standard is large – impossible for a single family to manage. This point is expanded upon in Chapter Nine and the Conclusion.

¹³ This was the first college to offer degrees based on an American model in Japan. The importance of Clark’s (*kuraku-san*) image is hard to miss at Hokkaido University today. There is Clark Road, there are

Echoing this American's proclaimed 'ethos', the *sachyou* and *kachyou* (manager) were ever keen to expand the operation; constantly buying new cattle, diligently inseminating existing cows, and improving the facilities to meet the government's ever-tightening ecological standards.

When the issue of expansion was brought up with the *sachyou* he would invariably tilt his head to the side, let out an uneasy hiss – the onomatopoeic sound reserved to express something is troubling, deflating, almost to the point of physical discomfort – and reply along the lines of “*Sore wa muzukashiida yo*” (this [business of expansion] is difficult, I'll tell you). And with time and energy sometimes permitting, Wada-san would tell me. Describing, often in an uncharacteristically animated fashion to penetrate my occasionally cloudy Japanese, how the government - and by this he meant the MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries), HOKUREN (the Hokkaido central agricultural co-operative), JA (The nationwide agricultural co-operative), and/or the *yakuba* (the municipal or regional government) – ceaselessly frustrated his ambitions.

On one occasion he confided that he had the funds at his disposal to buy many more cattle and that neither labour costs nor equipment expenses were at issue. Although regulated milk pricing described in the previous chapter was a huge problem, he had faith that this would remedy itself in 2009 with the lifting of milk price cap, the immediate problem was land. Not the cost of land, for one advantage Hokkaido farmers have is the low cost of land relative to other areas of Japan. The problem was that the amount of crop land owned or leased by the *bokujyou* was not deemed sufficient enough to meet the regulations set by the prefecture to safely spread the manure that would be produced by an increased herd.

This was the key issue holding the expansion of the farm back. Undeniably, fertilizing crop lands by manure spreading is the most economical and beneficial way to use this animal by-product; it replenishes the topsoil with phosphates and nitrogen. In the USA and Canada, farmers often pay to have manure spread on their crop lands. However, as noted above, the increasingly intensive nature of dairy farming in Hokkaido means that, in

busts of Clark, and the university bookstore sells his image with 'boys be ambitious' printed on Clark pens, Clark wine, etcetera. These words are known, in English, everywhere in Japan. They are even on the road sign for Kita Hiroshima (Hiroshima of the North) outside of Sapporo where his statue presides over a field of sheep. There can be little doubt as the significance of Clark and other American pioneer / teachers in Hokkaido's past and present (Fujita 1994, Russell 2007).

essence, the ratio of cattle to land area is ecologically problematic.¹⁴ Plainly put, there is too much manure and no safe or ecologically secure place to put it. In 2005, Hokkaido's 8830 dairy farms produced a staggering 14,370,000 metric tons of manure to produce an also staggering 3,883,000 metric tons of raw milk (MAFF 2005). 82% of feed is imported because there is simply not enough crop land to produce it domestically, *ipso facto*, there is also not enough land to spread the 'post-cow' product in its raw form. Recycling this post cow product has become a major issue in Hokkaido. The logic is simple, as there is a lack of land to produce the feed, there is also a lack of land to safely spread the bi-product on crops without causing water table and other toxicity problems (Nishizaki 2002). It must be stored and processed, and during my stay at the farm a new manure storage facility was installed at great cost. When I returned for my second stint of fieldwork the farm had contractors busy at work on a pair of huge manure dry storage barns.¹⁵

At one point during my research tenure the *sachyou* was eager to promote low-fat dairy products to combat the recent widely held impression of dairy goods as unhealthy, an irony given the aforementioned history of dairy in Japan. And, one afternoon he had me search for websites instead of working with my cohorts in order to find out information about low-calorie dairy products in Europe and North America. He claimed that he was willing to try his hand at producing such products by starting a subsidiary company. He was enthusiastic, even having workers in the staff room sample various milk products and comment on packaging over a lunch one day. However, his objectives, and our bloated stomachs, were all for nought. He soon found out that MAFF's iron grip regulations would not permit his opening a dairy company related to the Grand Hopes Farm operation.

Finally, the *sachyou* wanted to produce more milk. He wanted to hire more staff and buy more cattle, even run the dairy on a twenty-four hour rotation of shifts, but even if he could contend with the manure issue, the overproduction of milk is carefully policed by HOKUREN in accordance with the inability of smaller producers to keep pace with higher production quotas. Indeed as noted above like a protective parent the government cares for

¹⁴ This problem is not specific to Japan as noted in the well-known Marks Dairy Farm spill in 2005 in upstate New York wherein effluent killed 250,000 or more fish. See http://www.hsus.org/farm/news/ournews/marks_dairy_farm_manure_spill.html for more details accessed July 28th 2008.

¹⁵ I considered using exact blueprints and costs. However, I have decided against both to protect the identity of the farm. The manure storage facilities cost in excess of £100,000 or \$ 200,000.

its less robust children, MAFF and the various *nougyō* vehemently protect inefficient and part-time farmers at the expense of more efficient farms with higher overhead costs (Jussaume 1991; Mulgan 2006). Concrete proof of this small farm and price protectionism, beyond the ongoing beef trade wars noted in the previous chapter, came in early April of 2006 when HOKUREN opted to dump 1000 metric tones of excess processed milk rather than have it enter the highly regulated market and lower the overall milk price.¹⁶ This action angered many in Hokkaido, indeed many across Japan – where, as detailed in the previous chapter, food security issues hit a raw nerve. In short, people, urban and rural alike thought that this milk could have been put to better use and were rightfully piqued at the non-consultary nature of HOKUREN's action. The milk could have, for example, been converted to dry milk for food aid or stored in dry form for future possible shortages. However, this action only aggravated the *sachyō*'s perennial contempt of the system which he perceived of as being set up to penalize the ambitious and lend support to those smaller inefficient farmers who served as obstacles to his vision of progress. In short, his frustration and growing resentment towards the control of JA and HOKUREN were palpable and frequently articulated. Again, despite political grievances and industrious desires of the boss aside, most agreed the material conditions on the farm were good. And, in many ways, they were slightly better than the norm.

While the day started earlier, ended later, and the monthly pay was average, if not slightly less than the standard dairy worker's contract, due to the large size of the company the employees were given *kaishyain* (company employee) like conditions. Insurance was provided, a bonus of a month's salary was given in June and December for full-time employees, a moderate petrol allowance doled out, and a company car and semi-furnished company apartment – both relatively new – could be leased for a nominal fee. Workers were offered a four-day-on and one-day-off schedule amounting to six days off per month – two more than a many farms.

¹⁶ See *Okimunaru gyuunyuu haiki mondai* (The Growing Milk Problem) <http://www.hokurn.or.jp/new/20060316.html> via the HOKUREN news service and <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/e-japan/hokkaido.kikaku/025/128/htm?from=goo> from the Daily Yomiuri Online (both accessed July 28th 2008). Moreover, this event was widely featured on NHK news.



(IV.4.e.) Typical worker's room at Grand Hopes Farm, unseen is the small kitchen unit and through the door were a shower, a toilet, and a hallway.

At Grand Hopes Farm the *sachyou* does the majority of hiring and firing, at least for those who are not locals, and he gives the impression of being, if the aforementioned topic of government is circumvented, a calm, confident, busy, reasonable and good-humoured man.¹⁷ The equipment and buildings were safe and new if compared to most of the surrounding farms. Plainly put, for workers who might be interested in the newest of dairy farming methods and mechanics, the fifty cow parlour (milking machine) was at the cutting edge of technology.¹⁸ The conditions of Grand Hopes Farm were, by and large, considered favourable by most of the employees. When I would describe the situation at Grand Hopes to outside interlocutors, the situation at the farm was often commented on with envy in regard to the condition of equipment and awe over the size of operation. Nonetheless, the conditions of employment are comparable with other dairies.

¹⁷ Locals might be hired by another owner. The only person to be fired in the history of the farm was the *sachyou's* son; more will be mentioned of this in the following chapter.

¹⁸ More details about the layout of buildings and equipment will be revealed in the following chapter.

Numerous examples of contract conditions can be found on the Internet or in one of the local or national magazines catering to youth looking for *arubaito* (part-time) employment.¹⁹ Generally speaking, one must be between the ages of 18 and 40 and although experience is not necessary it is preferred.²⁰ Usually one must commit to a three-month contract, although in practice this is an impossible regulation to police with regard to Japanese employees and so this requirement is frequently broken by staff and ignored by employers.²¹ The work week is usually six days on and one day off. There are no paid holidays. Dairy work is a year-round vocation, and so, even the short but prized Japanese national holidays, such as Golden Week, do not apply to cattle or to the employees of dairy farms. Shift-work scheduling was adhered to 365 days of the year. Holidays could be negotiated. Short ones, for example two days with the missed shifts to be made-up later, or longer ones without pay could be arranged. However an employee negotiating for a long holiday was very rare. At Grand Hopes Farm, I know of only one employee who took a week off to return home to Chiba – a rural area near Tokyo. And a friend from Kyushu who worked at a beef farm near Gensan for seven years, a far less demanding position in regards scheduling as there is no milking involved, claimed that she had taken off only two weeks in her time of employment. The majority of holidays taken were of a short duration and the shifts were scheduled to ‘catch up’ the missed hours either later in the month or the following month negating the need to alter the monthly salary or do complex calculations. On the schedule a plus one or two was written and all knew who owed how many days at the end or start of the month. Often employees from outside the area or *furiita*- (part-time worker - in this case ‘tourist workers’) would plan to take extended travels around Hokkaido after they quit the *bokujyou* and before they returned to home, school, or their next job.

¹⁹ There are free magazines nationally and regionally advertising young people ‘flexible’ employment. Hokkaido’s CLUC *Arbeit* Magazine is popular or websites such as *hokkaidou no daichi de hataraku* (Hokkaido’s ‘earthy’ work) found at <http://job.haj.co.jp/daichi/job> or *hokkaidou rakuno kyuujin* (Hokkaido Dairy Job Offers) found at <http://www2.marimo.or.jp/JAoota/6-arubaito.html> both accessed via Google July 28th, 2008.

²⁰ In Japan there is ageism in employment and education. However, these ‘rules’ are often flexible in practice depending on need. Of thirty odd works on Grand Hopes four were over 35 years old.

²¹ The Turnover rate is high. One average one employee a month quit and over half of employees were related to local farm families. These points are discussed in Chapter Nine and the Conclusion.

IV.5. Securing Employment: Individuals Brokering Situations

Although not all dairy farms are exactly alike one can speak of a 'run-of-the-mill' shift. It starts with milking in the early morning, often 5:00 or 6:00 a.m., and runs through to the early evening, often 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. For most employees the last shift generally ends with the completion of the day's second milking and the cleaning of the milking equipment or the 'holding' areas.²² A three-times-a-day milking program exists but as seen below it is rare. And so, in essence the work day is often viewed in two halves – morning and late afternoon – usually with a substantial lunch break from the late morning to the early afternoon commonly spent eating and napping. Workers purchase their own clothing such as the required *nagagutsu* (rubber boots) and *yakke* (rain suits). Such clothes are necessary for the jobs to be done out of doors in rain, snow, or shine. *Tsunagi* (coveralls) and seasonal hats are often supplied to the farms by local equipment dealers and are emblazoned with their company logos. These are for use by employees inside the buildings or when weather or task permits or requires.



(IV.5.f). A solitary worker spreading straw, Pioneer, advertised on his Tsunagi, is a well known farm equipment dealer and the white nagagutsu were the most common footwear.

²² These times and points are related in detail in the following chapter.

The above should be thought of as a benchmark only. Arrangements are generally not codified inflexibly. As noted in the previous chapter, because there exists a shortage of labour caused by a substantial out migration from rural areas to the cities, and also because individual farms, farmers, and their needs differ, a significant amount of leeway is open for present and would-be workers to negotiate for more personally favourable conditions within the employment structure of farms. The brokering of employment situations is highly personal, rational, and individual. During an impromptu interview with a dairy farm owner near Wakanai, I was told that his workers alternated in taking holidays without pay. In another conversation with a farmer in central Hokkaido I was told that he had the same student helpers come for the summer; they are not missed over the winter. During the corn silage harvest season help was required while in the winter, though the farm remains busy, they can manage without external helpers and extra overhead. Some farms offer free housing and no car, some offer home-stay at the farm with meals. Conditions are open for negotiation by perusing help wanted advertisements and disregarding those positions regarded as untenable or, through talking with potential employers via telephone or on the internet, and seeing if some agreement can be reached.

By way of a more concrete example, none of the locals at Grand Hopes Farm took advantage of the accommodation or the lease of a car. These perks were offered but they preferred to make their own arrangements – often living at home and showing pride in their customized automobiles – thus, lease deductions were not taken from their pay checks. Some long-term workers chose to live in a larger apartment not owned by the *bokujyou*. Although they paid their own rent, in one instance the farm paid ¥ 60,000 for a larger heater to be installed in an employee's private abode.²³ And as noted below, one worker and his family lived on the farm in the *sachyou's* old homestead. Moreover, as some people had a background in agriculture, small bonuses might be applied to their pay and, in theory, workers were offered a yearly raise.²⁴ Pay increased as additional responsibilities were placed on some workers.²⁵ Students from an agricultural college in a

²³ For the sake of easy conversion and exchange rate of \$10 or £5 to ¥1000 is a useful, though inexact, benchmark. For current conversion rates see <http://www.bankofcanada.ca/en/rates/exchform.html>.

²⁴ Some complained that they did not get pay increases. I did not think it prudent to ask my employer about this situation as my own salary was carefully brokered.

²⁵ One female co-worker said was trained as a *hatsujyou hanta-* (defined in Chapter Seven) and her pay increased. Another co-worker was made manger and was paid to train new workers. I say 'slightly' because

neighbouring town, and also some from the more prestigious national university in Obihiro, worked part-time during the milking hours alone for ¥ 2500 a shift (approximately two and one half hours of work) and in the early autumn six poor souls from a mechanics training program run by a large international tractor company 'volunteered' to work 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. for two weeks!²⁶ In short, there are many farms, many farmers, and much scope for shrewd workers to haggle for opportunities and suitable conditions within the general framework of hours and days governed by the nature of dairying and rural life in Hokkaido.

IV.6 Conclusion

Continuing with the guiding themes of change, otherness, and security, this chapter has moved from the national register to focus on farms in the Tokachi region, specifically around the town of *Gensan*. The early modern history of Tokachi saw the arrival of settlers. Individuals generally seeking escape from their former lives and seeking a new life of security on the frontier. They were to change the landscape of the region through facing otherness – a new climate, growing new crops and husbanding new animals, and working alongside new neighbours. The chapter has outlined that today the search for security remains. Dairy owners try to secure the best staff they can and struggle against administrative bodies to manage their own farms and individual workers are able to broker the best conditions for their employment. The following chapter will note how this notion of increasing newness and change are again affecting the lives of those seeking security in Tokachi by focusing, in the main, on the individuals that created Grand Hopes Farm.

although I asked about wages, it was not a topic discussed openly and the owners claimed that we were all, more or less, paid about the same. I would get replies like *sukoshi motto* or *chotto dake ne* (just a bit more) than you, or an outright joke, *mochiron ore wa okane mochi yo* (absolutely right, I'm rich mate).

²⁶ All expressed their dislike of the *kachyou* (introduced in the next chapter) especially one worker who was scolded by him daily, but they also disliked the job itself.

Chapter Five

The Birth of Grand Hopes

V.1. Introduction

This chapter continues with the themes of change, otherness, and the search for security. However, here the scope is further reduced from Tokachi in general to the community of Gensan and the Grand Hopes Farm operation specifically. The chapter outlines the birth of the farm and the story of the four families at the heart of this industrial dairy operation. It underscores the reasons why the four owners chose to create a mega and monoculture farm and some of the problems they faced and continue to face. For example, their choice to expand was perceived negatively by some townspeople and dairy farm owners while it was seen as inevitable, even laudable or visionary by other dairy owners. Regarding the shift to industrial dairy production, at one extreme people saw Grand Hopes Farm as the wave of the future, at the other end of the spectrum it was viewed as the surest way to extinction, and there were a wide range of more nuanced dairy farmer's opinions that existed between these alternate poles. However, while the diversity of individual opinions that existed amongst locals might be expected, unexpectedly there were deeply divergent views amongst the shifting roster of owners of the Grand Hopes operation. The search for security was a matter of community interest and speculation but it was a matter of livelihood for the owners of the farm.

V.2. Grand Hopes Farm as a Case Study

A comparative appraisal of the specifics of payment and hours can be worked out by viewing the employment websites or magazines outlined in the previous chapter. Most are not offered in English however, and so an explanation of the specific employment conditions at Grand Hopes Farm is the most direct way to explain working conditions. Using this farm as a point of reference is not unreasonable. Employment conditions at Grand Hopes Farm were comparable to the work conditions offered at other farms; while conditions are not identical to those found on other farms the hours of work,

salary, and to some degree the conditions of work are akin to the lion's share of dairy *bokujyou* in Tokachi and even Hokkaido.

The base salary was ¥ 160,000 a month. ¥ 10,000 was deducted for a newer one-room apartment, but internet, phone electricity, and gas were all paid separately. This came to approximately ¥ 15,000 per month and ¥ 10,000 was deducted for the use of a leased car.¹ All told, after taxes for those on the lowest rung of the pay grade scale (tourist workers) an average worker was left with a little under ¥ 120,000 take home pay per month. To be clear, this was the salary paid to all new workers regardless of aptitude or day-to-day work assignments. There were rumours that some workers had serious financial problems due to gambling and financial mismanagement while some claimed that they were working at the farm in order to save money, in one case for a wedding, in another for continued education.² Most workers who remained at the farm seemed satisfied with their earnings; although workers frequently brought up grievances through hushed 'shop talk' during quiet moments on the job, pay was not a typical grouse. For a worker willing to stick it out, in general, but not always, they could expect a moderate yearly pay increase, especially if given extra responsibilities as noted below. Employment conditions were negotiated directly. As on all Hokkaido family farms, industrial or not, there was no union, nor was there any talk of a union being formed. Dissatisfied workers could leave, and as noted below they frequently chose to, including numerous members of the owner's families.

One contentious issue amongst staff was the 4:00 a.m. morning milking start for *hayaban* (morning shift) or *nakanuke* (middle rest shift) workers. Many workers waited until the last possible moment to come to work and arrived with tussled hair, pinkish eyes, and less than alert expressions. On the schedule, milking lasted until 8:00 a.m., but usually milking and the required clean-up was completed by 7:45 a.m., if not a bit earlier. There was then a break until 9:30 a.m. Some workers would remain in the staff room to eat, watch television, or nap sprawled out on the *tatami* (a woven rice straw floor). Those sleeping were surprisingly oblivious to the surrounding soundscape of the TV, conversations, people coming and going, the intrusion of salespeople's greetings, or even the milk truck noisily pumping out the morning's liquid haul in the next room.

¹ ¥160,000 worked out to about \$1600 or £800 at the time of fieldwork. The car was a newish Nissan sedan and the apartment was located in Gensan. It was one room with a small kitchen and toilet.

² The following chapters will focus in detail on the lives of individual workers making details here redundant.

Some chose to return home for breakfast with family or, presumably, just to get out of the building. At 9:30 the *osoban* (late shift) workers would arrive and all three shifts would work until 12:00 p.m. doing various tasks related to the care of cattle; usually cleaning stalls or transporting animals as outlined in the following chapters. At noon all workers took their lunch break, and again, some employees would stay while others would opt to return home or occasionally go to town for a lunch out. While the *hayaban* and *osoban* workers would return to work at 1:30 p.m., the *nakanuke* workers' break would last until 4:00. The shift from 1:30 to 3:30 was, like the shift from 9:30 a.m. to noon, dedicated to various maintenance tasks. After this shift there was a half-hour break. It was usually spent by remaining in the 'laundry / staff' room attached to the parlour. The time was spent smoking, talking, or enjoying a cold drink; bidding farewell to the morning shift workers after they completed their laundry with an *otsukaresama* (good job / you are a tired person) and welcoming the returning *nakanuke* workers who entered in various stages of drowsiness. The final milking shift began at 4:00 p.m. and usually ended just before 8:00 p.m.

Although dairy farm schedules differ, two-times-a-day milking is the standard practice. Thus, often starting an hour later and finishing an hour earlier. Most farms adopt some form of modified *nakanuke* work schedule – starting work at around 5:00 a.m. finishing around 7:00 p.m. having taken a long lunch break. In my final month, Grand Hopes Farm instituted a three-times-a-day milking schedule much to the 'behind the scenes' chagrin of the workers and to the shock of the neighbouring dairy owners. Many workers quietly growled; "*Nani o kangateirunda...mo, dame dayo...taihen da.*" (What are they thinking? This Sucks! What a pain.)

While other *bokujyou* owners all expressed surprise at this move "*Dameda yo ushi ga sugu byouki ni nachau yo*" (It's a bad idea, their cows are soon going to get sick)

One rather outspoken small scale farmer simply tilted his head and said; "*Kono aida no hanashi o oboeteiru, Wada san wa bakadakara.*" (I told you the other day, Wada is an idiot).

Under this new schedule the *nakanuke* shift was replaced by a *san kai* (three times) shift. *San kai* workers did not partake in any form of animal care or maintenance. Working only during milking times, they had no other contact with the animals beyond peering between their legs and attaching milking equipment mediated by a machine. The second milking began at noon and the final milking began at 6:00 p.m.,

consequently, *osoban* started at 9:00, lunch ran from 11:00 to noon, second milking ended at around 3:30, and the final shift ended at 10:00 p.m. Viewing the following schedule is perhaps more useful than trying to imagine the routine through prolonged explanation.

Time	<i>Hayaban</i>	New <i>Hayaban</i>	<i>Osoban</i>	New <i>Osoban</i>	<i>Nakanuke</i>	<i>San kai</i>
4:00 AM	Milk	Milk	OFF	OFF	Milk	Milk
5:00	Milk	Milk	OFF	OFF	Milk	Milk
6:00	Milk	Milk	OFF	OFF	Milk	Milk
7:00	Milk	Milk	OFF	OFF	Milk	Milk
8:00	Rest	Rest	OFF	OFF	Rest	Rest
9:00	Rest	Work	OFF	Work	Rest	Rest
9:30	Work	Work	Work	Work	Work	Rest
10:00	Work	Work	Work	Work	Work	Rest
11:00	Work	Lunch	Work	Lunch	Work	Rest
Noon	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Rest	Rest
12:30	Lunch	Milk	Lunch	Milk	Rest	Milk
13:00	Lunch	Milk	Lunch	Milk	Rest	Milk
13:30	Work	Milk	Work	Milk	Rest	Milk
14:00	Work	Milk	Work	Milk	Rest	Milk
15:00	Work	Milk	Work	Milk	Rest	Milk
15:30	Work	OFF	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
16:00	OFF		Milk	Rest	Milk	Rest
17:00			Milk	Rest	Milk	Rest
18:00			Milk	Milk	Milk	Milk
19:00			Milk	Milk	Milk	Milk
20:00			OFF	Milk	OFF	Milk
21:00				Milk		Milk
22:00				OFF		OFF
Overtime						

(V.2.a.). *Work Schedule 2006 (New and san kai represents the months of November and December 2006.)*

Clearly, if one works a *nakanuke*, *osoban*, or *san kai* shift followed by a *hayaban*, *nakanuke*, or *san kai* shift the morning comes surprisingly quickly! In essence, finishing work at 8:00 p.m. or 10:00 p.m., returning home, having something to eat, and then retiring in time to return to work by 4:00 a.m. the next day presents a mental and physical challenge. Frequently, workers were scheduled for four back-to-back *san kai* or *nakanuke* shifts. Perhaps, needless to say, some mornings, especially after a night of overtime or moderate carousing, everyone's requisite *ohayou* (an informal good morning) was half-hearted – and often followed by an expressive *nemuiiiiyo* (I am so tired!).

Workers, of course, had their days of rest. However, if one finished the week with a late shift and started the new workweek with an early shift, one's day off was effectively eighteen hours. Time off was generally a private affair. Indeed, as will be seen in the chapters that follow, time alone was common both on the job and off. Due to the nature of the four day rotation schedule, workers did not get the same day off weekly. And so, scheduling meetings with friends or family on a day off was usually difficult to plan, for often they too worked on other *bokujyou* or had jobs with regular weekends and holidays. It was a common refrain that this was a problem, at least for locals. Locals complained that they seldom saw their friends or families beyond mealtimes and that, due to working such unusual hours, finding or maintaining a romantic partner was nearly impossible. If the question, "*X – san, kinou wa anata no yasumi no hi deshita ne, nani o shimashita ka* (Hey X, yesterday was your day off, what did you do?)" was posed, the reply, often from locals, was that they watched television, slept, went shopping or played pachinko. Outsiders, generally, led solitary but reasonably active lives. While at some point *junbi* (preparation) was always included in the reply to my question (or example; prepare lunches for the week, do my laundry, clean my apartment, *etcetera*), they also often went on solo trips to surrounding tourist areas. For example, it was common to go on a trip to a town for famous local cuisine, visit a nearby national park to hike or ski, or spend a relaxing day at an *onsen*.

While the names have been removed to protect the identities of co-workers, the following is a typical monthly Grand Hopes work roster and schedule. The actual outline of the jobs and their purpose are outlined in Chapter Seven and Eight.

ホ	Holding
ス	Stall cleaning
エ or 育	Feeding
●	Parlour shift boss or teacher
○	Parlour shift worker
二	Tasks in second barn
ハ	In charge of cows in heat
哺	Nursing and caring for calves
/	Day off

(V.2.b.). A list of the jobs and corresponding kanji or katakana symbol on the schedule below – subcontractors were not included on the schedule.

On the schedule below, each day is represented by a square. Names are removed but would be placed at the start of the left hand row. The square is divided into three sections relating to the time of day the indicated task starts. For example a mark to the far left would indicate *hayaban* the task and start time of four in the morning while three marks would indicate working only in the parlour during milking. Occasional overtime was not added to the schedule but was instead communicated on the day by posting a note on the staff room door or the laundry room table.

11月 シフト表

(V.2.c.) A copy of the schedule for November of 2006 after the introduction of a san kai milking schedule.

Secure or stable work situations including, insurance, predictable bonuses, hours, wages, and job titles, were assured by the careful and reasoned brokering of most individuals – owner and worker alike without the aid of intermediaries. Therefore, as independent agents, the workers needed to be confident in their abilities, capabilities, and desires. This securing of personal securities, so-to-speak, in terms of both conditions of employment and clearly articulating what was expected of employer and employee was, in theory unambiguous. However, the actual work conditions, as will be elaborated upon below were ambiguous – such as the chain of command, or the long hours forcing unhealthy sleep and diet patterns – and depended deeply on individuals and on the needs of the farm, which shifted according to daily demands and season. This did little to promote a sense of physical security or wellbeing; stress, confusion (personal and professional), exhaustion, and as noted in the following chapters, frequent interpersonal and interspecies conflicts were all normative.

V.3. Grand Hopes: The Farm and its Families

The insights into the lives of four families that owned Grand Hopes Farm that follow are gleaned from ethnographic research. That is to say from working daily with some members of the families for eleven months, gossip within the farm and about town, a two hour structured interview with the *sachyou* and shorter follow up interviews, a night of slightly intoxicated chatting with another owner, and constant discussions of farm family goings-on with Matsuyama-san mentioned in the introduction, a well connected department head. The *sachyou*'s family has been selected as a central focus in this ethnographic account because, out of all of the owner's families, it is their story that I know the best for the above reasons. Moreover, Wada-san's family had been in Gensan since the area was homesteaded. However, details are added in regard to the other co-owners families for context and comparison. All owner families have lived on their respective homesteads for three generations.

The story of Wada-san's family is not unlike the stories of other modern settlers noted in the chapters leading to this section. The *sachyou*'s father was a papermaker in Gifu prefecture (Honshu) and his mother was from a farming family in Fukui prefecture (Honshu). They came to pioneer land in Gensan in 1928; at a time before roads, before electricity, and when horses were used to break land and for transportation – indeed, before Gensan was considered a village, let alone a town. At the time of fieldwork both of Wada-san's elderly parents were still living on the original homestead but in a newly built house. His mother was energetic and often seen walking on the roadway, but the father was badly hunched over, perhaps arthritic, from his previous years of work. Generally he was restricted to the front yard. They had had three children, the *sachyou*, his younger brother, who worked as an architect in Tokyo, and his sister, who was married to a police officer in Kyoto.

The personality and opinions of the *sachyou* have been described in some detail above. He was generally well liked. However, this might be a skewed interpretation. My links with the *sachyou* were perceived as tight by some workers. He had hired me, trained me, and would ask me how things were going in front of co-workers. He also gave me occasional privileges such as time off for research. Moreover, his closest worker, both in terms of proximity, as he lived with his family across the road in the

sachyou's old house, and in position, as he was Matsuyama-san, the *buchyou* in charge of cattle welfare, became a good friend of mine. Matsuyama-san and his family were to become informants, confidants, and friends. In short, and in contrast to Kondo's research, it is quite possible that my co-workers were reluctant to say negative things about the *sachyou* to me given these connections with both him and his 'right hand man' (1990). While there was no shortage of complaints expressed about the *kachyou*, along with griping about various *buchyou*, and a few fellow workers, I heard nothing bad about the *sachyou*.

Unlike the wives of the other owners, the *sachyou*'s wife did not work on the farm. Nevertheless, she was well-known by the farm workers for her kindness. She often left snacks and cold drinks for the workers. There seemed to be no particular logic governing her acts of generosity. All were pleasantly surprised. Like a cameo player, she would just appear at work with a bag of treats, ranging from pears to McDonald's cheeseburgers, ask employees to enjoy them, and bowing and nodding graciously exit, stage left, out the side door. She was very fond of gardening and occasionally looked after the neighbouring Matsuyama-san's son when his wife was at work in a local supermarket. The *sachyou* and his wife had three children. One daughter was twenty-four years old and worked as a caregiver for the elderly in the nearby town of Ikeda about a half hour's drive away and the other daughter was twenty-one and worked as a hairstylist in Obihiro. Occasionally, the daughters might be glimpsed in front of the house, but they were never seen on the farm and they had never worked at the farm. The son, discussed below, was twenty-five and lived in Sapporo.

The *kachyou* was a short, stocky, loud, impatient, and brash man. With an ever-present cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth and a hat precariously positioned on his head like a star atop a Christmas tree, he would drive around the yard of the farm often stopping to yell at someone or tell workers to get in the back of the truck – which they would quickly do despite knowing the task at the end of the ride was bound to be unfavourable. While the *sachyou* from time to time lost his temper, the reason was generally clear to all involved; a tool had been forgotten or a worker had arrived late. Often, there was no particular reason for the numerous "*Naniattanda / yaro*" (what the fuck-are-you-doin') doled out daily by the *kachyou* – it was accepted as just his way of being. Workers commented that he did command and demand respect, at least in terms of fear and loathing. However it was clear to everyone, including other

owners, that he was very knowledgeable about the running of a farm. The general agreement was that he was frustrated by the general incompetence of his staff many of whom, as noted below, knew nothing about farm work beyond what they learned on the dairy and mostly through trial and error of figuring out how to do a given task by themselves. His frustration with workers, equipment, and cattle, combined with being socially inept, made him prone to fits of rage that would quickly and harmlessly pass. Moreover, despite his rather militaristic and despotic approach to management, all agreed that he, unlike many in positions of authority outlined below, had clear ideas about what his workers should, or should not, be doing. All agreed that his job was stressful; insuring that the cattle were properly cared for by workers who often did not know – or occasionally did not care – about the safety and security of the cattle as they moved through their daily regimen of milking.

Although there are countless ethnographic examples of his approach to management that could serve to highlight his drive to control workers and cattle, a couple will suffice. Once he had nine workers stand outside to watch a cow get loaded onto a truck because “*Jikan ga aru*” (there is time). There was absolutely no need for workers to be standing in the baking hot mid-day sun. Most trotted around sweltering and attempting to look helpful, while three others held onto an immovable gate ‘in case’. When he was not around, and if the scheduled tasks were completed, workers frequently left five or ten minutes early. However, if the *kachyou* was lurking, there was always a hushed panic; whispers of “*Ima nani o shi masu ka, jikan ga aru?*” (What should we do, there is still time?). During these times, looking busy was far more important than actually accomplishing any task; washing a manure shovel or picking weeds in an open field would suffice. Often, with ten minutes remaining on the clock, the *kachyou* would find a twenty minute task for the workers to complete. He would assign it, leave, and the task was always completed. It was generally accepted that, from his perspective, for workers not to work the entire scheduled period was unfair to their cohorts.

Before my arrival at the farm there had been a disagreement amongst the owners over hiring me. The *kachyou* was dead set against the idea and the same co-worker that relayed this information to me also explained that the *sachyou* felt obliged to hire me because in his youth he had been hired by a dairy farm in Wisconsin, USA. I was his

penance (or as a co-worker told me his *giri* or duty) for his previous good fortune.³ Somehow they came to an agreement and I was hired. However, the *kachyou* made it clear that he was not keen to have me around and would occasionally make comments to hammer the point home. On more than one occasion he entered the staff room and stated that he needed a *nihonjin* to help him. When Chinese workers arrived at the farm he changed his position to needing a *Nihongo ga dekiru hito* (Japanese speaking person). But, what he was saying was understood literally along with the subtext. Conversely, his wife was reserved and seldom worked outside of their section of the farm; Grand Hopes Farm II. They had four children. The youngest son, Masahiro, worked on the farm and is described at length in the Chapter Seven. His older brother worked for the main dairy processing company near Obihiro. One daughter worked at a hotel and the other was still attending high school.

Yamamoto-san, was another owner. He was in charge of feed and spent most of his working day on a tractor carting feed from point A to point B. He was a quiet man, and, although I saw him nearly every day during my time at the farm, we barely ever spoke beyond bows with smiling cordial greetings and agreements about the weather. He too had four children. Two were working in Obihiro and two were students. His wife was also politely uncommunicative with me, but she joked with the other wives and the women who worked with the calves.

The final owner was Kato-san. While the other owners were in their fifties, he was twenty-seven years old. For weeks I had no idea that he was an owner. It was not until I enquired about the large *Jizō* statue (a Buddhist deity related to safe passage of living and dead) at a nearby crossroads that I learned his father had tragically been killed in a car accident two years before my arrival. As Kato-san did not have any siblings, he inherited his father's share in the farm. His mother worked at the farm in the lower barn area with the calves. In short, he was a reluctant owner and co-workers were often not fond of having to work with him.

Kato-san was a very jovial and good-natured fellow. He never flew into fits of rage like the manager or some of the department heads. Unlike the affable but silent

³ My use of the concept *giri*, similar to Benedict's (1946), is not intended to cover the entire nuance of the term. The point being made here is that the Wada-san felt a certain obligation to favour someone as he himself had been favoured by landing a job on Wisconsin dairy in his youth. *Giri* is a complex concept, but in this sense it is not somehow particularly Japanese – a duty to payback debts or to do to others as you would have them do to you, are similar notions for the case at hand. I leave the term open to other interpretations the reader may have.

Yamamoto-san, he would occasionally boisterously buy a round of drinks from the vending machine in the staff-room. With his big belly jiggling and an ear-to-ear grin, he would heartily laugh at both his own and others' jokes and jibes, steaming up his thick glasses while taking orders for a can of coke or coffee. He was a mixture of slapstick comedian and sumo wrestler stuffed into ill-fitting overalls. He seldom had a bad word to say about anybody and was an all-round likeable 'bloke'.

Unfortunately, pleasant as he was to be with, he was also notoriously lazy. Unlike all of the other owners or their spouses, all of whom worked as hard if not harder than their employees, hired hands often found themselves having to work for, or perhaps better put *around*, as at times he seemed like a gleefully gregarious pylon, Kato-san. He worked holding, milking, and stalls depending on where he was scheduled.⁴ If a stall worker was his partner for the day, they might say to me, or another co-worker, "*Kyou wa Kato-san to ishyoni hataraiteru*" (today I am working with Kato-san). The set reply was "*Gambare*" (do your best/good luck), but often a look or head tilt would suffice as empathetic understanding of predicament.⁵

During his agricultural college days, Kato-san had spent three months working as an exchange student on a cattle farm in Colorado, USA and, similar to the *sachyou*, he would occasionally intersperse English into his Japanese when talking with me. At one point, waiting for the delivery of rice husks to shovel out for bedding, I asked him about the chain of command at the farm. He listed the president, the manager, and claimed that Yamamoto-san was also a *de facto* manager as only he was in charge of the feed. I told him that I knew he was also a co-owner yet noticeably missing from his list. He replied in English. "No Po-ru, I am very very lowly." His meaning was, I suspect, that his position was low on this scale of power, but my impression was that he was uncomfortable being viewed as on the list at all; as being positioned beyond an ordinary worker. Truly 'lowly', he saw himself a reluctant department head of a non-defined department at best.

⁴ Positions outlined in detail in Chapter Seven and the Conclusion

⁵ My PhD Supervisor commented on my language use / memory in this translation. *Ganbaru* (to do your best – persevere) and the related forms *Ganbatte*, *Ganbare*, and *Ganbaremasu* (often with an extended s sound or elongated u sound) are a bit like the wink or blink scenario brought up by Geertz (1973) – deeply dependent on both context and embodiment. This saying was used daily in a variety of forms and levels of politeness – often with sarcasm entwined. For example, it can mean an earnest 'do your best' or an ironic 'I will do my best, but... we know how hopeless the situation is'.

In a few conversations with me he lamented about the large size of the farm. His comments contrasted with what I had been told by the *sachyou*. He was convinced that he had more free time and a more enjoyable life when he worked on his family's farm. However, perhaps through transference of my own experience of being the unexpected head of a cattle farm, this had more to do with the added responsibility of being a new owner with a hazily defined position and the loss of his father, than just the increased farm size alone. Kato-san gave the impression of the happy-go-lucky 'everyman', but he clearly had conflicts and worries about the direction of the farm, including his position on it, which as it turned out, was a sound worry for him to have.⁶

Before the birth of Grand Hopes Farm in 2002, all four families had managed their own 'medium – large' private family dairies ranging in size from 120 to 180 head. However, as noted above, in 1999 the government opened the way for the development of incorporated farms. The *sachyou* told me that the four owners had batted around the idea of incorporating for a year and finally in 2000 they sat down over coffee and discussed the pros and cons of merging. The *sachyou* and *kachyou* held the most cattle and equipment while Kato-san's father and Yamamoto-san held less liquid capital but a good deal of the land in the surrounding area.⁷ It was agreed that a merger would be beneficial for the following reasons:

1. They would be able to share equipment; for example, tractors and cultivating equipment. They could buy a rotary parlour system difficult to afford for a family farm (though some did purchase smaller models such as a nearby farm with 300 head).
2. They would cut down on competition between themselves for resources such as lease land for crops.
3. They would need to hire workers, but this meant more time for family and friends. That is, days off could be arranged as opposed to working 365 days of the year.
4. The farm would be a business and not a personal venture. Thus, owners could be bought out if their offspring were not interested in farming. Moreover, with the capital from all the farms condensed they would be able to secure larger loans at more favourable terms.

⁶ More in this point in Chapter Seven and Chapter Nine.

⁷ Both had above average holdings with around 180 head. Again the average, according to MAFF, is 97.3 head per farm. I was told by an official at the local agricultural co-operative that this seemed to be a low average – he reasoned that farms in the north of Tokachi were much larger and ambitious than those in the south.

5. The risks of working together were lower than those facing individual farmers. Sickness in cattle or family would be offset through the assistance of others. Equipment failures would be offset by the use of the other's equipment – and as above – new equipment could be leased or purchased on more favourable terms.
6. The prefecture and the municipal government would be willing to assist with some grants and loans.
7. They would produce more milk of higher quality in less time.

For these reasons, relayed to me during a taped semi-structured interview with the *sachyou*, Grand Hopes Farm was formed. However, what was not addressed in the interview became clear over time spent working on the farm and living in Gensan. By undertaking such a large venture in a small town a certain amount of untold hubris and acrimony was involved between the owners themselves but also between the townsfolk and the farm.

The farm incorporation was not paid for by the owners alone, since the prefecture, through a combination of grants and long term loans, contributed about 25% of the start up cost for the farm. The owners collectively paid around 25%, and with their combined equity, they secured a loan for 50% to cover the remainder. This, depending on one's opinion and on the future of the milk market, was a courageous or foolhardy move on a grand scale. A point, not contentious to any observer or the owners themselves was that like Barth's (1959) games of the Swat, this was a rationally thought out sizable risk taken by the family heads that could end in family success or disaster. The *sachyou* confided in me that this substantial debt was problematic to manage, and that for at least another two years, the farm would struggle to scrape by.⁸ But provided that the consumption of milk did not drop further, a second speculative hazard, the move to an incorporated farm system would pay off in the end. This financial situation was one reason why the farm was under pressure to produce and run smoothly. It also explains the *sachyou's* aforementioned anger at government set production limits. While the government sponsors the move to larger farms, it financially cripples farms with high overhead costs by setting low quotas encouraging small and part-time farmers to continue farming. The building of Grand Hopes was a high stakes gamble by the

⁸ Town gossip regarding the massive debt of the farm had not subsided by May of 2010. However the farm was still expanding and still afloat at this time.

four families on the future that the industry would move towards mega farming and away from smaller family or mixed farms.

Beyond the financial condition of the farm there was another reason why there was pressure for everything to look good and run smoothly. A large farm equipment dealer in Obihiro also had a stake in the development and continued functioning of Grand Hopes Farm. However, the owners and *buchyous* were reluctant to tell me about these external links, insisting, at first, that there were none. Nonetheless, I was certain that there were relationships and I persisted, irritatingly so I suspect, in wheedling information from one source, for example a *buchyou*, and relaying it to, for example, an equipment service technician out on call for the day, then feeding his response to the *sachyou*, and so on. What gradually emerged was a series of formal and informal, or tacit, agreements.

The equipment dealer helped to design the parlour and the outbuildings detailed alongside their intended function in the remaining chapters. If there was a problem with the equipment, service technicians, indeed often a team of three, would arrive from Obihiro within a couple of hours. They would not only repair the equipment, they would wait until it was in use for a substantial period of time (one night waiting until 11:00 p.m. after repairing the parlour) to be certain that it was functioning as it should. When smaller scale farmers in the area were asked what sort of service they expected from local equipment dealers, the answers ranged. Some seldom called upon dealers as their technicians were an unneeded expense for repairs they could execute themselves, especially on farms with older or more basic equipment; others claimed that they received satisfactory service, but all found the description of service at Grand Hopes Farm exceptional. This was true of the veterinarians as well. Grand Hopes was the only dairy in the area to have its own full-time veterinarian on call during the afternoon. This high level of service was not strictly financial or due to the size of the farm and the farm did not pay more for its services than other farms. Indeed, it occasionally was given a discount due to buying its parts (such as milk line inserts) in bulk. What was at stake was greater than direct economic exchange however; it was the symbolic capital of being linked with the farm, and being connected to the newest in farming technology.

Given the rate at which dairy herds were increasing in size, the parlour was touted as the 'wave of things to come' and many Hokkaido farmers had their eyes trained on the fate of Grand Hopes. Thus, the fate of the farm was entwined with the profitable sale of

new high-output, and high-cost, farming and dairying equipment and services. The windowed room that overlooked the parlour from above the office was frequently filled with new faces and the recognizable faces of the equipment salesman. Grand Hopes functioned as the unofficial showroom for this new equipment. Thus, there was a great emphasis on appearances. The farm had to appear successful and profitable even if it was struggling to pay off debts. This was a key reason why the floors and walls of the parlour were kept impeccably clean, the stall area water troughs looked new, and at one point a team of around a dozen workers, myself included, used brooms to sweep dead grass off the acres of lawn in front of the main office! Of course, the cleanliness or purity of the milk was important for obvious reasons. As seen above, price and acceptability are determined, in part, by the pre-pasteurized germ content, but the cleanliness of the publicly visible areas of the farm was important to sell the image of success, modernity, efficiency, productivity – in short, the farm served as a symbol of the future of mega farming. But, in a town as small as Gensan, an image, counter to local knowledge and gossip, is perhaps harder to sell than high-tech equipment.



(V.3.d.). Bokujoyou Zen: Sweeping the lawn: Haruko, 'the Chinese', a worker on loan, and myself – taking the photo.⁹

⁹ Workers all described in Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight.

Whether in a local coffee shop, *onsen*, or curry restaurant, I would eventually be asked what I was doing in Gensan. From my first day in town up to my last, I told everyone I met that I was a doctoral student from a London University learning about the lives of young dairy farm workers and that I was working at Grand Hopes Farm. This information was usually met with an “*Ah naruhodonee*” (oh, of course, that makes sense) and nothing more unless I pressed a subject, but occasionally this introduction acted as a magnet for disgruntled town folk gossip.

For example, at the town’s *onsen* one evening I could not escape the gaze of Sato-san, a well known local elder. He was a dapper older gent; a local clothes shop owner and a near nightly fixture at the *onsen*. Infamously friendly, talkative, and opinionated he knew everybody and everybody knew him. Upon learning about my research he told me that the farm was bound to fail because of the high turnover rate, the crowding of the cattle, and the debt. This was all public knowledge as the others in the sauna said nothing, but their heads were bobbing in emphatic agreement like boxers receiving in-between round instructions. Outgoing nature aside, he, and certainly they, would not comment on the owners beyond head tilts and *yokuwakaranai* (I’m not really sure). Of course, he asked me what I thought of the owners. I replied honestly that they had been helpful and kind to me and had gone to considerable trouble to arrange my visa. “*Gaijindakara*” (because you’re a foreigner), was his reply; and heads continued bobbing. *Gaijindakara* was a fairly standard answer to questions related to my perceived differential treatment or opinions diverging from what was thought to be, but seldom was, normative. *Gaijin*, is literally the ultimate label of otherness and outsider status in terms of Japaneseness.

There was little room for speculation about the thoughts of another man I met at the *onsen* nearing the end of my fieldwork in October of 2006. After a few comments about the turning leaves the comments turned to work. He was employed at a nearby beef farm. As it turned out, his wife had worked part-time at Grand Hopes Farm and had left on bad terms. According to him, the owners were fools, they knew nothing about cattle, they mistreated their animals and staff, they were deep in debt, and the whole town hoped that they would fail because mega farming was destroying local farmers and businesses – such as equipment stores unable to stalk bulk parts or service prohibitively expensive dairying equipment like that found on Grand Hopes Farm. *None* of this was new information. In Gensan, these sorts of diatribes were common,

though seldom as vehemently and unambiguously articulated. Usually, the comments were more along the line of, “*Shyakkin wa taihendesyō*” ([such high] loans are difficult [to keep up the payments on I bet]) or less optimistically, “*Ni nen ato ano bokujyō aru kana*” (I wonder if there will be a farm there in two years). The patent response was a play on the optimism of the katakana name of the farm – here a pseudonym – but saying something like, “Grand Hopes indeed”, “Keep on hoping”, or “Hopes won’t pay the bills” might be seen as suitable parallels. Eiji-san, a particularly insightful, highly unusual, frequently drunk, often leather clad man in his sixties who frequented a friend’s curry shop, claimed, prophetically as it turned out, “four owners will always move in four directions.” In his view, Yamamoto-san and Kato-san were weak links that would be cut out of the chain of command at the first chance. He saw the *sachyō* and *kachyō* as both *zuruihito* (clever or crafty people). Writing an early version of this chapter in the summer of 2007, I learned *via* email that these two owners had indeed been ‘let go’ and bought out by the *sachyō* and *kachyō*.

But some farmers, notably the owners of larger farms, while questioning the utility of certain practices, such as milking three-times-a-day, were not as critical of the Grand Hopes operation. They, like the owners of other industrial and industrialising dairies, saw the increase in farm size with a decrease in the number of smaller farms as desirable, if not inevitable, and they too had in essence, but to a lesser degree, cast themselves in the same ‘bigger-is-better’ lot. Two words constantly arose in interviews in relationship to industrialising dairies and their new technology, *shinpo* and *shourai* (progress and future), a discourse not so different from those promoting Japanese drive to modernise in the early Meiji period. However, as noted above, the future of the market was nothing if not insecure and uncertain and clearly what progress meant was not shared by the four original owners of Grand Hopes Farm, let alone their fellow dairy farmers.

V.4. Conclusion

Over dinner I relayed the negative talk about town to Matsuyama-san. “*Setsumei wa muzukashii da yo*” (It’s hard to explain) he said, and he asked for my electronic dictionary. He entered Japanese text and produced the phrase ‘sour grapes’ – “*Kore*”

(it's this), he said handing it back. His young wife looked over my shoulder and ardently added in a descending singsong tone, "*Sou sou sou*" (exactly).

The individual differences in interpretation amongst the town's people and the original owners of Grand Hopes Farm highlight individual otherness or, better put, individual 'each' otherness. All were dairy farmers, all were from this small town, but beyond the monolithic group otherness of 'owners' or of dairy farming as a 'shared' occupation these people did not agree on what was best for the community, what constituted progress, or what the future could, should, or would hold. This underscores the rapid social, market, and technological changes that the industry and the area face.

Community agreement, even in terms of what constitutes one's community, such as a 'community of dairy farm owners', is surely easier to maintain when changes come slowly. But as will be noted in the remaining chapters, changes were not coming slowly in Gensen or on Grand Hopes. Thus, any notions of group solidarity, of communal, farm, or family relationships were rapidly becoming relationships of 'each' otherness. Whether co-operative or combative, dairy farmers often were not following well trodden social paths but, similar to the first settlers in literal terms of breaking new ground and trails around Gensen, they were attempting to secure new relationships.¹⁰

If one is careful not to over generalise, a similar understanding of general farm cartography, organisation, and conditions of employment, as noted above, can be usefully applied to the majority of dairy farms, certainly industrial operations, in Tokachi. However, like the individual families and owners, there are variations. The remainder of this monograph adds flesh, feeling, and interactions onto the 'cartographic stage' of Grand Hopes Farm. These issues will be expanded upon below in terms of a detailed ethnographic study outlining that at the core of change and otherness is a search for security on numerous levels, for example financial (paying off farm debts or working to save or just get by), physical (work hours or personal altercations), or ontological (for example questioning the meaning of such work, its future, and one's own future).

¹⁰ This can be compared with other agricultural areas and industries facing rapid shifts (Berry 1996, Franklin 2008, Harper 2001, Pollan 2006, Vialles 1994).

Chapter Six

Beings Being

VI.1 Introduction

The previous chapters introduced Grand Hopes Farm and its owners as individuals with very different perspectives on what the optimum dairy farm situation was, is, or could be. Considering farms (in the plural) one of the foremost scholars of rural ecology, Wendell Berry notes;

...the most insistent and formidable concern of agriculture, wherever it is taken seriously, is the distinct individuality of every farm, every field on every farm, every farm family, and every creature on every farm. Farming becomes a high art when farmers know and respect in their work the distinct individuality of their place and the neighborhood of creatures that lives there.

(Berry 2005: 45)

Again, whether flying into Hokkaido or travelling overland, one can readily witness the truth in these words. Looking from above, land is portioned in similar geometric plots but the layout of each farm differs. This is the case even more so 'in the field' as an anthropologist or as a farmer. A farm is a microcosm. To farm is to deal with otherness. This is not to suggest that beyond a farm's fences, broader ramifications, whether economic, ecological, political, community, *etcetera*, are unimportant, nor is it to suggest that generalizations are impossible to make. The previous chapters highlighted comparisons and generalisations, and more to the point, these explored how farmers talk and debate about both individual and community interests. However, there is a danger here of creating what Arendt, in her discussion of changing labour, calls "a communistic fiction" of "social forces...that no longer correspond to reality" (1998: 44). Farms on frontier spaces have existed and continue to exist as homesteads apart from other homesteads, managed by individuals and families quite independently.¹ Simply put, farms are often as dissimilar as the people who own them.

The following chapters examine the lives of young dairy farmers. Emphasis is made here is on plural, changing and multiple ways of *being* on a farm. Just as it is a mistake to categorize dairy farms essentially, without reflection on the very separate essence of each farm under study, due to history, region, climate, size, age, efficiency, and layout,

¹This point will be elaborated on in the remaining chapters of this document.

it is also a mistake to neglect the needs that differ from farm to farm. This does not begin to plumb the depths of the more animated aspects of farm diversity. Similar to the trial and error history of what works and what does not work on any given farm landscape, it is important to remember that there are differences for everybody – every single body – on a farm.

This chapter sets the framework for a comparison of individuals, and the understanding of individuals as people and not types. As in Chapter Two, the purpose is to limit and contextualize concepts. The focus is, in general, on one particular farm with an eye to future comparisons with other farms, perhaps in other areas with a comparable history of industry or a homesteading past. Once more, it is a narrowing of scope.

VI.2. Individual, Social, and Self

The individual, the social, and the self are concepts that are broadly debated in the humanities and the social sciences, as are the relationships between these concepts and their linkages to research methodologies and theories. In what follows, the individual is viewed as being biologically and historically unique, the ontological and phenomenal core of agency, and so, the maker and interpreter of meaning over and above the social.² However, despite this theoretical / methodological focus I do not in any way or at any point deny the influence of a social world. It is a matter of emphasis; and the emphasis on Grand Hopes Farm is, as demonstrated and explained in these final chapters, decidedly individual oriented.

The division of the social and the individual as a research focus has been at the forefront of anthropological theory and method since its inception as an academic discipline. There are those who have tended to focus on the individual as a rational actor (not to imply any notion of rationalism) making, creating and interpreting the world, and there have been others who note that humans come into a ready-made world and prefer to view social structure as dominating, or largely determining, the actions of the individual (DeLanda 2006: 1-8, offers a clear contemporary summary of these issues).

² In his 2007 Radcliffe-Brown British Academy Lecture, Tim Ingold addressed this issue in a way essential and disturbing. The 'anthropologist' and 'ethnographer' are often conflated but are often conflicting roles.

Boas refers to these poles as the 'cosmographer' and 'physicist' respectively and claims that

...it is in vain to search for an answer to this question, which of the two methods is of higher value? As each originates in a different desire of the human mind. An answer can only be subjective, being a confession of the answerer as to which is dearer to him – his personal feeling towards the phenomena surrounding him, or his inclination for abstractions; whether he prefers to recognize the individuality in the totality, or the totality in the individuality.

(1887: 14)

Historically these views were often seen as underpinning British Social Anthropology and American Cultural Anthropology; with the latter heavily influenced by Weber, Boas and the culture and personality school, and interpretive approaches such as that of Geertz and the former strongly influenced by Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown, Levi-Strauss' structuralism, and the ubiquitous Bourdieu and his followers.³ Many scholars are not particularly dogmatic in their approach. For example Berger argues that:

The Durkheimian and Weberian ways of looking at society are not logically contradictory, they are only antithetical since they focus on different aspects of social reality...they contain between them the paradox of social existence:..[And, perhaps playing off Marx]...That society defines us, but is in turn defined by us.

(1963: 128)

Hence, like Cohen (1994), Ingold (2000; 2004), Jackson (1996), Rapport and Overing (2000: 1-8, 178-211), Rapport (1997; 2003), and Murphy-Shigematsu (2008) my focus on the individual should not be read as a dismissal of the social, but as a defence of the embodied individual's place as central to its existence. It is a reassertion of the individual's role in *being-in-the-world*; in creatively making, remaking, interpreting, and moving in her or his cultural and material environment (Ingold 2000: 312-322, Ortner 2006: 16-18). The intention is to decentre, as Latour has noted, that which has become "the default position of our mental software"...the notion that in viewing the social paradoxically as both "casual and material"..."the social could explain the social" (2006: 1-4). And, as is noted in the following section of this chapter,

³ Consult Boas (1887), Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 2002), Geertz (1973, 1987, 1988, 1995), Levi-Strauss (1970), Radcliffe-Brown (1965), and Weber (1958) as influential and representative samples.

'the social' has long been the 'default' position in *nihonjinron* arguments and being 'anti-social' the dominant paradigm in *otaku* claims (Hansen: In press).⁴ I seek a middle ground for these young workers' lives through focusing on the individual first and the social next. The people I worked, played, and lived with at Grand Hopes Farm and in Gensan were, of course, world-dwelling individuals. Nancy points out one cannot *be* without *being-with*:

...being cannot *be* anything but being-with-one-another, circulation in the *with* and as the *with* of this singularly plural coexistence...existence *is with* otherwise nothing exists.

(italics in original 2000:2-4)

Life, in an instant, is both intimately social and private – people have inner worlds, their own bodies, and their own histories. This is at the heart of dichotomies in the human condition; constant change, aging for example, and an engagement with changing otherness and each otherness often expressed in terms of conflict or co-operation. In the chapters that follow, these themes of change, otherness, and security are brought down, perhaps better metaphorically visualised as *brought in*, from the macro level as an attempt to understand and analyse the day-to-day interactions of individuals. Here, the polysemic play of securing and security, of change, and of otherness become the focus at the level of, not *the* social or *the* individual, but of *individuals*; actors or agents that independently derive and interpret meanings and pleasures from the social world they create. Perhaps nearing what Yamazaki calls the "the universality of gentle individualism" (2000: 107-149), the individual is not dominated by the social world; not 'enveloped' in the social but, as noted below, a part of its making, becoming, and changing.

From a Japanese perspective the work of Watsuji (1996) is informative. His conceptualisation of 'being-in-the-world', as a response to Heidegger's more 'Euro-centric' (read) 'individualistic' approach, is *sonzai no ningen* (human existence of humans). He defines this non-dualistically, as a Japanese understanding of being as inherently social through reading the kanji 人間 *ningen* (human between) over the Japanese readings of 人 *hito* (human) and 間 *aida* (between). This interpersonal *between-ness* is a conclusion arrived at *via* a Buddhist inspired, and highly indirect,

⁴ Definitions are offered below.

definitional maze based on negating a myriad of western philosophical notions of self with its own logic and agenda.⁵

Hendry notes, though not in direct reference to Watsuji's pervasive influence, that the conflation of individuality (as an existential condition) and individualism (as an ideological stance) is common in Japan (1992: 56-57). As such, I accept either Nancy's or Watsuji's notions of being with or being between. For neither negates the power of the individual agent. They merely write into the equation of individuality the well worn truth that 'no person is an island.' Humans are born into a ready-made, though rapidly changing and uniquely interpreted, 'fluid' world (Bauman 2007). More to the point, the majority of people, Japanese, French, German or otherwise, are likely not so concerned with in-depth metaphysical speculation that they choose to base their careers on debating it. The majority of people are concerned with their daily lives and they are usually aware that those lives are spent in the presence of and under the scrutiny of other lives. Moreover, certainly since the famed dialogues between Suzuki and Heidegger, one key point is clear. The notion that the self is, at once culturally constructed while also in flux, liminal, becoming, as well as in constant contact with others (people, animals, and material) and is, though haggled over, seldom denied in academic circles whether inside or outside of Japan. National, industrial, or community security in the abstract was not what concerned dairy farmers but how these conditions would or could affect individual's lives. Concern for security and securing of the self was a key theme in the perennial conditions of otherness and change.

The social world is obviously important in this context, but seeking small town life / work harmony is certainly not a 'uniquely Japanese' story. It is a common one. Everyone at the dairy farm knew that they were interconnected at work and that they were dependent on their co-workers. They also knew that due to living in a small town and working with thirty co-employees any incongruities in their life or behaviour quickly became public knowledge. They were aware that the smooth functioning of their work life and social life would be best served if they could 'get along' with others,

⁵ Watsuji's early career was deeply influenced through his reading of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Later he focused, as many Japanese philosophers of his day did (especially those of the Kyoto School), in dialogue with, often against, Heidegger's notion of the individual 'turned toward' or 'thrown into' the world. Starting with Descartes, engaging Husserl and Bergson, and culminating with Heidegger, Watsuji attacks the dominance of the individual self in European thought for neglecting Eastern thought – most notably Dōgen. Interesting, indeed absorbing, it is well beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it seems that his standpoint was more ideological than phenomenological based (Watsuji 1996: 352-354).

whom-so-ever they were, despite their backgrounds or aspirations, and through weathering whatever political, economic, or social changes that occurred.

This did not always happen however. Fights were frequent, the employee turnover rate was high, and malicious gossip was also rampant. Relations and motivations were more often individual and confrontational than group focused and co-operative. Despite (or because) of the condition of 'betweenness', of being thrown-into-the-world' (implying others) or 'being-witness' each individual agent interpreted, acted, and strategised how best to cope with otherness, animate or inanimate. And the best attempts did not always meet with success. Yet, likeable or loathe-worthy, all could explain their lives, narrate their individuality, both relationally and rationally as independent agents, actors with trajectories through time and space dependent upon their choices, desires, and actions (Mathews 1996; Appiah 2005; Rapport 2003). Everyone had particular triumphs and disappointments that were not necessarily related to a broader shared 'social' order, system, or structure.

In short, individuals were indeed involved in and influenced by social relations – inside and outside of the farm – but as noted below scholarship on Japan has frequently favoured social explanations, often shared social explanations under the rubric of 'Japanese society' or a 'Japanese way of doing X or Y' over individual explanations. And adding to Mathews on this point, I am shifting the focus from the group to the person. Not as a negation of the social as it is clear that,

Japanese senses of self are indeed culturally shaped...[as they are in every culture not only Japan]...as the contributors to Rosenberger's volume (1992) demonstrate; Japanese senses of self are indeed implicated in power relations...[again a universal], as Kondo (1990) emphasises. And Yet I have never met a Japanese person, and I am confident no anthropologist has ever met a Japanese person – at least outside of a mental institution or possibly a Zen monastery – who claims to have no coherent, separate self.

(1996: 721)⁶

Yet, individuals are very seldom discussed (see Rapport 2003 or Murphy-Shigematsu 2008 amongst few) unless they are being discussed in terms of their being

⁶ Rosenberger later 'tones down' her earlier claims about "multiple and concentric selves" and relates ideal selves to decades – in essence 1970s self, a 1980s self, and a 1990's self - always linked with 'national needs' usually motherhood - with the promise of a more "High-Modern" (quoting Giddens profusely) sense of self to come. "The outcome (of the 1990s) is a hybrid sense of self, expressing individual character while ultimately avoiding selfishness or isolation through strength of character the contributes to others" (2001: 239). Cave (2007) offers an outstanding book focused on the promotion of the individual (not always successful) in the mid 90s early 2000s Japanese primary school curriculum – the time when the majority of my informants would have been attending primary school.

part of a group (see Allison 1994 or Lebra 2004 amongst legions of others summarised by Cave: 2007: 31-48). To borrow from Martinez, these individuals viewed their lives and communities as *naru* (as becoming) and *tsukuru* (making) (2004), and so, in process; fluid, alive and changing not static and certainly not self-replicating. Like her work on Kuzaki, a 'traditional' fishing and diving village in Honshu, individual histories play a key role in analysis. In Tokachi, Gensan, and Grand Hopes Farm, some people are born into these places, others are attracted to these jobs, and still others are quickly repulsed by them, but these factors do not predictably determine who will stay, for how long, or why.

At Grand Hopes Farm there was a rise in both technology and alienation and *making* oneself was central while *becoming* in Gensan remained, for many a case of remaining in "liminal liminality" (building off of Turner's (1986) understanding of Van Genup). That is to say, being continuously liminal or being in a state of indefinitely prolonged liminality without end. This sort of ceaseless limbo was common on the farm. Many individuals were not reaching a 'threshold' key in a 'liminal' ritual process leading to a social transformation. They were not moving through life's stages of work, marriage, responsibility to community, respect, and retirement. Moreover, many did not know when, if, or how they would pass through these rites of passage while some remained dogmatically opposed to ending their liminal state, viewing themselves as set apart from accepted community social structures. Farm work remained continuous for many. Their lifestyle and motivations were not based on 'the group,' but focused, by choice or by circumstance, on themselves – a cultivation of their individuality.

Early in fieldwork I made numerous social and group categories; after all that is what social anthropologists are trained to do. However, these categories and typologies soon became frustrating due to their constant shifting and overlapping of the transient terrain of Hokkaido, dairy farm work, and the worker's lives. Most importantly, workers themselves did not categorize fellow employees beyond individual relationships. When asked, workers defined no rigid groups related to the industry. However, three exceptions should be explained briefly and kept in mind by the reader while working through the following chapters; females and males often played differing roles on the farm, perhaps related to different social expectations; locals, outsiders, and what might be best called 'no-siders' and 'lo-siders', names unpacked in my analysis in Chapter Nine, formed loose collectives from which it is safe to make

some generalisations; and religion was one way to mark (however transient) group belonging.

In sum, the young dairy farm workers that make up the brunt of the following ethnography were very much aware of living their lives in the present-day social / cultural climate of Hokkaido. However, this 'social fact' did not *determine* the trajectory of their lives. They frequently articulated that their lives were being lived in an uncertain, fluid, and changing world that existed in tension with their interpretations of the past, their position and ability to choose in the present, and their capabilities for the future. They planned trajectories based on a nexus of abilities, interests, luck, determination, goals, desires, *etcetera*, dependent on the changes and adaptations of their particular embodied being. Or worded alternatively, they planned with and towards their otherness as compared with others. All were embodied thinking beings, physiologically and psychologically distinct – secure in the knowledge that they were their own being with chances and choices not pre-determined.

Importantly, individuals – some liberalist legal structures aside – are not at all equal.⁷ Speaking socially, and/or materially, as neo-Marxists or post-structural structuralists like Bourdieu do, this much is obvious – we are all cast into unequal lifeworlds or *habitus*. Yet, in a changing frontier context, faced with otherness (otherness in terms of industry and location, other lifestyles, and others bodies animal and human) few are trapped into structures of social inertia.⁸ All beings animate and adapt their lifeworlds through choice and change, contingency and action, acceptance or rejection of this otherness, and in all this, the search for personal security is a fluid constant. Moreover what is equally obvious, but often overlooked in social constructivist research, is the fact that whatever culture, social category, economic strata, or geographic location one may be ascribed to or inscribed with, no single person shares the same mind and build – that is, body. Individuals are not a *tabula rasa* canvas for the social to inscribe. Similar to watching children playing at the local football pitch, a game more structured and rule governed than dwelling in the world, there are winners, losers, smart players, players who depend on size or speed, good players, 'team' players and egoists. There are players who make foolish choices, and

⁷ See Nussbaum on the Capabilities Approach of philosophy and legal rights (2006)

⁸ See the documentary film on Bourdieu "La Sociologie est un Sport de-Combat" wherein he claims that he is looking for what does not change – for inertia – in structures and people (Fergosi and Gonzalez 2002) the mirror opposite of this thesis. Also see King (2000: 417-433) for an explanation of the inherent contradictions in Bourdieu's interpretation of the *habitus* concept.

players with differing levels of interest in the game. Some players with natural ability play alongside those who are intensively trained, and, sadly, there are those children who cannot play at all and indeed still others who prefer to play different games.

We are all 'secured' to one body, one set of changing capabilities, and one history – all of which are open to varying interpretations by ourselves and others. Individuality is the physical condition that limits or opens past, present, and future experiences of the world, collective, social, or otherwise, to the embodied thinking and acting human being. And, given that this universalist notion of a human individual is found to be sound, then it should not be surprising that many humans are often individualistic, endowed with an individualism – the awareness and agency to think, act, and create apart from others and in agreement, defiance, understanding, misunderstanding, or indifference to the host of social, political, economic, or cultural norms in the many life-worlds at play in contemporary Japan. And as explained in the following section, contemporary Japan does not mean traditional Japan, nor does its negation invoke a Japan without tradition but a Japan that, like the frontier, exists in between.

VI.3. Working Between Nihonjinron and the Otaku boom

VI.3.1). Nihonjinron – Theories of Japanese Uniqueness

Japanese uniqueness has often been questioned in terms of exclusionist ideology (Kondo 1990; Miyoshi 2000), in terms of genetics (Howell 1994; Hudson 1999) and in terms of exclusionary political action (Gromer 2001; Hah and Lapp 1978; Siddle 1996) and a combination of the three (Dale 1986; Befu 2001). As noted below, numerous studies have viewed 'the Japanese' as socially 'stuck'. In short, they are often represented as 'a people', a problematic homogenising concept beyond pragmatic politics in itself,⁹ whose worldview is rigidly structured through a shared conservative and co-operative tradition. This conceptualisation is often defended in the context of a historical argument. The arguments frequently presented are in terms of marking Japan as a 'unique' nation formed and maintained by agrarian social life, 'concentric circles'

⁹ The Literature here is staggering and space does not enable a full review of it. Befu devotes a text to the issue (2001) see also Harootunian (1998) and Ryang (2004). In the context of a more scientific explanation see Hudson (1991). Gluck has an outstanding chapter on the topic building off of similar concepts developed by Raymond Williams (Gluck 1985: 178-204, Williams 1973: 1-12). My own view of the non-uniqueness of Japan are based on Anderson (1983), Hobsbawm (1987, 1994), and in the context of Japan, Befu (2001), Sugimoto (1997), and Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu (2008).

of obligation, well defined hierarchies of power notably the *ie* (family system), and a lengthy, often mythic, history of linguistic and biological sameness.¹⁰ Concisely put, the Japanese were, are, and often in fact self-ascribe themselves to be, a people who live in historic functional harmony induced by the influence of rice cultivation and/or, in the case of *nihonjinron* scholarship, perceived genetic homogeneity. In such studies, social collectivism is attributed to the 'cement' or bond of 'Japaneseness' that keeps society stuck together.¹¹ A fairly direct example of *nihonjinron* thought (amongst many) can be found the book *The Peasant Soul of Japan* (Watanabe 1989).¹²

In the early sections of the book Watanabe sets out to discuss how Japan's unique agrarian existence is linked with an ideology of security and consensus (read harmony) (*ibid.*: 13-40). After a rather lengthy discussion of the role that night soil played (before late modern methods) in fertilizing Japanese rice fields he notes; "...our forefathers' excrement went into this Japanese soil which produced the rice which our parents ate." (*ibid.*: 25). He notes that the four main islands of Japan (excluding Okinawa and Hokkaido) were already mentioned by name in the *Kojiki* (a book of Japanese creation myths dated 712 CE)¹³ and so, using a metaphor of recycling, he claims that this 'biological' Japaneseness (in farming practice and through the medium of fertilizer to rice) has been passed on from Japanese to Japanese (and to the exclusion of whoever he might consider non-Japanese) from time immemorial. He then laments the 'impurity' that contemporary sewage systems have brought to urban Japan and notes that at his university, Sophia University – a rather prestigious private university in Tokyo – the excrement of foreign professors is mixed with that of Japanese. Together, (the foreign and the modern – and implied the combination of both) has led to a loss of the *recycling* capabilities of this pure soil, which he equates with the soul" of Japan (*ibid.*: 31).

¹⁰ See also Dore (1978), Fukutake (1967), Moore (1990), Ohnuki-Tierney (1993), Reischauer (1977), Smith (1959), and in terms of philosophy and religion Suzuki (1970). Sound criticisms of these ideas can be found in Befu (2001), Kuwayama (2008), Morris-Suzuki (1998), and Oguma (2002).

¹¹ I disagree that Japanese 'uniqueness' can be derived from rice cultivation as globally there are an astounding number of people who, like Japanese, were feudal peasants, traditionally lived in paternally organised villages, fished, and cultivated wet rice. And yet, these people have not 'become' Japanese. Nevertheless, Lebra (1976), Dore (1978), and Doi (1972) and a host of those influenced by their work still underscore how Japanese hierarchies and value systems – ergo social and cultural relationships – stem, uniquely, from this system of food production. Bellah (1957) focused on ideological history, value development, and social stratification, albeit also with shades of essentialism, based in the early modern period not 'mystical time shrouded in Shinto mythology' that is sadly often ignored.

¹² It is essential to note that the date of 1989 is not a misprint.

¹³ See Chamberlain (1982) for a translation.

Watanabe continues:

In country villages in particular, where people use the same privy as their ancestors I think there is a deep feeling of inner security. However poor you may be, if you are born on this earth and raise your children on it you are immortal. The most fundamental thing in the spiritual structure of a peasant people is this “feeling of security.”

(*ibid.*: 32)

He also notes that in what he calls “Equestrian Societies” (modern social orders based on mobility and speed and clearly opposing Japanese history with Chinese and Korean history) such a harmonious and ‘spiritual’ attachment to land is impossible – land merely becomes acquisition. Given this, Hokkaido is excluded from this history of peasant society based on rice and excrement; indeed, as noted in the previous chapter excrement on a diary farm poses an entirely different problem!

To defend this sort of *nihonjinron*, ideas beyond genetic, historic, and agrarian ‘glue’, other essentialist conceptualisations are also put forward. It is popular to cite perceived social psychological relationships placed along a continuum, such as *tatemaie/honne* (surface/underlying) or *soto/uchi* (inside/outside), or value systems claimed to be shared amongst the Japanese community as a whole such as *amae* (dependency) (Nakane 1967, 1973; Doi 1973, 2007; Hsu: 1975, Lebra 1976, 2004; Wagatsuma and DeVos 1984; Kato 2005).¹⁴ These positions are often defended by claiming that a dichotomy exists between the ‘Oriental’ sense of self and the ‘Western’ sense of self (Lebra 2004; Rosenberger *ed.* 1992). Language is often cited as a central source of this perceived difference, notably language that is used in referring to the self and others. Frequently the focus is on the use of the pronoun ‘I’ in English contrasted with the many ‘situational and interpersonal’ pronouns that exist in Japanese.

Miller (1982) provides a book length, and perhaps overly vehement (Befu 2001), condemnation of this ‘linguistic’ uniqueness. For the case at hand one example is presented for the sake of clarity. The popular Japanese philosopher / nationalist / linguist Watsuji (1996) provides readers with numerous examples regarding pronouns as a perceived window into Japanese uniqueness. The English ‘I’ is one example.

¹⁴ Though as noted below Doi in the 2007 reissue of the classic *Amae no kozo* (The Anatomy of Dependence) significantly back peddles declaring that his earlier work does not account for today’s young people (foreword 2007). Prominent attachment theorist John Bowlby underscores how dependency is a need for security that is shared by all humans (1988: 12-17). Dependency is not a uniquely Japanese trait – though the likely response by *nihonjinron* influenced scholar would be that Bowlby does not understand the uniqueness of the concentric circles of belonging of the Japanese self – another catch 22 outlined below.

Used in nearly any interpersonal situation, it is deployed in conversation with family, friends, store clerks, or one's boss without causing offence. Those who link the uniqueness of Japanese people with a unique language, like Watsuji (1996: 49-54), note that in Japanese a range of pronouns are used – *watakushi* is utilised when referring to oneself in the presence of someone well above oneself or in polite feminine speech, *watashi* is directed to those perceived as above oneself or people you do not know well – *boku* is used by males with one's cohorts and *ore* to put on an extra macho masculine air.¹⁵ The obvious problem with this distinction is that such analysis lacks any phenomenological context which Wittgenstein has shown is essential to the understanding of any language-game (1953: 31-33). While I may indeed use 'I' when speaking with my boss, brother, or local baker, the language surrounding the 'I' can be radically different. "Well sir, 'I' am not really sure what is meant by that." as opposed to "To hell if 'I' know what it means?" Clearly, though I always use the referent 'I', it does not mean that this 'I' must always be the same situational and relational 'I'.

Beyond ignoring context, the argument of linguistic, and so cultural, uniqueness also assumes that because a language adheres to historic conventions, this then directly relates to contemporary identity, impressions of self, *etcetera*. Alternatively, while one could say that Japanese tend to use exacting referents and proper names, (for example X or Y san / sama), on the flipside, they often use no pronoun or name at all. The statement [I, she, Kenji-san] go/es to [the] party can simply become, party to go (*paatii ni ikimasu*) communicating 'through the belly' (*hara-gei*), instinctively interpreting, or so it is claimed, who the subject of a sentence is. This intuitive subject and verb conjugation is also deemed 'unique' by some proponents of Japanese uniqueness leaving a curious question as to how such hazy logics of linguistic and communicative uniqueness can be effectively combined; on one side, the unique use of highly discriminatory forms and on the other their unique lack altogether.

Furthering this argument is far from the purpose at hand. In accord with Miller however it seems that the direct links between language and self perception are not as *self* evident as many authors propose (1982). Moreover, if the Japanese self is, as D.T. Suzuki (1970) commented, able to understand the silences in Zen in ways that the western mind cannot due to sensitivity of the flexibility of self and sameness or of self and other essences, then one might ask why the use of such cumbersome linguistic

¹⁵ One could here go even further than Watsuji does and not forget the many regional dialects surrounding this pronoun – for example in the Kansai dialect *washi, wai, ate, uchi* and so on.

pronouns are ever needed in lieu of this cultural intuitiveness – or, more to the point, how Japanese dairy farmers manage to misunderstand one another, frequently as seen in the following chapters, much like other people do.

Putting the above points to their *extremes* for the purpose of illustration, the belief in uniqueness and agrarian glue (called ‘epic’ Japan throughout this thesis) is claimed to reach its zenith in the Japanese people; ‘the Japanese’ are emotive, family oriented, or family like, having ties that bind subordinates and seniors within a vertical hierarchical and self-sacrificial group mentality buttressed by sharing understandings based on mutual dependency and difficult to comprehend hyper-verbal or alternatively non-verbal forms of expression. This is contrasted with the ‘western’ self, with its apex being the stereotype of an American; a rational, self-centred, recklessly independent, individualistic individualist with understandings essentially underpinned by economic motives devoid of emotion or concern for others. Of course writers worth mentioning, like those above, shade such extreme depictions. A good example of this is Doi’s aforementioned text. In the opening chapter he describes how he came to conceptualise his work on *amae* in opposition to what he saw as the ‘western’ notion of self while living in the USA on scholarship.

Upon arriving in the USA, Doi explains that he felt awkward and out of place, uncertain if his actions and reactions were culturally appropriate, he felt uncomfortable communicating in a foreign tongue, and then (using the pronoun *jibun* (myself) in this case) he attempts to explain that the Japanese only view the self in relation to others as opposed to individualistic Americans (1973: 11-27). In fairness, Doi had these initial revelations in 1950 – in the wake of Benedict’s (1946) work on Japanese personality and culture (to which he refers) and during the Occupation of Japan. The gap between Japan and America likely seemed large to many at the time, and the notion that one might feel out of place, linguistically or culturally, as ‘a stranger in a strange land’ is hardly surprising.

One thing few scholars of contemporary Japan are likely to debate is that the country and its people have seen dramatic shifts over the previous century. In the last sixty years, Japan moved through an Occupation, to an economic boom, through to an economic crash, and on into an uncertain and insecure future. The idea that Japanese conceptualisations of the world, self, other, lifestyle and so on, have somehow remained stagnant – trapped in a formaldehyde of language, agrarian imagery, or ethnic origins – has, for the most part, fallen out of academic favour.

VI.3.2. The Otaku boom¹⁶

However, recently, as essentialist, functionalist, and structural representations of Japan as a whole have waned, a new polemic vision of an unsettled and dysfunctional Japan has emerged, which could be seen as a version of extreme social 'otherness' in Japan. Such representations vamp off the notion of a shared cultural and social 'glue' keeping Japan together but subvert it. 'Ungluing' tradition is the most recent genre with scores of studies that focus on Japan as the quintessence of post-modernity or of Japan as at the eye of the globalisation storm – in terms of cultural loss (Moeran 1984; Moon 1989) – in terms of adaptation to it and the neglect of history (Kerr 2002) or by being so entrenched in the historical that people are unable to break free to engage in the global world (Nathan 2004; Smith 1998). Generally, the new focus is on communities and the shared identities of 'non-traditional' Japanese, or urban Japanese who do not, or cannot, fit within the confines of accepted Japaneseness (Gordon and White 2004; Gottlieb and McLelland 2003; Robertson 1998a). And, if recent conference paper presentations are at all an accurate barometer by which to judge the topics of future academic monographs – the future holds many more such *otaku* studies – *Kosu Purai* (costume play) in all its many guises, *Moe-Kei* (maid café), *doujinshi* (reclusive comic book writers), various non working youth such as *NEET* (not in employment, education, or training), *Enjo Kosai* (compensated dating – in essence, child prostitution).¹⁷ This is augmented by the aforementioned focus on collections of marginal others in Japanese society; such as the Ainu or 'the hyphenated'. Taking all these groups into consideration definitely does question the homogeneity of Japan. However, these groups in nearly all cases are actively and collectively rebelling against Japaneseness. They are clearly (legally or in popular discourse) not central to how many Japanese live their lives. They form easy to identify groups because they often

¹⁶ I lump some research under the rubric of *otaku* studies liberally – for example, it is unlikely that Moeran (1984) would consider potters to be *otaku*. The point here is that the dominant focus has been on 'communities' bound in what is considered their shared a-typicality as a counter point to 'dominant Japanese' – salary men who Mackie notes are actually quite marginal (2003). Recently, with the exception of Murphy-Shigematsu's piece, Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu (2008) provide an excellent example of this trend in an edited text.

¹⁷ All of these topics were presented by young scholars at the 2007 Anthropologists of Japan in Japan Conference held at Temple University, Tokyo.

define themselves as belonging to such groups and actively distance themselves from epic Japaneseness.

VI.3.3. Working Life in Between the Extremes

What follows sidesteps these issues in some key ways. Again, dairy farmers, with a few exceptions such as migrant workers, are clearly genetically and ethnically Japanese and identify themselves as such. Indeed, every Hokkaido dairy farmer I met was at the most, three generations separated from their roots on Japan's main islands Honshu, Shikoku and the Kyushu peninsula and the lion's share of young workers had been in Hokkaido less than a year. More to the point, many industrial dairy workers come directly from Tokyo, Kyoto, or Osaka or rural Honshu; locations that nobody would deny are 'typically' Japanese. Being Japanese is the one thing they all share. Insofar as exclusionary politics or ideological considerations are to be used as a demarcation of national, cultural, or ethnic belonging, industrial dairy farm workers are a mix of young and old (though my focus is essentially on young workers), of urban and rural born, from all areas of Japan; of low middle and upper class backgrounds, some stay for years and others last a few weeks, moreover they are all engaged in a mode of agriculture sponsored by the government to produce a product that is commonly consumed by Japanese. There is nothing particularly 'un'-Japanese about these people. If anything, they provide a rather diverse sample of what is politically, geographically, and demographically contemporary Japan. Yet, what follows ethnographically underscores how they are considered other, outside, or peripheral to, popularly considered 'Japanese' as a type or category. Thus, rather than looking at the many exceptions – ideological, genetic, political and so on – that call *nihonjinron* conceptualisations into question (Ainu, Okinawians, the ethnically hyphenated, subculture groups, and so on), dairy workers are different.

This does not signify a pending attack on the aforementioned authors. Indeed as Befu (2001), Clammer (2001: 10-11), and Morris-Suzuki (1998: 154-160) explain, all but the most jingoistic of the *nihonjinron* texts (and even Watanabe's (1989) toilet musings noted above) offer the reader something about the way Japanese individuals construct their worlds and are influenced by the world, both in Japan and outside. These books become bestsellers in Japan for good reason. They tell a story that people either do, or do not, agree with, and stories that people do, or do not, want to hear about

themselves. For example, Nakane's work on social structure is thirty-five years old, but it is still invaluable in its explanatory power of ideal Japanese corporate structuring. However, such work should not be viewed, even if it views itself, as timeless. Similarly, the new Japanese language edition of Doi's 1973 text outlines how he could not have predicted the vast changes in Japan altering youth culture (Forward 2007). As for Kerr and Smith they have their own experiences and opinions of Japan – as they would of any other country they might be working in – and *their* opinions remain their opinions; some will agree with them and others will not. And finally, the sea of 'Japan is crumbling' or *otaku* studies are not an indication of poor scholarship; they are an indication of the research climate of the times.¹⁸ These young Japanese grew up in a bust, not boom, cycle. Far from homogeneous or static, but also unlikely to vanish from the map anytime soon, Japan and Japanese people are, and always have been, a work in progress. Japanese are aware of eccentric lifestyles on the one hand, and of people for whom daily survival is a struggle on the other, but I suggest that the majority of people in Japan are concerned first and foremost with their own existential realities; the phenomenological experience of their lives of family, friends, health, prices, education, and of course employment.

Work in Japan might not be thought of as an exotic topic.¹⁹ However, in terms of humanities or social science research it is, perhaps, of a nuanced, utilitarian, and of long-standing worth despite lacking a more pop-culturally seductive élan. Compared to the above topics essentialist or eccentric, there are relatively few ethnographic studies that concentrate on how daily employment has changed or changes individual lives or social groups. These must be studies of process and history, and this is where I see my own research attempting to stake (however small) a patch of ground (Bestor 2004; Ivy 1995; Gill 2001; Kondo 1990; Martinez 2004; Plath 1980, 1983 eds.; Roberson 1998; Roth 2002 – are a representative sample).

¹⁸ In a simple and aptly titled article "Japan Is Not Interesting" Miyoshi (2001) outlines how scholarship in and on Japan has tended to be rather conservative and inward looking; research of the 'we Japanese' sort that seldom asks who the 'we' really is. The flip side to this is the tremendous amount of money paid to scholars of Japan, notably non-native ones, to make it seem as if Japan is unique and unusual (Hansen: In press). Japan and Japanese industry pay dearly to appear 'cool' and interesting (White: In press). Like Sugimoto (1997), I suggest that the most unique thing in all this is the unique obsession with finding and authenticating this imagined uniqueness.

¹⁹ Though some work is more interesting or 'exotic': Ama divers, day labours, and paid shamans all seem more unusual ways to earn a living than being a dairy farmer. However, insofar as the divers are concerned, Martinez notes that the labour is hard and divers are interested in livelihood difficulties than their perceived external exoticness (personal communication January 27th 2008). As for dairy farming in Japan the same holds true, exotic or mundane, the same holds true; physically, economically, socially, and politically trying perhaps, but not self-exoticised – 'well, it's a living' as the adage goes, so does it fit.

Finally, with regard to social, self, and individuals, nobody at Grand Hopes claimed to be, or acted as, a mono-cultural conservative conformist, nor did anybody express the desire to become, or seem to be, a complete renegade social outcast. Of course, as individuals, some people were more conservative and others more liberal, but none were constrained completely by the social or radically fighting to extract themselves from Japanese society. It seemed to some of my more conservative informants (often local), that processes were 'ungluing' society and it seemed to the more liberal (often short-term and outsider) that society was becoming 'unstuck'.

VI.4: 'Practically' Working Things Out

To introduce all of the individuals on the farm, noting, however brief, their life history, impressions of their personality, their jobs on the farm, their skill sets, and so on would be far too cumbersome a procedure. Nevertheless, the individuals that follow, while selected from over fifty potential actors, should not be thought of as 'ideal' types. They are not representatives of categories beyond themselves. Strathern notes that

...the cultures we find most difficult to place are those whose gatekeeping concepts do not present themselves as candidates for inversion [us and them, that type against this type]...within anthropological thought, the concreteness of particular concepts...[in Japan and in social anthropology the social self]...and their location as self-evident facts about the particularity of places comes from establishing their taken for granted status through comparison with others

(1988: 92-94)

In this case *nihonjinron*, *otaku*, or 'the western individual' would serve as easy 'us versus them comparisons'. However, she continues;

[These] moves belong to a specific period of anthropological history. What of the future?...The anthropologist, unable to represent one voice completely in terms of the other, would mediate between the two. And in exposing the noncomparability of their voices would cancel any easy assumption about anthropology's own self-sufficiency as a single analytic language.

(1988: 95)

Before their time on Grand Hopes, many of the young dairy workers had never been employed on a farm. Many had never worked with animals, never worked with foreigners, and so on. Numerous classifications, categories, or types common in the

anthropology of Japan, social anthropology, and even rural anthropology more broadly speaking, simply did not exist. They were not observed by the author, discussed by co-workers (even when pressed), mentioned by townspeople (again, even when pressed), or referenced by native anthropologists when I was based at Hokkaido University and discussed my findings with these regional experts. This requires some explanation.

Previous chapters explained how throughout the farm's short history, change, otherness and a search to secure have been constant; this is obvious due to the relatively recent aforementioned amalgamation of four family farms into one operation, but also augmenting this is the fact that for the operation to continue functioning, new workers, new cattle, and new technology (from high tech milk inserts to increased manure storage for example) arrive at the farm nearly every day. There is a great deal of overlap and shifting between work spaces and job roles in a constant effort, at least from the perspective of owners and those with vested interests (for example the aforementioned product companies), to 'secure' (safeguard or predict) the profitability, and so the future, of the farm. Yet, describing the attempt to secure the farm's future in the midst of constant and rapid changes bedevils any attempt to link, in a 'concrete' way, workers with other workers in terms that are a mainstay in the social sciences. For example, given their utterly disparate backgrounds, present concerns, and future aspirations 'class' is too simple and stable a representation of what is, in actuality, a very fluid and flexible lived reality. The majority of workers were not 'learning to labour' in the sense of replicating a lasting socio-economic condition, especially through their previous off farm (university for example) or on farm education (Willis 1993). In short, and expanded upon in the following chapters, there was little chance that workers would remain at the farm long-term, including those who stayed 'in the industry.' Few aspired to be working class or saw this as their future.

There was a lack of workplace or worker solidarity. What *can* be accurately documented is a specific person, doing a specific job, for a specific duration of time, and for a specific purpose; both in functional and personal terms – to extract milk or to save money for example. Added to this 'disassociation' of persons from types, workers were often not 'familiar' with one another or the work they were engaged in.

Adding to this lack of shared values, goals, and experiences, there was *seldom time for prolonged instruction or socialisation* into job roles as is common in Japan and described at length by Dore and Sako (1989). At Grand Hopes, most workday tasks were learned on the job through briefly being told what to do, watching another worker

for a short time (minutes, not hours or days) and then doing - likely poorly at first - a given chore. Workers eventually honed methods as they continued working, usually unobserved and unobservable, by others. This was possible because most jobs did not require a complex skill set. Indeed as argued in the Conclusion of this thesis, these were direct effects of the automated surveillance inherent in new dairy technology - rural deskilling and alienation. Shovel the manure, sweep the barn floor, attach the suction cup to the teat, did not require extended 'social' learning or apprenticeship and learning generally followed a *mite, kitte, ima shite*, (watch, come, and now do) model. Workers would be told what needed to be done, asked to briefly watch how it was to be done with some instruction, and then be prompted to attempt to do whatever needed to be done. When they could convincingly respond *un wakatta* (yeah, I get it) to the question *wakkatta?* (Get it?), their 'lesson' was over and they were expected to be able to do the task if they were told to from that point into the future. Such a mode of learning is rather individualistic, dependant on the time and the patience of the teacher (both usually in short supply as outlined below) and the aptitude of the worker.

In a work recently edited by Cox, the long history, and indeed diversity, of Japanese 'copying' is addressed in terms of debunking the myth of Japanese uncreative mimes (Cox ed. 2008). In the Introduction he notes: "In all cases, it is shown that creativity in the process of copying resides in the character of individuals concerned and the nature of the materials and techniques employed" (*ibid.*: 11). For example, learning the Japanese Zen arts requires intricate attention to aesthetic detail through the embodied mimetic processes, often over a long time, of following a master before one can 'break' from the master adding a more individualistic style (Cox 2002). Again, individual character, material culture, and the techniques to learn these actions, range from learning esoteric dance to car manufacturing (Cox ed. 2008). This is an essential point in terms of how people learn, and not only those in Japan. And, of course, this is also the case within industrial dairy farming - only, the emphasis on individual character, material culture, and learning technique differ radically from a process such as the lifelong honing of artistic skills or 'perfecting' specialised work tasks.

Teaching at Grand Hopes was direct and brief. In contrast with Lave and Wenger's notion of "Legitimate Peripheral Participation", learning in fact was a direct link between "learning and intentional instruction" (Lave and Wenger 1992: 40). Lave and Wenger claim (for good reason in their context of lengthy 'career' apprenticeships - Midwives, Tailors, Quartermasters, Butchers, and recovering Alcoholics) that direct

instruction does not fully explain learning. This is a point I also concur with in the final chapter, albeit for other reasons. However, the idea that "...learning is not merely a condition for membership, but is an evolving form of membership..." in a "...community of practice" (*ibid.*: 53) presumes, at the least, that a common 'sense' of community exists and that people who come in contact with it, or remain 'within' it, become members 'socially.' All are problematic assumptions in what follows. The emphasis on the social indebtedness of learning comes to the fore when the writers go on to say that they "...conceive of identities as long-term, living relations between persons and their place and participation in communities of practice. Thus identity, knowing, and social membership entail one another" (*ibid.*: 53).

Perhaps obvious from the previous chapters, but worth repeating here, is the fact that most young dairy workers are not long-term and they seldom relate to each other at work or outside of it. In this sense, they are not participating in a 'social practice' beyond a short instructive encounter which usually (though not always) was followed by an individual's honing of methods and skills *apart* from others. Moreover, many workers simply did not care about perfecting their skills. While a few young dairy farmers did want to learn and enter into the 'community' of Grand Hopes or another area of the dairy industry, for many it was a job – the end of their 'work related' education story. Of course, as will be noted below, there were some jobs, such as catching cows, that required co-operation, and so entailed at least a degree of watching others and increasing one's skill through mimicry. However, cattle were often better, certainly more consistent, at training new employees than humans.²⁰

Except to the most ardent of social constructivist, the lack of shared social conditioning is unsurprising. The majority of workers, despite working for nearly the same wages and often with non-descript job titles, came from radically different backgrounds; rural, sub-urban, and urban, from Hokkaido, Honshu, or even other countries. While some workers were well-travelled, others had never left Japan, and though some came from well off families others came from poor ones. Some workers were university graduates, sometimes from quite prestigious universities, while others were high school drop-outs with backgrounds in labour work. None of these experiences were related to the job on the farm, salary, position of responsibility or prestige in their limited 'community' of dairy work. Nor, as noted below and indeed

²⁰ As highlighted in the Conclusion of this thesis.

surprising even to me during my time in the field, did such factors relate to the duration of time someone might remain in farm work. The farm was a constant site of change, but related to this, it was also very clearly a site of 'otherness'; a place where other relatively unknown people were, despite sharing a workday life, constantly coming and going often with little acknowledgement or ceremony surrounding arrival and departure.

Thus, the notion that young dairy workers formed a community and not a 'group' in social terms is questionable beyond being a convenient label. And to claim they formed a *community of practice* or *habitus* would be completely misleading. These identities and embodiments would require time to emerge (beyond a few months) and at least imply some sense of community solidarity – beyond being part of a group. In this regard, Tuan notes a powerful difference in the terms community and group. "The words differ...in their emotional tone – the one is warm and particularistic the other cool and abstract" (2002: 311). While dairy farmers can be viewed as a group and occasionally worked in groups – it is clear in what follows that they had little concern for or interest or incentive to form a 'community'.

This clarification made, it is true that workers abilities differed. Recalling the definition of individual offered in above, some individuals were better at some tasks than others; some were 'naturals' at picking up the new task quickly, while others remained quite hopeless months on. However, instruction and ability were task and person specific and not related to any sort of social 'grouping' – the good sweepers verses the good trough cleaners for example. There was no farm 'guidebook' to read, though some workers had attended agricultural college and had a 'bookish' knowledge of how to accomplish their workday tasks. Some had been raised on farms and perhaps mimicked what their parents or siblings had taught them (again farm specific practices linked to specific families and farms).²¹ While others, though fewer in number, had been doing the job for several years and had learnt as they went along from their own personal experience, most workers were just starting out and would not be staying for long.

Such aptitudes, (and again embodied capabilities) perceived or real, might, or might not, be taken into account by a particular *buchou* when assigning tasks or amongst workers themselves. As will be discussed in Chapter Nine gender played a role. Also,

²¹ See Berry (1996, 2005), Holloway (2001, 2007), and Ingold's work (2000: 172: 188) on the specifics of environment.

specific workers were noted by specific *buchou* as being lazy or incompetent. This sometimes came with extended knowledge of these individuals' past lives; for example, they were disliked by locals or they were deemed as outsiders destined to not *become* 'lo-siders' or 'insiders' – also points expanded upon in Chapter Nine. But, styles of working were more often than not learned through *doing*.

As noted above by Cox and Lave and Wenger, learning is always situational and part of a social environment – as in noticing a co-worker using a broom more effectively or observing the behaviour of cattle in order to catch them more easily. Yet, to say that these practices form a 'community' of learning amidst an ever-shifting roster of young workers is to exaggerate the social elements of mimetic knowledge over the *self* determining nature of the *individual* workers. Again, workers did not have much in common beyond relative age and being Japanese. Often, space and time were not shared with human others but with bovine others. This underscores key elements of both the technology and individual relationships with animals that undermine any notion of uniformity, consensus or 'consciousness' discussed in the final chapter. Hence, though obviously an embodied practice, a 'logic' of practice was superficial during work. Scripted tasks during milking depended on individual prowess, skills, abilities, meanings, and interpretations of these acts. Spaces and times were often not shared with other people but with cattle and equipment. That is to say, despite being "[t]he structures of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition)"...they *did not* produce a "*habitus*, systems of durable transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures...as principles of the generation and structuring of practices" (Bourdieu 1977: 72-73). Indeed, the lack of such shared 'dispositions' in speech, action, interpretation, past lives, present aspirations, and future goals is made increasingly clear in the ethnographic examples and analysis of the following chapters.

The lack of 'familiarity' or sociability in learning was mirrored beyond the workplace itself. As noted above, workers, including locals, did not associate with their co-workers outside of the work place. Due to the long hours and isolated nature of such employment co-workers often knew very little about one another. The vast majority of 'tourist' workers were not close with the families who owned the farm or with locals on or off the farm. And indeed, alternatively, most locals had very little interest in the lives of the incoming workers. As noted below the distinction between

local and outsider was a shifting one with some newcomers choosing to stay, or put another way not choosing to leave, and locals leaving the area to seek work in the city.

Thus, in what follows the linking of worker and job should not be thought of as impermeable or longstanding *classifying* divisions. Often owners could be found working, not in the office, but in the milk barn doing the same work while workers who might usually be found working as a stall hand could be found scheduled in an alternate position (working in the cow hospital for example). And again, at the rate of at least one per month, and usually higher, one of the farm's roster of thirty employees, including locals and family members, would quit and be replaced by a newcomer. In this regard, there was little division between local or non-local or owner and non-owner.

In short, the farm, its young dairy farmers, and their interactions with one another, cattle, and the environment could be theorised as rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari 1988; Ingold 2000: 140-146). Not pre-determined, linear, set, or 'genealogical', as in Franklin's (2008) study of sheep production – not a logical plotting with a ready to see archaeology of practices and intended results.²² Few workers, local or outsider, had settled into their work. Some were in a liminal stage, staying for a fixed duration with plans to return to, or begin anew, a non-dairy farming life. Others were in a state I described above as 'liminal liminality' – an ongoing social and cultural limbo. Not entering traditional forms of Japanese society, courtship, marriage, children, or increased social / community responsibility but often not discounting these as future possibilities – however vague this moment in the future might be. All were embodied individual agents, *making* and *becoming* (Martinez 2004). All were able to narrate an individual "self construction" or "life-script" (Appiah 2005: 198). Engaged in a way of being or dwelling understood as a "life-line"... "in short...understood relationally as a *movement along a way of life*, conceived not as the enactment of a corpus of rules and principles...received from predecessors, but as the negotiation of a path through the world" (Ingold 2000: 146). In short, young dairy farmers ought to be considered as individuals embodying their own agency in selecting their own "life-course" (Plath 1983: 3) or "life trajectory" (Rapport 1996, 2003) through the choices they make and the actions they take, over any form of determining *habitus*, shared class consciousness, or common culture (Bourdieu 1984; Charlesworth 2000; Willis 2003).

²² These points are clear from here on but made most forcefully in the Conclusion building off the notion of *Becoming Animal*.

In the previous chapter this is summed up in the case Kato-san; and the fact that one could become an owner, then become a worker, and then quit within the span of a year. And below, as the reverse of Kato-san, I introduce Kunio-san who was unemployed, then a worker and then became an owner. Or, as another example, while there was a tacit expectation that a woman might quit her position to marry, it is apparent in what follows that this was not the path chosen by some women. Many 'rose up the ranks' to better employment positions while their senior male co-workers languished on the bottom rung of the employment ladder.

In short, given the frontier nature of the farm, industry, and region, categories were extremely permeable or pliable depending on the individuals negotiating them. Of course 'distinctions' existed to varying degrees – the workers were part of Japanese society - and some examples of social structures are outlined in Chapter Nine such as flexible social groupings (locals, lo-siders, outsiders, and no-siders), a gender divide, and local social hierarchies that could be witnessed in gift giving and local religion.

VI.5. Conclusion

There is no denial here of 'the social' in this thesis. The situation of working in an industrial dairy farm is a specific one however. There is a danger in this context of immediately linking young dairy farmer's lives with other forms of social scientific research on organisation or agriculture in Japan, notably the epic discourse surrounding rice agriculture known as *nihonjinron* or an overly fragmented *otaku* notion of identity politics. Research on Japan has, in general, tended to focus on such social structures; the co-operative, the communal, the familial, the traditional or its social inversion, the mirror opposite, one group fighting for its distinction amongst others. Previous chapters have outlined how dairy farms are very particular in terms of history, product, and politics. Added to this distinction Hokkaido and Tokachi are particular in these terms alongside geography and climate. And finally, each town and farm has its own needs and seeks to secure those needs in order to continue functioning.

In many cases there was an antipathy to classifications amongst young dairy farmers which were seen as 'typical' Japanese modes of thinking (frequently relayed to me as *futsu nihonjin kangaekata*). This was something many incoming workers sought to avoid through dairy work. In the following chapters, such classifications are often not applicable, given workers self-identification or 'liminal' identification, for example as

furiitā or just doing the job for a 'challenge' or 'adventure' – something they were choosing to do for the time being. And epic categories were not applicable given the novel history of the area, the brief history of the farm, and the relatively recent emergence of the mega farm model. Finally and simply, such structures were not applicable because many of the individuals literally, such as foreigners on fixed contracts, had no stake or interest in the social order, whether Japanese or local.

Like solidarity or union consciousness, any linking "system of durable, transposable dispositions" as noted above, could not have developed prior to farm experience. As most employees quit within a year, if durable dispositions developed from their farm work experience they would have to be traced to a post-farm life. Long-term workers here might be an exception, but after four years there were very few of these individuals around – exactly one. As my methodology – for better or worse – was tied to working on the farm, I have very little data about post-farm life beyond a few impromptu discussions with ex-dairy farm workers and contact with a handful of residents still in Gensan. It nevertheless seems doubtful that any shared post-dairy work *habitus* exists. The experience is highly personal and individual, people take from it what they can, and it is unlikely that this is somehow 'shared' beyond superficial similarities (for example, mutual acknowledgement amongst ex-dairy workers may exist that dairy work is difficult or that they miss Hokkaido *onsen*).

Finally the *doing* of specific jobs was nearly always determined through the day-to-day, even moment-to-moment needs of the farm and being at a particular place at (depending on the task) the right or wrong time. That is, *what needed to be done*, alongside the workers real or presumed individual prowess (speed, strength, intellect, tact, finesse) at meeting these needs (amongst workers and owners) was key, as were individual desires or choices to even remain in dairy work. In the following chapters, the individual agent and their choices take centre stage in the functioning of the farm for owner and worker alike; there are good and bad workers, good and bad jobs, owner's sons choose to quit the farm and poor workers with little prospect for advancement remain indefinitely.

Chapter Seven

From Teat to Tot: Following Flows¹

I love this job. I am always working with living things. Of course I care for the cows. Those same cows make the milk that my son drinks. I love my son. There is no better job.²

We are building a life. Soon we will buy our own land and have...like the American dream. Now we have a house, two cars, a dog, and my son can play outside. I don't worry. There are chances here...working for the dairy...we can't live like this in Honshu...we even named our son 'big earth' after the land.³

The basis of our superior milk comes from the grass, the land of Hokkaido, and the care that we give the cattle every day. – Working, [both cow and farmer implied] every morning; every morning because there is tomorrow morning.⁴

VII.1. Introduction or How This Body Works

Humans and cattle provide the 'lifeblood' of any functioning dairy farm and the purpose of a dairy farm is to produce milk, another liquid. Though metaphoric, the best way to think about these movements and spaces is *via* thinking of them organically. The farm itself as a body (skeletal, spatial, and arterial): framed barns, walkways, flow paths, and collection areas. And thinking in terms of liquid flows, such as milk, blood, semen and excrement, but also in terms of figurative 'flows' on which these literal movements depend; human, animal, information, and financial. Like a living body, these movements speed up and slow down at different times of day, related to different

¹ 'Following Flows' was influenced by the use of the metaphor of "grooved channels" by Geertz (1978) and Bestor's (2004) subversion of this usage to describe changing trends as moving outside of grooved ruts. Castels (2000) and Bauman (2000, 2007) use the metaphor to describe the increasingly "fluid" arrangements of relationships, communications, and structures required in global commodities industries undergoing rapid changes. Appadurai also links the notion with the movement of information and capital (1996, 2000).

² Extracted from field notes taken during an interview with an Aso area (Kyushu) dairy farmer who had attended Hokkaido University to study agriculture. It underscores the flow of love and labour and its link with the flow of milk and his son.

³ Extracted from field notes taken after a conversation with a co-worker and friend at Grand Hopes Farm. It underscores the fluid social dynamics, mobility, and the flow of capital.

⁴ Extracted from an advertisement by a major dairy company. It augments the above flows and plays on the sentiment of animal and human historical symbiosis building on the trope of flowing time and positive ecological and social sustainability.

body shapes, energy expenditure, and regions of the body – from heart to fingertips – and so without flow there is only death.

In words for the less metaphorically inclined, Grand Hopes is a large and deeply integrated business; happenings at one end of the farm, while isolated spatially, impact other areas of the operation. Product and workers, human or bovine, are not stationary. They are in movement as the constant state of the farm is to 'be' productive. There is no 'being' a farm – no functional farm – without movement. Beings must move (flow) about the various work spaces (areas of the body) within the farm because stasis equates to death for the product and business.

The next three chapters present ethnographic accounts of young dairy workers' lives. However, these interrelated spaces, processes, and beings must be divided into comprehensible units as attempting to view them holistically would succeed more in confusing the reader than explaining life on the dairy farm and the relationships amongst humans, cattle, and technologies. The farm's work spaces are divided into three general sections. While these separations of space, function, work role, and worker are in some sense artificial, they are not arbitrary. The divisions were everyday terms used by workers to refer to locations, tasks, and even people and animals. They are based on the frequency of the *same employees* doing the *same tasks* in the *same area*. They are separated through the general function of these spaces in the process of producing milk; areas that workers referred to as *jimushyo* (the office), *pa-ra* (the milking parlour) and *soto de / no 'X'* (the outside 'places').⁵

This chapter focuses on 'internal flows.' That is to say, the *Head Work* of the office area (*flow of information and finance*) and the *Heart Work* the parlour area (*flow of animals, milk, and humans*). The following chapter will focus on the 'external flows' or *Keeping It All Working* – in essence areas outside of the main purpose of producing milk but important in keeping the farm functioning.⁶ To avoid confusion in describing an already confusing system, headings and terms used in the three sections, *Head Work*, *Heart Work*, and *Keeping It All Working*, follow the same format; a brief description of job role and purpose, followed by a description of select workers and examples of their interactions in and outside the work area. Workers introduced here will, along with the description of the owners in Chapter Five, snowball. They will be

⁵ Noted below, the inner stall and holding area play a dual role of being external during day work but obviously integral during the milking process.

⁶ Alternatively, without using metaphoric language, one could say: office work, parlour work, and work in support of the overall functioning of the farm.

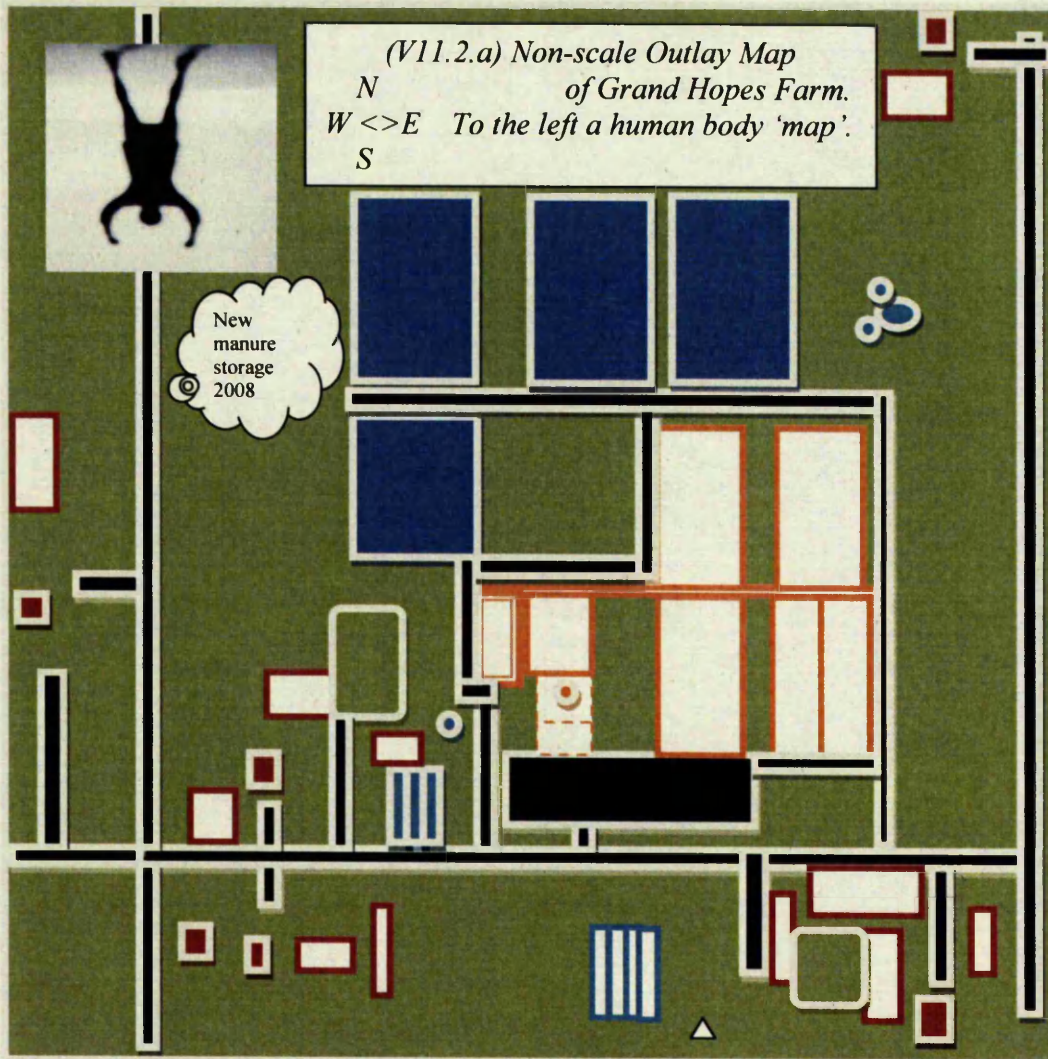
referred to in more detail in the remaining chapters, along with less developed 'characters'. The human body is used as a cartographic metaphor to assist in the explanation of a complex human, animal, and mechanical system as the farm and the function of the beings, machinery, and buildings roughly lend themselves to this analogy. However, it is important not to read too much into this essentially didactic explanation. I have added, where possible and practical, maps, photographs, and diagrams and the ethnographic details in what follows touch upon more sensuous aspects of the farm: sounds, smells, and tactile experiences.

XII.2. Farm as Being

Grand Hopes Farm was located ten minutes by car northwest of Gensan. The main office, barns, and milking parlour were located on a hill that was overlooked by mountains to the north. This area, the 'head and heart' of the *bokujyou*, was situated above open fields that were utilized for corn silage and a lower barn area to the south that was used primarily for the rearing of young calves. Beside the lower barns were concrete silage bunkers and the homestead of the *sachyou*, the separate house of his elderly father and mother, and across the road, his former home that was occupied by Matsuyama-san and his young family and when they purchased their own home, Chinese workers moved in to the old house.

The *kachyou's* home and barn area, sign posted Grand Hopes Farm II, was approximately half a kilometre east. It was home to three large barns, several concrete silage bunkers, and a large open area set aside for run-over silage piles that were covered by blue tarps and earth. The two other owners lived approximately a kilometre to the northwest and northeast respectively. Although their land was utilized for growing sweet corn silage, their barns were not part of Grand Hopes operation and, as noted in the following chapter, they were treated the same as a *buchyou* might be by staff and the *sachyou* and *kachyou*.

The structure and function of the *bokujyou* layout was complex. It took at least a month to get one's bearings on the whole farm and feel confident in knowing which gates to open or close, where certain tools could be found, how to find cattle belonging to a certain *gun* (group), or what task needed to be done before another task. It was an intricate outlay of animals, machines, and buildings designed to be, although not always working as planned, the most efficient way to get the most milk at the least cost.



- Pavement
- Homesteads
- Original family held Barns

- Pasture
- Silage

- Office and Parlour
- Milking and catch barn

- Dry cow, heifer, and beef barns
- Lawn and Crop Fields

- Manure processing and storage
- Waste burning piles

VII.3. Using Your Head: Farm Intelligence

Head Work is not chosen to slight other jobs on the farm as somehow requiring less intellect; though in terms of physical labour, office related work *tended* to be less onerous. Simply, extending the analogy of the human body, the office functions as the 'brain' of the operation on many levels. First, it is where all of the department heads have their desks and it is where decisions regarding the general operation of the farm are usually made. Second, it is the entry point for all who gain access to the body of the farm; other company heads call here first. Third, all planning is done through the office, from fixing the monthly work schedule, to charting attempts at artificial insemination, to plotting what barns cattle ought to reside in; information comes in and decisions go out. Finally all paperwork and computerised information, the 'memory bank' so-to-speak, regarding the farm's employees, costs, and cattle are stored here.

VII.3.1. Roles and Reasons

In what follows the job role and the reason why this job is required on the farm is explained. This is followed by an introduction to some of the people performing this role and their interactions with fellow employees, equipment, and the cattle.

Jimushyo sutafu (Office Staff)

The *buchyou*, *kachyou*, *sachyou* along with the secretary / receptionist all had a desk in the head office. However, the hunter (explained below), *sachyou*, and secretary were generally the only people found in the room; others might be glimpsed ducking in to update information or ask a question about daily operations, but generally speaking, most stayed clear of the office doors.

The head office had a wide range of external visitors. The flow of milk from cow, to machine, to truck, to factory, and on to the store is all coordinated through head offices. At Grand Hopes Farm the secretary, *sachyou*, and hunter were frequently on the phone keeping things flowing from their respective ends. Ordering machine parts, confirming cattle shipments, casually or eagerly enquiring where a veterinarian might be along his or her daily route, or making sure workers were paid and departing

workers were replaced; any stoppage in the flow of people, milk, or information was a problem that ultimately returned to and was resolved in the office.

All visitors, regulars or rarities, checked in. From tour groups and newspaper reporters to subcontractors, sales and delivery people, a hearty "*sumimasen*" (hello / excuse me) was uttered from the hallway outside the office, and any range of visitor could emerge through the door upon the reply of "*hai irrashai*" (welcome in). Depending on the importance of the visitor, the expectation was that the *sachyou* or secretary would contend with whoever dropped in. Traffic, (human, financial, and information) in and out of the office was constant.

Hatsujyou hanta- (The Heat Hunter)

The work day begins at around 3:30 a.m. for the *hatsujyou hanta-* (hunter of cows in heat). Every morning the cattle are quickly inspected. This is done, not only to ascertain if they suffer from obvious signs of sickness, for example sunken eyes, excessive perspiration, or bloody stool indicative of a range of ailments to be relayed to the veterinarian, but also to insure that the cattle in heat can be separated from the others for artificial insemination later in the morning. This is a job in which one must possess a considerable amount of specialized knowledge and skill. While all jobs on a dairy farm fit this description to some degree, the *hanta-* requires more know-how than most. Beyond an aptitude for physical mechanics, a strong back, and, if male, the ability to endure colourful taunts regarding his 'hidden desires' to find cattle in an amorous frame of mind, the hunter possesses a great deal of responsibility in the planning, handling, welfare and the profitability of the animals. Cows are only in heat for a few days and illness can quickly pass through cattle in such close quarters.

The hunter carries a computer print off of numerically identified cattle that includes an impressive array of biographic information ranging from date of purchase, milk production, and attempts at impregnation – including the type and cost of semen used. Catalogued in this highly rational process, all 1700 cows, an ever increasing number, are under the sole preview of the *sachyou* and *Hanta-*. Usually, they defer to the advice of a state hired and partially state funded veterinarian (outlined below), but this was not always the case. In short, veterinarians act as advisors but it is the hunter who ultimately determines the best course of action to take with each individual cow.

Thus the hunter is a *buchyou* position that commands considerable respect, prestige, and (usually) higher remuneration when compared with most other jobs on the farm. Such kudos are well earned as the hunter, in spite of being first at work, frequently puts in overtime and is on call if a cow is injured or, as was sometimes the case, simply 'drops' during the milking process. The job requires training often, but not always, in an academic program. The position also requires the ability to be personable. To knowledgably liaise with a range of people, from office staff to veterinarians, pharmaceutical suppliers to co-workers on the farm. Head, heart, body, legs, arms, and beyond – the hunter needs to be thinking, diplomatic and resourceful, if not a bit crafty and tactful, at all times.

Jyuu (Veterinarians)

The relationship between the veterinarian and the hunter is outlined above, and so their link to the head office is obvious, despite not working in it. Veterinarians are partially funded through insurance and by the state. Thus, the level of animal care – at least in terms of 'maintaining' their health to continually produce milk – is high. Most, but by no means all, of the *Jyuu* are originally from rural areas. Most went to national universities and a high proportion came from Hokkaido University (seven out of the nine I met). Generally the *Jyuu* work in one rural region but change farms in that area through a system of rotation. Thus, the same animals are not always tended by the same veterinarians.

VII.3.2. Working Lives

Below I focus on the lives of three individuals connected with *Head Work*. As noted in the introduction, my connection with most 'informants' was through working and living with them daily – not interviewing them. Thus, in the relaying of *their* stories I am implicated threefold. First, I am directly responsible in the eliciting, recording, interpreting, and relaying of their life stories; second, more times than not, this information was obtained during uncontrolled situations that might well have had an influence on what was done or said, that is, 'the context' – of which I was clearly a part – played a key role in what or how something was said; and finally I often

observed, or had information relayed to me, through informal gossip, in which case, 'triangulate' as I might, I am essentially passing this on to the reader.

Matsuyama: Home on the Range

I met Matsuyama-san my first day in Gensan. As noted in the Introduction, Wada-san, the *sachyou* had picked me up in Obihoro, but he had forgotten the keys to my apartment. We arrived at the office to collect the keys and Matsuyama was still at his desk. The *sachyou* said that I had had a long journey and asked Matsuyama if he would mind popping by my apartment to teach me how to use the cooker, turn on the hot water, *etcetera*. He added that after this we were to meet him at the local sushi restaurant. Matsuyama agreed, as he always did, and a friendship began.

I went on a few shopping trips with Matsuyama (34), his wife Takako (24), and his one year old son. We went to neighbouring *onsen* a few times, at least once a week we talked over dinner, and later, we knew some of the same people outside of the farm. Matsuyama had lived and worked for a year on a horse ranch forty minutes south of Calgary near the home of a lifelong friend of mine – an area world renowned for free range ranching. He had travelled through Australia, India, Thailand, and parts of Europe – including a horse trek across much of Spain. Matsuyama was raised in rural Akita prefecture in northern Honshu and Takako was from rural Hyogo prefecture in central Honshu. Though not from Hokkaido, they were both perfectly at home in a rural setting and in the *sachyou*'s old house.

The house, like that of most young working couples with a child and a dog, was always in a slight state of disarray. Occasionally affronting the squeamish tendencies of those without the experience of toddlers, tables and sofas could be curiously sticky. Toys, clothes, and furniture that Matsuyama was in the process of building, or the remains of some pet project were always to be found in ad hoc arrangements in the sitting room. Matsuyama always had interests outside of the dairy farm; making handmade bacon, sausages, wine or cheese and his experiments with Thai style curries were always shared with enthusiasm. There were photos of the couple's wedding set out. The couple looked happy, dressed in western clothes – very western clothes; cowboy hats, jeans, and belt buckles that he had won at rodeos. Their son had cowboy boots too.

In early meetings they relayed that their dream was to have a house of their own with space outside for horses. This was realized just after I returned from the field for the first time. The *sachyou* had helped them to buy a small parcel of land with an old house, barn, and machine shop. This does not mean that he helped them to pay for it. He did not need to. The land was sold to them at the going rate for bare acreage; an incredible ¥ 50,000 all included. The important point was that the *sachyou* vouched for them as good neighbours. On numerous occasions I was told of a local tacit agreement that land was not sold to outsiders easily or cheaply. A wealthy man from Nagoya paid over ¥ 46,000,000 for a similar property. And a local female nurse had been searching for property for over two years near Gensan. The few properties she had found were well out of her price range or would not be sold to a lone female buyer. Land was for sale to those who were deemed *ii hito* (good folks), people who could be vouched for by locals. For individuals seen as likely to stick around Gensan and not turn over the land for profit, favourable arrangements could be made. When the Matsuyamas moved out, Chinese workers moved into the owner's old house as they did not have drivers permits and could walk to work as opposed to being driven by other workers.⁷ Matsuyama was reluctant to rebuild the old house on his new land and it soon, somewhat mysteriously, burned down! Undaunted, perhaps even relieved, they started to build a new house and planned to buy some horses.⁸ Matsuyama and his wife were passionate about horses, Hokkaido, their new home, and their son, but with these loves also came contradictions and conflicts.

A house backing onto an expanse of land, two cars, a dog, and soon horses would be an impossible lifestyle to maintain in an urban environment and exorbitantly expensive in much of Japan, but Matsuyama's work made it possible in rural Hokkaido.⁹ This lifestyle came at a cost of course and as noted above for a *hatsujyou hanta*- this meant going to work at 3:30 a.m. and often working until 6:00 p.m. on a four-days-on and one-day-off rotation. Indeed, Takako's work at the supermarket was added income, but was of marginal financial importance. Matsuyama lamented about this work situation on occasion. "*Grand Hopes no seikatsu wa taihen. tatoeba nagaii jikan ga arushi tokidoki ningen kankei muzukasishi demo shigoto dake ne. shigoto ato toki zen zen kangaenai. Shigoto owaritoki iro iro na kyoumi ga aru ne. Sachyou wa itsumo shinpai*

⁷ More on Chinese workers can be found in Chapter Eight.

⁸ There is an interesting link here in Chapter Nine in the discussion of belonging and religion.

⁹ Matsuyama is quoted in the opening stanza this chapter discussing these issues – in general he was positive about working for the farm.

desuyo” (Yeah, life [working on the farm] is hard, the long hours, dealing with some of the people, but it’s just a job. I don’t think about it after hours I’ve other interests, but the *sachyou* is always worrying you know).

Matsuyama worried about his son’s future in Hokkaido however. For the present, both Matsuyama and Takako felt that life was good. Daichi, the Kanji of his name means “big land” in reference to Hokkaido, was in a safe environment and could run around outside and he had the *sachyou*’s wife and mother to occasionally look after and dote upon him. The local primary school was nearby. But, both parents thought that the teen years might pose a problem. Although reared in rural areas themselves, they feared that their son would become an ‘*inakamono*’ (a country bumpkin) and were quietly torn between staying and going.

The Secret life of Taro-san

Taro-san was also in a position of high-level importance on the farm. Fittingly, I met Taro-san in the office on my first official day of work. Taro-san loved his job. I was meeting people, handing out my business card and bumbling through formalized greetings with half-comprehending but widely smiling new co-workers. Taro-san stood out. With a look of serious reflection he studied my card holding it with both hands and, after a moment, he commented favourably on the perceived high rank of my university. He then placed the card under the glass cover on his office desk where it remained for the entirety of my stay at the farm. Taro-san, and I always called him Taro-san and not just Taro, was the *buchyou* in charge of the milking parlour and, when not in the office filling out reports on it or reading about it, he was often found eyeing it with a look of unease or pride depending on its state of cleanliness or function. The parlour was undeniably his realm.¹⁰

He took his job seriously. On two occasions he came into work on his day off because he knew the service technicians were coming and he wanted to explain the problems in person. Taro-san, like Matsuyama, was in his mid-thirties, slight of build, and in spite of his schoolboy face had the distinct air of being two generations older. This was not due to a lack of energy. He was usually the first one at work, last to leave,

¹⁰ As noted above, work spaces must be separated but should not be thought of as rigid. As a Hunter, Matsuyama would wander through the body of the farm inspecting cows, but he occasionally filled in as parlour worker. Similarly, Taro-san worked in the office as well and was somewhat removed from a ‘regular’ parlour staff worker. Most jobs must be thought of as interconnected to some degree.

and sprang effortlessly from under the *kotatsu* (a low table) into a dutiful trot to answer the phone or when beckoned by a superior. At ease in his coveralls, he moved faster and with more grace than people over ten years his junior. He was polite when we met, curious about me, and by the time I quit my job we were no longer on speaking terms. We were both happy I was going.

Taro-san was not well liked by most of his co-workers. One of the subcontractors smirkingly referred to him as *majime sugiru-san* (Mr. Overly serious) and most admitted this comment was a polite understatement.

During milking times Taro-san was in charge of the parlour. He would become enraged at animals and co-workers. Generally, any parlour worker would suffice, but notably Haruko and Takuto (young free-timers outlined below) were the chosen targets for his outbursts. In these instances his frustration was often interpretable if not understandable; undeniably, Haruko was slow and forgetful while Takuto was often more interested in the clock than the work at hand. However, the vehemence of his rage seemed, to all involved, beyond reasonable. If Taro-san was working in the final position of the parlour (a system defined in the following chapter and outlined in detail in the Conclusion) he would constantly demand the speeding up of the equipment, past the comfort level of slower workers. Unlike other managers, he would watch over his least favourite workers and would point out their failings, scream at them, and on more than one occasion I witnessed him strike them or shoulder them away from their task while berating them. Cows were also the frequent recipients of his wrath as he would punch at their legs or hit them with the iodine solution's plastic applicator – breaking it at least twice.

Everybody had an individual and seemingly patented response to Taro-san's daily fury. Young cattle would become more stressed and generally do whatever had been disturbing him all-the-more; old cattle were frequently, even shockingly indifferent; Haruko would weep and Takuto would laugh at him or make faces when he turned away. However, most would just say "*Hai wakarimashita*" with a variance in individual and momentary body language and intonation that expressed a situational sensitive range of meanings; from a dismissive "Yeah, whatever" to a forthright and apologetic "Yes sir, I understand" acknowledgement of wrongdoing.

Taro-san was not merely feeling pressure from being in charge of the milking process. He faced all jobs with zeal incomparable to the other workers. While scrubbing the parlour floor he would drip with sweat and would let out heavy sighs

from time to time. When roping cattle he preferred to rope them far into the corral and then animatedly grunt and 'humph' yanking them across the stall by the halter to be tied up. Indeed, whether folding summer silage tarps or shovelling snow he made it very clear that he was working hard. One evening after work he invited me for a beer. Having spoken to Taro-san little beyond work, I arrived at his apartment – a private apartment not affiliated with the farm – expecting it to either have bare walls or be a room rife with cow posters.

As it turned out the apartment was filled with photos, Taro-san was a newspaper photographer in Sapporo before starting dairy work at 33 years-of-age. He was also an avid angler, baseball fan, skilled cook, and collected detective novels. The early evening was spent speaking of our hobbies, but as the empty bottles increased so did the range of topics.

Taro-san had been engaged to a woman. When this relationship ended – 'badly' he impressed as emphatically as ambiguously – he sought a new life outside of Sapporo and the bitter memories that were held within its streets and play places. He expressed that work is hard to find once you have started a career in Japan. He was tired of being a photographer as the pay was poor and it was a stressful lifestyle being 'on call' with never-ending deadlines. Photography, his passion at one time, had become no longer enjoyable as a job and he was looking for a change even before his relationship troubles. He claimed that 'big money' could be made in dairy farming. Rubbing some dust off with his sleeve, he produced an aged black and white framed photo of his grandfather, a dairy farmer near Furano Hokkaido, a man whom he respected more than any other person, due to his being a *shojiki na hatarakimono* (an honest hardworking common man). In short he explained his choice to work at Grand Hopes Farm as a combination of seeking out a new life, the chance to make money, and a certain nostalgic view of his grandfather.

With the toted beer finished we moved onto the *shochu* in Taro-san's fridge and the conversation soon became more maudlin. "*Ore wa samurai da*" (I am a samurai!), Taro-san slurred leaning forward on wobbly elbows. Caught off guard by this elucidation, not sure if I was to be taking it literally, my blurry eyes likely widened as I asked what he meant. He went on to explain that the *sachyou* had given him a job when others would not, that he would do anything for the *sachyou*, and that others did not take work seriously enough or have pride in the company. Moreover, times were increasingly becoming harder because all of the small farmers were draining money

from the government in terms of subsidies and thus unfairly competing. It would be best if all these small family farms died off and workers from the small dairies moved to work at the larger ones. I expressed my disagreement with the utility of mega farms and I replied that many workers just saw it as a job, a way to make money, a way to see Hokkaido, a way to take some time out to think about their next step (all brought up below). I added that the *sachyou* surely knew this. Taro-san became angry – he slammed his glass down – “You are all idiots” this is everyone’s “big chance”, he growled.

The Girl Next Door

Yukiko arrived at the *bokujyou* three months after I started. I attempted to contact her through email before she arrived. I explained that I was a doctoral student working at the farm and that I was interested in her impressions of Hokkaido before she came. There was no response. After she arrived, and we were better acquainted, I asked why she did not reply to my email. She told me it was “*kowai*” (scary) because that it wasn’t a Japanese thing to do. She was from a large city in Honshu and had studied sheep breeding at a university in Aomori, the northernmost prefecture. Her boyfriend found a job at a nearby dairy *bokujyou* and he had negotiated the same ‘floating’ days off adapting his work schedule to fit hers.

One afternoon we were assigned the task of cleaning the floor of the laundry room together; a fairly easy job making conversation possible. I asked her why she chose to work in Hokkaido. She was conflicted: “*Iro iro na dobutsu dai suki demo inaka wa kirai yo. Kaimono ga naishi, tomodachi mo inai- okkashi ne.*” (I love all sorts of animals, but I hate the countryside, there’s no shopping I don’t see my friends (and so on) it’s strange that I chose to live here isn’t it). Well what about your boyfriend, I asked, he must like it here. “*Zen zen suki jya nai yo X farm wa sugoi hen na hito ga takusan yo*” (No way, he hates it here X farm – his job is full of weird people). Indeed, I later met people who had a host of unpleasant things to say about the owner of the farm her boyfriend worked on ranging from animal abuse to sexual harassment. “So, are you going to stay here?” I asked. “*Mada kimeimasen ga...*” (I / we? Haven’t decided but...) was her evasive reply. However, it was my assumption that she would soon be one of the many who quit the farm. However, a few weeks later she was made

an assistant to the *Hatsujyou hanta-* and had promised the *sachyou* she would stick around for at least another year.

VII.4 Head Work: Coming Together - Coming Apart

When I returned to the field for a second stint of research, despite keeping in contact via telephone and Internet with interlocutors both on and off the farm in Gensan, I was shocked at the level of change and otherness encountered upon my return eight months later. Former co-workers, the ones that remained among the eleven new staff members, agreed that change came at a furious pace at the farm. Of the three workers discussed above only Matsuyama was still at the farm. Thus, despite his claims that the dairy was the “big chance” for all of the workers, his commitment to the owners, and a strong desire to remain with the farm Taro-san was encouraged to quit by the owners. Encouraged is not meant as a euphemism. He was politely asked by the owners of the farm if he would please consider leaving the farm!

At first Taro-san remained, but eventually seeing that there was no future for him there, he did quit. His frequent altercations with staff and townspeople, outlined in more detail in the following sections and chapters, became a nuisance, even a liability, for the farm owners. Yukiko, uncertain of her desire to stay from the get go, left the farm despite her promise to stay on for at least a year due to an unplanned pregnancy. Matsuyama was the only worker who remained. However, his desire to remain as a permanent member of Gensan society was always in question. Choices, aptitudes, and contingencies played a key role in these individuals’ farm lives. While these three workers were linked with the office side of production – united in their engagement with ‘head work’ unlike the other workers on the farm described in the following chapters – they were extremely different individuals.

Moreover, they did not share similar backgrounds or interests. They communicated little at work and did not spend time together outside of work. Clearly they did not share similar future aspirations or possibilities at the farm. Yet, from 2006 to 2008 they represented half of the office staff. Yukiko, the only woman beyond the receptionist (a divorced local woman also unrelated to the farm family), was trained at a university in sheep husbandry, she was from Fukuoka (Japan’s fourth largest city) but had no practical experience at being a *hanta-*. She had not travelled widely and considered things ‘un-Japanese’ to be unusual – perhaps even threatening. She expressed no

interest in being a long-term worker at the farm – seeing the job as a stepping stone or a time-out. However, she did commit to a spoken one-year contract in order to learn the pragmatic aspects of the job, and I suspect likely would have stuck with this obligation if not for her pregnancy. By contrast, Matsuyama, holding the same work position as Yukiko, was raised in rural Akita but had travelled widely. He did not have a university education, but he was very open to foreign things, (rodeo, Thai curries, sausage making, reggae, and so on), he was ever-keen to discuss his views on life or the farm. It was his practical experience that earned him the position; his skills earned though experience, his tact and his “*ii hito*” status (stable, reliable, not prone to confrontation, seen as likely to remain in the area, through having a wife and child – and soon after a home) that kept him in the job and community – while he had no immediate plans to leave, he (quietly) did not discount this as an option. He was treated much as a family member by the *sachyou*. He was serious about work, but for him the job was a job; it afforded a rural family lifestyle. In contrast to both Matsuyama and Yukiko, Taro-san was extraordinarily eager to remain at the farm, while he had a university education it was in photography and not in agriculture. He had very certain ideas of what work life entailed and expected his co-workers to possess the similar ‘everything for the company’ spirit considering himself a sort of company ‘samurai’ in the service of the farm’s *ie*, the futility of which is expanded upon in Chapter Nine. He was frequently frustrated that his desire for company solidarity was not shared. And, despite his strong desire to be part of the farm family he was not deemed an “*ii hito*” due to his frequent outbursts at work and in the community. He was asked to leave the farm and eventually returned to Sapporo.

Detailed descriptions of other office staff beyond the *sachyou* would underscore the same basic point, very little beyond the work itself, united these individuals; all came from quite different backgrounds and interpreted the importance of the job in different ways; providing a lifestyle, providing a ‘big chance’ or providing a short-term opportunity. While none of these office workers were related to the owner by blood, as noted above, Matsuyama’s family shared a ‘fictive’ kinship relationship with the owners. Taro-san desired such belonging but was kept outside and Yukiko was an outsider and remained so. However, even locals with direct family links such as Kato-san, the farm’s daughters, and the *sachyou*’s son left the farm as noted in the previous chapter. Thus, being ‘in the family’ was not related to having an instant office career or even having an interest in the daily operations of the farm. Alternatively, being

intimately involved in the operation of the farm did not mean one shared a similar trajectory with co-workers.

VII. 5. Heart Work: Farm Foot Soldiers

The Conclusion of this thesis outlines the parlour system in detail tying together human, animal, machine, technology and production in terms of both function and dysfunction on the farm. It serves as the ideal summary point of this monograph and an in-depth discussion of the parlour here, beyond a broad outline, would be redundant. However, there are veins and arteries, or in other words pathways and collection points, which are central to the constant inward and outward flow of the parlour. In essence, spaces where humans, cattle, information, and milk move through on the way to or from the 'heart' of the operation. This area and the people working in it can be thought of as being connected through scheduling and work purpose. In essence, things going as planned, all elements work to get milk from inside the cow to the outside of the farm as safely and as quickly as possible for the spoilable product. And again, keeping in mind the body and flow metaphor, moving, from head to heart to extremities and beyond, it might be helpful for the reader to consult the farm layout map provided above.

VII.5.1 Roles and Reasons

Gyuunyuu ushi (Dairy Cattle)

Hokkaido's dairy producers have experimented with a variety of different breeds of dairy cattle. Today, by far and away the most popular breed, for practical and economic purposes, is the Holstein.¹¹ Grand Hopes cattle are all Holstein; usually black and white, sometimes brown and white, occasionally one of these colours, and more rare still, all three. Individuals themselves, some are skinny, some ornery, some affectionate, some are clever others are not. With few exceptions, cattle remain indoors for the entirety of their lives, on average around six productive years, making the daily route from stall to parlour and back to stall two or three times a day. Cattle are, from

¹¹ An interesting political history of this choice can be found in Russell (2007: 132).

approximately fourteen months of age kept as pregnant as possible; this accomplished solely through artificial insemination. Calves are born, mothers are instantly separated from their young, and when possible impregnated again. This increases the output of milk and the output of offspring. Smaller cows are inseminated with cheaper semen as it is not expected that they will produce offspring large enough to be productive dairy cattle and thus they produce beef cattle. More will be said of these processes in the Conclusion of the thesis.

Suto-ru (Stall 'Workers')

Stall work is perhaps the most 'insular' of the positions on the farm – at least in terms of human contact. The stall workers are essentially responsible for getting the cows to and from the barn areas and to and from the parlour. They maintain bovine bedding and flooring, ensuring that the animals have safe and secure mobility on their daily migrations and are resting in reasonably sterile environs. Stall workers often drive equipment around the farm during the various tasks outlined in the following chapters. They are usually responsible for transporting animals around the various areas of the farm as well. Thus, their concern is essentially with the movement of cattle during milking and with the maintenance of the outlying regions of the farm when not assisting with milking. Thus, they have little contact, beyond break-times, with other workers on the farm. As noted below, even while working with one another verbal communication is limited.

Horudin (Holding Area 'Workers')

Counter to the closed social work-world of the stall staff, the holding worker is a go-between. He or she works between the stall staff and the parlour staff and between the cattle and parlour machine itself. The holding worker's key task is to orchestrate the safe and smooth 'flow' of the cattle from the stall area into and out of the automated parlour and then back to the stall area. This requires that the cattle obey the pace of the machine – often a challenge with younger cattle. Occasionally the need also arises to communicate directly with the office staff, but generally cattle that need to be separated after milking are indicated by the hunter *via* a list of cow numbers and groups on paper.

Alternatively, members of the parlour staff make instant decisions regarding the separation of cows based on irregularities or perceived illnesses.

Prompting young cows into menacing looking equipment aside, the job is not as demanding physically as some others, but it does require the ability to act quickly and decisively. In this position numerous gambles must be made regarding the movement of cows in and out of the parlour and en route to and from the stalls, moreover, the worker must select opportune moments to leave their post to tie up sick animals, or, upon seeing a major problem on the horizon – such as broken equipment or missing animals – to halt the entire milking process. As such, it is a stressful job with plenty of movement from the stall areas, to the holding areas, to the parlour, and the ‘catch barn’ where separated cows are kept.

Pa-ra- (Parlour ‘Workers’)

Again, the mechanics and relationships involved in the various parlour jobs are complex and are outlined in the Conclusion as a central ‘hinge’, so-to-speak, drawing many aspects of the farm together. The function of the workers and equipment in the parlour is straightforward; the extraction of milk from cows as efficiently as possible and the search for any signs of illness that may have been missed by the hunter. During milking, the workers are always within the confines of the parlour and work in four alternating ‘stations’ of varying difficulty and intensity; approximately every twenty minutes workers change stations. Thus while there is a lead worker, the staff roughly share in doing the same tasks for the same duration of time.¹²

VII.5.2. Working Lives

Below two stall workers and six parlour workers are briefly introduced and they will reappear along with other workers in the remainder of the thesis. Like Matsuyama, Yukiko, and Taro-san, or the owners and their families these workers also have different ideas as to what dairy work offers them and how they engage with the work and their position on the farm. They also have differing aspirations and ‘embodiments’ – capabilities, some innate such as physical speed or co-ordination, others chosen such

¹²The boss is indicated on the example schedule in Chapter Six Section Five with a black dot.

as taking an interest in the work at hand or viewing such work as a job or lifestyle, that differentiate one worker from another.

Limbo-san

“*Limbo-san naze kono shigoto wo yamemasen ka*” (Limbo-san why don’t you quit this job?) I asked while we shovelled rows of rice husks out for stall bedding. “*Yametai kedo Grand Hopes o hatarakanai*” (I want to quit but I don’t work here). After repeating the question in various forms assuming it was unclear, Limbo-san assured me he understood. But as it turned out, one of the farm’s best workers did not officially work there. I had asked the question because it was clear that he hated the job and had a palpable, and compared to the others, a vocal dislike of the owners. He was not paid the same rate as other workers and he did not receive bonuses. He was employed by another farm and had been on loan at Grand Hopes Farm for over a year. He did not know the details of this arrangement and the owners were not willing to share these. It was an accepted mystery. What was certain was the fact that Limbo-san had worked on three dairy farms since he graduated high school. As months passed, and workers came and went, he would say that next month the owners had promised to let him return to the farm that he had formerly worked on. However, each month another worker would quit, indeed usually one a month, and Limbo-san would remain, unhappy and uncertain.

By all accounts from female staff and my local female friends, he was a handsome man. He was also clever, quiet, and hard working, and these three qualities made him a valuable stall hand; again, a job with considerable autonomy. I asked him what he disliked about the job. Like all workers his first response was that the hours were awful – but the work itself was OK. What was particularly troubling to him was not that the hours interfered with his hobbies, like Takuto below. It was that he was 28 years old and he wanted a girlfriend. “*Shigoto wa ma ma dakedo kanojyou ga inai, jikan ga muri dakara*” (The job’s OK but you have no time to meet anyone). Why don’t you just quit both jobs? I asked. He replied that it is very difficult to find work in Gensan. Why don’t you move to Obihiro, or Tokyo for that matter? I asked, adding the enticement of there being both more jobs and more women in either place. “*Shira nai*” (I don’t know why) along with a head tilt was always his reply. He was not sure why he was being kept there, he wasn’t happy about it, but he wasn’t (seemingly) about to do anything to

change his position. He told me repeatedly that his days off were spent sleeping or playing pachinko.

Up, Up, And Away.

Takuto worked in the parlour and later in the animal hospital introduced in the following chapter. He was 21 years old, sported a few prominent scars, bad teeth, and gold chains. Like Limbo-san he was a local, but he was far from quiet and reserved, in short he was a tough kid from the wrong side of Gensan's unused tracks. He was the quintessence of what Japanese call *Yankiipoi* (Yankee *ish*), however this linguistic referent is quite misleading. In short, he was young, brash, and had an attraction to flashy fashions and customised cars. He would often tote magazines to work and show me car parts he planned to buy with his next pay check. In the UK using a similar level of colloquial slang one might call him a *chav*.

Takuto had quit a few jobs around town, one as a honey distribution truck driver and temporary jobs on other farms. I was told this made him seem like a poor employee to most prospective employers. He came from a large family, and his father was known as a gambler and drinker. The *sachyou* hired him nonetheless. The *sachyou* often seemed to have a soft spot for him. But for Takuto concern about farm work was placed far behind concerns with where he would spend his next pay packet or how he could have some fun killing the hours of the workday.

Takuto and Taro-san were like comic book arch enemies. If I was working with one, unfavourable comments about the other were sure to arise. The other was always an idiot, disliked by the others, and hard to work with. Taro-san bemoaned that it was dangerous that Takuto did not take the job seriously and that this was the problem with Japanese today – *namkemono, bakarashi wakamono* (lazy and foolish youth). Takuto told me it was impossible to work with such a tyrant. Both told me that they had reached their *genkai* (limit) with the other.

Foolishly perhaps, I would try to reason with both, saying that Takuto was just a kid and likely did not see his future at the farm or that Taro-san was not such a bad guy outside of work – the general thrust being a combination of 'live and let live' and 'please don't involve me.' After one of my research trips I returned to learn that they had gotten into a yelling match during milking and Takuto stormed off before the end of his shift. The *sachyou* sent Takuto to work in the cow hospital, and indeed I was

told by Matsuyama that the *sachyou* always sent offensive employees to do this work in hopes that they would quit.

However, the result of this 'punishment' actually worked in Takuto's favour. His new job was more flexible in terms of taking time off as he was not responsible for the daily milking of cattle. And his true interest, beyond cars, existed outside of dairy farming. His new schedule enabled him to continue to study to be a balloon pilot. Indeed for all the lack of interest he had at work he made up in a passion to become a professional pilot on one of the local teams. His new position, a demotion of sorts, enabled him to attend a four day balloon festival in Honshu.

Ichiro the Hairless and Haru the Harmless

Ichiro stood apart from the others for various reasons. He was indefatigably friendly and polite. He was also hard not to notice due to his appearance; he completely lacked hair. Despite interviewing him and talking with him daily I never asked about this physical condition. He was clearly self-conscious about his appearance, but beneath his omnipresent hat brim, his smile contagiously beamed and his thin brow-less face gave the impression that he was some sort of timeless Zen master sent to meditate on dairy life. He was an anthropologist's dream; eager to help, patient, good natured and generally open to any question. Indeed, he often answered questions that I had before I was able to formulate them. This is not exaggeration. He was more than bright, more than observant, more than kind; there was something very special – a charisma – about Ichiro.

He had come from Nara. His parents worked in real estate. He had attended a private university on scholarship focusing on agri-business and was keen to pursue a career in industrial cheese making despite not really liking the flavour of cheese. Although being only twenty-four years old Ichiro was deeply concerned about his future and the future of agriculture in Japan; like many of the locals described in Chapter Five, he saw the move to larger farms lamentable, but necessary given Japan's population, land base, and world trade position. Ichiro was very well informed. He knew that there was more of a future, given the aforementioned trends of consumption and his intimate knowledge of them, in milk products rather than in milk production. He wanted to work in agriculture because he disliked cities and crowds. He liked farm work and was extremely patient and gentle with the cattle – this was a rare quality

amongst parlour workers, certainly males. On a few occasions we chatted over lunch in the staff room – every day he ate a plain *onigiri* (rice ball) and instant noodles – and although he didn't drink, Ichiro joined me for a beer in my apartment on a few occasions.

On night chugging back a beer as Ichiro sipped his can of juice, I asked him what he would like to do on his last day of work at the farm. I expected an answer ranging from, 'I will never quit' to 'go on a vacation,' but he caught me completely off guard. He looked at me in a direct way that, for him, seemed almost confrontational and he replied, "*Ushi zenbu nigeshite age tai*" (I would like to set all of the cows free).

Weeks later, and without mentioning it to anyone, Ichiro quit. I asked him why, hoping for a long explanation, one that might explain why many workers quit. "*Henna fuinki*." (bad atmosphere – bad vibes) was as detailed a response as I could get. Though many asked, nobody knew why he quit. As he was usually politely forthcoming with his views, perhaps Ichiro was uncertain himself beyond a vague feeling of *henna fuinki*. Simply, it was, for master Ichiro, time to move on. He promised to keep in touch with everyone. He quietly left the farm without ceremony and eight months later, nobody had heard from him.

Haruko was also a parlour worker. She was undeniably physically awkward and socially quirky. These are not statements made from my perspective alone – before my arrival she had earned the nickname *uchujin* (alien) because she would appear from lunch with food all over her shirt or from cleaning troughs drenched with water with her head covered with cow slobber. In short, she seemed utterly oblivious to her appearance or often what was going on around her. This, combined with her slow movements and self induced giggling, made her a target for good natured and malicious jokes.

'Haru', few called her by her full name, was raised on a small mixed family farm in Nagano. She told me that her family grew apples and persimmon and had a small dairy. When I asked about the size of the dairy herd she giggled out her reply that it was not exactly a dairy; they had three cows, all with names, and if she took over the farm she might bump the herd up to ten animals. Despite the seeming disinterest in her appearance and the lack of physical grace, Haru was clever. She had attended a national university to study dairying. I was not alone in liking her. She had friends in Obihiro and friends back home who would often call her on her cell phone during the

day. Surprisingly, weeks after Ichiro left, I found out that she had been dating him – a fact that nobody knew.

All were impressed with Haru's fortitude. She had made a commitment to stick with this job for a year and despite daily abuse from Taro-san – on more than one occasion I found her hiding in the back room literally nose bubbling and convulsing in tears – she lasted her contract and very happily moved on.

'Za' Tokyo Cowboy

Za Tokyo Cowboy hated this nickname but it is too fitting not to use. He started at the farm a month before I did and was well on his way out the door by the first time we met for a beer in my apartment a week after my arrival. He came from an upper-middle class family. His father owned some buildings in Tokyo and was a salary man, his mother was a home maker, and his sister had studied ballet in London. He attended a well-known private university in Tokyo to study economics, but he did not finish his courses. Since dropping out he had been a *furiita*- in various stores and pubs.¹³ At 32 years-of-age he had hoped that dairy farming would be his calling, indeed he had shipped furniture and belongings from Tokyo to start his new life.

His new life lasted two months. We arranged our final meeting the night before he was to return to Tokyo. He was not busy attending goodbye parties. The turnover rate was such that none were ever held. Workers came and left with seemingly few connections to the job or other workers. However, The Cowboy was an unusual case as nobody at the farm would talk to him once he announced he was quitting. Communication with him became small talk or instruction alone.

No stranger to vice, he arrived an hour and half late at my door with a few drinks already under his belt at the local *sunaku*.¹⁴ Shrouded in a halo of cigarette smoke, he cracked open a new beer and we started in on my poor attempt at Thai curry.

"*Fukinsonovabichii kaisha*" (Fucking son-of-a-bitch company) – "*Wakaru*" (Understand – [my English])?"

¹³ See Kosugi (2008) for a recent and extensive discussion of "freelancing youth" in Japan.

¹⁴ Snack bars range in both price and vice. Generally one pays an exaggerated amount for drinks in the company of women who feign interest in one's problems and titter at one's jokes (Allison 1994). Although they are not wholesome places, they are less seedy or dangerous than they often sound – though lung cancer from the haze of tobacco smoke must take its toll. In Gensan the owners were often well over the age of fifty along with any regular clients. I was actually a bit shocked that Za Cowboy was an occasional patron.

I assured him that I understood.

“*Hontouni*” (Really?), he chuckled, perhaps pleased that years of English language torture had at least come to use in this conversation. He disliked nearly everything about Gensan except the librarian.

“*Yari tai yo!*” (I want to ‘do’ her – [have sex with her.]) “*Demo kore kara murida ne – zan nen.*” (Well, that’s not gon’na’ happen now, too bad.)

I asked why he had quit Grand Hopes. He replied that his idea of living in Hokkaido was free time, open space, and nature, but as things turned out the hours were horrible (though he knew the hours before he came) and he hated small town life. The people, perhaps the librarian aside, were boring and he said he wanted to kill Taro-san every day. “*San kei wakaru?*” (Do you know what a 3 K job is?)

“*Un wakaru yo.*” (Yeah, I know) and I outlined the meaning in Japanese and added that in English there is a similar description of such employment.¹⁵

“*Nihongo wa sugoinaa Po-ru – chyampu iu no?*” (Your Japanese is great (a common lie) – *chyampu iu no? champu (shampoo?) iu (said), no (is it) ?*)

Thinking this was a Japanese word unknown to me, or an out of context reference to shampoo, I shrugged to express my incoherence.

He thrust his hands in the air spilling beer on his pants, “*Chyampu ova za worudo, I amu za chyampu...Eigo jyanai?*” (Champ of the world, I am the champ...It’s English isn’t it?). I re-thought, “*Champu, you know?*” (Champ – [do] you know [this word]?)

¹⁵ *San kei* means 3 K – similar to 3 D jobs in English. *Kittanai, Kuroi, to kiken* (dirty, dark, and dangerous) added to this is often *kusai* (smelly) and *kane ga nai* (poor paying). All workers I asked, including the owners, told me that dairy work was considered *san kei* employment. This might have been a bit of a tongue-in-cheek for owners (sure, your job is 3 D, I own the place).

Giggling I replied that I understood – “*Anata no eigo wa sugoi yo. Chotto benkyuo shitara pera pera ni naru to omou.*” (Your English is great! With a bit of practice you’ll be fluent I reckon). We both laughed.

“*Grand Hopes is za champu ova San kei. OK. Fukinkaisya*” (gloss) He bellowed – cackling himself into a coughing fit

I asked what the plan was after he got back to Tokyo. After a short trip to Sapporo to hang out with a former university friend, he had landed a job trucking shipping containers between Yokohama and Kobe. He told me that he thought it was going to be a great job. He liked to be alone and to drive.

Nobody Knows the Troubles I've Seen

Usually Tsutomu worked in the parlour but, much to the frustration of stall co-workers, he would also fill in doing work in the stall area if the need arose. Tsutomu’s father was a university professor in Tokyo and Tsutomu had a degree in something – something unknown because he rarely spoke. He was the only non-family member to have worked at Grand Hopes Farm for the entirety of its history and the common consensus amongst workers was that he would continue to work there for the rest of his days. This was not because he excelled at his job. Indeed he had not moved an inch up the company ladder since starting work at the *kachyou*’s farm the year before Grand Hopes was incorporated. He did not enjoy his job like Ichiro. He rarely ever put effort into working like Limbo-san, and even if he tried, the quality and quantity of work was low. Moreover, it was not because the *sachyou* wanted him there. Much in the way the *kachyou* was dead set against hiring me, I was told the *sachyou* disliked Tsutomu. If his name was mentioned around the boss, he would let out a low growling ‘*ahhhhhh, Tsutomu na...*’ (ohhhh, that Tsutomu) and quickly change the topic. From the perspective of those along the grapevine, the *sachyou*’s contempt was understandable; he had bailed him out of debt from gambling and unpaid credit cards (the companies, I was told, contacted the farm requesting payment) and he was well aware of his lack of work ethic.

Despite an official list of jobs issued during a staff meeting placing Tsutomu in league with the rest of the newer workers. Nevertheless, there were times when

Tsutomo would take it upon himself to snap the reins of command. If a true *buchyou* was around, this never happened. He held very little sway over male staff – he was more or less ignored even taunted and laughed at by Takuto. But he would often issue commands to female staff. And generally, they would do what he asked of them, though even Haru seemed to follow his commands more out of pity than deference. While this relates in part to roles of gender and status detailed in the ninth chapter, it must be made clear that such roles were not as determinative as the agency of the individuals who embodied them. In short, while Tsutomo might bully Haru, he would never dream of trying such high handed persuasion with Yukiko. Her ‘Girl next door’ quality aside, it was well known that her boyfriend was working nearby (for her), and she had no problem telling workers, male or female, what she wanted them to do when in her *buchyou* role. Alternatively while Ichiro was a respected and senior male staff member he never, without being told to from above, take command of other staff members.

Tsutomu was twenty nine years old and passionate about video games – especially *Final Phantasy* [sic.]. He enjoyed reading comics about cyber worlds and collecting figurines. One could consider him the nearest example on the farm to an actual *otaku*. It was rumoured that he also enjoyed pachinko and Obihiro’s prostitutes on his days off.

The Chinese Are Coming!

“*Mō taihen yo.*” (sigh, it’s difficult), Taro-san mumbled forking out new morning straw after I asked him about the farms newest workers. He had been informed that morning that the farm was hiring two new staff members from China through an agency. Taro-san’s initial worry was their complete lack of Japanese language. They read *kanji* (Japanese script based on Chinese characters) I said to him. How hard can it be to communicate ‘turn the dial’ or ‘spread the straw’? But this form of radical otherness was clearly upsetting for many workers.

Over the next few weeks anticipation grew. Indeed, I was the first *gaijin* that most of my cohorts had ever worked with. Speculation as to what ‘the Chinese’ would be like circulated daily; they will be strong-willed and violent, they are only coming to marry a Japanese man, be careful where you leave your wallet from now on. Workers were told about when ‘the Chinese’ had arrived in Japan, but this only heightened the suspense. We were told that they needed to be ‘trained’ how to live in Japan with the

other Chinese. We were told that there were twelve in all and those who came with them would be placed on different farms. "I hear that they need to be taught how to use a stove," one worker noted. Taro-san was moody and anxious – "This is bad, very bad," he frequently grumbled.

Both workers were from Outer Mongolia and had arranged to come through a 'broker' in China working in tandem with a 'broker' in a town near Gensan.¹⁶ For the chance to work in Hokkaido they paid approximately 5,000 American dollars for their flights, requisite paperwork and 'training'. This was to be paid back in instalments over their first year as they were promised three-years of work if they proved to be good 'students'. Thus, on paper, they were not officially workers. They were in Japan to study dairy farming. And so, they could legally be paid half the wages of a regular worker. And as students, they could work a part-time job – an extra twenty hours a week at part time rates – bringing their income up to three quarters of a Japanese employee. These work and wage conditions were justified in two ways [or something like this]: in China it was a lot of money and they had chosen to come.

When they arrived Taro-san and the others were relieved. They could read nearly all the kanji in the parlour and understood their jobs as quickly as a Japanese worker might have – indeed occasionally they would write a question that nobody understood, as their kanji level was too difficult. They treated their work seriously but were not encouraged to be part of the community – they were contract workers and they planned to leave.

VII.6. Conclusion: Coming Together and Coming Apart

The transient nature and different trajectories of these individual's lives was made even clearer when I returned to the field. Limbo-san had moved to Sapporo to work in a restaurant and returned six months later to Gensan and was working at another dairy. Takuto stayed at working in the cow hospital for some time but then later quit and his new work life was unknown by remaining staff members. Much like his private and unspoken reasons for leaving the farm, nobody had heard a word from Ichiro – he remained a mystery. Haru, however had remained in close contact with everyone. She was living at home and attending a *senmon gakko* (specialty school) to study

¹⁶ Space does not allow for more detail here on Chinese dairy workers in Hokkaido. See Hansen (2010 forthcoming).

persimmon farming while living on her family farm in Nagano. I describe a visit with her there in Chapter Nine. We last spoke in January of 2010. The Tokyo cowboy was still, at least as of April 2008 – our last contact being a date that fell through to go drinking in a nightclub area of Tokyo – a truck driver based in Tokyo. Tsutomu had remained, by all accounts, unchanged at the farm. ‘The Chinese’ had been deported and replaced by four Chinese workers.

In sum, one local with a ‘working class’ background quit while one worker with an urban ‘privileged background’ quit. One worker with a university and family agricultural background quit and returned to school. One worker with a university education in agriculture quit and may or may not be in agriculture employment elsewhere. One local worker with a working class background quit, moved away to work another job, and returned to a different Gensan area farm. And one worker with a privileged and university educated background remained at the farm in the same low level position. Finally, two foreign workers had been legally forced to leave. And, importantly, all of the workers who left were replaced with a new crop of workers. These shifts are noted in more detail in the following chapters, underscoring a point still made rather starkly here, that the farm was a space of rapid change and otherness at the micro level. Moreover, as in the previous examples there is no simple pattern that emerges from this data – the reader may speculate – and workers constantly did; “*Ichiro san doko ni itta kana, okashii da naaa*” (I wonder whatever happened to Ichiro, how strange [his leaving was]). But answers to such ‘social’ queries were, in day-to-day farm existence, often not forthcoming.

What remained certain were that individuals were making choices and acting – as in the previous chapters trying to ‘secure’ the best personal situation, moving on to a new job, to continue school, or simply remaining with no clear plans or goals. To complicate matters, their desires are not always expressed, or were perhaps inexpressible. While Haru had set a clear plan in order to work at the farm for one year, and saw out the commitment, other workers left, remained, or returned to dairy work. However, no ‘determining’ distinction is notable. No dairy farmer *habitus* is shared. No specific class of dairy worker formed. All of the individuals discussed in this chapter were Japanese and they are all between the ages of 21-34, but yet they all have differing interpretations of their work life and of Hokkaido. Some wished to remain like Ichiro, enjoying the lack of crowds – but mysteriously left nonetheless. Others like the Tokyo Cowboy expressed their desire to go as soon as possible – and did.

Embodied abilities and capabilities played a key role; while Taro-san disagreed with Takuto and Haru over work ethics, their responses to him were completely different. While Haru tried as she might, her abilities were such that she could not please him – she was simply a klutz; dropping equipment, tripping while chasing cows, unable to work at high speeds. Takuto, though quite athletic, had no interest in the job or pleasing Taro-san. He was more than capable physically, but he simply did not care and was not interested in the work – it was a job like any other. Limbo-san, dissatisfied with life on the farm left for the city only to return to dairy farming life less than a year after.

One must be careful not to dismiss the social implications of these relationships. Haru an awkward young ‘outsider’ woman, Takuto a cocky young tough guy with a ‘family reputation’, Limbo-san was also a local with family ties in Gensan, while the Tokyo cowboy had no ties to the town; but for every Takuto there was an inexplicable Ichiro and for every Tokyo cowboy there was a Tsutomo. Social relations and structures surely influenced agents and more will be made of this in Chapter Nine and the Conclusion. But the clear point here and in the following chapter is that agents made their choices in line with their capabilities, sometimes overtly as with Takuto’s daily ‘to hell with you, and sack me if you can’ attitude, but often times covertly and discretely as with Haru and her private romantic relations and workplace tears.

Chapter Eight

Keeping It All Flowing

XIII.1. Introduction

This chapter is brief but important. The work and workers outlined in this chapter are integral for the smooth overall functioning of the farm despite often not being directly related to the production or even distribution of milk. Moreover, while the reader could walk from the dairy parlour and into the head office in less than a minute and see any of the workers mentioned up to this point – s/he might have to drive ten minutes to reach the town or some of the silage fields mentioned below. Many of the workers in these areas were only sporadically glimpsed if working in the ‘head or heart’ of the farm (the areas where most young dairy farmers worked). The format of the chapter will follow that of the previous one, with roles leading to the introduction of some individuals and their working lives, and finally an analysis of these connections with the themes of change, otherness and security.

XIII.2. Arms and Legs

Workers in the more distant reaches of the operation were often not employed by the farm directly, but worked for the farm through a variety of economic arrangements such as subcontracting or piecework. Many were farmers’ wives or older locals while still others did not directly work in the dairy industry. In this sense they are beyond the main scope of this thesis. However they did play a part in the working lives of young dairy farmers and mention of them completes the overall picture of the workings of the operation before drawing together the work, workers and equipment, in the closing chapters. Again, the map of the farm can be referred to for the sake of clarity, but it should suffice to understand that, like arms and legs, the areas below progressively radiate out further from the head and heart. And so, ‘flows’ both to and through these regions were, in general, less intense. For example, working hours were generally shorter in these areas, from eight in the morning until five in the evening. Or, while seasonal work such as silage harvesting required gruelling hours, it was only for a few

weeks of the year as opposed to the daily pattern of milking experienced by young workers.

XIII.2.1 Roles and Reasons

Nikuushi (beef cattle)

Male cattle, barren cattle, the offspring from lesser sire's insemination, or cattle deemed too sick or old to keep up with the milking regimen become beef cattle. A running joke at the farm was that bothersome cows would soon become food. If a cow looked ill the joke would run that the cow would soon be visiting *Maku* (McDonald's fast food chain). It was also a common comment that difficult cows would soon be made into pet food. There was some truth to this. Almost all producing dairy cows will become sick or simply stop producing after six years and will meet the inglorious end of being middle or low grade beef.¹ Indeed, perhaps disappointing to any non-vegan vegetarian readers, divorcing the beef industry from the dairy industry at present would be impossible. Half of the newborn cattle are male and farmers are dependent upon producing and selling them off. Thus both young and old, barring a sudden 'natural' death, are eventually rendered. In this system steak, leather coats, and ice cream are all intimately related in terms of production.

There was no facility for slaughter at Grand Hopes Farm. Young healthy cattle were shipped out for auction near Obihiro. From auction young cattle often made their way to Honshu to be rendered where such facilities and the market for fresh beef is larger. Old cattle or the occasional young cow were butchered locally. But young, old, or sick, cattle were shipped out on a near daily basis, sometimes one or two head at a time while young *wagyu* were sold and shipped in batches.

Daini (Secondary 'Area Workers')²

With so many cattle living in a confined space, and considering the daily regimen of milking and impregnation, it is likely not surprising that the farm has a small, though

¹ A cow not part of such a milking regimen can live up to twenty years.

² Secondary in the sense of not being attached to the main building site but being near the *kachyou's* home.

well populated and staffed, 'hospital' to care for animals that are moderately ill or recovering. The *daini* workers, although not preoccupied with milking as a main task, do need to milk the revolving patient base of around forty head and a fluctuating pregnant herd of around double that number housed in a larger barn across the yard from the hospital. However, the main purpose of the *daini* staff is to clean, feed, and otherwise maintain cattle that have fallen ill, have just given birth, or are just about to. Although much like the stall staff, the thrust of their job is reasonably self contained, the hospital *buchyou* and two assistant workers do have brief working contact with all other members of the farm. Owners would drop in, veterinarians were daily visitors, and the above mentioned workers, less the hunter, might be called upon to help with their chores during slower afternoons.

Koshi (shita) ('the barn' Below 'the hill' 'where' Small Cows 'are kept' 'workers')³

Koshi was synonymous with my co-workers as the *obāchan fāmu* (grandma barn). As derogatory and quietly kept as this nomenclature was, it was metaphorically quite *apropos*. The workers, with the exception of one young woman, the girlfriend of a stall worker, were all females in their fifties. They were the wives and mothers of owners, and in most cases they were, or were soon to be, grandmothers. As Hendry (1986) points out, in modern Japan it is quite often the grandparents who are left to care for their children's young children as they go to work. Here this grandmother role takes on an interspecies twist; while the mothers of the young calves were nursed back to health in the *daini* or are already back to hard work in the milk 'factory', the calves were left to the care and guidance of the 'grandmothers'. The *Koshi* staff clean, feed, and care for the young calves until, at approximately five to six months, they are sent to the main barn. Here, milk flows from bottles to calves and not the reverse as on the rest of the farm.

"Linking Limbs"

Before examining jobs below that are even more removed from the daily operation of milk production, it is essential to note that the *daini* and *koshi* staff like the workers

³ This area is also not attached to the main site. It was the *sachyou*'s main barn before incorporating.

above (the office secretary being the only exception) have daily contact with the cattle and the quality of this contact is a central issue in the Conclusion of the thesis. However contact between workers in these areas and those working in the head or heart of the farm was seldom a daily occurrence.

For example, a couple of times a week random workers from the main barns would be sent down to the calf barns to assist with loading a trailer, applying skin medicine, or doing more labour intensive 'back and leg' work such as shovelling out barns. Alternatively, there are times when all the farm workers must pull together. Such a situation occurs during silage season. Putting tarps over silage and the subsequent unpleasant job of placing literally hundreds of tires atop the human made grass and corn mountain requires everybody's participation. As farmers follow the dictates of the sky and not the other way around, overtime was usually required by all workers to finish putting tarps over silage before, or even during, storms.



(XIII.2.a.). One of several concrete silage bunkers in use.

Recalling the body metaphor, the 'linking of limbs' here refers to the simple fact that in these areas, though human and animal traffic is less hectic than in the previous chapters, human and animal limbs do still interact; for example, cows step on human feet, lick human heads, and humans wrestle cows out of stalls or physically bind them.

Shitauke (Subcontractors)

This was an eclectic group. There were welders who were contracted to fix gates, build portable metal fences, and so on. There were seasonal workers who farmed crops – doing various tasks from spreading manure to putting up silage. Both groups were a perennial feature at the farm and many knew them by name as they would occasionally visit the laundry room for a smoke and chat.



(XIII.2.b). Owners and subcontractors putting up corn silage under ominous skies. Silage mounds range in size but can be several meters high and stretch for 400 Metres. In order to protect the silage from snow, rain, and often ineffectually, vermin, atop this mound a black polyurethane vapour barrier and several tarps would be placed and either weighed down with tires or clay.

Hoka no kaishyain (Workers From Other Companies)

While the above workers came at predictable times, workers from other companies would come when called. Farm equipment repair workers came with the near frequency of the subcontractors. At one point, an equipment dealer 'lent' Grand Hopes eight workers for two weeks, as a *sa-bisu* (service) in order for them to get 'on the farm' experience. People stalked the vending machines in the laundry room, Tuesdays the bread man came to sell his wears, trades people were occasionally required for

repairs, and one day while walking back from a routine late morning stall cleaning I was confronted by a troop of middle aged men toting rifles. Wearing a mix of camouflage and neon, they explained that they were hired to shoot the pigeons that were living in the barns and were paid, not per month, per day, or per hour, but per carcass by the farm.

XIII.2.2. Working Lives

Obviously a representative sample of working lives from such a diverse groups poses a problem. Again, these jobs are linked by virtue of their 'externality' from the 'head and heart' of the farm. Nevertheless, they are central to keeping the farm functioning smoothly. The section starts with two of the owner's sons, then a look at the man who was to replace Kato-san as a co-owner. It then focuses on two young workers in a piecework position. And finally a local doctor, his head nurse, and a local business that catered to some of the young dairy workers.

The Invisible Legacy of a 'No Good' Son

During an interview with the *sachyou* I asked where all of the owner's children were. He first listed off the sons and daughters of the other families. He then mentioned his daughters and noted that none of the owners' daughters chose to work on the farm – and he clarified that he did not want his daughters to work on the farm. Then he paused, waiting for a change of topic. I asked if he had any other children, knowing from at a previous conversation with Matsuyama-san that he had a son from a previous marriage. My Japanese friend who was helping to interpret became fidgety, I stared unrelentingly, feigning innocence as best I could, and Wada-san haltingly began a short story.

Wada-san was content working as an independent middle to large sized farmer with about 180 head. However, with Japan in a recession and the gradual cutbacks to agricultural subsidies outlined above, profits were declining and the future was less certain around the mid-1990s than it had been in his earlier years. His hope was that his son would be his *koukeishya* (successor) in taking over the farm and he started to

search for ways to make the farm more profitable.⁴ However, it became clear that his son had other plans.

After high school graduation his son moved to Tokyo and stayed with his uncle gaining a degree in computer science, but after graduation from university the son decided that this career was not for him. He returned to the farm and *yakusoku* (promised) to be part of the Grand Hopes Farm venture. Unfortunately, he was not a good worker. The consensus seemed to be that he was not a bad fellow, he got on with his co-workers, but he was simply not dedicated to the work. And in his particular case, motivation and interest were important qualities as he was supposed to assist and learn from Matsuyama how to be a “*hatsujyou hanta-*”, a position requiring relatively light labour but with long hours and important responsibilities. However, after three months he was the first person, and the only one, that his father ever sacked.

It was clear that these wounds were fresh, and it was equally clear that if I persisted with this line of questioning the interview would come to a halt. I learned that he was living in Sapporo and working as a *furittā* at a restaurant or pub, which his father was not happy about and if he wanted to come back to the farm he would be welcomed – but certainly *not* asked. There was a rumour circulating amongst the staff that he was going to come back after the summer. However, he never appeared and I never met him.

The Metamorphosis of Masahiro

Unlike the ‘no good’ son, the *Kachou*’s boy Masahiro was the epitome of the dutiful heir. He worked at the farm nearly every morning and some evenings whilst finishing his last year of studies at a local agricultural college. He claimed that he enjoyed working at the farm and eventually wanted to take the place of his father. Compared to most workers at the farm this was ‘outstanding’, if not for the earnest and outward show of respect for his father, then for this level of determination and clarity of intention being housed in an energetic and tightly built twenty-one-year-old. Moreover, in Japan it is rare for students to work long hours and attend college. Usually, parents or scholarships pay the way, and while part-time jobs might be held onto for pocket money or for the possibilities of socialising with co-workers, the responsibility and the

⁴ Knight (2003: 20-29) offers an excellent overview of out migration issues.

remuneration attached to this sort of employment are generally low. If one has endured the much commented upon 'exam hell' to enter into a college, once there, very little gets done beyond joining various clubs and societies until the crush and panic of final exams. Usually, part-time jobs are for fun, not survival. Of course, this is not true for everyone, but it is a period of life often romantically recounted by some older Japanese men as a grace period before the paternalistic responsibilities of marriage and the occasional case of *karoushi* (death from overtime).

Masahiro, despite his laid-back student image of spiky orange hair and flashy T-shirts with illogical English slogans, was very serious about the farm. He wanted to stay on the farm because his father had worked very hard to build it up and his elder brother was not interested in dairying. He echoed the owner's optimism that, in the future, the farm was likely to bring a good profit; for the money that he was going to reap when he took over from his father such short-term sacrifices were worthwhile. However, he did not know why the other workers, such as Ichiro-san or Haru stuck around, and unlike his father, he had nothing good to say about Tsutomu; for those who were not members of owner's families he saw it as a dead end job.

In April of 2005 Masahiro finished his studies and there was a celebratory meal arranged by the owners in early May. It was held in a local *yakiniku* (barbeque) restaurant and was intended to bring in the spring, welcome the new workers, and announce Masahiro's graduation. Despite being informed on the morning of the event, the assumption that nobody had anything to do that night was a sound one, all but one employee came. Masahiro was not sitting with his younger farm friends, or his mother, but to the right of his father and the *sachyou*. We each took a turn going around the table making brief introductions, welcoming the newcomers, and thanking our co-workers for assistance. Masahiro earnestly announced, along with requisite bowing, that he would do his best in his new position as *buchyou*. It seemed like a logical procession for the owner's son, but in the coming weeks workers witnessed a significant and frequently commented upon transition. Masahiro would make the move from student to manger and this change was not a smooth one. His new position was secure in terms of familial ties – however in terms of gaining authority in the eyes of others Masahiro went through a *making* and *becoming* accelerated by the changes around him – the move from mixed to industrial farming. Masahiro did become another man; but by all accounts, not a better one.

The next workday Masahiro had short and neat black hair and he was smoking – in public. He sat at the staff room table, not mulling about or joking as usual. The room was quiet. When all the workers had arrived a new trend began. Masahiro called everyone, except me, a shortened name with *kun*, or *chan* as opposed to the more formal *san*; for example, Ichiro-san became Ichiro-*kun*.⁵ I became a suffix deficient *Po-ru*. But, Kunio-*san*, a man several years his senior, became Kun'-*chan*. Several co-workers commented after, in private, that they were appalled at this *shitsurei* (rude) behaviour, but it was merely a signpost indicating what lay ahead.

He began poking fun at Haru. Between the daily berating of Taro-san and Masahiro's constant haranguing, calling her slow, ugly, poorly dressed, and so on, she began waiting in the corner, or even outside, of the staff-room before work. When the Chinese workers came, things, from the perspective of most, became worse. Chinese workers had, at first, nearly no command of Japanese. The *kachyou*, unsurprisingly, started the trend of not calling them by their simple enough single syllables names, but as *futari* ([the] two people), while his son, although not in front of his father, began to make rude comments, admittedly much to the amusement of some workers. For example, "*Chugoku dewa sekken ga aru ka*" (I wonder if they have soap in China) to co-workers or, one day to the nineteen-year-old Chinese girl he taunted, "*Hentai wakarū, wakarū – wakaranai un ato o oshiete*" (Pervert, understand, understand, no, after I'll teach you). She could do nothing but grin, feel clearly uncomfortable, and say what little Japanese she knew. "*Sumimasen. Wakarimasen*" (I am sorry. I do not understand).

Matsuyama-san knew of these situations and suggested that his transformation to empowerment had gone too fast, too far, and not too well. Everyone agreed calling Kunio-san Kun-*chan* was disrespectful. That the workplace was difficult enough for the Chinese workers without being harassed and that *someone* should do something about it. But, as weeks passed, nothing changed. That is workers agreed that the situation was bad – and felt *kawaiiisou* (sorry for) Haruko and the Chinese girls, but *shikataganai* (nothing can be done) or *kinishinaide* (don't worry about it). Indeed, one could see this 'apathy' on a number of accounts. As with other work conditions, if they

⁵ This element of Japanese is rather complex. *Sama* and *san* are polite markers on par with Sir / Madame and Mr. and Ms. *San* is frequently used between co-workers, certainly those who occupy different positions. *Chan* is familial as in *bā chan* (my grandmother). *Kun* is usually used for younger males. In short, the shift in form used by Masahiro was seen by most as rude. Calling my *po-ru* (Paul) was unproblematic, but to call a senior expert worker who was not part of his family 'chan' was viewed as out of line.

were unbearable, then why not quit? The group response, even amongst senior staff, was silence and people generally did comply with Masahiro's demands and suffer his jokes. He had indeed taken on the role of manager, and had secured his position of authority, but at the expense of respectability.

Kunio-san

Kunio-san has been mentioned several times in this monograph, and though not a young worker he came to play a key role in their lives. He was in his early fifties. He was the oldest worker at the farm. He had a family with no sons and a small dairy farm that had stopped production around the time that the Grand Hopes operation began. He was the most affable of the employees, nearly always speaking with a self-deprecating chuckle attached to his rapid and staccato local dialect. Nonetheless, he was respected, tacitly, by everyone, including the owners. *Kunio, nani ga ii ka* (Kunio what do you think is best?) was a common question. If there was a problem and despite what the reigning *buchyou* might have to say, most eyes strayed to Kunio-san noting his quiet nodding approval or head tilting disapproval of the plan.

He had lived in the area his entire life, and confirmed that life in the rural areas outside of Gensan had changed radically. He recalled a time, much like Yuji-san in Chapter Four, with no electricity and no automobiles, when all farm work was done with the power of horses and human hands. Unfortunately with only a daughter he had no successor to continue his dairy operation. Both he and his brother who lived on another defunct farm worked at Grand Hopes.

*

The following workers move progressively further from the 'familial' notion the farm, yet they are, with the exception of Doctor Oda, young workers. They are however 'removed' in one way or another from daily functioning of the farm.

Blood Brothers

Unlike Masahiro, these workers were respected by all and they stuck out for several reasons. First they were brothers and usually found in matching outfits drenched in

blood; second, they were, at 23 and 29 years-of-age, young to be company owners; third, their work ethic was incredible as they would often work from 4:00 a.m. until dark without breaks; and fourth they were clearly not of Japanese heritage alone. Noting the younger brother's scraggly beard and their combined occupation it seemed a reasonable guess to me that they might be Ainu or *buraku* of some kind.⁶ They agreed to meet me in a coffee shop in Obihiro for an interview where I was to be reminded of the adage that 'truth is often stranger than fiction.'

As it turned out, their mother was from England. She met her husband in England in the early 1970s when he, on a work exchange program from Japan, was working in a chicken hatchery. They fell in love, she became pregnant, and they moved to rural Hokkaido where they had brought up their three children; they also had a sister working in Obihiro. Although the mother returned to England on occasion, (indeed I was told she went back for a Pearl Jam concert - a Seattle based rock group - during the time of our interview), a small mixed farm in Shimizu had always been home for the family.

While the older brother had attended college, school was not an easy time for the younger brother. He was bullied, and when high school was over they started their business. At first they travelled from place to place looking for contracts, but now they only work for larger farms and can thus schedule yearly visits and, in their down time, plan fishing holidays. Grand Hopes Farm paid them very well I was told. The brothers were not paid by the hour - they were paid at a piece work rate by the *sachyou* with whom they got on well with. They found he was a straightforward man to do business with and he left them to their work, secure in the knowledge that it would be professionally done. For each cow the blood brothers were paid 1000 Yen or 250 Yen a hoof and long hours aside, the brothers were doing very well for themselves.⁷

⁶ See Chapter Two, under caste people on Japan are often found working in livestock related industries.

⁷ The interview was conducted in a hybrid of Japanese and English. They spoke English, but preferred Japanese, I the reverse. We spoke Japanese with occasional words in English. As noted in the Introduction, the use of hybrid language was common especially with individuals who felt comfortable with me. In some cases, such as speaking with rural elderly, the focus was nearly completely Japanese, however with others, medical professionals for example, English would greatly flavour out communication. A simple, but often neglected fact is that Japanese have all studied English - many people are keen to communicate and perfect Japanese or English does not always hamper communication - indeed at times it makes it more interactive, more based on give and take, and mutual understanding.

Dr. Oda: A Local Eccentric

Doctor Oda was one of the town's three doctors. He was a Japanese man who was born in China during the war, studied in Switzerland, had lived in Sapporo, and semi-retired in Gensan with a private clinic. He was a member of the 'slow food' movement, he vocally protested against auto rally racing in the nearby mountain range (one of the town's few stabs at promotion), and had a hobby farm attached to his clinic. His head nurse, Kyoko, a thirty year old woman from Kyoto, would recount endless stories of the *sensei's* 'erratic' behaviour. For example, he might be in the middle of setting a broken finger when he would notice one of his goats, sheep, cows, pigs, or chickens had gotten free from their various makeshift pens. "*Kusou!*" (Shit!), he would holler. And turning to the startled patient saying: "*Matte matte ne*" (Hold on a minute OK.) he would run out the door. After the patient watched the *sensei* wrestle the goat or chase the chicken back in its place through the window – seemingly unaware how very 'unsensei' like his behaviour was – Doctor Oda would return to the operating room covered with feathers or dung and, animatedly recounting his chase scowling or grinning, would continue setting the digit. He was well aware of his actions and the local perception of them however.

He flaunted his politics by inviting children from Belarus exposed to radiation poisoning to live with him over the summers. He would constantly lament how conservative 'typical' Japanese were in dealing with outsiders and how this would have to change. He saw this situation mirrored with the Chinese workers as well. He offered them free medical assistance. One of his 'hobbies', and he had many of these, was learning Chinese.

Kyoko said he would see a reserved (likely exhausted) Chinese worker in the waiting room and ignoring other patients would sit chat animatedly in broken Chinese – while Japanese patients tried to look as though they didn't notice this unusual scene. Kyoko spent such moments in the office giggling...

Hen na ojiisan yo, futsu jaya nai naa...yaparai suki da na...Kyoto no kangofuu no shigoto wa zen zen chigaou, jigoku...sensei zen bu iya na hito – Gensan wa suki jyanain demo shigoto wa ii... omoshiroi shi, jibun no jikan ga arimasu mo. (I like Oda Sensei, he's not typical, he's weird...In Kyoto working as a nurse is completely different...it's like hell...and all the doctors are horrible people...I don't really care for Gensan, but my job is great...it's interesting and I have time for myself).

Kyoko enjoyed the freedom of Gensan and working for Oda who opened his office only five hours a day and paid her the same rate as if she was still working split shifts in Kyoto. She was happy for the time being but was uncertain if she wanted to stay single in the isolation of Gensan.

Oda sensei and Kyoko claimed that the three main illnesses they saw in the town were directly related to industrial dairy work. Colds from eating poorly and working odd hours, athlete's foot from constantly working in rubber boots, and depression was on the rise with patents requesting medication. Both were convinced that '*nagagutsu raifu*' (gum boot life) was slowly wearing people down and that they knew many of the workers from Grand Hopes farm by name. They would inform me of their various ailments. The upshot was that the hours, the diet, the physical labour, was burning people out and causing a rise in depression.

Sutaru: Dancing to African Drums Under Tibetan Flags

Sutaru was not a person, but a café. Tibetan prayer flags, wafts of Indian curry, and trance music somehow suited the cabin like dark wood interior and the two owners – but it definitely stood apart from the norms of the surrounding area. Their boisterous greeting of "*Irashaimasse*" (welcome) was rare in stoic Gensan and appreciated by their regular customers – very few of whom were locals.⁸ The proprietors were a young couple hailing from Nagoya and Osaka, and the café was a regular spot for those from Honshu residing in the area. They would hold music nights every few months bringing in Japanese African percussionists from Kyushu or folk guitar acts from Hakodate and these events were followed by a potluck dinner where everyone would first sit around a large table, introduce themselves, and explain why they were in Hokkaido. Hokkaido-born seldom came and never came without an 'outsider' partner.

⁸ Many people from Honshu commented on the 'rudeness' of store owners in Gensan.



(VIII.2.2.c). *Inside the outside: One café owner from Nagoya and nurse Kyoko from Kansai. Enjoying this oasis of otherness in Gensan*

The monthly *tanjyoubi kai* (birthday meeting) was a similar potluck event with a similar roster of outsiders. It would be held at the houses of those from outside of Hokkaido who volunteered to play host in order to celebrate those who had a birthday that month. Occasionally it was held in the rentable gathering room of the local *onsen*. However, drinking was not allowed there so volunteer houses were preferred. Unless they were friends of the host, people from Hokkaido rarely attended a *tanjyoubi kai*. Dr. Oda was a frequent guest – an honorary outsider perhaps – and would take command of the kitchen admonishing others for our unhealthy eating habits.

These occasions all served as conduits for me to hear about what other Japanese people, those not from the area or involved in farming, thought about Tokachi and its people. The group was diverse; nurses, occasional labourers, retired car sales staff, other *bokujyou* workers, business people, retired teachers, and public office workers. One business man from Tokyo uprooted his whole family to move to Gensan. He ran an internet promotion company and claimed he could no longer stand the office politics in Tokyo – he was a constant critic of ‘typical Japanese’, an irony outlined below.

The professed reasons for coming to Hokkaido were remarkably similar. ‘*Hiroi*’ as noted in the Introduction was commonly emphasised; they enjoyed the spirit of

freedom, the love of nature, an escape from the stress of the city, or the desire for open spaces. Sometimes expressed, or sometimes related through gossip, were other compelling reasons. *Iyashi* (healing or soothing) was another constant explanation for being in Hokkaido. For example, people needed to get away from their families, commitments, or jobs for a 'time out' or even in more absolute terms relationship or career failures were often cited motivations to endure life in small town Hokkaido. Endure because, over time their criticisms of Tokachi and Gensan became as predictable as their stated reasons for coming.

Tokachi people were boring, rude, simple-minded, conservative, and stubborn. Numerous examples underscoring these perceived traits arose, but perhaps the two most often cited were the lack of respect local people had for the natural environment (for example littering or the endless and meaningless construction of roads) and their utter reluctance to try anything new (for example the same foods, drinks, and events at town gatherings). They complained that there was no entertainment in the town and even Obihiro was viewed as an extremely remote backwater. Their reasons for staying in Gensan were always fraught with conscious or unconscious contradictions. While many hated the lack of social life and entertainment in the area they also enjoyed the distance from the social obligations required of them in other parts of Japan. While they professed a love for nature only a handful did not constantly long for cafés and pavement.

XIII. 3 Conclusion: Coming Together and Coming Apart

Jobs found in 'the extremities' of the dairy farm life outline the extremes of change, otherness, and the search for security found in the areas surrounding Grand Hopes and Gensan. Disagreements on what constituted *ikigai* 'the meaning of life' (Mathews 2006) – the meaning of work and community, and even Hokkaido itself (notably as contrasted with Japaneseness) were central issues shared by locals and outsiders. The sons of the two main owners of the farm, both the same age, both having been raised their entire lives on mid-sized family farms in Gensan, and both having been invited to play a role in the rapidly changing family operation, were radically different in their 'capabilities' and desires. One 'crafting himself' (to borrow from Kondo 1990) from a student into tyrannical manager with honour and money underlying this choice, while the other shifted from student to likeable freelance worker with an insecure (financial to

be sure) future. Kunio-san had also undergone the shift from worker with failed farm ownership to being a co-owner – the mirror opposite of Kato-san. The various other positions from farmers' wives, to medical professional, to 'mixed' blood hoof trimmers and alternative café owners underscore the differing interpretations of work and of Hokkaido, of what a good life means and what Japanesness means.

As opposed to the 'timeless' image often associated with rural life in Japan, in Gensan change, otherness, and the search for security were perennial themes. In the remaining chapters the individuals, their various embodiments and capabilities heretofore considered in the previous chapters, will be analysed in terms of loose groups that they form; broad categories where social cleavages, however transient, can be marked.

Chapter Nine

Four Groups, Two Genders, and One Religion.

IX.1. Introduction

The groupings below do not indicate strict distinctions but shifting and permeable divisions; divisions that if pressed most workers would acknowledge existed, but in daily life possess fuzzy frontiers. Though the local residents around Gensan formed a community, their community and its livelihood were rapidly changing with the inclusion of an ever-increasing number of newcomers. Local young people frequently and freely left and returned, while newcomers could remain 'new' seemingly indefinitely. For young workers, being born in the area, wanting to belong there, or attempting to 'buy' one's way in – with the purchase of a home for example – was not enough to be part of the local or farm community. Like Matsuyama-san, one had to *become* part of the community through *making* a role for one's self and being accepted. Belonging is viewed from three perspectives in what follows; the formation of groups in relation to community status, gender, and religion.

The young dairy farmers previously mentioned can be seen as forming four relatively distinct groups in the community; locals, lo-siders, outsiders, and no-siders. These distinctions are transient, based *not only* on social factors, but on any given individual's desire to be part of a group and an agent's particular embodiment – physical strength, temperament, intellect, physical co-ordination *etcetera*. Individual capabilities (Nussbaum 2006: 273-315) often enabled or disabled making, becoming, and so, belonging. These are often not communities in any affective sense (Tuan 2002). Individuals shift between groups and usually opt to leave Gensan and dairy farming completely.

Female and male young dairy farmers tended to follow certain trajectories related to normative Japanese social expectations of acceptable gender belonging. Of course, this again relates to embodiment in a rather obvious way, but less obvious is the resistance that some workers felt about fulfilling these 'typical' Japanese roles of femininity and masculinity.

Finally, as outlined in Chapter Three, religion in Japan has long held a place for bovine and human relations; from oracle bones, to early peasant sacrifices, to prohibitions on eating meat, and on to the divine emperor Meiji's promotion of dairy. The modern Tokachi dairy world has religious practices that are particular to the area. These practices

are modern in the context of Tokachi. As such, they underscore contemporary change, otherness, and securing one's position in the area. They are practices that are changing, adapting to new conditions, and like all religious practices grappling with ontological security and what constitutes individual and collective 'insecurities.'

IX.2 Locals, Lo-siders, Outsiders, and No-siders

Locals were people who were born in the Gensan area. The four families who originally owned Grand Hopes Dairy Farm were third generation locals. Not all locals were farm owners however. Many whose families did not own farms worked on farms; for example Limbo-san or Takuto or Kunio-san (before becoming a co-owner). Kunio-san owned land, but it was no longer being used to farm. Moreover, there were locals working in other industries related to farming and still other locals who owned shops, worked for shops, or commuted to work to one of the larger centres such as Obihiro.

Thus, what was important in being considered local, was not an individual's employment classification as 'agricultural' *per se*, but the fact that in the agricultural areas outlying Gensan, families intimately knew other families and had for generations. Grandfathers had worked alongside other grandfathers, their sons had grown up alongside their friends' sons, and local high school attractions had become marriages. The youth in the local area are often life-long friends having gone to the same small and isolated schools together. They are frequently involved in various clubs such as *minibori* (beach volleyball less the beach).¹ These histories formed a base of common knowledge and community that was difficult to penetrate for outsiders. Again, in terms of long-standing residents, from the 1950's it was more common to see local sons and daughters go to the big cities than to see new people arrive.

What *made* one a local, was the active process of *becoming*. There is a local and active PTA (Parent Teacher Association) organised through the primary school three kilometres north of the farm. There were also PTA at the Junior and Senior high schools in the town. As on Honshu, these areas had *chounaikai* (neighbourhood associations) that come together in times of need or for celebrations. For example, when Limbo-san's grandfather passed away the *chounaikai* helped to organise the reception and when Grand Hopes erected a *chikukonhi* (*batou kannon*) (a Buddhist monument dedicated to the souls of

¹ The Primary school had eleven students ranging from six to twelve years of age and three teachers (one of whom was the father of two students).

livestock)² members of the association were invited to a lunch in the conference room at the farm. Young workers at the farm were not invited to attend, nor were residents of Gensan proper. However, it is hard to say if they would have gone even if given the choice.

This is because, while the residents of the outlying areas consider themselves to be part of the broader Gensan community, those living within the limits of Gensan proper usually separate themselves as *machi no hito* (town's people) from *yama no hito* (mountain people). This is a distinction particularly interesting when talking with outsiders, or even most 'lo-siders' (described below) who refer to all of Gensan and the surrounding area (and for some all of Hokkaido) as *inaka* (countryside) and residents as *inakamono* (countryside person / pejoratively meaning 'hick' or backward). In a very tangible way, one could view a 'Honshu-centric' perception of *burmei* (civilisation or progress).³ The outlying areas did not have a harvest festival (despite being farmers), while the town did, and the outsiders from Honshu would scoff at what a poor excuse for a festivals they had – always the same costumes, beer tents, and fried chicken. Cultural distinctions were often expressed by outsiders. Instead of calling the dish, in 'proper' Japanese, *kareage*, these local 'others' used the Hokkaido dialect rendering the food *zangi*. This term, amongst others, was emphasised to affect rural disdain – *minna ZANGI o taberu – tanoshi ne* (everyone eats 'HILLBILLY chicken' – ain't it fun).

Outsiders can be defined as those people who are not from Gensan and who clearly do not plan to remain in Gensan. Haru was decidedly an outsider. From the start, her plan was to stay at the farm to gain experience for a year and to return to her family farm in Nagano. The Tokyo Cowboy too, prided himself on being an outsider in Gensan and escape could not come quickly enough for him. However, by necessity this is a flexible definition as some outsiders become lo-siders. I define lo-siders (local outsiders) as former outsiders who have chosen to make Gensan a permanent home – or at least a planned home for the duration of their working lives – an example here could be Matsuyama and his young family. However, desiring this classification was not enough to become it. Some were unable to secure this identity such as Taro-san. Many lo-siders were uncertain if belonging was permanent; Matsuyama (like the Nurse Kyoko) viewed local life as stable but only 'for now'. In social terms lo-siders had *low* interest in local politics and were

² Religion was discussed in the Introduction and Chapter Two and it is returned to in the final section of this chapter.

³ See Morris-Suzuki (1998: 24-25) for an explanation of the concept especially in relation to Hokkaido.

allowed a *low* level of participation in these social activities. Again, Matsuyama and Takako had reservations about their son attending the local high school a decade or so in the future. Generally they did not belong to any neighbourhood association although Matsuyama did *'tokidoki'* (sometimes) attend meetings and he did participate in the celebrations they organised such as *bonenkai* (year end) and *shinenkai* (New Year's) parties. Matsuyama's wife, and also the aforementioned businessman who chose to move with his family from Tokyo, were active in the PTA. Similar to Matsuyama and his young family the owners of the *Sutaru* café were lo-siders. All had bought homes and had no concrete plans to leave the area. Yet, most outsiders, and many lo-siders did not have local friends; their friends consisted of the 'revolving door' outsiders or links maintained with relatives and friends living in Honshu – often meeting at the *Sutaru café* or inviting relatives or friends to come for a few days to stay at their rural home.

Many outsiders and some locals self-identified as *furiitā* – for example both Takuto and Za Cowboy claimed this as a self-distinction. Many conform to two of the three popularly conceived *furiitā* 'types' as outlined by Kosugi; the three typologies being "the moratorium type" (choosing to put off getting a full-time job), "the dream seeker type" (those who are employed to make-ends-meet while pursuing some other – often artistic – interest), and "under duress type" (those between jobs or in the midst of a life crisis) (2008: 11-14).

There were no 'dream seeker types' on the farm. Some preferred a relatively solitary life, such as shy Ichiro and the loaner Tsutomo. Others enjoyed the nearby snowboarding and surfing as recreation, but these were thought of as hobbies, not potential careers. A few outsiders, and indeed some lo-siders, did loosely fall into the Moratorium type. Some had university degrees and could not find suitable work. They were working at the farm while weighing other options. Some were taking a year out before continuing their studies or retuning to work in cities. However, a great many workers, both lo-sider and outsider were between this type and the "under duress" type. Unable to find other work or wanting a challenge, these workers would often have a set time, for example one year, to work and think about their next step in life before returning home. However, many would surpass a year and continue on. Others would make a concrete choice to stay for a longer term, often taking an offered position as *buchyou* like Yukiko. For women, failed relationships were often cited as a reason to come to Hokkaido for a new start. For men, troubled romantic relationships or work related problems brought them to *bokujyou* work – Taro-san had a history of both.

Thus, the shift from outsider to lo-sider is not permanent or easy to map. Though Taro-san wished to remain in Gensan, due to his temper outbursts he was essentially driven out of town when it became obvious he would never get a promotion. Alternatively, Tsutomo claimed that he did not see his future in Gensan but had no immediate plan to leave three years after I first posed this question to him. There were also those who embodied a 'pioneering spirit' to the fullest. One young man from Tokyo worked temporarily on dairy farms and spent the rest of his time building a log house with the timber coming off the land he had purchased and cleared himself.

This fluid urban immigration and local out-migration sheds further light on the aforementioned changing of the *ie* structure. Perhaps the best known explanation of the rural and corporate *ie* structure is provided by Nakane (1967) and commented upon later in detail by Hsu (1975) and Lebra (1976; 2004). Nakane is frequently the touchstone for authors writing on social structure in Japan. She offers a three-hundred year history and presents the *ie* broadly as the ideal household, but not to be confused with kinship despite *both being highly region and situation specific* in Japan (1967: 1-40). *Ie* are often linked with other *ie* through what she describes as "local corporate groups" which are not based, at least essentially, on kinship but often arise out of economic necessity. She outlines three such groups, however one concept out of the three, the *oyako* (parent / child) *kankei* (relations), played a role in the economic life of Grand Hopes Farm.

Nevertheless, by and large the *ie* was not viewed as an important structure by the lion's share of dairy farmers, especially those under the age of forty, and while owners viewed it as important enough to make a list of job roles, many workers were unconcerned with its replication in reality. If farmers were asked direct questions about the influence of the *ie* on daily affairs the reply was usually *imiga nai* or *kankei nai* (no meaning, no connection). Indeed, as noted by Hsu in describing essential characteristics of *iemoto*; namely a master disciple relationship, an interlinking hierarchy, wide acceptance of the supreme authority of the master, and resemblance of a real or fictional family structure, few of the workers would accept this as an explanation of their working conditions, Taro-san aside of course, and though the owners may have felt secure in their power over their workers, they did not depend on their reliability or respect as a master would demand, or even the reliability of co-owners for that matter in following Hsu's ideal model (1975: 62-68).

There could be many reasons for this. The Japanese *ie* structure was, ideal or real, in fact, made illegal during the Occupation under the new civil code; and, as Mock notes, this was the time when many pioneer families were settling in Hokkaido (1999). In many areas of Japan the structure has diminished in importance though its imagery has remained strong (Davies and Ikeno 2002: 119-124). Bestor, in his study of family owned business in the *Tsukiji* market, has remarked that while thinking of the business in terms of *ie* remains important for the owners and senior staff, younger workers are not as concerned with its continuation (2004). Lee outlines that in rural Tohoku, there is a shift in the conceptualisations of *ie* structure. She contends that it has moved away from a model based on an extended vertical family to a nuclear model (2007). And there are urban similarities to this nuclear shift throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s that are well documented by Rosenberger (2001). The *ie* structure is further weakened in Gensan through the necessity of employing a great number of outsiders (others) – and as noted above, most of these others are unable, or unwilling, to partake in more traditional forms of community or regional identity building.

Thus, identity building was ‘individual’ oriented; seen in the contrast between Taro-san and Matsuyama for example. Personalities and skills played a central role in career aspirations. As the case of Tsutomo, progression up the ‘company ladder’ was far from inevitable for young workers regardless of time spent in its service. Moreover, the desire to continue the *ie* line was not always adhered to even in economic terms by kin members. For example, while the *kachyou*’s son worked long hours and was keen to enter the family business the *sachyou*’s son had no interest and moved away to the city. The reasoning of the *kachyou*’s son was economic not only familial – again, for him there was good money to be made. Kato-san, whose father had passed away and left him his share in the farm, indeed a double stake in the *ie* (familial and financial), quit, while Taro-san and Matsuyama both desired to move up within the company and saw one another as competitors for the familial favour of the *sachyou*. It was abundantly clear that the *sachyou* favoured Matsuyama, not only because he was clever, congenial and did not have conflicts with workers, but also because – perhaps most importantly – he had a family and had settled on his own property near the farm. And finally Kunio-san, unrelated to the original farm owners, yet a respected local, became a co-owner.

In short, though weakened, the *ie* concept is not dead. It has been adapted to fit highly specific and individual situations, it has, or perhaps has always been, far more ‘personalised’ as noted by Lee (2007) and Rosenberger (2001). For example,

Matsuyama, his wife, and son were treated nearly as family members by the *sachyou* and his wife. While they were not 'adopted' into the *ie* in any official sense (names remained unchanged for example), their personal ties were close and Matsuyama's dedication (though not obsession) to work and the will of the *sachyou* was strong. In return Matsuyama was well paid, his family often interacted with the *sachyou*'s, and the *sachyou* had secured an incredibly cheap house for this 'fictive' son. During fieldwork I asked Kunio-san if he was disappointed in not having a successor for his own family farm. He tilted his head, "*Watashi no bokujyou wa chisaida kara. Unn, sore wa muzukashi da to omou*" (my farm is very small so (this idea of a successor) well, it's difficult I reckon). He seemed happy to continue as a worker at Grand Hopes Farm and then retire to his own separate farm. He was resigned to it being sold off after his passing. However, by the middle of my second stint of fieldwork this unexpectedly changed. He had become a new co-owner. Kunio-san reacted to Kato-san's absence in the way he thought best – he threw his lot in with the 'bigger is better' camp. When I met him driving to the farm one morning I congratulated him on his being a new owner. Kunio-san replied that he was happy about this lucky twist of fate. Will he now try to find a successor? His interest in the mega farm clearly has become an economic and familial one – his livelihood and income linked with the other owners of the farm and its fate.

The *ie*, or as noted above what might be easier thought of as 'the business of the family and the family business,' was a flexible system of relationships not based on blood as much as it was based on individual capabilities. The *ie* consisted of people choosing to stay in the area, apply themselves to work, be able to get along with others, and in Kunio's case, all this plus some luck, fate, and chance. The notion of being from company A or B, or being part of one *ie* or another, is of less importance for contemporary dairy workers than Nakane depicted in her model of Japanese rural structure (1967). The *owner's conceptualisation* as noted below was, however, similar to the vertical corporate structure in her later work (1972). Moreover, both Hsu and Nakane note that there are regional variations, the largest being between East (and West Japan (Hsu 1975: 77-83) (with unsurprisingly no mention of Okinawa or Hokkaido).

Sidestepping issues regarding the *ie*, most young workers are similar to the *furiitā* depicted by Kosugi (2008). They tend to view their farm work as a job alone. This is the most obvious in the final group I call no-siders, for example Chinese workers – a

group that is reputed to be growing nationwide (Chen 2008) and one that doubled at Grand Hopes from 2006-2008.⁴ These are essentially exploited economic migrants on contract who have no stake in Japanese society and could not care less about local or family politics of the household business as long as they are paid (Hansen 2010). It is possible that in the future such workers might move on to become lo-siders or even locals – but at present there are no examples of this in Gensan.

Other than direct family members (and this group still includes many who were not directly concerned with the family business such as the farm's daughters), most workers did not view their work in terms of familial obligation or as a central source of identity, community, or pride (Bestor 2004, Martinez 2004). Solidarity, amongst owners was weak – amongst workers it was virtually non-existent. Moreover, the owners made no effort to promote or enforce general feelings of the workplace as family, positive or negative, as depicted by Kondo (1990). What remained was a 'loosely adhered to' idea of a vertical power structure on the farm; an *ie*-like structure with the owners at the top, familial *buchou* beneath, and a fluid roster of underlings at the base. During my time at the farm, a chart hierarchy was circulated by the owners identifying who was in charge of what and whom. But beyond deference to the owners, the chart was ignored by most of the workers. The capable took charge and the least capable, despite rank, were ignored or somehow placated into thinking they held sway until their backs were turned and someone took over.

While there was tension between small family farms and the new burgeoning mega farms, the larger farms in the area had congenial, even co-operative, relationships. Owners and locals were conscious of where farms fit in the continuum of large to small operations, but nonetheless they would occasionally lend equipment and visit one another without any obvious animosity. The search for Chinese workers was carried out by a group of large independent farms co-operating with each other. Mutual farm communication was obvious in other ways. For example, information about me spread quickly. It was clear that large farms in the area were prepared for my 'impromptu' visits and occasionally the *sachyou* would ask me how my visit to X or Y farm went despite my not mentioning it. Of course no-siders, outsiders and even the majority of lo-siders were not concerned about rigid distinctions between farms – they had a job

⁴ As of 2008, Grand Hopes had four Chinese workers. In a telephone conversation with Kyoko in July of 2009 she claimed that Gensan was beginning to look like '*rituru Chugoku*' (little China) and the number of Chinese patients at Oda sensei's clinic had dramatically risen.

and their working conditions and wages were of more interest than any sort of *ie* inspired ranking system.

Bokujoyou hours of employment and fluctuating days off hampered any attempts at a predictable social life. But this atmosphere was relaxed and perhaps more 'worldly' amongst the outsiders and lo-siders than with the locals. Again Limbo-san never thought of moving to Sapporo early in fieldwork – let alone leaving Japan – he merely wanted a good job and a girlfriend. However, many outsiders had travelled in Japan, and some had travelled more extensively, before they found their way into Hokkaido employment. Others were in Hokkaido buying time for their next career or education move outside of Gensan. Some outsiders had postsecondary education – some from rather prestigious universities such as Tokyo University or Ritsumeikan in Kyoto. It was common and unsurprising if someone decided to return home leaving the world of farming behind and gossip frequently circulated about who was leaving, when and why.

Finally, lo-siders and outsiders often expressed their desire to escape *futsuno nihon jinno kangaekata* (typical Japanese thinking). This expression, or similar variants of it, constantly surfaced as derogatory comments. Talk about failures in the world of Tokachi business would be met, ironically, with "*Minna futsu nihon no kangaekata dakara*" (...because (locals) think like typical Japanese) and talk of the aspiring-to-be-local Taro-san amongst female friends would always contain "*Futsuno nihon no ojisan*" (typical Japanese middle-aged man) accompanied by a scowl, emphatic headshake, and topped with "*Iyanahito*" (disagreeable fellow). However many outsiders and lo-siders lived with the contradiction that, although they viewed local people as the epitome of conservative 'typical' Japanese, they were free in this 'open landscape' with the loose social relationships it availed. The choice not to be a part of local life was made for them by the locals or through the work conditions of farming. To a large degree, at least to a degree larger than they felt was possible in their former lives, they were making their own meanings and their own lives – essentially free from the constraints of essentialist Japaneseness. *Senpai / kohai* (junior / senior), *soto / uchi*, (outside group and inside group) relations were extremely fluid amongst outsiders and lo-siders. The expectation to *become* 'typically' Japanese, or to follow a community set path with requisite social expectations, was low. Again many, though nowhere nearing all, existed in a state of liminality with the expectation that they would – eventually – return to Honshu, to family, to a career, to social relations that are seen as typical and expanded upon in the following section. However, locals did not feel

themselves to be typical at all. As noted in the Introduction locals considered Honshu to be a distant place, historically and culturally. Yet, they did not feel they could comfortably enter the 'outsider' café either -- they themselves were betwixt and between.

All of the farm owners that I encountered, small, medium, large, or mega were local people. They were not professional managers hired by an outside party. They considered their farm, even if it was shared with other owners, to be a family business. There were locals and lo-siders who worked in *buchyou* positions within these farms, but the proportion of farm family members in positions of authority was clearly higher and not related to experience or age. In short, the child of an owner may well be younger, have less work experience, less natural ability, and less education than those who work under them. Outsiders were not in positions of authority although, in specific work situations, they might covertly or overtly be placed in a role of 'team leader'.

Thus the three groups, local, lo-sider, and outsider roughly correspond to patterns of employment found on a whole in Japan. Farm owners, like business owners elsewhere in Japan, were usually elder local males and similar in status to lower or middle level salary men depending on the size and profitability of their holdings. Lo-siders were most often like *kaishyain*, with slightly higher wages than other workers, who received bonuses, company perks, such as housing, and possessed a reasonably high level of job security. Outsiders, as noted above, were often *furiitā*. Although they held temporary *kaishyain* status, they generally did not remain with the company long enough for their wages to increase nor were they offered *buchyou* positions unless they were first deemed good workers, and second expressed a willingness to stay in the area, on the farm, and out of trouble with others. If these requirements were fulfilled then positions emerged or were created. Through the choice to take a *buchyou* position, one essentially became a lo-sider, a member of the work community if not the broader Gensan community. While there were exceptions, such as workers who quit for personal reasons (such as Yukiko) or who were let go as *buchyou* (such as Taro-san) or workers who endlessly lingered despite remaining outsiders and were unlikely to be offered superior positions (such as Tsutomo), for the most part, owners and workers fit the above pattern of local, lo-sider, outsider, and no-sider.

Nakane's above mentioned inter-company 'parent and child relations' also tended to 'fit'. One of the largest nearby farms was in fact the *ko kaishya* (child company) of a

large construction firm, and in fact the parent / child relationship was also literal in this case, as the father ran the construction company and the son ran the farm. Such relationships were also explained to me by many of the sub-contractors. Welders, hoof trimmers, silage harvest helpers, all offered the owners of the farm (*oseibou* (end of the year gifts) and in return Grand Hopes Farm offered the milk company and equipment dealers similar gifts.⁵ This exchange symbolised the hopes of the smaller companies that the previous year's cycle of patronage would continue into the new-year. The gifts were always rather uncreative and functional – office grade coffee, a boxes of work gloves, laundry detergent – but so was their intent. When asked why they exchanged such mundane gifts, responses clearly underscored the meaning, *rainen minna to issyouni hatarakitain node* “Everyone wants to work together next year.” Next year would exclude most outsiders and no-siders.

Thus, the exchange of *oseibou*, much like religion explained below, was a local affair. Outsiders, and for the most part lo-siders, were not a part of the exchange. They were not considered part of the community. Such individuals found their identity in their own ways; through being financially, politically, and/or socially independent or often forging links with people of their own choosing outside of work or inside the broader rural community of like-minded Hokkaido dwelling others. Change, for them, was central to the life-choice of otherness within the ever shifting community of Gensan outsiders. Locals however, though their gifts may have lacked ‘individuality,’ the purpose did not. The exchange represented individual aspirations for security in the face of uncertainty and change, both in the industry and community. The gift exchange cemented their part in the system. Their hopes of continued financial co-operation, continued social bonds, and continued securing of a place in the community of Hokkaido's *internal* ‘outsiders’ – the otherness of dairy farming agriculture.

IX.3. Farm Women

As Martinez points out in her monograph on Japanese female *ama* divers (2004) and as Carbert notes in her analysis of agrarian feminism of Ontario farm women (1995), the image of the submissive woman is a difficult one to maintain on the margins of rural employment. As opposed to some of the women Kondo encountered,

⁵ See Allison (1994: 16-18) and Hendry (1993) regarding the general purpose and process of gift exchange in Japan.

and feared herself to be 'crafting' into (1990), the women on Grand Hopes and other local farms were highly independent and confident people.

Unlike the image of the Japanese 'office lady' or middle class 'home maker' (Rosenberger 2001) or female "*furiitā*" in relatively low paying, low ceiling, often temporary positions (Kimoto 2003; Kosugi 2008), women who chose – and locals aside it was always by choice – to work at the farm were doing the same jobs as their male co-workers for the same recompense. It is true that males were favoured for some jobs and females for others, and generally these were tasks requiring greater physical strength, such as penning calves. Though female workers were not excluded from such work, if less physically demanding tasks were required at the same time it was inevitably they who were sent to do them. Again, this is a good example of how embodiment and interpretation are central at the farm. If an individual woman proved that she was physically able, there was little stopping her from doing any particular job. But simply put, the majority of men were perceived, on average, as stronger than the majority of female workers. *Buchyou* made split second decisions regarding work responsibilities as they were required. If a cow needed to be penned, he would size up his work force, say a forty-five kilogram woman and a seventy kilogram man and likely opt for the bulkier worker. Here gender played a role but, beyond physicality, it did not determine position; and as noted In Chapter Seven, Yukiko was chosen over senior male cohorts to train as a hunter as she was viewed as clever and hardworking.

The wives and mothers of the farm families tended to focus their work on the calves and thus their working hours were not doled out in split shifts. I suspect that there is traditional gender role division made in this respect (Kimoto 2003: 154-58). The older farm women had all raised children and this division of labour, between homemaker and farmer, was viewed as normative and perhaps functional. But, not all wives and mothers chose this role; the *sachyou*'s wife did not work on the farm and Takako, a fictive daughter, chose to work at the local super market.

Though I asked, I was not privy to any complaints relating to work roles, sexism, or gender bias in my time at the farm. This may have to do with my own embodiment as a male and the potential reticence of female workers to discuss these issues with me. However, women who came from outside of the farm were treated as any other employee. They received the same wages for the same hours, with the same benefits for engaging in nearly the same tasks. The Chinese workers were a notable exception here, but the male Chinese workers on a neighbouring farm were treated in a similar fashion

– this treatment was an issue of legality, prejudice, ethnicity and not gender. A woman working at Grand Hopes Farm, another at a neighbouring dairy farm, and a good female friend on a nearby beef farm, were all in the position of *buchyōu*. Moreover, they all worked on farms not run by their families. These positions and statuses were earned. In two cases they held this position despite being younger and working at the farm for a shorter term than many of their male co-workers. Although often covered over with the requisite Japanese downplaying, it was their individual skill, education, or savvy that got them the *buchyōu* position – gender was not at issue.⁶

Lee (2007) notes that in rural Tohoku there has been a steady movement of women from the traditional role of homemaker to wage earner, however such women are usually also working on the farm. Due to this shift she notes the decrease in familial ties and an increase in childcare facilities has led to a weakening of lateral support systems such as the *ie* (*ibid.*: 157-168) (Rosenberger 2001: 125-136 includes similar shifts in care for the elderly). In short, as workers move out of the extended family home they tend to work away from home and utilise childcare facilities. Through such economic and temporal distancing, familial links, for example between grandparent and grandchild, are rapidly weakened.

An important factor is age. All of the young women at the farm were without children at the start of my fieldwork. By the end of my research two of the women were pregnant and both had quit the farm. The likelihood of their return to farm life is unknown, but no mothers, beyond those in the farm families, engaged in farm work. Whether a ‘glass ceiling’ exists in the dairy industry is doubtful. However similar to ‘office ladies’ in Japan, the expectation seemed to be that young women would eventually get married and return to urban life or get married to a farmer and play the dual role of homemaker and flexible family farm worker (Kimoto 2003; Kosugi 2008). This was the case at Grand Hopes and women seemed happy with this arrangement. In Hokkaido I never met a *bokujōu* owner who was female. Outside of Hokkaido I only met one; an eighty odd-year-old widow in Kumamoto, Kyushu. She said she had no plans to retire. Nevertheless, this situation was a continuation of a long-held lifestyle, not a decision to start farming anew.

⁶ I was told that sexual harassment was a problem at a nearby farm. This was not a complaint and Grand Hopes farm however. Nevertheless, there was, as outlined below, conflict between particular male and female staff.

It was common for some male members of staff to curtly order female members of staff to do certain tasks or to berate them into tears. At first, I presumed that this was an entrenched power structure with gender as its base – in short, the female employees by virtue of their gender were considered lesser, weaker, and subservient to their male co-workers (Butler 2004). However, such a simple reading needs to be interrogated.

These bullying males were all in senior employment positions; an important issue in traditional Japanese power hierarchies even taking the issues of gender or *ie* structure aside. In short, they acted the same way in relation to male staff members. However, there was clearly an element of embodiment at play here. Similar to managers noting physicality in terms of job roles, the female workers were all physically smaller than the males, as well as, perhaps (culturally speaking) socialised to avoid conflict from a young age (Ben-Ari 2002; Hendry 1986). This is not to down play their gender as a factor, but angering them likely posed less of a physical danger to the verbal aggressor than brandishing the same ‘bravado’ towards a similar or larger proportioned male, although this happened as well with results varying from fist fights to walking off the job.

Of the three males who frequently engaged in this sort of bullying towards the female staff, two were widely (on and off the farm) regarded as having social or mental problems, a theme I will return to below. The other was simply regarded as a *waruihito* (bad guy) or *baka* or *inakamono* depending on who was asked about him. However, while some female workers clearly found the bullying difficult to contend with (and some men did as well though their usual response was to quit), ‘woman as victim’ is not an accurate portrayal of these situations or these women.

On one occasion off the farm, Kyoko, the aforementioned nurse from Honshu, complained first to the housing authorities and then directly to the *sachyou*, about the threatening behaviour of Taro-san. He was soon evicted because of this. And later, after Taro-san began berating a new female employee (in the manner to which he had grown accustomed with some of the other female staff such as Haru) he was quick to find out that this newcomer would not silently tolerate it. I was not witness to the exchange, but was told that colourful language was used by both parties and when the shift was over the new female worker stormed into the office and demanded: “Either he goes or I go”. The *sachyou* heard their stories with the result being that, despite gender and senior status, she stayed and he went; sent off to the conflict resolution exile of the hospital barn. And so, the ‘weak and meek’ Haru, who was brought to tears nearly

daily by the insults of bullies, not only finished out her year long and self-appointed stint by doggedly refusing to quit, but she was also given the satisfaction (and she told me later that she was pleased) of seeing one of her tormentors demoted from *buchyōu* to stable hand to eventually being 'asked' to leave the farm, through the actions of a junior, female, staff member.

Thus, while being a woman played an observable role, it did not play a starkly decisive role, especially for women from outside the local community. These women had chosen a difficult lifestyle and were determined, for an assortment of personal reasons, to make their rural lives work. Indeed, as an aside, when it came to simpering and complaining about the heat, cold, or the task at hand it was seldom a woman doing it – often times they proved 'stronger' and more determined than many male workers.

As for the older local women, while their choice to engage or not to engage in farm work might be more limited, entwined with family livelihoods and the cheap flexible labour they provided, three out of the four wives chose to work on the farm. The ebb and flow of daily life considered, they were happy with their work and their personal relationships on the farm. If there was any form of coercion to work, they did not betray it. Moreover, while some of the wives remained working at the farm none of the owners' female children chose to. Not one worked in an industry related to agriculture.

IX.4. Farm Males

If the stereotype of the submissive urban Japanese women does not hold, neither does the image of the salary man or the effeminate urbanite hold in the world of dairy farm workers or labour in general (Roberson 1998). Masculinity in Japan is complex (Dasgupta 2000, Darling-Wolf 2003, Ito and Yanase 2001, Roberson and Suzuki *ed.* 2002). Mathews (1996; 2006: 7-25) quotes numerous conversations held with his middle-aged Japanese informants who are confused by the current state of Japanese masculinity; confused enough to want to drag youth from their cars and put Judo holds on them (*ibid.*: 10). What follows is not a full account of masculinity in Japan but an account of it on Grand Hopes Farm.

Popular media may depict young male *bokujōu* workers as fashionable heart throbs of a sensitively sensual ilk as seen in Chapter Three (Love and Farm: *Ushi onegai yo*) or vibrant happy-go-lucky youth as depicted in the numerous part-time employment magazines, but most of the male workers I encountered were, 'Suzuki-san', that is Mr.

Jones or Smith, average guys. For example, Limbo-san, was *kakouii* (cool), but he was far from a salary man and not cultivating the image or actions of a stereotypical tough guy or urban hair stylist. He was unlike the many media representations of men combining bookend stereotypes into an “an androgynous hybrid” (Darling-Wolf 2003). Limbo-san was simply viewed as an attractive, soft-spoken, and friendly guy. However, herein lies the problem for many male farm workers. Despite wanting a girlfriend, having the looks and personality to attract could-be suitors, and being open about his desire to settle down, he was stuck in the lifestyle of dairy farming. He was perpetually single, with little economic security or control over work conditions; putting in long and unusual hours at a low profile and essentially dead-end job that intensified feelings of alienation inside and outside of the workplace.

As in Mathews (2006), *ikigai* (what makes life worth living) played a large role in the lives of male informants. This was intimately linked with change, otherness, and security. While work, family, and following one’s dreams are noted as the main sources of Japanese male *ikigai*, dairy work, especially in the context of a mega farm, offers such satisfactions to very few. To all involved, work pressures made family life difficult to start or maintain and free time to pursue other interests was scarce. To most from outside of the community the work was viewed as a temporary job – and given the turnover rate, a disagreeable one. For those few outsiders like Taro-san who sought satisfaction from work, a self-professed *kigyō senshi* (corporate warrior), their expectations that others would “display the qualities of loyalty, diligence, dedication, self-sacrifice, hard work; qualities which in an earlier era had been associated with another influential discourse of masculinity – the *bushidō* of the samurai” (Dasgupta 2000: 195), would be met with mockery by co-workers and disinterest from senior staff. In this sense, males are perhaps in a more difficult position, more secured into their “(in)security” to borrow from Dillon (1995), than females on the dairy farm. They cannot live up to the hybrid images expected by many Japanese women (Allison 1994, Darling-Wolf 2003, Rosenberger 2001: 182-213).

While many single women in Gensan told me they wanted a boyfriend (amongst Kyoko and her female friends this subject was pursued tirelessly) they would not consider dating a farmer. Bestor has noted a similar pattern of female reluctance amongst fishmongers in Tokyo (2004). However, Gensan is not Tokyo. One’s social life is public knowledge. The social world is a small and closed one. The pool of single people with similar schedules, let alone interests, is minuscule. While the

workers in Tokyo's *Tsukiji* market start work at 3:00 a.m., they are finished work by noon and have every Sunday and regular holidays off. Bestor notes that often the young workers had dreams and interests that they pursued outside of working hours. Such a schedule is radically different from having no vacations, no set day off, and working split-shifts from starting at 4:00 a.m. and often continuing until 8:00 p.m. or later.

Thus, unable to live up to the 'dream seeker' or sensitive urbanite image and unable to provide the security that a 'salary man' lifestyle could provide, male dairy workers are a hard sell. This has led to the well documented popularity of 'arranged' foreign brides in rural Japan (Chen 2008, Faier 2008, Knight 2003, Yamashita 2008) While women are expected to eventually quit working on the farm, men were expected to continue working and earning. They were expected to *make* themselves fit into the above mentioned accepted stages of *becoming* and so belonging; from marriage, to children, progressing to community members – but this seldom happened. Many saw these stages as unattainable, and the banality of their interests (sleep, video games, cars, or pachinko), was augmented by their unusual hours and poor pay packets. They were trapped in a catch twenty-two cycle.

Amongst males these conditions lead to alienation and violence perpetrated on both animals and humans. Violence amongst male workers was a serious and frequent issue at the farm. Taro-san clearly had a problem controlling his temper. Fist fights were not uncommon. There were three at Grand Hopes farm over my first year of research, all involving males. Kicking or punching cows was common amongst men as well. This was not only the case at Grand Hopes. A worker on a nearby beef farm told me that a male worker on staff was dismissed for severely beating a young cow.

Kyoko and doctor Oda commented on this information. Both suspected that there were many such cases. Indeed, the doctor mused that many men on *bokujyou* preferred to work away from humans but still desire 'skinship' (a common word in Japan denoting a physical and emotional connection with living things – often mother and son). They are, he concluded, attracted to work in remote locations with little human contact, yet long for living contact. Consciously or not the doctor was building from Doi's above mentioned work on dependency which has become common Japanese pop-psychology. The workers, troubled in the human realm, were perhaps seeking 'the unconditional love' of an animal. Whether this is the case in all or any case I am

uncertain, but the two recounted stories of some extraordinarily emotionally and socially inept patients – some of whom worked at Grand Hopes.

As a brief but poignant personal note on the issue of male violence, I had a conflict ridden relationship with the *kachyou*'s son. The reasons for this conflict could be numerous. Masahiro was in a new position of power at a young age, under stress, and moreover, he was not trained in the 'human management' aspects of presiding over dozens of employees, many of whom were his senior in both age and experience. Also he was surely aware that his father was against hiring me for the job. These reasons all seem probable causes for our discord, and eventual fist fight, and it is clear how change, otherness, and security could be seen as central to this situation. Social scientists generally do not get into fist fights with their informants unless that is their said intention (Wacquant 2000) and I was sure that I would be sacked due to our conflict. But fights amongst males were as common as institutionalised violence against animals noted in the following chapter. Insofar as senior workers were concerned, nothing was ever mentioned about our altercation. There was silence. In the rapid change and otherness experienced by all on the farm, such conflicts were inherent and expected (even by outside observers like Kyoko and doctor Oda) – obviously linked to physical and economic security. However, the ontological security of knowing one's self, one's reactions or temperament in the face of otherness or contingencies for example, or one's position as 'owner's son' or as 'detached social science observer' were constantly under question and strained. People, and notably males, were well aware that such positions – social, economic, physical – were not fixed but in flux.

The *sachyou* frequently interviewed hopeful employees on the phone. Sometimes he would think that the applicant was strange, but his better hiring judgement was occasionally outweighed by a desperate need for workers in the face of the shift to industrial production. When I explained, admittedly dodging naming people at the farm, that I thought many staff were *chotto kowareteiru* (a bit broken), pointing at my head due to not knowing a polite way to call somebody crazy in Japanese, and so sheepishly continuing, "...*ma, byouki, tokidoki kuruteiru kana?*" (ahm well, sick, sometimes crazy I guess?).

The *sachyou* leaned back and laughed: "*Hontou ni, takusan ga imasu yo!*" (Honestly, many are crazy, you better believe it!). And, knowing a bit about my research by then, with a devious smirk he added: "*Honshu no hito dakara hokkaidou jin*

wa daijyoubu da yo” (it’s because they come from Honshu. People from Hokkaido are fine).

I replied: “*Taro-san wa dou?*” (What about Taro-san?), knowing that he was from Hokkaido. The *sachyou* merely tilted his head and hissed; this was essentially a pan male staff issue not linked to location.

We discussed a few workers who had come and gone; for example, one who would stop coming to work for days on end and then simply appear as though everything was normal, and another who simply went ‘*pan*’ (an onomatopoeic expression meaning snapped) one day and started punching the aforementioned saintly Ichiro-san who had no idea what brought this on. We discussed a few remaining workers that both of us clearly thought belonged in the *okashii* (odd) category. We ended in agreement, not completely jokingly, that I too was of questionable sanity for wanting to do the research I selected.

Making the claim that there exists a high percentage of mentally ill in a given population is controversial and it can cause problems for those under study (Scheper-Hughes 1979). This section is one reason why pseudonyms for Gensan and its people were used in this thesis. The claim is not as extreme as Scheper-Hughes made in regard to the rural Irish, especially young rural Irish men, as I lack the statistical data or hospitalisation records *etcetera*, to back it up. Nevertheless, there were many suicides in the area (eight to ten over four years) and most of them were males related to *bokujyou* work – including the *sachyou*’s cousin.⁷ As noted above, these workers are in a demanding environment with their physical security at risk – often eating poorly, lacking sleep, lacking holidays, performing repetitive tasks at a fast pace with often uncooperative elements, including the weather, other workers, or cattle. Added to this, they lack contact with family and friends sometimes by choice but often due to the requirements of work.

These conditions were trying and shared in varying degrees by male and female staff as well as local, outsider, lo-sider and no-sider. However, males did have

⁷ Informants disagreed over the number, 8,9,10 were offered. Yuji-san was saddened by the suicide of his daughter’s husband. Japan is ranked number nine in the world (well above other developed nations) in suicides per capita. For an example see “90 Suicides a Day Spur Japan Into Action” The UK Times Online <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article2852726.ece>. accessed via Google January 15th, 2008. Since Durkheim’s pioneering study of suicide the notion that rural area suicides rates are higher due to “geographic clustering”, from ‘alienation and poverty’ for example, has been a popular theoretic claim (Baller and Richardson 2002). In comparative terms, due to financial pressures brought on by a change in technology (the control over GM crops), there has been a spike in suicide rates amongst Indian farm owners (Roberts 2008:1-2).

additional stresses and strains related to the ideal masculine image outlined above. Many male locals, like Kato-san and the *sachyou's* son, were placed in a position of being successors to farms they did not want (not unlike the Irish in Scheper-Hughes' study). In the former case he quit and in the latter case he left home. Although I was not told directly, as in Ireland, some sons remain in the industry against their inclination out of obligation (*giri*) and through believing that they lack alternative employment skills. As expanded upon in the next chapter, even those who wish to continue dairy farming face numerable insecurities; continual rural deskilling, an uncertain future, inheriting an industry with massive overheads, a volatile market, along with overseeing a product that must be maintained daily (cattle) and a by-product that lacks the ability to be stored for more than a day (milk). The young dairy farmers were aware of the rural deskilling that the change to high-tech equipment brought; anyone could be trained to milk or care for a cow despite their knowledge or skill and the scale of the new equipment also necessitated the importation of cheap labour from outside of the local area and increasingly from outside Japan. Yet perhaps the most difficult situation faced by male dairy workers, certainly locals but many others as well, is their exclusion; their forced otherness from 'epic' Japanese expectations.

While some workers, usually those from outside of the community of Gensan, claimed that social exclusion from societal expectations was a boon – the escape from typical Japanese thinking – to other individuals born in Gensan or to those individuals hoping to remain, their employment was alienating. They were effectively made community outsiders, blocked from becoming and belonging without desiring and directing colossal efforts towards making themselves what many wanted to be – 'typical Japanese', married and middle class. Others were liminal, they would return to life in university or at some other career. Some were 'liminally liminal' – with no goal or end in sight they simply lacked the qualities of 'self making' that the job required of them. For them becoming and belonging were also seemingly impossible. While this impacted the lives of men and women – Haru, for example, was never going to be put in a leadership role at the farm – I suggest it impacted the lives of men more profoundly.

Traditionally the *uchi*, the home, the inside, the family is a feminine realm – while the *soto*, the work place, and community is the area where the masculine is expressed. Of course this view is challenged (Rosenberger 2001). But this was one battleground of change and otherness in Gensan. As their work is not seasonal, their hours are long and irregular, holidays nonexistent, and as the likelihood of marriage and fatherhood

remains low for many, their ability to 'become' part of the social fabric of the greater Gensan community is hampered, and given their traditional male role, dairy workers are, in effect, emasculated. Most do not partake in village festivals, most do not belong to community organisations such as the *chonaikai* or PTA, and their leisure, by necessity, is often in the form of non-communal pursuits. Similar to 'the corrosion of character' in the modern, mobile, 'teamwork' oriented workplace (Sennett: 1998: 15-31, 132-134), there is nowhere to turn for support, there is no union, there are no sports clubs, and often, there are no friends or foes beyond bovine ones – for many there is work and work alone, insecure and alienating.

IX.5. "Batou San": Friendly Neighbourhood Protection From Life's Insecurities

Religion is one way to demonstrate the above shifting circles of individual and group otherness; a way of expressing the distinctions between, town's people, rural people, individuals employed in the livestock industry, locals, lo-siders, and outsiders. In Japan there is a common expression, "born Shinto – die Buddhist".⁸ While this holds true for most Japanese including those in Hokkaido, there are some distinctions that mark rural religion in Hokkaido and amongst livestock farmers particularly, that underscore regional change and otherness and the search for security.

A statue of *Jizō sama* (a *kami* (deity) of travellers and the dead) was at the cross roads leading to Grand Hopes Farm. Somebody would continually upkeep the icon. The statue would be cleaned and the surrounding grass or snow would be dealt with. In this respect, little differentiated *Jizō sama's* care from that of a swing set in a public park or a fountain. This care went beyond aesthetics alone however. *Jizō sama* had a steady flow of drinks, snacks, and cigarettes. He had a matching red ski cap, vest, and scarf to shield him from biting Tokachi winter winds and a straw hat to shade his concrete head in the summer. In return for looking after his mundane existence he drew attention to the two flags placed in front of him "*Supido-daun*" (slow down) and comforted those whose loved one had been lost on that stretch of road. However, unlike some sort of spiritual super-hero *Jizō sama* did not just miraculously appear here

⁸ For an explanation of contemporary Japanese religion start with Reader's (1991) readable account and for a history see Kasahara (2001). Shinto is native to Japan. It is, taking great licence, comparable to Daoism or animism. Buddhism in Japan follows, for the most part, the East Asian Mahāyāna (great vehicle) tradition.

in an appropriate space and at the time of need. ‘He’ was placed here by human agency and with significant costs and planning.⁹



IX.5.a). An ever-vigilant Jizō sama offering his message of “Slow down.”

Reader and Tanabe (1998) have, wittily, called the Japanese “Practically Religious.” There is a two pronged meaning at play here. During the Tokugawa period (1603 – 1867) Buddhist temples (which were in reality combined nearly seamlessly with Shinto shrines) were the organisational site of the military government’s administration of common people (Ketelaar 1990). In short, everybody, (less those completely outside the system for example the aforementioned *burakumin*) was registered with a temple and there existed strict laws curtailing mobility – temporal and social – within Japan. This led to a brief but vicious persecution of Buddhism and the promotion of ‘nationalist’ Shinto during the first few years of ‘revolutionary’ modernism in Meiji rule (Ketelaar 1990, Victoria 2000). But Buddhism soon recovered some of its former prestige in part through proving its worth to the ‘new’ state – emulating Christian aid societies such as the Red Cross – and in part through the complete inability of Shinto

⁹ I have had interesting and conflicting answers to my questions about the statue despite it only being three years old at the time of research. I heard Kato-san’s family had paid for it after the loss of his father in a car crash. Several co-workers agreed with this story until a *buchyou* claimed that the *chonaikai* erected it. This then became the official story until I was told the statue was paid for by a local temple and this story was supported by others from outside the farm. Oddly, the cost of ¥ 2,000,000 was agreed upon by all.

clerics to replace the well organised and educated Buddhists as community builders, sustainers, and leaders. Japan's militarism has always been supported by certain strands and strains of Buddhism and charismatic leaders (for example Rinzai Zen and Nichiren shu) and the modern era was no exception to this historical trend (Heisig and Maraldo ed. 1994, Kasahara ed. 2001). Nonetheless, with the Japanese defeat and Occupation (1945-52) two key changes developed in Japanese religious culture. The emperor was no longer the divine sovereign of Japan, indeed many called for his persecution as a war criminal (Bix 2000), and the new constitution enshrined the freedom of religion (Dower 1999) giving legal sanction to an already flourishing current of new religions; a "Rush Hour of The Gods" (McFarland 1967). Some new religions eagerly sought converts and in turn became substantial political powers within civil society and abroad, notably *Soka Gakkai* forming *Komeito* a national political party (Metraux 1988). At least one newer new religion (*Aum Shinrikyo*), supported by the apocalyptic notions of its charismatic leader, has engaged in murderous terrorism through a subway gas attack in Tokyo (Murakami 1995, Reader 1995). Given this history, religion is often perceived negatively in Japan. Many Japanese will fervently claim they are not religious even while engaging in overtly religious acts or belonging to numerous religious organisations (Reader 1991).

As a brief ethnographic aside to underscore this religious 'practicality' over and above doctrine for many Japanese, when I visited Haru at her farm in Nagano she insisted that we visit a shrine the night before I left. We climbed a few stairs, tossed our coins into the offering box, rang the tin bell, clapped twice, and bowed our heads towards the closed doors of the shrine. Nothing more was said. Pressing on towards home I asked Haru why she was so keen to do this ritual the night before I left. "Was she religious – a believer?" (*shyuukyoku o shinjiteimasuka*). She replied that she was not, but that this was "...well, Japanese culture" (*Nihon no bunka kana*). She paused, perhaps knowing after my year and a half of odd, irksome, and ill-worded questions that this was not going to please me, and added *anshin dakara* – "for ease of mind – safety – a feeling of security". I expected this response. I have heard similar ones from Japanese friends whilst engaging in 'non-religious' religion with them.

For many Japanese people religion is equated with tradition, becoming, and belonging – what Ama terms (if over essentialist) Japanese "Natural Religion" as opposed to "Revealed Religion" (Ama 2005: 1-11). Religion is associated with culture and ritual, and *not necessarily* metaphysical beliefs or a devout faith. Thus, to western

observers many Japanese seem “practically (almost) religious”. However, Reader and Tanabe warn against a pejorative reading of Japanese religion (1998: 8). As opposed to many other forms of religious belief, Japanese religion has always been practical; praxis concerned with “this-worldly” benefits such as the curing of ailments, protection from life’s unknown fates, and even the passing of exams. These are practical desires aimed at making life more predictable – managing risks or perhaps safely hedging metaphysical bets. These goals are accomplished through supporting religious performances by experts (such as maintaining the statue noted at the beginning of this section), or by oneself through going on pilgrimages or simply by purchasing an amulet. Moreover, participating in a religious pilgrimage may well be motivated through the desire to engage in a shared culture or community with or without the baggage of metaphysics (Martinez 2007: 175-176).¹⁰ Religion buffers individuals from the ups and downs of existing in, or coping with, the mundane world. In short, the fostering and securing of communities (us and them), the support that religious communities offer to individuals in terms of identity and ontological security (Giddens 1992) or more tangible support systems such as child care services or the organisation of funeral arrangements. For the case at hand, this covers some of the scope of security and securing that religion potentially provides. This final chapter section explains how practical religion marks change and otherness in the face of insecurity in Tokachi.

The remains of Tokachi’s first dairy farm lie at the mouth of the Tokachi river delta. Between two deep gullies, the site of former silos, there is a tilting memorial stone erected in 1916. The stone, now worn with time and ravaged by moss, was meticulously carved by hand. The marker mourns the passing of cattle during a particularly harsh winter storm, when the settlers, overcome by snow, could not feed their livestock. The monument prays for the rest of the animals potentially vengeful souls. Bestor discusses similar monuments and similar reasoning amongst contemporary fishmongers in Tokyo – notably those who flay live eels (2004: 172-174). And Ambros has a similar article regarding shrines for pets and protection from their vengeful ghosts (2010).

¹⁰ My own experience of completing Shikoku’s famed eighty-eight temple pilgrimage (by car not foot) supports the views of Martinez. My Japanese co-traveler was happy to see the scenery and engage in basic religious rituals, but saw the pilgrimage as a ‘fun trip’ and a way to show me Japanese culture (See also Reader and Tanabe 1997 for a similar account). On the other hand of the spectrum however we also met and chatted with devout pilgrims some having completed the route hundreds of times.

In the past, Tokachi cattle and humans shared a symbiotic relationship, while the farmers protected and cared for the animals they also drank their milk and they ate their flesh. It might seem easy to dismiss this monument off hand as a relic of a past era, or symbolic of Hokkaido's quaint origins – but I came across it after much searching. I sought it out after noting the numerous similar monuments in front of contemporary dairy and cattle farms.



(XI.5. b.) An example amongst many of a farm side batoukannon in Tokachi. Chikukonhi monuments are similar in appearance to a grave stone.

Batoukannon (horse (headed) Kannon) or *chiku(san)konhi* (livestock (holder's) monument) are common statues in front of dairy farms. Betraying early Indic roots, *Batoukannon* has eight arms and a crown of horse heads. Kannon is the Japanese interpretation of the Chinese bodhisattva of compassion *Guan-yin*, and so, also of India's *Avalokiteśvara*. There are six manifestations of the deity, but its essential purpose, in the guise of the horse headed Kannon is to guide the spirits of departed animals to the Pure Land, as well as to alleviate suffering, and in-so-doing rid human adherents from being plagued by vengeful or 'hungry' ghosts (Ambros 2010). In essence, the deity provides protection, a feeling of security, from the bad luck that the animal's spirit might encounter on their post-mortem travels and the ill luck they might

in turn bring upon the farmers who used their lives, perhaps too cavalierly, towards financial ends.

Chikukonhi is similar to a grave stone. Generally thanks and an apology are offered to the *tamashii* (soul) of numerous animals on one plaque and the names of the farm owners are also added. Given the rational, progressive, and modern nature of the Grand Hopes Farm, when a co-worker informed me that the farm was in the process of installing a new *chikukonhi* monument, I was somewhat surprised by this information; but not as surprised as I was to be by the reasoning behind it.

When I asked the *sachyou* about the monument his reply, as usual, was direct and it clearly underscored the point that the worlds of nature, animal, and human are still far from separate in modern Tokachi. He was being haunted by the *tamashii* of cows in his dreams. The hope was that by erecting the monument he would feel *anshin*. I assumed that this was all metaphoric – that if pressed he would not be able to ‘rationally’ explain any causal links between his business, the cows, his dreams, and the promise of salvation the statue was intended to provide. He could explain the links very well however.

Cattle that died emitted a round ball of blue light. This was the soul of the cow and its energy would cause harm to the farm if not allowed a place to reside. This misfortune was a cause of anxiety and the ¥ 1,400,000 for the plaque was a small price to pay if the farm was protected and he was able to rest easily. The monument was both a form of apology to the cows and a show of respect for their assistance in the farms profitability. I took notes and then I promptly raced off to the *Sutaru* café.¹¹

One of the café owners was interested in world religions. She agreed that this was the reasoning of many livestock owners including some she knew. She was quite knowledgeable about religion in the area and had a keen, if fragmented, curiosity about global strands of Buddhism and Hinduism. She explained that there was a recent trend in Tokachi of installing a *gyuukannon* (cowheadedkannon) in areas related to livestock.¹²

¹¹The owners and patrons often provided ‘impartial’ information about locals or comparative points offered by outsiders depending on one’s perspective. It was a good place to ask questions when I thought informants were being less than informative or having a good laugh at my gullibility.

¹² Cattle are often featured in temple grounds, especially those related to trade as they were used on the mainland for transportation – *gyuukannon* may or may not be particular to Hokkaido but it is far from common south of Hokkaido.



(XI.5.c.) Hokkaido's divine bovine: Kannon with a cow perched on its head. Near Shimizu, Tokachi.

Intrigued that there could be a common anthropomorphic, even metaphysical, view of cattle amongst 'hardened' dairy owners, I visited some of the local farms where I previously interviewed dairy workers. Nearly all had *chikukonhi* monuments. All agreed with the *sachyou*'s explanation of blue lights, souls, and salvation. All had paid a considerable amount of money for the monuments. All had yearly rites performed.¹³ And nobody gave any indication that this was a superstition or a cost of doing business (as some co-workers mused). However stories of empathy and anthropomorphism went beyond this animal – human link.

¹³ While many claimed that it would be best to perform such rights monthly – most only had the rites performed in once a year in May or June.



IX.5.d.). Grand Hopes new Chikukonhi monument

Once I confused *batoukannon* and *chikukonhi*. Standing in a farmer's yard I insisted that he tell me about his statue of *batoukannon*. He insisted he did not have one, and moreover, that he really did not have a clue what a *batoukannon* was or why I should be bothering him about it. As my arm waving and partially coherent babble continued he proved himself to be a patient man. Nodding and head tilting, he walked down his driveway with me and I immediately realised my mistake. "Ahh, *gomen ne, machigaimashita kore ha batoukannon jya arimasen...asoko wa chikukonhi desune*" (oh, sorry my mistake, it isn't *batoukannon* that is *chikukonhi* isn't it?), I said. He also realised his. "Ahhh, *wakaru, wakaru, batou san ne*" (ohh, I get it, you mean Mr. **Batou**) he replied.

Like a friend or an acquaintance, Batou was not Kannon (a lofty and distant bodhisattva) nor was he even and honourable 'sama', he was, like any member of the community, simply 'san'. Batou san was there as a practically religious reminder that cows, humans, and the fates had to work in concert even for modern industrial farms to continue functioning smoothly. Mr Batou brought the dairy community together, providing piece of mind, continuity through rituals such as cleaning, and keeping the lines of connection open for salvation of animal soul's at the monument and human

souls at the temple. This, was a local affair; although many outsiders were aware of the statues and icons; they had no ideas about their meaning or the rituals surrounding them.

However, the mass produced statues of today are far from the original hand carved monuments – perhaps the apologies have become less ‘heart-felt’. And in the Conclusion to this thesis I discuss how the new parlour systems (the heart) of the contemporary business may lead to ‘disenchantment’ caused by the ‘iron cage of technology’; as with tractors, and electricity in the past, artificial insemination, medicated feed, and the parlour system have weakened the magic, reduced the scope of the mysteries of nature and fate (Maley 2004). Nonetheless, the division between human, cattle, and the religious remains a hazy one. As mega farms grow so do the size and costs of the religious icons and their upkeep. Dairy farmers pay a hefty price for Mr. Batou and other religious markers, and unabashedly proclaim the belief, that he and other icons are doing their job of providing *anshin*. Presumably his workload of animal saving souls and securing sound sleep for owners will increase as long as this trouble industry lasts.

XI.6. Conclusion

A final point regarding religion in Tokachi and becoming, belonging, and security draws the themes from this chapter together. There are a limited number of *butsudan* (a Buddhist altar used to memorialize the dead) and a great many ‘multi-*shukyō* (denomination) *hakaba* (cemeteries) in Tokachi. This is unlike the densely populated regions of Honshu, where *butsudan* far outnumber *kamidana* (a Shinto spirit shelf). Simply put, Tokachi is home to more new beginnings than old stories. The non-denominational mixed graves in the area indicate that individuals from varying *shukyō*, (affiliated with community and location on Honshu) historically came to live in Tokachi in what could be seen as internal Japanese ‘ex-patriot’ communities – bringing their own regional traditions and eventually dying together on the ‘frontier’ of Hokkaido.



(9.6.e.) Graveyard on the outskirts of Gensan with no temple complex attached.

Both Gensan's *kannushi* (Shinto priest) and Matsuyama discussed these topics with me after the *kannushi* performed rituals installing a *kamidana* in Matsuyama's new home. The *kannushi* said that all Japanese were "shintoists" (his term) before Buddhists. He performed such religious rites for the purpose of promoting security and safety at the behest of many locals. After he left, the lo-sider Matsuyama hesitated; "*Tabun, kamisama o shinjiteinai*" (maybe, I don't believe in animistic spirits) "*demo boku wa nihonjin soshite taisetsuda toomouimasu*" (but, I am Japanese (that's) why it is important). First, the installing of the *kamidana* in his new home was not done out of a select metaphysical faith but a faith in belonging. And second, as there had been a fire in the previous home the rites provided a feeling of *anshin* (safety and security). Again like offering gifts to larger companies or having one's friend clap their hands at a Shinto shrine, there is an individual hedging of bets involved here. In short, it seemed to him that it was the right thing to do. This act underscored a trinity of concerns; change, the start of a new life and home, otherness, marking himself and his family's Japaneseness, and security, securing the home and family from harm. This also served to establish his lo-sider, perhaps even *becoming* local, household by actively *making* it a part of the Gensan community. However, the majority of Gensan outsiders and dairy farmers do not have *kamidana*. They remain outsiders, male or female, and have a *butsudan* 'back home' – wherever that non- Hokkaido home may be.

Chapter Ten

Conclusion: Getting Inside the Animal-Human-Machine

X.1. Introduction

To this point, this document has focused on the themes of change, otherness, and the search for security in the context of frontier Hokkaido and its dairy industry, notably Grand Hopes Farm in Gensan, Tokachi. The scope has progressively moved from the past to the present, and through macro, meso, and micro levels of analysis. The first two chapters are essentially macro level accounts of the frontier history of Hokkaido, marking a change in national perspective, Ezo's move from a "wild" or "unsettled" frontier land to being progressively secured as a "domesticated" or "internalized" space. Thus, shifting notions of otherness have always played a role in the history of Hokkaido in terms of its geography and climate, but also in terms of its human and animal populations and such internal otherness is well represented by the dairy industry and the policies and products associated with it. Macro economic, political, military, and finally food security concerns were associated with the island. This came to a modern culmination point with homesteaders, settlers who formed mixed farms with a symbiotic and symbolic - and in retrospect certainly iconic - relationship to dairy cattle in their attempts to secure new lives in this 'new' land.

Chapter Four focuses on how throughout the late modern period a pastoral lifestyle continued alongside its associated imagery; comparable to 'frontier' areas of North America (such as Alberta, Canada), but different from, even opposite to, other colonialist projects such as Okinawa. Tokachi's population saw dramatic changes. It increased from the early 1900s until the mid-1960s. However in the 1960s, new technologies were introduced to these rural communities. The testimony of Yuji-san and Kunio-san underscore ethnographically that the 1960s were a time of radical change; electricity, tractors, and automobiles. This period also saw a shift in basic milking technologies, a move to automated inline or herringbone systems (Dempster 1966). The early post-war period was an intense time for seeking macro and micro security, through occupation, rebuilding the nation, and resettlement (Irish 2009, Mock 1999, Takata 2004). However, at meso level, Tokachi, and even more so Gensan, remained relatively insular. Indeed, after the closing of major infrastructure

construction projects, such as the *Nukabira* dam, more people left Gensan to find work in urban areas than came.

Chapter Five discusses the first steps towards contemporary monoculture dairy farming and how it has been economically and politically prompted and structured. Dairy herds still averaged only around thirty head in the 1960s and saw moderate increases, while farms continued for the most part to be single family owned and operated into the 1990s. However, great changes have happened in the last decade. The 'progressive' shift to mega farming, and the security debates that surround it, for example food security verses ecological security, have changed the former insularity by bringing two new 'frontiers' front and centre in the area and to the dairy industry; the technological frontier and the frontier of otherness. How to secure, and be secure with, other thinking, other bodies, and other ways of doing things have become key issues for the people of Gensan, dairy owners, and the young workers they employ.

While all chapters contain ethnographic elements, Chapter Six through to this chapter focus squarely on these issues at the meso and micro level in terms of individual dairy farmers, their interactions, and the loose groups that they form. Most young dairy workers reached their teens in the post-1980s. They have only experienced Japan in a period of 'progressive' change and increasing insecurity.¹ Rotary parlour systems are the most recent shift from previous milking technologies.² Their introduction has spurred on a host of other technological shifts and increased the composition of otherness in the workplace and community. This includes a rise not just in human others, but also an increase in bovine others in order to meet the demands of the industrial dairy system.

These points, outlined in previous chapters, are both summarised and expanded upon in this Conclusion. It addresses his 'change of heart' in the dairy industry and how it is currently impacting, and may impact in the future, otherness and security. In short, if electric power and the automobile were seen as the last major change in dairy farming life, then changes 'at the heart' (of the parlour) and 'of the heart' (of the people) in the industry are the key contemporary issues. Again, for the dairy owners the shift to the rotary parlour system from other milking methods is a high stakes

¹ Again see Kosugi (2008), Genda (2005) or Harootunian and Yoda (2006 ed.) for more detail regarding Japan's "lost generation." Also Cave (2007) focuses on shifts in the primary education system towards individualism during the 1990s.

² Holloway discusses robot milking technology (2007). However this is not a popular adaptation in Tokachi.

gamble. It involves taking on crushing debt and radically increased herd sizes (in the case of Grand Hopes an escalation of one thousand percent in four years). As noted in previous chapters, this involves legal partnerships with neighbouring individuals who might have differing notions of what is desirable – economically, personally, ecologically and so on. The shift is not only notable in economic terms of risk however. It is the cause for numerous and competing individual searches for security; physical, financial, social, ontological, emotional, as well as quests for personal happiness or meaning – in a word, *ikigai* (Mathews 2006). These technological changes have increased otherness. First with the need for relatively unskilled staff, a need that outstrips the local capacity to supply, but also with the requisite increase in cattle who form the greatest number of heretofore little mentioned others.

This chapter assesses how the rotary system divorces owners and their families from daily embodied relations with their cattle. They become surveyors and managers, while the non-rural outsiders, lo-siders, and no-siders that they employ, are daily in the “contact zone...a space of becoming with” animals (Haraway 2008: 35-36). Her concept here echoes those of human relatedness found in Nancy (2000) and Watsuji (1996) in Chapter Six. While links between the panoptic gaze and cattle husbandry have been alluded to by Grasseni (2005) and Holloway (2007), their focus has mainly been on the sectioning of animal bodies into functional parts – the progressive ‘disassociation’ of the whole animal or whole processes into desired parts and outcomes. Similar to Franklin’s work on the genetic enhancement of sheep (2008), they focus on how husbandry technology ‘pulls bodies apart,’ so to speak, through aesthetic or scientific judgement; ways of seeing related to ways of rationalising. Such a process of rationalisation and functional individuation is important in what follows, but the application is quite different. The environment of the parlour system is *itself* literally individuating, and clinically, and I conclude chronically, rational. This space is compared with Foucault’s conceptualisation of the panopticon prison design and the disciplining of bodies, both human and bovine (1977).

I will draw upon Deleuze and Guattari (and others influenced by their work) to better explain the micro linkages between human and animal in this technological environment (1987). It is an environment of “becoming-animal” (*ibid.*: 232-309), wherein the blurring of embodiments and identities across species lines, or lines of flight (being towards), are not genealogical. Instead these are

...like an abstract immense Abstract Machine, abstract yet real and individual; its pieces are the various assemblages and individuals, each of which groups together an infinity of particles entering into an infinity of more or less interconnected relations...[technology and its rational ordering are]...a fixed plane, upon which things are distinguished from one another only by speed and slowness...not a unity of substance but the infinity of the modifications...[becomings]...that are part of one another.

(Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 254)

This best represents the workings at the contemporary heart of dairy farming, the rotary parlour, what I call the 'animal-human-machine'.

Chapter Six explained how learning the skills to be an industrial dairy farm worker are *generally* not learned through social practices and Chapter Seven through to Chapter Nine reinforced this claim with a number of ethnographic examples. Simply put, the notion of apprenticeship or collegiality is absent; there is no *esprit de corps* to speak of. For most workers it is not a long-term employment option, and so few have the desire to perfect their skills through practice much as is the case for many young workers (Bestor 2004; Kosugi 2008). At Grand Hopes however, technology determines the quality and quantity of time spent with others, both human and bovine. As such, one important point is that work time is spent working 'around', and in a very real sense not 'with' people, but with the otherness of rational machines and sentient non-humans.

Shifts underscoring industrialisation and deskilling in animal-human relationships can be witnessed in other livestock industries. Vialles documents a shift in French abattoirs, where the focus of prolonged training to produce individuals skilled in the practice of producing the best cuts of meat has, through progressive industrialisation, led to a situation where "the logic of the craftsman has ceased to exist...except in the smallest abattoirs." (1994: 69). This is also the case in terms of genetics in bovine husbandry, wherein the former focus on understanding the visual and tactile aesthetics of animal bodies, as a link to their reproductive or meat productive capabilities, is shifting to a scientific internal gaze of understanding and manipulating genetic codes (Holloway 2005). It can be seen in a variety of other related fields as well, for example in the 'cloning' of sheep as a 'frontier' in genetics research, but also historically in the economy and image of the Australian frontier or the cloning of dogs, sheep, horses

(Franklin 2008).³ Today, the cloning of one's deceased pet dog can be had for \$ 50,000 perhaps making the start of a new industry.⁴ Grandin documents the industrialisation of livestock handling – the shift from knowledgeable handlers to underpaid high-turnover workers – and the impact on animal safety, security, and even productivity (2009: 141-172). Reliance on undertrained staff and high technology can unsettle – make insecure – human identities related to hard-earned employment skills in these industries, also seen in Sennett's work on automation in bakeries and IBM corporate downsizing (1998). However an excellent example of this in relation to animals, not objects, can be found in English champion horse breeding. Cassidy concludes that AI (artificial insemination) is seen as a threat to the constructed identities of those at the core of the industry, such as the expert breeders (2002: 169-170).

What follows will underscore how industrial dairy farming is undergoing similar, and in some ways dissimilar, shifts. One interesting outcome of the shift to rotary parlour systems is that while owners and farm families are ever-increasingly divorced from contact with cattle – the 'other', albeit species, that they know well – they are faced with a 'frontier' of human others from outside of the community and need to incorporate new 'frontiers' of technology into their lives. While many temporary workers are comfortable in high-tech urban surroundings, they are progressively confronted with a new 'frontier' of unknown bovine beings. This presents the final notion of the frontier – not the frontier of geo-politics, or of novel spaces, but the micro frontier of new technology and the frontier of embodiments and shared spaces amongst species and how these processes effect change, otherness and the search for security.

X.2. The Animal-Human-Machine: Deskillling and Disenchantment.

As noted in Chapter Five, the rotary parlour is an increasingly common piece of equipment (in terms of location, cost, and importance) on industrial dairy farms in Tokachi. The *BouMatic Daytona* rotary dairy parlour found at Grand Hopes Farm is at the cutting edge of such milking technology.⁵ It is the centrepiece of their operation.

³ Although distant from the focus at hand, sheep were also promoted in a very similar way on the early Hokkaido frontier. Perhaps this would be a fruitful area for research; sheep and comparative histories of colonisation.

⁴ BBC news <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7542535.stm> accessed via Google October 23rd 2009.

⁵ Exact specifications of the *BouMatic* system can be found at <http://www.boumatic.com/> to compare specifications the *Dairy Master* parlour system can be seen at <http://www.dairymaster.com/> accessed via Google September 10th 2008.

BouMatic assures potential equipment buyers that “*BouMatic* is dedicated to ensuring that dairy farm producers throughout the world have the ability to produce the highest quality milk most efficiently, profitably and responsibly.”⁶ What follows is a brief explanation of how the rotary parlour functions. This will be followed by an in depth description of the relationships shared amongst people and cattle related to such a system.

It should be remembered that the parlour, as well as being the aforementioned ‘heart’ and site of recent change in how the central function of dairy farming is accomplished (the extraction of milk), is also a site of intense engagement with otherness; individual, and so embodied, security for both human and animal. Regardless of working the morning, afternoon, or evening milking shift, a wide range of human others and hundreds of individual, and highly individuated, cattle – detailed below – enter the system. For approximately three hours two or three times a day all beings encounter a space designed for maximum efficiency and rationality.

In one sense, the machine can be viewed as a great social equaliser. On any given shift the *sachyou*, *kachyou*, or his son might be working alongside, literally doing the exact same work, as any of the parlour workers past, present, and into the foreseeable future. Takuto, Ichiro, Tsutomu, Haru, and the Tokyo Cowboy all worked in the parlour. The Chinese worked nearly exclusively in parlour positions. While Taro-san was the *buchyou* in charge of the parlour, if needed, other *buchyou*, Yukiko or Matsuyama, might fill in. But what workers became equal partners in, as will be shown, was not a sense of shared work task solidarity but of intense individuation, and for some, alienation. Noted below, in addition to being codified, cattle were individuated from their herds, from their offspring, from their body parts, all to fit the logic of the machine. Their information was collected by the machine, stored by the machine, and the machine was often a key agent in informing the outcome of the life of a particular cow, from insemination to extermination.

X.2.1 Technology

Upon first sight, a rotary parlour looks more at home in a science fiction film than in a barn. Made of metal, plastic hoses, and blinking digital readouts, the parlour steadily

⁶ Quote found on the above *BouMatic* website homepage. *Dairy Master* quotes in bold print on its home page; “Our objective is to **“Make Milking Easy”**”.

rotates clockwise. It is designed to milk, in a constant flow, fifty Holstein cows. Creatures that are generally 680 kilograms (1500 pounds) and 1.45 metres (four and a half feet) at the shoulder that produce an average of 27.3 litres (six odd gallons) of milk per day. Whatever way one looks at it, machine or mammal, both are massive and when together in one room an impressive sight.



(X.2.1.a.) A view of the fully loaded rotary parlour from the observation room. Cattle enter at 12:00 o'clock (the top of the photo) and exit by backing out of the apparatus at 11:00 o'clock (the gate seen to the left).

As cows enter a Chromalloy stall on the parlour platform, a worker standing on a concrete floor four feet below the platform cleans each teat with an iodine solution excreted from a pneumatic wand. Workers do not touch the animal. All contact between human and cow is mediated by equipment during the milking process. The next pair of workers are 'milkers' and they function in tandem. They adjust the pneumatic suction head that automatically rises from the base of the machine to udder level and attach the four suction hoses to each teat while checking for any leg bands that indicate sickness or dysfunctional udders. After attaching four hoses they push a button that, from a sensor attached to each animal's collar, sends the sort number,

group number, and a record of each animal's daily milk output to a central computer. During this stage of the milking process human and animal contact averages less than eighteen seconds. The cattle cannot see the workers and workers only see bovine legs, udders, suction equipment, and a digital readout of cattle numbers. For a third of a minute each cow becomes an unpredictable and frustrating part of the equipment.



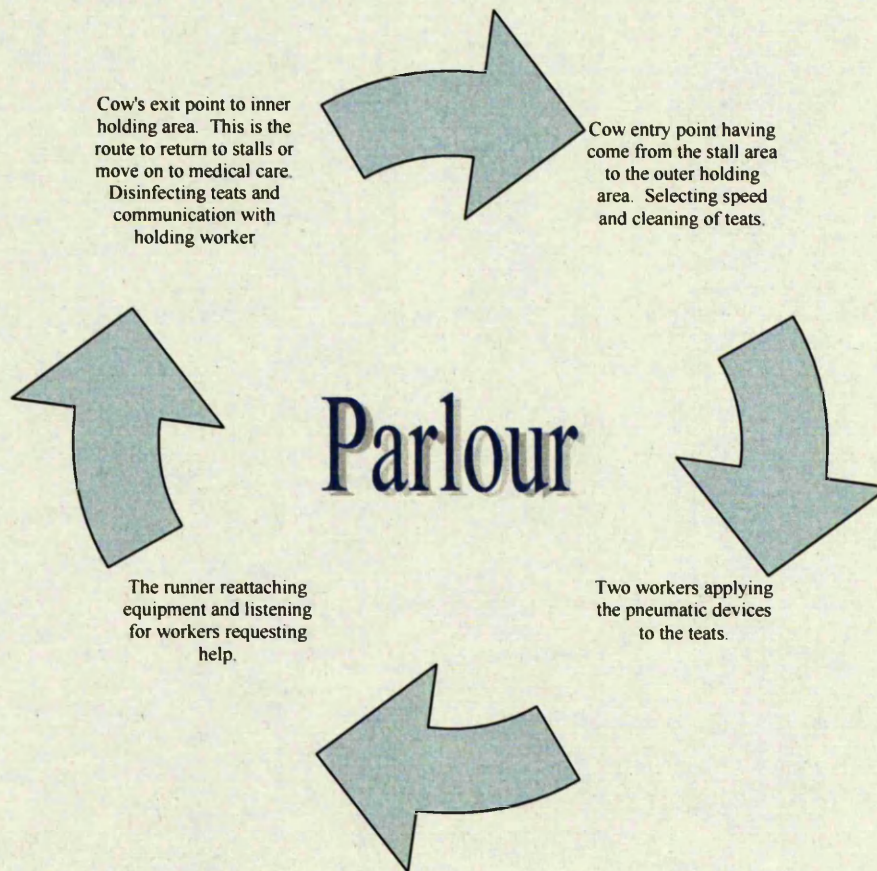
X.2.1.b.). Gloved and rain suited worker attaching the pneumatic milking head. The digital read out, detached milking head, and green leg band can be seen in the stall to the right.

The boundary between 'it' the machine and 'it' as an animal, a living, thinking, feeling creature is blurred by their merging into joined parts of a massive moving apparatus. Barring cattle kicking off the suction head, the device is set to automatically release when the flow speed of milk reaches a threshold set in common for all cows; much in the way the parlours rotational speed is set in common for all workers. When the threshold is reached it automatically drops below the parlour floor again.



(X.2.1.c.) Haruko standing on the floor. Haruko was infamous at the farm for being a poor judge of when a cow might defecate. This photo shows the eye level view of the parlour floor, the aforementioned equipment, and the obvious link between bodies, fluids, and flows – human animal and machine.

The third job is the ‘runner’. They act as a fast-paced trouble shooter – reattaching equipment that the animals kick free, administering antibiotic injections, or assisting co-workers falling behind who yell for their help over the loud pneumatic staccato of ‘*thuck, thuck, thuck*’ and the constant gushing flow of hundreds of litres of milk flowing into stainless steel holding tanks. The last parlour worker applies a final iodine solution to combat infection and liaises with the holding worker. Communication is short and functional, for example, they may shout out ‘*owari*’ (end) indicating the last cow of a group or call out the number of a single animal in need of medical attention; mastitis, lesions and lameness being the most common ailments discovered during milking.



(X.2.1.d.) Model of parlour workers stations and roles.

When the cattle are milked, ideally in under one revolution (as slow milking cows retard the efficiency of the equipment by needing a second go round) they exit the parlour. Cattle move past the holding area worker whose purpose it is to maintain a steady flow of cattle in to and out of the system. The worker generally acts as an observer, only intermittently called into action, as the cattle enter the parlour with the aid of a twenty meter (sixty foot) long automated gate.



(X.2.1.e.) One automatic gate and one cattle group (actually stretching to the right farther than one can make out from this vantage point) waiting for afternoon milking.

The gate electronically senses the lack of cattle body weight impeding its forward progress and pushes ahead until it contacts an animal. Cattle in such cramped conditions naturally move to where there is more space, specifically, the space ahead where cows have already entered the parlour access chute. However, more reluctant cows, often young cattle fearful of the noise and bright lights of the parlour are manually, often violently prodded along – through twisting tails or hitting them with a taped aluminium baton – so as to keep pace with the machine and allow as few ‘free stalls’ as possible.

On their return from being milked in the parlour the cattle pass by the holding worker again on route to the stall area where, for the purpose of efficient collection and cleaning, groups of around two-hundred cattle are housed in rows of concrete and metal stalls with rubber and rice chaff covered floors. At the entrance to the stall return chute each cow’s sensor is read a final time by the equipment.

At this point an automated gate separates cattle whose numbers are entered earlier into the central computer by the office staff, such as cattle known to be ill or cattle moving to another group due to the stage of pregnancy. But cattle are also automatically

separated by the equipment itself. Determined by fluctuations in individual milk output, the system separates cattle it deems to be irregular or due to be inseminated.



(X.2.1.f.) Photo of one stall area, the number tag (yellow) and sensor (blue box at the bottom of the collar) can be seen on the right lower cow.

Flows and fluids often mimicked the human circulatory systems as noted in Chapter Seven and Eight. Liquid materials and motions were central to everything on the farm. Indeed, even the rotary engine of the machine itself was run off of hydraulics. Cattle and humans would flow in and out through this machine three times a day. Milk (the purpose of the farm) would be extracted while cattle would urinate or defecate on workers and equipment which would then be cleaned with gallons of water to prepare for the next flow of cattle.

X.2.2 Becoming Bovine:

To claim that contemporary dairy cows can exist in a 'natural' state is misleading. For hundreds of years cows have been bred to increase both milk production and docility. There has been a similar historical trajectory in sheep breeding (see Franklin 2008). The Holstein is widely accepted as being bred to be the greatest milk producer

in the world and is the cow of choice in Hokkaido. However, Philips notes that “[c]attle are social animals in the fullest sense of the word, with complex communication channels and alleomimicry exhibited in many behaviours” (Philips 2002: 84). This can also be noted with other animals such as dogs (Haraway 2003, 2008; and in the context of Japan, Oliver 2003), horses, pigs, and chickens (Grandin 2009). The complete range of these behaviours and their individualistic expression is well beyond the scope of this dissertation, but in short, through strong matrilineal ties (for example, cow and calf separated by a fence will fight to remain in visual contact), through voice⁷, through rational thought,⁸ and through embodiment – especially mimicry, head, and tail expression;

...[c]attle live in hierarchically ranked groups and begin to order themselves within the group at a young age...Physical communication and grooming help to establish this social ranking. What may appear to be a game, such as head-butting or shoving, is actually a method of determining which animals within the group are dominant. Interestingly, the strongest or most dominant animals do not necessarily become the leaders...Cattle in a small herd, for instance, will join with up to three other animals to form a small group of friends. The animals in the group will spend most of their time together, frequently grooming and licking each other...And, like most animals, cattle also experience strong emotions such as pain, fear, and anxiety.

(The US Humane Society 2008).

I ask the reader to remove the word cattle and replace it with ‘the Japanese’ and the word animal with person. The description then sounds remarkably similar to the *nihonjinron* conceptions of ‘the Japanese’ discussed in previous chapters; mysteriously communicative, socialised to respect groups and hierarchy, tight-knit friendships amongst similar aged cohorts.⁹ In short, the description, with some license, mirrors this essentialist vision of a human community. Cattle were often the only sentient embodied beings that many workers were able to spend time with on the job. Despite the species divide and industrial conditions, humans and cattle were often closer than human and human in terms of sharing space and time, but also in more empathetic

⁷ Philips notes a range of vocal expressions (2002: 96-100).

⁸ The debate on if animals are rational is a fascinating one. I contend, along with some philosophers and animal rights activists that animals – certainly mammals – do have rational abilities (Hurley 2006: 140; Calarco 2008) and capabilities that entitle them to a dignified species specific existence (Nussbaum 2006: 325-405).

⁹ I am not making the claim that Japanese are cattle-like. The point is that comparisons between human and animal social relationships can be made, and more will be mentioned of such comparisons below.

ways difficult to describe – let alone reduce to cross species social explanations – discussed in the following section.

Milking was quite a particular process however. It was certainly the most dependent on technological prosthesis. Cattle and humans were harmed, mentally, socially, and physically by the systematic abuses and individuation of the rotary parlour system; a system that separates beings from their physical and social needs. Mega dairy farming in Hokkaido is not alone in such abuses. For example, conducting a discourse analysis of South African ranching communities, Mitchell (2006) concludes that modern mega ranching practices lead to discourses (found in farm and science journals and magazines) of production, science, enslavement, and achievement and concludes

...that in all these discourses animals are objectified – treated as production machines, objects for scientific study or manipulation, or personal property. There is an attempt to create distance between human and animal, thereby preventing the drawing of parallels or any relation of empathy.

(Mitchell 2006: 55)

BouMatic does not use such language in their promotional materials of course, yet in pasture conditions, cattle can form close ties with other beings. This includes sheep or donkeys with which they can graze without conflict. Due to daily contact with human handlers, dairy cows form close relationships and view stockholders as herd leaders. They come when called, remember different handlers, and engage in affective behaviours with humans much as they do with other cattle. However the life of a cow in the rotary parlour system differs considerably from these normative pastoral descriptions.

So as not to be caught up in the parlour equipment or injure themselves at play in the close quarters or on the concrete floors required by this mode of production, horns are cut off, tails are docked, and occasionally hind legs are bound to prevent splaying.



(X.2.2.g.) The Kachyou pneumatically crushing the horns of a cow soon to enter the milking regime.



(X.2.2.h.) One of the 'Blood Brothers' and Takuto cauterising a bound cow's open horn cavities with red hot iron rods. Cattle are not anaesthetised for the removal or cauterisation and show signs of severe stress.

Thus, adult 'play' and mimicry, along with the animal's instinctive ability to 'swish' flies away or express emotive states with their tail is restricted or abolished by workers

in order to make the animal more 'machine' friendly. Upon birth calves are separated and weaned in pens where they not only lose contact with their mother but also are unable to play with their cohorts. The reason is twofold, calves consume their mother's milk (the end goal of the parlour) and calves cannot enter the spatially efficient system with their dams. At four or five months of age calves do begin to associate with other calves but not with adult cattle. This reduces their ability to mimic appropriate adult behaviours or easily understand their roles within the hierarchy of a herd. This leads to considerable violence between cows. This violence follows them into their adult life as the parlour system requires, for the sake of efficiency, that cattle groups (in this case determined by milk output and stage of impregnation) be shifted almost daily. However, even "[m]inor changes [in herd composition] result in an approximate doubling of aggression activity for about 24 hours, longer if dominant cattle are introduced to a stable group when cattle may continue fighting for 30 to 45 days as they create a new social order."¹⁰ Thus, animal stress is an obvious by-product of the parlour system. Moreover, to accord with mass scale efficiency, female cattle, shortly after a year of life, are artificially inseminated and kept in a constant cycle of impregnation until their premature deaths¹¹ - barren cattle are rendered after three attempts at impregnation. Male cattle usually spend a year 'fattening' on the farm before being rendered. For both, high protein feed mixed corn silage – not grass or hay – is frequently medicated and causes painful bloating in the stomachs of ruminants, but space is at a premium and collecting animals must keep pace with the parlour – natural grazing is not an option.

X.2.3 Becoming Human: Dances with Cattle

What follows underscores some similarities between bovines and humans in regard to their relationships with contemporary rotary parlour milking technology. These concepts will be expanded upon in the final section. However, it is important to note that the linkage of human, animal and technology is not a new story. It is a common story with the metaphor of securing and to be secure at its base, for example securing animals in unnatural enclosures to keep them secure from predators, and so, in turn,

¹⁰ Philips 2002: 118 also quoting Schein and Fohrman 1955 and Sato *et. al.*, 1990).

¹¹ On average after six years and not their average estimated natural life-span of over twenty years.

securing human and animal food supplies. This 'human condition' is one of agency and action. Arendt describes it in clear phenomenological detail;

Labor; which corresponds to the biological life of man as an animal; work, which corresponds to the artificial world of objects that human beings build upon the earth; and action, which corresponds to our plurality as individuals.

(Canovan 1988: ix. Introduction to Arendt's *The Human Condition*)

The human ability to imagine another's (better though less grammatically sound, an other's) mutual 'being and becoming' – in this case animal – is one key value of arts like fictional film (Appiah 2005; 2006). *Dances with Wolves* (1990) is a film set in the 'frontier' of the American west, and though it is not a factual but fictional work, it has much to say about the human condition of 'being and becoming' human. The story is certainly one that resonates with the Hokkaido frontier. In it, a disillusioned man looks for meaning on the frontier; in this case a frontier of the late 1800s American mid-west. And, in-so-doing he faces many trials. This 'frontier' is rapidly changing with the encroachment of western technology displacing local (in the film Native American human and animal) ways of being. His trials include trying to understand himself and live with unknown others – 'Indians' and a wolf. With no other people of European extraction around, and the human locals less than friendly, the protagonist seeks a relationship with the only other being at hand, a lone wolf that he names Two Socks.

In the wolf he sees his self-projection – 'being and becoming wolf': alone, clever, and fending for himself and finding himself on the frontier. The death of the wolf at the hands of incoming militaristic settlers with new technology, wagons and rifles, is a turning point in the movie. The protagonist realises that he, the wolf, and the local people are victims of both new technology and newcomers; the irony – or tragedy for Two Socks – being that he was once one of them, a military settler. He comes to see that he has become more like the original 'others' (the wolf and natives) than his former self. In short, the 'frontier' of otherness is displaced. While below I theorise these relationships with more academic rigor, nevertheless, a dance with cattle was carried out daily at Grand Hopes Farm. It was rooted in a general history of the area as explained in prior chapters, but also in individual embodied searches for security in the midst of change and otherness – and the film is a good starting point for what remains to be said in this thesis.

As noted in previous chapters, there is an increasing divide between farmers who are and who are not able to purchase a rotary parlour technology. The smallest farm I encountered with a rotary parlour system had milking stock of over 300 head. Again, within the local agricultural community there is a growing divide, and animosity, between 'have' and 'have not' farmers. The overall population is declining and generally ageing, as former farmers find other employment, sometimes working for the mega farm outfits that drove them out of business, and their children (especially female children) frequently move to larger urban centres. This leads to problems for young local males as there are few employment opportunities for sons who choose to remain at home to care for their ageing parents or inherit the family homestead, and in a vicious cycle of dysfunction, there are few females left for them to partner with. So, many young rural Japanese men find work on large farms in essentially dead-end labour jobs such as dairy parlour work and are unable to enter the traditional community hierarchies through marriage and children – they remain liminal, even liminally liminal, living at home and single with no end to this in sight.

The local labour pool decreases through ageing and out migration, while there is a seemingly insatiable need for rotary parlour labourers. This operational need has drawn employers to be less selective when they seek employees. Tourist workers often fill the need but they are an extremely diverse group in the context of Japan (Kosugi 2008). It is difficult to typify an outsider or lo-sider worker. For a labour based company in Tokyo, London, or any major urban centre an eclectic mix of people is not particularly unusual. However, in small rural communities where, until the last decade, small family operated mixed farms, the changes have been both rapid and drastic resulting in conflicts.

The turnover rate for workers is high. Thus, traditional relationships between senior and junior often become confused as employees of differing ages, backgrounds, and knowledge of dairying practice work together at the same repetitive low-skill tasks. Unlike locals, tourist workers tend to view their work relationships, status, and performance as merit based, not hereditary, and not related specifically to farming. In short, ability takes precedence over having a 'set' place in the social order. Most view their job as temporary and not as a source of social or self identity. They are also, generally speaking, not concerned with the longevity or productivity of the farm. Tourist workers, like cattle, are important but exchangeable – when one leaves, and

again, on average one a month did leave, a new one could arrive without any effect to the functioning of the parlour system. They are, as noted below, replaceable parts.

Owners frequently expressed that they felt trapped in their job and by their dying rural community. Clearly, while they too were like replaceable parts for the parlour system, their predominant feelings contrasted with most of the young tourist workers; theirs was not a feeling of freedom from 'traditional' Japaneseness, but of alienation as a result from the deskilling function of the parlour. Owners no longer felt in control – they were controlled by debt and governmental production targets. In the parlour they were reduced to the same level as transient workers. They no longer shared a daily embodied relationship with personally known cattle. The logic of the rotary system was an attack on their former identities and while they did respect the social hierarchies of the community local workers they clearly felt they failed and now occupied the lower rungs on its ladder.

Each person was compelled by the universal human process of becoming, of making, and remaking, themselves. By this point in the monograph, it ought to be clear that industrial *bokujyou* life was a dance with an ever-shifting cast of others. Each had their own individual history, desires, projects and projections for the future - impossible to reduce into concrete or meaningful 'types' without doing significant violence to any ethnographic 'reality'. But, while their world was of course dependent upon the social world of human others, complex as this was, like the wolf in the film, also important were their dances with bovine others. This in itself is somewhat of a miracle; described in the following section in terms of momentary re-enchantments in a disenchanted space.

Thus while the machine was an equalizer for human others during the act of milking, the rest of the time and in other related spaces it was a source of a tremendous change in daily life. Its logic (the need for massive herds for example) separated owners from known workers, human, often family, and also the cattle they had once encountered daily. They became, generally, surveyors, statisticians, and managers. Workers, often coming from urban areas, family homes, university programs or former work situations found themselves, like the protagonist of the film, alone, on the 'frontier' – a space unknown and unfamiliar to them – with unknown and unconcerned human others but with many "curious creatures" (Grandin 2009: 143-146). While the logic of the parlour divorced human and cow alike during milking, its logic brought *worker* and *animal* into daily contact outside of the parlour. And often specific cows played a key

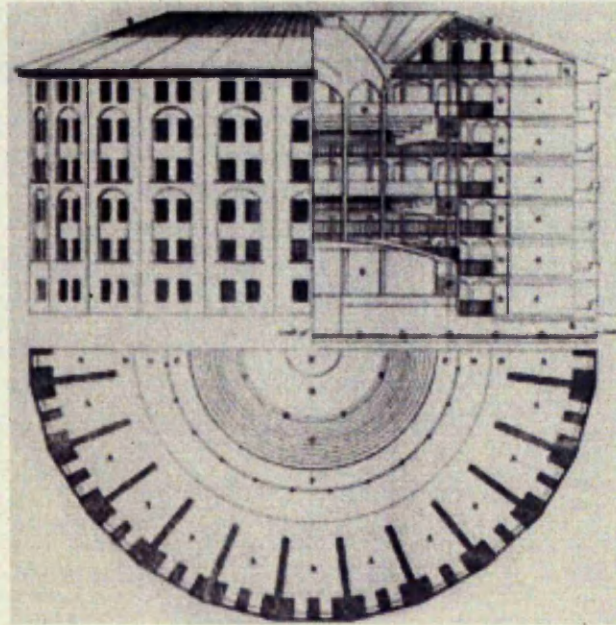
role in a young dairy worker's becoming. As seen below, in the face of the relentless rational logic of technology, it was what cattle and workers *shared* that made workers feel or act. The work experience naturally changed young workers. But what was considered 'other' shifted as well due to the equipment's relentless quest to secure, to fix times, spaces, and outcomes; workers were forced to become human through becoming more animal.

X.3 The Unlikely Enchantments Outside of the Panopticon

As an early advocate of human and animal rights, Bentham's panopticon prison design could serve here as an example of life's cruel ironies.¹² The following analysis of the rotary parlour system bears more than a passing resemblance to Foucault's analysis of the theory behind the panopticon prison system (1977). In both systems each 'inmate' is codified, numbered and individuated, with their individual progress mapped and stored in a central repository. Relations between kept and keeper are dehumanised – distant, cold, and clinical.¹³ These are systems of control, or literally in both cases systems of security, wherein the keepers watch and regulate the kept with the inability of the latter to witness the surveillance. The purpose is to produce reformed 'docile bodies' – bodies useful to society. Finally, in both systems there is dissolution of hierarchies beyond the distant one of keeper and kept – jailers like prisoners and workers like cattle could be replaced with no effect on the functioning of the system.

¹² In terms of a contemporary utilitarian approach to animal rights see Singer (1975/1990) for a social contract approach to rights see Nussbaum (2006). Ecological approaches are numerous, but Ingold (2000) and Descola and Pállson (1996 eds.) stand out. Other approaches, including some recent post-humanist works are referred to in this section. In terms of literature one can think of many examples but one of the most influential, in terms of animals, humans, and industrialized lives, is surely Coetzee (1999). In Japan two outstanding texts regarding mammal and human relations are Knight (2003) and Walker and Pflugfelder (ed. 2005). Other texts will be noted in further detail in this section.

¹³ Here one also thinks of Foucault's commentary on the 'securing' of gender in Barbin (1980).



(X.3.i.) The modern parlour system resembles Bentham's panopticon prison design in both design and function. (Stock image of Bentham's 1791 design. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panopticon>).

While cattle are not human, they are – building off a host of philosophers since Aristotle – at the least comparable, (and commonly compared) to humans (see Calarco 2008: 144-148; Wolfe 2008: 1-41 for numerous examples). Species separations are enforced and negotiated by humans. This is unsurprising as throughout history animals have lived alongside humans, however some animals are considered to be more similar to humans than others.¹⁴ Cattle, as noted in the previous section, form life-long social groups, are mammalian, feel pleasure, pain, and so on – but more than this, cattle have

¹⁴ One future project, but well beyond the scope of this chapter, is to map the history of anthropology through focusing on human-animal relationships and the 'in vogue' theorisation of those relationships at the time. For example, shifts in antimal-human relations could be mapped through; Darwinism (Morgan: 1868; Tylor 1870; Bates 1888: 135-138) diffusionism and the culture and personality school (Boas 1904), functionalism (Evans-Prichard 1940), structural-functionalism (Lienhardt 1961), structuralism (Douglas 1966; Lévi-Strauss (1969), ecological-neo-functionalism (Rappaport 1968), neo-Marxism and science (Harris 1974) neo-Marxism and rational actor model (Kuper 1982); interpretive approaches (Tambiah 1984) economics and ecology Ingold (1980) to a post-modern, playful, and collective approach (Ingold ed. 1988). Moreover, throughout the history of social and cultural anthropology, physical anthropology has been constantly underscored by interests in eugenics (Hooton 1937), evolution (Washburn 1962/2007) and of course physical anthropology and primatology (Peregrine et.al.: 2002). Various 'schools' or paradigms continue to have opponents, proponents and those who attempt to amalgamate them, for example, within the sphere of human and animal drama, history, politics, public policy, and change there has been a great deal of work, but few monographs as interesting as Vitebsky's recent work focusing on the changing, migratory, and symbiotic relationships shared amongst reindeer and their predator, both humans and other animals, in the former Soviet Union (2005). Historically speaking, few studies have focused on shared human-animal empathy in the face of changing agricultural technology

'faces' (to use Levinasian language).¹⁵ That is to say, cattle have, in a hyphenated and created word, 'personal'-ities.¹⁶ Like human individuals they have distinctive and often memorable individual endowments (capabilities) and embodiments. Such facts are clear in research focused on pet animals more than research on livestock (Fudge 2008; Haraway 2003, 2008; Kete 1994 as opposed to, for example, Franklin 2008 or Grandin 2009 where the focus is more squarely on animals as distinct species, breeds or types). However human and cattle empathy and sympathy can be witnessed in the ways that the parlour system affects bovine and human in the context of change, otherness, and micro security.

Ingold rightly points out; "[b]oth humans and animals...can be virtually reduced to a machine existence through the systematic repression of their powers of autonomous action" (2000:307). He concludes that "machines have not so much made as been made *by* history, one in which human beings, to an ever increasing extent, have become the authors of their own dehumanisation" (*ibid.*: 311). The rotary parlour provides an excellent example of this for both humans and Holsteins. The shift to the rotary system is at the heart of social hierarchies being called into question. For human workers, interactions with others have increased. Assemblages such as locals, lo-siders, outsiders, and no-siders have varied ways of thinking about identities, for example their Japaneseness as it relates to community belonging, or their work as related to *ikigai* as outlined in previous chapters. Due to the demands of the parlour – the long and irregular hours for example – most remain peripheral in each other's lives, with only a select few integrating into the local community. As noted in Chapter Nine, these conditions have led to locals' separation from formerly well-known community members and a weakening of familial relationships. Dairy work was what people had in common – and what was increasingly common was the individualising nature of such work from community practices. However, outside of this broader notion of community, in terms of the workplace itself, workers, both human and bovine, were forced to contend with rapid change and increasing otherness. Shifting herds, like shift-working humans, were pushed together; social hierarchies were uncertain and violence was common for both animals and humans.

¹⁵ For a summary of Levinas and faces see Calarco (2008; notably 57-77).

¹⁶ This is not dissimilar to dogs in Mexico for example, although they are cursed and abused, are considered part of the village, guides in the afterlife, and possessing commendable *personalities* (de Vidas 2003: 535).

Political disagreements, arguments, and outbursts were common. Stress and violence are produced by the system through the attempt to keep pace with its demands. Natural embodied processes are hindered – in the case of cattle and humans, nutrition and sleep are compromised. Workers capabilities, two or four legged, were strained to keep pace with the equipment. As noted above, cattle fare worse in this conflict. Their bodies are altered and abused to fit the logic of the machine and not the logic of their being. One could make a lesser but similar argument about repetitive motion injuries in the human element of the animal-human-machine triad. In discussing human ailments with Doctor Oda he told me that nerve and tendon damage in arms and necks were common complaints in rotary parlour workers, alongside depression and exhaustion. Again, the doctor was convinced that many outside workers suffered from mental problems before arriving in Hokkaido, and that their initial desire to work on a dairy was guided by the historic romantic pastoral image of Hokkaido outlined in the Introduction and Chapter Two but in short, a desire for an animal or nature bond. The rotary system was the antithesis to this however. Workers quickly became disillusioned with Hokkaido and its image of pastoral romance. Thus a space often initially seen as an escape from ‘typical’ Japan left them socially isolated with meaningless and poorly paid work. This is much like the aforementioned link between embodied, skilled, and knowledge-based agricultural employment and the removal of these ways of being and becoming found in Berry (1977, 2005), Grasseni (2005), Holloway (2005, 2007), Vialles (1994) – and can be seen as augmenting the more philosophical aspects of alienation and deskilling through technology found in Ardent (1958/1998) and Ingold (2000: 312-322).¹⁷

During the *actual* functioning of the parlour system there is no need for humans to skilfully observe, record, or consider bovine bodies or co-workers beyond the basic question; Are they doing what they should in accord with their role as determined by the equipment? During milking there is little human or animal control over the pace of the process. Avenues of resistance are minimal and there is no immediate responsibility for animal or co-worker. The technology functions in terms of its programmed norms of size and speed. Living elements, attached as though animate prosthesis to this equipment, are forced to keep pace, to adjust their ‘shared’ biological

¹⁷ Both, vamping off Marx, discuss technology as central in the removal of human beings from meaningful labour to alienated production.

needs – sleep, food, movement – to preset mechanical rhythms: the pneumatic and hydraulic ‘heartbeat’ of *BouMatic*.

During milking, problems and irregularities cannot be compensated for as to stop the machine is to stop the entire possibility of milking. One’s responsibility, imposed on humans, and in turn often violently imposed on animals, is to keep the machine moving at the expense of the living. A few workers, often those who had come from smaller family farms, were repulsed by violent acts and would refuse to violently force animals to comply despite the pace of the equipment and the taunts of fellow workers. However most became somewhat indifferent, complicit slaves to the pace determined by the parlour technology. Like many of my co-workers, while forcing cattle to move I twisted tails until they broke in my hand, cut and cauterised horns, and hit panicking cattle to conform to the logic of the parlour system. Many have commented on the similarities between concentration camps and industrial agriculture¹⁸ – their reasons are clear and arguments sound. However in terms of industrial dairy farming one is not ‘forced’ to be abusive through ‘just following orders’ *per se*, but following a particular mode of rational production.

The trend is to expand parlour sizes and speeds. Indeed, through the aforementioned government programs, and the constant state of ‘crisis’ in regard to food security and safety, many owners – mimicking American style agriculture with American built equipment – are obsessed with the size and speed of parlours which are seen as a panacea to solve the national food security ‘crisis’ – whatever the popular weekly crisis might be. Owners, in turn insecure about their economic futures, are trapped in what Maley, building off Weber’s iron cage of rationality, calls the “iron cage of technology” (2004). In essence, the belief is that problems stemming from technological advancements can only be checked by advancing increasingly complex technological solutions that cause further problems, and parallels can be noted with Beck’s notion of risk society (1992). Existing in the political, social, and economically insecure industry and environment highlighted in this thesis, owners, trickling down to workers human and bovine, are engaged in a form of speed politics; what Virilio calls (dromocratic progress) the belief that speed equals progress (1977 / 2006). He warns;

With the realization of dromocratic type progress, humanity will stop being diverse. It will tend to divide only into *hopeful populations* (who are

¹⁸ For examples and summaries of such work see Calarco (2008), Esposito (2008), and Wolfe et al. (2008) Notably the essay by Diamond in Wolfe.

allowed the hope that they will reach, in the future, someday, the speed that they are accumulating, which will give them access to the possible – that is, to the project, the decision, the infinite: *speed is the only hope of the West* and *despairing populations*, blocked by the inferiority of their technological vehicles, living and subsisting in a finite world.

(Virilio 2006 ed.: 70 original italics).

It is clear that an increasing number of dairy farm owners believe that speed is the only hope for the future of the dairy industry to offset risks – to be secure in a space that has always been and continues to be insecure. The parlour is the heart of industrial dairy farming but also of this highly rationalised and disenchanting macro space.

However, outside the parlour process, this anomie shifts. While owners are progressively removed from embodied encounters with animals through their roles as surveyors and managers, constantly welded to the mass panoptic system, lower level workers share the same space, the same hours, and a similar relationships with the rational ordering of the machines and time as cattle. For young workers, beyond milking, the parlour was generally a distant technology. While feeding, cleaning stalls, or moving cattle between various groups and barns, they spent more time with cattle than friends, family, or even workplace cohorts. Though my research agenda from the start was to focus on young dairy farm workers, human ones, near the end of research I began to realize that I was surrounded by thousands of young workers; workers that, given my own rural upbringing, I had treated as epiphenomena, as something just there and not my co-workers and daily dancing partners.

Again dancing might seem an odd description, but in fact, like dancing one had to learn to read the body movements of bovine partners. Failure to do so would occasionally result in minor injuries. Commonly this meant having the wind knocked out of you, bruises or sprains, but misjudging the movement of cattle could potentially be lethal. Movements of their massive bodies soon became predictable for workers previously unfamiliar with these animals. Their first weeks of cringing and proclamations of *kowai kowai* [!], gave way to silent movements and expectations. They soon understood that moving slowly to the left, would cause a cow to veer right – indeed catching cattle required a knack and much of this was the ability to predict, or to read, bodies. For new workers, cattle would often be the best teachers, certainly the most consistent. They knew where to be and they knew where a given worker should be. For example, clearing cattle from stalls was easy. They often began exiting a stall when they saw a worker with a shovel, but not if a worker was not holding a shovel. If

one was late spreading out silage in the morning a line of fifty cattle would face that worker with big brown eyes, that seemed to imply, 'Aren't you forgetting something?'

In short, animal-human connections outside of the parlour had much to do with embodied 'dances', with observing and with the experience young workers had of farm life. Building off Fassin, who borrows Agamben's notion of 'bare life' – or physicality as representing life – in terms of "frontiers...or internal boundaries" (Fassin 2001: 6), understanding is shared between bodies of foreign others. These are others who look different and perhaps cannot communicate through a shared language. What is shared is pathos. "The biopolitics of otherness must here be understood as an extreme reduction of the social to the biological; the body appears to be the ultimate refuge of humanity." (*ibid.*: 5). A minority of workers, often, though not always locals, saw all cows as the same. A few took great pleasure in acts of violence – randomly punching a cow for example – but most were like Ichiro, Takuto, or Haruko. They saw similarities between themselves and the animals, they shared time, space, and they empathised with their suffering. They could 'regard the pain' of these others as their own; it was not something distant like a photograph in a tourist brochure or a happy cartoon cow beckoning one to buy ice cream; these were warm bodies with methane smells and distinctive calls.¹⁹ They became, in a word, real.

Recall, that just before quitting the farm, Ichiro claimed that his greatest desire on his last day would be, if possible, directed towards the majority of others he worked with – he wished he could set all the cattle free. As with Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'becoming animal' (1987), and like the fictional 'becoming wolf' in the previous section, there was a displacement of identification with distant humans. Yet through sharing space, time, and, to a degree, the daily reluctance in the encounter with the hyper-rationality of the rotary system, becoming bovine meant crossing a species boundary – if only occasionally – to commiserate in shared alienation, understanding that the world of the farm was, in a tangible and embodied sense, a space and time of common suffering by creatures that were perhaps not so very different after all was, to flip a cliché, done and left unsaid.

I began to ask what people thought of particular cows out of over 1700 four-legged candidates. I asked co-workers about specific cows that had somehow 'entered my life' – moved beyond the epiphenomena of bare life – on the farm. For example, taking

¹⁹ Sontag (2003) outlines how photographs can take frame of the suffering of those you do not have an image of through words – making others human via a tactile reference.

a cow that I thought looked unique or a cow that had given me a playful nudge on a rough day, I would ask “347 no ushi wa dou desuka” (How about cow number 347?) or “tokubestu na ushi ga imasu ne” (She’s a special cow hey?) For some co-workers these were odd questions and the reply was a tilted head and “ma, nai desuyo” (ahm no) with a facial expression underscoring curiosity, not about a particular cow, but my state of mind. Yet, despite the distancing technology of the rotary parlour, the sheer quantity of cattle on the farm, the limited time workers were able to spend with a particular cow, and the use of random numbers to identify them, a surprising number of cows, for a surprising variety of reasons, were remembered and discussed by other farm workers.

This is interesting in-and-of-itself, but more interesting than this alone were the reasons why one particular cow might be memorable and another not. Selections were usually highly individual and personal. Of course some cattle were known to most of the workers. Many workers remembered the numbers or physical features of some animals – cow 138 was very large, cow 614 was tri-coloured, or recalled specific cows for practical reasons, cow 1028 was a slow milking cow – but many remembered cows that others would not know, that is, as the saying would have it, ones ‘standing out from the herd’. Often these were cows that the workers had ‘shared a moment with’ – a moment of becoming animal, crossing a boundary, and becoming human touched by this sympathy or empathy. For me, 603 would insist on being the last cow to enter the parlour and would rest her head on my shoulder while waiting. Her breath of sour mash, constant cud chewing, followed by her power and decisive knowledge – choosing the exact moment to leave me, walk 10 meters down the chute to the entrance of the parlour while rarely missing an open stall. Workers had cows that would follow only them, or others that they just liked the look of, or the first cow they caught and so on. There was, in short, a very ‘personal’, a very individual link with significant non-human others. These were not ‘pets’ but nor were they such distant creatures.

In essence, while the parlour was a space of speed politics and disenchantment the other areas of the farm were spaces of possible re-enchantments – of seeing individual animals, like people, animated with identities and ‘person’-alities. Did these random connections offer the ‘skinship’ that Doctor Oda claimed that the young workers were searching for? Did it aid with their individual voyages of *iyashi* (healing)?²⁰ I cannot say with certainty, but on more than one occasion, co-workers claimed that they

²⁰ As an aside *iyashi* is an extraordinarily common explanation as to why people own pet dogs in my current Osaka based research.

preferred cattle to some of the humans that they shared their days with. Human relationships were often difficult, and when I left the farm on my final day of work I did not say good bye to some of my co-workers – again this was not rude but a common practice amongst distant others – yet, I did go out of my way to pat 603's neck one last time.

X.4. Conclusion

This Chapter has drawn upon the rotary parlour system as a 'hinge' in examining how change, otherness, and the search for security flagged throughout this dissertation are manifest at the individual and embodied level for young dairy workers. The chapter reduced the scope of analysis from the macro to the micro level while it expanded the concept of the frontier to include bodies and technology. It has focused on aspects of the rotary parlour system that can be seen as panoptic and emphasised how this technology enhances individuation of animal and human bodies. It also focused on how this alienating technology draws human and cow into relationships of empathetic otherness based on embodied understandings outside of the parlour walls.

The mass rotary parlour is symbolic of the chronic logic of rationalisation that besets Hokkaido's dairy industry and agricultural policy in Japan as a whole. Fear of change and otherness on a macro or national scale is reflected in the quest for security, the 'need' to secure human and animal to machines that physically, technically, socially, and in terms of policy, nationally refuse to allow for novelty or for the change inherent in global markets and the otherness that has been ever-present, and is indeed increasingly present, at the micro, meso, and macro levels of the troubled Hokkaido dairy industry.

Nevertheless, the image of symbiotic production remains as a relic. Dairy products, dairy cattle, and dairy farmers are a 'novel' fetishised consumable commodity in Hokkaido – central in Hokkaido's pantheon of symbols – despite the often dire situations outlined in this document based on dominant 'epic' discourses. When driving in rural Hokkaido one is constantly reminded with fibreglass ice cream cones, cartoon cattle issuing invitation or authority, and beckoning signs for tourist milk farms that they are in "Milkland Hokkaido", a space of otherness. But in looking over the vast rangeland of Tokachi one might be better off to pause and ask - where are the real cows and farmers?



(X.4.j.). A Japan Agriculture sponsored billboard. The caption reads, "Delicious! You ought to drink milk!" This sign is one of a multitude of similar ones. In this case it is painted on the side of the cattle shed wherein cattle spend the majority of their 'de-ranged' lives due to the deranged 'epic' agriculture policies outlined in this thesis.

The *Sachyou* will likely be the last in his family to be a dairy farmer, Matsuyama, may or may not, remain in the industry, and as for the legions of outsiders and no-siders I met over the course of this research project, many more have left than have remained. While this surely underscores change and otherness in the industry, further change is needed. I suggest that there must be a shift from a search for impossible macro securities – political, ideological, food, and so on – that make the day-to-day individual lives of dairy workers, human and bovine alike increasingly insecure. What is needed is to allow for individual otherness to flourish; a cosmopolitan acceptance of novel thinking and novel beginnings in lieu of epic notions of progress and regional or national identity.

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