

The characteristics of Oi-machi town, a rural town in the suburbs of the megacity Tokyo in Japan

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Abstract: Oi-machi town is located in the suburbs around 70 km away from the capital Tokyo, Japan. The cultivated fields are left like mosaic pattern among houses in this town. The information was collected at Oi-machi town public office and from the web page of Oi-machi town, and Japanese census to show the characteristic of this town. The result showed everyday almost 6,000 persons go out of the town for work and school. Agricultural field is cultivated by some people. There are a few industries for work in the town. This town has the common characteristic like other towns in Japan.

Key words: Oi-machi, suburb, rural town.

Introduction

Nowadays many Japanese people immigrate to suburban towns along railway lines, and go to capital Tokyo and its satellite towns for work. Oi-machi town is one of the typical suburbs in Japan, located around 70 km away from Tokyo. Once the land of Oi-machi town was used almost for agriculture (43% in 1965). Now people in this town go to the workplace in other towns. This town is not the exceptional town in Japan, but the points are common with other towns as: (1) It is called the “Bed town” of megacity, (2) The agricultural field is not cultivated but left abandoned, and (3) There are a few industries for work in the town.

Many people had immigrated in this town because of its favorable natural environment including paddy field and farm land. But now the increase of uncultivated fields becomes a problem. This research aims to show the characteristic and problems of the town in rural area, Japan by analyzing the situation of Oi-machi town as an example.

Materials and Methods

The investigation was carried out with questionnaire to residents at Oi-machi town public office. Five residents were interviewed about consciousness of daily living in July 2012. Secondary data were collected from Oi-machi town public office and also from the web page of Oi-machi town. The Japanese census reports were also consulted.

Results and Discussion

1. Outline of Oi-machi: Oi-machi is located near capital Tokyo, 139.2°E longitude, 35.3 °N latitude (Oi-machi town public office), with 14.31 km² of geographical area, and 17,626 of population. The highest temperature is 35.9 °C in August and the lowest temperature -3.6°C in February. The annual rainfall is 1,747 mm, with 110 rainy days (in 2012).

The population of above 30 to 70 years old is especially larger than other age classes (Fig. 1). Those are mainly former immigrating people.

There are two railway lines and highway road in this and next towns. The construction of railway lines later caused the immigration.

This town is bounded by the river from neighboring towns. A half of the area is in plain land and the other in hilly land. There is greater part of population in plain land and hilly land is used in forestry and farm.

The population of this town is increasing every year (Fig. 2). People had migrated from other cities and made this

town as a “Bed town” of capital Tokyo. Everyday almost 6,000 persons go out of the town for work and school. This is also true for the people living from old days. The transportation is important for people to go to workplace.

2. Left agricultural field:

The agricultural field is left like mosaic pattern among houses (Photo 1). The agricultural lands are separated from residential area by the administration authority of the town. But its units are small. So narrow agricultural lands are isolated among residential area. In the appointed agricultural area, houses cannot be built except for owners. Owner and his son may build their houses. The immigrating people had got houses in the residential area. People living from old days have agricultural field. The people are not chiefly engaged in agriculture. Elderly people mainly cultivate their land. The young people plow on holiday. And some fields are left uncultivated. As owners have the other occupation along with farmer, it is not necessary for them to obtain agricultural income. A few people borrow the farm land to cultivate.

In 2012, there are 1.42 km² of paddy fields and 2.98 km² of farm fields in 14.41 km² of the town (Table 1). In 1965, there were 2.72 km² of paddy fields. Until 2012 a part of it had altered to residence area. In 2012 the farm fields had slightly decreased, which may be changed into uncultivated area.

3. The occupation: population of industry

The industrial feature of the town is shown in Fig. 3. The number shows persons engaging in each industry. Many people are engaging in jobs in other town because there are few industries in this town. The tax revenue of the town is not numerous from industries.

The 1st industry, mainly agricultural industry, includes about 4% of population of the town. The 2nd industry includes about 30%. The 3rd industry, or service industry, occupies over 60%.

Many people have been employed in the 3rd industry. In 1960, about the half of town population engaged in the 1st industry. Until 1985, total number of 1st and 2nd industry did not change. New factory did not open around the town. The population of the 3rd industry has gradually increased.

The detailed population of each industry is shown in Fig. 4. New types of service industry were generated due to increasing demand of residents. The medical and care service is one of the new services. They are employed in the care institution for elderly.

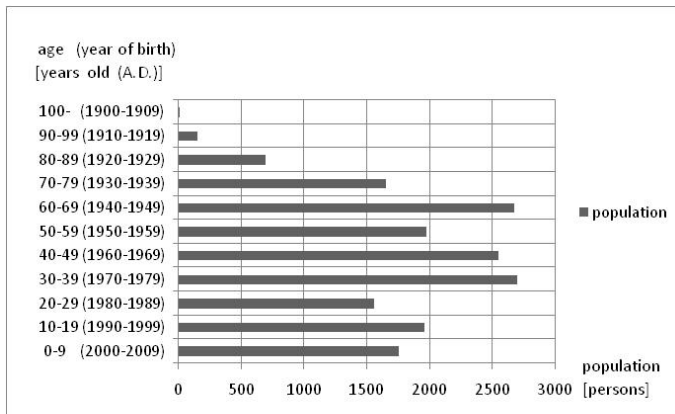


Fig. 1. Population of age divided ; Source: Official Statistics of Japan (in 2010)

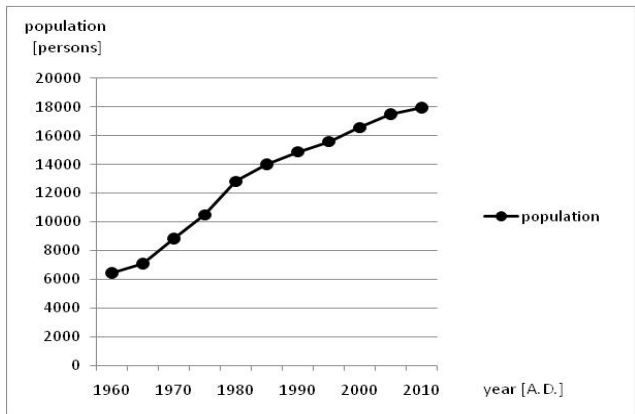


Fig. 2. Transition in population; Source: Census of Oi-machi town



Photo 1. The paddy fields like mosaic pattern among houses

Table 1. The mode of land use (km²)

Year	Residence	Forest	Paddy field	Farm field	Other	Total
1965	0.87	4.17	2.72	3.61	3.32	14.71
2012	2.66	3.16	1.42	2.98	4.19	14.41

Source: Census of Oi-machi, Oi-machi basic investigation of total development

4. What people are satisfied with in daily life?

It was revealed that many residents favored good natural environment, the river and the agricultural field from the investigation with questionnaire to residents at Oi-machi town public office. The favorable natural environments in the town are paddy field, other agricultural field and viewing Mt. Fuji (53 years old, female householder). Many services, for example, stores, restaurant and leisure site are easily accessible by car. It is possible to go to the workplace in capital Tokyo by railway (58 years old, male company employee).

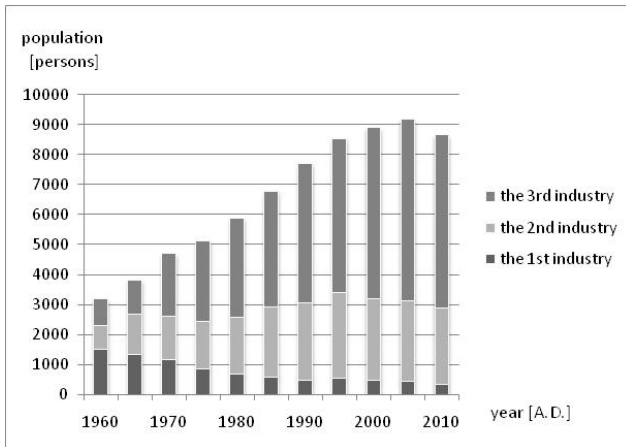


Fig. 3. Transition in population of industries; Source: Official Statistics of Japan (in 2010).

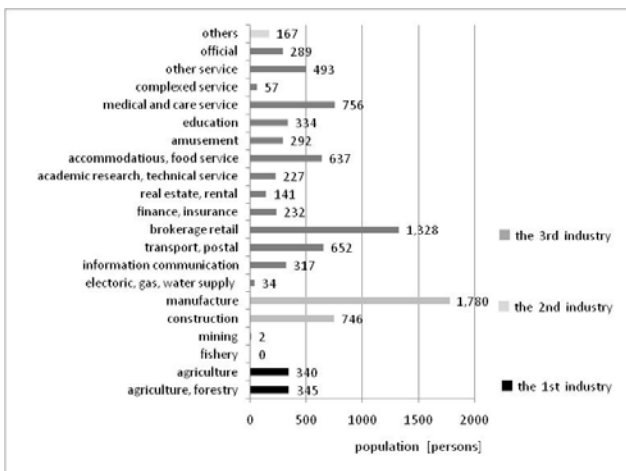


Fig. 4. Detailed population of industry; Source: Official Statistics of Japan (in 2010).

People ride on own vehicle to go to anywhere, for example to the store, workplace, for leisure, so does not use the public transportation. As the result, the bus system has become poor.

It takes long time to go to workplace in the megacity, for example 2 hours one way.

People are anxious about life of the old age, both their own and parents'. People must provide care and outlay for old ages. (58 years old, male manager).

From the questionnaire survey, it was also revealed that people feel they are paying higher resident tax for the fewer public services.

Conclusion: Oi-machi has increased its population for the last few decades. Many people everyday go out of the town for work and school. It is convenient to move to workplace and shopping store by train or own vehicle. But it means that they must have own vehicle to live the convenient life, or they must take train which takes much time to get cities. Agricultural field is cultivated by few people because agriculture is not always necessary as income source. People without agricultural field favor agricultural fields as a beautiful landscape. Therefore, it has become the important task for all residents in the rural area to conserve the agricultural fields.

The tax revenue from the industries is not enough to support the residents. The finance of the town is small, and only a few public services are available. This is the typical situation of the suburban town in Japan.

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