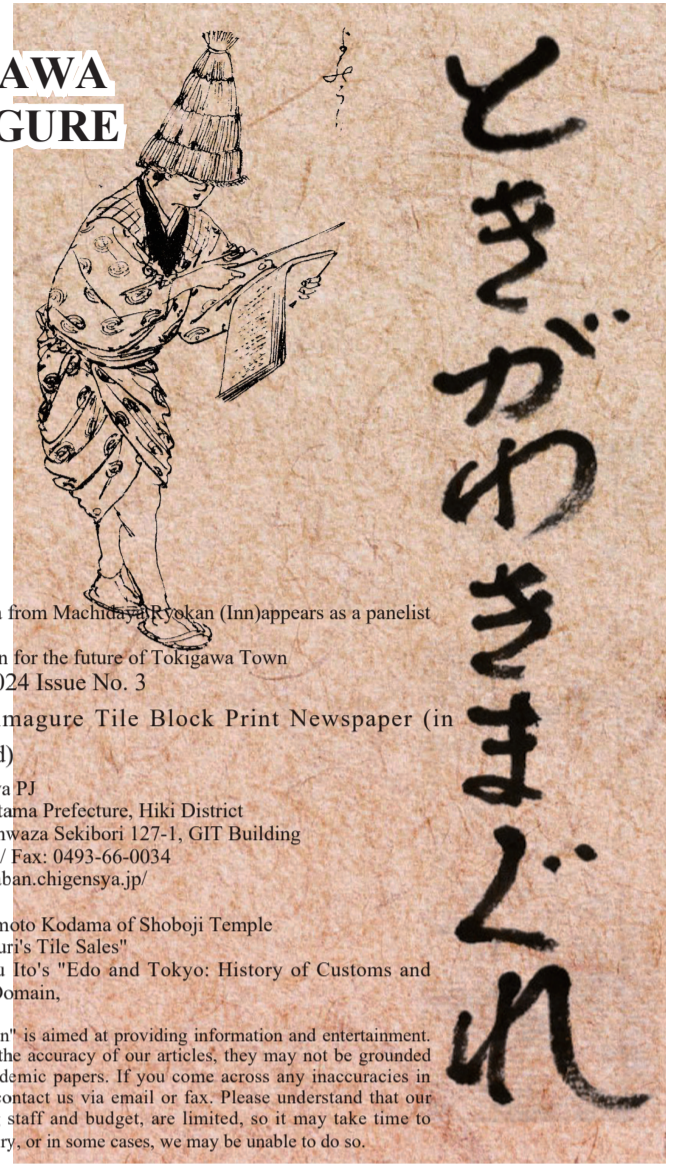




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"IBUSHIGIN"
Mr. Mikio Machida from Machidaya Ryokan (Inn) appears as a panelist at the seminar
Unveiling the vision for the future of Tokigawa Town
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Title: Master Takamoto Kodama of Shoboji Temple
Illustration: "Yomiuri's Tile Sales"
Source: From Sei-Itô's "Edo and Tokyo: History of Customs and Customs," Public Domain.

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On Friday, December 1, 2023, a panel discussion sponsored by the crowdfunding platform "IBUSHIGIN" took place on the second floor of the Musashino Bank's main branch in Saitama City, Saitama Prefecture. The event aimed to showcase the experiences of four entrepreneurs who achieved success through crowdfunding supported by Musashino Mirai Partners Co., Ltd., serving as a valuable reference for local business owners in Saitama Prefecture.

The concept behind "IBUSHIGIN" is to have the entire Bugin (Musashino Bank) Group unite in supporting the fervent aspirations of businesses. Four distinguished individuals were invited as panelists, including Hiroshi Tanaka, cultivating low-pesticide and chemical-free rice in Kawagoe City; Iori Saito, practicing the sixth industry at a livestock farm in Hanyu City; Ryosuke Shimizu, aiming for zero eel waste at an eel wholesaler in Saitama City; and Mikio Machida, planning to revitalize Tokigawa Town in Hiki District through the revival of the 800-year-old Jiko tea.

In "Tokigawa Whimsical Kwaraban No. 3," after briefly introducing three individuals engaged in new ventures in rice, livestock, and eel, Mr. Machida presented a detailed report on a grand project to carve out the future of Tokigawa Town. This initiative is already underway.



Panelists politely responded to in-depth questions from the seminar venue

Part 1 — Three Ventures Centered on the Theme of "Respect for Life"

"Nanohana Rice": Growing rice with rapeseed flowers, aiming for reduced pesticides and no chemical fertilizers by Hiroshi Tanaka

"Nanohana Rice," "Luncheon Meat," and "Eel Snack." The three individuals announced as successful crowdfunding entrepreneurs are all producers and wholesalers of the rice, pork, and eel that we rely on as part of our daily diet. What unites these businesses is a common commitment to "respect for life." The project's theme revolves around savoring and minimizing waste in the life we consume, garnering support from backers.



Mr. Hiroshi Tanaka (left), "Rice can be grown with fewer pesticides," Mr. Tanaka asserts.

Firstly, let's delve into Mr. Tanaka's rice. Grown without pesticides, with reduced pesticide usage, and without chemical fertilizers, it is aptly named "Nanohana Rice." Quite literally, it is rice cultivated using rapeseed flowers as fertilizer. By incorporating rapeseed into rice fields, it is possible to cultivate rice without chemical fertilizers and with fewer pesticides. Rapeseed flowers release aerobic gas as they decompose, and this gas has a weed-killing effect, eliminating the need for herbicides. As an aside, I once heard a story from someone cultivating three rice fields, saying, "Throw three herbicides into a rice field, and no grass will grow. Rice cultivation is that simple."

While the extent of herbicide use in the rice we commonly consume is unknown, adopting Mr. Tanaka's method could alleviate the labor-intensive task of weeding and undoubtedly enhance the quality of rice.

Interestingly, Mr. Tanaka was born into a farming family with a lineage dating back to the Meiji era, yet he chose not to inherit the family business. Instead, he pursued a career at the fire department. Both his father and grandfather refrained from continuing the farming tradition, resulting in its interruption with his grandfather's generation.

Feeling an irrepressible desire to engage in agriculture in his 30s, Mr. Tanaka retired from the fire department and established "Tomozu's Farm," a dedicated rice farm, in April 2020. His application for crowdfunding stemmed

from the desire to expand this innovative method. With an impressive completion rate of 128%, the heartfelt feedback from those who purchased his product served as significant encouragement.

Currently operating as a sole proprietor, Mr. Tanaka aspires to eventually incorporate his venture, broaden the production method for rapeseed rice, and has already initiated collaborations with other plant varieties beyond rapeseed.

Iori Saito: Transitioning from Pig Farming to the Sixth Industry, Managing Pig Processing and Sales

In Hanyu City, pig farmer Iori Saito, affectionately calling the raised pigs "buta-chan," expresses an understanding of the emotional state of these animals. Maintaining a commitment to cleanliness, the barns are meticulously cleaned daily, and the feed consists of a protein-focused mixture, incorporating discarded confectionery scraps and ramen noodle remnants. Pig manure is repurposed as compost by a fellow farmer in Hanyu City, aligning with the core principle of utilizing life without wastefulness. A family-run business, it boasts a 40-year track record.

The application of a sixth-order industry involves planning and overseeing the processing and sales of the pigs raised. The inaugural product, "Domestic Pork Luncheon Meat," exemplifies their venture into the sixth industry. This term refers to a business model integrating primary industries like agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, secondary industries such as manufacturing, and tertiary industries like retail. Diversifying into poultry farming, the introduction of cage-free chicken rearing aims to create a stress-free environment, fostering natural behavior and, consequently, a distinct flavor in the eggs. Exploring innovative uses for cage-free eggs in the sixth industry's product lineup is currently underway.



Mr. Iori Saito



Realizing the sixth industry from livestock farming to sales

養豚農家だから
できること
養豚農家だから
できること



light snack has significantly reduced overall waste. Handling 750 tons of eel annually, Mr. Shimizu emphasizes the company's responsibility to maximize the use of each eel's life.

The crowdfunding campaign surpassed its target within three days, eliciting widespread support for the concept of repurposing discarded eel into snacks. Media coverage acted as a catalyst for subsequent interviews, generating considerable interest. Contrary to the common perception that crowdfunding primarily involves newly established businesses, "Koihei," with its 126-year legacy dating back to 1897 (Meiji 30), demonstrates how even traditional establishments leverage

crowdfunding for novel initiatives. The campaign garnered support not only from Saitama but also from Kansai and Kyushu, bolstering confidence in the exceptional quality of their "eel snack" products. The positive response has elevated employee morale and heightened awareness within the company.

To mitigate waste from discarded eel parts like the head and bones during cooking, they pioneered the freeze-drying processing method. Transforming eel waste into a



Mr. Ryosuke Shimizu



Our policy is "Respect for life is our mission as a wholesaler"

Responsibly Utilizing the Entire Eel: Ryosuke Shimizu's Freeze-Dried "Eel Snack"

"Eel Snack" represents a freeze-dried eel snack developed by the well-established river fish wholesaler "Koihei" in Saitama City.

Part 2 — "Tea Culture" Paving the Future of Tokigawa Town

Motivated by the desire to convey the history of Tokigawa Town rather than selling products, Mikio Machida revives the culture of Jiko tea after 800 years.

Now, the report from Mikio Machida, the proprietor of Machida Ryokan, who took the stage with the three panelists mentioned earlier, was quite unconventional.

After all, he didn't apply for crowdfunding with his idea, but at the recommendation of the Saitama Prefectural Tourism Division, and he only learned after applying that he had to send rewards to supporters. That's how he found out. So, he hastily devised a plan to commercialize Jiko tea. It was like a shoestring operation.

This is because the purpose of applying for crowdfunding was not to sell products but to make people aware of the history of Tokigawa Town. The starting point was fundamentally different. Let's capture Mr. Machida's passionate narrative.

Tokigawa Town: The Birthplace of Tea in Eastern Japan

In my case, my underlying motivation was to pass on the history of the town.

That's the most significant motivation. Crowdfunding emerged as one of the methods for achieving this. Tokigawa Town is home to Ryozen-in (Rinzai sect), the first Zen



Mr. Mikio Machida



Making tea from 800-year-old tea trees

temple in the Kanto region, founded in the Kamakura period(14th century) by Eicho Zenji, who received an imperial order from Retired Emperor Gotoba. Eisho Zen Master is a disciple of Eisai, who wrote the first book on tea in Japan, "Kissa Yojoki," in 1211.

This way, the history of tea in eastern Japan spreads from the founder of Japanese tea, "Eisai" → Eisho, a disciple of Eisai (Jikocha) → Eisho's disciple, "Enni" (the founder of Shizuoka tea). It was transmitted.

In the Muromachi period(15th~16th century), as mentioned in the book "Travel Inn Questions and Answers," there is a description of the famous tea "Jikocha" in Musashi Province, and it is inferred that tea was widely cultivated in the surrounding areas of Tokigawa Town, such as Ogawa-cho, Arashiyama-cho, Higashi-Matsuyama City, Ogose-cho, and Yokoze-cho.

In the Edo period, this tea culture flourished in the

Sayama Hills and became "Sayama Tea."

I had a strong desire to preserve the history of tea, the birthplace of tea in eastern Japan.

Although there were suggestions to give a lecture, I tend to forget such things as soon as I hear them. I wanted to engage people using all five senses and involve them in various activities. That's how I came up with the idea of a "tea garden."

In the town's mountain forests, tea plants brought by envoys to Tang China 800 years ago grow like wild trees. Many tea trees that haven't been crossbred with local species remain in their original state. They grow naturally.

Using them, we created a tea garden where children could plant seedlings, weed, harvest tea, and, of course, brew and drink it. We wanted to engage in activities that make people familiar with tea.





But for that, funds are necessary, and many people need to cooperate. When I sought advice from the Saitama Prefectural Office, they suggested submitting the plan on paper. I quickly compiled my thoughts into 50 PowerPoint slides and submitted them. After that, the prefectural office advised us to apply for Musashino Bank's crowdfunding. So, in my case, it wasn't the product that came first; it was my thoughts.

When we sought supporters through crowdfunding, about 50 people quickly gathered. People from Tokigawa Town, those from outside the town, and even those I didn't know well came together. As a token of appreciation, we were able to create something called "Jikocha."

We also made youkan(japanese sweets) filled with tea and were able to send the tea and youkan as return gifts to our supporters.

However, in the first shipment, we made a mistake of packing the heavy youkan and light tea together in a box, causing the tea and youkan to mix and look messy. After receiving feedback, we redesigned the box with the advice of a packaging specialist and sent it again.

Reviving a Town by Utilizing Abandoned Mountainous Land

The collaboration of supporters we encountered through crowdfunding has paved the way for our ongoing initiatives. Currently, we focus on two main endeavors: expanding the population of ancient medieval tea plants and nurturing tea into a distinctive product of Saitama.

Concerning the first objective, propagating ancient tea plants from the Middle Ages isn't feasible through seed sowing. Seeds inevitably result in the mingling of male and female parts, leading to an altered outcome. To multiply them, we experimented with cutting branches from old tea trees to create saplings. With the landowner's permission

where the tea trees grew, we successfully generated around 120 saplings. Our goal for the next year is to increase this number to 1000, offering numerous possibilities.

Tokigawa Town, with a high aging population, possesses numerous uncultivated mountainous areas left in neglect. Simultaneously, there's an influx of young individuals moving to Tokigawa Town aspiring to engage in agriculture. We've partnered with young farming enthusiasts, providing them with untended mountainous terrain to cultivate tea organically, without pesticides



Package where you can see how the tea leaves are rolled or fertilizers. The vision is to produce organic Jiko tea, contributing to a new industry in Tokigawa Town.

Ideas Emerging from the Crisis in Saitama Prefecture's Tea Culture

Despite its lesser-known status, Sayama tea in Saitama Prefecture boasts a rich history and exceptionally high tea manufacturing expertise on a national scale. Currently overshadowed by tea production leaders like Kagoshima and Shizuoka, Sayama tea represents a mere 1/22nd of the national output. This discrepancy is attributed to Saitama Prefecture's geographical location.

I, as an amateur, proposed a unique concept in response

to the predicament. Introducing "tea paste," a solution to the challenges posed by powdered tea in culinary applications. Unlike powdered tea prone to clumping or marbling, the paste ensures easy and elegant blending. Whether used in bread-making, added to dried noodles, or incorporated into fruit and dessert recipes, the possibilities are extensive.

Further diversification includes the utilization of tea juice, a byproduct rich in catechins and nutrients. This waste liquid sparks creative ideas like producing juices or even beer. With an increasing number of supporters providing valuable advice, we've achieved success in various aspects, from transparent packaging innovations to the creation of trademarked teas such as "Jiko Black Tea."

Inbound Business Monitor Tour in January 2024

Contemplating the possibility of a town-wide initiative, we applied to the Japan Tourism Agency for an inbound project. Successful approval led us to plan a monitor tour in January 2024. Collaborating with the Saitama Prefectural Tourism Division, local tourism associations, and JTB, we are actively developing experiential activities for foreign tourists within tea gardens.

The proposed activities range from hands-on tea garden work and meditation at a Rinzaï sect temple to the authentic preparation of matcha tea and enjoying desserts or dishes infused with tea. Experience-based activities appealing to all five senses leave a lasting impact, and we are eager to turn these ideas into reality.

This developmental approach aims to bring about positive change in Tokigawa Town. Envisioning a lively town that attracts attention from around the world, we believe that as foreign visitors share their experiences on social media platforms, Tokigawa Town will gain global recognition. (Authored by: Editorial Department)

Three Distinctive Features of IBUSHIGIN

The insights below have been consolidated based on the Musashino Bank's website (Authored by: Editorial Department).

1. Appeal to Supporters

Compelling Returns: Contributing to our projects offers not only attractive returns but also exclusive unreleased rewards.

Project-driven Connections: By participating in the form of "support," individuals can engage in socially meaningful projects, collaborating with substantial projects that would typically remain out of reach.

Musashino Bank Group: Unique treasures and captivating specialty products exclusive to the Musashino Bank Group await exploration.

IBUSHIGIN

From the land of color, Saitama
~ Purchase-type crowdfunding site ~
<https://mmp-mbkg-ibushigin.en-jine.com/>

Musashino Bank Omiya Branch

〒 330-0802
1-30-30 Miyamachi, Omiya-ku, Saitama City, Saitama Prefecture
Phone: 048-642-2221

2. Enticements for Sellers

Comprehensive Planning Support: Our team collaborates with you, providing support from project inception to site publication.

Strategic Fan Base Expansion: Diverging from conventional mail-order methods, expressing genuine thoughts and enthusiasm in your products can foster the growth of your dedicated fan base.

Advertising (Promotional) Assistance: In times of advertising uncertainty, we offer support in promoting your brand, allowing you to seamlessly conduct both sales and

advertising through "IBUSHIGIN."

Venturing into Novelty/ Test Sales: Employ our services during the development of new products or services, or when embarking on fresh challenges within the BtoC realm.

Musashino Bank Group: We collaborate with Musashino Bank and external entities, leveraging our network influence to support businesses.

3. Considerations for Potential Listings

A 20% (excluding tax) fee is applicable to the collected amount.

Eligible genres encompass agriculture, forestry and fishery products, food-related items, goods-related products, regional revitalization initiatives, and various others.

Criteria for qualified entities (products) include: Businesses engaged with Musashino Bank, enterprises aspiring to uplift Saitama Prefecture, businesses intertwined with Saitama Prefecture-related products, and Businesses contributing to SDGs. Embracing new challenges characterizes a proactive business operator.

Career Women of Tokigawa Town

82-year-old Shigeiko Yoshida and 74-year-old Yoshie Tanaka

In Tokigawa Town, two trailblazing career women continue to shine in their active roles—82-year-old Shigeiko Yoshida, proprietor of the tsukudani (food boiled in soy sauce)shop "Yoshida Shoten" and 74-year-old Yoshie Tanaka, the lady of "Tokian." Despite their ages suggesting retirement, these two women remain robustly engaged in physically demanding work.

At "Fureai no Sato (Community Hall)Tamagawa," Shigeiko Yoshida showcases an array of tsukudani on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. Offerings include clams, freshwater clams, and character brushes—12 varieties that customers can freely mix. Their presence extends beyond Tokigawa Town, participating in festivals at locations such as Sugamo Jizo Temple and Takahata Fudo Temple in Tokyo. Notably, brown sugar distinguishes their products. Meticulously sourcing fresh batches from Okinawa, they break them apart at home and pack them into bags. Inspired by overcoming a severe illness through the benefits of brown sugar, Shigeiko aims to spread awareness of its immune-boosting properties.

Yoshie Tanaka, proprietress of Tokian shop, is renowned for managing a bustling establishment where she diligently carries heavy trays of tempura soba and other dishes to customer seats. Her standing workday begins in the morning and continues until night. Establishing Tokian at the age of 43, she borrowed money to construct the shop on adjacent land, delved into intensive studies, and secured a chef's license.

Intrigued by the source of their resilience, we interviewed both women to delve into their stories.

Shigeiko Yoshida, at 50, discovered she had no pancreas! A catalyst for entrepreneurship

Clad in a traditional Japanese kappogi(Japanese apron) and a black baseball cap, Shigeiko maintains a poised posture—her signature style. However, there's a significant twist: she lacks a pancreas. Despite being a frail child with no pancreas, she has persevered to the age of 82.

"I've been frail since childhood. The sixth of eight siblings, I was the weak one. Even after consulting doctors, the reasons remained unclear. I couldn't eat much; consuming food made me nauseous. At 20, my waist measured around 30cm. Concerned about my future, my parents set aside assets, mainly land."

The revelation about her weak constitution came at the age of 50. Hospitalized due to health issues, a CT scan uncovered the absence of a pancreas. The doctor marveled, "You've lived remarkably well in this condition—your pancreas had dissolved away."

She met her current husband in her 40s, initially refusing marriage due to infertility and limited domestic abilities. Eventually, they married, and she assisted in managing her husband's factory. During a hospitalization prompted by illness, the absence of her pancreas came to light.

This revelation became a turning point, prompting a dietary transformation. Embracing brown sugar and eliminating not only spicy seasonings but also soy sauce, she weathered her husband even throwing an electric kettle due to the initially unpalatable meals. Having survived, the idea emerged to establish a tsukudani shop, sourcing quality products nationwide to promote better health for many.

In this endeavor, numerous people engage in



Shigeiko Yoshida standing at the store

conversations. It's enjoyable. "This is from me," they say, generously including extras.

"I just wish everyone good health. Money is a secondary concern."

Despite common beliefs suggesting excess salt in tsukudani, observing 82-year-old Shigeiko diligently seated outside without heating or cooling challenges the simplicity of human health. In reality, individuals, such as architect Tadao Ando at 82, continue working without a pancreas. It urges us to question conventional wisdom.

"Fureai no Sato Tamagawa"
4359-2 Tamagawa, Tokigawa Town, Hiki District,
Saitama Prefecture
Phone: 0493-65-1171

At 43, Yoshie Tanaka embarked on entrepreneurship with "Tokian"shop

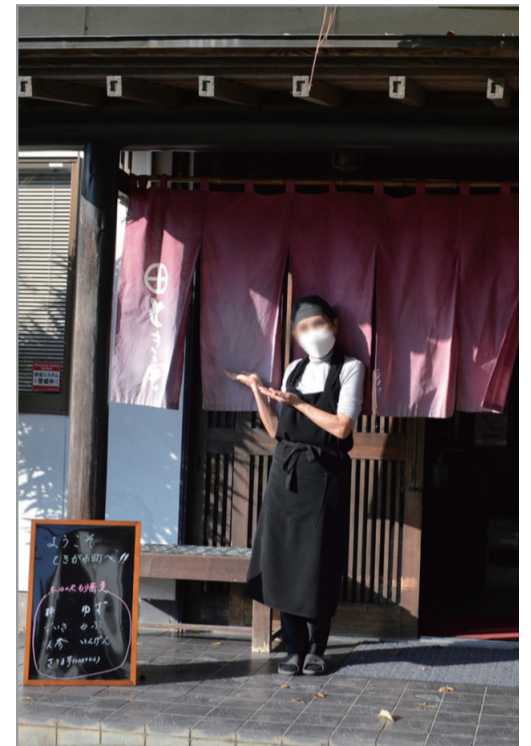
Life unfolds from one's forties, or so it seems in the case of Yoshie Tanaka, the proprietor of "Tokian"shop who ventured into entrepreneurship at the age of 43. The setting is Nishihira—an obscure location, far removed from main roads and train stations, enveloped by mountainous terrain. One might question the rationale behind establishing a shop in such a secluded place.

"At the time, I was employed at the Joinery Hall, and there was a severe lack of eateries in the vicinity. While there are several now, back then, there was nothing. When I craved something for lunch, there was nothing available. So, I thought, why not create it myself?"

This was the driving motivation. The Joinery Hall, a municipal entity, specializes in selling locally crafted joinery.

"Opening a shop in a place like this won't attract anyone," was the prevailing sentiment. Most people opposed the idea, to the extent that there were complaints heard on the bus her son took to high school, with assertions of it being "foolish." That was 32 years ago.

The proprietress dedicated herself to rigorous studies, acquiring a chef's license, and took on debt to construct a shop adjacent to her residence. The establishment,



Yoshie Tanaka, the proprietress of "Tokian"

fashioned as an authentic Japanese dwelling, featured walls adorned in muted hues to exude the ambiance of an antiquated farmhouse. It initially commenced as an udon noodles eatery.

"Remarkably, from the day of our opening, numerous customers started coming in."

These patrons weren't tourists but local residents. Despite no advertising, a steady influx of customers ensued. The shop remained open until around 8 p.m., even accommodating requests for coffee as an evening beverage.

However, about a decade later, a crisis loomed. A rival udon restaurant emerged in close proximity, resulting in a sudden decline in customers. The proprietress recalls, "There were days when only three people showed up." After enduring this for about a year, she devised a new strategy—transitioning to soba noodles. This involved making soba from 100% whole grain buckwheat flour and serving it with seasonal vegetable tempura. The term "seasonal vegetables" took a unique twist, featuring items such as imogara (Japanese thorns), zuiki (chickpeas), kabu (turnips), kaki (oysters), kogomi (ostrich fern), warabi (bracken), and yamaudo (mountain udon). Utilizing produce from their owned mountains and pesticide-free vegetables, the preparation methods were distinctive, including splitting persimmons, adding wasabi, and unique frying techniques, even incorporating flowers. The uniqueness garnered praise on social media, propelling the restaurant into the limelight with long queues.

Ironically, the current challenge revolves around these queues. When the restaurant reaches full capacity, due to its petite size, customers may find themselves waiting outside. Addressing this issue, the proprietress remarked, "I always feel very saddened."

"In warmer weather, we set up large garden umbrellas for shade and offer cold beverages. Previously, we provided these outside, but due to the impact of the coronavirus, we had no choice but to move them indoors. During colder seasons, we provide blankets. At times, after customers have finished their meals, we approach them for a chat. We also expedite orders for young children. As a three-person operation, we do our utmost, but there are limitations."

"Tokian"
756-4 Nishihira, Tokigawa Town, Hiki District,
Saitama Prefecture
Phone: 0493-67-0517

(Written by & ©: Midori Nishida)

Life in Ohno is grounded in the culture of "behavior" and "mutual assistance."

When speaking of the Ohno district in Tokigawa Town, Hiki District, Saitama Prefecture, it's known for its mountainous terrain, with a road stretching from Mt. Dodaira to Higashichichibu Village. Besides facing a declining population, the area is also experiencing significant aging. Presently, there are 327 residents, with 176 aged 65 or older (according to the 2020 census), constituting over half of the population. Single-person households are predominant. Despite this, even the local bus service has been halted.

As one ventures past Nishidaira into Ohno, the roads progressively narrow, surrounded by forests, evoking the ambiance of secluded mountain valleys. While it may sound idyllic, the reality is undeniably inconvenient. How do the residents of Ono cope with such conditions? In November, amidst the stunning autumn foliage, we undertook a journey to Ono district, joining the Nishinosawa Waterworks Association in tank cleaning and hitching a ride on a mobile food truck from Seven-Eleven (Tanaka store) to document life in the area. What became evident was a resilient "culture of generosity" and the vigor of "mutual aid and self-reliance."

The Tea-Making Person

"When tomorrow comes, there's a tank cleaning event in Ono. How about going to cover it?"

Such an email arrived from an acquaintance on the night of Saturday, November 18th. It suggested visiting on Sunday, the 19th, as the local community would gather for tank cleaning. A tank, in this context, refers to a filtration tank, a facility that filters water drawn from the mountains.

In Ohno, around 50 households utilize water drawn from the mountains. Upon request, water can be drawn to any household, with an annual cost of ¥18,200. Comparatively, the Waterworks Bureau charges around ¥2,500 per month, approximately ¥30,000 annually (varies by household), making it a notably economical choice. The operations are overseen by the Nishinosawa Waterworks Association.

Mr. K, a devoted user of this mountain-sourced water, expresses, "The water we drink is from the mountains. It makes delicious tea."

Mr. K is a tea-making maestro. At his workplace in Ohno, a wood stove is consistently kindled, an iron kettle bubbles, and he generously treats visiting friends and their companions to tea. I, too, have been treated on numerous occasions. The tea is sweet, and Mr. K promptly re-infuses it if it cools, always ensuring the optimal temperature.

Various confections grace the small table. During winter, a small pot warms cans of amazake (sweet sake), and meticulously sharpened knives peel apples bought in bulk from Nagano Prefecture's cardboard boxes.

As I savor the tea and treats, an inexplicable sense of wonder envelops me. Despite not being a local of Ono, nor a resident of Tokigawa Town, and lacking any particular closeness, Mr. K graciously permits me to sit by the wood stove and prepares tea. Why does he make tea and encourage indulgence in sweets?

Many individuals frequent Mr. K's wood stove for tea. "Everyone's a friend. Strangers don't come," asserts Mr. K. Nonetheless, even if a friend brings along an acquaintance, Mr. K doesn't decline. Initially, I joined my friend, and the four of us invaded. Though my friend met Mr. K just once, during a casual encounter as a tourist driving around



Put a kettle on the wood stove and boil water. It's strange that the handle doesn't get hot even when you hold it with your bare hands.

Ono, the warmth of the wood stove prompted a greeting. A seemingly abrupt introduction led to extended conversations and subsequent visits with additional companions.

Mr. K engages in physically demanding tasks like felling trees and crafting firewood in the mountains, rendering him robust. He identifies as a versatile handyman, willingly taking on tasks within his capabilities.

The sight of this sturdy man brewing tea is peculiar yet intriguing, especially with his consistent attention to detail, discarding used tea leaves and re-brewing. The motivation behind making tea remains an enigma.

Mr. K is no saint. He's an ordinary gentleman, albeit with some eccentricities: two crows visit, seeking food, and upon breaking a rice cracker on a flat stone, they descend to consume it. Nevertheless, he takes the time to prepare tea.

Examining this act through an economic lens, it aligns with the concept of a "pure gift."

This diversion allows us to scrutinize "the person who makes tea" from an economic standpoint.



The tea made in a small teapot is sweet.

"The Tea Maker" and the Concept of "Pure Gift"

Modern society operates at its core around economics, with relationships among individuals often intertwined with financial transactions. In essence, these relationships can be categorized into three methods: (1) exchange, (2) gift, and (3) pure gift.

The concepts of "exchange" and "gift" are straightforward, representing a form of "equivalent exchange." For instance, one receives a salary as compensation for labor, or reciprocates with gifts like year-end or mid-year presents for favors received. Even during events such as funerals, weddings, or hospitalizations, financial transactions occur in the form of condolences or congratulations. This falls under the umbrella of mutual aid and equivalent exchange.

Japan has a rich tradition of gift-giving, with historical records dating back to the Muromachi period (14th~16th century), such as the lessons of Ise Sadachika. Authored by Sadachika Ise (1417-1473), an official of the Muromachi



Ono Shrine, a symbol of the Ono area

Shogunate who raised the 8th Shogun Yoshimasa Ashikaga, these teachings emphasized returning something equivalent when receiving from others—a notion aligned with the concept of equivalent exchange.

While the prevalence of year-end and mid-year gifts may have diminished, this reciprocal philosophy has functioned as a societal norm in Japan for over 500 years. Our daily act of purchasing goods by paying money is also a form of "equivalent exchange," with the price of commodities determined by factors like material costs, labor costs, and distribution expenses. Money, defined as a promise note to exchange for goods of certain values, circulates under this convention.

Religious anthropologist Shinichi Nakazawa encapsulates the principles of "equivalent exchange" into three points in his work "Logos of Love and Economy" (Kodansha, 2003). To summarize:

1. A product is an object devoid of the creator's personality or emotions.
2. Items of approximately equal value are exchanged.
3. The value of items must be calculable.

The notion of "gifts" is summarized into three elements:

1. Gifts are not mere objects; they serve as a medium through which something personal appears to move between individuals.
2. To express feelings of mutual trust, an appropriate amount of time should pass before reciprocation (immediate reciprocation damages the trust relationship).
3. Uncertain and indeterminable values move through objects, and the delicate exclusion of the idea of equivalent exchange allows "gifting" to become possible.

In essence, a "gift" involves an exchange of equivalent value, but it only becomes realized by concealing (excluding) this fact. A gift isn't detached from the giver's

personality; instead, it carries the giver's personal touch. In simpler terms, it's not just an object; it's imbued with thought.

However, in the case of "pure gift" (③), the concept of equivalent exchange is entirely absent. Moreover, the giver's personality doesn't permeate the gift; it lacks heartfelt sentiment. It's indeed a peculiar phenomenon.

The "mystery" experienced while sipping Mr. K's tea stems from its deviation from the principle of equivalent exchange. This might explain the slight discomfort one might feel. While experiencing a "gift" like this once or twice is understandable, its repetition for everyone makes it perplexing. This is because it falls into the realm of a "pure gift."

A "pure gift" is a unilateral offering devoid of any expectation for reciprocation. It is a gift without ulterior motives. Does such a phenomenon truly exist? With Mr. K's participation in the tank cleaning event, I visited him, combining it with an opportunity for an interview.

Tank Cleaning in Yokoza

Cleaning the tank is no small feat. The task involves removing and washing all the fine gravel used for filtering water flowing down from the mountains, an effort to purify the mountain water. The gravel, heavy and abundant, is scooped up with a shovel, placed on a 4-meter conveyor belt, transported to a washing area, scrubbed clean, and then returned to the conveyor belt. This repetitive lifting and lowering of gravel is a task that, according to the training from the fire department's fire rescue task force, is a strenuous two-minute routine.

The tank cleaning is, in essence, a continuous process. While it may appear light when observed, it's genuinely challenging, as confirmed by Mr. K himself who remarked, "It's tough."

Starting at 8 a.m. on holidays, the cleaning continues throughout the morning. The compensation, to be frank, is modest – it goes beyond mere volunteer work. The rationale for keeping the annual maintenance costs down is attributed to such mutual assistance. It reflects a shared sentiment of wanting to maintain the cleanliness of their water.

Below, I documented the tank cleaning process through an array of assembled photos (see bottom photo).



Scrub the gravel using a brush while running water



Once the gravel has been brought to the washing area, it is unloaded from the belt conveyor to the washing area.



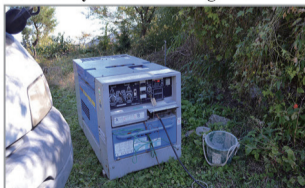
The filter tank is filled with fine gravel.



The filter tank is located on the slope of the mountain. The photo is with the lid open



After returning the washed gravel to the filter tank, the conveyor belt is placed against the iron fence for washing, heavy



The belt conveyor is powered by a generator.



Small mounds of washed gravel can be found here and there.



Scoop gravel with a shovel and put it on the conveyor belt



Place the belt conveyor on top of the filter tank with the lid closed, and the work is complete.



Work to clean up the belt conveyor after washing the gravel. A smile spills over my face after completing nine minutes of hard labor:



Finally, close the filter tank lid. It's heavy so we'll all have to tackle it together:



A conveyor belt propped up. Run water vigorously to remove gravel

"Mr. K is a Generous Host"

After completing the tank cleaning, I sought the opportunity to speak with Mr. K. The chosen location was a café tucked away behind the Ohno Specialty Products Store – a place favored by Mr. K.

The café, resembling a hexagonal tower, displays locally sourced wild plants, mushrooms, vegetables, and fruits at the storefront. In the rear, shelves showcase processed items like jam and tsukudani. The café itself is a bit inconspicuous.

Upon arrival, Mr. K ordered "three coffees." Wondering if someone else was joining besides Mr. K and me due to the quantity, a survey of the store revealed no other customers. It later became clear that this was a gesture of hospitality for someone working at the store.

Two women work in shifts at the specialty product store, and each visit prompts Mr. K to treat them to coffee. Furthermore, if a friend or relative happens to pass by the store, Mr. K actively invites them in for coffee. For instance, when a friend of the reporter, Ms. M, casually walked by the sales office, she was called over: "Hey, planning to just walk by? Sit down and have some coffee," said Mr. K, who then took her coffee order.

The reasons behind offering tea as a treat and actively inviting people for coffee might seem like peculiar behaviors. When asked, "Why do you treat us to coffee?" Mr. K simply responded, "It's obvious."

Curious to learn more about Mr. K, I inquired with Ms. M, who responded, "He's a generous host." Ms. M, having a familial connection with Mr. K spanning three generations, enjoys a closeness such that Mr. K uses a pet name for her.

This cultural practice of "behaving well" extends beyond Mr. K, as subsequently realized. During coverage of the Ohno area while riding in a 7-Eleven mobile sales van, the reporter noticed this unique behavior. Mr. K's assertion of "It's obvious" turned out to mean "It's obvious in Ohno."

Dried Persimmons from 92-Year-Old Ms. T

After expressing admiration for Mr. K's intriguing habit of offering tea even to strangers, the tables turned as I found myself treated to dried persimmons, courtesy of 92-year-old Ms. T. "Don't take them back with you," she insisted, a



Ohno specialty product sales office. Vegetables are cheap and of high quality. The taste is also outstanding. Every time I see vegetables from a store that sells local produce from the Ono or Tamagawa areas, I wonder about the abnormalities in distribution prices.

gesture that unfolded during my coverage of the Ono area from the 7-Eleven mobile sales van. We set up a makeshift "store" in Ms. T's garden, with the side of the mobile van transforming into a product display window and the rear serving as the cash register, equipped with shopping carts and plastic bags.

Joining us was Ms. M, a relative of Mr. K, who clarified that she and Ms. T weren't mother and daughter but part of a daily camaraderie referred to as the "Tonarigumi(neighboring group)". They spent their days together, even peeling and drying persimmons. Ms. M crafted 100 pieces, while Ms. T contributed 60, all from a bountiful delivery of astringent persimmons from Ms. T's ancestral home. The labor-intensive process included peeling even softball-sized persimmons.

Drying persimmons without sulfur fumigation is known to risk mold growth, but Ms. M's secret, as she shared, is to "speak to them, saying 'Become delicious, become delicious' while peeling." Ms. T proudly affirmed, "I make them every year, but they've never gotten moldy." A nod and shared glance sealed their agreement.

Ms. N from 7-Eleven also received a gift, prompting a humble acknowledgment of having received one the previous week. Notably, during a subsequent interview with Ms. M, I was gifted a sizable bag of mandarin oranges from her garden tree and an additional 10 dried persimmons.

Ms. M visits Ms. T's house every day. How do they spend their time?

"Every day, we're laughing and having a good time, right?" When Ms. M says this, Ms. T replies, "It's fun when we're together. We say something and burst into laughter loudly, " "I don't talk about others. I share my old stories, " "There's no way not to laugh." "Yeah," agrees Ms. T. Both are living alone.

Ms. T, who had no children, spent five years nursing her sick husband at home until his passing. Despite the challenges of caregiving, she found solace in visiting his grave daily. "Being at the cemetery calms my heart. It took ten years to get used to their absence. Losing someone close feels strange for a while. That strange feeling disappeared after ten years."

Ms. M, having raised five independent children and lost her husband, concurs with the ten-year sentiment, saying, "Yeah, it's been kind of strange for ten years." It seems their souls are deeply intertwined. At 73, she even has a 4-year-old great-grandchild, proudly declaring herself a "great-grandma."

Ms. M's house is only a five-minute walk away. The two friends frequently shuttle between each other, exchanging home-cooked meals and sharing mealtimes. Ms. T vividly remembers Ms. M's birth and has watched her grow up. They are closer than distant relatives.

Ms. T daily routine involves cultivating vegetables and maintaining her garden. Even after marriage, she continued working, sewing kimonos in her youth. She engaged in sericulture, producing and shipping silkworm cocoons. She cultivated wheat and managed a 2,000-strong sweet potato crop. Living in the Ohno area, which once belonged to Chichibu County, she reminisces about its lively



When the side of the mobile sales vehicle is opened, it becomes a product display shelf.

atmosphere with offices, schools, and shops.

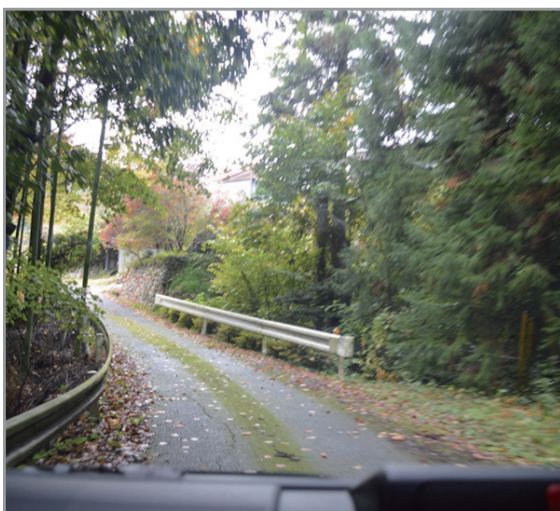
Even now, she faces no significant challenges. Her neighbors assist with shopping errands, reflecting the deeply ingrained values of mutual aid and independence in the community.

Make an effort to "live with laughter"

7-Eleven's mobile sales vehicles are set to open "stores" at eight different locations. First, they play announcements with music while looping around the area, then they stop at designated spots, awaiting customers. These spots range from gardens like T-ko's to shared taxi stops and road edges.

While opening a shop along the roadside next to a guardrail, I encountered two individuals determined to spend their day with laughter. They turned out to be members of the "Tonarigumi (neighboring group)". When I mentioned it was for an interview, they responded with laughter, saying, "Oh, I didn't bother with makeup today," and "I just came in my regular clothes."

Ms.N from 7-Eleven described, "It's always so lively, like a manzai comic act." The shopping experience is also filled with excitement. "Bananas are a must." "My blood sugar level rises because Ms.N brings delicious things." In the midst of various conversations, these words slipped out: "Whether you wake up in the morning, look down, or live with a smile, it's all the same day." "Exactly. Living with laughter makes for a much better day." A glimpse into a philosophical approach to life unfolded.



The Ono area seen from the window of a mobile sales vehicle. A narrow road surrounded by mountain forests continues.

"I'm coming to meet everyone."

This incident took place when I borrowed a shared taxi stop to set up shop. Upon hearing it was for an interview, the response was abrupt: "Are you interviewing? When you publish it, make sure to mosaic my face." The person was still in their 50s. When asked why they came for shopping, the response was unexpected: "With no school events and no chance to meet neighbors, I come when I hear Seven's music."

In the past, parents had occasions like sports days, school festivals, cultural events, and parent-teacher meetings. However, after their children graduated, opportunities to meet neighbors dwindled. The mobile sales vehicles play a role in creating a space for chatting and information exchange while shopping. "I get to meet Ms.N too." Ms.N often addresses customers by their first names and not only assists with shopping but also shares information about the town. The initial assumption of mobile sales catering to shopping refugees crumbles, revealing a different purpose.

It was also mentioned that, with children independent, efforts are underway to initiate new activities and create opportunities to meet. One such endeavor is miso-making. People from Ono and Nishihira gather to make and sell miso, utilizing the town's fittings hall with the necessary equipment.

"I'm in my 60s, but I'm considered young. The seniors leading the way are in their 80s. They are enthusiastic. The miso they make is sold at places like 'Yasuragi no Ie(Community Hall)'. We're currently discussing broader sales, aiming to cultivate it as an industry."

"Yasuragi no Ie" is a handmade udon noodle shop located in Nishihira, just before Ono. The person making the udon noodles is a woman, visible through the glass. It's a town-owned store relocated from a century-old folk house, displaying magnificent architecture with high ceilings and thick beams. They plan to gather in January next year for preparations, followed by another session in February.

Typical of Ohno, once children leave, adults come together to brainstorm activities. While some create opportunities for face-to-face interaction and shared activities, modern society often focuses on relationships based on calculated gains and losses. The prevalent idea is to view others as tools and evaluate them based on their utility, determining whether or not to engage based on perceived usefulness. This perspective emphasizes living with an attitude of calculating future gains and losses.

Conversely, other relationships prioritize the present and immediate interactions. This approach cherishes the "now" and emphasizes living without sacrificing the present for the sake of the future. It's akin to the concept of "Ichigo Ichie" or "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," where people engage with each other in the moment and treasure those connections.

In pre-modern Japan, this kind of relationship was likely commonplace. There's a saying from the Edo period, "Don't keep money overnight," which can be interpreted in various ways, but one interpretation is that living generously without being stingy contributes to daily life. Having many people who act generously allows individuals to rely on others' support during challenging times.

During interviews in Ohno, I often received expressions like "Have some tea" or "Have lunch." I realized this is a manifestation of a cultural exchange. After being treated, I would bring a small gift the next time I visited. With such exchanges, the need for money diminishes.

As a side note, this culture is not exclusive to Ohno. When traveling in remote areas, you might suddenly find yourself treated to lunch or sweets at a house you visit. The



"Tokigawa Handmade Miso" sold at Yasuragi House and prepared by everyone

culture of generosity persists stubbornly in remote areas. However, as the number of elderly individuals carrying this culture decreases, it risks fading away along with them.

To Sustain the "Culture of Generosity," Restarting Some Bus Routes

If one were to focus solely on the individuals visiting mobile sales vans for shopping, it might seem that mutual assistance is seamlessly functioning without any concerns. However, the reality is far less optimistic. Those genuinely facing hardship tend to remain confined at home, limiting their outdoor activities.

On a rainy day like this, only 25 people ventured out for shopping, a fraction of the usual 30 attendees. The circumstances of those who abstain from shopping remain unknown, compounded by the fact that 7-Eleven deliveries are halted on days of rain and snow.

The suspension of bus services in the Ohno area occurred three years ago, coinciding with the onset of the pandemic. Understanding the extent to which individuals are affected by this hiatus requires individualized investigation, as those truly in distress often refrain from voicing their struggles.

During this investigative journey, I encountered one individual visibly distressed. An 88-year-old woman, despite making it to the mobile sales van, refrains from making any purchases. When asked about her shopping habits, she explained, "I frequently travel to various places by car with my next-door neighbor."

Her neighbors, a couple who relocated from the city to Ohno, have extended invitations whenever the husband falls ill and the wife steps out. Consequently, she has no need for 7-Eleven purchases, stopping by the sales van only while taking a walk. She shared, "I spend the entire day walking, currently on a stroll. I used to attend a gymnastics class at a supermarket in Ogawamachi three times a week. However, due to the bus service cancellation, I can no longer attend. It's truly disappointing."

Searching "Tokigawa Town, Ohno Area Bus" on the internet brings up a NAVITIME site listing bus stops and timetables, suggesting continued operations online even if the service is effectively suspended. Consulting the Tokigawa Town Hall website, the service status is labeled "suspended," citing a "shortage of drivers" as the reason.

Presently, the closest bus stop in the Ohno area is at the "Daini(second) Government Building," proximate to the Seseragi Bus Center. Though a bus to Ogawamachi departs from the same stop (with a transfer involved), directing it on a slight detour to reach destinations like the Joinery Hall or Ohno Special Products Sales Office could potentially revive bus services without the need for a new driver. The distance to the special products store is around 6.7 km, an 8-minute car ride. Given this, even if a complete reopening of the Ohno line is unfeasible, proposing a partial resumption could be a manageable compromise. "I hope

they consider restarting at least a part of it," speculates the reporter, perhaps echoing the expectations of those who have relinquished their licenses.

Shared taxis pose a hurdle with reservations requiring a phone or smartphone, an obstacle for many elderly individuals who may struggle with such technology. Thus far, based on the reporter's experiences, there hasn't been widespread usage of shared taxi services.



The Ohno area currently attracts enthusiasts of road biking as a hobby, fostering a community visible on weekends as bikers form columns along mountain roads. Campgrounds like Komoriba have opened, contributing to an influx of young immigrants. This pattern reflects the appealing living conditions in Ohno and the efficacy of its "culture of behavior."

To preserve the ingrained "culture of generosity" among the people of Ohno, it is hoped that the reinstatement of some bus routes, even if logistically challenging, could contribute to the improved living conditions of new residents. The desire for such a change is expressed by the reporter

. (Written by & © Midori Nishida)



Sesaragi Hall, lottery venue

Tremendous Success!! "Kawara Edition of Kimagure Tokigawa" Inaugural Commemorative Prize Drawing Grand Prize Goes to a First-Year Junior High School Student!!

Rattle, Rattle!!

As the handle of the Garapon spun around, it clicked and revealed the grand prize—an accommodation catalog for a carefully selected destination valued at ¥100,000. The fortunate winner was a first-year junior high school student attending with their father, and we captured the moment with a commemorative photo featuring the iconic V sign. From two electrically assisted bicycles for a woman in her 50s to two children's bicycles for an elementary school student, each prize found its perfect match. There were no empty-handed participants, and the fifth prize consisted of locally curated gifts from the esteemed Saladkan Tanakaya Co., Ltd.



"Congratulations!" Winner of Galapon, families

The gift lottery, celebrating the launch of "Kimagure Tokigawa Kawaraban," unfolded over two days, October 28th (Saturday) and 29th (Sunday), culminating in resounding success at Sesaragi Hall.

On the initial day, individuals of all ages, spanning elementary, junior high, and high school students to the elderly, reveled in the excitement of playing "Garagarapon!"—a sentiment likely fueled by those initially startled attendees who took to social media to proclaim its enjoyment.

Diverse were the methods of revelry. Among the participants were two inseparable friends, aged 90 and 86, who strolled leisurely, showcasing their vitality. "I'm 90 years old. I walked here today," declared one, highlighting their robust physicality. As they visited the photo exhibition corner, the elder reminisced, "It's nostalgic. I'm an artist. Recently, I sketched cosmos and persimmons."

The exhibited photographs, chronicling post-war life and sourced from the Prefectural Archives via Saitama Shimbun, portrayed snapshots of bygone eras—scenes of meals, shrine festivities, baseball tournaments, and bus excursions. "Back in those days, buses couldn't maneuver quickly, and we often came close to collisions," recalled one participant. "They sure shook a lot," added another.

While admiring their vigor, the 86-year-old companion disclosed, "He tends to be a bit forgetful. That's why I always make sure to be with him." Despite articulate speech and assured responses, the gentleman exhibited a penchant for forgetfulness.

"I eagerly anticipate our visit to Tokian for a shared soba experience. It's quite a distance, but we always manage to walk back home together."

Tokian, nestled in the heart of Nishidaira, is celebrated for its whole grain soba. Alone, it might be labeled as "wandering," but with a companion, it transforms into a delightful "stroll." Their circle of friends converged, creating an ambiance reminiscent of a salon for a brief moment.

The recipient of the large TV mused, "I consider this an advance reward. I sense something significant will unfold in the future," offering a somewhat philosophical reflection.

Indeed, there were myriad small dramas. We eagerly encourage you to continue your readership of Kawaraban!



Venue scenery. There are various prizes on the table.



TonaNAKai Communication

- Inaugural Issue Digest -

Public Transportation Challenges in Tokigawa Town

885 Municipalities Designated as Depopulated - Tokigawa Town Designated in Reiwa 3!

What is the current situation in depopulated areas? According to a Yomiuri Shimbun online article on March 21, 2022, a total of 65 municipalities in 27 prefectures were added based on the 2020 census results, bringing the number of designated municipalities to 885. Seven municipalities in Saitama Prefecture were also designated, including Tokigawa Town.

Saitama Prefecture has published the "Saitama Prefecture Sustainable Development Policy for Depopulated Areas (Reiwa3~Reiwa7)," and here is a quote from a part of it:

This policy is based on the provisions of Article 7 of the Act on Special Measures Concerning Support for Sustainable Development of Depopulated Areas (Act No. 19 of 2021), hereinafter referred to as the "Depopulation Act." It serves as a guideline for the Sustainable Development Plan for Depopulated Areas formulated by municipalities in depopulated areas and the Sustainable Development Plan for Depopulated Areas of Saitama Prefecture. The covered period and area are as follows.

The designated depopulated areas in Saitama Prefecture include Chichibu City, Ogano Town, Kamikawa Town, Higashichichibu, Minano Town, Nagatoro Town, and Tokigawa Town.



Shared Taxis Introduced After Suspension of Bus Routes

On April 1, 2020, Tokigawa Town's bus routes were reduced as follows:

The operational bus routes are essentially four:

1. Tobu Tojo Line to Musashi-Arashiyama Station via Myokaku Station
2. Tobu Tojo Line to Musashi-Arashiyama Station via Juodomae
3. JR Hachiko Line to Ogose Station
4. Tobu Tojo Line to Ogawamachi Station via JRCS Hospital

Each route operates at approximately one-hour intervals. However, the bus route to the Ono area is suspended due to the challenging terrain in the western part of the town where about 20% of the residents reside.

To compensate for this, shared taxis provide detailed services, such as a taxi stop beyond Jiko-ji Temple, extending to Reizan-in Temple in the mountainous region.

Bus Routes to Remote Mountains Designated as Depopulated - A Case Study of Higashichichibu Village

While it's not a direct comparison to the situation in Tokigawa Town, let's delve into the mountainous terrain bordering the Ohno district, specifically the areas like Dodairasan and Kasayama in Higashichichibu Village. These areas include deep spots like Shiroishi Garage, the entrance to mountain climbing adventures. It's a valley on the opposite side of the mountain to the north of the Ono area. Unlike Tokigawa Town, Higashichichibu Village has a significantly lower population density, with around 2,000 residents, mostly

residing in the mountainous regions.

The Kaiya district in this village bears a striking resemblance to the Ono district, where Tokigawa Town discontinued its bus service. A river flows through the valley between the mountains, and there are faint signs of human habitation.

Despite being nestled deep in the mountains, Higashichichibu Village has managed to ensure a bus service as a lifeline to the remote areas through a reconsideration of its bus routes, improving profitability in the process. It's noteworthy that, similar to Tokigawa Town's structure with Seseragi Bus Center as the hub, Higashichichibu Village uses the roadside station, Washi-no-Sato, as the starting hub for route buses. The main difference lies in Higashichichibu Village not having introduced demand taxis yet.

国土交通省

地域公共交通ネットワークの形成（埼玉県東秩父村）

○和紙の里を拠点に、統一的にバス路線を見直すことで、長大な運行距離の縮減を図りながら持続可能な公共交通ネットワークの再構築を目指す。また、和紙の里の活性化と両輪で公共交通を充実させることで、住民・来訪者のおでかけに資する公共交通ネットワークを形成する。

村営バスと民間バスの統合

系統の編成を見直し

○村のまちづくりと協調した地域公共交通体系の確立

小さな拠点である和紙の里の活性化策とあわせて、おでかけの促進を図る。

○和紙の里をハブとした交通ネットワークの再構築

和紙の里を拠点にバス路線を再構築することで、長大な運行ルートであった系統などを廃止するとともに、利用実態に応じた運行回数の適正化を行うことで、効率的な運行を目指すこととしている。

収支率の改善

※道路から離れた集落に居住する住民に対しては、デマンド交通の導入を検討。（網形成計画の事業）

5

Key Points for Ensuring and Sustaining Local Public Transportation

① Private Paid Passenger Transportation System

Established in 2006, this system allows for paid transportation using private vehicles on an exception basis when bus or taxi services are not operational. Both local governments and non-profit organizations can implement this, and it operates on a registration basis rather than a business system.

② Welfare Paid Transportation System for Care Recipients and Physically Disabled Individuals

In cases where public transportation, such as taxis, fails to provide adequate services for care recipients or those with physical disabilities, non-profit organizations may operate individual transportation services using private vehicles with a capacity of 10 or fewer passengers, all within specific expense limits (information derived from Saitama Prefecture public relations materials).

③ Ride-Sharing Initiatives

This service involves matching drivers of dedicated chartered vehicles with passengers, essentially legalizing what is commonly known as white taxis. Yabu City in Hyogo Prefecture has successfully implemented the ride-sharing service "Yabukuru" over the past five and a half years. Meanwhile, Tottori Prefecture is contemplating a "Tottori-style ride share."

④ Car-Sharing

Residents in depopulated areas like Ohno, Kunugidaira, and Nishihira can leverage car-sharing practices popular in urban centers. However, the success of these initiatives heavily relies on a consensus emphasizing mutual aid and volunteer efforts by residents.

Case Study of Private Paid Passenger Transport in Hanno City

The depopulation scenario in Tokigawa Town shares similarities with the districts of Higashiagano and Agano in Hanno City (which is not designated as depopulated). Despite having a Seibu Line station, these districts lack bus services, posing challenges for residents. To address this, the non-profit organization Okumusashino Green Resort has initiated a paid transportation system utilizing private vehicles. Residents' persistent efforts, exemplified in case studies published by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism, showcase the realization of their aspirations through hands-on community involvement.

13. NPO法人奥武蔵グリーンリゾート (埼玉県飯能市) 国土交通省

関東地方 埼玉県飯能市 人口: 79,708人 平成31 (2019) 年1月1日現在 NPO法人奥武蔵グリーンリゾート 問合せ: 090-2677-4362 公共交通空白地有償運送

事業者との役割分担モデル

- バス路線や駅待ちタクシーがない吾野・東吾野地区で運行。
- 飯能市地域公共交通網形成計画で、公共交通を補完する自家用有償旅客運送の導入と位置づけた。
- 「地区内の運送」、「地区内から地区外(飯能市内)の運送」に限定することで、既存公共交通と役割分担し、双方の供給効率を担保。

運行開始時期	平成30 (2018) 年12月9日
運行形態	区域型 (運行区域を設定)
使用車両	持込6台
運送対価	距離制: 3km未満500円 (加算100円/1km)
運送対価以外の対価	待機料金: 30分未満無料 30分~60分 250円
ドライバー数 (免許)	6名 (二種0名、一種6名)

実施エリア: 吾野地区・東吾野地区 (赤線) 中心地 (青線)

導入背景

- 従前より、住民懇話会の席などで吾野・東吾野地区の公共交通サービスの必要性が話題になっていた。
- 平成23年から地域住民の組織「たすけあいあがの」が、サロン送迎、買い物ツアーのための無償の運転ボランティア事業「らくだ号」の運行を開始した。
- 無償の運転ボランティアではかなえられない個別の移動ニーズに対応するため、平成26年頃から公共交通空白地有償運送の実施に向けて動き始め、NPO法人奥武蔵グリーンリゾートを設立した。

運行状況

- 運行開始後約半年間の利用者数は、214人 (平成30年12月~令和元年6月)。
- 主要な目的地は、「吾野駅 (地区内)」、「吾野駅 (地区外)」。
- 主に地区内の高齢者が利用しており、徐々に登録者が増加している。
- 令和元年度は「飯能市公共交通空白地有償運送支援事業費補助金 (初年度事業)」(10/10補助、上限50万円) を活用している。
- 現在、利用者から隣接市の施設への移動ニーズがあり、事業範囲の拡大について検討している。

Toyama City's "Outing Commuter Pass" – Over 100 Million Yen Reduction in Medical Expenses

In documents from the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, there's a public transportation discount system called the "Outing Commuter Pass," implemented by Toyama City. The city collaborated with transportation operators to set a fare of 100 yen for round trips for seniors aged 65 and above traveling from various parts of the city to the downtown area.

With a total population of over 400,000, Toyama City has about a quarter of its seniors holding commuter passes, with approximately 2,800 individuals using them daily on average.

The resulting benefits are quite remarkable. According to Toyama City's estimates, this initiative will lead to a reduction of 112 million yen in annual medical expenses.

Why is this the case?

Using the Outing Commuter Pass leads seniors to increase their average daily steps by about 2,000, resulting in reduced susceptibility to illnesses. The affordability of riding buses or trains for just 100 yen serves as compelling evidence of its significant psychological impact, motivating elderly individuals to engage in more activities.

Shouldn't Tokigawa Town reconsider its inconvenient zone fares for its bus routes? A fare of 220 yen is an awkward amount and alone diminishes the inclination to use the service. Ignoring such psychological factors could stagnate efforts to revitalize the town.

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http://www.tgkwaraban.chigensya.jp/PDF/240130_tonainakai01.pdf
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List of hospitals and clinics near Tokigawa Town

- Arai Eye Clinic/tel:0493-74-1711/ZC:355-0328 Ogawamachi Otsuka 907-1
- Iizuka Orthopedic Clinic/tel:0493-72-3308/ZC:355-0328 Ogawamachi Otsuka 86
- Iwahori Clinic (Urology)/tel:0493-71-6601/899-2 Ogawamachi Kamiyakota ZC:355-0312
- Uchida Clinic (Internal Medicine)/tel:0493-72-0516/ 149-3 Otsuka, Ogawamachi, ZC:355-0328
- Ohno Clinic (Rheumatology/Allergy)/tel:0493-74-1868/491 Ogawamachi Ogawa ZC:355-0321
- Ogawa Red Cross Hospital (general)/tel:0493-72-2333/ 1525 Ogawa, Ogawa-machi, ZC:355-0321
- Ogawa Hospital (General)/tel:0493-73-2750/205 Harakawa, Ogawa-machi, ZC:355-0317
- Kinoshita Clinic (Diabetes Internal Medicine)/tel:0493-72-0375/660 Otsuka, Ogawa-machi, ZC:355-0328
- Takano Clinic (Internal Medicine)/tel:0493-72-0045/103 Otsuka, Ogawamachi, ZC:355-0328
- Kobayashi Internal Medicine Clinic (Nephrology)/tel:0493-81-3902/930-1 Otsuka, Ogawamachi, ZC:355-0328
- Sakura Orthopedic Clinic/tel:0493-71-6411/2-10-4 Ogawamachi Midorigaoka 335-0315
- Satsuki Internal Medicine Clinic/tel:0493-71-6050/471-1 Ogawamachi Ogawa ZC:355-0321
- Sanada Hospital (Cardiology)/tel:0493-72-8020/2-2-2 Midorigaoka, Ogawa-machi, 335-0315
- Otolaryngology Nozaki Clinic/tel:0493-72-0389/ 1149-1 Otsuka, Ogawamachi, ZC:355-0328
- Suzuki Clinic (Dermatology)/tel:0493-72-1215/ 1194-3 Ogawamachi Koshizuka ZC:355-0327
- Segawa Hospital (Surgery/Neurology)/tel:0493-72-0328/30-1 Ogawamachi Otsuka ZC:355-0328
- Taguchi Clinic (otolaryngology)/tel:0493-72-1036/ 88-1 Ogawa-machi Ogawa ZC:355-0321
- Tanaka Eye Clinic/tel:0493-72-0304/ZC:355-0328 Ogawamachi Otsuka 1180-1
- Nakamura Obstetrics and Gynecology / tel:0493-72-0373 / 1176-1 Otsuka, Ogawamachi, ZC:355-0328
- Nozaki Clinic (Surgery/Internal Medicine/Physical Checkup)/tel:0493-72-0101/1439 Ogawamachi Aoyama ZC:355-0324
- Park Hill Clinic (Internal Medicine/Allergy)/tel:0493-74-4125/3-9-1 Higashi Ogawa, Ogawa-machi, ZC:355-0322
- Hara Clinic (Internal Medicine)/tel:0493-72-0362/86 Otsuka, Ogawamachi, ZC:355-0328
- Miyazaki Clinic (Obstetrics and Gynecology, Pediatrics)/tel:0493-72-2233/285 Otsuka, Ogawamachi, ZC:355-0328
- Yanagisawa Clinic (Gastroenterology, Hepatology)/tel:0493-72-0024/21-7 Otsuka, Ogawamachi, ZC:355-0328
- Shimizu Pediatric Allergy Clinic/tel:0493-61-2431/ 512-1 Sugaya, Arashiyama-cho, ZC:355-0221
- Nozaki Clinic (Gastroenterology/Proctology)/tel:0493-61-1810/693 Senjudo, Arashiyama-cho, ZC:355-0227
- Watanabe Obstetrics and Gynecology (Chinese medicine/Pediatrics)/tel:0493-62-5885/249-98 Sugaya, Arashiyama-cho, ZC:355-0221
- Hatoyama Daiichi Clinic (Internal Medicine/Pediatrics)/tel:049-296-6800/3-7-2 Matsugaoka, Hatoyama-cho, 350-0313
- Fukushima Internal Medicine (Cardiovascular Medicine/Pediatrics)/tel:049-298-0600/4-17-8 Kaedegaoka, Hatoyama-cho, 350-0314
- Asami Hospital (Psychiatry/Romantic Medicine)/tel:049-296-1155/1066 Ohashi, Hatoyama-cho, 350-0302
- Kinosato Clinic (internal medicine/home medical treatment)/tel:0493-66-0770/ZC:355-0355Tokigawacho Baba 50-1
- Kodama Clinic (Internal Medicine)/tel:0493-65-0147/ZC:355-0361186 Momoki, Tokigawa-cho
- Tamagawa Clinic (Internal Medicine)/tel:0493-66-0128/ZC:355-03431267-1 Gomei, Tokigawa Town
- Nanbu Internal Medicine Clinic (Internal Medicine)/tel:0493-67-0438/ZC:355-0364Tokigawa-cho Oaza Nishidaira 643-1
- Hajikawa Clinic (Gastroenterology, Cardiology, Respiratory)/tel:0493-65-0043/ZC:355-0354Tokigawa-cho Bansho 295
- Iruma District General Hospital
- Ogose Medical Clinic (General)/tel:049-277-1119/ 199-1 Kuroiwa, Ogose-cho, Iruma-gun, ZC:350-0411
- Saitama Medical University Hospital (General)/tel:049-276-1111/38 Morohongo, Moroyama-cho, Iruma-gun, ZC:350-0495