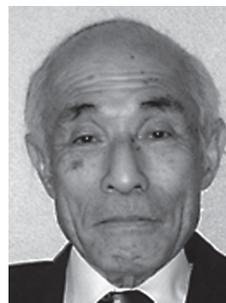


Imperial Prize and Japan Academy Prize to:

Senzo HIDEMURA

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*for Agriculture and Society at the Last
Stage of Satsuma Feudal Fief—A Study
of Moriya Family, a Rural Warrior in
Kōyama-Gō—*

***Outline of the work:***

Prof. Hidemura's work focuses on the household of Moriya, an upper-ranking *gōshi* (country samurai) family that lived at *Kōyama-Gō* (a rural district) in Osumi Province of the Satsuma Fief (currently the eastern part of Kagoshima Prefecture) during the late Edo Period. Providing a highly detailed and comprehensive examination of the state of both villages and family life in that era, Hidemura's work lays the foundations for elucidating tangible aspects of villages in the Satsuma Fief. Exercising considerable power within each *gō*, the *gōshi* formed there a community made up of several hundred members. Coming under the direct control of the *gōshi*, the peasants in villages were low in status, so that historical records of Satsuma villages are not found in the houses of farmers, but have often been handed down in the houses of *gōshi*, who were also landowners. There remained in the Moriya house many important historical documents such as family diaries and crop cultivation records. Using these materials in reference with historical documents handed down through other powerful *gōshi* families, Hidemura was able to piece together a detailed profile of the internal structure of one family in one *gō*. It was, in this manner, his goal to provide a "point of observation" for understanding life in the Satsuma Fief. For that purpose, he endeavored to place his work within the framework of research conducted on the subject to date.

While his research was oriented to the agrarian village in the Satsuma Fief, he began this treatise with an examination of Satsuma as one type of fief within the era's feudal system, in opposition to a tendency to view the Satsuma Fief as a region with unique characteristics. Some researchers had classified fiefs into various regional groupings, including northeastern, middle and southwestern. Hidemura, however, proposed a new type, a circularly configured group of fiefs which constituted the southwestern border area of Japan. It ran from southern Shikoku (the Tosa Fief) to fiefs in southern Kyushu (e.g., Satsuma) and in western Kyushu (e.g., Saga, Hirado), and extended on to the Tsushima Fief and the Choshu Fief. He found that all of these fiefs had common structural elements, including a genealogy of *daimyo* (feudal lords) that extended back to the Warring States Period and that, while adapted to the shogunate's fief protocol, their *gōshi* systems were left in various forms, imbuing these fiefs with considerable power. This group of fiefs includes Satsuma, Choshu, Tosa and Saga, which played a major role in leading the revolution that brought about the Meiji Restoration. As such, Hidemura's concept, though a hypothesis, blazes a creative new path to elucidating issues germane to the societal infrastructure in late Edo — early Meiji history.

Heretofore, there have been numerous studies related to the Satsuma Fief. Before World War II, most of them were focused on the political history or the system of the fief. It was not until after the war that researchers began taking a closer look at the history of the fief's villages. However, due to a

paucity of historical records, these studies have not necessarily elucidated the actual state of those villages. Most of researchers studying the Satsuma Fief have come from within Kagoshima Prefecture. Being from Fukuoka Prefecture, Hidemura sought to conduct a strictly objective study, one in which he painstakingly delved into the history of one family in one *gō*. Given the huge volume of historical materials he gathered from the Moriya household and through extensive ancillary surveys, such a study would normally be carried out as joint research project. With strong determination, however, Hidemura took on this formidable task by himself. Spending a half century starting from around 1950 on this research, he succeeded in compiling a massive body of original work. In doing his exploratory fieldwork, Hidemura contacted and interviewed a great many local residents. Though he, himself, was from outside the prefecture, he was able to establish close relations with the local people, who would offer him lodging and other conveniences. Among the elderly residents he surveyed, however, those born in early Meiji and those born around the 20th year of Meiji had already developed differing recollections. Worse yet, the elderly folk whom he was surveying began dying off one after another. As it so happened, he experienced the last stage of when interviews and fieldwork on the Meiji period history of the region could be effectively conducted.

Besides holding various executive positions within the *gō*, the *gōshi* received tenures of land and were permitted to levy taxes on farmers living inside their tenurial lands. They also controlled agricultural affairs on the land they owned. The cultivation records of the Moriya family, particularly the entries for 1864, provide a clear picture of the state of agricultural management at that time. One salient entry showed that about two-thirds of an approximately 2.7-acre tilled plot was not used as a paddy for white rice seedlings but rather as a wet field in which red rice seeds were hand scattered. The elder farmers remembered laboring in these fields as being very harsh work. They also recalled that dry field crops, such as sweet potato and tobacco, were almost exclusively for home consumption.

Regarding the system of farm labor, the 1864 document recorded the work done each day and the names of the people who performed it. Mainly those on the bottom rung of the village's social ladder (*genin*) did this work. The labor system was a subject that Hidemura considered important even when doing surveys in other regions. As for the *Kōyama-Gō*, he conducted a very detailed analysis of it, and found that there existed many kinds of *genin*. Among *genin*, there were even cases of two families which were given their own houses and lands to cultivate. Others were indentured servants or daily hires. It was this sort of multi-layered labor force, which in a broad sense constituted a "master-servant" relationship, that the Moriya family is conjectured to have used to support their farming operation and livelihood.

Hidemura's work covered a wide variety of other points, including the *shūmon-aratame* system, which required all persons of the fief to register their commitment to Buddhism (vis-à-vis Christianity) once a year. Another of these points was kinship. It might be thought that Hidemura's work on the Japanese agrarian village is similar to that in Aruga Kizaemon's monograph published in 1939. Whereas Aruga advanced a consanguinity theory of the traditional agrarian society, Hidemura's approach, however, emphasized the relationship among a group of relatives. A consanguineous family is as a group bound by the genealogies of the head and branch families. Being of samurai status, however, *gōshi* in the Satsuma Fief could not easily create branch families. The Moriya records show that it took 26 years (from 1815-41) for the second son to form a branch family. They also describe the concrete process in which this was done. The number of branch families in a *gō* was few. It was a group of head family relatives, rather than a head-branch family group, who conducted family rituals, such as the observance of ancestral ceremonies. Such a group would include members introduced into the head family by marriage or adoption through marriage. Women, therefore, served as a node for bringing new members into

the family. Whereas the consanguineous family is tied together through the genealogy of the male members, Hidemura points out that the relative group constituted around the head family does not differentiate between the male and female lines. He conjectures that this important function of the female members gave them a high social status. These elucidations on the traditional family system offer an effective tool for better grasping the structure of Japanese society.

As Prof. Hidemura's work has provided deep insights and made landmark contributions to a cross-section of related academic fields, he is eminently qualified to receive the Japan Academy Prize.