

«Note»

A Village Headman's Network and the Ideology of “National Interest”

Kō Ochiai

(Received on October 6, 2011)

Ikegami Tarōzaemon (池上太郎左衛門, also 池上幸豊, 1718–1798) was the headman of Daishikawara village in the domain of Kawasaki (today's Kawasaki in Kanagawa prefecture). In his role as village head, as well as being involved in village administration, he promoted two major projects as his life's work. One was a landfill project known as 'the reclamation of new farmland from the sea': Daishikawara village bordered the coast, and he sought to increase the available farmland by developing new fields out of the ocean. This had already been a project undertaken by generations of the Ikegami family, even before Tarōzaemon. His second project was the domestic production of sugar. He promoted the cultivation of sugar cane and the refinement of white sugar, making his goal the self-sufficient domestic production of sugar, which previously could only be produced in Ryukyu. In the course of this domestic sugar production initiative, Ikegami traveled to villages throughout the entire country, leading to the widespread cultivation of sugar cane throughout Japan in the late Edo period.

This paper aims to address two main questions. Firstly, under a hierarchical class society like the *baku-han* system, how did someone in the role of village official (falling squarely into the 'farmer' social class) manage to implement a program of national relevance like domestic sugar production? Secondly, what were the social networks that supported Ikegami Tarōzaemon in this effort? I will clarify the nature of these networks, and also their significance for the

history of the period.

1 Background on domestic sugar production

Raw silk and sugar are well-known as products that were originally imported but became domestically produced by the *bakumatsu* period. In particular, raw silk production developed until it even became a major export with the *bakumatsu* opening of the ports.

As is well-known, a *sakoku* (closed country) policy was imposed in the Tokugawa period. Goods necessary to daily life were mainly produced domestically, with any lack made up through import. Since methods of sugar production were not known in the early Edo period, sugar had to be imported.

On the other hand, from the mid-Edo period onward, demand for sugar spread beyond the samurai class to include every level of society, and this increased demand led to an increase in imports. Japan's exports at this time were gold and silver; but as the Japanese economy grew, domestic gold and silver were not sufficient, and there was reason to look for a new policy.

To cope with the expanding scale of the economy and the lack of gold and silver, the *bakufu* adopted a policy of allowing domains to print their own money. But ultimately this proved ineffective, and was replaced by a policy of expanding domestic production of goods.

Trade policies were first implemented in the time of Arai Hakuseki and the 'Shōtoku policies'. In 1715, in order to limit the exports of silver, a law was issued limiting Chinese ships to thirty per year with 6000 *kanme* of silver, and Dutch ships to two per year, with 3000 *kanme* of silver.

In the Kyōhō period (1716–36), with the policies of Tokugawa Yoshimune, the domestic cultivation of medicinal plants was encouraged; Korean ginseng was grown successfully in Fukiage Garden on the grounds of Edo castle, and its cultivation then spread widely throughout the country. Sweet potato cultivation

for purposes of famine relief also spread through the country in this period.

The cultivation of cane sugar had already been considered in the Genroku period (1688–1704), and in the Shōtoku period (1711–16) under Arai Hakuseki, there was a move to more concrete research including asking Dutch and Ryukyū sources about growing methods. In the Kyōhō period (1716–36), under the eighth shogun Yoshimune, medicinal plant research was encouraged and the production of cane sugar took concrete shape. Then, in the Hōreki period (1751–64) brown and white sugar cultivation became possible, and in the Meiwa period (1764–72) plans were made for the domestic development of sugar production.

One could say that in each of these periods policy-makers both inherited and also at the same time critiqued the policies of previous eras. But if we look at this from the perspective of how domestic production policies developed for various goods, there is a progression from insufficient gold and silver, to failed attempts at currency reform, to trade restrictions and a move toward domestic production of certain goods (medicinal plants, famine-relief crops, which were first produced experimentally in Edo and then spread to elsewhere in the country), to the widespread production and trade management of various goods – a progression which, though the political methods may be different, reflects an overall policy trend towards domestic production. And in fact, there were many goods for which a shift to domestic production was successfully carried out.

Against this historical background, there appeared the figure of Ikegami Tarōzaemon, the Daishikawara village head who undertook the task of domestic sugar production. Ikegami was born in 1718, and received permission to use a surname and carry a sword in 1768. Among his particular projects were 'the reclamation of new farmland from the sea' and 'the spread of sugar throughout the country'; declaring that "if people increase and land does not, naturally resources will not suffice," he claimed that "the development of new farmland is

the first priority in the national interest.” He argued that the development of new farmland was in the national interest, since it would enlarge the national territory and absorb the subsistence class. On bringing methods of sugar cultivation to the entire country, he explained “eight years ago, in Hōreki 10 (1760) we received some sugar-cane sprouts and made experimental plantings, and the sugar cane grew strong and healthy. Spreading this method of cultivation to all provinces is in the national interest.” That is, by establishing sugar cane cultivation through the country, it would be possible to reduce gold and silver exports, which would be in the national interest. Within this ideology of national interest, the goal was to grow produce that was better suited to the land; clearly we see a departure from the long-held feudal framework that was content so long as farmers grew the ‘five-grain’ staple crops and paid their yearly tax. Informed by this ideology of national interest, Ikegami Tarōzaemon promoted the development of new farmland and the domestic production of sugar.

2 Three social networks

That a village head like Ikegami Tarōzaemon, a member of the peasant class, was able to promote the domestic production of sugar based on the ideology of national interest was because he had various social networks that reflect the nature of his era. I will discuss this point from three angles: the network that worked towards domestic sugar production, the network that advocated for the ideology of national interest, and the political network promoting domestic sugar production.

The network working towards domestic sugar production included herbalists, scholars of medicine, and scientists. Herbalists often had experience planting and cultivating plants with medical value, and were often also medical scholars. Starting with groups like the Edo Medicinal Goods Association 東都薬品会,

they held many exhibits of medicinal goods, which also facilitated networking. Unfortunately, Ikegami Tarōzaemon's name cannot be confirmed on the lists of any of these associations, but he did interact with Tamura Ransui and Hiraga Gennai, who hosted such groups. Indeed, it was Tamura Ransui who recommended Ikegami to undertake the cultivation of sugar cane. Ikegami's close associate Tamura Ransui was originally a doctor, but in 1737, at age 20, he received seeds to grow Korean ginseng from the eighth shogun Tokugawa Yoshimune; he wrote a treatise on ginseng, and became the key expert on Korean ginseng. Ikegami also had many interactions with Tamura's student, the famous Hiraga Gennai; it was in Tamura's home that they first met.

Next is the network advocating the national-interest ideology. Ikegami Tarōzaemon enjoyed waka poetry, and with the introduction of Narushima Dōchiku he studied with the Reizei school. In April 1746, he was approved as Reizei Tamemura's student and achieved his debut. His instructor of waka poetry was Narushima Dōchiku, who was active in the eighth shogun Yoshimune's government; for example, when messengers came from Korea, he was present while Yoshimune questioned them. In 1720, he entered Reizei Tametsuna's school. His relationship with Ikegami Tarōzaemon was not simply that of waka teacher and student; he also fostered Ikegami's adopted daughter. He taught that "to expand the national territory, develop farmland, produce grain, and support the citizens is to enrich Japan," and that "one should not only follow the Buddha teachings, but should also consider how to make use of land and water" – giving advice that aimed to foster production of goods as well as moral virtue.

Thirdly, he drew on a political network promoting domestic sugar production. Ikegami Tarōzaemon had connections with the statesman Tanuma Okitsugu. For example, in the third month of 1769 he mentioned to Tanuma that he had requested a place to plant sugar cane from the office of Ina Hanzaemon 伊奈半

左衛門役所 but received no reply; in the fourth month, he was granted land to plant on just as he had hoped, and thanked Tanuma, “on the twentieth the land was granted – thank you very much.” Similarly, he thanked Tanuma when he received permission to travel around various villages spreading the methods of sugar cultivation. In this way, through the powerful political figure Tanuma Okitsugu he was able to gain permission for several of the conditions that made domestic sugar production possible.

Conclusion

As seen above, in promoting the domestic production of sugar, Ikegami Tarōzaemon was supported by three social networks. One was a network of scientific experts; herbalists and medical scholars like Tamura Ransui and Hiraga Gennai who could pass on practical knowledge and techniques. Another was a network of more abstract thinkers like Narushima Dōchiku, who were able to back up their actions with ideology. And lastly, there was the network of politicians, led by Tanuma Okitsugu, who used their political power in support of developing domestic production. It was in alignment with Tanuma’s attitude of support for domestic production, and with his political power as key support, that Ikegami Tarōzaemon promoted the domestic production of sugar.

That is to say, the domestic production of sugar was promoted by social networks that transcended class lines, involving intellectuals (townspeople, merchants, and samurai), village officials (of the peasant class), and powerful politicians (domain leaders and samurai). The fact that, rather than being encouraged from above by domain leaders, the domestic production of sugar was undertaken by a commoner like Ikegami Tarōzaemon reflects the support of these networks.

Unfortunately, due to the Tenmei famine, Tanuma Okitsugu was forced to resign. The new figure who appeared as key policy-maker was the lord of

Kō Ochiai: A Village Headman's Network and the Ideology of "National Interest"
Shirakawa domain, Matsudaira Sadanobu. Matsudaira Sadanobu was born into the Tayasu cadet branch of the shogunal family, but adopted by the lord of Shirakawa domain, Matsudaira Sadakuni. His policies reflected a conservative return to politics that emphasized scholarly and martial pursuits and were centered on the samurai class.

(translation, Jenny Guest.)

本論は、2011年8月にタリン大学 (Tallinn University in Estonia) で開催された、The 13th International Conference of EAJS (European Association for Japanese Studies) で報告したものである。翻訳していただいた Jenny Guest さんには心より謝意を申し上げたい。

なお、本論は2010年度科学研究費補助金「近世中後期国益思想の研究」(研究課題番号22530200) の成果の一部である。