1997

Damming the Agatsuma River| An exploration of changing space and place in Kawarayu, Japan

Michael Edward Gorton

The University of Montana

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd

Recommended Citation

https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/1972
Permission is granted by the author to reproduce this material in its entirety, provided that this material is used for scholarly purposes and is properly cited in published works and reports.

** Please check "Yes" or "No" and provide signature **

Yes, I grant permission \( \times \)
No, I do not grant permission

Author's Signature \( \text{Michael E. Lott} \)

Date \( \text{July 1, 1997} \)

Any copying for commercial purposes or financial gain may be undertaken only with the author's explicit consent.
DAMMING THE AGATSUMA RIVER:
AN EXPLORATION OF CHANGING SPACE AND PLACE
IN KAWARAYU, JAPAN

By

Michael Edward Gorton

B.J., The University of Missouri-Columbia, 1990

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

The University of Montana

1997

Approved by

Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

Date
The rural hot-spring community of Kawarayu is locked in a forty-year struggle with Japan’s most powerful government agency — the Ministry of Construction — over reconstruction and compensation related to the construction of Yamba Dam. At stake is the village’s very livelihood and character. What has the community done to maintain its sense of geographical identity? Will the village be able to successfully rebuild? These are the broad questions behind this exploration of changing space and place.

In tracing these broader questions, this research weaves together many smaller threads. It considers Japan’s water-resource situation, and why the government says the country needs Yamba Dam. It looks at citizen protest and also the unique cultural characteristics shaping attachments to place in rural Japan. The background of the Kawarayu’s protest is another important strand, as are the measures the community has taken to preserve its identity. Some problems facing the future of reconstruction are also discussed.

The original hypothesis was that strong ties to place, driven by cultural and geographical factors, fueled the protest against the government over Yamba Dam. Further exploration of the issues revealed, however, that it is not so simple. Discontent within the community regarding the Ministry of Construction’s methods of implementing construction plans has fueled further opposition.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Of the many people to whom I should like to express my gratitude for help in this project, the first is Julia Keffer, as it was she who introduced me to the people of Nagano, sparking my interest in Japan and Asia.

Next, I should like to thank all of the people in the Nagano Town Hall and in the Kawarayu community who gave of themselves to help me gather the information for this project. Of these, I should like to mention Mayor Tamura Mamoru, Ichimura Satoshi, Takebuchi Tsuyoshi, Tomioka Hideaki, Hida Tomijiro, and Takeda Hiroe, all to whom I owe a special debt of gratitude.

I am deeply grateful as well to Toshiharu and Kazuko Yamaguchi for accepting Julia and I into their home while I carried out my fieldwork.

I should also like to thank my committee members for their guidance and support through the research process: Jeffrey Gritzner, Chair; Evan Denney; Judith Rabinovitch; Philip West.

The staff at Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center has also been very supportive of my studies. I should like to thank the Mansfield Center for financially supporting my study through a half-time graduate assistantship.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................................. ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................... iii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ........................................ v
LIST OF TABLES ...................................................... vi

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION ..................................................... 1
2. TALE OF A HOT SPRING VILLAGE .............................. 9
3. CITIZEN PROTEST AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DEBATE . 22
4. LEGACIES OF PROTEST ........................................... 37
5. QUESTIONS OF RECONSTRUCTION ....................... 51
6. CONCLUSIONS ..................................................... 68

APPENDIX .............................................................. 74
REFERENCES CITED .................................................. 75
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Naganohara's Location in Japan and East Asia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Ten Villages of Naganohara</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Kawarayu Area</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The Yamba Dam Reservoir</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Selected Reconstruction Costs Associated with Yamba Dam</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Proposed Goals, Guides, and Devices for Rebuilding Kawarayu</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In 1952, the Ministry of Construction announced plans for Yamba Dam on the Agatsuma River. Its reservoir would flood all or part of five districts of Naganohara Town, including the hot-spring village of Kawarayu. Through a long and bitter struggle with the Ministry of Construction, Naganohara negotiated the right to rebuild the town. This study focuses upon the protest against Yamba Dam and the measures the people have taken to maintain their community after the dam is constructed.¹

The story about Yamba Dam began for me forty years after it began for Naganohara, when my wife, Julia Keffer, and I moved to the community from Montana in 1992. She worked teaching English in the junior high and elementary schools. I eventually started working in the Planning and Tourism Section of the Naganohara Town Hall. At the outset, neither of us spoke Japanese. Learning the language became a priority living in this rural community of seven thousand where few spoke English. Despite the barriers to communication, Julia and I felt accepted by the community. We worked hard to develop a sense of place for ourselves. It was during our long weekend walks through the villages in all seasons that we came to appreciate the quiet

¹ The fifty-two-square-mile Naganohara Town was incorporated during the Meiji reforms of 1888. Ten villages, including Kawarayu, were brought together under one administrative roof based in the centrally located village of Naganohara. Figure 1 shows the location of Naganohara Town. Figure 2 shows the locations of the ten villages constituting Naganohara Town.
Figure 1: Nagano noha's Location in Japan and East Asia
Figure 2: The Ten Villages of NaganoHara

Legend

Highway

Scale

0 1 2 3 Km

north

Otsu
NaganoHara
Haneo
Yokiya
Okuwa
Kitakaruizawa
beauty of Kawarayu and the warm spirit of the people who lived there. Because of my own growing personal attachment to the place, the purpose of my exploration was to learn how the people of Nagano-hara were responding to the threat of the dam.

This research is in many ways connected to the kind of explorations the National Research Council refers to in its 1997 book, Rediscovering Geography. The book outlines how geographers are exploring interrelated economic, social, political, and cultural processes to study how those “processes affect the evolution of particular places.” The National Research Council points to a body of work that:

. . . devotes considerable effort to understanding how space and place mediate the interrelations between individual actions and evolving economic, political, social, and cultural patterns and arrangements and how spatial configurations are themselves constructed through such processes.²

My methods of exploring these questions are qualitative humanistic analysis as outlined by William Norton.³ I had planned to incorporate quantitative methods as well into my research methodology. I was prepared to execute a questionnaire aimed at tracking changing attitudes toward Yamba Dam. While as a foreigner I really have my own special niche in the community; I still owe an allegiance to the Town Hall where I once worked. When early in my fieldwork my former colleague Ichimura Satoshi said my

---


written questionnaire could make unnecessary waves in the community, I was disappointed yet felt an obligation to honor his opinion.

As a result, the primary data used are tape-recorded interviews, government maps, planning documents, surveys, and Naganohara Town Council records. The interviews were collected during fieldwork in January 1997, but many of the relationships that formed the trust necessary for these conversations were established over the three years that I worked as a sister-city coordinator. I used a basic set of questions to ensure a structured interview, but I did not hesitate to vary the format depending upon the informant and the dynamics of the interview. (For a general questionnaire, please see the Appendix.) In short, my methods were to talk with and listen to the people. The interviews lasted anywhere from between fifteen minutes to three hours. I used these tape recordings to complement the notes that I took during the conversations.

Although all of Naganohara Town will be affected by the dam, this study focuses on Kawarayu, the hot-spring community. This community will be completely submerged by the dam, and it is the nucleus of the strongest citizen protests against the project. The interviews represent as many different sides of the issue as possible. I focused first upon government officials in both the Town Office and the Ministry of Construction connected with the Yamba Dam project. From Kawarayu, I interviewed hotel owners, restaurant owners, firemen, beauticians, and company employees. Each of the three Kawarayu neighborhoods was represented in the interviews. Beginning by first interviewing acquaintances, I used these people to network new contacts. Two
books published in 1996 by Kawarayu residents about the Yamba Dam protest formed the core of my secondary data. I also used newspaper clippings, magazine articles and books.

The process of exploring the issue of Yamba Dam began with the experience of living in Naganohara. As I began my fieldwork, I thought that my relationships might prevent me from exploring the issue as fully as I should like. There are strong tensions in the community between anyone associated with the government and the villagers affected by the dam. When I entered Kawarayu and sat down to drink tea again with the people I had visited with so often before, I could see that the relationships I had established would be invaluable. As a result of this trust, over the course of the interviews I was invited to participate in the Yukake Matsuri, the village's winter festival. Participating in that festival of renewal was something that I could give back to the community.

My position as an American outsider with inside connections served me well. While I expected some reluctance to discuss the dam issue, a painful subject for many, nearly everyone with whom I talked seemed frank and open. I felt privileged that they had allowed me insight into their lives. This access changed my views of the issues. I began my research expecting clearly defined boundaries between the villagers fighting to maintain their way of life and a bulldozing government. When I returned to Montana after finishing the fieldwork, I could see that it was not so simple.

There are many points of tension surrounding Yamba Dam in the Kawarayu community. Grassroots citizen protest is a driving force in
reshaping and rebuilding the Kawarayu community with the coming of Yamba Dam. This thesis is an exploration of the cultural, historical, political, and environmental sources of these tensions connected with the construction of Yamba Dam. It explores the two main sources of this protest. The first is a traditional bond to the land and community reinforced by cultural and historical factors. The second source of protest is anger over the government’s methods of implementing the Yamba Dam project.

As well as the protest, the research explores other related threads, including parallels between the Kawarayu experience and the experience surrounding the construction of other large public-works projects. Other related issues include environmental considerations and the impact of heightened environmental awareness in Japan on the Yamba Dam project.

On one hand, an aura of pessimism surrounds the future of the Kawarayu. Running through the background of nearly all my conversations with the people of Kawarayu, however, is a thread of optimism about rebuilding their community. Their hopefulness is perhaps best expressed by geographer Yi-Fu Tuan in his 1977 book *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. He notes that although destruction of home and hearth may thoroughly demoralize a people, human beings’ strong recuperative powers should not be dismissed. “Cosmic views can be adjusted to suit new circumstances. With the destruction of one ‘center of the world,’ another can be built next to it, or in another location all together, and it in turn becomes the ‘center of the world.’”

---

4 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 150.
The schedule for completing Yamba Dam is uncertain. In January 1997, officials said the new target for completion of the project is 2006. With the continual delays, it seems likely that another generation will pass before Kawarayu is rebuilt. When it does happen, rebuilding will be a complex undertaking. It will require a complete commitment of mind and body from the villagers to put the architectural spaces they envisaged into a material form that captures the Kawarayu ideal. The knowledge that there is a younger generation bridging the rifts in the community who will lead the community through the reconstruction process somehow makes the prospects for Kawarayu seem brighter.

---

5 Tuan, *Space and Place*, 106.
CHAPTER 2
THE TALE OF A HOT SPRING VILLAGE

All-but-naked men, women, and children stood shivering in the January twentieth pre-dawn cold. Wearing only loincloths and tabi-socks, they carried buckets of steaming hot spring water. The narrow streets bordered by a steep mountain on the south and hotels on the north were lit by bamboo torches and television lights.

Onlookers crowding the hillside above and the winding streets below sipped sake. On the stage above the main source of Kawarayu Hot Spring, two of the loincloth-clad men delivered a barrel of the spring water to a Shintō priest, who, his back to the crowd, chanted a prayer, waving a rice paper wand to chase away the evil spirits. To his right side were the drummers, now quiet, but whose stirring performance had earlier opened the ceremony. Standing to the priest’s left were Naganoheara Mayor Tamura Mamoru and Utsuka Koichi, director of the Ministry of Construction’s Yamba Dam Construction Office.

The offering now having been made to the hot-spring god, the festival participants split into two teams, one group carrying the water from the source southward toward Kawarayu’s Shintō Shrine, the other taking the

---

6 Japanese names are presented in Japanese order, which is surname first, except in footnotes referring to Japanese authors of publications in English.
water northward to a public bath. The participants ran down the frozen streets carrying buckets and torches to light their way. Once their cold mission had been accomplished, all crowded into the baths to warm up and refill their buckets in the source beneath the stage. Then, once again, the teams gathered on the frigid street above, and under the full attention of the cameramen waited while a caged chicken was brought forth for the next act. The bird was doused in hot water and then the street suddenly erupted into a full-blown water fight.

The narrow street was filled quickly with steam from the hot water. If it cleared enough to see, more buckets of hot water were thrown, engulfing the scene once again in a deep fog. Taking turns between warming up in the hot-spring bath and joining the battle on the streets, the teams continued to splash each other, keeping a steady stream of hot water flowing. Forty-five minutes later, the battle concluded with a finale for the television cameras. By that time the streets were empty of onlookers, who had all returned to their hotels for more sake, breakfast, and perhaps more rest under their warm futon.

This is the Yukake Matsuri. In Japanese it means literally the "festival of throwing hot-spring water." To the people of Kawarayu, it is the glue that binds past, present and future. The festival is said to have started one cold winter day four hundred years ago when the hot spring suddenly dried up. The locals were understandably upset. They associated the sulfuric odor of the hot spring with boiled eggs and decided that the hot spring's deity was unhappy, and wanted a chicken to lay eggs. According to the legend, upon sacrificing a chicken, the water began to flow again. In celebration, the
delighted residents began throwing water on each other. Now, every year in
the pre-dawn hours of January 20th, said to be the coldest day of the year, the
ancestors of those original Kawarayuans celebrate the hot spring that gives
the community its life as a tourist town. In the second half of the twentieth
century, the survival of Kawarayu has become threatened.

The success of Japan's cities and factories that has built the country
into the world's second largest economy threatens the Kawarayu hot spring
and the ancient traditions that residents hold dear. The Agatsuma River that
flows at the foot of the village is a tributary of the Tone River that flows
through the Kanto Plain, home to thirty million people. The Ministry of
Construction's official presence at the festival is a solemn reminder of the
plans for the dam just downstream of Kawarayu. Demand for water and
concerns about flood control led the Japanese government to plan a system of
dams on the Tone River system that includes Yamba Dam. Not only will
Kawarayu be flooded, but four other neighboring districts in Naganohara Town
will also be directly affected.

It is remarkable that for forty years this small rural community has
waged a successful campaign against the Ministry of Construction, thought to
be the country's most powerful governmental arm, first against the dam and
then on the issue of relocation and compensation. 7 The result is a

7 In terms of budget allocations, for fiscal year 1995, public works
accounted for 11.4 percent of Japan's budget. The construction industry
accounts for nearly ten percent of all employed people in Japan. Michiyasu
Yoshimune, ed., Japan Almanac (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbun Publishing
Company, 1995), 97.
comprehensive reconstruction plan aimed at preserving the livelihood of the hot-spring community. The question now is whether Kawarayu and the other affected districts can survive reconstruction. The talk among residents is that at least half of the community will move away. Others worry whether tourists will visit a new Kawarayu. Whatever the outcome, one thing is for certain: grassroots citizen protest is the predominate force creating a sense of place in the new Kawarayu.

Seven years after World War II ended, Japan's Ministry of Construction announced the plan to build Yamba Dam, in effect sentencing Kawarayu to sink forever beneath its reservoir. Bound to their land by long history and traditions, and angry at the government, the townspeople rose up in protest. They fought the government for three decades before agreeing to "no-sacrifice" reconstruction terms. Despite the community's effort, there is a sacrifice. The quiet character of the hot-spring village will be forever changed. After decades of delay, construction crews began initial construction for the 436-foot-high Yamba Dam in 1994. The details of the reconstruction plan will be explored more fully in Chapter 5.

That Kawarayu people have strong ties to their village is the result of several factors. Among those is the isolated geography of the village. It is far removed from Japan's industrial centers and the forces of modernization that have shaped the urban Japan the world is most familiar with. The community's long history undoubtedly contributes to strong attachments as well. Most of the village's hotel owners can trace their roots back into the Tokugawa Period. As already noted, the beginnings of the Yukake Matsuri
Figure 3: The Kawarayu Area

Legend

- Agatsuma River
- Japan National Railways Agatsuma Line
- Route 145
- Secondary Roads

Contour Interval is 10 meters

Scale

0  500  1000 meters

[Diagram of the Kawarayu Area with key locations and contours]
Figure 4: The Yamba Dam Reservoir

Source: "Yamba Damu," a Ministry of Construction pamphlet
date back about four hundred years, though memory of the exact date has been lost. The village location itself is vital, as the community's livelihood depends in great part upon the twenty thousand tourists who come annually to stay in the hotels and soak in the hot-spring waters.

While this study explores the human impact of Yamba Dam on Kawarayu, this tale of a hot-spring town is only a part of a much bigger drama on a larger stage. Locally, each of the five affected districts has to grapple with the same issues of space, place, and identity. Nationally, since the end of World War II there have been over 25,000 people relocated to make way for sixty-two general purpose Ministry of Construction dams, averaging 403 people per dam. Throughout the country, nearly equal in size to the state of Montana, there are an estimated five thousand dams. The necessity of dams is heatedly discussed at the national level. In some cases, like that of the Nagara River, the drama has spilled into the international press, as well.

Yamba Dam affects all of Nagano Town. The five districts of Kawarayu, Kawarahata, Hayashi, Yokokabe, and Naganohara along the Agatsuma River in the northern part of the town are the most affected. More far-reaching impacts, such as the influx of construction workers, will be felt even in Kitakaruizawa on the flank of the active volcano Mount Asama.

Kawarayu was chosen as the focus of this research for three reasons. First is that it is one of two villages that will be completely relocated, the other being Kawarahata. The other three directly affected districts will retain at least

---

some of their original form. Second is that as the nucleus of the protest movement, it led the entire Nagano-hara Town against the dam. Lastly, it was chosen because of my familiarity with the district.

The rugged topography makes seeing the whole village at once impossible. Walking from the Nagano-hara hamlet along the south side of the river through Yokokabe on a road narrow enough to be called a sidewalk in Montana, the first hamlet of the Kawarayu district is Kamiyubara. Its thirty houses occupy bench land that extends from the mountains down to the river bottom. There are a few rice paddies here and there between the houses, and vegetable patches and persimmon orchards. The second stories of some of the older farm houses were used for silk-worm farming, but now most people commute to jobs elsewhere. From Kamiyubara the road turns sharply uphill toward Kawarayu Hot Spring itself and the heart of the hotel district.

After ten minutes on foot from Kamiyubara, the first sign of reaching the Kawarayu Hot Spring neighborhood is a leveling of the steep road and a broad vista into the Agatsuma River bottom lands. Across the river, bathed in winter sunlight, is the village of Kawarahata. On the left, toward the river, are residences, some with carefully manicured gardens. To the near right is a hotel parking lot, beyond that is the Kawarayu Shinto shrine, tennis courts, and a persimmon orchard. Further down the road is the Takadaya hotel, built after the war. Continuing left into the central area is Oyu, the principle source of the

---

9 Within the village of Kawarayu there are three neighborhoods. Figure 3 shows Kamiyubara, Kawarayu Hot Spring, and Shimoyubara. Figure 4 shows the outline of the new reservoir, the transportation system, and the replacement lands.
Kawarayu hot spring and the site of the Yukake Matsuri. Beyond it lining the narrow road are the hotels — Yamakikan, Yamakiboshi, Kawarayukan. There are fifteen hotels in all. There are gift shops, karoke bars, and a sushi shop.

Descending now, the narrow road winds past toward Shimoyubahara, the third neighborhood of Kawarayu. There, along the road among the houses are the post office, a small grocery store, a cabinet-maker’s shop, a barber shop, and a few restaurants. Passing through this portion of the hamlet are Route 145, the main thoroughfare, and Japan National Railways’ Agatsuma Line. The only traffic light in the community is where the road to the hot-spring district and Route 145 join. Continuing westward, one would cross the Agatsuma River into Kawarahata. Continuing eastward, one would follow Route 145 past the Kawarayu Station on the left; a manju (steamed bean cake) store and a restaurant on the right. Before the road crosses the Agatsuma River, there is a wood-chip plant and the entrance to the Agatsuma Canyon hiking trail.

The destructive Typhoon Katherine of 1947 sowed the seeds for Yamba Dam. The storm caused massive flooding along the Tone River in the Kanto Plain. Over three hundred thousand homes and businesses were flooded, and two thousand people lost their lives.10 Japan’s 1949 Tone River Improvement Plan named Yamba Dam as an essential element for controlling

---

future floods on the Tone River system. The 436-foot concrete dam will control 273 square miles in the Agatsuma River watershed. The planned capacity of its reservoir is 87,150 acre feet. Of the seven dams designed to control the headwaters of the Tone River, it alone remains to be constructed. The Ministry of Construction says that Yamba Dam will reduce peak flood flows from 137,700 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 53,000 cfs on the Agatsuma River. The combined effect of the seven dams would reduce peak Tone River floods from 777,000 cfs to 565,000 cfs. Yamba is also intended to bolster municipal and industrial water supplies for Gunma, Saitama, Chiba, and Ibaraki prefectures, as well as Tokyo, all located in the Kanto Plain.

Yamba Dam will displace about 1170 people in 340 households spread over all or part of the five districts for these benefits to the thirty million people downstream. In all of Kawarayu, with the hot-spring hotels forming the historical core, live some 550 people in 167 households. With the eventual construction of Yamba Dam, these people will have two choices. They can accept the opportunity for relocation to replacement lands carved out of the mountainside above the town, or they can move someplace else. The five districts will be developed as a resort. Physically, the town will be redefined by its new infrastructure, including eight new bridges and a four-lane highway.

---

11 The population densities for Saitama and Chiba prefectures through which the Tone River runs are as high as 4500 people per square mile. Japan Almanac, 272-273.

Schools and railroad stations will be relocated, and new shopping centers built. The price tag is an estimated ¥500 billion (US $4.4 billion). The expense of this project itself raises many interesting questions, however, a discussion of the benefits and costs of Yamba Dam is beyond the scope of this study.

Just as important are the human tensions in the changing relationships of community and place. In densely populated Asia, dam construction is in full swing, and dislocation is an almost unavoidable effect of a large dam. China is building the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River, which when completed will involuntarily relocate between 1.2 million people. In making way for sixty-two out of 102 general-purpose dams that Japan’s Ministry of Construction has completed since 1945, the agency estimates that it has relocated 7,654 households, or about 25,000 people.

Hippocrates, in his ancient book *On Airs, Waters, Places*, was among the first to discuss the concept that humans are influenced by their environment. Present-day geographers are concerned as well with the relationships between humans and the environment and believe that until recently discussions of environmental quality seldom include attempts to understand how people think about changing space and place. Within the context of Kawarayu, where residents continue to depend on their geography —

---

13 The June 1997 exchange rate is ¥115 to one U.S. dollar.


16 Tuan, *Space and Place*, 5.
the location of a hot spring, there are particularly strong bonds between the land and people. Part of my purpose is to bring the human impacts of dam construction, in the terms of space and place, into the same discussion as impacts to the physical environment.

One work that has had a large influence on this discussion of space and place is Yi-Fu Tuan’s book. He discusses human traits that are common to all cultures in the formation of attachment to place. Three aspects of Tuan’s thesis seem most suited to use in the discussion about Kawarayu. These are “architectural space and awareness,” “attachment to homeland,” and “intimate experiences of place.” Architectural space and awareness are very powerful elements in shaping identity, Tuan explains. “The built environment, like language, has the power to define and refine sensibility. It can sharpen and enlarge consciousness. Without architecture, feelings about space must remain diffuse and fleeting.”\(^{17}\) Reflections of the importance of architecture in Kawarayu are seen in the emphasis on buildings and space in the community’s reconstruction plans.

Intimate experiences and events also shape feelings for a place, Tuan says. The experience of Kawarayu could be as exciting as the Yukake Matsuri, or as simple as watching the autumn leaves from an outdoor bath. As well, many of Kawarayu’s residents share a long history living in the same place together. Tuan says this kind of intimacy between people is another shaper of place. In relating how place changed for Saint Augustine at the death of a childhood friend, Tuan writes, “For Augustine the value of place was borrowed

\(^{17}\) Tuan, *Space and Place*, 101-117.
from the intimacy of a particular human relationship; place itself offered little
outside the human bond.\textsuperscript{18} It seems that as important as location and the
architecture of the buildings are to a place, so are the people who live there.

Tuan also identified a commonly held, but very strong, human emotion
of attachment to homeland. Though more difficult to articulate, these kinds of
attachments can be subconscious, including emotional bonds with the soil, the
graves of ancestors, or the shrines, he says.\textsuperscript{19} In Kawarayu there are graves
and monuments to ancestors. Burned and rebuilt over and over, the whole
village itself is a monument to the efforts of ancestors to keep the community
alive. These three aspects of Tuan's discussion on space and place form the
theoretical framework for this study of how the people of Kawarayu have
responded to the planned construction of Yamba Dam.

\textsuperscript{18} Tuan, \textit{Space and Place}, 136-148.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, 149-160.
CHAPTER 3
CITIZEN PROTEST AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DEBATE

A discussion of the geography of Japan's water resources and the Japanese government's justification for building the Yamba Dam is valuable to understanding the background of the project. Although citizen protest against environmental problems dates back to the Meiji Restoration, Japan's environmental laws and environmental-assessment process are a post-war phenomenon. In exploring both citizen protests and how these laws work, discussion will touch upon other large public-works projects, such as Narita Airport, that find some parallel to the Yamba Dam discussion. The complexities surrounding Kawarayu's protest can be more readily understood when framed in the cultural perspective of "village consciousness."

Located off the east coast of the Asian continent, Japan's 3400 islands are spread over a nearly two-thousand-mile arc from northeast to southwest. By Ministry of Construction estimates, there are some five thousand dams on the islands. This figure includes multi-purpose dams, agricultural dams, hydroelectric dams, flood control dams, and dams for water supply. With average annual precipitation on the islands of about seventeen hundred millimeters, Japan receives an annual 5241 cubic meters of precipitation per capita. In contrast, the United States receives an annual 29,485 cubic meters of precipitation per capita. This is because Japan's 125 million people live in
an area roughly one twenty-fifth the size of the United States. Japan has thirty-two cubic meters of stored drinking water per capita, compared to 536 cubic meters per capita in the United States. Limited by the nature of its narrow, mountainous topography, the capacity of all of Japan's dams is 20.4 billion cubic meters, barely half of Hoover Dam's forty-billion cubic meter capacity.  

Despite extensive development of water resources, Japan continues to have water problems. Parts of the Kanto Plain have suffered drought eight of the past nineteen years, roughly every 2.4 years. In 1989, Tokyo endured a seventy-one-day drought aggravated by inadequate flow in the Tone and Arai rivers. Parts of Shikoku, Japan's fourth largest island, have been hit repeatedly by drought. A major source of the problem is a doubling of water consumption from 1965 to 1991 that is associated with a more affluent, industrialized society. Some also blame global climate change for erratic rainfall. 

Yamba Dam is seen as beneficial by the national government because it will control flooding, protecting human life and property downstream. It will also provide water for farms, industry and municipalities. All dams have their costs. They impede the flow of rivers, affecting fish migration. New habitat created by artificial lakes can cause "ecological explosions," resulting in the

---


growth of some species at the expense of others. Dams also reduce the ability of a river to transport silt, causing changes in stream channels. Without the annual cycle of floods to replenish topsoil, farmland fertility can be affected. Lower water levels have also been blamed for saltwater intrusion problems in estuaries. The weight of large reservoirs has been associated with increased seismic and volcanic activity.  

One associated question in the discussion about dams is Japan’s relationship with its natural environment. Japanese have throughout their history manipulated their natural environment, being famous, for example, for their carefully sculpted gardens. Japan also has a longstanding philosophical commitment to an ecocentric world view, a view reflected in Buddhist, Confucian, and Shinto traditions. In fact, the purpose of many Japanese traditions, such as calligraphy, gardening, and martial arts, is to become more in tune with nature. Because, philosophically speaking, Japanese tend to see themselves as part of, not separate from, the natural environment, the ecological issues so prevalent in Western debate about dams enter less frequently into mainstream discussions in Japan.

More of the debate in Japan centers upon how to best solve water problems. Post-war pumping from deep wells has lowered water tables, causing severe subsidence. In the 1960s, more emphasis was put on surface

---


water — rivers, lakes, and reservoirs. The government's answer to climatic vagaries is more dams, allowing better control of Japan's highly variable river flows. Critics respond to government dam building by saying more are unnecessary, and charging that dams are built only as a matter of political and economic expedience and are not long-term solutions. Indeed, say Brendan Barrett and Riki Therivel, “Major projects . . . are very attractive assets for any regional economy and have increasingly come to be viewed as a way to stimulate industrial activity.” Because of high sediment loads, dams, critics argue, have a very limited life.

Some environmentalists in Japan propose “green dams.” This would mean improving vegetative cover in the mountains to reduce run-off and store water. The government has dismissed this suggestion, arguing there is little historical correlation between variations in the amount of forested land and the occurrence of drought. Critics also say that the government should concentrate its efforts upon recycling and conservation. The government does

24 To illustrate this variability, for example, minimum flows on the Tone River are one percent of maximum, while on the Mississippi, minimum flows are one-third of the maximum.

25 Brendan F.D. Barrett and Riki Therivel, Environmental Policy and Impact Assessment in Japan (New York: Routledge, 1991), 161; Sato Motoaki, Shin seiryu aoiko e no michi [The Way to Clear Streams and Blue Lakes] (Tokyo: Nihon no mizu o kirei ni suru kai, 1989), Sato estimates the life of Yamba Dam at between three and forty years. If the active volcano Mt. Asama were to erupt like it did in 1783 when pyroclastic flows buried villages upstream of Naganohara along the Agatsuma River and sent ash flows down through the Agatsuma Canyon, the life of the dam would definitely be cut short. In contrast to what Sato says, Yamba Dam is described as a safety measure protecting downstream people from such volcanic eruptions. The Ministry of Construction plans a system of dams to slow sedimentation and extend the effectiveness of the reservoir. Tomioka, 1997.
admit more water conservation and recycling is needed. In 1994, only one of Tokyo’s twenty-three wards practiced water recycling. Government wish lists do include a sophisticated system of dams to control tidal flows in estuaries, and water treatment plants to recycle as much water as possible.26

Located on a tributary of the Tone River, Yamba Dam is a critical link in Ministry of Construction plans to protect the thirty million people in the Tokyo area from floods and drought. While the Ministry of Construction reiterates its importance, critics say otherwise. Some ask whether Yamba Dam is not just a way to stimulate economic growth, noting not only the high costs of construction and neutralizing the Agatsuma, Japan’s most acidic river, but also issues of water quality, sedimentation, and whether the dam can provide expected flows during drought.27 Regardless of one’s perspective, there is no question the Yamba Dam project is in the middle of the on-going water-


27 The Agatsuma River has the lowest pH of any river in Japan. If untreated, effluent from Kusatsu hot spring and an old mine would make the Agatsuma river a 2 pH acid bath where nails would dissolve literally overnight. As the water is too hazardous for concrete, plans for Yamba Dam were delayed thirteen years while a neutralization plant was built upstream. Every day the plant dumps sixty tons of limestone in solution into the river at an annual cost of about ¥230 million/US $2 million. (Jomo Shimbun (Maebashi, Japan), 24 August 1994) Despite this, the river is still not suitable for fish, and in 1984 the Ministry of Construction was blamed for a fish kill in a Maebashi hatchery that uses water from the Agatsuma River. (Sato, 2-10) Wearing out, the thirty-four-year-old neutralization plant is undergoing a ¥2 billion/US $17.4 million renovation (Sankei Shimbun (Tokyo), 29 June 1996).

Also flowing downstream is waste from 30,000 residents, 4500 dairy cattle, and millions of tourists visiting the hot springs and ski areas. This is on top of the chemical fertilizers used in upstream Tsumagoi, one of the nation’s top cabbage growing regions. Sato says these pollutants may prevent the water from meeting environmental criteria, even for industrial use (2-10, 11).
resource debate in Japan.

During the country's long isolation in the Tokugawa period, Confucian values of filial piety and a national ideology of order and unity became deeply ingrained in the Japanese psyche. Leaders of the Meiji Restoration continued to emphasize these values of national unity. Despite post-war modernization and the growing influence of Western values, the ideal of harmony in interpersonal relations has remained a strong cultural component. However, conflicts between groups — especially citizens and huge impersonal industries — defy resolution within the traditional forms of interpersonal compromise and conciliation. These conflicts result in citizen protest, and Yamba Dam is another episode in Japan's history of environmental protest.

One of the first environmental protests arose from pollution caused by the Ashio copper mine in Tochigi Prefecture in the late 1890s. The mining and smelting operation released large amounts of heavy metals and sulfuric acid into the air and water. Floods on the Watarase River carried the pollutants downstream, spreading them over wide areas of farm land. Their once-fertile land poisoned, locals protested. The large citizen protest focused criticism upon the Furokawa conglomerate that owned the mine, whereupon the national government responded to the protest. In this case, the government worked to repair the flooding and pollution problems. In order to create a more permanent solution, the government eventually condemned the village most

affected by the pollutants, buying it by power of eminent domain.\footnote{29 Margaret McKean, \textit{Environmental Protest and Citizen Politics in Japan} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 35-38.}

In later cases, neither government nor business was as responsive. Blamed with the loss of World War II, the Japanese government lost the confidence of its people. In general, public admiration and gratitude made big business stronger, more secure, and more defiant than in pre-war years. Saddled with the burden of recreating Japan as an economic power, industry defied government orders, rejected studies, and challenged scientific evidence presented by pollution protestors. The landscape of environmental law changed, however, when citizen protestors sued the polluting industries. The resulting four landmark court decisions come from two cases of organic mercury poisoning in Niigata and Minamata, the case of cadmium poisoning in Toyama, and the case of industrial pollution in Mie Prefecture. These late-1960s court decisions are the foundation of Japan’s environmental movement.\footnote{30 McKean, \textit{Environmental Protest}, 41-42.}

Having exhausted traditional avenues of mediation, these victims of acute industrial pollution used the courts to get the attention of industry. The “Big Four” court decisions awarded huge compensation to victims and put industry on notice that it would be held responsible for controlling and cleaning up pollution. These cases initiated development of Japan’s environmental legislation and the creation of its environmental protection agency in 1971. An environmental-impact assessment process was added in 1984. The “Big Four”
verdicts are said to form one of the most environmentally progressive bodies of case law anywhere in the world. The “polluter-pays-principle” forms the basis of Japan’s environmental laws. These laws put “the burden on industry through simple economic devices and devote the proceeds to the relief of victims.” Since 1965, as an indirect result of this, remarkable reductions have been made for some kinds of pollution.31

A distinction should be drawn between these famous cases and the case of Yamba Dam. The thrust of the protest over these cases of dangerous industrial pollution were not on ecological grounds. The issue was human health and suffering. Although the protest against Yamba Dam was not about life and death, Kawarayu residents were concerned about their livelihood and property — not the ecological implications. Had it been a protest over damage for ecological reasons, it would have undoubtedly been less successful. A look at other large public-works projects shows that in many cases ecological concerns are ignored, even under the Western-style environmental-impact assessment process. Scientists opposing public-works projects with ecological evidence have been turned away by the government. Addressing these kinds of concern about the environmental assessment process, Japan’s parliament enacted the Environmental Basic Law in 1993. It called for a review of the paradigm of mass production and consumption, recommending “voluntary.

31 McKean, Environmental Protest, 41-69, 141; As one gauge of Japan’s success cleaning up air pollution, average sulfur dioxide levels went from 0.057 ppm in 1965 to 0.008 ppm in 1993. Average carbon monoxide levels were reduced from 6 ppm in 1971 to 1.9 ppm in 1993. Water quality as well has shown improvement. Asahi Shimbun Japan Almanac 1996 (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbun Publishing Company, 1995): 207-208.
economic measures" to regulate pollution. Watered down by criticism from industry and bureaucrats, the law is said to offer no means of enforcement in its approved form.\(^{32}\)

One citizen protest, related to the Nagara dam project, which was based in larger part upon ecological grounds, found little recourse in the court system. Groups protesting Ministry of Construction plans to dam the Nagara River near Nagoya in central Japan filed suit in 1982. Construction continued while the lawsuit proceeded, and in 1994 courts dismissed the case arguing, "The right to protect the environment cannot be recognized under the law."\(^{33}\)

The 1994 court decision regarding the Nagara River reflects the legal difficulty facing citizens groups struggling to prevent dam projects from altering the environment. It is questionable whether Japan's environmental laws would have any effect if used to challenge Yamba Dam.

In terms of protest over loss of property, parallels can also be drawn between the protest over Narita Airport and Yamba Dam during the period. Citizens of both places fought hard to hold on to the land that is the basis of their livelihood and way of life. Faced with a rapidly growing national economy

\(^{32}\) Hidefumi Imura, "Japan's Environmental Balancing Act: Accommodating Sustained Development," Asian Survey 34 (April 1994): 355-369; Hadfield, New Scientist, 15; Despite evidence in an environmental-impact assessment that the New Ishigaki Airport in Ryukyu archipelago would damage coral reefs, the construction project was approved. This led Barrett and Therival to conclude, "The case of the New Ishigaki Airport shows that EIA is ineffective in preventing environmental destruction unless it is supported by an appropriate political climate. A development action is virtually unstoppable if the administrative agencies involved are committed to it."

\(^{33}\) Hadfield, New Scientist, 15.
and a more prominent role on the world stage, the Japanese government, led by the Ministry of Transport, decided Tokyo needed a new airport. Much of the facility was going to be built on a horse farm owned by the Imperial Household Agency located about sixty miles northeast of the capital near Narita. Not nearly large enough for the airport with its four-thousand-meter runway, farmers were expected to give up their land as well. Farmers were distraught, for they thought of themselves as living in closest harmony with natural rhythms, and therefore should occupy an honorable place in Japan's history. "For them the airport is . . . the first step in the process of irreversible change and a permanent disaster in terms of their way of life."

Farmers began protesting when surveyors arrived on October 10, 1967, to stake out the airport. There were two main sources of discontent. The loss of property important to agriculture was closely linked to their protest. Beyond the runways and terminals, there were, for example, pipelines, sewers, and drainage ditches. An age-old irrigation system crucial for rice farming was to be destroyed if the airport went ahead. There was also another source of contention: angry at how the government handled the project, some farmers wanted the government to establish better policies of due process and consultation. The protest continues even today, delaying the completion of the airport's second runway.


35 Students who thought that the Japanese government was going to use the airport in the Vietnam war also played a large role in the protest movement. Apter and Sawa, Against the State, 225-226.
There are important linkages between this famous case and Kawarayu. When Kawarayu residents woke up to discover their town and way of life at risk, they protested for the same reasons. As Narita Airport was seen as a permanent disaster to the farmers, Yamba Dam, in the residents' view, would be a permanent disaster to Kawarayu. As Narita farmers depended upon irrigated land for rice cultivation, Kawarayu depends upon the hot spring and the tourists it brings for its livelihood. With high population densities and scarcity of developable land and hot springs, relocation is a serious problem. Also similar to the Narita protest, Kawarayu residents were angry with the government's methods of implementing the project.

While pointing out the similarities, it is also important to note there is an important difference between the two that cannot be overlooked. Despite what the government says about the importance for Kanto Plain flood control and water supply, Yamba Dam is a different kind of project that may not require the haste that Narita airport required.  

Loss of the land that formed the basis of livelihood in both Narita and Kawarayu was perhaps as strong a source of protest as discontent against the government. The sources of government protest will be explored more fully in

---

36 The New Tokyo International Airport opened in 1978, eleven years after the surveyors started their work. Yamba Dam was first announced in 1952. Only now, forty years later, is initial construction underway. With Narita Airport, international commerce was at stake. Yamba Dam's different purpose is reflected in how long it has taken to actually start construction. An interesting aside is that Kawarayu hantai kisei domei (protest movement) leaders had strong ties with Narita protestors, as did other Kawarayu activists. Hagiwara Yoshio, Yamba Damu no Tatakai [The Yamba Dam Protest] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten. 1996); Noguchi Hajime. tape recorded interview with author, Kawarayu, 6 January 1997.
the next chapter, but now the focus will turn to the factors that create a distinctly Japanese sense of place. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's thesis emphasizes architectural space, monuments, shrines, and shared community experience as the source of attachment to a location. Kawarayu has a central shrine, where offerings of hot-spring water were made during the Yukake Matsuri that the community celebrates together. It is a geographically isolated community built close together on a mountain side. Many of its people have lived in the community for generations. In addition to these fundamental aspects, there are unique cultural factors reinforcing attachment to place.

Joy Hendry says that annual community festivals, like the Yukake Matsuri, are part of the cultural fabric that serves "to strengthen the residents' perception of their boundaries within a wider area." The landmarks and experiences are the threads that Kawarayu people use to weave their sense of identity and attachment to place. Tadashi Fukutake, a famous scholar of Japanese society, speaks of Tokugawa-era Japanese villages as having their own "sovereign territory," with villagers being conscious of their village boundaries. Membership in a village, different from other Asian countries, such as China and India, has been defined territorially, which reinforces an historical village consciousness. This community unity is symbolized by the ujigami, the shrine of the protecting deity that is the focal point of each village. More than being defined just as a spiritual center, the edges of each village were clearly demarcated for tax purposes during

---

Tokugawa times. Each villager was aware of the village boundaries. These factors all reinforced a "village consciousness."^38

As Tuan also suggests, human relationships are another element important to sense of place. Rural Japanese have intimate, life-long relationships with each other, their land and with their shrines. They are tied to a place both by the land and the people with whom they share it. "In contact all day and every day with the same set of villagers, and bound to them by a wide multiplicity of ties, villagers could not but have a continuous awareness of 'belonging' to the village." Richard Beardsley, too, found the people he studied in Okayama Prefecture very attached to their community, "though they find this attachment difficult to articulate in words."^39

However, Kawarayu is a not an Okayama farm village. It features the hotels and the sushi and gift shops. There are wet rice fields and dry fields, but the steep mountains and narrow canyon leave little space for extensive agriculture. The hotels add a factor to the equation of place and identity that the literature does not consider. What is the effect of the outsiders attracted by the hotels? Part of Kawarayu's growing political awareness may be in some small part due to conversations with writers and thinkers, the aware and articulate visitors who frequent the resort.

---


There perched on the side of the steep Agatsuma Canyon, far from the cities and factories, residents say Kawarayu has changed little since the Tokugawa-era. With the coming of Yamba Dam, the shrines and hot springs, the family graves, the centers and symbols that for centuries have shaped a sense of place and community, will be relocated. Faced with the loss of their homeland, Kawarayu residents protested until agreements with the government were reached that at the very least offer a chance for the community to rebuild itself around transported-but-familiar landmarks.

It could be said that Kawarayu's location is both a blessing and a curse: blessed by a quiet lifestyle in a beautiful natural setting and a hot spring that is said to have remarkable healing qualities; cursed by its location on a river upstream from one of the most populous regions on Earth. As noted above, the protest over Yamba Dam in Kawarayu was not about ecological issues. However, it is none the less complex. The protest centered upon maintenance of a particular way that human life centered around long-held property.

While original environmental movements in Japan sought compensation for damages that already occurred, Margaret McKean's studies show that later citizens' movements were inspired by these examples and sought to prevent pollution before it reached dangerous levels. The protest in Kawarayu over the human impacts of the dam may be representative of this political awareness. Before the fight over Yamba Dam, residents displaced by the dams were expected to use their compensation money to start a new life.

---

McKean, *Environmental Protest*, 130.
elsewhere. In part because of Kawarayu's protest, national legislation was passed in 1973 to mitigate the sacrifices of the displaced. Just how Kawarayu organized its protest, and how it came to be resolved are the focus of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4

LEGACIES OF PROTEST

Kawai'ayu is not the first town to be relocated by a dam in Japan. It is among the first to have a comprehensive reconstruction plan. That these plans have become a model case in Japan was heard often in Kawai'ayu. That they came to be is as much a result of Kawai'ayu's deep attachment to place as it is reflective of heightened political awareness. However, the struggle for the rebuilding of the village is by no means over, as shall be seen below.

Born from a cataclysm of colliding continental plates, the islands of Japan are extremely unstable with seismographs recording thousands of earthquakes annually. Some two hundred volcanoes have been active in Japan in the Quaternary Period. Though now extinct, three of these volcanoes dominate the landscape of Kawai'ayu and the middle reaches of the Agatsuma River. Rising over five hundred meters within two kilometers of the river bed, Mount Ōjo, Mount Takama, and Mount Kanbô create a sheer and beautiful topography. The rock cliffs overlooking the Agatsuma River are home to the occasional eagle, mountain goats, monkeys, and flying squirrels. It is from under these spent volcanoes that ground water heated by a pocket of

---

cooling magma finds its way to the earth's surface at Kawarayu.\footnote{Naganohara no Shizen [Naganohara's Natural Environment] a book in Japanese published by Naganohara Town in 1994 for the purpose of educating residents about their natural environment.}

If history is any measure in determining attachment to place, Kawarayu is deeply rooted in the cradle of the sleeping mountains. One legend has the first visitor to Kawarayu hot spring there in 1193, three hundred years before Columbus reported his discovery of America. Exploring the mountains on a hunting trip, the military leader Minamoto Yoritomo, founder of the Kamakura Shogunate, camped on the banks above the Agatsuma River. When he went out to round up his stock, he discovered the hot spring rising out of the mountainside. Another legend tells of the hot spring being discovered in 1063, with the discoverer living near the source for a time. “Which is correct, I am not sure,” says Sakiyori Fujio of the Naganohara Board of Education, “but that is the legend of Kawarayu’s beginning.”\footnote{Sakiyori Fujio of the Naganohara Board of Education, interview by author, 25 December 1996, Naganohara, Japan, tape recording.}

Later visitors during the Tokugawa period arrived in Kawarayu via the Shinshū Kaidô, a road from Takasaki through the mountains to the Zenkō-ji temple in present-day Nagano prefecture. Near Kawarayu, the ancient road branched, with one route going to nearby Kusatsu, a much larger hot spring. Just one day’s walk from Kusatsu, Kawarayu became a way-point for travelers. The first hotels trace their beginnings to this era around 1700. The small hot spring’s reputation grew, with its waters reportedly beneficial for stomach ailments, headaches, and paralysis. On the benchland above the
Agatsuma River, residents cultivated rice and vegetables and raised some livestock. According to Sakiyori, Kawarayu was never a farming community. It was then, and is now, mostly dependent on the tourists passing through to soak in the hot water.

The Yamakikan is one such hotel where travelers can enjoy the hot spring and the Agatsuma River scenery. Its architecture is a reminder of a time when wood, not steel and concrete, was the preferred building material in Japan. Signs on the outside advertise that this is the hotel from which to watch the flying squirrels that live in the forests around the river. The entrance is at street level, but because the hotel is built on the side of the mountain, the guest rooms and the baths are down several steep flights of stairs. Guests stay in rooms floored with woven tatami, or reed, mats. In the closet are cotton kimono, called yukata, printed with the hotel's special design. On arrival, guests will change out of their work-a-day clothes into the cotton kimono to relax. The image of yukata-clad visitors walking the streets in wooden clogs is a hallmark of the Japanese hot spring. The real centerpieces of these hotels are the baths, and the Yamakikan is no exception. Including the outdoor bath, there are men's and women's public baths and a private bath, all filled with hot-spring water piped in from the source at Oyu.

Kawarayu has survived fires, floods, and the destructive 1783 Mount Asama eruption. The shrine burned and was rebuilt several times. Fires

---

44 The blast, flood, and fires of the Mount Asama eruption are blamed for killing two thousand and leaving eighteen hundred houses destroyed. The eruption is said to have had global impact, its ash darkening the sky, contributing to the crop failures in Europe that helped trigger the French Revolution. Conrad Totman, Early Modern Japan (Berkeley: University of
gutted the hotels, but they were rebuilt. Removed from Japan’s urban centers, the slow rhythm of life in Kawarayu varied little through the end of the Tokugawa era, the rapid Meiji modernization, and World War II. However, the rhythms were disrupted when the Ministry of Construction suddenly declared its intention at the Naganohara Town Hall in May 1952 to build Yamba Dam. One day the people were preparing fields for spring planting, baking charcoal, and cutting firewood. The next day the community was in an uproar, forgetting it was planting season.

Realizing they had to organize to fight the Ministry of Construction’s plans, members from the affected districts rallied on the grounds of Dai Ichi Elementary School in February 1953. They gathered despite the cold, wearing headbands and carrying placards, and resolved to fight to protect their village from a watery grave. Protest chronicler and hotel proprietor Takeda Hiroe, characterized the anger of his generation with an unlikely comparison: “In Hiroshima, several years after being baptized by the atomic bomb, grass is springing up. But in our town, to be sunk forever behind this dam, plants will never grow again.”45 Elders were driven to protest by the conviction that losing the town their ancestors worked so hard to rebuild after the 1783 Asama eruption would be sadder than death itself, wrote Takeda.

These protestors’ sentiments illuminate the attachment to homeland discussed by Tuan: “The city or land is viewed as mother, and it nourishes; place is an archive of fond memories and splendid achievements that inspire


45 Takeda, Yamba ga Shizumu Hi, 8.
the present; place is permanent and hence reassuring to man, who sees frailty in himself and chance and flux everywhere."

The protestors’ slogan became “Damu kensetsu zettai hantai,” which translates, “absolute opposition to dam construction.” The Nagano\ohara Town began a petition campaign to the Ministry of Construction and the National Parliament. In November 1953, the town petitioned Gunma Diet member Nakasone Yasuhiro, who later become Japan’s prime minister. As the Ministry of Construction’s assessment progressed, the dam builders met a road block. The water of the Agatsuma River was so acidic that it would dissolve a concrete dam and flood gates. With this the Ministry of Construction suddenly stopped its talk of the dam. Residents gradually forgot about the dam, and life returned to normal, but the Ministry of Construction was not actually at rest. By 1964, construction was completed on the neutralization plant upstream. In March 1965, thirteen years after the first announcement, the Ministry of Construction once again declared its intent to build Yamba Dam just downstream of Kawarayu.

Despite the brief but intense scare about the dam in 1952 and 1953, residents consider the two decades after the war as Kawarayu’s golden years. The railway line built during the war to haul iron ore from a nearby mine was converted to a passenger line. With the increased tourist trade brought by the railroad, Kawarayu’s population also increased. With this good fortune, the village grew out from its hot-spring core to Shimoyubara, the flatter bench lands above the river near the railroad station. In the mid-1960s, the

---

46 Tuan, Space and Place, 154.
rekindling of the construction plans ended this sense of peace and prosperity, leaving Kawarayu a community frozen in time. People have hesitated to build or make improvements because they know their properties will eventually be underwater.

Although the community again sent a strong signal of opposition to the Ministry of Construction, there was not the united front of the earlier protest. The community was now split along three lines: support; conditional support; and absolute opposition. Divided, the Committee for United Measures against Yamba Dam (Yamba Damu Rengō Taisaku Iinkai), which had represented the whole community, splintered. When the dust from the schism settled, the Kawarayu Yamba Dam Construction Opposition Alliance (Yamba Damu Kensetsu Hantai Kawarayu Kisei Dōmei Kai) emerged as the largest, with 675 members. Representing the majority opinion in the town, this group led the battle against the dam. It was from this group that Hida Tomijiro emerged as the Nagano-hara Town leader after former Mayor Sakurai was suddenly hospitalized with stomach cancer right before the 1974 election. Hida won the support of the whole town, and was elected mayor on an anti-dam platform.

Soon after the second announcement, Nagano-hara, led by the Kawarayu opposition group, began its campaign against the dam. The mayor, town councilmen, opposition leaders, and citizens made countless trips to Tokyo to lobby their representatives to stop the dam. Sometimes four or more bus loads of people would show up at a politician's doorstep. In the village,

\[^{47}\text{Takeda, Yamba ga Shizumu Hi, 12-13.}\]
people painted slogans on their roofs and hung banners above their doors. When Ministry of Construction officials came, residents would harass them, standing outside their homes beating empty gasoline cans with sticks.

In early January 1997, creating a din that almost sounded like one of those protests, jackhammers pounded the old concrete retaining walls. The busy New Year was over, and tourists were scarce in Kawarayu in the days leading up to the Yukake Matsuri. Construction crews were back at work repairing the concrete retaining walls that protect the hotels from landslides.

Seated on a tatami floor in an empty guest room in the Yamakikan, septuagenarian Hida Tomijiro sipped green tea, and above the noise related Naganohara’s tactics in fighting the dam. He was talking sumō wrestling, Japan’s national sport. To understand his explanation of the village’s approach, some explanation of the sport is in order. In sumō two opponents square off in the ring or dohyō. The first wrestler to be muscled out of the ring or have any other part of his body but his feet touch the ground loses.

Naganohara’s match was for far bigger stakes than those current grand champions Akebono and Takanohana played for in the 1997 New Year’s Tournament. In Naganohara’s case, the reigning champ was the Ministry of Construction. Naganohara, led by the Kawarayu opposition, was in the junior grade. The town’s strategy was simple yet effective — avoid direct conflict. By not entering the ring, Naganohara could not get knocked out by their stronger opponent, Hida said. So as the Ministry of Construction officials requested meetings to explain the construction plans, the Kawarayu Opposition Alliance repeatedly petitioned the mayor and town council to block them. The Ministry
of Construction courted the minority in the village who supported the dam in an attempt to capitalize on the schism in the community, thereby outflanking the opposition. But the majority held firm, their tactics successful in shutting the conduit of communication that ran from the national government through the prefectural government to the NaganoHara government. Without such meetings, no progress could be made on the dam.  

A hundred meters down the narrow road from Hida’s Yamakikan toward Shimoyubara is the Kawarayukan. As a child living in Takasaki, proprietor Takeda Hiroe had been sick. His mother took him often from their home searching for a hot-spring cure. They found it in the waters of Kawarayu. At age twenty Takeda moved to the village and opened a hotel so that he could use the hot spring every day to preserve his health. That was in 1948, four years before the Ministry of Construction announced Yamba Dam. He feels that he was drawn to the village to be a part of the protest against the dam. After the re-announcement in 1965, Takeda found himself as one of the leaders of the opposition movement. Now at sixty-eight, with the continual delays, Takeda is not optimistic that he will live to see the fruits of the opposition’s labors.  

Compared to the Hida family with its long history, Takeda is an outsider in Kawarayu. His feelings for the community, however, are no less

---

48 Hida Tomijiro, former mayor of NaganoHara, interview by author, 7 January 1997, Kawarayu, Japan, tape recording.

49 Takeda Hiroe, hotel proprietor and author, interview by author, 11 January 1997, Kawarayu, Japan, tape recording.
strong. He characterizes the protest as one by people who want to hold on to their quiet way of life. The opposition are people who loved the mountains and wanted to remain on the lands passed down to them from their ancestors. Takeda wrote in his book *Yamba ga Shizumu Hi*. An important concern about the dam for them was that there would be no way for the community to rebuild in the steep topography without considerable sacrifice. As well, protestors were concerned about the loss of the hot spring itself and the scenic Agatsuma Canyon. With no replacement lands to be found nearby, there was the untenable reality that the town would die away.\(^5^0\)

Though opposed to the dam, the community, says Hida, understood that the downstream prefectures need a dam to provide more water. Why, Hida asks, should the Kawarayu community be expected to pay the ultimate sacrifice? He explained:

> In the rapid economic expansion after the war, it became a matter of the government just paying people to leave their homes with no regard for the emotional or mental impact. If there had been an attempt to build a place like Kawarayu for us to move to, we would have been happy to cooperate, but that was missing . . . We were not opposed to the government’s ideology, we were opposed to the idea of being paid off with no consideration for the people’s livelihoods. With no other hot spring but this one, the basis for our livelihood would be gone.\(^5^1\)

As well as throwing light on one source of the protest, Hida’s statement also shows much of what Yi-Fu Tuan says about human attachment to homeland to be true in Kawarayu. Though difficult for most to articulate, there are strong bonds between people and place in Kawarayu.

---


Like with Narita, the source of protest in Kawarayu is tied to what author Hagiwara Yoshio calls the Ministry of Construction’s “undemocratic” method of pursuing the dam. As evidence of this, he cites the ministry’s failure to keep the village informed of its plans while it was building the acid-neutralization plant. He says, for example, the bureaucratic language the ministry used to describe the assessment process was misleading in that it gave the impression that a possibility existed that the dam would not be constructed.\(^{52}\)

The protest could also be put in terms of David and Goliath. Naganohara Town is a community of seven thousand. In terms of political and economic might, it is small compared to that of the downstream cities and prefectures. However, where other small communities were swept away by government dam construction. Naganohara Town, led by Kawarayu, held fast. Hida said that Naganohara and the downstream benefactors of Yamba Dam are countrymen, equals, and should be considered as such by the national government. “We need to consider that we are in this together, that we are the same,” he said. “There was no attempt [by the Ministry of Construction] to honor the fact that these [Kawarayu] people had made a choice between the city and the countryside.”\(^{53}\) Discontent over the Ministry of Construction’s bureaucratic methods continues to be an issue today.

The Riverhead Community Special Measures Act (Suigen Chiiki Taisaku Tokubetsu Sochi Hō), commonly referred to in Kawarayu as the

\(^{52}\) Hagiwara, *Yamba Damu no Tatakai*. 15-16.

\(^{53}\) Hida, 1997.
Suitoku-ho, forms part of the legal framework for the reconstruction plans that the residents eventually accepted. It is legislation enacted in 1973 during the period of increased environmental and social awareness that followed the Big Four decisions and the Narita Airport protests. It was supported by the national governor's association, which, in large part from lobbying by Nagano, saw a need for such legislation. The law provides that those who benefit from public-works projects should pay to alleviate the sacrifice of those affected by their construction. Despite the legislation, a compromise over Yamba Dam was ten years away.  

Under Hida's leadership, the town continued its policy of hearing nothing of the Ministry of Construction's plans for Kawarayu. The Gunma governor entered the standoff in the mid-1970s, siding in large part with Nagano. Gunma, said Hida, had built six or seven dams before the Yamba project, and had seen that the areas where the dams were built remained undeveloped with dim hopes for the future. "Though the Ministry of Construction said it [the economy] would be better when the dam was built, the governor knew it was a lie," Hida said. Seeing what Nagano said about the social impact of dams to be true, in the mid-1970s the governor asked prefectural planners to create a reconstruction plan that would mitigate the community's sacrifice.  

With funding for reconstruction secured from the downstream prefectures, Nagano government went to work with the prefectural government to craft a reconstruction plan. However, most of the community

---

54 Hida, 1997.
continued to oppose the project, even though the plans were widely circulated in the newspapers. It was a long process for the strongly opposed villagers to see the possible benefits of the reconstruction proposals. After long, informal negotiations between the government and the mayor and the community, community opinion gradually swung over to a point where in 1980 the “no-sacrifice” reconstruction proposals could be presented, and more formal negotiations could begin.

The delays won by the stalling tactics were used wisely. Now as Naganohara entered the dohyō with the Ministry of Construction, it did so with not only a powerful ally, but also with growing political savvy. Records show at least fifty research trips by Naganohara Town officials and residents to other dam sites during the fifteen-year period beginning in 1965. The community knew the misfortune that had befallen earlier communities. After continued negotiation, Naganohara submitted a 478-item reconstruction demand to the prefecture in February 1985, which then mediated with the national government. On November 27th, of the same year, five years to the day after the first official presentation of the reconstruction proposal, Gunma Governor Kanda and Mayor Hida concluded a memorandum agreeing in general terms to the reconstruction plan. “Since there’s no alternative place for the dam, we reached a settlement on a plan that will improve our community.” Hida said.55

With the red ink of the official seals, the community went from

absolute opposition to starting down the road of relocation and reconstruction. It was a 180-degree course change. The community has already begun to see the results of the reconstruction plan. Over the past five years, under Mayor Tamura’s guidance, funds from the downstream cities and prefectures have already built a nursing home, a center for the handicapped, and new multi-purpose recreation center.

To summarize, in 1952, when the Ministry of Construction first announced Yamba Dam, the entire community rose up in protest. As water quality problems seemed to derail the dam, the protest died. Thirteen years later, in 1965, when the project was re-announced, there were differing opinions in the community about the dam. While the majority, led in large part by the long-time residents and landowners, were opposed, about twenty percent of the community is said to have supported it. These supporters, characterized as renters or people with bad business locations, saw the dam and the accompanying compensation money as a way to improve their lot, say town officials. The reconstruction plans eventually adopted were aimed at improving the economic situation of the whole community by rebuilding it and developing it as a resort.

Despite the hard-won promise of carefully planned reconstruction, Kawarayu still doubted the Ministry of Construction’s ability to maintain the character of the town. From their many trips to other dam sites around Japan, residents had seen the results of other Ministry of Construction relocation jobs. Villages were reconstructed with little regard for village centers.

56 Takebuchi, 1996.
and traditional architecture. Not wanting to lose the physical attributes so important to creating their sense of place, Kawarayu residents demanded that they have a part in planning their new village. The next chapter looks more closely at those plans.
The general reconstruction plans are the result of compromise among town, prefecture, and the national government. They reflect Kawarayu’s long struggle to hold on to its traditional ways while reaching for a viable future. The blueprints show the villages rebuilt above their present location, with bridges linking the districts across the reservoir. Economically, the area would be promoted as a lakeside resort emphasizing the natural environment. A rowing course is planned on the lake. A lakeside walking course will connect the new Kawarayu train station in Kamiyubara with the dam and dam-site park. A tram will carry tourists down the face of the 436-foot dam to a walking trail through the Agatsuma Canyon. The waterfall Fudo-taki will be the focus of a nature park. In the hot-spring district, farmers and artisans will offer their products at an *asa-ichi*, or morning market. It is a plan aimed at uniting the individual characteristics of each village into an attractive resort package.

In the sense that they are among the first to provide for rebuilding and economic promotion of the dislocated community, these overall reconstruction plans in themselves are seen as ground breaking. Kawarayu citizens were still worried about specific measures to recreate its community and livelihood. The result was more detailed plans that show what Kawarayu values about their community, and how they want to preserve it. These reconstruction plans
community, and how they want to preserve it. These reconstruction plans have created expectations that, given the complexities of land ownership and compensation, may be difficult to fulfill. The answers lie in the future, but the big questions affecting the success of reconstruction are in everyone’s mind today. This chapter will first look beyond Kawarayu to the whole community of Naganohara, as the new infrastructure will intertwine their fates even more closely. After taking in this broader picture, the focus will again turn to Kawarayu and the efforts that community has made in planning for the reconstruction.

Naganohara is known as the gateway to western Agatsuma County. As tourists traveling the Shinshū Kaidō on foot and on horseback had to cross through the town to reach Kusatsu hot spring, so too do modern-day travelers using cars, buses, and trains. Although itself not a principle destination, its location as a transportation hub is crucial, and has resulted in dependence on the tourist trade. Among the biggest employers in Naganohara is Asama Shuzo, a sake distillery that attracts tour buses with its large restaurant facilities and wide selection of gifts. Other businesses that depend upon the ten million people passing through annually are the smaller restaurants and gift shops, both at the train station and along the highway. Route 145 is a narrow and winding two-lane road. During peak holiday flows fifteen thousand cars per day back up until traffic moves at a crawl. The Japan Railways’ Agatsuma Line is a single track line used by two trains an hour. Many passengers going to Kusatsu transfer to buses or taxis at the Naganohara station for the last leg to the hot-spring resort.
The plans for the new transportation infrastructure are extensive. In addition to eight new bridges to cross the reservoir connecting the villages, there will be a new four-lane highway to handle the tourist traffic. The Agatsuma Railroad will be rerouted in tunnels bored through the rugged mountains. Planning new shopping centers and businesses, community entrepreneurs are already looking ahead to the time when the new roads are complete and traffic is routed around the Nagano-hara village instead of through it. A hot-spring well was drilled in Kawarayu in 1992. When the community is rebuilt, water from the well will be piped to the new hotels. Land will be carved out of the hillsides to become new residential, commercial, and agricultural zones. In the Nagano-hara village, work has been underway since 1996. What were once sloping orchards and vegetable fields are now level tracts of land prepared to make way for the new junior high school and residential zones. This creation of land is one of the biggest expenses of the Yamba Dam project. Budgets show that the sixty-five acres of possible Kawarayu replacement lands alone would cost ¥5.4 billion (US$47 million). (Table 1.) The location and safety of these lands are critical issues in Kawarayu. How these lands are to be procured is another stumbling block. These are important questions, and they will be considered in the context of the reconstruction plan that the Kawarayu community has written.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT NAME</th>
<th>PROJECT COST*</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Replacement Land</td>
<td>23.034/200</td>
<td>Replacement land construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road and Transportation Measures</td>
<td>122.637/1066</td>
<td>Route 145, JR Agatsuma Line, other roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster Prevention Measures</td>
<td>35.219/306</td>
<td>Reservoir, sand guard dam, waterway construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Infrastructure Measures</td>
<td>8827/76</td>
<td>Dai-ichi Elementary School, Higashi Junior High School, Fire Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Forestry Measures</td>
<td>333/3</td>
<td>Creating agricultural lands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Promotion Measures</td>
<td>10,325/89</td>
<td>Dam site Park, Lake Site Park, Kawarayu Lakeside Park</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Millions of Yen/Millions of US dollars

Source: Ministry of Construction, 1994

The New Kawarayu Village Plan (Atarashii Kawarayu no Machizukuri) resulted from strong community desires to improve on the Community Living Project (Chiiki Kyoju Keikaku) released jointly by Gunma and the Ministry of Construction in 1990. The sixty-two page Community Living Project spends seven pages outlining, in general terms, the reconstruction parameters for Kawarayu. Describing the plans for recreating the Kawarayu living environment, for example, the document reads:

Regarding the preparation of the living environment, we will arrange, with the main road as axis, a convenient easy-to-live-in community, with such facilities as parks with open space, sewers, and a community center, that is both a comfortable and beautiful tourist destination.57

The document includes plans for new bridges linking the Kawarayu district.

57 Chiiki Kyoju Keikaku [Community Living Plan] (Maebashi, Japan: Gunma Prefecture Water Resources Section and Ministry of Construction Yamba Dam Construction Office, 1990), 32.
with Kawarahata to be built so as to become new symbols of the community. For disaster prevention measures, the plan calls for the replacement lands to be protected by concrete river walls. Small concrete dams will arrest erosion along the creeks on the steep hillsides. “Suitable” residential and public lands will be provided as the framework for the municipal infrastructure, it says. As well, the list of projects includes parking lots, community centers, public restrooms, and a museum that will commemorate the old Kawarayu.

The desire for the New Kawarayu Village Plan was perhaps a result of the general language of the document and the Ministry of Construction’s word “suitable.” Because the Ministry of Construction did not ask what aspects of the community the residents would like to see developed. As residents had seen from their travels to other dam sites, suitable for the Ministry of Construction might be generic concrete buildings. So with government funding to hire city planning consultants and a strong desire to put their own stamp on the government’s plan, the community set out to write its own reconstruction plan.

The 1994 process was designed to include the whole community. It was called “minna no te ni yoru machi-zukuri,” which translates as “building a town with everyone’s help.” It was a three-part process. The first part involved the “yoriai kaigi,” or get-together meetings. About thirty people attended each of these meetings. The planning consultants hung large maps


59 It is customary in Kawarayu for one person, usually the patriarch, to represent a household at these meetings. The thirty people attending each meeting could be thought of as representing thirty households. With 167
on the walls to be used in the discussion. The participants divided into groups, discussing and deciding upon various aspects of the plan. The discussion covered topics ranging from Kawarayu’s most important characteristics to hotel zoning issues. Ten get-together meetings were initially planned, but they concluded after the fourth meeting, with the group feeling that there was little more they could accomplish. Next was the “hiaringu chōsa,” or the consultant’s door-to-door survey of residents who either did not attend or did not have a chance to express their opinions in the open meetings. Finally, the results of the meetings and the survey were approved by a general meeting of Kawarayu villagers.  

The result of the community’s planning is a list of guidelines from which recommendations were made to the government’s Community Living Plan. These guidelines are based upon four general principles: preservation and protection the natural environment; passing on and protecting history and culture; the coexistence of hot spring and livelihood; and a new village to be built by all. These four guiding principles are the basis of twenty-five specific devices the community wants to use to preserve Kawarayu’s special characteristics. (Table 2)


61 Ibid., 1-3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Guides</th>
<th>Devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preserve and protect the natural environment</td>
<td>Build the town making the best use of the topography</td>
<td>Build sloped roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restore the relationship between village and creeks</td>
<td>Utilize slopes in building the replacement lands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preserve the relationship between people and nature</td>
<td>Make the best use of the original forest and creek structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass on and protect history and culture</td>
<td>Pass on Kawarayu's original landscape</td>
<td>Build naturally shaped creeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make the best use of former culture and lifestyle</td>
<td>Build proper riparian areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Revive the inheritance of history and culture</td>
<td>Build easy-to-walk trails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coexistence of hot spring and livelihood</td>
<td>Make the hot spring the tourism base</td>
<td>Ecological village construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build peaceful residential areas</td>
<td>Preserve the face of Kawarayu by replanting the forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use the appearance of the village to create a beautiful landscape</td>
<td>Pass on Kawarayu's folklore and traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prompt community initiative</td>
<td>Build a town where old meets new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create devices where everyone can participate</td>
<td>Preserve old place names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community control of the landscape</td>
<td>Preserve and protect history and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Revive the former culture and livelihood in the new village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create devices for community participation</td>
<td>Create a different hot-spring resort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create planning devices where residents and administration work together</td>
<td>Build a hot-spring village that best uses Kawarayu's characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A village built by everyone</td>
<td>Create devices for community participation</td>
<td>Take care of nearby green areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community participation in writing covenants</td>
<td>Build residential areas to match the appearance of the hot-spring village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create devices for community participation</td>
<td>Create a beautiful view surrounded by forest and green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community participation in building public facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is here that the threads that weave the fabric of place in Kawarayu finally become clearer. The New Kawarayu Village Plan takes the reconstruction guidelines from the general to the specific, defining the characteristics that are important. Not only does it set out guidelines for the streets, buildings, and layout of the town, but it also describes appropriate building materials and suggests ways to revive Kawarayu's culture and history. Among these suggestions are the creation of new sacred centers, the places that form the spiritual focus of the community. The shrine, the focal point of the community, will be rebuilt on top of Mount Kinka. The plans also emphasize the waterfall Fudo-taki and the graveyard as new community centers. The residential areas will be centered around a public bath and a community hall. The Yukake Matsuri will be continued at the new shrine. Water from a hot-spring well drilled in 1992 will be piped to the hotels. It is a blueprint for reconstruction, but it also is a reflection of what people treasure about their community. It seeks to recreate the architectural spaces, the shrines and graveyards, the ceremony and traditions that for centuries have been the basis of the Kawarayu identity.

Some people in the community agree with the reconstruction plan, others see it creating more problems than it solves. Hida Shuichi, twenty-nine, lives with his wife Hiromi and infant son Tatsuhito in a house built next to his parent's in Shimoyubara. Though he works outside the community, commuting to an office in a neighboring town, he too values Kawarayu's natural harmony and wants to protect Kawarayu from becoming part of the

---

62 Atarashii Kawarayu no Machi-zukuri, 22.
concrete jungle, like the nearby resorts of Ikaho and Kusatsu. He agrees with the emphasis on natural materials. “Asphalt is a scab on the earth. If you are going to build a parking lot, make it dirt,” he said. “If you make it all asphalt and concrete, it ends up just like a city.” There is merit, Hida says, in rebuilding Kawarayu in a way that preserves its old-fashioned flavor. “With Japanese having more leisure time,” he said, “hot springs built in harmony with nature are becoming more popular.”

While the New Kawarayu Village Plan itself is seen as a success among the villagers like Hida for its measures aimed at preserving the village’s traditional sense of place, one big question surrounding the reconstruction is the actual implementation of the plan.

Some say that the New Kawarayu Village Plan is premature in that it creates expectations that may be difficult to realize, given the problem of land. If the lands to be used for replacement lands were wholly owned by the government, there would be less at stake. In fact, a large portion of the needed land is private. Before any construction can begin, the government must acquire it. According to the process outlined by the Ministry of Construction, landowners are guaranteed a set amount of replacement land. All those who currently rent in the community will all be able to buy 150 square meters of replacement lands.

A long-time Kawarayu family might have a hotel as well as ten acres of orchards next to the mountains. Theoretically this family has rights to a


64 Toyoda Akiyoshi, interview by author, 8 January 1997, tape recording, Takadaya, Kawarayu, Japan.
proportionate amount of replacement land. Their ten acres of orchards next to the mountains are crucial for the replacement lands, and must be first sold to the government so construction can begin. The compensation criteria have yet to be decided, so temporary deals are negotiated to start construction.

There is no one solution. It is a complex problem that has to be resolved through individual negotiations with each landowner. "There are a lot of different kinds of people," says Mizuide Koichi, who runs a restaurant in the hotel district. "Some will accept money for their land, others want to have it all replaced."65 It seems a very real possibility that Kawarayu could come to resemble the Narita airport — a few holdouts slowing the whole process down.

Masaiji Akira owns the wood-chip plant at the edge of town. Tourists wanting to hike the trail through the Agatsuma Canyon have to pass through his log yard. He is one of the twenty percent of the community who supported the dam. His teenage son bore the brunt of his father's position of support when his teammates, sons of the dam's opposition, took away his baseball uniform, forcing him to quit the junior high school team. Masaiji himself has little contact with the hotel owners who form the core of the opposition.

His landlord, who lives near Tokyo, is one who has reached an agreement with the Ministry of Construction. Behind Masaiji's house construction crews have started work on a steep haul road to be used in building the replacement lands. Two hard-hatted workers rappel down the face of the hill pushing iron rebar into the soil. Masaiji, forty-nine, was an electrical

---

engineer in Tokyo before returning twenty-two years ago to take over his father’s wood-chip business. Although he supports the dam because it is national policy, he says the long process is heartless and inhuman. He is worried whether renters like himself will receive enough money to buy replacement lands. Facing retirement in the next ten to fifteen years, he is not anxious to start over again.  

Masaiji’s fears represent the worries of many other renters. The only people with rights to replacement lands are the current landowners. If renters want to remain in the village, they will be have to use their compensation monies to buy land and build a home or business. Even with the extra money, it may not be enough to make the move. Others worry that after the land owners receive their share, there will not be enough land left over to buy. Many interviewed estimated that the village will lose half of its population when the move to the replacement lands is finally made.

Kaneko Noriko, thirty-nine, who runs a beauty shop with her husband Shinichi in Shimoyubara, is interested in staying in the village, but as renters, they share Masaiji’s concern about relocation to the replacement lands. Kaneko says their business needs a certain population base to remain viable. If half the village’s population moves away, it could jeopardize their livelihood.

Shimizu Hidekazu, thirty-one, operates a cabinet shop with his father not far from the Kaneko’s beauty parlor. Much of their business comes from people

66 Masaiji Akira, wood chip plant owner, interview by author, 13 January 1997, Kawarayu, Japan, tape recording.

67 Kaneko Noriko, beauty salon proprietor, interview by author, 10 January 1997, Kawarayu, Japan, tape recording.
building second homes, as well as the hot-spring hotels. He cannot imagine leaving Kawarayu, but says a move to the replacement lands depends upon the situation. "If it is a liveable place and we can secure enough land for a shop, then we want to stay here locally," Shimizu says. "If the situation is bad, we'll think about going out." 68

Shimizu's concerns about the quality of the replacement lands echo those of other villagers. Noguchi Hajime, forty-one, a fifth-generation son of Kawarayu, is perhaps the most outspoken. As a hunter, he has walked the mountains where the Ministry of Construction plans to spend ¥5.4 billion (US $47 million) to create sixty acres of land. The north slope of the mountain will be cold and dark in the winter, he said. There is also the real concern of landslides there. "It is not a place where people should live. I have been to the actual place, and it is a place that will not ever become like those pictures," he said, referring to the pen and ink drawings in the government's New Living Plan. Noguchi has decided to move his family out of Kawarayu; he has already bought land in another town. He thinks the government could put the fortune being spent on Kawarayu to better use. 69

The question arises from this discussion, however, of what kind of community Kawarayu would be if many of its people leave. Tuan makes the point, "In the absence of the right people, things and places are quickly drained


of meaning so that their lastingness is an irritation rather than a comfort." 70

As much as a place depends on its location, it also depends on its people.

The village took extensive measures in hiring planning consultants to work with the community and the Ministry of Construction to write a feasible plan that included everyone’s ideas. Most still do not agree. A 1996 Ministry of Construction survey shows that just thirty-two percent of Kawarayu households think that it is a good plan. Of the remainder, thirteen percent understand the plan, forty-six percent do not understand the plan, five percent have other suggestions, and four percent did not respond. 71 Sakurai Shoichi, deputy director of the Ministry of Construction’s Yamba Dam Construction Office, blames a lack of understanding. At the time of the survey, he said, the villagers had not yet seen the scale model showing the reconstruction. The model recently completed, Sakurai expects to see the deeper understanding it offers the residents reflected in the next survey. 72

There are concerns about the quality of the replacement lands. There may also be some lack of understanding about how the community will be rebuilt. Despite this, a 1996 Ministry of Construction survey shows that sixty-five percent of Kawarayu residents want to move to the replacement lands

70 Tuan, Space and Place, 140.

71 Ikō Chōsa [Survey of Intentions], (Ministry of Construction Yamba Dam Construction Office, 1996), 10. Among the five affected districts, the survey had a ninety-one percent overall response rate, with eighty-nine percent of Kawarayu’s 167 households answering the questionnaire.

72 Sakurai Shozo, Deputy Director Ministry of Construction Yamba Dam Construction Office, interview by author, 13 January 1997, Naganohara, tape recording.
around the Yamba Dam reservoir. Of the remaining, twenty-four percent are undecided, and eleven percent want to move elsewhere. For all five of the affected districts, sixty-eight percent want to move to replacement lands, seventeen percent are undecided, and fourteen percent want to move elsewhere.  

Perhaps because those who commute daily to another town for work might be more likely to considering moving elsewhere, a larger percentage of those who have a business stake in Kawarayu want to stay behind. Among the forty-six businesses in Kawarayu, seventy-eight percent say they want to relocate to the replacement lands. Thirteen percent are undecided, while those who plan to start business elsewhere is nine percent. This is very close to the average for the five affected districts. Knowledge of the villagers' intentions is important because it tells the Ministry of Construction how much replacement land to construct. The results of the most recent survey call for a total of twenty-four acres of residential and agricultural land in Kawarayu. The survey makes no mention of the land required for commercial or public facilities. The government's plans say up to sixty-five acres are possible in Kawarayu.

Nearly all of those interviewed in Kawarayu worried that the nature of the Ministry of Construction bureaucracy is the real barrier to successful reconstruction. As in other branches of Japanese government, it is customary for Ministry of Construction employees to be rotated every three or four years between posts. Not only do incoming officials have very little background

73 Ikō Chōsa, 1996.  
74 Ikō Chōsa, 1996.
about the length and complexity of dam negotiations, a verbal promise given by one official may have no meaning to his successor. Traditional forms of mediation that rely upon interpersonal relationships and gentlemen’s agreements are difficult because the players are always changing. With every Ministry of Construction transfer, there is a setback in negotiations.

With this impersonal bureaucracy, says Hida Shozo, whose family is a large landowner, “It is not an issue of money. It is an issue of heart. If they [Ministry of Construction] would understand that, things would go more smoothly.”

Others have concerns about the government’s willingness to cooperate. “There is a lot that is unclear,” says Toyoda Akiyoshi, of the Takadaya hotel. “The Ministry of Construction says ‘we will work with you.’ When we ask, ‘please do this for us,’ they do not say ‘sure we will do it.’ they just say, ‘we will make an effort.’ It is this that makes the community nervous.”

There is a hidden price to Kawarayu’s struggle that so far has only been touched upon briefly. Almost from the beginning, the community has been divided roughly eighty percent opposed and twenty percent in favor of the dam. Within this split, the supporters have been characterized as those, generally renters, who see Yamba Dam and the compensation money it brings as an opportunity to improve their situation. There are even deeper schisms that often run between members of the same family. As one case in point,

75 Hida Shozo, hotel proprietor, interview by author, 10 January 1997, Kawarayu, Japan, tape recording.

76 Toyoda Akiyoshi, hotel proprietor, interview by author, 8 January 1997, Kawarayu, Japan, tape recorded.
octogenarian Toyoda Yoshio, a former town councilman and opposition leader, told of how one day his son tore down the anti-dam banner from the hotel front. His son did not share the same strong sentiments that his father held and felt the time had come to put the protest behind.

Some outside Kawarayu say the waiting is a game of attrition. In the forty years since the dam was first announced, the Ministry of Construction bureaucracy has already outlasted one generation. For the oldest, most adamant opponents, time is not on their side. There are more and more people in the community who have grown up knowing nothing but the struggle over the dam who want to move on with their lives. Ichimura Satoshi of the Naganohara Town Office likened Ministry of Construction tactics to a siege on a castle. The thinking is that sooner or later people will tire of the battle and give up, Ichimura says. As construction of replacement lands is one of the biggest expenses, the government would save money as people decide instead to accept compensation and move away, he added. Most of those under age forty say they are weary of battle and want the dam to be built so they can start over.

The reconstruction plans look good on paper. There are concrete measures for establishing a new transportation infrastructure, promoting economic development, and reestablishing Kawarayu's sacred centers. It is a blueprint for embracing the future while holding onto history and tradition.

---

77 Toyoda Yoshio, hotel proprietor and author, interview by author, 14 January 1997, Kawarayu, Japan, tape recording.

78 Ichimura Satoshi, Naganohara Town Hall Planning and Tourism Section, interview by author, 22 December 1996, Naganohara.
Land, however, is the critical issue. Until the criteria for property compensation is negotiated, it will be difficult for the Ministry of Construction to acquire the private lands it needs to build the replacement lands. Already behind schedule, officials say it will be at least another year before land surveys are completed and an agreement on the compensation criteria can reached. From that point it may take another year or longer to complete the land transactions.\(^79\) The residents say the delays are caused by the nature of the Ministry of Construction bureaucracy. The Ministry of Construction for its part says the delays are caused by landowners dragging their heels. Either way the result is the same. The schedule for putting these plans to action and beginning actual reconstruction continues to stretch out. The questions of successfully rebuilding Kawarayu and sense of place there remain unanswered.

\(^{79}\) Sakurai, 1997.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS

The tradition of the Yukake Matsuri is continued every year in Kawarayu. It still draws a big crowd, but some have said that the number of villagers who participate is diminishing. The long waiting for the dam has had a negative effect, a listlessness and sense of resignation in people’s attitudes that is reflected as well in a kind of dinginess in many structures. The framework for reconstruction is in place, but delayed land negotiations have held up progress on the major construction projects, although minor work has begun.

Instead of David and Goliath, the situation seems now like that of two sumō wrestlers stopped in the middle of the ring, each struggling for a better hold on their opponent’s belt. Many people say they would like to see the dam built quickly, but it seems unlikely to happen as fast as people wish. Hida Shozo’s family operates the Yamakiboshi, a hotel of long Kawarayu tradition. It was rebuilt after being destroyed by fire in 1951. Since the re-announcement in 1965, only the most necessary maintenance has been performed on the building. The same is true for practically every other structure in town. Not knowing how long the community would last with the threat of dam construction, no one wanted to risk money on upkeep.

In 1996, the Hida family decided to pick up where time stopped and
build a new outdoor bath overlooking the Agatsuma River. Without working to hold on to Kawarayu’s special qualities now, argues Hida, it will be more difficult to revive them when its time to relocate. His family is also debating whether to go a step further and rebuild the entire hotel.

A few doors away at the Takadaya is like-minded Toyoda Akiyoshi. In 1994 he added a new bath to his hotel aimed at attracting new, more health-conscious customers who want to bathe in heated sand. At thirty-one he is not waiting for reconstruction and relocation to start rebuilding Kawarayu.

If we don’t understand that we have to make the customer happy, we won’t be able to do business when the dam is finished and the new hotels are built. It is a good opportunity to experiment little by little before the dam is built, so when it is finished we will be ready to put our ideas to work.

Toyoda is taking charge in other ways as well. He is the leader of Kawarayu’s Seinen Forum or Young Men’s Forum. The age limit for members is forty. The group meets several times a year to discuss the dam and the future of Kawarayu. It also is a platform from which to negotiate with the Ministry of Construction. “If we residents are not firm, if we don’t tell the Town Hall, the prefecture, or the government what we want, it won’t work,” Toyoda says.

Grassroots citizen activism will continue to be a driving force in reshaping and rebuilding the Kawarayu community. This exploration of the

---

80 Dedicated to the doomed Agatsuma Canyon, the bath’s brochure reads in part, “In ten years this canyon and this hot-spring hotel will be sunk at the foot of a dam. So thinking, when you look out over the canyon in the lingering twilight, you can feel your chest tighten.”

81 Officially it is not “protest” any longer because of the agreements NaganoHara Town reached with the prefectural and national government.
construction of Yamba Dam shows the issues to be complex and intertwined. Beginning with the political climate resulting from the “Big Four” court cases, the threads start to come together. Rooted in this are two points: First is what McKean calls the “polluter-pays-principle,” that says it is the polluter’s responsibility to clean up. The second is that because of this political climate more citizens groups began taking a proactive approach to stop pollution before it starts. At around this same time in the late 1960s, the protests over Narita Airport began raising questions about unfair government practices. This atmosphere may have been a catalyst for Kawarayu’s growing political awareness.

Another important thread is Kawarayu’s place itself. Isolated, traditional activities focused around the village shrine and hot spring had changed little through Japan’s industrialization. With many of the residents tracing their roots back into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there is a strong attachment to Kawarayu. The intimacy of living in the community has created a uniquely Kawarayu experience that reinforces attachment to place. The quiet hot-spring resort draws a clientele of writers and thinkers whose ideas, possibly when combined with what villagers already knew from their own travels and schooling, created a more subtle political awareness. How these threads are woven together is not exactly clear, but the result is. Since 1952, even despite splits from within the community, little Kawarayu has held firm against the mighty Ministry of Construction.

As it led Naganohara Town in the fight for “no-sacrifice” reconstruction measures, Kawarayu used every tool common to other environmental
protests. The community elected an anti-dam mayor. It petitioned the national and prefectural governments. It lobbied legislators and sent letters. It held sit-ins and demonstrations. However, two of Kawarayu’s methods showed a more subtle approach. These were the tactics of stalling for time and conducting research. In the end, perhaps it this buying of time to study other dam situations that gave the community the upper hand it needed in negotiating “no-sacrifice” terms with the Ministry of Construction.

Yamba Dam will eventually submerge Kawarayu. The natural hot spring that sustains the core of the 800-year-old community will be submerged, to be replaced by a drilled well. As where before industrial pollution victims were expected to quietly endure their fate, so were those dislocated by dam construction quietly expected to endure theirs. Kawarayu did not go quietly. Threatened with the destruction of home and livelihood, protestors led the fight for compensation, believing they should be on equal terms with the dam’s downstream benefactors. They believed that, in a corollary to McKean’s “polluter-pays-principle,” those who benefit from the dam should compensate those who sacrifice for it.

One other point of interest is that the necessity of Yamba Dam is questioned by nearly all but the Ministry of Construction. Sato Motoaki raised serious concerns about Yamba Dam. One of these is the acidic Agatsuma River water that must be neutralized with sixty tons of limestone each day. There is a question of how usable this water will be to the people downstream. High sediment flows introduce another question about the longevity of the dam.

---

82 McKean, Environmental Protest, 153.
as does its position downstream from the active volcano Mount Asama. Sato also questioned the Ministry of Construction estimates of how much water the Agatsuma River could provide to the downstream cities and prefectures. Economically, the ¥500 billion (US $4.4 billion) cost of the project seems sure to outweigh any benefits from flood control and increased water supply to the Kanto Plain. As noted earlier, big public-works projects like Yamba Dam are seen as stimuli to both the local and national economies, and are strongly supported by politicians and construction companies.\textsuperscript{83} Needing to make work for its huge bureaucracy, the tremendous political power of the Ministry of Construction keeps Yamba Dam moving forward despite the costs.

The end of this exploration comes around again to the beginning. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan suggests that “cosmic views can be adjusted to suit new circumstances,” that sense of place is flexible.\textsuperscript{84} Even though many people in Kawarayu are broadening their horizons with international travel and advanced education, most still have a strong desire to hold on to the location and experience of their hot spring village. But as the location of the village changes, so will the experience of living there. The question remains of whether or not the community is strong enough to hold on to the experiences of the old village in the new location. There is a current of pessimism in the community about the pitfalls of reconstruction. Underneath that, however, embodied by those like Toyoda Akiyoshi and Hida Shozo, is an optimism that if the

\textsuperscript{83} Barrett and Therival. \textit{Environmental Policy and Impact Assessment in Japan}, 47.

\textsuperscript{84} Tuan, \textit{Space and Place}, 150.
community wants to rebuild, it can. If what the community has accomplished so far is any indication, the will of the Kawarayu people to succeed in recreating their community should not be underestimated.
APPENDIX

Interview Questions

I really appreciate your taking time out of your busy schedule to help me with my master’s research on Kawarayu. Is it alright if I tape record the interview?

1. First, I'd like to ask you a little about your background. How old are you? How long has your family lived in Kawarayu? How long have you operated this business?

2. Did you participate in the community meetings for the New Kawarayu Living Plan? What were they like? Were they useful?

3. What do you think are Kawarayu’s special characteristics?

4. Do you think those characteristics can be recreated if the reconstruction plans are followed?

5. How do you feel about moving? What do you think about the future of Kawarayu?

6. Are you a renter or landowner?

7. How did you come to support the reconstruction plans?

8. What affects on interpersonal relations has the dam had on the community?

9. What do you think of the planned compensation system? What affects do you see it having on the community structure?

10. Is there anything in particular you would like to ask or tell me?
REFERENCES CITED


INTERVIEWS


Hida Shozo, hotel proprietor. Interview by author, 10 January 1997, Kawarayu, Japan. Tape recording.

Hida Tomijiro, former Naganojara mayor. Interview by author, 7 January 1997, Kawarayu, Japan. Tape recording.

Hida Yoshiko, hotel proprietor. Interview by author, 10 January 1997, Kawarayu, Japan. Tape recording.


Kaneko Noriko, beauty salon proprietor. Interview by author, 10 January 1997, Kawarayu, Japan. Tape recording.


Mizuide Koichi, restaurant proprietor. Interview by author, 7 January 1997, Kawarayu, Japan. Tape recording.


Shinohara Makoto, grocery store proprietor. Interview by author, 8 January 1997, Kawarayu, Japan. Tape recording.


______. Interview by author, 17 January 1997, Nagano, Japan.

Toyoda Akiyoshi, hotel proprietor and community leader. Interview by author, 8 January 1997, Kawarayu, Japan. Tape recording.

Toyoda Mikio, hotel proprietor. Interview by author, 8 January 1997, Kawarayu, Japan. Tape recording.

Toyoda Yoshio, hotel proprietor and author. Interview by author, 14 January 1997, Kawarayu, Japan. Tape recording.