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The Diffusion of Cotton Processing and Trade in The Kinai Region in Tokugawa Japan

WILLIAM B. HAUSER

COTTON cultivation, cotton processing, and cotton marketing were major features of life in the Kinai region during much of the Tokugawa period. From its origins in the early seventeenth century, the Kinai cotton trade developed into an important element of the economic life of Osaka and the surrounding provinces of Settsu, Kawachi, and Izumi. During the seventeenth century, as cotton cultivation increased in Kinai villages, processing and marketing of the harvested cotton were monopolized by merchant groups centered in Osaka. The demand for cotton and cotton cloth was largely for urban consumption and the technology for transforming the cotton from its harvested form into cloth was most easily concentrated in cities like Osaka. By the 1660's and 1670's merchants from Osaka received authorization to form trading groups to regularize the distribution system which channeled harvested cotton from the cultivators to local market towns and Osaka for processing and sale.

This Osaka centered marketing and processing system dominated the Kinai cotton trade well into the eighteenth century. With the diffusion of processing technology into Kinai villages and the increased demand for by-employment income from the villagers, inroads were made into the Osaka centered cotton trade. Responding to the growth of rural processing and trading activities, the Osaka merchants called on the government for new protection for their monopoly rights. Subsequently, in the 1770's, the Osaka cotton dealers were granted additional controls over the marketing and processing of cotton. While successful in retarding the expansion of rural competition, the urban merchant controls failed to eliminate cotton processing and marketing by farmers and rural merchants.

By the early nineteenth century, rural competition increased in intensity and the Osaka cotton merchants began to seize rival shipments and impose sales commissions on all cotton goods which passed through the city, attempting by these actions to reassert their control. Rural opposition was sufficiently aroused by 1823 that 1007 villages in Settsu and Kawachi joined in a major complaint to the *bakufu* against the restrictive controls on the Kinai cotton trade. The settlement of the suit removed the restraints on rural trade and rapidly accelerated the growth of village level cotton processing and marketing. With the elimination of government

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supports for the Osaka cotton monopolies competitive marketing systems expanded and significantly altered the operation of the Kinai cotton trade.¹

Two aspects of rural competition in the Kinai cotton trade were the expansion of cotton processing and cotton trading by Kinai area villagers. Both were responses to village demand for new sources of non-agricultural or by-employment income. As a commercial crop, cotton offered access to new kinds of economic activity in the villages and had a significant impact on rural employment patterns. It contributed to increased involvement in handicraft production through cotton processing and also made available opportunities for rural trade. This paper will discuss the expansion of both cotton processing and cotton trading in Kinai villages, its impact on village employment patterns, the conflicts which developed between rural and urban interests in the Kinai cotton trade, and the official response to these conflicts by local representatives of the Tokugawa *bakufu*.

I.

By the mid-Tokugawa period cotton cultivation was a common form of commercial farming in the Kinai region, despite the fact that prior to the seventeenth century cotton was not widely grown in Japan.² During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries most cotton was sold in its harvested seed cotton form. While there was some processing of seed cotton into ginned cotton, cotton yarn, and cloth, it was largely for household consumption. Consequently, most of the cotton cloth available to urban consumers was produced by specialized artisans in Osaka or Kinai market towns and there was little rural trading of cotton cloth.³

Beginning in the early eighteenth century cotton processing increased among the cultivators. Cotton ginning became a common form of village by-employment and in some areas carding, spinning, and weaving were extensive.⁴ The gradual increase in cotton processing activity was in part related to new technology. New tools for cotton ginning increased productivity and new looms increased the cloth output of village weavers.⁵ Over the course of the eighteenth century, the dominant role of Osaka and towns like Hirano as cotton processing centers was gradually displaced by village processing of a large portion of the Kinai cotton crop.⁶ By the nineteenth century cotton processing was so specialized that the harvested cotton passed through as many as fourteen hands before being marketable as finished cloth.⁷

The impact of cotton processing on village production is evident from data collected from villages incorporated into the modern cities of Amagasaki, Nishinomiya, and Fuse. As can be seen in Tables 1, 2, and 3, cotton processing was a

¹ For a more complete discussion of this process see William B. Hauser, *Economic Institutional Change in Tokugawa Japan: Osaka and the Kinai Cotton Trade*, (Cambridge University Press, 1974).

² Thomas C. Smith, *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*, (Stanford, 1959), pp. 76-7.

³ Okamoto Seishin, ed., *Amagasaki shishi*, II, (Amagasaki, 1968), pp. 655-6.

⁴ *Amagasaki shishi*, II, p. 656; Yagi Akihiro, *Kinsei no shōhin ryūtsū*, (Tokyo, 1962), pp. 22-30; Hayashi Reiko, "Kinsei chūkōki no shōgyō,"

in Toyota Takeshi and Kodama Kōta, eds., *Ryūtsūshi, Taikei Nihonshi sōsho*, Vol. 13, (Tokyo, 1969), p. 220.

⁵ Fuse Shishi Hensan Iinkai, ed., *Fuse shishi*, II, (Fuse, 1967), pp. 543-5; Tsujiai Zenyotarō, *Kawachi momenju*, (Tokyo, 1965), pp. 19-29; Takebe Yoshito, "Sekkasen no mengyō," *Nihon sangyōshi taikei*, VI, (Tokyo, 1960), pp. 136-7.

⁶ Yagi, *Kinsei no shōhin ryūtsū*, pp. 89-93.

⁷ Smith, *Agrarian Origins*, p. 80.

TABLE 1—AMAGASAKI AREA COTTON RELATED AGRICULTURAL BY-EMPLOYMENT

Village	Year	Description
Ushioe ^a	1677	women weave cotton cloth
Mandaraji	1701	Men weave rope and matting, women spin cotton yarn in off-season
Shimosakabe	1749	women weave cotton cloth in off-season
Ushioe ^b	1782	Men weave rope and matting, women spin cotton yarn
Nishi Koya	1803	Women spin and sell yarn
Ushioe	1838	In off-season men weave rope and matting, women weave cotton cloth for clothing
Tokitomo	1844	women weave cotton cloth
Ushioe ^a	1867	Men weave rope and matting, women spin cotton yarn
Shidō	1868	Men weave ropes, women weave cotton cloth in off-season
Hōkaiji	1869	Men weave rope and matting, women weave cotton cloth

Source: Amagasaki shishi, II, Table 143, p. 655

^aAmagasaki shishi, II, p. 664 facing page foldout.

^bAmagasaki shishi, II, p. 658

regular form of non-agricultural production. In most villages a single stage of production was the major form of by-employment as artisans specialized in carding, spinning, or weaving. In some villages, however, we find several stages of production as, for example, in the entries for Koshiki Iwashinden and Kami Ōichi in Table 2. Still others, such as those in Table 3, list cloth processing as the major by-employment activity, and this may also have included multiple levels of processing involvement. It should be noted, however, that rope and matting were woven by men in the Amagasaki area and sedge hats by men in the Fuse area illustrating the availability of alternative forms of by-employment in the villages. Elsewhere in the Kinai region similar forms of village by-employment were also common. For example, in Higashi Tottori, Hikishō, Izumi, Izumi-sano, Kashihara, Moriguchi, Sakai, Sayama, and

TABLE 2—NISHINOMIYA AREA COTTON RELATED AGRICULTURAL BY-EMPLOYMENT

Village	Year	Description
Namase	1730	Women weave a little cotton cloth
Koshiki Iwashinden	1759	Women are busy spinning and weaving for wages
Komatsu	1790	Shigemon is a cotton cloth merchant
Danjo	1803	Women spin cotton yarn
Kami Ōicni	1803	Women spin yarn and weave cotton cloth, men weave straw
Shimo Ōichi	1803	Women weave cotton cloth from yarn, men weave straw
Shimo Ōichi	1843	Women are employed as cotton weavers
Toiguchi Shinden	1843	Women are employed as cotton weavers
Danjo	1850	Wage laborers as cotton carders in nearby villages
Moriguchi Shinden	1867	Men weave straw, women weave cotton as by-employment, no cotton grown in village

Source: *Nishinomiya shishi*, II, Table 45, p. 241; V, pp. 54, 55, 61.

Yao area villages as well, various forms of cotton processing were typical sources of non-agricultural income.⁸

The implications of this for village life throughout the Kinai region were considerable. To begin with, cotton processing offered an opportunity for off-seasonal and evening employment on a scale never previously available. For small holders and tenant farmers employment in cotton processing, either as wage laborers or as self-employed craftsmen, offered a source of supplementary income to what was otherwise a very marginal existence. Processing also offered a source of non-agri-

⁸ Takao Kazuhiko, ed., *Hikisho chōshi*, (Hikisho, 1954), pp. 167, 437, 460; Hiraoka Shishi Hensan inkai, ed., *Hiraoka shishi*, IV, (Hiraoka, 1966), p. 514; Izumi Shishi Hensan inkai, ed., *Izumi shishi*, II, (Izumi, 1968), pp. 250-1; Shibata Minoru, ed., *Izumi-sano shishi*, (Izumi-sano, 1958), pp. 265-6; Kashihara Chōshi Kankōkai, ed., *Kashihara chōshi*, (Kashihara, 1955), pp. 670-81; Mori-

guchi Shishi Hensan inkai, ed., *Moriguchi shishi*, IV, (Moriguchi, 1962), pp. 45, 53, 59; Obata Jun, ed., *Sakai shishi zokuhon*, I, (Sakai, 1971), p. 947; Sayama Chōshi Hensan inkai, ed., *Sayama chōshi*, I, (Sayama-chō, 1967), p. 960; Yao Shishi Hensan inkai, ed., *Yao shishi*, I, (Yao, 1958), p. 282; II, (Yao, 1960), pp. 284, 306.

cultural income to individuals who were not fully employed in farming and made it possible for them to remain in the villages and earn a livelihood. While farming was not displaced in most areas by handicraft industry, the impact was often extensive.⁹

The importance of cotton processing to Kinai area villages can also be seen from data on agricultural wage rates. Weaving skills became a marketable commodity in the Kinai region as evident from the 1793 wage scales for female agricultural laborers in the Tayasu domain of Izumi. One of the primary components of salary

TABLE 3—FUSE AREA COTTON RELATED AGRICULTURAL BY-EMPLOYMENT

Village	Year	Description
<u>Wakae gun</u>		
Hisniya Nishi		
Shinden ^a	1719	Most cotton sold as seed cotton, little weaving
Kowakae	1745	Outside of farming, men and women process cloth
Hishiya Nishi Shinden	1760	In off-season men and women process cotton cloth
Hishiya Higashi		
Shinden	1760	In off-season men and women process cotton cloth
Shimokosaka	1770	In off-season men and women process cotton cloth
Nagata	1787	Outside of farming men and women weave cotton cloth
Hishiya Naka Shinden ^b	1787	Men and women weave cloth and sell it
Omido	1788	Outside of farming men and women process cloth
Tamai Minami Shinden ^b	1791	Men and women weave cotton cloth
Tamai Kita Shinden ^b	1791	Men and women weave cotton cloth
Shinke	1832	Men and women do cloth work as by-employment
Takaita	1861	By-employment is work with white cotton cloth
Tomoi	1869	In free time men and women weave cotton cloth
<u>Shibukawa gun</u>		
Arakawa	1744	In off-season, men and women weave cotton cloth and sedge hats
Minose	1754	Men and women weave cotton cloth and sedge hats
Taiheiji	1754	Men and women weave cotton cloth and sedge hats

⁹ Smith, *Agrarian Origins*, pp. 78-9.

TABLE 3—*Continued*

Arakawa ^a	1758	Men and women weave cotton cloth as by-employment
Ōhasu	1759	In off-season men and women process cotton cloth
Higashi Ajiro	1757	In off-season men and women weave cloth and sedge hats
Minoae ^d	1843	Women spin yarn and weave white cotton cloth
Higashi Ajiro ^a	1845	Three men in seed cotton trade, no cotton weaving in cotton growing season
Nagado	1801	Men and women weave sedge hats in winter and spring

Source: Fuse *shisui*, II, Table 10, p. 72

^a Fuse chōyakuba, ed. Fuse chōshi, (Fuse, 1929), pp. 18-20.

^b Furushima and Nagahara, p. 74.

rankings among female laborers was weaving ability. Skilled laborers were expected to be capable of all kinds of agricultural work and able to weave one *tan* of cloth per day in the off-season. The lowest ranking female laborers were expected to weave one-half *tan* of cloth daily and do various kinds of labor service. Wages varied considerably and farming skills played an important role in salary rankings, but weaving skills were the major determinant of the income potential of female agricultural workers in Tayasu *han*.¹⁰ Thus cotton processing was a significant factor in transforming the demand for labor in the Kinai region and subsequently contributed to its increased cost as well.¹¹

The impact of non-agricultural employment can be seen from the increase in the village population primarily employed in handicraft production. For example, in the Sakai area of Izumi, an increase in non-farming households is evident from mid-nineteenth century data. In 1843, of twenty-nine non-farming households in Akahata village, twenty-three were in cotton related employment. Similarly in Ōtori village in 1854, among forty-three households not engaged in agriculture thirty-four were involved in cotton processing. Shimoishizu village in 1843 included two weavers, nine cotton carders, six yarn merchants, forty-one spinners, and two cotton merchants, while in Kamiishizu there were two carders, one spinning wheel maker, and forty-one spinners out of a total population of 502.¹² These data are not unusual and similar examples can be found in other villages throughout the Kinai region.

In some villages local entrepreneurs owned up to ten looms and hired wage laborers to weave cloth in small manufacturing operations. In the Izumi-sano area during the first quarter of the nineteenth century local cotton merchants were loaning raw materials and tools to weavers and collecting interest on them as well

¹⁰ *Sakai shishi zokuhen*, I, Table 108, p. 941.

¹¹ See Smith, *Agrarian Origins*, pp. 108-23 for

further discussion.

¹² *Sakai shishi zokuhen*, I, p. 947, 960.

as controlling sales of the cloth which was produced. In Kishiwada *han* of Izumi each household was authorized to have one loom for each ten *roku* of *rokudaka* and those households holding land assessed at less than ten *roku* productivity were forbidden to own looms. This assisted the growth of putting out production by large landholders as it encouraged small holders to be dependent on their richer neighbors for their equipment.¹³

From the examples above it is apparent that cotton processing had a major impact on village life in the Kinai region. It was a common form of village by-employment, offered a source of non-agricultural income to many households, and broadened the opportunities for economic involvement by villagers in the provinces of Settsu, Kawachi, and Izumi. The growth of cotton ginning, spinning, carding, and weaving within farming communities encouraged new social relationships as new forms of wage labor, putting out activities, and household production became available. For the poorer members of the village communities processing offered a source of supplementary or non-agricultural income within the village. It also offered to the wealthier villagers a new mechanism for exploiting the under-employed members of the community as well as itinerant laborers from villages where non-agricultural employment opportunities were not available. Thus while contributing to the economic well-being of the poorer members of the community, it also added to the wealth of the richest, thereby enlarging the gap between them. It should be emphasized, however, that the growth of village level processing made a major contribution to the expansion of village output and increased the employment options available to farmers in the Kinai region. Access to by-employment contributed to an increased standard of living for many members of the village communities and offered new economic opportunities to villagers who could not be absorbed in farming.¹⁴

II.

Shifting our attention to rural trade, it is apparent that during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries most of the Kinai cotton crop was sold as harvested to Osaka or town based merchants and their rural agents. Towns such as Amagasaki, Hirano, Itami, Ikeda, and Tondabayashi as well as cities like Osaka and Sakai had groups of merchants specializing in cotton goods.¹⁵ Many of the town merchants were large scale operators, for example, the six cotton dealers in Hirano who in 1734-35 collectively purchased 10,500 bales of seed cotton.¹⁶

Much of the rural cotton trade in the Kinai region was organized into local merchant groups similar to the Osaka merchant organizations. Around the modern city of Yao the cotton traders were arranged into three such groups, each with its own sphere of influence. These associations attempted to restrict trade to authorized

¹³ *Izumi-sano shishi*, pp. 266-7.

¹⁴ For further discussion of this point see Susan B. Hanley and Kozo Yamamura, "Population trends and economic growth in pre-industrial Japan," in D. V. Glass and Roger Revelle, eds., *Population and Social Change*, (London, 1972), pp. 479-80; and Thomas C. Smith, "Farm Family By-Employment in Pre-Industrial Japan," *The Journal of Economic History*, XXIX, (December, 1969), no.

4, pp. 709-10.

¹⁵ *Amagasaki shishi*, II, pp. 679-80; Hirano-gō Kōekikai, ed., *Hirano-gō chōshi*, (Hirano-gō, 1931), p. 301; Kanan Chōshi Hensan Inkaikai, ed., *Kanan chōshi*, (Kanan-chō, 1968), p. 201; Osaka Shisan-jikai, ed., *Osaka shishi*, I, (Osaka, 1965), pp. 350-1, 409-10; *Sakai shishi zokuhon*, I, p. 690.

¹⁶ *Hirano-gō chōshi*, p. 301.

merchants and regulate the distribution of cotton goods. Their bylaws indicate that despite efforts to the contrary, competition between members was common as was direct trade between independent merchants and their suppliers. The capacity of these merchant groups to restrict participation in rural trade was obviously limited. They were unable to monopolize local capital resources or access to raw materials and processing technology to support their local monopsony for cotton goods.¹⁷

Among the members of the Yao cotton traders association was Wataya Kichibei. Under the shop name of Watakichi he was a large scale trader of ginned cotton, yarn, and cloth and was engaged in direct trade between the Yao area and buyers in Omi province. In 1759, for example, Watakichi sold 21,428 *tan* of cotton cloth, 1,720 spools of yarn, and 273 *kan* of ginned cotton and was one of the largest cotton dealers in the Yao area. Watakichi continued in operation into the Meiji period and was an outstanding example of a major rural cotton dealer active in both local and long distance trade.¹⁸

By the mid-eighteenth century the expansion of rural cotton trading had made serious inroads into the Osaka centered marketing network. This led to repeated complaints from the authorized Osaka merchant associations and in 1772 the government established new supports to protect their monopsony rights in the Kinai cotton trade. To reinforce their control over rural trade the Osaka merchants expanded their jurisdiction into villages surrounding the city of Osaka and attacked the sources of rural competition at their root. This seriously threatened the position of village cotton merchants who responded with complaints to the government and requests for preservation of their role in the Kinai cotton trade.

In 1773 villagers from Kawachi petitioned the Osaka magistrates in opposition to the expansion of the commercial authority of the Osaka cotton merchant associations. As part-time merchants they feared that official efforts to license rural cotton dealers would force them out of the cotton trade. Licenses were too expensive for part-time traders and this threatened to drive them out of business. This would deny them a major source of by-employment income and narrow the number of sales outlets available in the villages. The villagers requested that the prevailing system of unregulated trade be allowed to continue.¹⁹

Despite the objections of the villagers the Osaka merchants were granted new monopsony rights in the cotton trade. Once again in 1774 groups of villages from Settsu and Kawachi petitioned against the extension of Osaka merchant authority. They asked for the opportunity to freely participate in trade in the off-season. They claimed that cotton prices had fallen and that cotton cultivators were not receiving a fair price for their crops in villages where licensed traders had forced out local competition. The growth of rural trade had increased the expectations of the cultivators and they were faced with financial losses by the new trade restrictions which had been imposed. The expansion of Osaka merchant controls reduced both their access to market outlets and their access to cotton trading as part-time em-

¹⁷ *Yao shishi*, I, p. 286; II, p. 662-5; *Hiraoka shishi*, IV, pp. 512-14; Takebe Yoshito, *Kawachi momen no kenkyū*, (Yao, 1957), pp. 14-16.

¹⁸ Takebe, *Kawachi momen no kenkyū*, pp. 17-22; "Sekkasen no mengyō," p. 143; 1 *kan* equals

8.72 lbs., 1 *tan* of cloth is a roll 12 yds. in length.

¹⁹ *Hiraoka shishi*, IV, p. 513; Nakai Nobuhiko, *Tenkankei bakuhansai no kenkyū—Hōreki-Temmeiki no keizai seisaku to shōhin ryūtsū*, (Tokyo, 1971), p. 118.

ployment and the villagers asked that broad based participation be authorized in the Kinai cotton trade.²⁰

The impact of the organizational efforts of the Osaka cotton dealers can be seen from the example of Namba village. Because of its location near Osaka traders from the village were susceptible to pressure to join the Osaka associations. Most of the twenty village cotton traders were unable to raise the initiation fees and only six managed to gain entrance to the association, the others being forced out of business. Entrance fees varied depending on the scale of business of the applicant and in addition were annual license fees charged to both full-time merchants and seasonal peddlers. In the town of Hirano cotton ginners and even pawn brokers who took cotton in pawn were pressured into joining the Osaka monopsony associations. Local opposition was intense as the fee schedule was too high for most to be able to pay. The alternative seemed to be abandoning their involvement in cotton processing and trade, an unacceptable choice in a town which was heavily committed to cotton processing and included around 2000 households involved in cotton ginning in 1773.²¹

As a consequence, the town of Hirano petitioned the Osaka city magistrates and asked for an exemption from the demand that merchants and artisans in the town join the Osaka association. This petition was granted in 1774 on the grounds that the town was heavily committed to cotton processing and denial of this involvement would severely curtail the residents' capacity to meet their tax obligations. The Osaka city magistrates authorized their continued activity in cotton processing and trade, enabling them to preserve their role in the Kinai cotton trade.²² The government, even while granting new monopsony and processing rights to Osaka merchant groups, did in the case of Hirano take steps to prevent severe economic disruption.

Extension of Osaka merchant monopsony controls into villages surrounding the city slowed down the expansion of alternative marketing systems, but it did not eliminate the trading activities of the villagers and rural merchants. Evidence of this can be seen in a 1783 document from the Yao area which complained that farmers engaged in part-time cotton trading were neglecting their farming—despite the fact that such activity was forbidden. Many of those who engaged in cotton trading went bankrupt according to the government complaint, yet it is apparent that trade was a common form of non-agricultural employment.²³

Efforts to expand the control of the Osaka cotton merchants were relatively successful in the late eighteenth century. There were, however, new sources of rural competition developing outside of the city of Osaka. A government order of 1790 attempted to restrain direct trade between rural cloth dealers and dry goods stores in Osaka. The merchant complaint which initiated the government action claimed that rural buyers, working as agents of the Osaka associations, were operating on their own and evading the established marketing system. A second complaint in 1791, directed against outsiders who purchased cloth and sold it directly

²⁰ *Hiraoka shishi*, IV, p. 514; Uozumi Sōgorō, ed., *Nishinomiya shishi*, IV, (Nishinomiya, 1962), pp. 823-4.

²¹ Nakai, *Tenkanji bakuhansai no kenkyū*, pp.

120-3; Smith, *Agrarian Origins*, p. 78.

²² Nakai, *Tenkanji bakuhansai no kenkyū*, pp. 123-4.

²³ *Yao shishi*, I, p. 285; II, p. 632.

to Osaka retailers, further illustrates the weakening of Osaka merchant monopsony controls.²⁴

Independent action by rural buyers had serious implications for the Kinai cotton trade. The Yao cloth buyers association, for example, included sixty-eight buyers spread in thirty-five villages from nine of the sixteen districts of Kawachi.²⁵ Competitive action by these rural buyers undermined the Osaka merchants' major access route to sources of Kawachi cotton cloth. As the rural buyers increased their independence their influence in the Kawachi cloth trade increased accordingly.

Rural opposition to urban merchant control in the cotton trade is evident in other parts of the region as well. Around the city of Sakai similar competitive activities are visible. In 1791 Izumi villages complained against the restrictive monopsony controls of the Sakai cloth dealers. Many of the weavers began to produce cloth of substandard size which the licensed merchants were forbidden to purchase in an effort to evade the controls. By producing inferior goods the weavers were able to gain flexibility in the marketing of their cloth.²⁶

The successful application of monopsony controls in the Izumi area forced compliance with established trading channels, but opposition continued to mount. Complaints against the Sakai cloth dealers monopsony were made in 1807, 1810, and 1811. In each case the objective was to raise the price paid to the weavers for Izumi cloth and increase access to the Izumi cloth trade for village merchants. In 1811, after much agitation, the government authorized a limited amount of trade between independent village buyers and rural weavers. Rural opposition to the Sakai cloth monopsony thus achieved a limited breakthrough in favor of unrestricted trade. This did not end the dispute, however, as continued pressure from villagers and efforts by the Sakai cloth dealers after 1811 to preserve their control of trade prolonged the controversy as each side worked to enhance its position in the Izumi cloth trade.²⁷

In 1823 came a major change which favored the expansion of the rural cotton trade. A suit brought before the Osaka magistrates by 1007 villages from Settsu and Kawachi challenged the restrictive monopsony of the Osaka seed cotton dealers association. The official settlement of this dispute opened up the Kinai seed cotton trade dramatically and a similar impact can be seen in other aspects of the Kinai cotton trade. By authorizing village trade in seed cotton and denying the monopsony of the Osaka merchants the government backed away from its previous policies of support for urban merchant interests. Why did it take this step? What lay behind this change in official policy towards the Kinai cotton trade?

One factor in the government reaction was the scale of the dispute. Localized opposition to the Osaka merchant monopsony was coordinated into a major conflict incorporating 1007 villages from two major cotton cultivating provinces near Osaka. Further support for the Osaka merchants threatened widespread disruption and this was inconsistent with government interest in maintaining social harmony.

²⁴ Furushima Toshio and Nagahara Keiji, *Shōhin seisan to kisei jinushisei—Kinsei Kinai nōgyō ni okeru*, (Tokyo, 1954), pp. 94–5; See also Hayashi Reiko, "Kaseiki ni okeru shōhin ryūtsū," *Rekishu kyōiku*, Vol. 12, No. 12 (1964), p. 12.

²⁵ Furushima and Nagahara, Table 20, p. 81.

²⁶ *Izumi-sano shishi*, pp. 305–6; Takebe, "Sek-kasen no mengyō," p. 146.

²⁷ Sakai Shiyakusho, ed., *Sakai shishi*, III, (Sakai, 1930), pp. 439–40; *Izumi-sano shishi*, p. 306; *Sakai shishi zokuhon*, I, 962, 987.

Social unrest was dangerous and the costs of supporting the merchants could not be justified in economic or social terms. The scale of the protest suggested the seriousness of the problem and continued support of the Osaka monopsony would only make it worse. This was not in the government interest and it was expedient to remove the source of village discontent, even if the *ad hoc* gesture was inconsistent with overall policy.²⁸

Another justification for the policy change was the focus of government concern on Edo and the Kanto region rather than the Kinai. Beginning in the late eighteenth century in the Kansei reforms the *bakufu* attempted to assert the interests of Edo merchant groups, often at the expense of those in Osaka. The government was thus less inclined to support Osaka merchant interests, particularly when they made no direct contribution to bettering economic conditions in the Edo region.²⁹ Government interests and *bakufu* personnel were concentrated around Edo, not Osaka, and the preservation of order in the Kinai region was more important than support of urban monopsony interests which were already weakened by the expansion of rural trade.

From the village perspective the settlement of the 1823 dispute authorized cotton cultivators and village merchants to sell and ship cotton to customers in other provinces without the authorization of the Osaka merchants. The Osaka cotton dealers were ordered to stop interfering with independent cotton shipments passing through the city to help eliminate the barriers to unrestricted trade.³⁰ The power of the Osaka seed cotton monopsony was broken and the villagers won a significant victory in favor of increased rural trade.

The scale of the seed cotton trade at the time of the 1823 dispute, while affected by the increase in rural cotton processing, was far from insignificant. Seed cotton imports to Osaka totalled around 353,000 *kan* in 1736 and had increased to 1.5 million *kan* as the average for the years from 1804 to 1830. Opening the trade to greater rural participation was of real significance as seen by the drop in the volume of seed cotton shipped to Osaka. By 1840 seed cotton imports to the city had declined by around thirty-five percent. Part of this decline can be attributed to increased rural processing, but government liberalization of the seed cotton trade was of real consequence to the Osaka cotton merchants. The expansion of village merchant participation in the Kinai cotton trade sharply reduced the volume of goods which was handled by the Osaka merchants.³¹

Part of the decline can also be attributed to the expansion of cotton cultivation outside of the Kinai region and the associated reduction in demand for Kinai cotton. Higher wage rates in Kinai and the spread of agricultural and processing technology to other regions undercut the dominant role of Kinai cotton and led to reduced

²⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, (New York, 1969), p. 25 notes how rural unrest often led to more serious problems of social disruption often including banditry.

²⁹ For the new focus on Edo see Takeuchi Makoto, "Edo jidai toshi shōnin no dōkō," *Rekishi kyōiku*, Vol. 7, No. 11 (1959), pp. 25-6. For a more general discussion of the growth of the Edo market region see Hayashi Reiko, "Edo jimawari

keizaiken no seiritsu katei—kuriwata-abura o chūshin toshite," in Ōtsuka Hisao, Andō Yoshio, Matsuda Tomoo, and Sekiguchi Hisashi, eds., *Shihonshugi no keisei to hatten*, (Tokyo, 1968), pp. 255-71.

³⁰ *Nishinomiya shishi*, IV, p. 830.

³¹ Hayashi Reiko, "Kinsei chūkōki no shōgyō," p. 226; "Kaseiki ni okeru shōhin ryūtsū," pp. 11-12.

output.³² This is not to say, however, that cotton did not remain a major crop in the Kinai area. While cotton cultivation in the Kanto region and elsewhere increased, Kinai continued to produce a large portion of the seed cotton grown in Japan.³³

Responding directly to the growing rural dissatisfaction with the restrictive trade practices of the Osaka cotton merchant associations the government decision of 1823 legitimized cotton trading by villagers in Settsu and Kawachi. In villages throughout the Kinai region efforts to restrain rural participation in the cotton trade were sharply reduced. In Shimokosaka village near the modern city of Fuse local cotton merchants issued a statement indicating their intention to avoid actions which might restrict participation in the cotton trade.³⁴ While all practices which had restrained trade did not cease, the removal of official support had an immediate impact on rural trade.

The impact of the 1823 dispute on rural cotton marketing can be seen from the example of the Ujita house of Nishikoya village in Settsu. The Ujita, large landholders in the village, were major cotton cultivators. Their sales records for the years from 1783 to 1867 illustrate the shift in rural trading patterns. The Ujita sold their cotton to buyers from the towns of Amagasaki, Nishinomiya, and Itami as well as those from nearby villages. Between 1783 and 1822 they sold 221 bales of seed cotton to town merchants and 244 bales to village merchants. While the balance of trade favored village merchants slightly, town merchants purchased almost forty-eight percent of the Ujita cotton crop sold as seed cotton. After 1824 the balance shifted sharply in favor of village cotton merchants. Where prior to 1823 village merchants accounted for fifty-two percent of Ujita house seed cotton sales, between 1824 and 1867 their portion increased to ninety-five percent. Town merchants accounted for only five percent of seed cotton purchases and were nearly excluded from access to the Ujita cotton crop. This trend continued into the Meiji period and is consistent with sales patterns found elsewhere in the Kinai region.³⁵

Cotton cloth sales by the Ujita house indicate the same kind of shift away from town buyers and to village merchants. Town buyers accounted for twenty-five percent of Ujita house cloth sales between 1790 and 1822 and then declined to around three percent between 1824 and 1874. The town buyers were all but excluded from purchasing Ujita house cloth by the increased activity of village buyers. Here as well, the shift to village buyers accelerated after the decision in the 1823 dispute.³⁶

Associated with the shift from town to village buyers was a change in the character of village traders. For example, among the ten cotton buyers active in Shimokosaka village between 1818 and 1829 five had lands assessed at over eight *roku* productivity and only two were landless. Most of the cotton merchants were thus middle or upper class farmers. Twenty years later, between 1848 and 1853, the eight cotton buyers in Shimokosaka included only one individual with lands assessed over two *roku*, four small holders, and three who were landless. In this latter period the cotton buyers were largely small landholders or landless merchants

³² Nakai, *Tenkaniki bakuhansai no kenkyū*, pp. 283-5.

³³ Hayashi. "Kinsei chūkōki no shōgyō," pp. 231-2; Smith, *Agrarian Origins*, pp. 69-72.

³⁴ Fuse *shishi*, II, p. 830.

³⁵ Yamazaki Ryūzō, "Kinsei kōki Settsu nōson ni okeru shōhin ryūtsū," *Ōsaka Shiritsu Daigaku keizai-gaku nenpō*, No. 8, (1956), pp. 78-82.

³⁶ Yamazaki, "Kinsei kōki Settsu nōson," pp. 90-3.

who were far more dependent on trade than those active before 1829. This shift from middle and upper class farmers to lower class farmers and landless villagers was characteristic of village trade in many parts of the Kinai region during the last decades of the Tokugawa period.³⁷ By 1860, Shimokosaka had thirteen cotton buyers as well as two cotton ginnerers and three dealers in carded cotton. This increase in participants in the cotton trade was tied to a decrease in the scale of the individual merchant houses.³⁸

The increase in rural trading activity following the 1823 dispute significantly altered the characteristics of the Kinai cotton trade. To begin with, the relative importance of village merchants increased at the expense of merchants from Kinai area towns and cities. Not only was the volume of cotton imports to Osaka reduced, but the proportion of cotton marketed by town buyers also decreased. There is some evidence that the total cotton output of the Kinai region declined in the last decades of the Tokugawa period, but it does not negate the impact of the expansion of competitive marketing systems in the countryside or the displacement of urban merchants by rural cotton traders. The marketing of the Ujita house cotton crop is one example of this process.

Also of importance after 1823 was the expansion of the number of cotton traders and the reduction in their scale of activity. Elimination of trade restrictions combined with inflationary pressures on the less successful villagers greatly increased the attractions of the cotton trade. Commerce was a source of non-agricultural income for villagers who failed as farmers or were underemployed in agriculture. Even with limited capital resources it was possible to enter the cotton trade and turn a profit. With the reduction in the value of other sources of income as the result of inflation and reduced demand for Kinai cotton goods, the importance of trade for the less successful members of the community increased.³⁹

When in 1842 the Tokugawa *bakufu* abolished the licensed Osaka cotton merchant associations as part of the Tempō reforms, it was in many respects a realistic adjustment of government policy to conform to the marketing patterns which had developed in the Kinai region. The abolition of licensed monopoly associations was consistent with the expansion of rural participation in the Kinai cotton trade.

The removal of official support for trade restraints did not eliminate government concern with the commercial activities of Kinai area villagers. In 1842 the Osaka city magistrates issued an order indicating their unhappiness with the increase in rural cotton trading. The order noted:

Recently, people from rural areas around Osaka have been adopting urban manners, forgetting their occupations as cultivators, and engaging in commerce. Those who have been engaging in the trade have gradually increased, particularly since the 1823 dispute when farmers and merchants in 1007 villages united in opposition to the controls exercised by the Osaka seed cotton dealers association. To maximize profits, cotton has been sold at auctions to force up its price. Commercial greed has spread to the cultivators and they are less committed to farming and have been hindered in fulfilling their obligations as farmers. Moreover, many of

³⁷ *Fuse shishi*, II, Table 23, p. 832.

³⁸ Furushima and Nagahara, p. 84.

³⁹ Increased competition for reduced output seems to have been characteristic of the Kinai cotton

trade in the last decades of the Tokugawa era, but further inquiry is necessary for a more detailed analysis of this process.

them have been acting like cotton merchants and have become wealthy. Although farmers will not be restrained from engaging in trade, hereafter, in order to correct their behavior, hoarding, cornering the market, and auction sales by rural merchants as well as dishonest trading by itinerant merchants are expressly forbidden. All seed and ginned cotton, including that sold by the cultivators, must be sold freely to local buyers or other merchants in an open manner.⁴⁰

The government was continuing its policy of liberalizing the rural cotton trade, but it was attempting to curtail practices which were viewed as undesirable. Increased rural trade would be tolerated, but unscrupulous practices and profiteering were unacceptable.

The subsequent restoration of licensed trading groups by the government after 1851 was a misdirected attempt to reassert outmoded forms of commercial control. While less restrictive than their pre-1842 predecessors, the post-1851 merchant associations were an attempt to regulate commerce via urban centered merchant organizations. This, however, was basically a return to the kinds of controls which had been overturned in the 1823 dispute in the Kinai cotton trade and was regarded as a threat to the trading rights which had been won by rural cotton merchants.

In 1854, the Osaka city magistrates, as an extension of the 1851 restoration of official trade associations, ordered all rural cotton merchants to join the new merchant groups.⁴¹ Village opposition organized rapidly and the government order was challenged as a violation of the settlement in the 1823 dispute. The Osaka magistrates, confronted by unified village-based opposition, backed down and agreed that membership in the revised trade associations was not required for merchants from villages included in the 1823 dispute. Consequently, village traders did not participate in the revised trade associations after 1854.⁴²

To further clarify the situation the government requested statements from rural cotton traders explaining their understanding of their rights in the Kinai cotton trade. In an 1854 reply from Shimokosaka village, the following points were emphasized by the village cotton merchants:

- 1) The 1823 settlement was not modified by the creation of revised trade associations. Licenses are not required for participation in the cotton trade.
- 2) Cultivators are authorized to be part-time cotton merchants.
- 3) Cotton processing does not require membership in a trade association.
- 4) Distinctions between urban and rural merchants established in 1823 remain in force and efforts to expand the control of Osaka merchant associations are contrary to the 1823 decision.
- 5) All interested parties are authorized to participate in the cotton trade if they notify their village headman and adhere to established trading procedures.⁴³

The Shimokosaka merchants took a firm stand in defense of their rights in the Kinai cotton trade. Adhering to the 1823 settlement they made a direct challenge against government efforts to impose new forms of centralized control. Utilizing a legally supported argument they refused to be subjected to a system of monopsony controls which restricted participation in the Kinai cotton trade. Shimokosaka merchants were not alone in their opposition to new trade restrictions. Merchants

⁴⁰ *Nishinomiya shishi*, IV, pp. 829-30.

⁴¹ *Nishinomiya shishi*, IV, p. 830.

⁴² *Fuse shishi*, II, p. 834.

⁴³ *Fuse shishi*, II, pp. 835-8.

from Izumi fought renewed efforts by the Sakai cotton merchants to restrain rural trade. Farmers from Kuboji village near Yao successfully challenged new commercial controls and continued as part-time cotton merchants without joining the revised cotton merchant associations.⁴⁴

It is clear that by the mid-nineteenth century urban domination of the Kinai cotton trade was replaced by a more open and flexible marketing system in which rural merchants played an independent role. The grip of licensed urban merchants on the cotton trade was broken and replaced by a proliferation of small scale rural trading groups and independent village traders. Direct long-distance trade and sales by rural merchants were commonplace and the focus of trade was no longer on the major cities and towns of the Kinai region. Participation in the cotton trade was widespread and efforts to restrain trade were successfully rebuffed by groups of rural merchants. The Kinai cotton trade was dramatically changed over the course of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the interaction between urban and rural merchants was inexorably transformed.

III.

The social ramifications of expanded village participation in cotton processing and cotton marketing were extensive. In parts of the Kinai region where cotton cultivation was extensive new sources of non-agricultural employment became available in the villages. Cotton processing, which in the early Tokugawa period was directed primarily toward satisfying household clothing needs, was by the mid-eighteenth century a major source of by-employment income. New technology was one factor in the expansion of village output as new looms increased the productivity of village weavers and new procedures were also developed for cotton ginning. The costs of processing technology may have been a factor influencing its diffusion in the Kinai region as in many households older looms which were adequate for household requirements were not replaced by newer and more efficient looms in the eighteenth century. Similarly, with increased demand for cotton cloth came associated pressures for production specialization. Many households, and even whole villages, restricted their processing activities to a single stage of production in order to maximize productivity. Throughout the Kinai region were villages which specialized in cotton ginning, carding, and spinning, weaving or dyeing—as evident in Tables 1, 2, and 3—although in many households at least some cloth was processed for family use.

Specialization offered the potential for cottage industrial production on a scale which far exceeded the output capacity of a single household. In many villages the wealthier households invested in multiple looms or spinning wheels and employed other members of the community as either full-time or off-seasonal cotton processors. Initially this was on a small scale and used to increase output during the off-season from farming, but as the demand for cloth increased and under-employed laborers became available it was possible to employ some operatives in cotton processing throughout the year. Off-season production increased to the extent that local labor was supplemented by itinerant workers brought in from other villages. In some areas the demand for labor during the planting season

⁴⁴ *Sakai shishi*, III, pp. 440-1; *Sakai shishi zokuhon*, I, pp. 962-4; *Yao shishi*, I, p. 285.

exceeded the supply because so many potential farm workers were involved in processing activity. Increased access to non-agricultural employment also contributed to the economic polarization of many villages as in processing the more successful members of the community gained an additional means of utilizing wage labor to further their own economic status.

For the poorer villagers the expansion of cotton processing offered a source of supplementary or non-agricultural income. For those with marginal land resources and tenant farmers, employment in cotton processing offered an important source of extra cash. For the landless villagers cotton processing provided remunerative employment in their own or other village communities. The economic possibilities in the Kinai region increased and marginal members of the community were able to survive in the villages and were not forced to go off to the cities or nearby towns in search of employment. This was a common feature in many areas as the population of landless villagers increased in commercially advanced regions of Japan.⁴⁵

The increase in village cotton processing offered new incentives for integrating members of the community into the marketing process. Cotton cultivation costs increased more rapidly than did the value of harvested cotton and the margin between profits and losses changed as fertilizer and labor costs increased. With production costs relatively inelastic and not controlled by the cultivators, increased involvement in processing or trade offered access to supplementary income. Consequently, we find from around the mid-eighteenth century an increase not only in cotton processing but also in cotton trading as the demand for sources of non-agricultural and by-employment income increased in the Kinai area.

Aiding the growth of rural trade was the expansion of rural processing. Specialized production in some villages required the development of new distribution systems to provide raw materials and partially finished goods. Established trade systems were designed to distribute seed and ginned cotton from the cultivators to town and city processing centers. Local processing required inter-village distribution systems and provided incentives for local people to engage in trade. Village traders supplied local processors with their raw materials and then distributed their products to the communities or individuals engaged in the next stage of production. As local merchants became active in selling ginned cotton to cotton carders and spinners and then yarn to the weavers and dyers it was a logical extension of their involvement to begin marketing the finished products as well. This resulted initially in the growth of inter-village trade and eventually of inter-regional trade which directly competed with the Osaka cotton merchants.

As village trade increased it was initially the richer cultivators who acted as local cotton traders. However, since the capital resources necessary for involvement were relatively small and each household could be approached individually for small quantities of goods, the scale of enterprise was reduced and small farmers began to participate in trade. This suggests that economies of scale were ineffective in maintaining control of trade by larger dealers and that the demand for sources of non-agricultural income made even small scale trade a desirable means of employment. This reduction in the scale of enterprise was similar to the decrease in the size of farm units noted by T. C. Smith and attributed to technological

⁴⁵ Smith, *Agrarian Origins*, pp. 164-6 and p. 164, note j.

advances in farming during the Tokugawa period.⁴⁶ In the case of the cotton trade it suggests that many individuals had been displaced from farming or were under-employed in agriculture.

The difficulties faced by both the government and the urban merchants in controlling the expansion of rural processing and trade were compounded by the existence of multiple administrative jurisdictions in Settsu, Kawachi, and Izumi. Administrative control of Kawachi, for example, was divided among seventy-five separate proprietary interests including eighteen daimyo, three imperial princes, thirty-two *hatamoto*, seven *bakufu* officials, five Shinto shrines, and ten Buddhist temples. Settsu was split up among ninety proprietors and Izumi had thirty-six administrative units in the late Tokugawa period making the enforcement of consistent policy impossible. The largest daimyo domain in the three provinces was the 53,000 *kokū* domain of Kishiwada in Izumi, which included almost one-third of the productive capacity of the province, and was one reason for the greater success of commercial controls in Izumi than in Settsu and Kawachi. Most of the area of the three provinces was divided among many small proprietary interests, many of which were absentee proprietors, and in Teshima *gun* of Settsu near Osaka, not only was administrative control divided among many separate interests, in many villages there were multiple jurisdictions which further complicated control.⁴⁷ Kinai area farmers thus had both access to technology and markets and more freedom from administrative controls than cultivators in most other areas of Tokugawa Japan. Consequently, they were able to develop sources of non-agricultural income more readily than farmers in other parts of the country.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the social composition of Kinai villages was far different from what it had been in the seventeenth century. Many households were active in non-agricultural forms of employment either year-round or as a source of extra cash. Village residents were no longer exclusively involved in farming and the Tokugawa class system in which farmers, artisans, and merchants were officially separated no longer applied in many parts of the Kinai region. With the diffusion of processing and trade into Kinai villages the artificial separation of occupations into social classes no longer held much meaning. Farmers, artisans, and merchants could all be included in one household and even single individuals could potentially play each of these officially distinct roles. Many of the social and economic traditions established by the Tokugawa *bakufu* in the seventeenth century had been dramatically transformed as evident from this discussion of cotton processing and trade in the Kinai region.

⁴⁶ Smith, *Agrarian Origins*, p. 105.

⁴⁷ Shimbō Hiroshi, "Kinai mensaku ni okeru shōhin seisan no hatten ni kansuru ikkōsatsu," *Kobe Keizai Daigaku sōritsu gojū shūnen kinen rombunshū*, (Kobe, 1953), p. 493; Sakai shishi,

III, pp. 224-9; Fujimoto Atsushi, *Ōsaka-fu no rekishi*, (Tokyo, 1969), pp. 179-81; Yagi Akihiro and Ishida Yoshihito, *Hyōgo-ken no rekishi*, (Tokyo, 1971), p. 197.