

## **Where were the Japanese peasants likely to die in the 17th -19th centuries?**

Hiroshi KAWAGUCHI

Faculty of Business Administration, Tezukayama University, Japan

kawag@tezukayama-u.ac.jp

In this paper, I will focus on the places where the peasants were likely to die before the industrial revolution in the end of the 19th Century. I intend to examine the mobility of the peasants in Tama County located in the suburbs of Edo/Tokyo with the database of the Japanese Buddhist temple death registers in DANJURO system.

I have been developing a database system, which I call DANJURO, to output demographic statistics and indicators from the Japanese religious investigation registers, the Buddhist temple death registers, and the household registers. DANJURO version 4.0 is composed of six parts: (i) data analysis system for the religious investigation registers, (ii) data analysis system for the Buddhist temple death registers, (iii) data analysis system for the household registers, (iv) technology to recognize handwritten characters in historical documents with neural network, (v) research funds, publication of research results, and prizes (vi) links to related sites. In Japan, most of the Buddhist temples make temple death registers for their parishioners. There are following two types of Buddhist temple death registers; the deaths are recorded in chronological order and in the date order when the person died. The latter is a basic type. The former is compiled from the latter. Buddhist priests usually hold a mass for the dead with the latter type of temple death registers day after day.

In both types of temple death registers, the following records of the dead are written; the secular name, the posthumous Buddhist name and date of death. I can find few instances of age at death, address and date of birth. Cause of the death is seldom written. One of the most significant features of the registers is the detailed description of birth-place and death-place of the dead persons.

The death places of the peasants living in Tama County spread all over Japan. The birthplaces of the persons who were from out of the parishes and died in Tama County also spread all over Japan. Not only males, adults and poor peasants but also females, children and rich farmers died far from their home villages. The number of dead persons who were from other places increased after 1860. Death places and

birthplaces of the dead suggest high mobility of the peasants on the outskirts of Edo/Tokyo.

On general principle, if a family member of a parishioner of a Buddhist temple died out of his/her home village, the dead body was carried to his/her home village and the priest of the Buddhist temple performed a funeral service for him/her. But some dead persons were buried in cemeteries in the Buddhist temples near the death places if the home village of the dead was too far, the dead had no claimant or the dead was too poor.