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FARM FAMILY MIGRATION: The Case of Echizen in the Nineteenth Century

W. MARK FRUIN

Little is known about the rate and nature of pre-industrial migration, and even less is known about reasons for migration in this era. What is known of the rate and nature of migration in Tokugawa Japan (1600–1868)¹ supports the hypothesis that volume of migration is thought to vary directly with degree of economic diversity.² Increasing local specialization and regional diversification of agriculture, household industry, and commerce created multiple openings for seasonal, temporary, and long-term employment in most areas of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Japan, and people moved often to take advantage of these opportunities.³

In spite of the growth in the amount and frequency of migration during the Tokugawa period, motivations for migration at this time are not well understood. In lieu of survey interview information and other modern research data which are naturally unavailable from this time, it was felt that an examination of the characteristics of households that either sent out or took in migrants—especially their size, composition, status and wealth—might help uncover motivations for migration, and this article is a preliminary report of that examination.⁴

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS AND MIGRATION

The characteristics of over 700 households involved in migration from fifty villages in Echizen, as recorded in annual population registers,⁵ were collected and analyzed. Since migrants moving into, out of, or within a village were registered by households, the characteristics of these households are easily determined. The size, composition, and wealth of households *taking in* migrants were examined.

¹ See HAYAMI Akira and UCHIDA Nobuko, "Kinsei nōmin no kōdō tsuiseki chōsa," *Kenkyū Kiyō*, Tokugawa Rinseishi Kenkyūjo (1972), pp. 217–56; KISHIMOTO Minoru, "Awa ni okeru nōmin rison genshō," *Tokushima Daigaku Gakugei Kiyō*, 9 (1959), pp. 49–79, and Robert J. SMITH, "Aspects of Mobility in Pre-industrial Japanese Cities," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 5–4 (July 1963), pp. 416–23.

² Everett S. LEE, "A Theory of Migration," in J.A. JACKSON, ed., *Migration* (Cambridge, 1969), p. 288.

³ See Thomas C. SMITH, "Farm Family By-employments in Pre-industrial Japan," *Journal of Economic History*, 29–4 (Dec. 1969), pp. 687–715, and Thomas C. SMITH, "Castle-Towns, Country and Premodern Economic Growth in Japan," paper presented at a colloquium, Center for Japanese and Korean Studies, University of California, Berkeley, Feb. 2, 1972.

⁴ A fuller report of my original work in this area is contained in my unpublished dissertation, titled *Labor Migration in Nineteenth Century Japan: A Study Based on Echizen Han*, awarded Stanford University, April 1973.

⁵ *Shūmon aratamechō* (宗門改帳) or *zōgenchō* (増減帳) registers from SAKU Takashi, *Echizen-no-kuni Shūmon Ninbetsu Onaratamechō*, 6 volumes, Tokyo, 1967–72, were used.

The size, composition, number of migrants, and age of household head were examined for households *sending out* migrants. Households sending out migrants were examined in more detail, as the nature of the records makes it possible to study an out-migrant within the context of his or her own family.

In an attempt to determine to what extent, if any, the materials collected on household characteristics and migration from the fifty villages differed from other villages, a ten percent sample of the villages studied was compared to a comparably sized group of villages not included in the study but from the same region. It was found that the study group contained more resident non-kin (and, consequently, fewer kin-extended households) than the other group. This did not seriously effect the results of the study, however, as the differences between the two groups were almost all due to the greater size and complexity of *honbyakushō* (本百姓) households in the population studied. As few migrants came from *honbyakushō* households, the differences between household characteristics in the villages studied and household characteristics in those not studied were not germane to our research results.⁶

HOUSEHOLDS THAT TAKE IN MIGRANTS

Size. Examining the size distribution of households that take in migrants reveals that larger-than-average households employed migrants (Table I). Half of the households (58%) that took in migrants contained seven or more persons,

TABLE I. SIZE OF HOUSEHOLDS THAT TAKE IN MIGRANTS

Household Size (no. persons)	<i>Mizunomi</i>		<i>Honbyakushō</i>		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	% (cumulative)
1	1	3.0	1	0.3	2	0.61
2	1	3.0	3	1.0	4	1.83
3	3	8.8	10	3.4	13	5.83
4	4	11.8	23	7.8	27	14.04
5	10	29.4	28	9.5	38	25.59
6	5	14.7	37	12.5	42	38.36
7	4	11.8	49	16.6	53	54.47
8	4	11.8	44	14.9	48	69.07
9	0		35	11.9	35	79.71
10 or more	2	6.0	65	22.0	67	100.1
Total	34	100.3	295	99.9	329	

⁶ The composition of households studied was as follows:

	Research Group		Non-Research Group	
	No.	%	No.	%
nuclear	283	48.0	277	49.5
kin-extended	219	37.0	249	44.5
non-kin-extended	88	15.0	34	6.0
Total	590	100.0	560	100.0

This breakdown excludes migrants from the calculations.

counting in-migrants. The average size of such households, not counting their in-migrants, was 5.44, compared to a mean household size for all villages of under five persons (4.6).⁷

Among households that took in migrants, *honbyakushō* households were larger than *mizunomi* (水呑) households. Whereas only 30% of the *mizunomi* households that employed migrants had seven or more persons, fully 66.5% of the *honbyakushō* households were of that size.⁸ Excluding non-kin, the average size of *mizunomi* households taking in migrants was 4.5 but the same figure for *honbyakushō* households was 6.3.

Composition. The composition of households employing migrants was examined with the following results. 96% of the households employing migrants had two or more generations living in the household; 34% had three or more generations. The most commonly occurring members of these households were those in lineal relationship to the household head, but collateral family members were also present in 22% (72 out of 329) of such households. Among households taking in migrants, *honbyakushō* households were clearly more complex than *mizunomi* households: they were not only bigger, but were more diverse, tending to span more generations and to embrace people with more various relationships to the household head (see Table II).

TABLE II. COMPOSITION OF HOUSEHOLDS THAT TAKE IN MIGRANTS

Composition	<i>Mizunomi</i>	<i>Honbyakushō</i>	Total
One Generation			
1. single member	2	3	5
2. couple	1	6	7
3. couple, sibling(s)	0	1	1
Subtotal	3	10	13
Two Generations			
1. couple, sibling(s), children	4	6	10
2. couple, sibling(s), relatives	0	16	16
3. head, parent(s)	0	5	5
4. head, sibling(s), parent(s)	1	17	18
5. couple, parent(s)	1	9	10
6. one parent, child(ren)	3	10	13
7. couple, child(ren)	14	118	132
8. head, relatives	0	1	1
Subtotal	23	182	205

⁷ From the sample of 50 villages, only seven had a mean household size of more than five persons, and only two of these seven had a mean household size of more than six persons.

⁸ A certain number of households were not classified as either *mizunomi* or *honbyakushō*. On the assumption that high socioeconomic status was significant enough to warrant noting where appropriate, when such a distinction was not made, the household was classified as *mizunomi*. This probably means, however, that the actual percentage of *honbyakushō* households was somewhat higher.

TABLE II. (continued)

Composition	<i>Mizunomi</i>	<i>Honbyakushō</i>	Total
Three Generations			
1. head, parent(s), grandparent(s)	0	2	2
2. head, sibling(s), child(ren), parent(s)	3	16	19
3. head, sibling(s), parent(s), grandparent(s)	0	1	1
4. couple, child(ren), grandchild(ren)	4	15	19
5. head, child(ren), grandchild(ren)	0	5	5
6. couple, child(ren), parent(s)	1	51	52
7. couple, child(ren), sibling(s), parent(s)	0	3	3
Subtotal	8	93	101
Four Generations			
1. couple, child(ren), parent(s), grandparent(s)	0	2	2
2. couple, child(ren), grandchild(ren), parent(s)	0	5	5
3. couple, child(ren), sibling(s), parent(s), grandparent(s)	0	3	3
Subtotal	0	10	10
Grand Total	34	295	329

TABLE III. NUMBER AND PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS FOR WHICH WEALTH* IS KNOWN, AND WEALTH OF HOUSEHOLDS THAT TAKE IN MIGRANTS

	Number	Percent
Wealth of Household Known	34	10.4
Wealth of Household Unknown	295	89.7
Wealth of Households for Whom Wealth Known (in <i>koku</i>)		
0.1 to 2.5	0	
2.6 to 5.0	1	3
5.1 to 10.0	1	3
10.1 to 15.0	1	3
15.1 to 20.0	4	12
20.1 to 30.0	1	3
30.1 to 40.0	3	9
40.1 to 50.0	3	9
50+	20	60
Total	34	102**

* Wealth as measured by rated income in *koku* where given for certain *honbyakushō* households

** More than 100% due to rounding.

As would be expected, there is some evidence of a positive relationship between household income and number of migrants employed. Although only 10% of the *honbyakushō* households were given a rated income in the population registers, for this 10%, more migrants entered the wealthier households (see Table III).

It should be noted that there is no way of knowing whether this 10% is representative of all *honbyakushō* households in the sample. The inclusion of rated income for *honbyakushō* households in population registers seems to have been a matter of local custom. Most registers do not include the information, and most of the 10% sample discussed here come from only a few large villages.

HOUSEHOLDS THAT SEND OUT MIGRANTS

Size. The distribution by size of households that give up migrants (see Table IV) points out that most migrants come from families larger than average for the villages as a whole. Whereas the mean household size for the fifty villages was 4.6, the mean size of all households giving up migrants was 5.4. When households giving up migrants are divided according to status, however, *mizunomi* households are only slightly larger than average (4.86) while *honbyakushō* households are considerably larger (6.1).

TABLE IV. SIZE OF HOUSEHOLD THAT SEND OUT MIGRANTS*

No. in household	<i>Mizunomi</i>		<i>Honbyakushō</i>		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	% (cumulative)
1	10	4.6	4	2.7	14	3.9
2	12	5.5	2	1.4	14	7.8
3	33	15.1	14	9.7	47	20.8
4	43	19.6	13	9.0	56	36.2
5	40	18.3	10	6.9	50	50.0
6	33	15.1	34	23.6	67	68.5
7	33	15.1	27	18.8	60	85.0
8	8	3.7	30	20.8	38	95.5
9	4	1.8	7	4.9	11	98.5
10 or more	3	1.4	3	2.1	6	100.2
Total	219	100.2	144	99.9	363	

* This household size includes migrant(s) in its calculation

After subtracting migrants from calculations of household size, it is important to note that these households fell to an average size of only 3.7 members, which suggests that household size was controlled in a significant manner through migration. Migration controls on household size may have been more important and widespread in Tokugawa Japan than were curbs on fertility. This supposition gains some support when the number of migrants per household is considered (see Table V). The larger the household, the greater the number of out-migrants: the relatively large households of six or more persons are the households that give up, on the average, more than one migrant.

TABLE V. NUMBER OF MIGRANTS PER HOUSEHOLD ACCORDING TO HOUSEHOLD SIZE AND STATUS

No. in household	No. of migrants/household	Status		Total	
		<i>Mizunomi</i>	<i>Honbyakushō</i>	No.	% (cumulative)
1	1	11	6	17	4.7
	2	8	3	11	7.7
2	2	4	0	4	8.8
				15	
	3	25	11	36	18.7
3	2	2	8	10	21.5
	3	6	0	6	23.2
				52	
4	1	18	7	25	30.1
	2	11	4	15	34.2
	3	3	0	3	35.0
			43		
5	1	23	9	32	43.8
	2	9	5	14	47.7
	3	1	0	1	50.0
	4	3	0	3	50.8
			50		
6	1	19	14	33	59.9
	2	9	5	14	63.8
	3	4	11	15	67.9
	4	0	4	4	69.0
			66		
7	1	15	12	27	76.4
	2	15	10	25	83.3
	3	0	5	5	84.7
	4	4	0	4	85.8
			61		
8	1	3	15	18	88.0
	2	7	10	17	92.7
	3	0	2	2	93.3
			37		
9	1	3	2	5	94.7
	2	1	3	4	95.8
			9		
10	1	0	3	3	96.6
	2	0	0	0	
	3	3	1	4	97.7
	4	0	6	6	99.4
			13		

Composition. The composition and status of households sending out migrants was next tabulated (see Table VI). It is apparent that most migrants come from two-generation households, and that in absolute terms more than twice as many migrants came from three-generation households as came from households of only one generation. It is also apparent that most migrants come from *mizunomi*

TABLE VI. HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION AND NUMBER OF MIGRANTS FOR HOUSEHOLDS SENDING OUT MIGRANTS, BY STATUS

Composition	<i>Mizunomi</i>	<i>Honbyakushō</i>	Total
One Generation			
1. couple	0	2	2
2. single person	10	4	14
3. siblings	7	2	9
4. couple, sibling(s)	0	2	2
5. couple, sibling(s), relatives	1	0	1
Subtotal	18	10	28
Two Generations			
6. one child, one parent	2	0	2
7. one parent, child(ren)	37	11	48
8. two parents, child(ren)	63	57	120
9. sibling(s), parent(s)	25	20	45
10. couple, sibling(s), parent(s)	10	4	14
11. one parent, sibling(s), child(ren)	6	0	6
12. two parents, sibling(s), children	22	7	29
Subtotal	165	101	264
Three Generations			
13. parent(s), child(ren), grandchild(ren)	6	3	9
14. one parent, child(ren), grandchild(ren)	9	1	10
15. parent(s), child(ren), grandparent(s)	9	18	27
16. head, parent(s), grandparent(s)	3	2	5
17. couple, parent(s), child(ren)	9	6	15
18. couple, child(ren), sibling(s), grandparent(s)	0	4	4
19. head, sibling(s), parent(s), grandparent(s)	0	1	1
Subtotal	36	35	71
Grand Total	219	144	363

households, and that twice as many *mizunomi* migrants come from families that lack one or both parents, that have no functional household head, or that have many collaterals present (see lines 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 12 of Table VI). Migrants from *honbyakushō* households, by contrast, almost always come from households headed by a married couple.

An examination of the ages of household heads of families that send out migrants reveals that *honbyakushō* and *mizunomi* heads are very nearly the same age on the

average; except for the youngest two age groupings, the age distribution of household heads by status is amazingly similar (see Table VII).

TABLE VII. AGES OF HOUSEHOLD HEADS OF FAMILIES THAT SEND OUT MIGRANTS, BY STATUS

Age of head	<i>Mizunomi</i>		<i>Honbyakushō</i>		Total
	No.	% (cumulative)	No.	% (cumulative)	
1-19	10	4.6	1	0.7	11
20-25	24	15.6	14	10.4	38
26-31	14	22.0	17	22.1	31
32-37	20	31.2	16	33.1	36
38-43	26	43.1	15	43.4	41
44-49	39	61.0	25	60.6	64
50-55	44	81.2	29	80.6	73
56+	41	100.0	28	99.9	69
Total	218		145		363

HOUSEHOLD SIZE BY PERIOD

Finally, it is useful to consider how migration patterns may have changed during the last fifty years of the Tokugawa period. The data from the fifty villages were collected from three periods, 1823-38, 1840-55, and 1856-71. Over these fifty years, many significant events occurred which could have influenced migration, notably the Tempō Famine (1836-38) and the attempt of the Echizen government during the 1860's to intervene more directly in the market economy of the region.

When sizes of households sending out migrants are compared over the three periods, it is immediately apparent that following the Tempō Famine during the second period of this study, the size of households sending out migrants fell relatively and absolutely as compared to the two other periods. This reveals,

TABLE VIII. SIZE OF HOUSEHOLDS SENDING OUT MIGRANTS, BY PERIOD

No. in household	Period					
	1		2		3	
	No.	%*	No.	%*	No.	%*
1	1	0.9	4	7.7	8	3.9
2	3	3.7	5	17.3	7	7.3
3	12	15.0	12	40.4	23	18.5
4	20	33.9	7	53.9	24	30.2
5	13	46.2	4	61.6	33	46.3
6	21	66.0	9	78.9	37	64.4
7	18	82.9	6	90.5	36	82.0
8	14	96.1	5	100.1	24	93.7
9	4	99.9	0		7	97.1
10 or more	0		0		6	100.0
Total	106		52		205	

* percentages are cumulative.

I think, the strains and difficulties inflicted on families by the famine, forcing even relatively small households (half of the migrants during this period came from families with four or fewer members) to send away members for work (see Table VIII).

The effects of the famine on households taking in migrants are also clear. In the second and third periods, fewer smaller households took in servants relative to the first period. This unwillingness or perhaps inability of smaller households to employ servants in the second and third periods meant that the size of households employing servants was generally larger by one or more persons than in the first period, and this suggests that fewer live-in servants were employed after the famine and that they were employed only by the wealthier households (see Table IX).

TABLE IX. SIZE OF HOUSEHOLDS TAKING IN MIGRANTS, BY PERIOD

No. in household	Period**					
	1		2		3	
	No.	%*	No.	%*	No.	%*
1	3	1.8	0		0	
2	4	4.2	1	1.3	0	
3	9	9.6	1	2.6	4	4.7
4	19	21.1	3	6.5	7	12.8
5	19	32.6	5	13.1	13	27.9
6	22	45.9	8	23.6	8	37.2
7	26	61.6	18	47.3	9	47.7
8	14	70.1	12	63.1	21	72.1
9	10	76.1	10	76.3	14	88.4
10 or more	38	99.0	18	100.0	10	100.0
Total	167		76		86	

* percentage is cumulative.

** includes migrants in calculation.

CONCLUSION

This examination of households involved in migration from fifty villages in Echizen during the last years of the Tokugawa era has resulted in three general findings. First, larger-than-average households took in migrants; the mean household size for all households from fifty villages was 4.6 members, while the mean household size for households taking in migrants was 7.4, if migrants are included, and 5.44, if they are not. Second, households taking in migrants usually contained more than one generation; 96% contained two or more, and 34% three or more generations. Third, larger-than-average households also sent out migrants; the mean household size for all households in all villages was 4.6 members, but the mean household size for households sending out migrants was 5.4 members. However, this figure dropped to 3.7 when out-migrants are excluded from the calculations, indicating that average household size was linked inversely to migration.

The purpose of this inquiry, as you may recall, was to ascertain something of motivations for migration. A close examination of these findings, especially in light of migration differences according to socioeconomic status, provides a framework for possibly understanding why many people moved at this time.

Honbyakushō households which employed migrants were larger than *mizunomi* households doing so; *honbyakushō* households employing migrants were more complex than *mizunomi* households—they were more extended by generations and by number and kinds of persons resident in the household. *Honbyakushō* households appear to stress the idea of a household more than *mizunomi* households, and to be more regular in their structure. More *honbyakushō* household heads were married, more *honbyakushō* had two-, three-, or four-generation households, and they had more collateral relatives present. *Honbyakushō* households apparently held together better.

The greater cohesiveness and longevity of *honbyakushō* households points out, by contrast, fundamental differences between them and *mizunomi* households. These contrasts help explain why most migrants were from *mizunomi* households going to *honbyakushō* households.⁹ Which leads me to conclude that overpopulation and poverty were primary motivations for migration in late Tokugawa Japan. The most disadvantaged presumably feel the strongest push to migrate,¹⁰ and members of *mizunomi* households, without land or political rights in villages, had less to keep them home. Indeed, in light of the growth and diversification of the Japanese economy and the nationwide openings for mobile workers this created during the Tokugawa period, *mizunomi* household members often had more to gain than lose through migration. Thus, socioeconomic status differences in terms of real wealth, local opportunity, and cultural values associated with household cohesiveness and longevity, help clarify motivations for migration in premodern Japan. These conclusions are only tentative, however, until a much larger and detailed study of migration in Tokugawa Japan can be concluded.

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⁹ An earlier study revealed that 70% of migrants in one region were from *mizunomi* households and that 90% of migrants went into *honbyakushō* households. See citation in footnote 4 above.

¹⁰ See discussion of the “selectivity” of migration depending on whether a “push” or a “pull” is in effect by Donald J. BOGUE, “Internal Migration,” in *The Study of Population*, ed. by Philip M. HAUSER and Otis D. DUNCAN (Chicago, 1959), pp. 502–3.