

Doctoral Dissertation Abstract

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Dissertation Title	Research on Community Revitalization Programs Based on <i>Taiga</i> Dramas		

Abstract

1. Research background

NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) began broadcasting on February 1, 1953, and its initial programming consisted of news and sports relays, expanding in the 1960s to include entertainment programs such as quiz shows and dramas. April 1963 marks the first run of a *taiga* drama series, a genre that is still produced today.

At the beginning of 1963, NHK's goal in planning and broadcasting *taiga* dramas was to create enjoyable programs for television audiences that could compete with films. Just as NHK had intended, the first *taiga* drama, *Hana no shōgai* (1963), resonated with audiences, achieving a 20.2% audience share on average throughout the year. In addition, Hikone Castle in Shiga Prefecture, which was shown in the program, hosted an above average number of visitors that year—the beginning of a phenomenon whereby *taiga* drama locales would become tourist destinations. Over the run of the seventh drama, *Ten to chi to* (1969), what is now Japan Railways ran group tours named after the series; this development showed that *taiga* dramas had begun to influence people's choices of holiday destinations. After the run of the 25th series, *Dokuganryū Masamune* (1987), the municipality featured in the program saw a sudden increase in tourists, prompting it to increase its tourism public relations activities in a bid to attract even more visitors.

Consequently, local governments showed a renewed interest in *taiga* drama locales in historic sites and personages. Art and history museums would hold special exhibitions on characters featured in the dramas, and local governments would hold events related to the dramas throughout the year to attract visitors. The number of visitors typically decreased

the year after the drama ended, indicating that a spike in tourism was often a temporary phenomenon limited to the run of each series.

Still, some communities continued to benefit even after the end of a series. In some cases, the broadcast of *taiga* dramas prompted the construction of new tourist facilities that continued to be used after a series finished its run, helping to attract further tourism. In other cases, the depiction of traditional art forms in the programs rekindled interest in them, leading to revitalization efforts and the establishment of *hohon-kai* (preservation groups). Examples include Yomitan, Okinawa, and Esashi, Iwate Prefecture.

From 2000 onward, *taiga* dramas helped residents see historical figures in a new light, and local governments began to use them more frequently in their tourism campaigns. When cities such as Kanazawa, Minamiuonuma, Ibusuki, and Kagoshima were chosen as locales for *taiga* dramas, they began training volunteer guides and local residents to conduct welcoming activities for tourists. These activities contributed to community revitalization and community building by serving as a space for new exchanges among residents. Some local governments also incorporated the historical characters from *taiga* dramas into their school curricula. In 2013, a *taiga* drama was produced and broadcast to support community rebuilding efforts in areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake.

The effect of *taiga* dramas on local communities has changed over time. Currently, they are inspiring community revitalization efforts and initiatives to ensure that the activities spurred by the dramas are not just passing fads.

2. Research objective

The objective of this dissertation is to describe instances of community revitalization in which local governments' use of NHK *taiga* dramas, in their efforts to attract tourists, have contributed to social, economic, or cultural development in the local community.

3. Research methodology

To accomplish this objective, I begin by using prior research to identify the research problem. In Chapter 2, I refer to books and data to analyze television's effect on the audience and the spread of television itself. I also analyze changes in *taiga* drama viewership over time and the rise of mass media, as well as the regionality of *taiga* drama broadcasts and their historical background. Regarding the use of *taiga* dramas for tourism purposes, I also analyze changes over the 50-year span from 1963 to 2013 and discuss a *taiga* drama that was produced to support revitalization efforts in Aizuwakamatsu, Fukushima Prefecture, which was affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Chapters 3 to 9 are dedicated to analyses of the *taiga* drama locales selected for this research.

Chapter 3 covers three series that were filmed in Yamanashi Prefecture: *Ten to chi to* (1969), *Takeda Shingen* (1988), and *Fūrin Kazan* (2007). I analyze the differences in how these series were used for tourism purposes to note the changes that can be observed over time.

In Chapter 4, I consider the case of Kōchi, Kōchi Prefecture, which was used as a locale for a *taiga* drama twice in the span of five years; I examine differences in the effects that *Kōmyō ga tsuji* (2006) and *Ryōmaden* (2010) had on tourism there.

To understand how *Ryōmaden* (2010) affected Kōchi, I first used tourists' survey responses to learn about visitors and their opinions of tourism in Kōchi (Chapter 5). In Chapter 6, I discuss responses to surveys I conducted on tourism in Kōchi to understand the opinions of students at Kōchi University and students in the International Tourism program at Ino Business High School in Kōchi Prefecture who are studying tourism in Kōchi. Finally, I point out the differences between tourists' and locals' perspectives.

In Chapter 7, I discuss initiatives in Esashi (present-day Esashi Ward, Ōshū City), Iwate Prefecture, where the run of *Homuratatsu* (second half of 1993) led to the construction of new tourist facilities and the preservation and revitalization of the traditional arts.

In Chapter 8, I discuss community revitalization initiatives in Ibusuki, Kagoshima Prefecture, where the drama *Atsuhime* (2008) spurred the revival of local communities and

the inclusion of local studies in school curricula.

In Chapter 9, I look at *Yae no sakura* (2013), which was produced to support revitalization efforts in communities affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake, and I discuss its effect on Aizukawamatsu, Fukushima Prefecture.

In Chapter 10, I synthesize the findings from Chapters 3 through 9 to identify similarities and differences in community revitalization efforts based on *taiga* dramas. Finally, Chapter 11 contains the conclusion of the dissertation.

I visited four other municipalities in addition to those mentioned above, collecting literature and data and conducting oral surveys in a comparative study and examination of changes in community renewal efforts. Kawagoe, Saitama Prefecture, was featured in *Kasuga no tsubone* (1989); Yomitan, Okinawa, was featured in *Ryūkyū no kaze* (first half of 1993); Hiraizumi, Iwate Prefecture, was the locale in *Yoshitsune* (2005); and Minamiuonuma, Niigata Prefecture, was the setting featured in *Tenchijin* (2009).

4. Research findings

Taiga dramas became popular programs across Japan when first broadcast in 1963, attracting record numbers of viewers. NHK would go on to continue producing a series that reflected the zeitgeist of Japanese society, and *taiga* dramas remain among the network's representative programs today.

Tourists visiting the locales and the local governments that welcomed them—especially travel agents—were the linchpins of tourism based on *taiga* dramas, which meant that tourism's effect on residents of the municipality was overlooked. However, starting in the early 2000s, not only did local governmental travel agents welcome visitors, but residents also began taking part in volunteer guide activities, signaling a change in tourism based on *taiga* dramas. In addition, *taiga* dramas also contributed to the revitalization of disaster areas, as in the case of *Yae no sakura* (2013), which was produced to support Fukushima Prefecture, the epicenter of the Great East Japan Earthquake.

The scope of *taiga* dramas nowadays has gone beyond the confines of the television

screen, not only contributing to attracting tourists to locales featured in the series, but also functioning as spaces for local communities to engage in various activities.

Yamanashi Prefecture and Kōchi City are two examples of places that have used *taiga* dramas to promote tourism. Yamanashi Prefecture was the locale for three series: *Ten to chi to* (1969) during the postwar boom era, *Takeda Shingen* (1988) during the Bubble Economy period, and *Fūrin Kazan* (2007) during the Heisei recession. All three series share the same protagonist, Takeda Shingen, who was also a character in the tourism campaign for each series. However, with 19 years between them, the dramas also show how Japan has changed over time, and each tourism campaign has differed in its use of dramas.

Kōchi, meanwhile, was the locale for two *taiga* dramas over a span of five years: *Kōmyō ga tsuji* (2006) and *Ryōmaden* (2010). However, there was a difference in how many tourists came and how tourism was managed by the local government. Exhibitions and events related that the protagonists of both series were from Kōchi Prefecture: Yamauchi Kazutoyo, *daimyō* of the Tosa domain, in the case of *Kōmyō ga tsuji*, and Sakamoto Ryōma, in the case of *Ryōmaden*. In the case of *Kōmyō ga tsuji*, the increase in the number of visitors was only temporary, whereas with *Ryōmaden*, the number of visitors had been steadily increasing since the year prior to its run and continued to increase after its run. The reason for the latter situation is that the prefectural government, after reviewing how things went in 2006, changed its approach for the new exhibition on Sakamoto Ryōma. Even after the series was over, the exhibition remained open, and the prefectural and city governments continued their campaigns to attract visitors, which had a definite effect on the number of visitors to Kōchi.

According to the results of the survey I conducted the year after the end of *Ryōmaden*, 47% of all visitors to Kōchi went there because of the series, which shows that *taiga* dramas influenced people's choices regarding holiday destinations. However, I found that as the number of visitors increased, the effect of *taiga* dramas on people's choices of destinations decreased. While roughly half of all visitors to Kōchi did so because of the drama, the oral surveys I conducted revealed that there was also interest in other tourist

facilities besides those pertaining to the drama.

Some examples of the use of *taiga* dramas in community revitalization include the cities of Esashi (present-day Esashi Ward, Ōshū City), Iwate Prefecture; Ibusuki, Kagoshima Prefecture; and Aizuwakamatsu, Fukushima Prefecture.

Community revitalization initiatives in Esashi began in the early 1990s, with the first effort consisting of activities based around Fujiwara no Kiyohira, a samurai who hailed from Esashi. These activities were featured in the local newspaper and sparked the initial interest in Esashi as a *taiga* drama locale. At the time, NHK, mindful of the temporary nature of the “*taiga* drama effect” on places featured as locales, wanted to make a lasting contribution to tourism in the area. They planned the construction of a facility that could make a long-term contribution, which would become the Esashi-Fujiwara Heritage Park.

The 1993 drama *Homuratatsu* played a major role in changing the consciousness of residents who did not look upon the Ōshū Fujiwara clan favorably before the run of the series. Some residents even cursed them. However, after its run, the local residents’ attitudes toward the clan changed for the better, suggesting that *taiga* dramas have the power to change the consciousness of people.

Moving on to Ibusuki, when the city was chosen as the locale for *Atsuhime* (2008), the city set up related historical sites and planned to use the character of Atsuhime to attract tourists. It also put a system in place to welcome visitors and began to train volunteer guides to show them around the sites.

During the run of the series, Ibusuki received more visitors than had been expected. Accordingly, the city decided to continue its volunteer guide activities, which it had originally planned to discontinue after the series ended. In addition, after the end of *Atsuhime*, primary schools in Ibusuki set aside time for students to learn about Atsuhime as a historical figure. The promotion of tourism spurred by the broadcast of *Atsuhime* in 2008 promoted an exchange among local residents and led to community revitalization.

In addition, besides the aforementioned kinds of community revitalization, the drama *Yae no sakura* (2013) was planned to support rebuilding efforts in Fukushima Prefecture, which had been affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake. It helped attract visitors to

some degree during the year of its run, and while it did not lead to continued activities after the series was over, it did make the series' protagonist, Niijima Yae, a resource for tourism in Aizuwakamatsu. *Yae no sakura* left a good impression on residents of the affected areas as well.

Local governments of places chosen as locales for *taiga* dramas would use the opportunity to prepare related tourism resources going as far back as 1969, when the programs were still in their infancy. They constructed filming locations and erected statues of historical figures featured in a series; additionally, they prepared other kinds of tourist facilities.

Upon categorizing the activities of local governments based on their duration, I found that activities not continuing beyond five years were often run by the municipality. They were events for tourists limited to the year during which the corresponding series ran, and they resulted in only a temporary boost to visitor numbers and the local economy.

Meanwhile, one commonality among long-term activities that continued beyond five years is that—rather than being run by the municipality—they involved the proactive participation of residents. These included not just welcome activities for tourists, but also those related to the creation and renewal of local communities, the reconceptualization of historical figures, and a renewed interest in traditional arts.

Through these effects on local communities, NHK *taiga* dramas came to play a role in their revitalization.

NHK *taiga* dramas have a long history lasting half a century, and in today's society, where community revitalization is promoted as a matter of government policy, it is important to select protagonists and locales that are appropriate for the social climate. Proper selection will increase viewership, promote tourism in places featured as locales, and contribute to the renewal of local communities.

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