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# UNDERMINING THE JAPANESE MIRACLE

Work and Conflict  
in a  
Coalmining Community

MATTHEW ALLEN

*Department of History,  
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## Glossary

- asseiyama* lit. 'pressure mountain'; violent, generally small, mine.
- beddo taun* commuter or satellite town.
- beddo taunzu* plural of *beddo taun*.
- bento* lunch box, usually consisting of rice, *nigiri*, and other oddments of food.
- Bon Odori Taikai* celebration of the Festival of the Dead; dancing rally.
- bōryokudan* organised crime syndicate; *yakuza*; lit. 'violent group'.
- bōsōzoku* young, often teenaged car-driving hoodlums, often seen in gangs.
- bota yama* slag-heaps.
- buraku* lit. 'village'; more commonly used to describe the villages in which 'special villagers' live; that is those who have been ritually discriminated against by the general public since the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.
- Buraku Kaihō Undō* The Buraku Liberation Organisation, an anti-discrimination movement dedicated to eliminating the widespread stigma of association with *buraku*.
- burakumin* the group of people who live in the *buraku*; that is, those who are discriminated against by the general public.
- chihō ōte* unions representing the regionally powerful mines such as K-san and O-san, supported by association with *Tanrō*.
- chimpira* low-level *yakuza* footsoldiers.
- chūko chu* unions representing medium-sized mines, with between 500 and 1,000 workers.
- chūko ko* unions representing small mines, with less than 500 workers.
- chūkokigyō* small to medium-sized mines (lit. 'enterprises').
- chūo ōte* unions representing the large mines such as M-san, N-san, T-san, supported by association with *Tanrō*.
- daikigyō* large mines (lit. 'enterprises').
- daimyō* feudal lords of the pre-Meiji (1868) era.
- danchi* housing development; apartment complex.
- fujinkai* women's group.
- Fukutanrō* Fukuoka branch of the National Coalminers' Union.
- genkan* entrance hall.
- giri* debt of gratitude; obligation.

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## GLOSSARY

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*Gisei no Tō* 'The Tower of Sacrifice' (manuscript).*Gorika* The Scrap and Build Plan; the second Temporary Coal Rationalisation Bill.*goyō* enterprise; business.*goyō kumiai* enterprise union.*gun* county; sub-prefecture.*Haitan Kodan* Solid Fuels Distribution Public Corporation.*happi* livery coat; *happi* coat.*haramaki* stomach-protector (to ward off cold).*honne* one's true intentions/feelings.*hōritsu* law.*idobata kaigi* lit. 'well conference'; women's informal gatherings at the local wells, a common means of disseminating local gossip. *Idobata kaigi* was an institution in most of the *tanjū* until the 1960s, when running water was introduced to many coal villages. However, although the wells are no longer used, the women still get together for regular gossip sessions, and still refer to these sessions as *idobata kaigi*, a term used disparagingly by many men.*ippanjin* 'normal' or mainstream people; non-coalminers.*jikatabi* split-toed heavy-cloth shoes; traditional workmen's shoes.*jimmu keiki* period of 'divine providence' (1956–57), prosperity; economic boom.*jinja* Shinto shrine.*jinmyaku* contact networks.*jinzai* lit. 'human capital'.*kachō* section chief.*kakari* person in charge.*kakui* colloq. 'cool', attractive, appealing.*kami shibai* picture show man.*kanji* Chinese ideographs.*katana* traditional samurai sword.*kawasuji kishitsu* lit. 'river-dwellers' character', euphemism for 'rough diamonds'; that is, violent externally, but warm internally.*keigo* honorific Japanese language.*kenri* a right.*kinrō kakari* person in charge of labour (at mines).*kinsaku seido* the system of capital raising.*Kōgyō Renmei* industry association.*kokumin nenkin* national public pension.*kotatsu* a table and a quilt over a heated area.*ku-chō* headman of a ward.*kumi* group of houses into which villages are divided, usually between eight and 16 houses.

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GLOSSARY

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- tokushū buraku* lit. 'special village'; village in which *burakumin* live.
- tokutsu* random manner in which mines were laid out underground.
- toroko tsuaa* tour of massage parlours.
- tsunami* tidal wave of epic proportions.
- uwasa shakai* rumour-based society.
- uyoku* right-wing, pro-militarist activities, often associated with the *yakuza*.
- yakuza* organised crime syndicates.
- yakuza gumi* specific, local branches of *yakuza*.
- yakutoku* a privilege.
- yama no Kami jinja* the temple of the mountain gods.
- yūrei* ghosts of dissatisfied spirits.
- zaibatsu* lit. 'financial cliques'; old-style monopoly capitalist corporations, based around a family holding company, and extending into many important, heavy industries. Arguably the power behind Japan's pre-war economy.
- Zengakuren* The National Association of Students.
- Zentanko* the right-wing National Coalminers' Union.
- zori* traditional leather thongs.

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## *List of Abbreviations*

BKD	Buraku Liberation Organisation
CICC	Coal Industry Co-operative Council
CUC	Coal Unemployment Commission
FMSC	Fukuoka Mine Safety Commission
JCP	Japan Communist Party
JSP	Japan Socialist Party
LASL	lowest acceptable standard of living
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MITI	Ministry of International Trade and Industry
MOP	Ministry of Propaganda
NEC	newly exporting country
NIC	newly industrialised countries
NNS	<i>Nishi Nihon Shinbun</i>
RTSB	River Transportation and Safety Bureau
SCAP	Supreme Command of Allied Powers
TCRB	Temporary Coal Rationalisation Bill
TUCWM	Temporary Unemployed Coal Workers Measure
YWM	Y-san Widows' Movement

## *Notes on translation and anonymity*

Throughout this account, I have attempted to remain faithful in translation to the style of Japanese spoken by the miners and people of Chikuho. It is rough, colourful and highly evocative. In Japan, swearing as such is uncommon, but in Chikuho personal abuse in everyday conversation is almost the norm, and I have attempted to retain this in the translation. I accept responsibility for all translations in this book.

I have changed the names of most of my informants and some of the placenames within Chikuho to avoid causing personal hardship for those who so generously gave of their time and knowledge.

The names of companies have been abridged in the Japanese language convention.

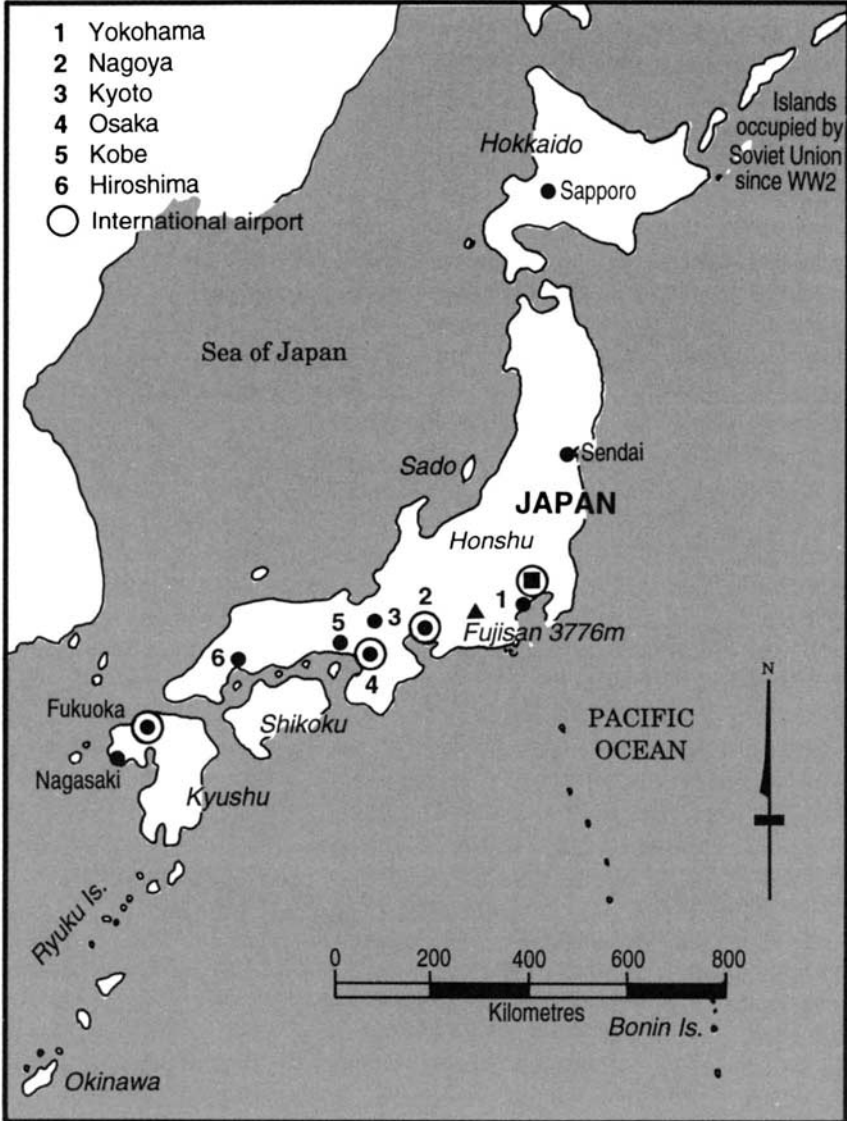
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Map 1: Japan and Kyushu



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Map 2: Fukuoka prefecture and Chikuho region