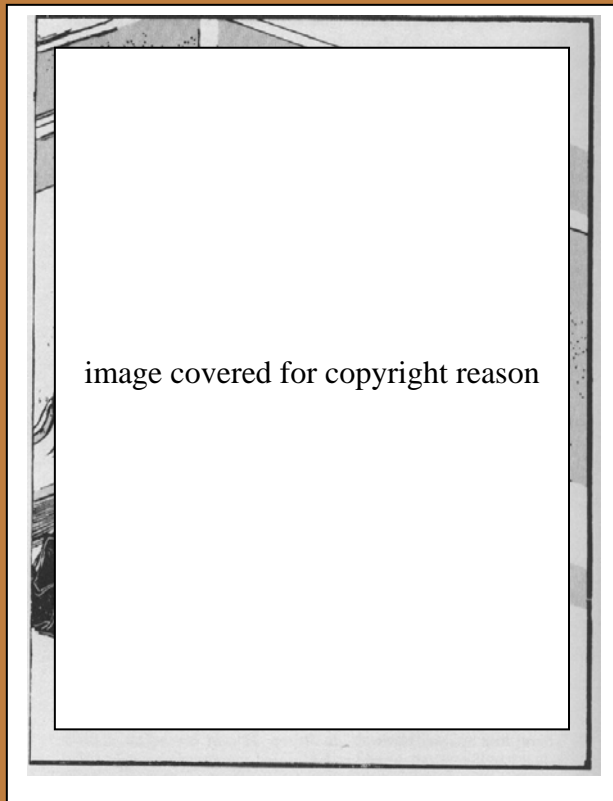


Crossing Boundaries

Suzuki Bokushi
(1770-1842)
and the Rural Elite
of
Tokugawa Japan



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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Takeshi Moriyama

ABSTRACT

This thesis centres on a member of the rural elite, Suzuki Bokushi (1770-1842) of Echigo, and his social environment in Tokugawa Japan (1603-1868). Through a case study of the interaction between one individual's life and his social conditions, the thesis participates in the ongoing scholarly reassessment of Tokugawa society, which had an apparently rigid political and social structure, yet many features that suggest a prototype of modernity. Bokushi's life was multifaceted. He was a village administrator, landlord, pawnbroker, poet, painter, and great communicator, with a nation-wide correspondence network that crossed various social classes. His remote location and humble lifestyle notwithstanding, he was eventually able to publish a book about his region, Japan's 'snow country'. This thesis argues that Bokushi's life epitomises both the potentiality and the restrictions of his historical moment for a well-placed member of the rural elite. An examination of Bokushi's life and texts certainly challenges residual notions of the rigidity of social boundaries between the urban and the rural, between social statuses, and between cultural and intellectual communities. But Bokushi's own actions and attitudes also show the force of conservative social values in provincial life. His activities were also still restrained by the external environment in terms of geographical remoteness, infrastructural limitation, political restrictions, cultural norms and the exigencies of human relationships. Bokushi's life shows that in his day, Tokugawa social frameworks were being shaken and reshaped by people's new attempts to cross conventional boundaries, within, however, a range of freedom that had both external and internal limits.

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The illustration on the cover page of this thesis is taken from Suzuki Bokushi with Kyōzanjin Momoki (annotated by Okada Takematsu), *Hokuetsu seppu* (Iwanami shoten, 1978), p. 229. The original was drawn by Suzuki Bokushi, the subject of this thesis. The person on the right is probably Bokushi himself, and on the left is one of his relatives. They are sitting in the drawing room of a rural elite family, looking at a fossil.

CONVENTIONS

This thesis uses the following conventions that have been widely adopted in recent studies of Japanese history in the English language.

Names

Japanese names are given according to Japanese custom, with surname first, except in the case of authors writing in English who choose to reverse the order.

In the case of literary figures, their pseudonyms are generally used once the full name with surname has been given. For example, Suzuki Bokushi is subsequently referred to as Bokushi, his pseudonym, although his surname is Suzuki and his actual given name is Gisōji. I have normally ignored alternative given names, such as those used in childhood and the official name of the household head.

Merchants are sometimes referred to by their tradename. For example, the Ōtsuka family was known in the community as the Takada-ya, its tradename, and so the head of the family is also referred to as Takada-ya.

Dates

Dates are given in numerals in order of: year in the Western calendar/Japanese month/Japanese date. For example, the 30th day of the 12th month in the 12th year of the Kansei era in the Japanese calendar is given as 1800/12/30. According to convention, I disregard the fact that the last part of the year in the Tokugawa-period calendar actually fell in the early part of the following year in the Gregorian calendar, as a date in the Tokugawa-period calendar was normally twenty to forty days behind the corresponding one in the Gregorian calendar.

The Tokugawa-period calendar had intercalary months (*urū zuki*) such as *urū ni gatsu* (intercalary month after the 2nd month), in order to adjust the difference between the lunar calendar and the solar position. The example above would be given as ‘*urū 2*’ in this thesis.

Where appropriate, dates in the Gregorian calendar are given in addition to Japanese dates. I used the calendar conversion tool at <http://maechan.net/kanreki> for this purpose.

Ages

People's ages are given in the Japanese traditional age-count system (*kazoe doshi*), following all the sources used in this thesis. According to this custom, people were considered to be aged one until the end of the year in which they were born, aged two in the second calendar year, and so forth, regardless of their own actual birthdays.

Currency

Prices and costs are normally given as they appear in the sources. Where appropriate, however, I convert the sum into an equivalent value of gold currency in *ryō*. The units of currency in the Tokugawa period were as follows:

<i>kin</i> (gold):	1 <i>ryō</i>	= 4 <i>bu</i>	= 16 <i>shu</i>
<i>gin</i> (silver):	1 <i>kan</i> (= 3.75 kg)	= 1,000 <i>monme</i>	(=10,000 <i>bu</i>)
<i>zeni</i> :	1 <i>kan</i>	(= 100 <i>hiki</i>)	= 1,000 <i>mon</i>

Exchange rates among gold, silver and *zeni* fluctuated from time to time, and to some extent from place to place. I adopt the rate that is the closest possible in time and place. Generally speaking, around the period 1800-1830, one *ryō* in gold was worth sixty *monme* in silver, or about 6,000 *mon* in *zeni*.

Koku for rice and landholding

Koku was a unit of volume, measuring approximately 180 litres, and most significantly was used to measure rice production and trade as well as land value and tax. Under the Tokugawa regime, landholdings were measured in *koku* as well as area (one *tan* = 990 square metres) by recording the officially assessed productivity of the rice crop (*koku-daka*) of each piece of land, even vegetable fields and residential blocks. In this thesis, while one *koku* of rice means 180 litres of rice grain (which weighs approximately 150

kilograms) unless noted otherwise, one *roku* of land means a piece of land with an official productivity equivalent to one *roku* of rice grain annually. As explained in the thesis, there was, however, a considerable gap between officially assessed productivity and actual productivity in rice (*jishū*) in the region with which this thesis is concerned, as in other places.

Macrons

Macrons are used to indicate long vowels in Japanese such as in ‘Honshū’ and ‘Santō Kyōzan’. However, I follow a widely accepted custom in historical studies of Japan in the English language in not giving macrons in the following words: ‘Tokyo’, ‘Kyoto’, ‘Osaka’, ‘shogun’, ‘daimyo’ and ‘Shinto’. When these words appear in titles and publishers of Japanese publications, however, I do include macrons.

Place of publication

All Japanese-language sources are published in Tokyo unless otherwise stated.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes.

- SBZ1 *Suzuki Bokushi zenshū*, vol. 1 (*jōkan chosakuhen*)
(compiled by Miya Eiji, Inoue Keiryū and Takahashi
Minoru), Chūō kōronsha, 1983.
- SBZ2 *Suzuki Bokushi zenshū*, vol. 2 (*gekan shiryōhen*) (details as
above).
- HS-Iwanami *Hokuetsu seppu* (Suzuki Bokushi with Kyōzanjin Momoki,
annotated by Okada Takematsu), Iwanami shoten, 1978.
- SCT *Snow Country Tales: Life in the Other Japan* (Suzuki
Bokushi, translated by Jeffrey Hunter with Rose Lesser,
with introduction by Anne Walthall), New York:
Weatherhill, 1986.
- NKS-S *Niigataken-shi shiryōhen* (edited and published by
Niigataken [Niigata Prefectural Government]), 24 vols,
1980-86.
- NKS-T *Niigataken-shi tsūshihen* (edited and published by
Niigataken [Niigata Prefectural Government]), 9 vols,
1980-89.
- SCS-S *Shiozawachō-shi shiryōhen* (edited and published by
Shiozawamachi [Shiozawa Town Council], Niigata), 2
vols, 2000.
- SCS-T *Shiozawachō-shi tsūshihen* (edited and published by
Shiozawamachi [Shiozawa Town Council], Niigata), 2
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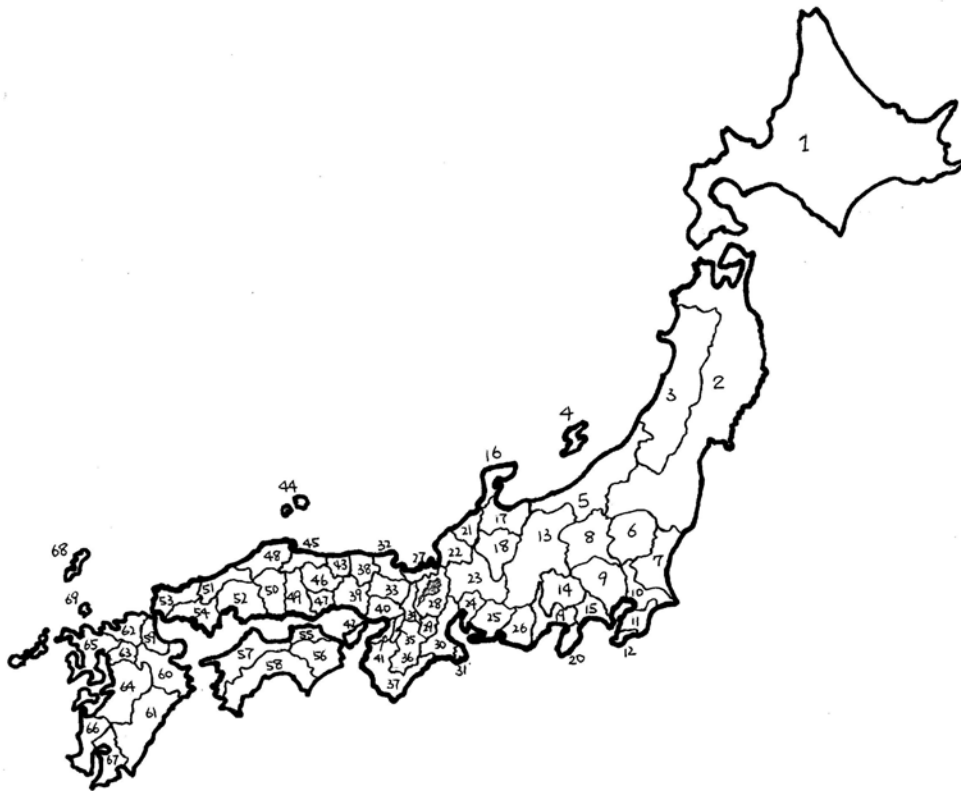
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Map 0.1: Provinces (*kuni*) and locations in Tokugawa Japan (1603-1868)



Aki	52	Higo	64	Kii	37	Shima	31
Awa (安房)	12	Hitachi	7	Kōzuke	8	Shimōsa	10
Awa (阿波)	56	Hizen	65	Mikawa	25	Shimotsuke	6
Awaji	42	Hoki	45	Mimasaka	46	Shinano	13
Bingo	50	Hyūga	61	Mino	23	Suō	54
Bitchū	49	Iga	29	Musashi	9	Suruga	19
Bizen	47	Iki*	69	Mutsu	2	Tajima	38
Bungo	60	Inaba	43	Nagato	53	Tanba	33
Buzen	59	Ise	30	Noto	16	Tango	32
Chikugo	63	Iwami	51	Okii	44	Tosa	58
Chikuzen	62	Iyo	57	Ōmi	28	Tōtōmi	26
Dewa	3	Izu	20	Ōsumi	67	Tsushima*	68
Echigo	5	Izumi	41	Owari	24	Wakasa	27
Echizen	22	Izumo	48	Sado	4	Yamashiro	34
Etchū	17	Kaga	21	Sagami	15	Yamato	36
Ezo-chi*	1	Kai	14	Sanuki	55		
Harima	39	Kawachi	35	Satsuma	66		
Hida	18	Kazusa	11	Settsu	40		

*These areas were officially not ‘provinces’ (*kuni*).

Map 0.2: Echigo Province in the Tokugawa period

