# The 'One Village One Product' Model of Regional Industrial Revitalization and Its Applicability to Asia

— Global and Local Perspectives —

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#### 1. Introduction

Oita prefecture's 'One Village One Product' (OVOP) movement provides an important model of success in regional development policy. The movement encouraged and empowered local citizens to unearth opportunities for economic growth and develop local industry with a global outlook. The principles behind this movement, and the efforts of the local citizens which sustained it, have attracted attention from across Japan and from many other Asian countries, and the movement is now often presented as a new paradigm for regional development. This paper reviews the movement's formative process and its subsequent development, with a view ascertaining its applicability to issues of regional development throughout Asia. It is hypothesized that the movement can be seen a model approach to the issue of rejuvenation of local industries in the era of globalization. Together with a historical review of the growth of the 'OVOP movement as led by Oita prefecture, the paper will attempt to identify the unique characteristics of the movement as well as its limitations, and make proposals for how Japan's experience with the movement may be applied in other parts of Asia.

2. The 'One Village One Product' Movement in Oita: Origins, Development, and Principal Features

Since the 1980s, 'OVOP' in Oita has grown into a movement for unearthing new local

industries and rejuvenating regional communities. The movement has its roots not in national or regional government policy, but rather in the initiative and efforts of local communities themselves.

One of such community was Oyama, a village (now town) nestled in a mountainous region far from the urban centers of the prefecture. In 1961 local citizens in Oyama, which at the time consisted of less than 1000 households, initiated the 'NPC' movement, promoting the production of plums and chestnuts to take advantage of the village's geographical characteristics. This movement was in direct contrast to the national agricultural policy of the time, which encouraged the production of rice above other agricultural products. But Oyama people definitely determined to grow them by their own initiatives even if it was against the national policy and lose chance to get subsidies from central government. The first period of time had been in the quite severe condition because they didn't have an experience without their spiritual braveness. However, their direction was right. Gradually the productivity was up and their commercial activities were expanded by putting well-thought quality keeping and own value added efforts. A so-called '1.5th sector industry' (not only producing raw products but processing them to the marketable one) for the promotion of agriculture was created by this particular small community, led by its younger members. The village then even moved NPC into its second stage with setting their goal to the more humanitarian level with contrasted to the initial main target which was an income raising only. Incorporating human resource development initiatives, and subsequently 'third stage NPC' which tackled the issue of improving the living environment and lifestyle conditions for local residents. Oyama's efforts are particularly noteworthy in that they were initiated within the local community itself, and led and developed by local citizens with a broad global outlook and vision.

In addition, the Oyama movement provided for the cultivation of human resources with the creativity and energy to lead the next stages of the movement, and ultimately led to an improvement in living conditions and a general revitalization of the community. Similar movements soon appeared in other parts of Oita prefecture.

The model provided by Oyama, one of community revitalization for areas with little or no significant industry and far from the major population centers such as Tokyo and Osaka, was refined into a prefecture-wide policy of industrial rejuvenation by Morihiko Hiramatsu, the Governor of Oita Prefecture at the time. Hiramatsu provided the principal ideological force behind the movement, empowering local citizens and defining bureaucracy's role as one of providing support for community initiative. Hiramatsu emphasized that actual implementation and development of the movement was to be led not by him, but by local people at ground level.

The concepts of 'think globally, act locally', 'autonomy, initiative and creativity' and 'people first', which had appeared in a primitive form in Oyama, subsequently became the core principles of the 'OVOP' movement. Goods should be produced with a view not just to the local arena, but with national and international standards in mind; activities should be directed and implemented by local citizens themselves; the movement must place priority on nurturing forward-thinking individuals to inspire and lead the movement into the future;

Table 1. Examples of products developed under the 'OVOP' movement

Bungotakada city	White spring onions	Tsukumi town	Sunqueen mandarins
Kitsuki city	Greenhouse mandarins	Himeshima village	Kuruma prawns
Yonozu village	Dried fish	Yufuin town	Bungo beef
Oyama town	Japanese apricots, chestnuts, enoki mushrooms	Saganoseki town	Seki brand horse mackerel and mackerel
Usa city	Shochu spirits	Ajimu town	Grapes, turtles
Hiji town	Shiroshita flounder, shochu spirits	Taketa city	Kabosu (citrus fruit)
Kusu town	Kicchomu-zuke pickles		

Source: Hiramatsu Morihiko, Isson ippin no susume, Gyousei, 1982

government and bureaucracy should provide only peripheral support. These ideals made the 'OVOP' movement more than just a project for producing and promoting local specialty goods—it was in fact a comprehensive movement for community regeneration.

The fact that the movement offered potential for sustainable social change and improvement is the principal reason for the acclaim it gained in Japan and indeed throughout Asia. The production of regional specialties was the key function, but the real motivating force behind regional development was the people—the intrepid and visionary individuals who led the movement in each community. Led by these people, regional economies achieved a kind of autonomous and organic development, in which community leaders' efforts fostered continuous innovation and pioneered new directions. As Governor Hiramatsu puts it, 'the ultimate goal of the OVOP movement is people-based; 'the term "product" refers not just refer to physical goods, but to products and capabilities in the human sense—the cultivation of human resources.'

When this movement began, Oita had the lowest average personal income rate of any prefecture in the Kyushu area, and was facing a major depopulation problem which was particularly severe among the younger generation. However, the advent of the movement saw a flood of new specialty products devised by local citizens, which were then refined and promoted heavily through prefecture-wide initiatives. The Oita brand label became well known throughout Japan, and local industry experienced strong growth. The number of 'products' registered under the 'OVOP' movement grew from 100 to over 500 in the 1990s, and the total value of product shipments increased from 10 billion yen to over 100 billion. A number of 'academies' were formed to train future leaders of local industry; there are now over 10 such academies covering a variety of areas.

This success attracted much attention both domestically and from abroad. Other areas of Japan, such as Hokkaido, as well as other Asian countries including China, Thailand and Malaysia, commenced moves to implement projects based on Oita's prototype. Today, the prefecture enjoys a high level of exposure throughout Japan, and its model of regional development has become well established overseas as well.

Table 2. Development of the 'OVOP' movement into social initiatives

Table 2. Development of the Ovor movement into social initiatives				
Year	Title of			
founded	Initiative			
y) 1984	Toyonokuni Shirayuri Juku (Toyonokuni Shirayuri Academy)			
7) 1987	Toyonokuni Shounin Juku (Toyonokuni Business Academy)			
ny) 1990	Oita Nougyou Heisei Juku (Oita Agricultural Heisei Academy)			
re) 1996	Nougyou Mirai Juku (Academy for the Future of Agriculture)			
Exchange 1998	Toyonokuni Kokusai Kouryuu Karejji (Toyonokuni International Exchange			
	College)			
1999	Chiiki Bunka Doujou (Regional Culture Forum)			
: Welfare 1999	Oitaken Fukushi Borantia Dagakkou (Oita Prefectural School for Welfare			
	Volunteers)			
of Business) 1999	Toyonokuni Akinai Mirai Juku (Toyonokuni Academy for the Future of Busine			
e) 1999	Toyonokuni Kankou Karejji (Toyonokuni Tourism College)			
t Century) 2000	21-seiki Oita Nougyou Juku (Oita Agriculture Academy for the 21st Century)			
• Welfare 19 of Business) 19 e) 19	College)  Chiiki Bunka Doujou (Regional Culture Forum)  Oitaken Fukushi Borantia Dagakkou (Oita Prefectural School for Welfare Volunteers)  Toyonokuni Akinai Mirai Juku (Toyonokuni Academy for the Future of Busine Toyonokuni Kankou Karejji (Toyonokuni Tourism College)			

Town/city	Project	
Kokonoe	Kokonoe Ice Festival	
Nakatsue	Taiokinzan Underground Museum	
Yufuin	Hotsprings and tourism culture	
Ajimu	Green tourism	
Shounai	Kagura (Shinto performing art) promotion	
Hita	Promotion of Mameda historical precinct	

Source: Document produced by the Oita Prefecture One Village One Product Promotion Division

Table 3. Number of Products and Volume of Sales under the OVOP Movement

Year		1980	1985	1990	1995	1997	1998	1999	2000	
Sales (billion yen)		35.9	73.4	111.7	129.4	137.3	136.3	139.8	140.2	
% gro	% growth from 1980		100	204	328	360	382	380	389	391
		< 100	74	148	136	156	170	173	187	198
		million								
		yen								
		100-300	34	53	68	76	68	79	70	75
		million								
Number		yen								
		301-500	16	14	21	15	30	24	28	22
of	Value	million								
		yen								
products		501-1000	15	17	27	27	21	18	18	19
		million								
		yen								
		> 1000	4	15	20	15	17	18	18	19
		million								
		yen								
		TOTAL	143	247	272	289	306	312	318	329

Source: Document produced by the Oita Prefecture One Village One Product Promotion Division

In 1988, the Japan Center for Regional Development, at the time an arm of the Ministry for Home Affairs, announced that 'over 3000 municipalities throughout Japan have participated in this movement [OVOP] in one way or another', and also noted that the movement

Table 4. Examples of the proliferation of 'OVOP'-inspired initiative

Hokkaido	Hokkaido One Village One Product Movement [hokkaidou
	isson ippin undou]
Aomori	Project to Revitalize the Marine Resources Manufacturing
	Industry [suisan kakougyou kasseika jigyou]
Iwate	Home Town Products Promotion Scheme [furusato
	tokusanhin shinkou jigyou]
Yamagata	One Region, One Production Center Project [ichi chiiki ichi
	sanchi jigyou]
Fukushima	Fukushima Home Town Products Promotion [fukushima
	furusato sangyou okoshi jigyou]
Kanagawa	The 50 Famous Products of Kanagawa [kanagawa meisan
	50sen]
Toyama	Indigenous Products Kingdom Project [tokusan
	oukoku-zukuri]
Nagano	Pilot Project for Local Development [muraokoshi moderu
	jigyou]

Source: Document produced by the Oita Prefecture One Village One Product Promotion Division

had sparked an increase in interaction between municipalities, in the form of symposia and other exchange events.

Hokkaido was the first region to show an interest in the movement, and by the late 1980's it had established the 'Hokkaido One Village One Product Movement [hokkaidou isson ippin undou] ' to promote industry and revitalize local communities. Discussing the reasons for this move, Hokkaido's Governor stated 'Hokkaido boasts a great variety of primary products. However the majority of these either leave the island in an unprocessed state, or alternatively local producers rely on manufacturers in Honshu to process the goods for them. .. We want to get out of this cycle, and achieve a situation whereby our citizens can take the initiative themselves to process and add value to our indigenous products,' thus contributing more to the local economy. Other prefectures followed suit, with Iwate's 'Home Town Products Promotion Scheme', Yamagata's 'One Region, One Production Center Project', and Nagano's 'Local Development Pilot Project' being among the many initiatives which sprung up nationally.

# 3. The 'Oita Model of Regional Development' in Asian Regional Development Theory

East and Southeast Asian nations have devoted much effort to economic development and industrialization since the 1970s, with a certain degree of success. However, this early success was generally limited to major urban centers of population, with outlying regions gaining little benefit in terms of industrial advancement or increased employment opportunities. In addition, the income gap between urban and rural residents widened, and the remarkable prosperity achieved by major cities was clouded by continued poverty in non-urban areas. An

Table 5. The 'OVOP' movement in Asia

China	(1) One Hamlet, One Product Movement (Shanghai)			
	(2) One Town, One Product Movement (Shanghai)			
	(3) One Region, One Vista Movement (Shanghai)			
	(4) One Village, One Treasure Movement (Shanghai)			
	(5) One Community, One Product Movement (Jiangsu			
	Province)			
	(6) One Product Movement (Jiangsu Province)			
	(7) One Village, One Product Movement (Shaanxi			
	Province)			
	(8) One Village, One Product Movement (Jianxi			
	Province)			
Philippines	(9) One Barangay, One Product Movement			
	(10) One Region, One Vision Movement			
Malaysia	(11) Satu Kampung, Satu Produk Movement			
Indonesia	(12) Back to Village (East Java)			
Thailand	(13) One Tambon, One Product Movement			
Cambodia	(14) One Village, One Product Movement			
Laos	(15) Neuang Muang, Neuang Phalittaphan Movement			
Mongolia	(16) Neg Baag, Neg Shildeg Buteegdekhuun			

Source: Oita Prefecture International Center

influx of rural dwellers to urban areas with no prospect of employment led to the expansion of slums and the aggravation of other social problems. By the 1980s, many nations had targeted economic growth and promotion of industry in regional areas as a major challenge for their economic development policies; however the decade came to an end with no effective remedial steps put in place. The foundations of industry were slow to develop in many areas, and the crisis of poverty and overpopulation continued.

Economic cooperation and development circles became acutely aware of the problems of poverty, environmental destruction, and regional imbalances, and experts began once more to emphasize sustainable development and the importance of nurturing human resources and local organizations to drive this development. Today, theories of development assistance place as much emphasis on the promotion of 'participative development' as they do on sustainable development and environmental issues. There is increasing recognition of the importance of 'bottom-up' economic development founded on the initiative and participation of local residents, as opposed to macro-level industrialization and promotion of industry based on large scale investment and direction from the central government. The DAC has stressed the importance of this kind of development, saying.

It is not difficult to see the 'One Village One Product' movement as a manifestation of 'participative development' ideals. The manner in which it encouraged grass roots initiative and nurtured local industry can offer valuable hints for economic development and industrial growth in the wider Asian region, across various stages of economic development and transcending differences in social conditions.

'Participative development' emphasizes concepts such as continuity over transience, organization and collective consciousness, formation of internal mechanisms, amalgamation of

tradition and new perspectives, and strategic accumulation of practical experience. All of these concepts are entrenched in Oita's 'OVOP' movement. The movement can be placed alongside other well-known participative development initiatives such as the 'Mini Credit Project' in South India, and Korea's "Semaul Momement" in the 1970's, as a model of potential-building and community empowerment which is still relevant in today's circumstances.

By the 1980s many governments in Asia were embarking on projects to apply the 'One Village One Product' movement to nurture local industry in their countries. Although this proliferation through Asia was encouraged by Governor Hiramatsu's efforts in local diplomacy, it also demonstrates the movement's universal appeal.

The following examples further illustrate the applicability of the movement, examining the forms it took when introduced to China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and more recently when promoted as a key economic policy in Thailand by Prime Minister Thaksin.

## 4. 'One Village, One Product' in Asia

It is generally agreed that China was the first nation outside Japan to realize the potential of the 'OVOP' movement. In the 1980s, facing acute problems of population shift to urban areas and decline of surrounding rural communities, the city of Shanghai initiated a movement — under the slogan 'One Hamlet, One Product' — to encourage the development of industries to process goods produced in its surrounding rural areas, thus stimulating the economy in these areas. In the same period, the city of Wuhan further inland embarked on a project to nurture local industry under principles of 'self-improvement', and using the catchphrase 'One Village One Treasure'. Similar projects for local industry development began to spring up in Southeast Asia as well: the Philippines began a 'One Barangay One Product' project (Barangay meaning 'village' or small municipality), while in Malaysia, Prime Minister Mahathir's state of origin Kedah embarked on the 'Satu Kampung Satu Produk' project. By the 1990s, the East Java region in Indonesia had begun a 'Back to Village' campaign to encourage citizens to return to rural areas. All of these movements involved regional development policies following the pattern set by 'OVOP' in Oita. Of particular note is Thailand's 'One Tambon One Product' movement initiated in 2001 under Prime Minister Thaksin. This movement is being implemented on a national scale, with all 50,000 villages ('tambons') across Thailand receiving special loans and grants to implement projects relating to the movement. It must be noted that international cooperative bodies have been enlisted to assist products manufactured under this movement to achieve success on the export market, and that the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) has cooperated in the areas of product development and marketing. Cambodia and Laos are now embarking on similar national-scale projects of regional development.

Although there may be differences in the exact method of application, all the above regions are using Oita's model actively to encourage local industry, increase consciousness

among local citizens, enhance the quality of local products and explore market opportunities including in the export arena. This is occurring in the context of an economic upturn throughout Asia, with Asian nations experiencing social and industrial conditions and urban/rural dichotomies similar to those experienced by Oita prefecture—and other regions of Japan—during Japan's period of high economic growth.

### 5. Applicability of the Oita Model

The 'OVOP' movement now requires re-evaluation and examination in the light of new theories of economic development and changing policies relating to regional industrial revitalization. To date there has not been sufficient objective assessment of the movement, interaction amongst those involved, nor attempts to define it in the context of industrial policy and regional development. There is great diversity in social patterns among different rural areas in developing Asian nations; in addition, these areas have weak economic bases and limited human resources, making it difficult for theme to achieve the dynamism required by the 'OVOP' movement. For these reasons, in many cases the movement has ended up as nothing more than a government-led project for the manufacture of new local specialties. It is doubtful whether the process of manufacturing these specialties has actually encouraged local ingenuity or rejuvenated communities in manner originally intended by the movement's founders.

However, regional development movements along the lines of 'OVOP' may have some validity in Asian countries in the following terms.

- (1) Economic rationality: The process envisaged by the movement, of selective and concentrated use of limited resources to develop a certain 'product' to which value is added before sale, is a very rational process in economic terms.
- (2) Citizen empowerment: The product development process increases opportunities for interaction between local citizens and external markets, raising awareness and encouraging active involvement among local citizens.
- (3) Community spirit and participation: Traditionally, Asian cultures emphasize strong bonds within the local community, and are thus the movement's emphasis on cross-community participation is may be accepted easily.
- (4) **Decentralization of power:** Decentralization and the allocation of power to regional governments is a major political trend throughout Asia. The movement provides an example of how local regions may increase their economic control and independence.

The 'OVOP' movement's model is valid in many contexts, and in Asia it has the potential to contribute significantly to policies of regional development, revitalization of rural society, reduction of income gaps, alleviation of poverty, and expansion of employment opportunities. However, it must not be forgotten that 'OVOP' emerged in Japan when this nation had achieved a certain level of social maturity and industrialization. It is necessary to identify elements of the movement which may be difficult to transfer to the context of other Asian

countries. In addition, an examination of the movement's current situation reveals many unresolved issues, including the following:

- (1) Most manifestations of the movement are no more than projects for the manufacture of local specialties, and have not led to any general revitalization of local society.
- (2) Implementation of the movement often relies heavily on government support, with a low level of direct involvement by local citizens.
- (3) Most regions do not have sufficient human resources, systematization or community awareness to sustain growth in the movement.
- (4) The movement can be introduced as no more than a political campaign, with no effective measures for implementation at administrative level.

The above points require further close examination and analysis.

However, it is also true that the movement has brought positive benefits in many cases, such as (1) driving export growth; (2) successfully nurturing and bringing together local industries; (3) achieving personal income growth and expanding employment opportunities for low-income earners. This is a further argument for more detailed analysis of the movement, sharing of experiences amongst its participants, and providing more support for its effective application.

Oita prefecture and other regions of Japan now face a new challenge: how to integrate local industry developed under the 'OVOP' movement with modern research and development-based industries (a field of rapid growth in Japan), manufacturing plants which have been relocated from urban areas, and local small and medium business enterprises. They also need to consider how to expand industrial growth beyond regionalist boundaries and how to build collaborative relationships with emergent regions in Asia.

# 6. Significance of the Movement as Locally-Initiated International Cooperation

As explained above, in general terms, the 'OVOP' movement can be evaluated positively as an important model for regional development in Asia. However, it may be possible to identify further positive aspects of the movement by re-evaluating experiences in its point of origin — Oita Prefecture — and undertaking comparative research into different Asian contexts in which the movement has been applied, with a view to the promotion of international economic cooperation. The effectiveness, the limitations, and the further potential of the movement need to be re-evaluated.

Models of 'participative development' are becoming predominant in economic development circles, with the World Bank leading calls for the eradication of poverty by the middle of this century, the adoption of a broader perspective to development, and a renewed focus on the sustainability of development. In this context, the experiences of regional development in Asia under the 'OVOP' model need to be organized and analyzed in a more systematic manner. Based on this analysis, Japan could work to establish some kind of 'Model project for nurturing regional industry in Asia' as a means of effective economic cooperation with

Nurture Compare Management Models in Oita Model · Human resource developed Organization Asian Frontlines regions Japan Bureaucracy Models Apply Economic resources · Planning Asian local industry models · Industrial organization 金融 Industrial orgs., cooperatives, NGOs, regional govt., community orgs., SMEs Oita - hub for regional industry information interchange Center for the Devt. of Model Projects for Nurturing Regional Industries Center for Regional Industry Information Interchange

Figure 1. Outline of the Model Project for Nurturing Regional Industry in Asia

#### Asian nations.

As outlined in the diagram below, such a project would entail the following tasks:

- (1) A reappraisal of the 'OVOP' movement in Oita prefecture from a contemporary perspective, and comparison between it and its various other manifestations throughout Asia;
- (2) Comparison among the different manifestations in Asia, to identify both aspects which have been adapted universally as well as unique characteristics in each context;
- (3) Systematic review of local industrial development and regional revitalization theories, founded on the above points;
- (4) An examination of the framework for regional development as a policy issue for economic cooperation.
- (5) A practical investigation into how regional economies in Japan can cooperate and interact with other regions in Asia.

Issues that would need to be addressed in such a project include the human resource base to drive the movement, organizational factors, bureaucratic structures, allocation of economic resources, management capabilities, and organization of industry. The project would need to examine issues from the points of view of all major participants, including industrial and social organizations, regional government and administration, and non-governmental organizations.

An overall project of review and analysis as proposed above would make an important contribution to the continued development of the 'OVOP' movement in its many manifestations throughout Asia. Now is an opportune time to undertake such a project.

#### Notes

1) The activities in Oyama town, which were the starting point of the movement, are outlined in detail in 'Genba kara no shougen-oyama no monogatari [Report from the front line — the story of Oyama]', pages 6 to 10 of Isson ippin katsudou 20nen no kiroku [20 years of the OVOP

- movement], Oita Prefecture One Village One Product 21 Promotion Conference 2002. The catchword NPC encapsulated each stage of development in the movement: stage one being 'New Plum and Chestnut', stage two 'New Personality Combination', and stage three 'New Paradise Community'. The above volume also introduces other examples, such as the fusion of environmental protection and cultural movements in Yufuin (p. 11-14), and the production of kuruma prawns in Himeshima in the North of the prefecture (p. 63-64).
- 2) See the document produced by the Oita Prefecture International Center, <u>Isson ippin no haikei</u>, <u>susumekata</u>, <u>rinen [OVOP: background, implementation, and ideals.] http://www.oic.or/jp/ison-p/haikei. html</u>
- 3) Hiramatsu, <u>Chihou kara no hassou</u> Iwanami Shoten [1990], p. 84. For more detail regarding the importance of community leaders within the movement, see the third chapter of <u>Isson ippin</u> katsudou 20nen no kiroku (note 1 above)
- 4) Ibid., p. 138.
- 5) *Ibid.*, p. 138-139.
- 6) Japan International Cooperation Agency, <u>Sankagata no yoi touji, bunyabetsu enjo kenkyuukai houkokusho</u> [Report of research committee on participative government and assistance], p. i-ii.
- 7) "Back to village campaign is listed as an OVOP movement in the Oita document but it's slightly different to the OVOP. However, Indonesian government adopted this movement for the revitalization of rural villages.
- 8) Refer to website http://www.thaitambon.com.
- 9) Recent concrete examples of industrial revitalization include Sanwa Shuzou's application of modern technology to traditional sake brewing, Oyama town's development of manufactured agricultural products in collaboration with Suzhou in China, and the green tourism initiatives in Ajimu. Oita Prefecture's Research Committee for the Promotion of the OVOP Movement is also developing a new framework for the movement under the banner of 'Uniting the Globe with OVOP 21 [Chikyu o musubu isson ippin 21]'.

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Mitsuhiro Seki, Hideo Sato (eds.), <u>21seiki gata jiba sangyou no hatten senryaku</u> [strategies for the development of local industry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century], Shinhyouron, 2002

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