

## 【論文】

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### **A Study into the Ideal Tourism Promotion Organization**

- Using the Tanabe and Nishimuro areas of Wakayama Prefecture as Examples -

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#### **【Abstract】**

The revitalization of rural areas in Japan has proven problematic due to a population shift from rural areas to the Tokyo area. In response to this, tourism has been considered as one way toward regional revitalization. To this end, tourism promotion organizations have been established in various regions to revitalize the area through tourism. Many of these organizations are led by local governments. In the process, numerous problems have come to light. This study reveals the causes of those problems.

Through field surveys and literature surveys conducted during the course of this study, the following two points were revealed. The first is the economic situation of each municipality, and the second is the "boundaries" of the customs and culture of the local residents living there.

The "Great Heisei Merger" was enacted under strong guidance from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. In the process, populations with similar customs and cultures were separated into different local governments, while those with different customs and cultures were placed together under the same local government. Under the name of regional revitalization, tourism promotion organizations were created within each of these local governments. As a result, tourism promotion was performed region to region, resulting in inefficient management.

Based on these results, it has been suggested that regional tourism promotion organizations should be separated from local governments, and that they should instead engage in wide-area cooperation to increase the exchange population and revitalize the region through tourism.

**Keywords** : regional revitalization, local government, tourism promotion organization,  
Great Heisei Merger

## **I. Introduction**

### **1. Research Background**

Japan is grappling with a shrinking population, a declining birthrate and an aging population, as well as the redistribution and concentration of populations in and around metropolitan areas. This has created a serious problem for the nation with the resulting pressure on pension finances and the exhaustion of rural economies. From 2013 to 2018, only the metropolitan areas of Saitama, Chiba, Tokyo, Kanagawa, Aichi and Okinawa prefectures<sup>1</sup> have seen an increase in population.<sup>2</sup> All prefectures outside these six have experienced a decrease in population. Furthermore, Aomori, Iwate, Akita, Yamagata, Wakayama, and Kochi prefectures have seen a population decline of more than 10%. This study addresses Wakayama Prefecture, which had a population of 917,252 in 2020<sup>3</sup>, the only prefecture in the Kinki area to have less than one million people. Wakayama Prefecture is one of those prefectures that is facing a difficult economic situation. Conversely, Fukuoka City is gaining notoriety as a compact city among local governments nationwide. And yet, although

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<sup>1</sup> Okinawa Prefecture had a natural increase, while others had a social increase.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs E-Stat Portal Site of Official Statistics of Japan, last viewed on July 30th, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Home Page of Wakayama Prefecture: <https://www.pref.wakayama.lg.jp/prefg/020300/suikei/d00204067.html>  
Last viewed September 4th, 2020.

some cities have seen population growth, local cities, their suburbs, and rural areas have all lost "regional power" due to a decrease in population. As a policy to overcome this problem, the government has appointed a Minister for the Promotion of Overcoming Population Decline and Vitalizing Local Economy, and measures are being taken to revitalize regions through tourism. Governments, local governments, and even private companies are essential to regional revitalization. Efficient countermeasures are necessary and important. Addressing regional revitalization, the Minister advocates that "local awareness is essential to regional planning and projects." As an important factor in regional revitalization through tourism, Ochi (2012) regards local people as "host communities," and states that "the implication of the word 'host' is 'the community that is involved in the tourism phenomenon.'" But are organizations for the promotion of regional tourism, found in each region, truly a "host community" for the residents living there? Lacking a host "spirit," the power of tourism promotion organizations is thought to be halved. In many cases, the Tanabe and Nishimuro regions of Wakayama prefecture are used as examples to examine whether tourism promotion organizations established by each local government deviate from the scope of what the local people think of as their region. Local awareness was based on local governments, but the number of local governments decreased significantly during the so-called "Great Heisei Merger," and in many places regions that the local residents thought of as "external" were grouped together under the same local government. This also broadened the scope of the grouping of local government. The number of municipalities was nearly halved during the "Great Heisei Merger,"<sup>4</sup> from 3,235 on January 1st of 2000, to 1,718 on September 4th of 2020.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, land area was increased.<sup>6</sup> For example, Gifu Prefecture's Takayama City is the largest in Japan at 2,177.61 square kilometers, while the smallest are Kanagawa Prefecture, at 1,876.78 square kilometers, and Osaka Prefecture, at 1,905.29 square kilometers.

The regions examined in this study include Wakayama Prefecture's Tanabe City, at 1,026.91 square kilometers, and the same prefecture's Nishimuro District, at 432.80 square kilometers, for a combined 1,459.71 square kilometers. This is 76.61% of the land area of neighboring Osaka Prefecture. The different cultures, traditions, festivals, dialects, etc. of Osaka Prefecture, including the Edo Period areas of Osaka, Settsu (including present-day Hyogo Prefecture), Izumi, and Kawachi, still exist in each of those areas today. With this in mind, the Tanabe and Nishimuro areas of Wakayama Prefecture are considerably large. "Local awareness" is an important factor in the success of "regional revitalization," both for people who were born and raised in the region, and for people who are recent transplants. Even if the government merges certain areas, it is unlikely that there will be a rapid change in local consciousness among local residents. On the other hand, it is thought that even the foundation of regional revitalization cannot be established without the local awareness mentioned above. The building of local awareness and the relationship with tourism promotion organizations are both very important.

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs E-Stat Portal Site of Official Statistics of Japan, last viewed July 30th, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Home Page: <https://www.soumu.go.jp/kouiki/kouiki.html> Last viewed September 4th 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Geospatial Information Authority of Japan, Area by Prefecture, City, Ward and Village in Japan as of October 1st, 2018: <http://www.gsi.go.jp/KOKUJYOHO/MENCHO201710-index.html>, last viewed May 23rd, 2019.

## 2. Purpose of the Study

There should be no divergence between municipalities, administrative divisions of prefectures, regional tourism promotion organizations and host communities of local residents. This is fundamental, and I hope that this will be applied to the creation of regional organizations and the management of union organizations. Any problems in the organizations created for revitalization through tourism should be ascertained. If we clarify the divergence between local tourism promotion organizations, which are primarily organized by local governments, and the regional awareness of residents, and find measures for improvement, this can aid in more efficient management of these organizations. This is the basis of this research. I believe it is important to clarify the distinction between the superficial boundaries of local government with the deeper character of local residents. Previous studies have long considered the impact of geographical features such as mountains, rivers and oceans on the region, but this study aims to also consider the psychological boundaries of the people who live there. This study also examines the "internal and external" that exist in the human mind, regardless of geographic boundaries, on determining what is in the same prefecture or in the same municipal government. Some previous research on "internal and external" considered the issue as a matter of national character, folklore, or the afterlife and the present world, but there are not many studies that mention the "boundaries of the mind" that separates regions in Japan. This study intends to examine that phenomenon. The governmental policies of the various regions must create separation between areas at some point, but this should be performed in a way that clarifies the features of separation in a developed, efficient manner.

## II. Theoretical Background and Methods of Research

### 1. Theoretical Features of Regional Boundaries

#### 1) Geographical Features

Misawa (1931), a pioneer in regional individuality and geographical research, thought of "region as a complete body in the contact between earth and sky." In terms of geography, Misawa explains the division of regions via geographical elements, using the present Suwa area of Nagano Prefecture as example. In this case, there are geographical factors, such as mountains, rivers, and the ocean, which impede interaction, block the exchange of folklore, language (dialects), and culture. Japan is an island nation with one language, with the exception of Ainu (there are various theories regarding the classification of the Okinawan dialect as a dialect, but they are omitted here). But, for example, Switzerland is a single nation with different languages north and south of the Alps. German is spoken north of the Gotthard Railway Tunnel, the world's longest railway tunnel, while Italian is spoken to the south of the tunnel. On the exit to the highway tunnel parallel to the railway tunnel, "Ausfahrt" is written in German in the north, while "Uscita" is written in Italian in the south. The 4,000-meter-high European Alps divide the region. It is clear that geographical factors have become a major factor dividing people, as Misawa pointed out. However, in the vicinity of Tanabe City, Wakayama Prefecture, the neighboring areas of Gobo and Hidaka, Shingu and Higashimuro are not divided by any mountain ranges or islands. Regardless of the administrative scope of a

certain area, there is an understanding of the scope of the area for past residents, current residents, and even individuals who are originally from the area but have transplanted to another area. In the Tanabe and Nishimuro regions, there is the concept of a Kinan area. Koike (1986) stated "East-West Muro District is called Kinan. The name Kumano still exists in Kinan. Kumano was the name of the province before the Taika Era, and it is said that it was integrated into Kii Province by the Kunigun system and was thereafter Muro District. But the Kumano nickname has been more widely used for the area than Muro." Southern Wakayama, which has been historically inhabited, has not been considered a single area, but comprised of several distinct areas with their own regional consciousness. And as Koike pointed out previously, it is an area that has appeared repeatedly throughout Japanese history. Currently, there are 9 cities, 6 counties, 20 towns and 1 village in Wakayama Prefecture. Between the Tanabe and Nishimuro areas dealt with in this study, Tanabe City has expanded the most during the "Great Heisei Merger." Residents of the area think of it as a merger with areas outside of "their town." The merger of Tanabe City in Wakayama Prefecture combined the former Tanabe City on May 1st of 2005 with Nishimuro District, creating the current incarnation of Tanabe City. The merger also included areas outside Nishimuro, both Ryujin Village of Hidaka District and Hongo Town of Higashimuro District. In the author's field survey, the dialect of Ryujin is little different from that of Tanabe City, but Hongo was originally culturally a part of Shingu City via the Kumano River (Shingu River) area, and the dialects are clearly different from those of Tanabe City. The accents of Shingu City and the nearby areas are considered very different from that of former Tanabe City. Wakayama Prefecture belongs to a group of Kansai dialects. This is not a language study, however, so I will only briefly touch on it. Presently, there is a dialect centered around the Wakayama City, Kinokawa and Gobo City areas, another dialect centered around the Tanabe City area, and a third dialect centered around the Shingu City area. The dialect of the Shingu area crosses the prefectural border into Mie prefecture, and is of the same group as Kumano City and Owase City. This is a remnant of the Kishu Domain, which was partially incorporated into Mie Prefecture during the abolition of feudal domains and establishment of prefectures. According to Obayashi (1990), one of the leading researchers on Japanese borders, Japan would be divided into East and West, North and South, Pacific Ocean side and the Sea of Japan side. Consider especially Obayashi's theory that borders contain an area. Obayashi said, "The boundary between cultural domains is usually a zone of intention with a certain width, consisting of several lines, rather than a single line dividing them cleanly into two." In this study, it is speculated that there may be multiple boundaries as a result of certain phenomena. In this author's field study, it is assumed that the former Tanabe City<sup>7</sup> and Nishimuro District are the same cultural regions.<sup>8</sup> However, the municipalities are different. Even though they are the same cultural and economic sphere, they are different municipalities due to a border being drawn between them.

## 2) Cultural Boundaries

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<sup>7</sup> Tanabe City before the Great Heisei Merger

<sup>8</sup> The cultural sphere is not a sphere but a region, as proposed by Obayashi Tara, in the same book, p. 10.

It is difficult to grasp the culture of various parts of Japan. Ono and Obama (2006) said, "the literature cannot adequately answer the question of Japanese cultural formation and development." They also conducted research from a broad perspective, arguing that "extensive facts from folklore, geography and fisheries must be observed, and valid data must be derived from them." Regardless, people are vaguely and naturally aware of a "boundary of language" between East and West Japan. Language, and more precisely, dialect, is also a major factor in determining boundaries.

Sekiguchi and Hayashi (2017), writing on local consciousness, said that, "the word 'local' is used in various instances of daily life. For example, in the case of 'local people,' it refers to the place where people currently live, but in the case of 'local area employment,' it is interpreted as the region where each person was born and raised. From this, it is inferred that people's perception of the word 'local' can be diverse." Local consciousness is regarded a difficult to grasp concept.

### **3) Political Boundaries**

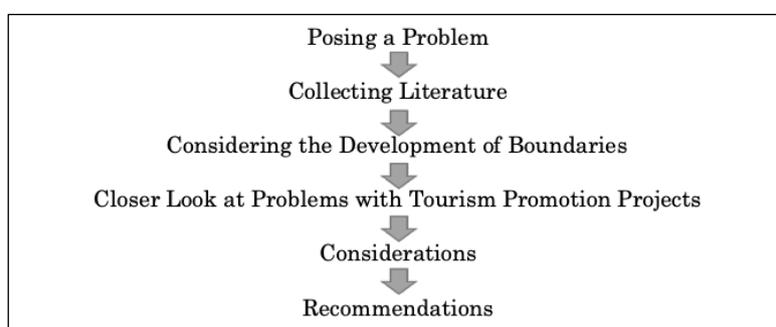
In contrast to cultural boundaries, political and administrative boundaries can be determined relatively easily, except in conflict areas. According to Batten (2000), boundaries are defined as "political boundaries" and "other social boundaries." "Political boundaries" are, as implied in the term itself, national boundaries. Although there has been a transition from ancient to medieval and early modern times, national boundaries are boundaries, including disputed borders, according to a sovereign state.

Here, the boundaries of local government can be easily understood as boundaries. Batten also puts forth the concept of "other social boundaries." These are ambiguous, and, as put forth by Obayashi previously, can be numerous. Since the regional determinants dealt with in this study are limited to regions such as the Tanabe and Nishimuro regions in Wakayama Prefecture, the proposed 'other social boundaries' is a prerequisite for an important definition. Batten's definition is divided into three major categories: race, culture and ethnicity. Of these, he classifies "culture domain" and "historical linguistics" under culture, and the "ethnic boundaries of the Japanese people" under ethnicity. According to Batten, "there is no clear relationship between ethnic and cultural boundaries, and it is not cultural differences themselves that are important in the formation of ethnic boundaries, but how members themselves approach those differences." He also points out the importance of what "members of the group choose to create meaning." In addition, Batten states that, "even today it is not possible to clearly define the geographical extent of the Japanese people or the Japanese culture. Even in pre-modern times, regardless of the degree of centralization of the state, the cultural and ethnic boundaries of 'Japanese' society were blurred and jagged."

## **2. Research Methods**

This study is not suitable for quantitative research, as it is a study of the internal and external "boundaries of the mind." Instead of using a quantitative model, we will adopt a qualitative research method. In addition, the research model used is found in (Fig. 1). We will proceed with a literature survey and a look at the opinions of local people. Literature surveys are

also the subject of research, but often include non-academic conjecture and hearsay. We should therefore examine the author and circumstances of each text before adopting them. There are few universities or research institutions within the region in question. The Field Science Education and Research Center of Kyoto University is a research institute for marine life, while the Kindai University Shirahama Station (Aquaculture Research Institute) and the Wakayama Forest Research Station of Hokkaido University are research institutes for the natural sciences in Susami. Wakayama University is located in the northernmost part of Wakayama Prefecture, and most of their research is conducted in Wakayama City and the northern part of Wakayama Prefecture. Research on the Kishu Domain has been carried out, but research into southern Wakayama Prefecture is still limited. Therefore, we should maintain objectivity while utilizing field and literature surveys.



(Figure1) Research Model

### III. Considering the Development of Boundaries

The Tanabe City area was expanded in the so-called "Great Heisei Merger" in May of 2005. Ryujin Village of Hidaka District and Hongu Town of Higashimuro District were both annexed at this time. However, the new "Tanabe City" did not include the neighboring areas of Susami Town or Shirahama Town of Nishimuro District. Shirahama is historically famous as the host of many emperors and aristocrats at its hot springs,<sup>9</sup> and has been mentioned in the "Chronicles of Japan" and the "Manyoshu." In addition, the neighboring local municipality of Hidaka District was not included in the merger with the former Tanabe City. The details of the wide-area merger of Tanabe City are as follows. We have previously studied the division of the region, but we will now examine what separates the newly established Tanabe City and Nishimuro area from its surroundings. We will also consider what is thought of as the border to the Tanabe-Nishimuro-gun by the people who actually live there.

#### 1. Perspective from the Administrative System

Boundaries are closely intertwined with local self-government. Japan became a modernized nation well after the developed countries of Europe and the Americas. The Meiji Restoration of 1868 brought about the demise of feudal society

<sup>9</sup> From the Nanki Shirahama Tourism Bureau (located in the Shirahama Town Hall) Homepage: [http://www.nankishirahama.jp/news/detail.php?news\\_id=315](http://www.nankishirahama.jp/news/detail.php?news_id=315), Last viewed September 4th, 2020.

and the beginnings of the modern state.

This study is not an historical or political treatise, and so we shall only touch briefly on the division of local administrations during the "Great Meiji Merger," the "Great Showa Merger," and the "Great Heisei Merger."

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications,<sup>10</sup> "the 'Great Meiji Merger' implemented the Municipal Government Act, suited for administrative purposes (education, taxation, civil engineering, relief, census). This act aimed to eliminate the differences in the town and village system (inherited from the natural settlements of the Edo Period). The town and village merger was implemented (Ministry of Interior Decree No. 352, June 13th, 1888), with a standard scale of approximately 300 to 500 households. As a result, the number of towns and villages was reduced by approximately one fifth of previous numbers." In 1888, there were 71,314 towns and villages, but after the Municipal Government Act (Law No. 1 of April 17th, 1888), this number was reduced to 15,859 by April 1st, 1889. After the end of World War 2, the enactment of the October, 1953 Town and Village Merger Act (Law No. 258 of October 1st, 1953) reduced this number further to 9,868. And in April, 1956, the passing of the New Municipal Construction Plan (Law No. 164 of June 30th, 1956) brought the number of local governments to 4,668. Additionally, the enforcement of special cases of city mergers (Law No. 118 of May 10th, 1962) brought the number to 3,453 by October of 1962. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications referred to the merger as "The Great Showa Merger," and stated that, "post war, the establishment and management of the new junior high school system, the establishment of municipal fire and police, and the new administrative affairs related to social welfare and health were made the administrative affairs of the municipality, and the rationalization of the scale was that it was necessary for efficient management of these affairs. The Town and Village Merger Act of 1953 (Article 3, "a town and village should have more than 8,000 residents") and the subsequent New Municipal Construction Plan of 1956, which was meant to reduce the number of towns and villages by approximately one third, aimed at achieving the Basic Plan for Town and Village Mergers (Cabinet decision of October 30th, 1953). The effective establishment and management of one of the new system junior high schools was thought to necessitate a population of approximately 8,000 people. Between 1953 and 1961, the number of towns and villages was reduced by almost one third."

Batten, as previously mentioned in Chapter II.1.(3), believes that administrative division is important, but that consideration of the members of a community is also necessary. In the "Great Meiji Merger" and "Great Showa Merger" previously mentioned, several elderly people in the area reported that the residents of the county, which had been merged since the Ritsuryo Period, had no sense of incongruity.<sup>11</sup> In the "Great Showa Merger," the Nishimuro area surrounding Tanabe City was merged with Tanabe City, and sections of Tanabe City were merged with Shirahama. The "Great Showa Merger" was carried out in stages, and Shirahama was merged previously, such that even today the name of an elementary

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<sup>10</sup> Changes in the number of municipalities and characteristics of major mergers during the Meiji and Showa Periods:  
<https://www.soumu.go.jp/gapei/gapei2.html>, Last viewed August 31st, 2020

<sup>11</sup> December 7th, 2019, Hisako Misu of Toyo, Tanabe City (former Tanabe City center).  
Interview with Natsuko Sakamoto, a resident of Tomita, Shirahama-cho, Nishimuro-gun.

school in the Tomita area remains Minami-Shirahama Elementary School. However, these districts were very close in terms of distance, and did not exceed the administrative divisions from the Ritsuryo Period, which were abolished in the Taisho Period.

And with the "Great Heisei Merger" in 1995, the Government and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications initiated and promoted the merger of municipalities through the expansion of financial support measures, mainly through the "Merger Special Case Law, revised by the Devolution of Power Law." The Tanabe and Nishimuro areas were also included in the merger considerations. Before making a concrete examination, I would like to briefly touch on the administrative situation of Wakayama Prefecture as a prefecture. In Wakayama Prefecture before the "Great Heisei Merger," cities and their surrounding areas had local offices that were situated as branch offices of the prefecture, and which continue to operate as regional development bureaus. Before the "Great Heisei Merger," Wakayama Prefecture was seven cities and seven districts. For example, Tanabe City and Nishimuro District were in one group, while Shingu City and Higashimuro District were in another group. Within these groups, "the central city and its surrounding areas" were combined to take on prefectural governmental responsibilities for Wakayama Prefecture. This is due in part to the fragility of the means of transportation such as road networks. The combination of "the central city and its surrounding areas" has also been thought to have had an influence, from a political point of view, on the residents of the area. The local highway has been extended, and is now open all the way to Esumi Town of Nishimuro District, but it was only just completed in 2015. Wakayama City, the capital of the prefecture, and Tanabe City, the second-largest city in the prefecture, are separated by a distance of 100 kilometers. Despite this, they were not connected by a highway until recently. Today, it takes about one hour to get from the Tanabe City City Hall to the Wakayama Prefectural Government Office by car. Previously, before the completion of the highway, this trip took about 2 hours, 30 minutes. From Shingu City City Hall, which is the farthest from Wakayama City, it still takes over 3 hours by highway and surface roads. The current state post-Great Heisei Merger, even after the opening of the highway, is the continuation of the local office system as regional development bureaus, as in (Figure 1). From this we can see that the various areas of Wakayama Prefecture are politically divided. When the former Ryujin Village of Hidaka District became part of Tanabe City during the Great Heisei Merger, the promotional bureau was transferred from Hidaka to Tanabe City, and the former Hongu Town of Higashimuro District, also merged with Tanabe City, came under the jurisdiction of the Nishimuro Regional Development Bureau.<sup>12</sup>

(Table1) Classification of Regional Development Bureaus in Wakayama Prefecture

Name	Location	Jurisdiction
Kaiso RDB	Wakayama City	Wakayama City, Kaiso City, Kainan City
Naga RDB	Iwade City	Kinokawa City, Iwade City
Ito RDB	Hashimoto City	Hashimoto City, Ito District

<sup>12</sup> The former Nishimuro District Kushimoto Town merged with the former Higashimuro District Koza Town on April 1<sup>st</sup> of 2005, becoming Higashimuro District Kushimoto Town under the jurisdiction of the Higashimuro Promotional Bureau.

Arida RDB	Arida District Yuasa Town	Arida City, Arida District
Hidaka RDB	Gobo City	Gobo City, Hidaka District
Nishimuro RDB	Tanabe City	Tanabe City, Nishimuro District
Higashimuro RDB	Shingu City	Shingu City, Higashimuro District

Source: From the author of Wakayama Prefectural Ordinance (Ordinance 15, 2005 and Ordinance 22, 2006, partially revised)

## 2. A History of the Greater Metropolitan Tanabe Area, From the Ritsuryo Period

"The Research Association of the Tanabe Area Mergers"<sup>13</sup> was established in 2001. As shown in (Fig. 2) and (Fig. 3), the area of Tanabe City expanded during the "Great Heisei Merger." Hidaka District Ryujin Village and Higashimuro District Hongu Town were also included in the expansion of the Nishimuro area, both from outside the district. Even with the development of the road network, it takes over one hour by car to reach Ryujin and Hongu from the former Tanabe City center. On the other hand, the immediately adjacent areas of Hidaka District and the towns of Shirahama, Kamitonda, Hikigawa and Susami were not included in the merger. It takes approximately 20 minutes by car to reach the Tanabe-Nishimuro area center from the hot springs district of Shirahama, and about the same amount of time from Minabe Town and Minabegawa Village of Hidaka District. The newly established Tanabe City was merged with a remote local municipality with different river basins and different economic zones, while regions within the same economic zone and culture were not included in the merger. According to the aforementioned "The Research Association of the Tanabe Area Mergers," "Ten municipalities (Tanabe City, Ryujin Village, Minabegawa Village, Minabe Town, Shirahama Town, Nakaheichi Town, Oto Village, Kamitonda Town, Hikigawa Town and Susami Town) were the subject of research into the municipal merger issue. Over the long history of our ten municipalities, we have developed a shared culture and a close relationship in our daily and economic lives." At that time, Ryujin, Minabegawa and Minabe were part of Hidaka District, but the other towns and villages were part of Nishimuro District. However, at the time of "The Research Association of the Tanabe Area Mergers" establishment on July 23rd, 2002, Shirahama was not participating in the association. "Higashimuro District Hongu Town participated in this council on October 4th. In light of the inclinations of the council and residents, it has been decided that on February 5th, 2003, Hikigawa Town and Susami Town will withdraw from this council." Merger consultation between the newly established Tanabe City and surrounding municipalities ended in failure, and although sharing population, culture and economies, Shirahama Town, Hikigawa Town and Kamitonda Town of Nishimuro District, Minabe Town and Minabegawa Village of Hidaka District withdrew from the council. Shirahama merged with Hikigawa in March of 2006, while Minabe merged with Minabegawa in October of 2004. Susami and Kamitonda did not merge, and each retained their pre-merger areas. Tanabe City, Shirahama and Kamitonda share populations and are part of the same economic zone, but

<sup>13</sup> Tanabe City Homepage: <http://www.city.tanabe.lg.jp/kikaku/gappeikyo/setti/frame.htm>, Last viewed May 3rd, 2020.

Shirahama boasts a 1400-year history.<sup>14</sup> Approximately 3 million people visit Shirahama Hot Springs a year,<sup>15</sup> while 1.3 million people visit<sup>16</sup> Adventure World,<sup>17</sup> Japan's fifth most-visited zoo and home to the largest population of pandas outside of China. Direct flights from Tokyo to Nanki-Shirahama Airport take approximately one hour. Shirahama also has a Class B river, which is an abundant source of fresh water for the town. The newly established Tanabe City manages the upper reaches of the Tonda River, but this provides little in the way of fresh water. Kamitonda shares significant water resources with Shirahama, which has an estuary in the middle basin. In the former Tanabe City area, rivers and streams were scarce, and they have contracts to receive water from Kamitonda and Shirahama.<sup>18</sup> Shirahama, relatively rich in tourism and water resources, joined the preliminary consultation committee after merger talks, but decided to leave the committee relatively immediately. Kamitonda has a plum processing factory, and like Shirahama, has a contract to provide Tanabe City with water, but was ultimately not included in the merger. Plans to merge the two municipalities to the south of Tanabe City with Tanabe were ultimately abandoned. Additionally, former Minabe Town and Minabegawa Village of Hidaka District, both north of Tanabe City, and important production centers for Japanese plums, avoided a merger with Tanabe City due to the "Minabe" branding problem.<sup>19</sup> These areas were originally part of the Tanabe economic and cultural zones, but they could not be easily merged at the municipal level. In addition, there was the opinion<sup>20</sup> that if "Shirahama Hot Springs," a leading tourist destination in Japan, were absorbed into Tanabe City, this would be unacceptable to the brand. Tanabe City, once a branch domain of the Kishu Domain and briefly a prefecture after the abolition of feudal domains, being absorbed by Shirahama was also unacceptable.<sup>21</sup> The neighboring municipalities of Shirahama and Kamitonda withdrew, while Minabe and Minabegawa of Hidaka did not merge. In 2005 the current Tanabe City was established, and included Ryuujin Village of Hidaka District and Hongu Town of Higashimuro District. Ryuujin, which takes nearly an hour to travel to by car, and the river basin are different areas. Hongu, which is also a one hour car ride away and hosts a different dialect, was merged. Meanwhile, the merger of Shirahama, Kamitonda and Minabe, each 20 minutes away from the city center, with Tanabe City was postponed and the new Tanabe City was established without them. The Tanabe City merger is thought to have two identifying features: in one instance the city was merged with geographically distant areas, and in another instance it was not merged with culturally similar, neighboring municipalities within the same economic zone. In

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<sup>14</sup> Shirahama Society of Commerce and Industry: <http://www2.whokokai.or.jp/sirahama/rekisi.htm>  
Last viewed August 23rd, 2020

A History of Shirahama. Approximately 1400 years ago, Shirahama Hot Springs were made famous by two individuals: Empress Saimei and Prince Arima. Shirahama Hot Springs are mentioned in Chapter 26 of The Chronicles of Japan, with references to Muro Hot Spring and Ki Hot Spring in connection with the tragedy of Prince Arima. At the time, the capital of Japan was in Yamato and the journey to Shirahama was a long one, likely traveled by horses and boats, accompanied by many government officials.

<sup>15</sup> Wakayama Prefecture "Tourist Dynamics Survey":

[https://www.pref.wakayama.lg.jp/prefg/062400/doutai2\\_d/fil/R01\\_doutaityousa.pdf](https://www.pref.wakayama.lg.jp/prefg/062400/doutai2_d/fil/R01_doutaityousa.pdf), 2019, p 5, Last viewed August 23rd, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Travel Voice: <https://www.travelvoice.jp/20191228-137633>, last viewed August 23rd, 2020

<sup>17</sup> Adventure World, <https://www.aws-s.com/>, Last viewed August 23rd, 2020

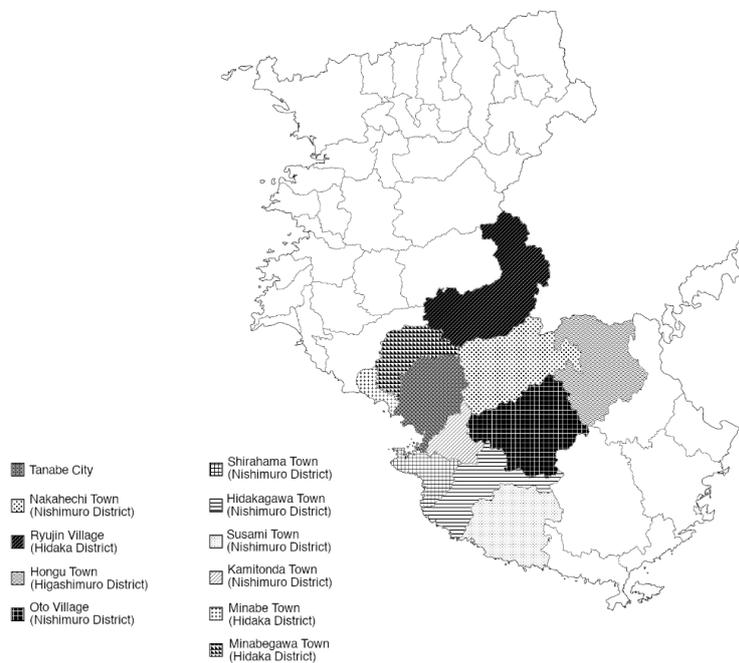
<sup>18</sup> Tanabe City Homepage: <http://www.city.tanabe.lg.jp/suidou/jigyoun/enkaku.html>,  
Last viewed September 12th, 2020

<sup>19</sup> Statement from Ms. Miyoko Sakamoto (born in the former Minabegawa Village of Hidaka District Minabegawa-mura, currently residing in Shirahama Town), December 17th, 2019

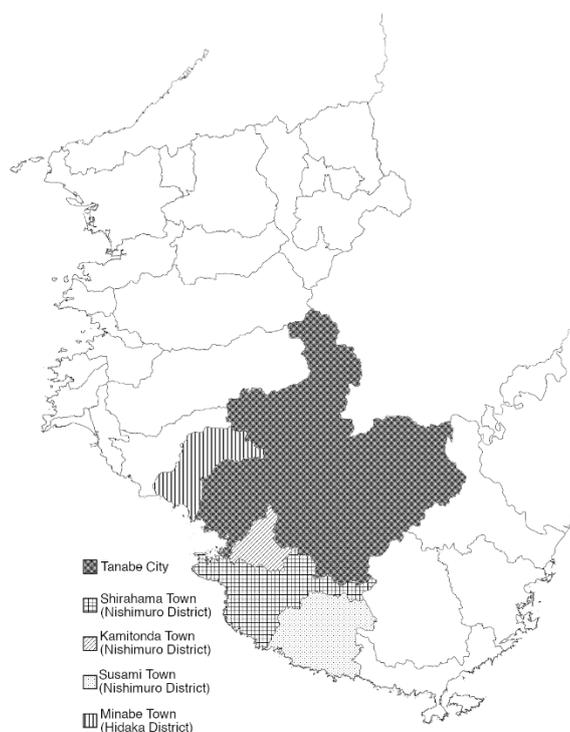
<sup>20</sup> Statement from Mr. Yoshitaka Sakamoto (born and currently residing in Shirahama Town), December 17th, 2019

<sup>21</sup> Statement from Mr. Kohei Yoshida (born in the former Tanabe City, currently residing in Kawasaki City, Kanagawa Prefecture), January 20th, 2020

addition, according to Kanda (2008), the former Seto area of central Shirahama was not part of the Tanabe Domain, but was in direct control of the Kishu Domain of Wakayama, a factor contributing to abstention from the merger.



(Figure 2) Map of Tanabe City Prior to the "Great Heisei Merger"



(Figure 3) Map of Tanabe City After the "Great Heisei Merger"

## IV. Considerations and Conclusion

### 1. Current Problems with Tourism Promotion Projects

So far, we have examined regional determinants. Regional revitalization through tourism will be lackluster without a sense of camaraderie, or "host community." When interviewing Yasuhiro Kuwahara,<sup>22</sup> a former social studies teacher at Tanabe High School, and author of several academic books, he stated that, "I can't agree with our local taxes being used to fund the 'Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau' to promote the unrelated former Hongu." The statement symbolizes the divergence between local governments, tourism promotion organizations, and the opinions of local residents. It is important to understand what factors determine the scope of regional tourism promotion organizations. This study hopes for regional development and coexistence through tourism across Japan. Coexistence, according to Kawamori et al. (2017), is "a process in which people with various differences, including ethnicity, language, religion, nationality, region, gender, sexuality, generation, disease, disability, etc., recognize each other's diversity of cultures and identities, and build equal relationships." Here, there is not as much a difference in ethnicity, language, etc., outside of local dialect. It may seem like a small area from a worldwide perspective, but local consciousness is thought to be a multi-layered structure. Encouraging regional division is not recommended. Regional tourism promotion organizations should be reorganized by investigating the psychological boundaries of local residents and striving to unite them. In addition to the geographical elements previously described by Misawa, district boundaries, in place since the Ritsuryo period, have dictated local consciousness of the region. In the area in question, the "school district" of the local high school is thought to determine the boundaries in the local consciousness. By induction, it is a "district." In Wakayama Prefecture, high school districts were abolished in 2003, so it can be predicted that changes will be seen over time. Regional development through tourism is an important means of economic revitalization in Japan in this time of a declining population. As mentioned at the beginning of this study, local governments and prefectures are also focusing on regional revitalization through tourism. The target area of this study is a region which is blessed with tourism resources. There is rich historical natural beauty, such as Yoshino Kumano National Park, Shirahama Hot Springs, Ryujin Hot Springs, and one of only two roads among the World Heritage Sites,<sup>23</sup> the "Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountains (Kumano Kodo)," as well as leisure facilities such as "Adventure World." It is an advantageous area for sightseeing. It is one and a half hours by car to Kansai International Airport, and has direct flights from Nanki Shirahama Airport to Tokyo Haneda Airport. It is also connected to Osaka by highway and electric rail lines.

### 2. Problems Arising from Boundaries

There are two problems with tourism promotion in the Tanabe-Nishimuro region which have been examined in this study. One is that, despite the degree of population exchange with nearby areas in the same economic zone, tourism

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<sup>22</sup> He was a teacher of social studies at Tanabe High School in Wakayama Prefecture. Interviewed December 7th, 2019

<sup>23</sup> The other is the "Way of Saint James" in Spain.

promotion organizations operate in the two areas independently. The Nanki-Shirahama Tourism Bureau, which was established with Shirahama Town Hall as its home organization, and the Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau, which is based on Tanabe City, operate independently. The "Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau"<sup>24</sup> website does not mention Shirahama Hot Spring, which is representative of Japan, because its parent municipality is different. Similarly, the website of the "Nanki Shirahama Tourism Bureau,"<sup>25</sup> operated by Shirahama, does not mention the world Cultural Heritage "Kumano Kodo" in Tanabe City. This is unavoidable, as the two organizations are operating on different budgets, but there is no doubt that this situation is inefficient.

Another problem is that the "Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau" will invest in the former Hongu, as it was integrated as a local municipality with the newly established Tanabe City. It is a distant district that is geographically separated from the former Tanabe City, with different mountain passes, river basins, and dialects. In other words, the hard-earned tax money of residents of the former Tanabe City is being used towards Hongu, an area outside what is thought of as "our local area." The testimony of Mrs. Kuwabara mentioned above touches on this.

### 3. Conclusion

As mentioned previously, regional tourism promotion organizations in Japan are often run by local governments, and both the 'Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau' and the 'Nanki Shirahama Tourism Bureau' are run in this way. Regional tourism promotion organizations should be operated, not by each municipality, but by taking into account the sense of what the residents think of as "our town." It was found that even within the same municipality, what residents thought of as "outside our area" would be better as a separate organization. It is also important to cooperate with local governments even if they are a different municipality, in order to manage regional tourism promotion organizations. And these organizations need to form a coalition for the purpose of promoting tourism in southern Wakayama Prefecture, the Kii Peninsula, and the whole of Japan. In addition to the administrative aspect, regional tourism promotion organizations will not be powerful, sustainable organizations unless they grasp the "hearts of the residents" that support their organizations. Consideration should be given to the management of promotional organizations, with the "Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau" and the "Nanki-Shirahama Tourism Bureau" as examples. The administrative area has seen dramatic changes after the "Great Heisei Merger," but the "borders of the mind" among local residents needs to be emphasized. Even if the government conducts wide-area mergers, regional tourism promotion organizations need to be reconsidered as residents' host communities. The deviation between the "boundaries of the mind" and the boundaries of the municipalities is a reality. This study found that regional tourism promotion organizations are closely related to local self-government, inefficiency, and divergence from the consciousness of residents. Once again, it is strongly recommended that these organizations are improved such that

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<sup>24</sup> Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau Home Page: <https://www.tb-kumano.jp/>,  
Last viewed September 9th, 2020

<sup>25</sup> Nanki Shirahama Tourism Bureau Website: <http://www.nankishirahama.jp/>,  
Last viewed September 9th, 2020

they are aware of the "boundaries of the mind," support host communities and organize a coalition amongst themselves. This study did not touch on the financial problems inherent in the operation of regional tourism promotion organizations. This is also a major problem for these organizations. Moreover, since the study focused on the Tanabe and Nishimuro regions of Wakayama Prefecture, no other regions were mentioned. It is thought that similar situations are happening around Japan. In the future, I would like to focus my research on other regions, as well as the financial resources of regional tourism promotion organizations.

[Supplementary Note] In this paper, Gregorian calendar dates are utilized.

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