CHAPTER FOUR

TSUGARU REVITALIZATION POLICY AND CULTURAL COMMODITIES

Local identity has been identified as vital to the revitalization of peripheral areas. This chapter opens by examining Tsugaru identity and the potential factors of development for the area and then turns to the Aomori Prefecture and Hirosaki City revitalization policy. The chapter closes by looking at the case for Tsugaru lacquerware and Tsugaru shamisen in national and local government policy. The scheme for assessing local revitalization through examination of the characteristics of local identity and local factors of development along with the characteristics of a culture economy developed in Chapter Three and shown in Figure 4.1, will guide the first section of this chapter.

Toward a Culture Economy: Local Identity and Cultural Commodities

Tsugaru Identity and Local Factors of Development

Chapter Two introduced the Tsugaru District by highlighting a Jōmon-period heritage together with an Edo-period history of national importance and the forging of a strong local cultural and educational

(1) Local Identity/ Local Factors of Development:
– socio-cultural factors
– socio-economic factors
– techno-economic factors

(2) Culture Economy / Industrial / Institutional Cultural Districts:
– commodification of local cultural resources
– identity construction/promotion externally
– identity construction/promotion internally
– restructuring of the local economy

(after Figure 3.2)
base on the one hand, countered by geographic peripherality, persistent poverty and a sense of inferiority as Japan modernized up to the present on the other. This section focuses on the character of a contemporary Tsugaru identity organized as factors of development, and the relevance of these to local revitalization in economic and cultural dimensions.

Responses to the 2004 Cultural Commodities Consumer/Producer Survey (see Appendix 2.3) show that local residents and local cultural commodities producers prioritized natural resources, followed by the present agricultural and fisheries economic base as important components of Tsugaru identity (see Table 4.1). A specific Tsugaru character, followed by Tsugaru history, culture and commodities constituted a second, socio-cultural component of identity. However, neither a sense of local solidarity and participation nor various levels of enterprise and industry were prioritized by either consumer or producer. Given the lack of urban infrastructure and industry in Aomori, the expanses of forested mountainous tracks, and a predominance of agricultural livelihoods, an identity that stresses natural resources and agriculture should not be surprising. Encouraging in terms of cultural commodities in local revitalization is the recognition of a specific local character, presumably through the local history, culture and cultural commodities which can be brought to local revitalization.

Operationalizing local identity into factors for development was proposed as an important part of local revitalization. Present agriculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1 Tsugaru District Identity</th>
<th>Resident rank</th>
<th>Resident mean</th>
<th>Producer rank</th>
<th>Producer mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural resources</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present agriculture and fisheries</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific local character</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local history, culture and commodities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local solidarity and participation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various levels of enterprise and industry</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2004 Cultural Commodities Consumer / Producer Survey.
Note: means based on Likert scale response with 1 = strong agreement with the prompt statement, 2 = agreement, 3 = disagreement and 4 = disagreement (see Appendix for survey); resident N = 190, producer N = 62.