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The scope for developmental dynamism after Geographical Indication specification: The case of Japanese kaki

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Research Background

- Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) introduced the Japanese *sui generis* GI system in 2015.
- It followed the European criteria in a technical sense, but left much flexibility about the extent to which they codified terroir (Gangjee, 2017)
- *Hoshigaki* (dried persimmon) GIs have developed “lowest common denominator” degree of specification to accommodate producers’ divergent approaches.
 - Vague (wide) specification for small production area
 - Flexible standards for larger production area





Research objective

Is the permissibility of minimalistic terroir standards in the Japanese GI providing space for differentiation ("developmental dynamism") after certification, or merely sanctioning limited territorial connection?

Fieldwork and Data

Four Japanese GI Hoshigaki production

- Open-ended interviews with producers, organizers, and retailers in two sites (Autumn 2018)
- Retail observation (online and in stores) 2018-2022
- Books of specification from MAFF
- Publicly available documents (marketing, websites, other agri-food certifications)



Table 1. GI Hoshigaki Production (as of July 2020)

GI Name	<i>Ichida</i>	<i>Noto Shika Koro-gaki</i>	<i>Dojo Hachiya</i>	<i>Higashi izumo no Maruhata</i>
Registration	July 2016	October 2016	December 2017	December 2019
Number of producers (Farm)	~1800	135	68	16
Cultivation Area (ha)	260	84	~10	15



Methods

Evaluate:

- ✓ The degree of terroir specification of the GI standards
- ✓ Extent of differentiation and authenticity possible by standards
- ✓ Scope and realization of developmental dynamism beyond the standards

From the perspectives of most critical terroir dimensions:

- Geographical
- Physical
- Technical

Results

Geographical dimension

Focus of geography on contribution to processing

- Climate, variety, elevation concerned with drying

Cultivation imprecisely codified to retain flexibility

- Ecological conditions (soil, climate, exposure, etc.) not concerned with persimmon cultivation

Long history

- 200-1000 years
- Local heirloom variety often referenced



Physical dimension

Aesthetic considerations dominate

- Focus on appearance, such as colour, shape and weight of the final product
- Not much organoleptic information except sweetness
- These attributed to the Kaki variety and processing methods

Mandatory requirements are limited in scope

- Smaller areas have less explicit requirements
- Larger area (Ichida) offers flexible “comparative standards”
- Presumption of active self-monitoring and participatory guarantee



Technical dimension

Limited differentiation through unique processing

- Processing is nearly consistent among all GIs, except:
 - Symbolic custom of “brooming” the fruit surface (Dojo Hachiya)
 - Prohibition of sulfur fumigation (Higashi Izumo)
- Agriculture and cultivation aspects left largely unspecified

Mechanization follows production scale

- Largest site (Ichida): recommendation for mechanization to homogenize quality
- Medium-size area (Noto Shika): some strictly defined elements
- Small areas (Dojo Hachiya / Higashi Izumo): no, or only primitive machines (e.g., fan)

Avoiding lock-in to strict technical standards

- Perpetuation of tradition without concise requirements for labor
- Provision of innovative “space” in production for young entrepreneurs to express

Conclusion

- Hoshigaki producers in Japan have long rationalized and innovated their product at the individual level ('developmental dynamism'), while the GI system in 2015 required *shared* specification
- To overcome idiosyncrasies while retaining shared territorial identity, GI producers have focused on outcome rather than inputs
 - Shape, texture, and aesthetic of the final product with limited specification of cultivation, ecological features, and processing
- Books of Specification are designed to retain sufficient space for developmental dynamism (flexible / less explicit standards according to the production scale)
- The wide range of approaches to specification is resulted from strategic behavior by producers with extensive experience in branding.
- The toleration of such standards "gaming" has implications for the integrity of the GI policy as a marker of heritage.



Thank you for your listening!

For any questions and comments,
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Reference

- Gangjee, D. S. (2017). From Geography to History: Geographical Indications and the Reputational Link. In: I. Calboli & N.-L. W. Loon (Eds.), Geographical Indications at the Crossroads of Trade, Development, and Culture: Focus on Asia-Pacific, pp. 36–60. Cambridge University Press.