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## **Rolbin, Cyrus, ed. Art and Life in Rural Japan: Toho Village Through the Eyes of Its Youth.(Brief article)(Children's review)(Book review)**

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ROLBIN, Cyrus, ed. Art and Life in Rural Japan: Toho Village Through the Eyes of Its Youth. 176p. charts, maps. photos. Next Generation Press. 2011. pap. \$24.95. ISBN 978-0-9815595-3-7. Hard. \$29.95. ISBN 978-0-9815595-4-4

This gem of a book takes readers beyond typical images of Japan as a land of cityscapes and bullet trains, and into the heart of a small mountain community. Dwindling populations have forced villages to merge to sustain themselves economically, resulting in the loss of each community's distinctive character. A foreword explains that the youth of Toho, Japan's smallest merged village, contributed photographs and text to create this book as part of a revitalization effort to document and share their hometown's unique qualities. Simple, often poignant sentences in English and Japanese tell Toho's story, rich in history and culture. Stunning, full-color pictures capture verdant rice fields, jubilant school scenes, a lively festival, and expressive portraits of Toho's residents. The village's connection with its heritage is evident in photographs of its traditional arts, stoneware pottery created using centuries-old techniques and wood carvings made of trees from the local forests. A fascinating window into a vanishing way of life, this book holds appeal for both pleasure reading and reports, and the inclusion of a word search, crossword puzzle, and comprehension quiz adds to its value for educators. This book provides an intimate look at the culture and rhythms of a small, rural Japanese community and is especially relevant right now, as children may want to learn about such villages in the aftermath of the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami.

--Allison Tran, Mission Viejo Library, CA