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Abstract: This paper reviews the major researches on African area studies conducted during the past 20 years by Japanese geographers. Mainly three major trends are reviewed and examined to find common interests and future directions: (1) Studies by physical geographers on late Quaternary environmental history, physical as well as anthropogenic impact on formation or change of landscape, and human response to currently changing environment, (2) Studies on subsistence economy, technology and strategy of local people including concerns of interaction among local groups and historical dynamics, (3) Political economy and political ecology that focus on coping behaviors and strategies of various actors in rural as well as urban areas with unstable environment stemming from global or national political economy.

Key words: African area studies, environmental history, human response, subsistence strategy, political economy

Introduction

This paper aims to offer a brief review of African area studies by Japanese geographers over the past two decades to find the present achievements and future directions. African area studies by Japanese geographers started in the 1960s (Kobori 1962, 1976; Suzuki 1969), and several research projects, some of which were supported by the Grant-in-Aid for International Scientific Research of Japanese Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture, were carried out through the 1970s and 1980s by both of physical and human geographers. The number of researchers increased and many remarkable outcomes have been published since the end of 1980s, some of which were the bases of a lot of present studies. That is a part of the reason why the author deals with articles from that period in this paper.

Condensed review papers on African studies by Japanese physical and human geographers that discuss articles and other results up to 2000 already exist (Mizuno 2001; Ueda 2001a). Consulting them to much extent, the author tries to offer his own perspective about recent results and problems as well as to provide a review of studies published since 2001 up to present.

Articles and other research results published during the period are enormous, so it is difficult to pick up all of them, partly because of lack of space. Therefore, rather than to please everybody, the author focuses on the three main trends which he regards as commonly held interests to many researchers. First, the author reviews studies on environmental history, anthropogenic transformation of environment, and human response to past and recent environmental change. These studies have been promoted mainly with projects by physical geographers. Next, studies on subsistence technology, economy and strategies of small-scale societies, as well as recent articles based on increasing interests in historical perspective that developed from studies on subsistence strategies and inter-group relations among local peoples are examined. They have been conducted mainly by human geographers, and many of them have common interests with ecological anthropologists and cultural anthropologists as well as agronomists. Third, the author refers to outcomes concerned with the political economy and political ecology of contemporary Africa. Many of them pay special attention to various actors' behaviors in rural and urban areas and their coping strategies with politico-economical fluctuations.
Environmental History, Anthropogenic Transformation, and Human Response to Environmental Change

The most notable achievements of African area studies by physical geographers since the late 1980s are a series of products of research projects by Hiroshi Kadomura and his research colleagues. One of their main interests is environmental history of rain forest and savanna vegetation in humid Africa, and another is ‘desertification’ study in the Sahel and other arid lands. Many of the researchers who engaged in those projects are geomorphologists, climatologists, plant ecologists of Tokyo Metropolitan University, Hokkaido University and Tohoku University, and they have conducted researches in African countries such as Kenya, Cameroon and Zambia since the 1970s. Accumulation of these long-term studies flourished in 1980s and 1990s.2

In Cameroon and Zambia, Kadomura and his colleagues tried to elucidate late-Quaternary palaeo-environmental processes, especially that of prosperity and decline of forests and savannas from a multi-disciplinary approach such as geomorphology, climatology and plant ecology (Kadomura 1989a, 1994; Kadomura et al. 1993). One of their focuses is savannization process, which Kadomura (1989b: 3-5) defined as not only the vegetational changes from forests to savannas but also broader degradation processes of forests by anthropogenic factors. It can be said, therefore, that a distinctive feature of their study is its interest in the human-environment relationship and human effects in the establishment of African nature.

Tamura (1988), for instance, reconstructed late Quaternary palaeo-environmental history of two different vegetation types (West Cameroon Highlands and the Adamaua Plateau) by means of stratigraphic interpretation of geomorphic, pedogenic, palynological and archaeological evidences and explained that different types of land use during recent 200 years reflected difference of present vegetation types in both areas. Also in Zambia, Tamura (1994) and Tamura et al. (1991) clarified that both physical (geomorphological and hydrological) and human factors influenced varieties of the present landscape of miombo-woodlands where shifting cultivators have engaged in Chitemene cultivation over hundreds of years. On the other hand, Chujo (1989, 1994, 1997) conducted vegetation survey in humid and semi-deciduous forests area of Cameroon and Congo. While he classified types of forests in the area, he also investigated successional stages of fallow fields of shifting cultivation and showed several parts of anthropogenic aspects in forests of Central Africa.

While Kadomura proceeded these case studies with his colleagues, he paid special attention to ‘desertification’ study of the Sahel and neighboring areas, and examined various evidences to reconstruct Sahelian environmental history (Kadomura 1988). He reconstructed environmental change in various timescales such as during 20,000 years (Kadomura 1987, 1989b), hundreds of years (Kadomura 1989c), and recent 100 years, and illuminated the history of Sahara in which arid lands have expanded and contracted repeatedly. He also has interest in social dimension of drought as well as recent meteorological events around Sahel to solve the problem of land degradation and poverty (Kadomura 2005).

Nobuyuki Hori succeeded Kadomura’s team as a leader after his retirement from Tokyo Metropolitan University, and continued studies from a new perspective in dry savanna areas of Cameroon, Niger and Kenya (Hori 1999, 2002a, 2007). The distinct feature of his research perspective is his emphasis on peoples’ socio-cultural response to drastic environmental change, which he calls ‘triangle of socio-cultural eco-place (fudo)’ (Hori 2002b). His colleagues’ approaches, however, are diverse because of differences of disciplines including human geography and ecological anthropology. In this project, for example, Chinen (1999, 2002) continued investigation of gully erosion in a small tributary drainage basin of the Niger River in southwestern Niger from a geomorphologic approach, and explained changing land use (intensification of garden cropping and expanded use of marginal land) as a countermeasure against erosion. Masato Shinoda, who was also a core member of Kadomura’s project, has been consistently carrying out climatologic investigation from both local and global viewpoints (Shinoda 1990a, b, 2002; Shinoda and Yamaguchi 2003; Ya-
maguchi and Shinoda 2002). Iwashita et al. (1999) identified the importance of the relationship between soil moisture and phenology of pearl millet by multi year field observation in the Sahelian region of Niger, and Takaoka (1999, 2002) on the other hand, conducted field survey in the northeastern foot slope of Mt. Kenya on useful trees and suggested change of indigenous values and practices with socio-economic change. Many approaches in this project also put more emphasis on human activities. For example, Shikano (2002) read pastoralists' coping responses against repeated droughts from life history data of the Samburu of northern Kenya, and Yoshida (2002) made an analysis of Samburu migrant workers who change their behavior according to drought in their homeland and the decline of the tourism industry in which they depended for cash earning. Oyama (2002) made an investigation of subsistence economy and technology about Hausa who are agro-pastoralists in southern Niger and elucidated their reciprocal relationships with Fulani nomads, and changing aspects of the relationships of the two ethnic groups caused by droughts and population pressure. It is also a fascinating fact that Hausa people maintain soil nutrition utilizing not only livestock excreta but also household garbages as manure, as Oyama and Kondo (2005) reported.

There is also a recently started project by physical geographers that is focused on late Quaternary environmental change and its relationship to human activities. Kazuharu Mizuno, who studied succession processes of alpine vegetation in response to glacial fluctuation in Mt. Kenya and Mt. Kilimanjaro (Mizuno 1998, 1999, 2005a), recently set up a project in Namibia and promoted studies on environmental history with many young researchers. We can see a part of the results from a variety of approaches with fifteen articles edited in African Study Monographs Supplementary Issue 30 (Mizuno 2005b): Geomorphologic and vegetation-geographic approaches which illuminate history of sandhill and specific vegetation (Mizuno and Yamagata 2005; Yamagata and Mizuno 2005; Mizuno 2005c); Studies focused on relationships between vegetation distribution and human activities (Ito 2005; Fujioka 2005); Plant ecological approach which identified factors causing different savanna vegetations (Okitsu 2005); Remote sensing analysis of riparian forest (Yoshida 2005); Climatologic approach which dissented from the orthodox explanation about the origin of the fog in the Namib desert (Kimura 2005); Study on relationship between population change and intensification of land use (Araki 2005); Examination on selection of pearl millet cultivars by peasants from the viewpoint of both physical character and local knowledge (Uno 2005). Although most of the articles of this issue are based on the field researches in arid regions of Namibia, there are also interesting results in other countries such as Hirai (2005), which analyzed indigenous vegetation maintaining practice in west Senegal. Since many of these studies have been recently started and have been carried out by young researchers including graduate students, plentiful outcomes are expected in the near future.

Subsistence Strategies, Technologies and Recent Interests in Historical Perspective

Although the number of Japanese human geographers who were interested in African area studies had not been many except for a few precursors such as Kobori (1962, 1976) and Hata (1981), they have increased since the late 1980s and many products accordingly emerged. First the author takes up studies on subsistence economies and indigenous technologies of small-scale societies such as hunter-gatherers, shifting cultivators, pastoralists and sedentary agriculturalists. One feature of these studies lies in methodology of detailed and long-term data collection of one or a few specified regions or social groups, partly because many of them started African studies in research projects with ecological and cultural anthropologists or at least had common interest with them.

As for studies on subsistence economy of hunter-gatherers, a lot of research results about the Central Kalahari San (Bushmen) were published by Kazunobu Ikeya. Though plentiful achievements already exist on the San study by ecological anthropologists such as Richard Lee (Lee 1979) or Jiro Tanaka (Tanaka 1980), one of Ikeya's originality lies in his special attention not
only to representative economic activities such as dog hunting (Ikeya 1994) but also to minor subsistence activities such as goat raising (Ikeya 1993a), agriculture (Ikeya 1996a) and cash earning (Ikeya 1996b) that had been overlooked so far in the tradition of the San study. His interest is partly based on historically changing aspect of subsistence strategies of the San. As noted later, this interest originated in ‘traditionalists and revisionists controversy’, and he had an important impact on the debate with his series of articles.

Nonaka (1997)’s study on insect eating among the San is another example of studies focusing on minor-subsistence. He described edible insects and eating behavior by the San in detail and suggested the importance of insect eating among them lies in their preference as favorite foods rather than in nutrition intake. Nonaka’s (2005) distinctive contribution to cultural geography is in developing his interest in insect eating to broader relationships between insects and human cultural contexts in southern Africa, southeast Asia and Japan. Nonaka’s interest also evolved to questions about the spatial cognition of nature. Nonaka (2004) examined how peoples of small-scale societies such as the San, Inuit, Orang Asli in the Malay Peninsula, and Carolinian people cognize their environment and come to know the position they stand and the direction they go. It may be possible to be called a kind of ‘folk geography’ that also offers materials for studying human universal ability of spatial cognition. Further researches and examinations in various environments are expected.

Studies on shifting cultivation that is one of the still prevailing subsistence technologies in equatorial Africa also exist, such as Sato (1995, 2003a), that analyzed time allocation of cultivation with cropping technologies among the Majangir living in evergreen forest of southwestern Ethiopia and explained the superiority of their system in respect of labor productivity and risk avoidance. Other examples are Oyama (2003, 2005), who elucidated rationality of Chitemene cultivation in Zambia focusing on environmental knowledge and stability of food production. He also discussed changing economy and technology of the Chitemene with acceptance of new cultivars and semi-sedentarization, using remote sensing analysis (Oyama 1998).

Few articles exist on fishing technology and economies. One of them is on the subsistence economy of the Vezo in the southwestern coastal area of Madagascar (Iida 2001). Based on a detailed field data about food procurement activities, he showed the remarkable contrast between one village which acquired fish and another which depended more on agriculture, in how they responded to and cope with crop price fluctuation, and he explained the difference as strategic features of the fishing and agricultural economies respectively.

Studies on pastoral people have also been done by Ikeya, mainly based on the interests in pastoral economy and conflicts over resource use. Ikeya (1993b) conducted field survey and described a concise profile of the pastoral economy of Fulbe in Nigeria, as he turned his attention to conflicts between Fulbe pastoralists and neighboring agriculturalists caused by overlapping of resource use caused by expansion of agricultural land use (Ikeya 1995). He also reported and analyzed conflicts over grazing lands among Somali groups of northern Kenya (Ikeya 1993c). Adding data of his own investigations on Reindeer pastoralists in Siberia and Camel pastoralists in India etc., he has been conducting comparative studies on pastoralists in the world (Ikeya 2006; Ikeya and Fratkin 2005).

While many studies that focus on subsistence system were based on the detailed data of one or a few particular societies, Oji (1988, 1990, 1992, 1997) conducted an extensive survey of villages in Mali and classified technological types of millet cultivation. Comparing to millet cultivation technology in India where he had continued field survey for many years, he identified features and contemporary problems of millet cultivation in Mali and made several suggestions to improve the conditions. From a similar interest, Tsukihiara (1997), who had conducted investigation of an agro-pastoral complex system in Nepal Himalaya, made a survey of agricultural villages in Mali focusing on the technical problems of the present cultivation system. Their viewpoints include an interesting method of inter-continental comparison of indigenous technology rather than a simple comparison between traditional and modern technology. The method also has the possibility of application in local
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While articles studying subsistence strategies appeared in large numbers as the author reviewed above, there are increasing interests in social aspects that cause and effect resource use. Studies on conflicts among pastoralists and agriculturists by Ikeya, (1993c, 1995) mentioned above, are among such examples. In southern and southwestern Ethiopia, where diverse small ethnic groups have repeated conflicts and reconciliations as well as fission and integration, studies of 'ethno-system' with subsistence strategies and resource use has been carried out by anthropologists and geographers by means of long-term field data collection (Fukui 1997, 2003, 2005). In the project, Sato (2002, 2004, 2005) analyzed forest resource use and the highly dispersed settlement system with inter ethnic relations of the Majangir who are shifting cultivators in the humid forest of southwestern Ethiopia. He elucidated that their unique subsistence strategy had been caused by various social frictions among intra- and inter-ethnic groups such as blood revenge, raiding and slave trades. As those friction relatively decreased from the end of the 1970s, he argued, the Majangir were induced to accept Christianity and state policies including villagization.

Attention to inter-group relations also roused historical interest in changing relations of ethnic groups as well as their relations to nation states. Ikeya (2004) suggested the necessity and validity of bringing the method of environmental history to studies on social history, referring to his own historical study on the San. Through his commitment to 'the traditionalist and revisionist controversy', he made a thorough investigation of such problems as historical fluctuation of the physical environment, relationship among the San, neighboring pastoralists and the states, and the international fur trade network, and as a result, he threw light on the historically changing subsistence of the San (Ikeya 1997, 1999, 2001a, 2002). Sato (2003b, 2007) tried a reconstruction of settlement history of the Majangir that had been repeatedly abandoned and resettled in the forest, as well as a reconstruction of population history from the early 20th century, and explained the changing and enduring mechanism of their subsistence and population. These studies show a part of the outcomes of studies based on historical interest.

Changing Politico-Economic Conditions and People's Response to Unstable Environment

Many Japanese human geographers have also paid great attention to national and global trends of political economy that affect the subsistence of local people and local peoples' coping strategies with the unstable political economy. While studies of subsistence strategies and related studies from historical perspective reviewed in the preceding section have been relatively common in traditional categories of cultural or agricultural geography, studies examined here are closer to economic geography. Shuhei Shimada is the precursor of such a field of study. A series of his studies carried out in Nigeria (Shimada 1992a), Zambia (Shimada 1992b, 1995) and Burkina Faso (Shimada 2001) are wholly characterized as multi-scaled analysis of various actors from small households in local villages to national and global political economy, although all of these are based on intensive and long-term data collection in villages.

For example, the studies of Ajiki and Shimada (1990) and Shimada (1991) were among those intensive case studies in Nigeria that illuminated how agricultural land use patterns in rural areas became labor-extensive with the increase of wage labor according to population outflow from rural areas under 'the oil-boom' in 1970s, conditions which continued even during 'the oil-doom' in the 1980s. Shimada (1996, 1999a) based his study on further fixed point observation in a village of Nigeria, analyzing the influence of a structural adjustment program which had an enormous influence in many countries in Africa and indicating that although food production in Nigeria increased in this period, change of land use in rural areas such as decline of traditional mixed cropping cultivation and shortening of fallow period probably raised environmental degradation and heightened the vulnerability of local peasants. Shimada pays special attention to the problem that interactions among unstable political economy and various actors with different interests in rural areas reflect environmental use.
in the region and result in enlargement of vulnerability of local people. Thus he places the main framework of his studies as political ecology (Shimada 1998, 1999b, 2007). In another study related to national policies on agriculture, Fujii (1993) compared the changing process of policies in Algeria and Côte d'Ivoire since independences, and contrasted the differences.

STudies on enterprises and businesses were traditionally few in African studies because enterprises of African people were very limited in the colonial era, and even after independence, many of them were under national management until the 1970s (Nishiura 2003). However, as structural adjustment programs started and private sectors were politically encouraged in the 1980s, several fascinating outcomes on small enterprises of Kenya and Tanzania have been published since the mid 1990s by Gen Ueda. Ueda (1994) examined medium-sized firms with special attention to the changing process since economic liberalization in the 1980s, while Ueda (1998a) focused on small car repairing companies in Kenya to investigate their actual conditions in relation to national policy and the rural economy. On the other hand, Ueda (1998b, 2001b) developed his interest in small industry to study rural small industries in Mount Meru, northern Tanzania, analyzing detailed behaviors of different actors including kinship networks and labor division by gender within the household, while Ueda (2003) made a detailed description about change of agricultural management and development of irrigation systems under liberalization of crop trading in a rural area and argued the probability that social differentiation between large scale landholders and ordinary farmers as well as inequality of gender may increase in the future. His most recent study illuminated that coping strategies of farmers, forced to withdraw from coffee production under economic liberalization in Tanzania, differ depending on spatial location and regional environment that affect resource availability and accessibility to transportation (Ueda 2006). The features in his series of studies partly lie in his special interests in peoples' response in rural and urban areas to politico-economic change such as economic liberalization as well as his intensive attention to social stratum and gender relations.

Concerning studies of informal sectors, Onjo (1999) offered a concise review of studies of informal sectors and small enterprises in Ghana and suggested several future directions in related studies. As for industrial studies, Teraya (1997, 2004), who is conducting comparative study of industries of alcoholic drinks, studied the wine industry of the Republic of South Africa and Mauritius.

Studies on urban system and peoples' activities in urban areas are very few. Although most of the Japanese articles about human activities in urban areas have been carried out by anthropologists (Matsuda 1998; Shimada et al. 2001), an exceptional study by Ikeya (2001b) illuminated the actual condition of squatters in Cape Town based on field observation.

**Concluding Remarks**

Physical geographers have systematically accumulated fruitful products from earlier periods up to present. Though their main interest has been late Quaternary environmental history, interests in human impact in formation of physical environments as well as in human response to the changing environment seem to be becoming greater among them. These interests will probably continue and become more intense in the future, considering the present educational situation of geography and African area studies in Japan. Also, there may be a point of contact between these interests of physical geographers and human geographers who are interested in human-environment relationship from standpoints such as environmental history and political ecology.3

Since the late 1980s, human geographers also have accumulated fascinating outcomes in such fields as subsistence economy, technology and various strategies of local peoples' coping strategy against politico-economic force and vulnerable environment. Another remarkable characteristic of human geographical studies in the period is their growing attention to history and dynamics of society and economy. This is partly because of a critical view against traditional studies that look on cultures and societies as static, as Ikeya (2004) criticized. Another reason is that African societies have actually experienced rapid
change since the 1980s both in rural and urban areas, influenced by changing global/regional political economy and its effects: the cold war and its collapse, structural adjustment program, economic liberalization, democratization, ethnic conflicts including civil wars, rapid urban growth and so on. These transformations in African societies also stimulated the emergence of studies on urban phenomena, urban-rural relationships, enterprises and businesses. Outcomes of these fields are not so many to date, but it is certain that they are among the most important future directions.

While physical geographers have produced outcomes in projects or research teams of their own discipline, most human geographers have conducted area studies belonging to multi-disciplinary departments and research centers, such as the Institute of Developing Economies, National Museum of Ethnology, and the Department of Asian and African Studies of Kyoto University. This is a cause that makes human geographers' own contribution obscure on the one hand, but it is also one that has activated African area studies in Japan on the other. It is partly because area study, by nature, is a research method that grapples with complicated social problems that are unable to be solved with separate disciplines. It is shown by the fact that many fruits of African area studies concerning social sciences in Japan have been made by inter-disciplinary organizations and projects, rather than by those of specific disciplines. In inter-disciplinary studies and projects, human geographers have a tendency to pay extensive attention to other disciplines and various temporal/spatial scales. Such a tendency will be continued in the future.

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Notes
1. In this paper the author means geographers as scholars conducting research activities in geographical societies in Japan, although the author also deals with some other scholars who have done several inter-disciplinary projects with geographers. Particularly in the fields of human geography, however, many geographical studies have been made also by scholars of neighboring disciplines, so an inclusive review would be worthwhile to grasp the present achievements of geographers. It remains a future task, since it is beyond the capacity of this paper.
2. A part of the fruits is showed by the fact that they contributed much for the foundation of the Japanese Association for the Arid Land Studies (Kadomura and Katsumata 1992)
3. Ikeda (2003) is one of the results of a joint study project on global environmental problems in which physical and human geographers as well as researchers from other disciplines took part.
4. Ikeda et al. (2007) is an edition on African geography to which diverse scholars including physical/human geographers, ecological/cultural anthropologists, historians, economists, linguists, medical scientists, political scientists, primatologists contributed, and shows the contemporary achievement of African area studies by Japanese researchers.

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