The Anthropological Study of Gender and Sexuality in Japan

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In reviewing the work on this subject, I will start with several collections of papers, some of which were the products of seminars. The reason why I am concerned with these volumes first is because I hope to show not only the important work on this theme by individuals, but also the collective interest shared by Japanese anthropologists.

Ethnography of Women and Gender Studies

In spite of the long tradition of Japanese anthropology, it was behind the general worldwide academic trend in emphasizing the field of gender studies. When Ayabe Tsuneo produced a volume on the anthropology of women by female ethnographers in 1982, some authors were included who were not anthropologists in the strict sense of the term. The volume, entitled Anthropology of Women (Ayabe ed. 1982b), was targeted at undergraduate students and interdisciplinary scholars. It was quite a successful publication, in that many readers welcomed the information it presented on the lives of women from different cultural backgrounds. It reached its twelfth impression in 2001. The co-authors, and the subjects on which they wrote, were: Hiroko Hara (Hare Indian women in Canada), Matori Yamamoto (Samoan women), Fujiko Ueda (Kamba women in Kenya), Yukiko Miyamoto (Indian women), Akiko Kagiya (Indonesian women), Kyoko Kikuchi (Philippine women), Kazuko Matsuzawa (Taiwanese women), Mayumi Shigematsu (Korean women), Masako Tanaka (Okinawan women), Motoko Katakura (Arab women), Hiroko Sugita (German women), Kazuko Ohta (American women), and Takie Sugiyama Lebra (Japanese women).

Fifteen years after Anthropology of Women was published, Ayabe edited two further volumes in a similar vein: Ethnography of Women vol.1 Asian Women, and Ethnography of
Women vol.2 European, American, Near Eastern, African, and Oceanic Women (Ayabe ed. 1997a; 1997b). The chapters in vol.1 were: Han Min, "Han, women: Supporting half the sky"; Hiromi Yasuda, "Korean women: behind Confucian norms and in the world of Mudang"; Hiroko Yokoyama, "Bai women: The transformation from 'wives who carry their husbands on their back'"; Sae Etoh, "Thai women: The changing suburban village in Northeast Thailand"; Kumiko Yoshimatsu, "Karen women: Owning half the world and supporting the other half"; Kim, Kisook, "Indian women: The women of the Patua jati in Bengal"; Masami Mori, "Women in Malanao: Life and social change among the Philippines Muslims"; Naruhisa Nakashima, "The women of Minangkabau: The reality of a matrilineal society under Suharto's New Order regime"; Ayumi Ohashi, "Balinese women: Living in Hindu society in Bali." Volume 2 was composed of: Taeko Udagawa, "Italian women: Where does their 'strength' comes from?"; Mayumi Furukawa, "Swedish women: The women of the grandmother's generation"; Yuko Nishikawa, "French women: Change and diversity"; Noriko Nakayama, "Turkish women: Living in secularized Muslim society"; Fujiko Ueda, "Guiliama women: The life of women under polygyny"; Nobuhiro Kishigami, "Inuit women: Hard workers in the Arctic"; Nanami Suzuki, "American women: The self-realization fantasy"; Hiromi Hosoya, "Andean women: American Indian women in a highland village"; and Manami Yasui, "Palauan women: Living with the custom of siukang in a matrilineal society."

None of the authors of Anthropology of Women participated in the new project except Fujiko Ueda. The new volumes included two male authors, one in each volume. While Anthropology of Women tried to describe the life cycle of women in each culture, Ethnography of Women rather concentrated on describing "tradition" and change in women's lives in each culture. While the former presented mainly general descriptions, the latter attempted to describe women belonging to a specific tribe, sector, or group. Although Anthropology of Women was aimed at readers interested in gender in cross-cultural settings, not all the authors were specialists in gender issues. After another fifteen years, however, the publication of Ethnography of Women showed that the younger generation of women anthropologists in Japan has concentrated more on gender issues in recent years.

Social Change and Women: Anthropology of Gender (Kubota and Yagi eds. 1999) is a similar book. The authors of this book belong to the same generation as those of Ethnography of Women, but none of them contributed to both volumes. It is perhaps surprising that there are so many women anthropologists currently writing in Japan. Social Change and Women also included one paper by a male author. The chapters in it were: Yuki Konagaya, "Women who changed the steppes: Mongolia"; Yuko Yagi, "Marriage, family, and women: Change in northern Indian agricultural society"; Ayami Nakatani, "Housework, ritual, and weaving: The triple burden of Balinese women"; Yoko Hayami, "Women in a peripheral society: The Karen in Northern Thailand"; Sachiko Kubota, "Possibilities for the Yolngu Women: Will there be women entrepreneurs in Northern Arnhemland in Australia?"; Akiko Naito, "In the natural harmony of New Zealand: The cosmology of a Maori woman and the resistance movement"; Atsuko Fukuura, "Cantonese maids in Singapore: Independent decisions about life"; Ichiro
Numazaki, "'Tradition' and 'human rights' in a colonial society: History and modernization in Hong Kong." The book is composed of three parts. The first part, "Changes in economy and life," includes the papers by Konagaya, Yagi, and Nakatani. The second part, "Representation of identity," includes the papers by Hayami, Kubota, and Naito. The third part, "History and tradition from the point of view of the present," includes the papers by Fukuura and Numazaki.

As the titles have shown, all these projects have concentrated on women and socio-cultural change. Nevertheless, their perspectives are somewhat different. The authors of the last of these books are more conscious of the active role of women in these societies, and the editors are clearly conscious of the importance of women in socio-cultural change. As Kubota and Yagi (1999a) write:

As we have understood the dynamics of society more fully, we have realized the process is not so simple. Although men are a majority among those who make decisions at the formal or superficial level of society, women take part in the actual decision-making process, and sometimes it is women who lead the decision-making. For example, even though elderly men often take the lead in socially important rituals, it is the women who actually prepare the food and mobilize the other women who take part in the ritual...Therefore, it is women rather than men who are the real players in social activities.

In spite of Kubota and Yagi's positive editorial stance, the outcome in terms of the actual descriptions which their book offers is little different from that of the other collections. Perhaps, it is something to do with the mechanism by which change occurs in "traditional" societies today, within the context of modernization and globalization. These cause people to behave differently, and in ways that will certainly bring about change in their societies, whether positive or negative.


A collection of papers on African women was published in 1996 entitled *Ethnography of African Women: Between Traditional Culture and Modernization* (Wada ed. 1996c). This resulted from a series of seminars organized by Shohei Wada at the National Museum of
Ethnology between 1991 and 1994, entitled "Anthropology of Gender: Focus on African Women." During the course of this, some of the members of the seminar presented a series of lectures at the Asahi Culture Center, Kobe, on July 1 through September 26 in 1992, entitled "Cultural anthropology: Learning more about Africa, especially women fighting against poverty." Even though the edited collection of papers is the direct outcome of the seminar series at the Museum, the lectures at the Asahi Culture Center increased the impact of the book. It includes the following papers: Hideaki Terashima, "Women and the marriage system of the Efe Pygmies"; Shun Sato, "Marriage and women in Rendille society"; Yuko Sugiyama, "Who's afraid of a divorce? The development of farming and changes in life among Bembang women today"; Shohei Wada, "Liberation from levirate marriage: Confinement, liberty, and the independence of widows"; Nobuyuki Hata, "What is a housewife? Peasant women of the Cameroon Highlands"; Masaru Akasaka, "Cooperation and competition among co-wives: Life in a polygamous family in Mali"; Haruka Wazaki, "Men and women in an African kingdom: The political power of women in the Bamun Kingdom in Cameroon"; Yoshihito Shimada, "Feminism in the savanna: Women in a polygamous society of Islamic kingdom"; Toru Komma, "The paradox of patrilineality and the private domain as 'female wisdom': The household property system' and modernization among the Kipsigis"; Shoichiro Takezawa, "The lion and the dugong: Gender and cosmology in a fishing society"; Shozo Akutsu, "A goddess who loves the odor of blood: Sexuality and its cultural representation among the Zande"; Ryo Ogawa, "How women from rural areas protect their livelihoods: The case of Dakar, the capital of Senegal"; Makiko Toda, "Nawal El Saadawi: A report from Egypt." The book is divided into six parts. The first part, "Hunters and pastoralists," includes the papers by Terasaki and Sato. The second part, "Patrilineality and matrilineality," includes papers by Sugiyama and Wada. The third part, "Monogamy and polygamy," includes the papers by Hata and Akasaka. The fourth part, "Women and marriage in kingdoms," includes the papers by Wazaki and Shimada. The fifth part, "Perspectives on gender and sexuality," includes the papers by Komma, Takezawa, and Akutsu. Finally, the sixth part, "Between tradition and modernity," includes the papers by Ogawa and Toda.

The authors are all well-known Africanists in Japan and all but two are male. Even though most of them are not specialists in contemporary theories of gender and sexuality, it was still useful for them to compile their research data relating to this topic, because of their depth of experience in the field. Africa is also an ideal region in which to study this subject because of the large existing literature on descent-related issues such as lineality, polygyny, ghost marriage, women marriage, and the levirate. At the same time, "tradition" and change are also the basic themes of several papers such as those by Sugiyama, Wada, Hata, and Ogawa, and all the authors try to present an in-depth description of contemporary African women's lives.

Shohei Wada had written a book entitled Ethnology of Sexuality and Marriage (1988) before he started the project. In it, he discusses the nature of marriage from an anthropological perspective. In contemporary society where monogamy is the only system,
marriage may be defined as a "union involving a sexual relationship between a male and a female of some duration, based on economic cooperation according to particular rules, and accompanied by cohabitation...." (Fukutake et al. 1958). However this definition becomes meaningless when it is exposed to the world of anthropology. In some societies, sexual relationships are allowed between a wife and the brothers of her husband. Legal parentage is often very important and a pater is strictly differentiated from a genitor. In modern society, sexuality and marriage usually go together, while ethnographic reports show that elsewhere they often do not. Wada continues by examining the parent-child relationship, ghost marriage, woman marriage, and in conclusion, the future status of marriage systems, drawing on some of the most famous cases in the literature, though his conclusions about the importance of the legitimacy of children are rather conventional (cf. Mair 1971). Wada also argues that it is time for the laws governing marriage in Japan to be revised, since the present monogamous marriage system is inflexible, given the biological realities.

A recent issue of the JCAS Review (JCAS = Japan Center for Area Studies) was on the special theme of "Gender in transitional societies" (JCAS Review vol.3, no.2, 2000: 5-93). In the introduction, the guest editor, Fumiko Oshikawa, points out the possibilities and dangers of gender research in area studies (Oshikawa 2000a). It is risky since a description of gender in a given area tends to be essentialist, while the positionality of the ethnographer is always in question. On the other hand, the observation of gender in transition provides rich information on the transformation and reconstruction of the particular area being studied.

The volume consists of four papers: Noriko Kawahashi, "Gender and religion: A postcolonial narrative"; Yoko Hayami, "At the crossroads of difference: Interethnic marriage in the northern Thai hills"; Eiji Nagasaka, "A case of sexual assault in Cairo's Ataba Square: Public dispute on the issue of sexuality in Egypt"; and Fumiko Oshikawa, "Reading popular English-language magazines for women in India from the 1970s to the 1990s."

Oshikawa previously edited another volume called Social Change and Women in South Asia which is composed of three parts: Part 1, "Women and the restructuring of the South Asian economy"; Part 2, "Changing lifestyles of women in South Asia"; and Part 3, "Development, politics and the women's movement." These consist of seven chapters by women, including two anthropologists (Yagi 1997; Nishikawa, Mugiko 1997b). The book is the final report for seminar series entitled "Socio-economic development and women: Focus on South Asia" (1994), sponsored by the Institute of Developing Economies.

Emiko Namihira's Cultural Anthropology in Everyday Life (1999) is written as a textbook for general anthropology courses. The main subjects dealt with here include gender, family, sexuality, and livelihood. Because the cases are taken mostly from her own field research in Japan, the issues are easy to understand. This is an attempt to produce a new type of textbook. Namihira became interested in gender and sexuality issues through the interpretation of rituals, and she analyzes why menstruation is often seen as pollution in various societies with reference to a variety of anthropological research (Namihara 1983).
Studies of Sexuality

Some senior male anthropologists began to be interested in sexuality around 1990, though their emphasis was different from that of the women. One of them, Ken'ichi Sudo, organized a series of seminars at the National Museum of Ethnology between 1988 and 1991, entitled "Comparative studies of sexuality and cultural representation." The outcome was published under the title, Ethnography of Sexuality (Sudo and Sugishima eds. 1993). The papers included are: Ken'ichi Sudo, "Introduction: Social anthropology and the study of sexuality"; Makio Matsuzono, "Amasangia, or the sharing of sexual partnerships: Adultery and punishment among the Gusii"; Fujiko Ueda, "Sexual taboos and the cosmology of disease among the Guiliama in Kenya"; Ken Matsui, "Sexuality and love on the northwestern periphery of India"; Takashi Sugishima, "The practice of sexuality among the Lio"; Eriko Aoki, "A mouth is a vagina, a tongue is a penis: Words, sexuality, and power among the Central Lio"; Akitoshi Shimizu, "Sexual behavior and the categorization of the body in terms of value: A case in Pohnpei"; Ken'ichi Sudo, "Sexuality in Yap society, Micronesia"; Masanori Yoshioka, "Sexual relationships in Maiana, Kiribati"; Hiroko Ueno, "The mystical power of blood: Theories of reproduction and pollution among the Han Chinese"; Hiroyuki Kurita, "Where does a baby come from? Anthropological debate on the Virgin birth"; Makoto Oda, "Unproductive sexuality"; Yukio Takahata, "The labyrinth of incest: The sexual link between apes and human beings"; Juichi Yamagiwa, "Subjectivity and sexuality: Eye contact and homosexual relationships among mountain gorillas"; Iwao Ushijima, "Women as daughters and sisters and women as wives and mothers"; Masakazu Tanaka, "Orientalism in sexuality: Indian sexual fantasy and its interpretation." The whole collection is divided into two parts. The first part, "Sexuality: Sexual practice and its rules," includes the first nine papers, while the second, "The theory and syntax of sexuality in sociological context," includes the papers by Kurita, Oda, Takahata, and Yamagiwa.

Sudo provides an introduction to research on sexuality and its importance. The gender studies strongly influenced by feminism, which had been popular in the 1970s and 1980s, dealt mainly with issues such as the division of roles between males and females, the male domain versus the female domain, and maleness versus femaleness. The imbalance in the distribution of power between male and female was therefore explained in biological terms. Feminists argued rather that this imbalance was created for sociological reason and that gender was a construct. Feminists have tended to neglect biological differences, even though sexuality is both biologically and culturally determined. According to Sudo, the difficulty of studying sexuality is twofold. First, sexual behavior is not easy to observe, unlike eating food or cultivating rice fields. People usually hide their own sexual behavior. Second, most anthropologists have been very hesitant to carry out research on sexual behavior themselves because of their own cultural inhibitions, although they have often chatted with their colleagues about their sexual experiences in the field.
The papers in the first part are mostly ethnographies of beliefs about sexuality, sexual behavior and/or expressions of sexuality. The four papers by Matsuzono, Ueda, Matsui, and Sudo deal with socio-cultural punishments for deviation from the normal rules of sexuality. The second group includes the papers by Sugishima and Yoshioka, on the ideology of sexuality. They are concerned with how this ideology is expressed in rituals, belief systems, and norms. The third group includes the papers by Aoki, Shimizu, and Ueno. These papers discuss how sexual behavior is related to, and explained by, the value system of each society.

The papers in the second part are on anthropological and primatological research into sexuality and reproduction. They include two primatological papers, by Takahata and by Yamagiwa, from an interdisciplinary perspective. The editor seems to differentiate between two categories of papers: the first part consists mostly of ethnography and the primary interest of their authors is in the interpretation of the culture of a society through analyzing sexuality; while the second part is a more theoretical study of sexuality and reproduction. As with the other collections of papers, discussed previously, the authors, especially those in the first part, are not necessarily specialists in this subject. In a sense, the study of sexuality of the first part is aimed at understanding society. The discourse on sexuality in each society is used to understand the kinship system, cosmology, social norms, and so on.


Some papers are introductions to, or reviews of, particular regions, while others deal with theoretical issues. Wagatsuma died shortly before publication and his paper was part of a manuscript he had been preparing on the psychology of sexuality. Even though Japanese
anthropologists have tended to avoid the study of sexuality (Matsuzono 1987a: 9). Japanese folklorists have been particularly successful in the study of sexual representation in rituals, perhaps because of the fertility cults which exist in Japan. Phallic representations are common as ritual objects in Japanese folk belief. While it is possible to find many contributions to this field by Japanese folklorists, especially by those of the Yanagita school, Akamatsu Keisuke has long criticized the neglect of the study of sexuality itself in the life of Japanese village communities, and he now seems to be an isolated researcher in this area (e.g. Akamatsu 1986; 1994). However, Miyata has written two books on female ritual power in Japanese folklore (1983; 1987b).

Two papers particularly impressed me when I read the volume in 1987, one by Konishi and the other by Otsuki. Konishi discusses sexuality among the Saotai in India as expressed in their poems. The author's long experience with these people enabled him to give a precise interpretation of the situation presented in the poems and to translate them beautifully into Japanese. Otsuki's paper is on urban folklore. He examines the transmission of several rumors over time, and discusses the alienation of the underground world to which Southeast Asian women are now confined. He criticizes the present situation in Japan in which the sexuality of Southeast Asian women sex-workers is valued differently from the sexuality of Japanese young female college students.

Matsuzono carried out extensive research on kinship before he became interested in sexuality. His interest is still in kinship, but through the study of sexuality he has gained new ideas and tools with which to analyze it (1987b). He also has produced a model questionnaire for students of sexuality (1994).

Matsuzono edited another book on sexuality in 1996, entitled *Encountering sexuality: What anthropologists see, hear, and describe*. It is based on a round table discussion by six male anthropologists -- Makio Matsuzono, Ken'ichi Sudo, Kazuyoshi Sugawara, Satoshi Tanahashi, Hiroyuki Kurita, and Juichi Yamagiwa - and is aimed at general readers. It is composed of an Introduction and six parts: Part 1, "Positions in intercourse"; Part 2, "Foreplay"; Part 3, "Extramarital intercourse"; Part 4, "Flirtation"; Part 5, "Homosexuality"; and Part 6, "Bestiality." There is also a short section by Yamagiwa on "What are the differences in sexuality between *homo sapiens* and the other primates?" Each speaker prepared a short presentation on one of these topics, and the other participants asked questions and spoke about their experiences in their own research. These main speakers were Sudo (on Micronesia) for Part 1; Tanahashi (on the Cook Islands) for Part 2; Sugawara (on the G/wi of the Kalahari in southern Africa) for Part 3; Everyone for Part 4; Kurita (on Papua New Guinea) for Part 5; and Matsuzono (on the Gusii of Kenya) for Part 6. The introduction was written by Matsuzono after the discussion. After a summary of research on sexuality in British and American anthropology, he describes the general situation of research on the theme in Japan. There seems to be more research coming on stream as the general taboo on the study of sexuality has been loosened. Even though Matsuzono welcomes the fact that the younger generation of anthropologists is discussing sexual behavior and morality
more freely in the context of the cultures and social organizations of the societies which they study, there are still only a few anthropologists primarily committed to the study of sexuality (p.19). It is not easy to carry out research on sexual matters at the beginning of one's field research. His advice to young students is to maintain an interest in the study of sexuality all the time and collect data on this topic when possible. The round table members here had the same experience: they had each developed their own research themes, and collected data on sexual matters by the way.

We could not avoid a discussion centered on the research episodes experienced by each speaker, since it was a round table. Nevertheless, it was much more meaningful to talk about sexual phenomena in the context of each society rather than to propose hypotheses on human sexual behavior in general. The participants also agreed to adopt the method of presenting data in this way, which is entirely appropriate at the level of our research right now (Matsuzono 1996: 26).

Akiko Mori's paper called "Reading bodies: A note on research in an Austrian agricultural village" (1998) is an attempt to analyze narratives about the bodies of others. Mori has found that there are certain contexts in which people say a lot about their neighbors' bodies and sexuality, often in a metaphorical way. It is not easy to get married in this area since marriage and property are closely linked. The ratio of illegitimate to legitimate children is very high. Old people are sometimes happier to have illegitimate grandchildren rather than difficult affinal relationships within the family, and illegitimate children often inherit property. Neighbors often discuss such cases, without accusations of sexual immorality. Mori explains this in terms of membership of the local community and local property rights. Observation and discussion of each other's bodies give the community continuity, but protecting property is the most important issue. Her analysis opens up new possibilities for studies of sexuality. Mori has also published an analysis of gender based on the church records in her study area (1995).

Yukio Takahata has edited another book on human sexuality called Anthropology of Sexuality: The Quest for the Missing Link between Apes and Humans (Takahata ed. 1994). He is concerned with the theoretical question of what is distinctive about human sexuality. Most of the book is composed of observations of incest, sexual behavior, biological parent-child relationship, and so forth among apes and monkeys. The authors are mostly primatologists, but two social anthropologists are also included, namely Kaori Kawai and Kazuyoshi Sugawara. Kawai's paper "Folk procreation theory and sexuality among the Chamus: The deception of women" (1994) is one of the longer papers in the volume, and presents a detailed description of folk theories of procreation among the Chamus, a polygamous patrilinial society of agro-pastoralists in Kenya. This is followed by a discussion of their treatment of extramarital relationships. They believe that procreation results from the mixture of female menstrual blood and male semen, with the male element growing within the female element.
Female blood has a bad effect on male sexuality, and the Chamus are very careful in relation to the menstrual cycle. Intercourse with more than one male is believed to lead to infertility. Their folk theories have a considerable impact on sexual behavior, and especially on extramarital relationships between a women and her lover, a relationship which is often relatively stable. Usually a woman has a husband who belongs to a senior age-set and a lover who belongs to her own age set. It is often the woman who takes the initiative in starting a relationship with a man just after his circumcision. The relationship is known to others, but never to a woman's husband who would be furious if he knew about it. The women try to avoid trouble at all costs, invoking their theories of procreation. Kawai's description is vivid and the cases she presents are quite convincing. The man's role here is twofold: that of a polygamous patriarchal husband of younger wives, constantly concerned about the biological paternity and legitimacy of his children; and that of a lover, often in a steady relationship with another woman (or women). While a woman's husband is chosen by her father, usually when she is young, a woman chooses her lover herself. Relationships between lovers are regarded as informal but accepted in Chamus society. It is interesting that the Chamus differ from other agro-pastoralists in the region like the famous Nuer in that they are very concerned about biological fatherhood, and it would also be interesting to compare the Chamus with their neighbors. Kawai previously wrote a paper in English on a similar topic (Kawai 1990).

Sugawara's paper entitled "Maternity and paternity among hunter-gatherers: The case of the San," also discusses extramarital sexuality, among the G/ ui of the Kalahari. He has been concerned with this topic elsewhere (Sugawara 1993: 248-282; 1998: 87-205), in addition to his contribution to the round table discussion edited by Matsuzono (Matsuzono 1996: 103-147). His presentation in this discussion is one of the best parts of the book. I enjoyed his description of G/ ui women becoming sexually aroused watching a skillful male dancer. According to him, the G/ ui are very active sexually, and marriage and divorce rates are both high. There are few single adult G/ ui. Extramarital relationships called zaku are very common, and the G/ ui are open about discussing them. While Sugawara refers to the research on zaku relationships in a small community by his senior colleague, Jiro Tanaka (Tanaka, Jiro 1989), he himself is more interested in the emotions of G/ ui fathers. Tanaka suggests that zaku relationships sometimes supplement the limited range of social relationships available in hunter-gatherer society. Sugawara's discussion is more psychological. According to Sugawara, when a G/ ui husband finds out his wife has had a baby by another man, he becomes furious, but finally he accepts the baby as his son/ daughter and nurtures it. Sugawara argues that the emotion is affected by the social system.

Feminism has had a strong impact on this field. The shift in perspective from gender to sexuality was emphasized by Taeko Udagawa at a relatively early stage in her work. Her manifesto, entitled "The definition of 'woman': An analysis of 'gender' and 'sexuality' in Italy" (Udagawa 1993), has had an extensive influence on Japanese anthropologists, especially on the younger generation. Udagawa is greatly influenced by feminist theory. It is quite
interesting that through struggling with this she has tried to find a new viewpoint derived from her perspective on sexuality. In her later work on the methodology of the study of sexuality (1997a), she refines her ideas still further. She is content neither with dichotomized gender theory, nor, so far, with the anthropological study of sexuality. According to her, while there has been a long tradition of detailed studies of heterosexual behavior in relation to marriage and kinship, research into homosexual behavior is only relatively recent. In the site map of the academic study of sexuality, "normal" heterosexual behavior is put in the center while "abnormal" homosexual behavior is on the periphery. Instead of a focus on reproductive heterosexuality, she proposes a shift in the analysis of sexuality to person-to-person relationships based on affection which, she believes, will bring in a wider field of personal relationships. We expect a monograph based on her theory to be published soon.

Noriko Nakayama's monograph, Gender and Secularization in Islam (1998), is based on a field research in a village in Turkey. Compared with other Muslim countries, Turkey is famous for its secularism ("kemalism") in which religion is excluded from the public context. There used to be two types of female response to the dominant secularization policy. Pro-kemalist "modern" women were not veiled (açılk=open), while "traditional" religious women were veiled (kabil=closed). As a result of the modernization process, groups of feminists and well-educated modern fundamentalist Muslim women have emerged. Turkish feminists are mostly pro-secularist and açılık, even though they criticize kemalist patriarchy and gender inequality, while the new class of urban educated fundamentalist Muslim women are kabil although they share some ideas with feminists.

If this is mostly the situation in urban centers, what is happening in the rural areas? Nakayama was interested in the rural women who were Muslim by custom. Rural women wear the veil, but are not very religious. Their chastity is under the strict control of their fathers, brothers, and husbands, since men's reputations are very much concerned with the behavior of their daughters, sisters, and wives. Nevertheless, rural women are not unhappy with the situation and they are free from kemalism, feminism, and fundamentalism, which are all ideological products of Turkish modernization. In spite of the widely accepted argument that it was the urban population who promoted Turkish secularization, Nakayama suggests the possibility that the secularization was also widely accepted by rural people who are flexible by nature.

Religious Perspectives on Gender

The comparative study of goddesses directed by Masakazu Tanaka is a rather unusual project (Tanaka, Mazakazu 1998). It is the outcome of a project at the National Museum of Ethnology led by Tanaka in 1991-94 entitled "Godesses: The cross-cultural study of sexuality and sacredness." "Sexuality" and "sacredness" are both pronounced sei in Japanese. The question here is why divine beings are usually seen as gendered. The usual explanation is
that human society has gender, and that a pantheon is a representation of the society. Is it then natural to assume that goddesses are representations of women in society? The interest in goddesses has recently been revived by the feminist spirituality movement which arose alongside the critique of patriarchy. The values often attributed to goddesses include maternity, spirituality, peacefulness, purity, and fertility. But Tanaka is rather skeptical of the ideology of the movement, because he sees its ideology as essentialist.

The authors of the papers in the book are: Masakazu Tanaka, "Introduction to the study of goddesses"; Yuko Mio, "Goddesses unable to become women: Religion and gender in Han Chinese Society"; Yagi Yuko, "The body of a goddess, the body of a woman: Goddess worship in northern India"; Masakazu Tanaka, "From women to goddess: On divinization in Southern India"; Kunimitsu Kawamura, "The mother of Kintaro: Rethinking yamauba"; Ichiro Konan, "The myth and ritual of the horse-headed daughter or the goddess of silkworms: Seeking the origin of the Japanese silkworm divinities"; Kazuo Matsumura, "The goddess and the polis: Athena and Athens"; Haruko Okano, "Christian culture and the polarity of sacredness and sexuality: On Eve and Mary"; Midori Tsutsumi, "From Maria Regina to the Bride of Christianity: The triumphal icon of the Virgin Mary in the Medieval Europe"; Aiko Ogoshi, "Images of women in the modern state: Behind the image of the goddess of peace"; Midori Igeta, "The sons of the great mother goddess: A perspective on the 'maternity principle'"; and Junko Saeki, "Seeking the goddess: The 'female spirituality' movement in the United States and Japan."

The papers are divided into three parts. The first, entitled "The cult of the goddess," includes the papers by Mio, Yagi, and Tanaka. These are anthropological accounts in the strict sense. The second part, entitled "The underlying meaning of legends of goddesses" includes the papers by Kawamura, Konan, Matsumura, Okano, and Tsutsumi. The authors are from interdisciplinary backgrounds such as mythology, the study of religion, and art history. The papers in the last part, entitled "A critique of the modern goddess," are those by Ogoshi, Igeta, and Saeki. They examine the meaning of goddesses in the modern era. Although one of the purposes of the book is to criticize the female spirituality movement, seven out of eleven authors are women, mostly feminists. It is therefore also a critique of modern culture. The book is of general interest to anthropologists, and the papers included are extremely stimulating.

Masakazu Tanaka and Musashi Tachikawa have edited another collection of papers entitled Living with Sakti: Gender, Sexuality and Religion in South Asia (1999). This work is not a direct outcome of a particular project, but it is clear that the work on goddesses just mentioned provided a major stimulus. However, this book is more of a professional academic ethnography on religion in south India. The authors and titles of papers are: Masakazu Tanaka, "Introduction: Writing on gender, sexuality and religion in South Asia"; Musashi Tachikawa, "Hindu thinking on sakti: A historical perspective"; Shingo Einoo, "The autumn goddess festival as described in the Puranas"; Yuko Yokochi, "The warrior goddess in the Devimahatmya"; Masakazu Tanaka, "The Navaratri Festival in Chidambaram, South India";
Akio Tanabe, "The transformation of sakti: Gender and sexuality in the festival of the goddess Ramachandi"; Timothy Fitzgerald, "The Mariai Village Festival in Maharashtra"; Yumiko Tokita-Tanabe, "Women and tradition in India: Construction of subjectivity and control of female sexuality in the ritual of first menstruation"; Yasumasa Sekine "Rethinking the ambiguous character of Hindu women"; and Yuko Yagi, "Rituals, service castes, and women: Rites of passage and the conception of auspiciousness and inauspiciousness in Northern India."

Tanaka also has written a paper on a case of sati (1998c) which took place in 1987. Sati is the Hindu custom of a widow burning herself on her husband's funeral pyre, and has been criticized as violence to women. Despite government prohibition, the custom has wide support in the region. The crux of the matter is whether the widow decided to commit sati by herself or whether she was forced. But whatever the case, feminist criticism is in a dilemma. If it accepts that the widow was forced, it means it denies completely the autonomy of females as agents. On the other hand, if it accepts that the widow decided by herself, it implies that her decision was based on complete subordination to her husband. This is the irony of the system. Similar issues are raised in the debate about female circumcision. The dilemma of feminists is shared by anthropologists. Tanaka is trying to find a way out for an anthropologist in this predicament. The anthropologist describes the framework of beliefs and institutions which supports ritualized violence such as sati. If anthropologists decide to respect other cultures at all costs, based on a belief in cultural relativism, they are unable to criticize the violence. But Tanaka sees that an anthropologist must cut through this logic somewhere. He suggests that it is necessary to focus on the pain entailed in the violence and to think of the people who share the pain. Tanaka has now moved on to research on sexuality in contemporary Japanese culture (1997). We await his next findings.

Established religions have been often criticized by feminists for the patriarchal tendencies inherent in their belief and administrative systems. The criticisms against the established Christian churches started in the United States and Europe. In Japan, Buddhist women have started their own critique and their movement is trying to bring about reform from within. Noriko Kawahashi, a woman anthropologist and Buddhist member of the reform movement, writes on the reconsideration of gender discrimination (Kawahashi 1999: 12-26). According to Kawahashi, the most serious discrimination is against priests' wives. Since priests in Japanese Buddhism are prohibited from marrying, except for the Jōdō-Shinshū sect, marriages to priests are illegitimate and the wives are treated as concubines in certain contexts. Her paper is part of the book, a collection of voices of women Buddhists and scholars. She also discusses the topic with a feminist colleague (Kawahashi and Nomura 2001).

Childbirth

Mugiko Nishikawa's work on the life history of a Japanese midwife (1997a) received the
26th Shibusawa Award in 1999. This is both an intensive study of a personal life history and the introduction of western midwifery into a rural area in Japan, and a more extended study of the social history of reproductive health. The narrative is structured around the life history of a midwife named Mii Takeshima. The story starts at the time when she was a girl in Noto, a rural area of north coast of Honshu. Mii sat an exam and entered a midwifery school in 1922. As a formally educated modern midwife she ran a clinic of her own. Nishikawa carried out research into childbirth and traditional midwifery during that period. Mii's personal life history including her marriage is also described in detail. After her husband's death, she went back to midwifery. The description includes a wide range of socio-historical background information, giving us the flexibility to read the ethnography in various ways.

Nanami Suzuki's work on childbirth (1997a) is different in style from Nishikawa's although both are historical studies focused on midwifery. Suzuki's central theme is the so-called Alternative Birth Movement in the United States in the 19th century. This was generally the time when traditional midwifery was being displaced by modern medicine, and midwives were being displaced by male doctors. The sectarian medical movements in those days included Thomsonianism and Hydropathy, which were both pro-nature and against modern medicine. Suzuki analyzes the discourse of each movement in order to discover their cosmologies of childbirth. Thomsonianism relied upon herbs, aiming to recover the powers of nature for curing. Hydropathy used water in many ways to realize another form of natural power. Neither movement necessarily aimed to revive traditional midwifery since life was no longer the same. Suzuki argues that both movements reflected a transitional stage in which midwives were being replaced by doctors and living conditions were changing rapidly.

Etsuko Matsuoka's *Cultural Anthropology of Childbirth* (1991) is another study of this topic. The book is composed of three chapters which can be read separately. The first chapter, "Conception and childbirth as cultural constructs," which is also the main theme of the book, provides an introduction and a short ethnology of childbirth. The second chapter, "Midwives," is based on Matsuoka's fieldnotes of her interviews with midwives. The third chapter is a comparative study of childbirth in England, Germany, and Holland. This book is an introductory work and we look forward to her full-length ethnography of modern childbirth in Europe. She has also written on natural childbirth movements in Japan (Matsuoka 1983).

Manami Yasui has written a short ethnography on traditional and present day maternity care and rituals in Pulap and Palau (1999).

The Postcolonial Situation and Gender/Sexuality Studies

Matori Yamamoto has written two papers (1994, 1997) about the famous Derek Freeman-Margaret Mead debate concerning Samoan sexuality. Whereas most of the papers written on the topic are attempts to find out the truth about Samoan sexuality, Yamamoto discusses the responses of the Samoans to the dispute. Nevertheless, since Freeman takes the Samoan
viewpoint as important evidence in his own discussion, it is also related to the search for the truth. Samoan free sex and free love as described by Mead matched the prevailing image of the time of the South Seas as a "paradise." Modern Samoan intellectuals are often hurt by European "Orientalist" viewpoints, and Samoans in general are quite sensitive about how they are perceived by outsiders. Yamamoto concludes that the responses are postcolonial counter-narratives developed by the Samoans. The problem therefore has to be analyzed from the perspective of post-colonial discourses.

Kawahashi's work (1997, 2000) also relates to cross-cultural research in the postcolonial age. In her paper titled "Limits and possibilities of feminist ethnography" (Kawahashi 1997), she deals with the so-called predicament of feminist ethnography. Responding to Kisuyo Kasuga's manifesto entitled "The methodology of feminist ethnography" (1995), Kawahashi reveals a dilemma inherent in realizing an ethnography for women, of women, and by women. Her basic question is whether a female ethnographer is inherently able to share the problems of the female informants about whom she writes. She raises the issue of the positionality of an ethnographer who comes from a developed society. Is it possible to bridge the gap between ethnographer and informants? She also discusses the possibilities of "anthropology at home." She tries to find a way to solve the problem, since she herself is a dedicated feminist and she needs the answer.

In a more recent paper, Kawahashi (2000) is more cynical about the simplistic belief that "the universal female experience" privileges a female ethnographer writing about women in another culture. The gap is twofold when a female ethnographer writes about women and religion. While an ethnographer from the First World usually criticizes religious dogma from the standpoint of a belief in universal human rights, religious adherents criticize the ethnographers for their colonialist attitudes. Kawahashi points out that when ethnographers criticize the ideological framework of religions which are often dominated by high-ranking male priests and theorists, they often overlook the activities of women reformers working from inside. Here Kawahashi has a dual standpoint, as a woman active in a religious movement, and as an ethnographer carrying out her own research, and she uses this in trying to find a solution to the problem of developing an ethnography of women, by women, for women.

Japanese Gender and Sexuality

This is a rather wide area covered mainly by scholars such as folklorists, sociologists, psychologists, and historians, and anthropologists play only a small part in it. I refer here only to a part of this literature.

Kunimitsu Kawamura is widely known as a folklorist publishing on socio-cultural change in gender and sexuality within the modernization process in Japan. His information comes mainly from magazines for women from the period between the late Meiji and early Showa
eras. The magazine created a community of middle-class girls/women who not only enjoyed the contents, but also actively contributed letters and articles. Kawamura has written a social history of modern women, dealing with discourses on gender (including marriage, chastity, and the family) and sexuality (including menstruation, birth-control, diet, and virginity). In two books (1993, 1994), he focused on the new category of 'maiden', referring to women waiting for marriage and preparing to become a "good wives and wise mothers." Middle class women who had begun to live in nuclear rather than extended families needed to educate themselves about sexuality and reproductive hygiene. In a third book, (1996) Kawamura discusses both sexes. In the modern patriarchal family in Japan, there was an emphasis on the differences between the sexualities of each member of the family (husband or wife, father or mother, son or daughter). Kawamura demonstrates that this discourse of sexuality fitted well, both with the mobilization of soldiers during the Second World War, and with the mobilization of "corporate warriors" during the postwar period. He tries to show that the Foucault's schema of modernity oppressing sexuality can also be applied to modern Japanese. He has also written a monograph on blind Japanese women shamans (Kawamura 1991), and his introduction to the reprinted edition of a five-volume series, Folklore of Sexuality, is also quite useful (Kawamura 1998b).

Makoto Oda's Sexuality (1996) is a short work in a series entitled "One Word Dictionaries." Like Kawamura's work, it consists mainly of a description of sex during the modernization stage in Japan, rather than exotic sexual behavior from other cultures. Oda seems to have wanted to analyze the term in the Japanese rather than a universal context. Most of his discussion overlaps with Kawamura's, except for issues of homosexuality. Male homosexuality was part of bushidō or samurai culture in medieval Japan, and was widely accepted during in the Edo period. It was still common during the Meiji period, but was banished from the public sphere during the Taishō period. The government did not want to confuse western visitors or be accused of running an "undeveloped" country. Homosexual behavior was treated simply as behavior in the past, but came to be regarded as an element of personal identity in the modern age. This is also an analysis which draws on Foucault.

Postscript

Since the boundaries of this subject are not clear-cut, my review must also be partly interdisciplinary. Many collections of papers include chapters by authors who are not necessarily anthropologists. I apologize for the fact that some of these papers have been included here while others written by anthropologists may have been omitted. Nevertheless, this review illustrates a general trend: while gender studies and the ethnography of women used to be rather neglected areas in Japan, they are not any more, and more and more work has been published since about 1990; the former distinction between gender and sexuality is no longer clear-cut. Many studies use both concepts in their discussion, and this seems to be a
continuing trend.

In considering the question of to what extent a female ethnographer has a privileged insight into the experience of women in the field, a Japanese woman ethnographer is in a unique position. She may be at the same time a researcher and the object of research, as in the work of Kawahashi (1997, 2000). The importance of positionality is also emphasized by Nakatani (1997). Masakazu Tanaka's discussion of satti (1998) raises similar issues, although he is concerned with the position of anthropologists in general. Compared with ethnographies on Japanese gender issues by foreign researchers (e.g. Kondo 1990; Roberts 1994; McVeigh 1997), the Japanese "anthropology at home" of contemporary issues has so far achieved only limited results, and we expect further developments in this area. I hope there will be an increasing amount of work published on the issues of gender and sexuality studies, since these are among the fundamental issues in human life.

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