SOCIOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES
— Started Later but Developing Rapidly —

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Introduction: Scope of This Chapter

If we pick up academic works on the Orient written by Japanese scholars having a sociological or anthropological flavor, more than a few articles and books can be found in the first half of the twentieth century. One of the most well known of these is Gaikan Kaikyo-Ken (General Survey of the Muslim World) edited by the Kaikyo-Ken Kenkyujo (Institute of Islamic Studies) in 1942. That institute was the first purely academic organization on the Islamic affairs in Japan, while some more politically oriented institutes or associations were founded in the same period.

However, sociological and anthropological studies in the strict sense of the term began late in the latter half of the century. Even now, the number of Japanese sociologists and anthropologists who work in the Middle East is much less than the number of scholars in other disciplines. They are also a minority if compared with the number of their colleagues doing research in other regions of the world. Admittedly, such a situation is common to some extent with that of sociology and anthropology in Western countries; still, the Islamic world has historically been less familiar to Japanese than to Europeans.

Therefore, to tell the development of the Japanese sociological and anthropological studies on the Orient in the latter part of the twentieth century is to tell the whole history of that field; its presence remains a small one in the academic world as a whole. Nonetheless, it is the history of a discipline that has expanded its influence in Oriental studies in Japan and also in Japanese sociology and anthropology generally in a short period of time.

It should be noted that many works which can be classified as those of social sciences in a wider sense will not be mentioned in this chapter.1 This chapter concentrates on academic works, based on relatively long-term field

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research by experts in sociology and anthropology and published as articles in purely academic journals or as academic volumes. Recently, there has been a steeply increasing demand for academicians to participate in the international development projects of the ODA and NGOs; thus, scholars are beginning to participate in more practical works, but this new movement is difficult to assess at the moment.

In addition, I should call attention to the fact that the term “Orient” and “Near East” have been rarely used in Japanese sociology and anthropology these past fifty years. Instead, the “Middle East,” “West Asia” and “North Africa” are common terms. Such terminology is different from other disciplines, particularly from those dealing with ancient times of the area. For the sake of brevity, I will use the term “Orient” and “the Middle East” interchangeably in this chapter and disregard the different historical backgrounds of these terms and include works written as Middle East studies in general.

What follows is a schematic description of the subject that puts more emphasis on anthropology than sociology, partly because space is limited and partly because my specialty is in anthropology. More detailed information on this chapter’s subject may be found in works written in Japanese such as Katakura & Matsubara (1996) and Okuyama & Kano (2000).

The Period of Expeditions (1950s to 1960s)

The Kyoto University Scientific Expedition to the Karakoram and Hindukush in 1955 is generally considered the first anthropological field research conducted in the Orient by Japanese. Among the nine resulting volumes on various topics, the team for anthropological studies published one on its linguistic research (Iwamura, Osada & Yamasaki 1961). Another member, T. Umesao, later published the results of his research in the style of a travel account (Umesao 1956a, 1956b). Kyoto University dispatched research missions to the same area also in 1959, 1962-63 and 1965-66 (Oji, Oda & Sueo 1967) and the University of Tokyo sent an expedition in 1967 for the research on irrigation systems in Afghanistan (University of Tokyo, Expedition to South-West Hindukush 1969). Kyoto University made a general survey of the Sahara Desert in 1968-69 (Yamashita 1969; Ishige 1970, 1973).

As is clear in the above history, the 1950s and 1960s were a period of group research. The duration of the research was generally less than half a year, and most of the scholars who participated in the expeditions did not limit their
field of research to the Orient. Members of the expedition parties included a mixture of archaeologists, geographers, historians and linguists; strictly speaking, no anthropologists or sociologists participated. For example, T. Umesawa, who was a member of the Kyoto University Expedition of 1955 and 1968-69, became the first Director-General of the National Museum of Ethnology later in 1974, but his major when he was an undergraduate at Kyoto University was zoology. His case illustrates the general situation that most sociological and anthropological researchers of this period were originally trained in other fields.

Long Term Studies (1960s to 1970s)

In the 1960s, some geographers and historians began long-term field research projects. They also began to specialize in the Orient, limiting their field work to this region.

After initial research in Brazil, a geographer, M. Ono, conducted a two-year field study in an agricultural village in Iran during 1963-65. His field work in Iranian and Afghan villages continued intermittently until the 1990s, through the time of the Iranian Revolution. His method was so unique that it is difficult to find in his theories direct correspondence with the major trends of sociology and anthropology in general. But his many works give us a precious example of a field worker refining his methods in direct response to his experience, as well as providing significant data about continuous changes in Iranian rural societies between the 1960s and 1980s\(^{(4)}\) (Ono 1965, 1967, 1971a \textit{et al.}).\(^{(5)}\)

S. Okazaki, who started his career as a historian, also selected Iranian rural areas as his field of research. His first field work was conducted during 1961 and 1963. Utilizing his background in economic history, he attempted to classify economic structures of Iranian agricultural villages in his early works (Okazaki 1964, 1965, 1968, 1969, 1985a \textit{et al.}). He also paid a great deal of attention to irrigation systems in Iran (Okazaki 1973, 1974, 1985b \textit{et al.}). His continuous research on that subject was later published in a large volume (Okazaki 1988). The fields both Ono and Okazaki selected followed the traditions established by expeditions in the Persian world in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Institute of Developing Economies (formerly the Institute of Asian Economic Affairs) played a large part in the research of this period.\(^{(6)}\) It provided both Ono and Okazaki with funds necessary for research. K. Oiwaka, a geographer who was also funded by the Institute, explored a new field in Israel

M. Katakura majored in geography and conducted a field study among the settled Bedouins in Saudi Arabia during 1968 and 1970. She was a pioneer in anthropological research of the Arab world and her monograph is a classic work of Japanese anthropology on that area (Katakura 1979). Besides publishing many academic articles (Katakura 1973, 1974, 1981, 1982 et al.), she continues to conduct numerous field studies of Muslims in Arab and non-Arab countries including the United States and Canada (Katakura 1988, 1989 et al.). She has also made contributions by organizing research projects, editing collections of theses and educating the public about Arabs and their culture through her introductory books (Aoyagi, Katakura & Sato 1977; Katakura 1987a, 1987b, 1991, 1994, 1995).

M. Miyaji is another anthropologist who began her field research in the Arab world at the end of the 1960s. Miyaji chose the people of the Kabyle in Algeria as the informants of her first field study and has been conducting extensive field work in the Maghrib countries for more than thirty years (Miyaji 1976, 1980, 1985a, 1985b, 1987a et al.). She also has shown from the early stage of her works strong interest in themes such as urbanization, immigration and gender (Miyaji 1977, 1987b, 1988 et al.). She has also written some works on Muslim immigrants based on field work in France (Miyaji 1983 et al.). It is noteworthy that Miyaji is a graduate of the course of anthropology at the University of Tokyo, which means that experts with training in sociological and anthropological research appeared in the field at this time.

Finally, during this period M. Matsubara became the first to conduct field research in Turkey. In 1972 he chose a peasant village in southwest Turkey as his field (Matsubara 1975, 1976 et al.); later, he moved on to the study of the Turkish nomads, the Yörük, in 1979-80 (Matsubara 1983, 1988, 1990 et al.). T. Matsui, specializing in ecological anthropology and having an interest in nomadic life, selected Afghanistan as his field (Matsui 1980; 1984 et al.).

Field Work as the Ordinary Method of Research (1970s and 1980s)

Following the example of Miyaji, a certain number of graduate students in sociology, anthropology and other disciplines of social science began to choose the Orient as their field of research in 1970s. Their written works, published from the 1980s on, made sociological and anthropological studies of the Orient (or the Middle East) established sub-disciplines of both anthropology and
Oriental studies in Japan.

Not that scholars of other disciplines retreated from field research of the Orient. Rather, the number of historians and geographers who dared to adopt a sociological method to supplement traditional methods increased. By now, fieldwork had become one of the most powerful tools of research for most experts regardless of their specialty. At the same time, Japanese graduate students on the Orient studies had come to prefer the Middle East to Europe as the place to study abroad in their younger years.

K. Otsuka opened up a new dimension of anthropological studies of the Arab world in 1980s. After two years of study at a university in Saudi Arabia, he expanded his areas of research to Egypt, Sudan and other countries (Otsuka 1983, 1988, 1990, 1996 et al.). With his articles, which were compiled into four books, and also with a monograph on the Mahdi movement in Sudan (Otsuka 1989, 1995, 2000a, 2000b, 2002), he has attempted to clarify how modern Islam has evolved into being. In these books he generalizes his arguments in an attempt to understand the larger theme, that is, what is modernity for ourselves who are living in twilight time of modernity. His works on so-called “Islamic fundamentalism” have had a particularly large impact on Japanese anthropology in general (Inoue & Otsuka 1994 et al.). It is also noteworthy that he is now training many young graduate students who hope to improve Japanese anthropology on the Orient at Tokyo Metropolitan University, where he himself studied anthropology.

As the Institute of Developing Economies had in the 1960s and 1970s, the Department of Social Anthropology at Tokyo Metropolitan University played an important role in the development of Oriental studies of anthropology in the 1970s and 1980s. Three anthropologists in particular should be mentioned besides Otsuka.

M. Horiuchi, conducting a field study in Morocco in 1970s, focused on saint veneration in Islam as his main theme (Horiuchi 1982, 1985, 1989, 1981, 1999 et al.). He was highly sensitive to issues concerning the nature of anthropological description, which was problematized in the 1980s. In fact, beginning with his studies of life history methods, he has made various attempts to overcome the problems which have been discussed as central to “postmodern” anthropology (Horiuchi 1984, 1990, 1997 et al.). K. Okuno, after field work in Oman in the beginning of the 1980s (Okuno 1985 et al.), conducted intensive research in Upper Egypt where he collected extensive data to clarify the
dynamic social transactions in the networks of rural towns and villages (Okuno 1990 et al.). Y. Shimizu published articles on Egyptian popular beliefs including the Zār cult (Shimizu 1985, 1985b, 1986 et al.), then made a steady community study in a Jordan peasant village that explored various kinds of themes, among which popular belief in spiritual beings has been conspicuous (Shimizu 1989a, 1989b, 1990, 1992a, 1992b et al.).

K. Takaki is another excellent community researcher of anthropology. After finishing a graduate course at the University of Tsukuba, she conducted field work in a village in southern Tunisia in the beginning of the 1980s and in Tunis and its surrounding areas in the following years. Her initial theme was saint veneration and other popular beliefs (Takaki 1985, 1986, 1990, 1992 et al.). Later, she became to pay attention to artifacts and skills in the daily life of the Tunisian people, compiling two monographs and some articles after her second long-term field study in the southern village in the 1990s (Takaki 1997, 2000a, 2000b et al.). Recently she began a study of “microcredit,” which started in Bangladesh and is now rapidly spreading in the North African countries (Takaki 2002).


Weekly and other occasional markets were another new subject of study in this period. As a part of the research project ‘Mechanisms of Cultural Contacts
in the Islamic World,’ T. Hayashi conducted field work in Turkey, Okuno in Egypt, and H. Yajima in Tunisia (Hayashi 1994; Okuno 1990; Yajima 1994). Though most of the authors were not sociologists, they applied sociological methods to their researches.

**Expanding the Horizon of Study (Since 1990s)**

Since the 1970s, Egypt has been for Japanese graduate students one of the most popular countries in which to train for professional scholarship. Partly because of that tradition, we see many sociological and anthropological studies in that country emerging in the early 1990s. Following Otsuka’s research in the Delta and Okuno’s in Upper Egypt, Horiuchi and M. Akahori began studies among the settled Bedouins in the deserts. Akahori has been trying to interpret how Bedouin life in the Western Desert has been transformed through modernization using various kinds of case studies including dwelling patterns, tribal organizations, traditional songs and saint veneration (Akahori 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1996, 2002a, 2002b et al.). Horiuchi conducted a joint study with an archaeological team in the Sinai and published articles about the region’s oral tradition (Horiuchi 1994 et al.).(13) As a sociological approach, Tanada’s study of voluntary village associations in Cairo is based on his field work of 1991-1992 and 1998-1999 (Tanada 1991b, 1994, 1996, 1998, 1999 et al.). A historian, H. Kato, used interviews with peasants and settled Bedouins as supplementary data for his study of nineteenth century Egypt (Kato 1988, 1990, 1997 et al.).


In this period, we can recognize some new themes of study acquiring significance. One is migrant workers within a country or between different countries. A subject first broached by I. Kamozawa (Kamozawa 1978) and T. Nagaba (Nagaba 1975 et al.), and later explored by R. Hara in Iran (1977), Kano
Sociological and anthropological studies in Turkey (1984 et al.) and Miyaji (Miyaji 1983 et al.), was developed further in the 1990s. M. Naito's works on Turkish laborers in Germany are representative (Naito 1996 et al.). In relation to this subject, research about Iranian and other Middle Eastern laborers in Japan are expected to improve, assuming that more experts of the Middle East engage in them. Today the number of such studies is still not large (Komai 1999 et al.). Gender studies based on intensive field work have also increased in significance, but they also have not yet been explored adequately in Japan (Nakanishi 1996 et al.; Murakami 1999 et al.; Nakayama 1999 et al.).

Future Contribution of Japanese Sociology and Anthropology in Oriental Studies

Generally speaking, contemporary Japanese sociological and anthropological studies of the Orient share most of the subjects and themes studied in Western countries, though the number of Japanese experts is not enough to cover all of them equally. At present, it seems difficult to judge how much their Japanese cultural background will influence the trends of research in a distinctive way. Of course, we admit such differences must exist because sociological and anthropological understanding of different cultural situations is only possible by relativizing the cultural preconditions of the researchers themselves, which differ obviously between Japanese and Westerners. In that sense, one may be able to say that Japanese sociologists and anthropologists can offer unique contributions to worldwide Oriental studies.

Anyway, before judging the possibility of such contribution, we should try to change the situation in which the achievements of Japanese Oriental studies are difficult for foreigners to access. Even the highest educational and scholarly works in Japan are presented in Japanese. Fortunately, the situation has been rapidly changing; in the 1990s scholars of the younger generation, particularly of sociology and anthropology, became more highly motivated to write about their research in European languages as well as in Japanese and in native languages of their field including Arabic, Turkish and Persian. In that sense, the “Islamic Area Studies Project,” which lasted from 1997 to 2002 with a Grant-in-Aid for Creative Scientific Research by Japan’s Society for the Promotion of Sciences (JSPS), made great progress in improving that situation. In that project, Japanese sociologists and anthropologists were given many chances to exchange with scholars of different disciplines in Japan and also with colleagues of the
same field from other countries.

We started our studies later than other studies, but we have developed them rapidly, and we believe we can contribute much more to the field of Oriental studies in the near future.

Notes

(1) Some scholars of political and economical sciences like A. Usuki have conducted field work and adopted socio-anthropological viewpoints (Usuki 1998), but space did not allow for treatment of their works in this chapter.

(2) Imanishi (1963) is another volume showing some anthropological research data. Imanishi later became a pioneer of primatology in Japan.

(3) Recently Sueo published a compilation of his studies beginning from this expedition (Sueo 1999).

(4) Ono’s research data from the 1990s have not been published because of his death in 2001.

(5) Ono’s many articles were later compiled into several books (Ono 1971b, 1971c, 1974, 1985, 1990). Ono (1990) was translated into Persian in 1998 (Ono 1998).

(6) Even now many of the scholars in political and economical sciences of the Middle East are researchers or ex-researchers of the Institute of Developing Economies.

(7) Katakura also published a monograph in English before the publication of the Japanese one (Katakura 1977).

(8) Also Y. Tani wrote some articles on a similar theme as part of his study on the pastoral culture of the Mediterranean World (Tani 1984, 1990, 1997).

(9) Recently Shimizu is conducting research on Muslims in Japan along with other field work in South East Asia, particularly in Brunei.

(10) R. Hara also did a study on the irrigation systems in Turkey (H. Hara 1985) and analyzed the influence of the Iranian Revolution on rural societies in some of his articles (R. Hara 1982, 1994 et al.).

(11) N. Nutahara’s essay (1986) is a literary work, but it contains much significant information about the life of rural Egyptians and development of nationality of Egypt.

(12) As mentioned before, Miyagi paid attention to the same subject in the Maghrib countries as an anthropologist since the 1970s (Miyagi 1989 et al.).

(13) Recently he also wrote an article on the oral tradition in Morocco (Horiuchi 2000). See also Takaki (2000c).

(14) See also Nakayama (1995).

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