

# A historical sketch of cultural anthropology in Japan: associations, museums, research projects and textbooks



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Received: 28 August 2022 / Accepted: 8 September 2022 / Published online: 13 October 2022  
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## Abstract

The aim of my presentation is to introduce a brief history of anthropological studies in Japan, particularly focusing on the associations, museums, research projects and textbooks. As for associations, I will describe about the Anthropological Society of Nippon (founded in 1884), the Japanese Society of Ethnology (founded in 1934) and its renamed association, the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology (since 2004). JASCA has approximately 2000 members. Regarding museums, I will pick up mainly National Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku, founded in 1974), as well as Little World Museum of Man (founded in 1983) and National Ainu Museum (*Upopoy*, founded in 2020). With regard to research projects, special research projects and inter-university research projects of Minpaku and panels of JASCA conferences are major targets of analysis. Lastly, I can cite at least 50 textbooks for students and several encyclopedias on anthropology. I will also show the variety of anthropological publications and popular topics in the contemporary book market.

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This article is based on my presentation as one of the keynote speeches at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) Forum, which was held on 23 October, 2021. I owe much information on the following two books—which are actually basic source books for my paper—namely *Bunka Jinruigaku Jiten* (Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology) edited by ISHIKAWA, Eikichi, GAMO Masao, UMESAO Tadao, SASAKI Komei, OBAYASHI Taryo and SOFUE Takao, published in 1987 by Kōbundō, and *Kindai Nihon no Jinruigakushi: Teikoku to Shokuminchi no Kioku* (History of Anthropology in Modern Japan: Memories of Empire and Colony) written by NAKAO, Katsumi, published by Fūkyōsha in 2016.

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**Keywords** Cultural/social anthropology · Ethnology · Association · Museum · Research project · Japan

### Abbreviations

ASN	Anthropological Society of Nippon
AST	Anthropological Society of Tokyo
GHQ	General Headquarters, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers
JASCA	Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology
JSE	Japanese Society of Ethnology
IUAES	International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences

## The dawn of anthropology in Japan

The aim of my presentation is to introduce a brief history of anthropological studies in Japan, particularly focusing on the associations, museums, research projects and textbooks, rather than universities and their professors. This is mainly because anthropology was not a mainstream discipline in the Japanese academia for a long time.

Anthropology was brought to Japan under the name of natural history, which was especially inspired by an American scholar of natural history, Edward Morse, who taught at Tokyo University for 2 years since 1877. He excavated shell mounds of Omori (famous for cord marked pottery = *Jōmon* pottery) and introduced Darwinism. He came back to Japan in 1882, for the purpose of collecting potteries and folk articles of everyday use, which were later stored in Boston Museum and Peabody Museum, respectively. At that time natural history was closely associated with museums.

## Anthropological Society of Tokyo Japanese Society of ethnology

Under the influence of natural history, Anthropological Society of Tokyo (AST, 東京人類学会) was founded in 1884. In 1889, TSUBOI Shogoro went to the U.K. to study anthropology and became a professor at Tokyo University in 1892. TSUBOI brought British anthropology of E. B. Tylor and became president of Anthropological Society of Tokyo in 1896. In 1941, the name was changed to the Anthropological Society of Nippon (ASN, 日本人類学会).

Japanese Society of Ethnology (JSE, 日本民族学会) was separated from the Anthropological Society of Tokyo in 1934. The first institute of ethnology was established at Taihoku Imperial University in 1928. It is noteworthy that it was not at Tokyo Imperial University.

In 1934, Keijō (Gyeongseong, 京城) Imperial University was established and physical/cultural anthropology and sociology were taught by Japanese professors.

In 1934, JSE separated itself from the ASN, as mentioned before, but a joint conference of AST (ASN) and JSE began 2 years later in 1936. It was maintained till 1996. In other words, differentiation of physical and cultural anthropology occurred, but the pace was gradual. Anthropology and ethnology coexisted in the process of colonization.

## Overseas research projects

### Taiwan Province of China

As for colonization, Taiwan became a Japanese colony in 1895. At first, projects of land research and custom & practice research were launched and lasted till 1910s. TORII Ryuzo was the main figure who contacted indigenous people (1896~1899) for the first time. This project was supported by Taiwanese Government-General. We can name MABUCHI Toichi and Furuno Kiyoto who specialized in kinship system and religious practices respectively. Taiwan also functioned as a base for Southern Pacific studies.

### Korea

In 1910, Korea was integrated into Japan due to the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty. The Korean Government-General began custom & practice research projects in the 1920s, in response to the March-First Movement for Independence (1919). Keijo Imperial University opened courses such as science of religion and sociology. Some faculty members and their fields of interest are as follows: AKAMATSU Chijo: Shamanism; AKIBA Takashi: Shamanism; SUZUKI Eitaro: Village, family and festival, and IZUMI Seiichi: First student of Keijo University, who visited Korea, Inner Mongolia of China, and Western New Guinea.

### Micronesia

In 1922, Japan had mandatory rule over certain South Sea islands. Various ethnological research projects were conducted for 30 years till 1944. To name a few scholars, they were SUGIURA Kenichi: Matrilineal system; IMANISHI Kinji: Ecological research in Ponape (Pohnpei) Island; HIJIKATA Hisakatsu: Satawal Island.

### Puppet Manchuria state

In 1932, Manchuria was established as a puppet government. Its “national” ideal was ‘Five Races under One Nation (五族協和)’. Anthropological researches were carried out by the government and also by Kenkoku University (建国大学) which was founded in 1938. In 1942 the Manchuria Society of Ethnology (滿洲民族学会) was organized, which was intentionally approached by the government. OYAMA Hikoichi and OMACHI Tokuzo were conspicuous among others.

### Institute of Ethnic People (民族研究所)

In 1943, Institute of Ethnic People was established by the initiative of OKA Masao and FURUNO Kiyoto, having SHIRATORI Kurakichi (historian) as

Director-General. There were 5 research departments which employed more than 40 scholars. At the same time, Japanese Society of Ethnology was resolved into a foundation named Ethnology Association (民族学協会), being an affiliated organization.

### **Northwest institute (西北研究所)**

In 1944, Northwest Institute was established as a sort of branch office of the Institute of Ethnic People at Zhangjiakou (張家口) in Inner Mongolia of China. ‘Northwest’ meant the northwestern region of China and tightly connected to the colonial strategy toward Inner Asia. IMANISHI Kinji was appointed as director and ISHIDA Eiichiro as the vice director. Many members of the alpine club of Kyoto Imperial University were recruited to organize interdisciplinary expeditions. UME-SAO Tadao was the youngest student member. They were lucky to bring back their research data to Japan after World War II.

## **Continuity and change of anthropology in postwar Japan**

### **Research themes in postwar Japan**

When the war ended, a symposium was held on the origin of Japanese people, organized by the journal of JSE (ISHIDA as moderator), which questioned Japanese mythology. For instance, EGAMI Namio proclaimed that Japan was conquered by the equestrian people.

Interdisciplinary research projects by 6-9 academic associations: Okinawa, Amami Island, Noto Peninsula, Sado Island and continued till 1989.

Overseas expeditions: West Asia and Southeast Asia (1950s), Africa and South America (1960s).

An article by UMESAO Tadao, “Ecological view of history in the comparative study of civilization” made a tremendous shock in the world of criticism in 1957. His article was based on the ethnological fieldwork in Inner Mongolia of China, Afghanistan, and India during and after World War II.

### **Rise of social/cultural anthropology**

Japan was occupied by the GHQ during 1945-1952. Occupation policies were somewhat modelled by an anthropological book on the behavior of Japanese people. This was *Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, written by an American cultural anthropologist, Ruth Benedict, and its translation was widely read by the Japanese, too.

Courses of social/cultural anthropology were opened in some universities, first at Tokyo University (cultural anthropology taught by ISHIDA Eiichiro, IZUMI Seiichi and Nakane Chie) and followed by Tokyo Metropolitan University (social anthropology taught by OKA Masao and SUZUKI Jiro). Private universities such as Meiji University (social/cultural anthropology taught by OKA Masao, SOFUE Takao and GAMO Masao) and Nanzan University (Ethnology taught by NUMAZAWA Kiichi)

began teaching anthropology in the late 1940s and 50s. Kyoto University had several positions for social/cultural anthropologists such as IMANISHI Kinji, UMESAO Tadao and YONEYAMA Toshinao and organized a study group named Konoe Rond. In the 1960s Saitama University started a course for cultural anthropology, and in the 1970s Osaka University (cultural anthropology) and some other universities followed.

Some of the popular themes in the 1960s include 'Japan as vertical society' by NAKANE Chie and structuralism inspired by Claude Lévi-Strauss. A perspective of 'center and periphery' by YAMAGUCHI Masao contributed an anthropological popularity in the 1960s.

In 1968, an international congress of International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) was held in Tokyo and Kyoto, which triggered a movement toward the founding of National Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku).

Though Minpaku was triggered by IUAES, it has a long pre-history.

Institute of Ethnic People was abolished in 1945, though Ethnology Association continued, having SHIBUSAWA Keizo (entrepreneur of a former industrial conglomerate) as president.

In 1964, the Japanese Society of Ethnology (JSE) was re-organized. JSE launched a movement to establish a national museum of ethnology, locomotives of which were IZUMI Seiichi (Tokyo University) and UMESAO Tadao (Kyoto University).

National Museum of Ethnology was founded in 1974 and opened to the public in 1977. There were 5 research departments and about 70 academic members. The background of the establishment of Minpaku was a rapid economic growth and not a militaristic expansion. People were fascinated by the World EXPO 1970 held in Osaka. Minpaku is located in the EXPO Park. The unique display of Minpaku attracted many visitors. New technologies were employed. For example: *videotheque* and digital guide, associated with computer ethnology and visual anthropology.

In 1976, Senri Office of 民族学振興会 (Shibusawa Foundation for Ethnological Studies) was organized to support Minpaku: information service, museum shop, publication, lectures, etc. Senri office became independent as the Senri Foundation in 1983.

Besides Minpaku, there are several ethnological museums in Japan. At first, Tenri University Sankokan Museum (founded in 1925) displays ethnographical and archaeological objects related to the religious mission of Tenrikyo. The Little World Museum of Man (founded in 1983) is an outdoor museum which was advised and initiated by IZUMI Seiichi. Hokkaido Museum of Northern Peoples (opened in 1991) has a big collection donated by Abashiri City, Hokkaido, where the museum is situated. Upopoi National Ainu Museum and Park (opened in 2020) has a symbolic space for ethnic harmony (*upopoi*) in Hokkaido.

## Recent research projects

Lastly, I would like to list up some of the recent research projects in order to show some interests and tendencies among Japanese cultural anthropologists. In addition to the research projects, let me indicate some publications related to encyclopedias and textbooks.

## National Museum of ethnology

### MINPAKU Special Research Projects:

Umbrella theme of “Contemporary Civilization and the Future of Humanity: Environment, Culture and Humans”.

International joint researches implemented with a solution-focused approach to tackle urgent challenges facing our contemporary civilization.

**Info-Forum Museum** To create an interactive, multilateral, multimedia database, Minpaku is embarking on a series of international collaborative research projects based on its large and diverse collection of cultural resources.

**Inter-University Research Projects** As an Inter-University Research Institute, Minpaku often carries out joint research projects with scholars from multiple disciplines and institutions. 27 projects.

### Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology (JASCA, renamed in 2004, 2000 members)

The special themes of *Japanese Review of Cultural Anthropology* are as follows:

2020 “Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Disaster Risk Reduction”.

2020 “An Anthropological Approach to Consumption Practices in Contemporary Asia”.

2019 “An Anthropology of Hospitality”.

2019 “Designing an End-of-Life Care Culture in Contemporary Japan”.

2018 “Dynamics in the Indexical Process of Signification: Perspectives from Linguistic Anthropology”.

2018 “Migration and Transnational Dynamics of non-Western Civil Societies”.

### Encyclopedias and book series

There are 6 encyclopedias on ethnology and cultural anthropology in Japanese.

『文化人類学事典』 弘文堂. 1987.

『世界民族問題事典』 平凡社. 1995.

『世界民族事典』 弘文堂. 2000.

『文化人類学文献事典』 弘文堂. 2004.

日本文化人類学会編『文化人類学事典』 丸善. 2009.

国立民族学博物館編『世界民族百科事典』 丸善出版. 2014.

Several book series on cultural anthropology are as follows:

弘文堂 文化人類学ゼミナール 18冊 邦訳 (translation into Japanese).

紀伊國屋 文化人類学叢書 29冊 邦訳 (translation into Japanese).

岩波講座『文化人類学』 13巻 1996~1998.

## Textbooks

There were about 240 textbooks on anthropology before 2000. There are more than 75 universities and institutes where anthropology is taught in the 2020s. There are more than 50 textbooks on cultural anthropology which are circulated in the market. Book titles are quite diversified, which show a variety of research fields.

## Concluding remarks

The history of anthropology began under the umbrella of natural history. As Japan expanded its territory overseas, anthropological and ethnological researches extended their fields to Taiwan Province of China, Korea, Manchuria, Inner Mongolia of China, and Pacific islands of South Seas. Colonial perspectives were involved implicitly or explicitly in anthropological studies.

Right after the Second World War, anthropological fieldwork was confined to Japanese archipelago and American influence increased. As Japan enjoyed economic recovery, an expedition type of scientific research emerged again, but without militaristic and imperialistic interests.

After JSE co-hosted IUAES with ASN in 1968, the movement toward establishing the National Museum of Ethnology accelerated. A collection of ethnic artefacts displayed in the World Expo 1970 also paved a way. As a result, Minpaku was founded in 1974. Other ethnological museums were opened sporadically. Most recently, National Ainu Museum was established to mark ethnic harmony.

Contemporary trends in anthropology were briefly introduced, taking 'themes' which were picked up in the projects of Minpaku and JASCA's English journal. Problems facing contemporary civilization such as environment, disaster, social welfare and so on. We can discern a drastic change from the era of imperialistic colonization.

Lastly, collaboration between institute/museum and association/foundation for the promotion of cultural anthropology is worthy of attention. I sincerely hope that my brief sketch has at least stimulated your understanding of Japanese ethnology/cultural anthropology in diachronic and/or synchronic context.

**Acknowledgements** No acknowledgement.

**Author's contributions** Hirochika NAKAMAKI conducts all the research and writing.

**Funding** No funding.

## Declarations

**Ethics approval and consent to participate** Not applicable.

**Consent for publication** Not applicable.

**Competing interests** I have no competing interests.

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