

Conclusion

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Conclusion

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More than twenty years have passed since our questionnaire was first sent to the sample areas, and we must now ask ourselves whether the results still retain their original value and are worth publishing in spite of this long lapse of time. My answer is an unqualified "yes." And as we have written enough of the various limitations of this research, I would like now to try to justify this belated publication point by point.

First, this study is not a collection of theoretical articles but a presentation of basic data, and therefore its value should—far from having decreased—have increased as time has gone by.

Second, the time when this research was conducted is very significant. It was conducted just before the radical changes of rural communities all over Japan, brought about by rapid economic growth and the government policy of the depopulation of villages. Our informants seemed to have had vivid recollection of many old customs and institutions. It would be much more difficult, even impossible, to obtain such information now, since many of these old men may no longer be alive.

Third, the contents of our questionnaire were very unique compared to other research based on questionnaires, in that most questions were concerned with social aspects, especially with *ie* and the interrelations of *ie*, kinship and marriage. These were, and still are, relatively new kinds of data, as Ōbayashi pointed out in the last chapter. We have to admit that the quality of the questionnaire was not well refined and left much to be desired, but some questions nevertheless had high heuristic value.

Fourth, the number of samples, 1,113, was large enough to have revealed some distinctive features that had gone unnoticed and also question some previous generalizations that had been based on a much smaller number of examples.

Fifth, one of the main uses of this study may be as an introductory to general survey preliminary to an intensive study of a particular area. Since the number of foreign researchers who want to conduct fieldwork in rural communities is increasing, this would be a useful handbook for them. The lag between the research and the publication may be a disadvantage, but it might be compensated for by the new perspectives gained by this distance in time.

Lastly, interest in the regional differences of the Japanese people and in Japanese culture seems to have revived in various disciplines. Since Ōbayashi has already stressed this renewed interest in the last chapter, I would like to add one more example. A project with the title "An Investigation into Methods of Study with regards to Regional Differences of the Japanese People" was granted research fund by

the Ministry of Education in 1981 and the report was published in 1982.¹⁾ Its contributors consisted of four physical anthropologists; a cultural anthropologist, Professor Takao Sofue of the National Museum of Ethnology; a linguist, an archaeologist and a geologist. This composition of the project itself reminds us of the interdisciplinary cooperations during the 1950s and early 60s. Moreover, Professor Sofue's contribution to the report was mostly concerned with our own project, and it favourably assessed the methods we had used. Most of the distribution maps from our original articles, which appear in Chapter 6 of this study, were also reprinted in that report.

Apart from that study, we have also noticed that our early reports and maps have been cited here and there. It thus appears that, after all, our tentative and early results have become one of the main sources of reference for studies of regional differences in Japan. We thus thought we could contribute to a wider readership outside Japan by publishing the complete original data in English and in the form of codified figures. This, then, is the main reason why we have dared to publish these materials after so many years.

1) Omoto, K. (ed.), *Nihonjin no Chūikisei ni kansuru Kenkyū Hōsaku no Kentō*, University of Tokyo, March 1982.