

Preface

journal or publication title	Senri Ethnological Studies
volume	79
page range	i- v
year	2012-03-30
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/10502/00009051

Preface

Even today, there are parts of the United States in which horse-drawn buggies can still be seen driving about. The people holding the reins of those buggies are the Amish or Old Order Mennonites groups of Anabaptists (radical religious reformers) who immigrated to America from Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, seeking freedom of religion. One of these churches—the Old Order Amish—are wary about the trappings of modern civilization, declining to use televisions, computers and telephones, shunning higher education and the Social Security system, and opposing war on account of their assertion of non-violence. They live in rural areas while sensing the breath of all living things and hold dear the ideal of daily mutual aid so that everyone in the community, including senior citizens and children, can live with peace of mind. Though they have often been the source of controversy in the United States, greater recognition has been given in recent years to their ideals of daily mutual aid and the practice of forgiveness.

“The thing I like the most is caring.” That was one of the comments written by children I encountered when I visited a one-room Amish school in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in the fall of 2008. Amidst their old-fashioned way of life, the children busily ran about delivering food to “Big Father’s House,” built on an adjacent plot as a residence for their retired grandparents, as well as taking care of animals and helping can fruit.

In recent years, changes have been seen in the lifestyle of such “stubborn people.” Instead of just turning their backs on contemporary society, the Amish have started to transmit their own beliefs to the outer world. One catalyst for such changes was a shooting incident that took place in a one-room Amish school in October 2006, in which several children were killed and/or injured by an “English” (i.e., non-Amish) person living in the region. What drew attention was how the Amish community, right after the incident forgave the criminal and his family.

Thereafter, there have been debates and discussions about the meaning of the pacifism lying at the foundation of “Amish forgiveness.” Furthermore, since the incident, increasing opportunities have been made available for non-Amish to transmit messages to the Amish. In addition, the various Anabaptist sects—which had split from one another on account of different interpretations of how to put the words of the Bible into practice in daily life—have come to play a role connecting society in general with the Old Order Amish. At present, some of the different Anabaptist sects cooperate in carrying out activities assisting people in disaster-stricken and war-torn areas around the world. Items produced through the cooperative activity of a people who had once insisted on living on the sidelines have now begun to connect the Amish to the larger world beyond.

What do the Amish cherish—and what do they do to realize it—as they spend much of their time each day getting together in one another’s homes, enjoying home-made food with other members of the community, talking with each other, and vigilantly maintaining group coordination and harmony? We explored such issues as the well-being (comfortable way of life) and life design of the Amish, along with Stephen E. Scott himself a member

of the conservative group, The Old Order River Brethren, as well as researchers who have conducted fieldwork surveys of Amish and related groups.

This collection of papers is based on the presentations, comments, and discussions conducted at the international research forum, “The Amish Way of Living Together in the 21st Century: Mutual Help and International Cooperation” June 21, 2009 at the National Museum of Ethnology (NME) and the succeeding cooperative research conducted by the “Anthropology of Caring and Education for Life,” a core research project for FY11-13, part of the core research of NME: Anthropological Studies of Inclusion and Autonomy in the Human World. The forum was held to publicize the results of three projects: a study on the “Anthropological Perspectives on Well-being and Life Design,” an inter-university research project for FY08-11, “Anthropology of Life Design and Well-being,” a core research project for FY08, and “Historical Anthropology on the Creation of Multifunctional Spaces for Welfare and Education in Multicultural Aging Societies,” a research project promoted with a grant-in-aid for scientific research for FY09-11. The research forum was organized by NME and sponsored by the Shibunkaku Art Museum in Kyoto, which concurrently ran a special exhibition, *The Amish Way of Life*.

The forum invited Stephen Scott, who has studied the Amish lifestyle for many years at The Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies in Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, USA), to enlighten the participants on three topics: (1) the role played by the thoughts and practices of mutual help and forgiveness in developing people’s relationships within and between communities, (2) the factors that have enabled these practices to work well, and (3) how these practices might be applied in other settings.

The forum opened with welcome remarks by NME Director-General Ken’ichi Sudo and introductory remarks by Nanami Suzuki on “The Amish Way of Living Together: Life Design Aiming at Well-being.” Stephen Scott then gave a keynote lecture entitled, “The Amish Way of Life in Modern American Society.” Comments were later delivered by Chiho Oyabu (Gifu University) on “The Amish Way of Life and Cooperation,” Shin-ichiro Ishida (Tokyo Metropolitan University) on “The Pacifism of Anabaptist People and Aid Practice in Africa,” and Motoi Suzuki (NME) on “The Amish Way of Supporting Others: From the Viewpoint of Post-Development Theory.” Afterwards, a general discussion was held, with participation by more than 210 people, including ordinary citizens.

The forum clarified what the Amish cherish as well-being based on “God’s will” and what they do to realize it. One effort of the Amish is to refine arts to improve communication with each other, as the basis of cultivating relationships and mutual help in a changing society. The findings of the forum ought to give us hints about the proper pursuit of well-being and life design, particularly in the sense of working together in a multicultural, aging society, in which conflicts are experienced based on the difference of beliefs, life history, and so on.

By making presentations and participating in the discussions, we have written these papers as follows.

In Chapter I, “Ideas and Practices of Care Extended by Anabaptist People:

Cooperation toward Developing Various Methods of Communication,” Suzuki considers the point that the characteristic features of the Old Order Amish such as their method of communication and their way of moving reflects their thinking about the relationship among people as well as the relation between people and their environment. In order to maintain that environment and live according to their belief, they need to care for the various elements that are indispensable to it. She explores how Anabaptist people have developed ways to coordinate and collaborate for the purpose of living together based on their common beliefs.

In Chapter II, “The Amish Way of Life in Modern American Society,” Scott explains the characteristic feature of the life practices of Old Order Amish, its meaning and the changes based on a site investigation that had been done over many years. He traces the pressures that Amish have faced in preserving their ways with their language, education, involvement with the government, and care for their sick and elderly people. He examines whether the Amish will change and if they will survive in this modern world of the 21st century.

In Chapter III, “Analysis of Amish Family-Based Education: Through the “Children’s Section” of *Family Life Magazine*,” Oyabu and Sugihara examine the Old Order Amish purpose and method of promoting values to the next generation. Since Old Order Amish value education at home, the authors focus on a home education magazine and base their work on a site investigation done with Old Order Amish living in Pennsylvania.

In Chapter IV, “A Confluence of Alternatives: The Merging of Mennonites and Peace Projects in Kenya,” Ishida examines through his fieldwork the circumstances where Mennonite support activities based on the beliefs of Anabaptists are practiced in a poverty-stricken region in cooperation with peace projects. He makes it clear how the pacifist thinking of Anabaptists and their way of support has directly affected and indirectly influenced specific activities conducted by various bodies in Africa.

By conducting the studies described above, we explored ways to carry out coordination and collaboration for the purpose of creating a living space for people in a diversified, changing, multicultural society, while valuing the beliefs deeply connected with their identities. Community is a living thing, being created constantly by people. One of the keys to the Anabaptist community doing well is the creation of a variety of times and places for mutual care, and to reach this aim, they seem to have developed numerous ways of communication.

The international research forum program is shown on the next page.

International Research Forum Program

“The Amish Way of Living Together in the 21st Century:
Mutual Help and International Cooperation”

June 21, 2009, National Museum of Ethnology

- 13:30 – 13:40 **Welcome Remarks**
Ken'ichi Sudo
Director-General, *National Museum of Ethnology*
- 13:40 – 14:00 **Introductory Remarks to the Forum**
“The Amish Way of Living Together: Life Design Aiming at Well-being”
Nanami Suzuki
National Museum of Ethnology
- 14:00 – 15:00 **Lecture**
“The Amish Way of Life in Modern American Society”
Stephen E. Scott
Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies
- 15:00 – 15:15 **Intermission**
- 15:15 – 15:30 **Comments I**
“The Amish Way of Life and Cooperation”
Chiho Oyabu
Gifu University
- 15:30 – 15:45 **Comments II**
“The Pacifism of Anabaptist People and Aid Practice in Africa”
Shin-ichiro Ishida
Osaka University
- 15:45 – 16:00 **Comments III**
“The Amish Way of Supporting Others:
From the Viewpoint of Post-development Theory”
Motoi Suzuki
National Museum of Ethnology
- 16:00 – 16:55 **General Discussion**
- 16:55 – 17:00 **Closing Remarks**
Nanami Suzuki

Acknowledgement

At the international research forum, it was a great honor for us to welcome Stephen Scott, himself a member of an Anabaptist group, the Old Order River Brethren. Mr. Scott, a research and Administrative Associate at the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies in the United States (Elizabethtown College, Pennsylvania), has studied the Amish lifestyle for many years and spoke to us about the way of life that the Amish have continued to lead.

Also, thanks to the valuable efforts of Chiho Oyabu, one of the commentators from Gifu University, the forum could be held in conjunction with an exhibition on *The Amish Way of Life*, with special cooperation from the Kyoto Shibunkaku Art Museum. We would like to express our deep appreciation for their efforts.



Picture 1 A view of the lecture of Stephen E. Scott International Research Forum, “The Amish Way of Living Together in the 21st Century: Mutual Help and International Cooperation”
June 21, 2009, the National Museum of Ethnology



Picture 2 A view of panel discussion, International Research Forum, “The Amish Way of Living Together in the 21st Century: Mutual Help and International Cooperation”
June 21, 2009, the National Museum of Ethnology