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Introduction: ***Shaen* in Contemporary Japanese Society**

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WHY WE FOCUS ON *SHAEN*?

This volume studies the human relationship and the organisational culture of association in contemporary Japanese society – at home and abroad. The major emphasis is placed on the concept of *shaen*.

Shaen is a new terminology developed from two terms, namely *chien* and *ketsuen*. *Chien* indicates the social ties in a local community, typically represented by *mura* (village) and *machi* (town). *Ketsuen* suggests the relation among family members and relatives, who are related by birth. *Ie* (household) also represents a blood-based group, though in a strict sense it may not be categorised as such because servants are usually included as members of the household. In the meantime, *shaen* is used as a handy term, which generally implies the relationship found in a business circle. One remarkable aspect is that although the terms such as *chien* and *ketsuen* are found in any ordinary dictionaries, *shaen* has not been listed yet in *Kōjien*, which is regarded as the most standard and comprehensive Japanese language dictionary. In that sense, therefore, it can be said that while *shaen* has already established its presence as a very familiar concept, it still has not obtained a citizenship as a legitimate term in Japanese language.

The concept of *shaen* was given birth to in the early 1960s in Japan. A cultural anthropologist, Prof. Toshinao Yoneyama, is the person who coined the term. His version of *shaen* did not necessarily mean a relationship found in a business community, rather suggested broader sense. When he read a paper at the annual meeting of the Japanese Society of Ethnology in 1963, he tried to share that view with others. When he was asked about the English word for *shaen* at that time, he answered almost immediately without much thinking that the most appropriate English translation would be sodality, which was a term used in anthropology in rare circumstances. The academic concept of *shaen* developed by Prof. Yoneyama, therefore, meant associations found in a wide range of organisations, including *kō* (religious or financial group), *kumi* (group) and clubs, as well as in business corporations (See Prof. Yoneyama's comment in the following chapter).¹⁾

On the contrary, *shaen* is regarded in general as a term meaning a relation in business community. Such a definition has been often used in journalism starting

from the 1960s. We, therefore, would like to take a view that there are two kinds of definition for *shaen*: the one proposed by Prof. Yoneyama, which has broader implications; and the other, of which implications are more restricted. Anthropological term of *shaen* is *kessha-en* (group ties) in a broader sense, while it is commonly used as *kaisha-en* (company ties) in a narrower sense.²⁾

This publication mainly deals with *shaen* with broader implications. Thus the case studies presented here vary in contents. One paper discusses the human relationships in a company, and others show voluntary-base civic activities. One of the reports tries to compare the club activities in overseas Japanese communities and the Chinese counterparts, and another study compares new religious groups, which are formed in Japan and are now on the course of globalisation, with the corporate culture. In any case, one remarkable features of this publication is that human relationships beyond the scope of companies are taken into account under the theme of *shaen* culture.

Why, then, are we focusing on *shaen* with broader implications? There are two major reasons. The emergence of voluntary groups is the first reason. Voluntary groups have been formed in the peripheral of business corporations and government organisations that have traditionally bragged about their well-organised systems. The groups, then, have gradually expanded the range of activities and become widely recognised in the society. Such a movement has strongly affected on the society as a whole, and we now even witness traditionally male-oriented companies have begun to employ female staff for jobs with a possibility of promotion to managerial posts. It also became distinguishably noticeable that citizens act either for or against the local authorities. Secondly, with the development of information technology and the globalisation of the society, the Japanese *shaen* groups have gained the presence in overseas countries, while undergoing a constant metamorphosis. Groups, which fall under such a category, may be an overseas Japanese community, which keeps some distance from a business corporation, or may be a network group that even does not belong to such community. Or in some cases, it may be Japanese new religious groups that are gaining popularity among the non-Japanese.

It was during the period of rapid economic growth, when *shaen* has remarkably developed, and has even surpassed *chien*, such as village and town, and *ketsuen* such as household. The term *shaen* was born during this period and became the one exclusively suggesting company ties, might be an inevitability of history, to employ a Marxist notion. During that period, *shaen* typically represented *kaisha* (company), and company funerals became the quintessence of the *kaisha* culture. However, with some signs of Japanese economy's declining, the bursting of bubble economy, and IT industry working as an engine to drive the economy and society on a global scale, the concept of *shaen* that only focuses on a relation in business community seems to be losing relevance. The employees began to doubt about the perpetuity of company and life-long employment. In this way the validity of *kaisha-en* is being eroded. Women, citizens, and overseas Japanese and non-Japanese are

now torchbearers of *kessha-en* discussed in this publication, which may be another inevitability of history.

CONTENTS OF THIS VOLUME

This volume consists of chapters based on the following three sub-themes: “Voluntary Associations”; “Overseas Japanese Communities”; “Gender, Company and Religion”.

The first section, “Voluntary Associations” contains three papers, and each of which focuses on voluntary groups formed by local citizens who are actively working, either for or against, projects led by municipal authorities. The case study in Kyoto (Chapter 1) illustrates a civic movement opposing the construction of the *Ponte des artes* bridge advocated by the local government. Case studies done in Kawasaki (Chapter 2) and in Takefu (Chapter 3) demonstrate the civic activities initiated within the administrative framework.

The three papers in the second section, “Overseas Japanese Communities” are the case studies conducted respectively in Britain and Singapore. The case in Britain covers the Japanese women who escaped from their own country (Chapter 4). And the case studies in Singapore illustrate two kinds of Japanese living there: Japanese who temporarily reside in Singapore with a view to coming back to Japan (Chapter 5); and Japanese who became permanent residents, and stayed there for the rest of their lives (Chapter 6).

The third section, “Gender, Company and Religion” observes the company culture from the perspective of “gender” (Chapter 7), “ritual” (Chapter 8), and in the final chapter (Chapter 9), the company culture is compared analogically with a religious organisation. The first two papers present *shaen* in the narrow sense, and the third paper tries to examine a group of *shaen* with broader implications through Sūkyō Mahikari, one of the Japanese new religions.

THE 12th MEETING OF JAPAN ANTHROPOLOGY WORKSHOP (JAWS)

At the 12th meeting of JAWS held between March 10 and 14, 1999 at the National Museum of Ethnology, Japan, the following panel discussions were organised along with the one entitled “The Anthropology of Japanese Organisations” (Co-ordinators: Nakamaki Hirochika & Mitchell Sedgwick).

1. Japanese Disciplinary Perspectives and International Discourses (Co-ordinator: Pamela Asquith, University of Alberta, Canada)
2. *Mono kara mita nihon bunka* (Co-ordinator: Jane Cobbi, CNRS, France)
3. The Anthropology of Social Policy in Japan (Co-ordinator: Roger Goodman, University of Oxford, Great Britain)
4. Perceptions and Representations of the Body in Japanese Culture (Co-ordinator: Josef Kyburz, CNRS, France)

5. This Sporting Life: Sport, Society and State in Modern Japan (Co-ordinator: William Kelly, Yale University, U.S.A.)
6. Popular Culture in Japan: Change and Continuities (Co-ordinator: Wendy Smith, Monash University, Australia)

It also should be mentioned that the sub-panel discussion “Informal Activity in (Formal) Japanese Organisations” co-ordinated by Dr. Sedgwick, presented the following reports.

Dixon Wong, University of Hong Kong
Japanese Expatriates as a “Crowded Category”: Power Politics among Japanese Male Expatriates of Yaohan Hong Kong

Brian Moeran, Copenhagen Business School
Markets, Hierarchies, Networks, and Frames: In/Formal Organisation in a Japanese Advertising Agency

David Slater, Sophia University
Informal Structure at a Public, Working-Class High School: How Did It All Get So Political?

Brigitte Stegger, University of Vienna
Dozing in Parliament

Jane Bachnik, National Institute of Multimedia Education, Chiba
Impediments to the Information Technology Revolution in Japanese Higher Education

The Japanese version of “The Anthropology of Japanese Organisations” will be published as a single publication by Tōhō Shuppan in Osaka.

Notes

- 1) See a chapter entitled “*Shaen no jidai (Age of Shaen)*” in Yoneyama, Toshinao (1994) *Dōjidai no jinruigaku (Anthropology in the Same Age)*, Tokyo: NHK Books, pp. 105-129.
- 2) See discussions about *shaen* in the following articles:
Inoue, Tadashi (1987) “*Shaen no ningen kankei (Human relationship of shaen)*” In Kurita, Yasuyuki (ed.) *Nihonjin no ningen kankei (Human Relationship of the Japanese)*, Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, pp. 244-259. Ueno, Chizuko (1987) “*Eraberu en, erabenai en (Association that can/can’t choose)*” In Kurita, Yasuyuki (ed.), *ibid.*, pp. 226-243. Nakamaki, Hirochika (1992) *Mukashi daimyō, ima kaisha (Feudal Lords in the Past, Company at Present)*, Kyoto: Tankōsha, pp. 142-148. Hioki, Kōichirō (1998) “*Shaen kyōdōtai no genzai (The Present of*

Shaen Community) In Nakamaki, Hirochika (ed.) *Kyōdōtai no 20 seiki (20th Century of Community)*, Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, pp. 206-220. Takada, Masatoshi (1998) “‘*Zen-kindai* nostalgia’ *no seishin antei sōchi: Nihon to America ni okeru taishū-shakai-ka to kyōdōtai* (“Mental Stability Device for ‘Pre-modern Nostalg’: Socialisation of Mass Society and Community in Japan and U.S.A.” In Nakamaki, Hirochika (ed.), *ibid.*, pp. 251-271.)

