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Introduction to Part II

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Under the recent process of globalization and the influences of nation states' policies, most of the world's foraging societies are now facing rapid changes not only to their own traditional subsistence economies, but also in their intra-/inter-social relations, cosmology, social roles, and even their very identity as hunter-gatherers. Gender relations and roles are in no way unaffected by such contemporary circumstances.

Owing to the pioneering works of Simone de Beauvoir and Margaret Mead, various questions about gender have been studied; for example, the universality of the gender division of labor, the binary opposition of female and male, and the idea of male dominance. However, problems of gender roles and relations associated with cultural dynamics have been least discussed so far. Prompted by these considerations, the session on 'Gender and the Dynamics of Culture' was organized at the Eighth International Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies (CHAGS 8) held in Osaka in October 1998. Part II of this volume is the product of this session, and examines gender relations and roles in contemporary foraging societies through the dynamics of culture from different viewpoints.

Imamura, dealing with the !Gui and !Gana, the least changed of the societies considered here, examines extramarital sexual relationships. Focusing on !Gui and !Gana folk-interpretations of human reproduction and the concept of 'dirt' (disease), she clarifies the means by which illegitimate children are incorporated into father-child relationships, and the significance of the explicit approval of extramarital relationships in !Gui and !Gana society.

Quraishy and Venkateswar present case studies of drastically changing foraging societies under the control of the Indian government: the former of the Alu Kurumba, the latter of the Onge and the Andamanese. Quraishy, focusing on the socio-economic changes due to resettlement and the economic transition from foraging to different economic pursuits directed by national and state policies, examines changes in the gender dynamics of the Alu Kurumba. She points out that their original, simple, egalitarian institutions, based on asymmetric but complimentary relations between men and women, are slowly being replaced by structures that are unequal in both economic and social spheres. Moreover, she concludes that the new cultural construction of gender roles and behaviors reduces women's ability to function effectively.

Venkateswar explores gender relations among the Onge and the Andamanese in the Andaman Islands as manifest in their everyday behaviors and practices against a backdrop of the intervention of the Indian Government's welfare authorities. The

Andamanese have generated an infinite variety of sexual strategies, including drinking and sexual promiscuity, in the interest of reproducing themselves so as to exist as a viable community. Onge men are complicit in attempts to assimilate them to the mores of mainstream Indian society, while Onge women are resistant to such efforts by the welfare officers of the Indian Government. Thus, Venkateswar shows that their positionality in relation to the welfare system results in different ways in which Onge men and women are implicated in the forms of subjection, and suggests that every society and gender can develop different strategies to produce new social formations in the pursuit of objective interests.

In contrast, Fedorova and Yamada explore the continuity of gender ideology through cultural dynamics. Among the Mansi, who were 'decultured' under the policies of the Soviet regime, interest in traditional culture is being revived thanks to the lifting of many ideological restrictions. Fedorova, describing the rules of behavior for women, some of which still apply in remote villages, concludes that even some young people are beginning to follow their traditions, and that there has been no breach of the continuity of traditional customs.

Similarly, among the Ainu in Hokkaido, who have developed cultural revitalization movements since the Second World War, the traditional gender ideology has been handed down. Yamada, exploring the cultural revitalization movements of the Ainu and gender roles in those movements, suggests that a dualistic gender ideology, backed by egalitarian and complementary relations between the genders, has been kept as the core of their mentality.

Thus, the discussions and conclusions presented in these chapters show that gender relations and roles in the process of the dynamics of culture among foraging societies have been formed and reformed into an infinite variety of configurations under the constraints of specific circumstances. That diversity, a human characteristic in itself, however, indicates that we can make few generalizations about foraging societies but only discuss the specific details of each society.