

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

DIJ Social Science Study Group



Wednesday, 8. February 2012, 18.30 h

Hiroe Kihara and Chika Sano, Kwansai Gakuin University

Urban-Rural Relations in Contemporary Japan

In rural sociology and agricultural sociology in Japan today, the transformation of rural societies in response to the demand of urban consumer has emerged as a major topic for discussion. Does this transformation simply mean the collapse of traditional values, norms, lifestyles that have characterized rural societies? How can we establish constructive relationships between urban and rural people? In this session, two speakers working on this issue based on their respective fieldworks will present some of their research findings from sociological perspective.

1. *Hiroe Kihara*

Reconfiguration of a Regional Community through Preservation of Traditional Dance

— **A Case Study of a Regional Community in Seto Inland Sea** —

The purpose of this presentation is to examine how such practices that aim to preserve “traditional culture” function in the everyday life of a regional community in Japan. Today, those areas that retain world heritage or important cultural property are attracting an increasing number of tourists. Thus, it is now expected for regions around Japan to preserve and utilize “traditional things” as regional resources. On the other hand, however, the promotion of regional culture in this way is also often criticized as “commodification of culture”, as it may lead to the loss of authenticity of such culture.

In this talk, I will analyze whether the practices of preserving “traditional culture” work simply to respond to the image of such culture as tourists recognize it. With reference to a case study of traditional dance actually utilized as a resource for tourism, I will examine how such practices have influenced the everyday life of the regional community concerned.

Hiroe Kihara is a doctoral student at Graduate School of Sociology, Kwansai Gakuin University. Her research concerns the preservation and utilization of local knowledge in regional community in Japan.

2. *Chika Sano*

License to Kill?

**— Human - Animal Relations in Japanese Cattle Farming after
Foot-and-Mouth Disease —**

On April 20, 2010, an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) occurred in Miyazaki prefecture. To prevent further spread of the infection, approximately 290,000 cows and pigs were culled. Cattle farmers, who are usually far removed from the act of killing animals, experienced mass killing of animals on their farms. To investigate changing human-animal-relations, this paper focuses on farmers' views on "slaughtering" and "killing" animals before and after experiencing the FMD disaster on Miyazaki.

First, this paper describes the meanings of owning cows for beef cattle farmers, which have changed as the ways of producing meat have been gradually transformed. Second, based on my interviews with farmers, I investigate how their views toward the life of animals changed after the experience of culling in the FMD crisis. In conclusion, the moral dilemmas farmers face when sending off cows for slaughter are emphasized as an important aspect of their everyday lives.

Chika Sano has been researching human-animal relations in the livestock industry from the standpoint of sociology at Graduate School of Sociology, Kwansai Gakuin University. The core themes of her research include the dilemma of engagements with beef cattle farming, structural discrimination, and qualitative surveys. She conducted field surveys in Hokkaido, Iwate, Miyazaki, Kagoshima and Kyoto between 2005 and 2011 on these themes.

The DIJ Social Science Study Group is a forum for young scholars and Ph.D. candidates in the field of Social Sciences organized by Maren Godzik and Barbara Holthus. All are welcome to attend, but registration (godzik@diptokyo.org) is appreciated.

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