

Opening Address for the Development Aid Workshop

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Among industrialized countries, Japan is exceptional in that anthropology has very little involvement in aid programs. This is even more surprising when we consider that Japan has been one of the largest donor countries for the last decade. How should we consider this fact? I wish this fact would become a matter of concern for aid agencies in Japan.

As Japan's assistance has broadened its scope of aid programs, and the number of Japanese aid specialists involved has increased, many Japanese anthropologists have had increasing contact with them abroad, and have come to have more concern on development issues than before.

More and more young Japanese researchers and graduate students engaged in anthropology have become interested in this type of "practicing anthropology." Anthropologists while staying in cities or rural areas abroad are far more often than before approached by residents on how to obtain know-hows and financial support for improving their living conditions.

With a few exceptions, however, Japan's aid agencies and anthropologists never cross paths, which seems to reveal one of the distinctive features of Japan's assistance.

As reflected in the relationship between American anthropologists and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), American anthropologists have always been involved in their government's aid programs, responding to high expectations and demands from the government and aid agencies. This does not mean, however, that anthropologists have been uncritical of development schemes. They have withdrawn from projects if they felt their professional ethics as anthropologists was being jeopardized.

In the case of northern European countries, although the amount of international assistance they give is not as large, donors have been giving

active roles to anthropologists to conduct substantial basic social research.

Reflecting on earlier development assistance which took a modernization approach emphasizing economic and technological development, industrialized countries are now conducting people-centered development assistance under a new diagram which is marked by such key words as “social development,” “human development,” “grassroots,” and “participatory development.” JICA also has determined that its structural reform correspond with this trend. It shifted into a new organizational structure from January 2000.

From an anthropologist’s standpoint, it is apparent that social research is the weakest among all fields within JICA-related projects and has been neglected. The characteristics of conventional Japanese assistance are epitomized by this fact, and for that reason, aid agencies and anthropologists have so far had limited contact.

I, however, feel signs of change when speaking personally to people in JICA. As an anthropologist, and in expectation of the improvement under the new structure, I would like to take this opportunity to express my concern for the collaborative work between JICA activities and anthropology.

When I took office as director general of this Museum last year, I immediately proposed to develop “anthropology in action” or “practical anthropology” in the Museum and also in Japan. This workshop is one of the museum projects initiated in line with my proposal.

It is my impression through my field experiences in Kenya that development projects undertaken by Danish and Swedish agencies in Kenya are highly appreciated by the local people, and thus presumably very successful. This is in spite of the fact that Denmark and Sweden fund these projects to a much lesser extent than Japan.

The purpose of this workshop is to discuss the two aspects of development projects. The first relates to the role of social sciences such as cultural anthropology and sociology in development policy and projects as well as

the relationships between development agencies and universities or research institutes in Denmark, Sweden, Japan, and other countries.

The second relates to how to implement successful development projects, focusing on exploring the overall approaches in general and evaluation methods in particular that have made these projects successful, and the contributions of cultural anthropologists and sociologists in each case.

It is hoped that this workshop will identify those areas in which Japanese development agencies can improve their approaches and evaluation methods so that Japanese contributions may be more effective and relevant to local peoples.

Here for this workshop we have guest speakers, Dr. Neil Webster from Denmark, Mr. Tomas Kjellqvist from Sweden, and Mr. Sato Kan Hiroshi from Japan. Last year, I sent Prof. Kishigami to Denmark and Sweden to collect information about the past and current situation in which social scientists have been involved in development activities, and also to get in touch with development specialists with social science background who might accept our invitation to come over to this museum to tell us their experiences.

Busy as you are, Neil and Tomas made time to attend this meeting. I would like to say many thanks to you. I am sure that we will learn many things from your experiences and knowledge, which I hope would be instrumental in establishing more promising cooperative relationship between cultural-social anthropologist and sociologists in Japan and Japan's development agencies to bring about effective and appropriate kind of development activities.

Thank you for your attention and please enjoy the workshop.