

INTRODUCTION

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Nearly 30 years ago, in 1967, J. Tanaka embarked on his research on the ecological anthropology of the !Gana and !Gui San in the Xade Area, in the mid western part of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, Botswana. He introduced to us their self-sufficient hunting and gathering economy, social structure, demography, and their cultural value system (Tanaka, 1976, 1980). The primary interest which motivated these studies was to elucidate the way of humans thoroughly dependent on the “blessings of nature.” This interest was deeply rooted in the paradigm of human evolution which had developed under the distinguished influence of primate socio-ecology in Japan (Itani, 1988). Thus, Tanaka, while recognizing that “certainly the ancestors of the modern hunter-gatherers must themselves have gone through some social changes during the last 10,000 years,” confidently stated that:

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the ethnographic facts of the present-day hunter-gatherers hold many important keys for us as we try to reconstruct man’s past history. Particular concerning the early stage of evolution of human society, our only resource are the modern hunting and gathering societies. (Tanaka, 1980: 138)

In the last decade the ecological/evolutionary paradigm which had characterized many articles on the San, the most prominent of which is by R. B. Lee (Lee, 1979), have been subject to serious criticism by so-called “revisionists” (Wilmsen, 1983, 1989; Wilmsen & Denbow, 1990). We do not here intend to scrutinize a series of debates between the “traditionalists” and the “revisionists” (e. g., Solway & Lee, 1990; Kent, 1992). We have to admit that the previous studies of ecological anthropology on the San have been biased to some degree, in that they have concentrated on the homeostatic mechanism of adaptation within a closed system, while having paid relatively little attention to either the historic changes or the persistent contacts with the outside. For instance, although Tanaka pointed out that the !Gana people had had more contact with the Kgalagadi and some of them had raised goats or cultivated *tsama* melon, ‘!nan’, he failed to offer substantive data on other subsistence activities than hunting/gathering. Collecting the historic records on the contact of the !Gui and the !Gana with the Kgalagadi was also beyond his ecologically-oriented scope.

However, we cannot agree with the “escalation” of the revisionist argument along the line of political economy, which came to insist that the San have been the undermost class exploited by the Bantu through the last millenium all over the Kalahari. Nor can we agree with their “narrow archaeologism” or “uniformitarian conclusion” (Tanaka, 1990) which takes little account of the value of the

ecological/anthropological theories extracted from the ethnographic details of the extant San hunter-gatherers. So far as the !Gui and the ||Gana are concerned, we believe the following four points still hold critical significance for the theory of ecological anthropology on the hunter-gatherers: (a) larger contribution to the caloric intake from gathering activity than from hunting, (b) frequent fission and fusion of residential groups, as well as the lack of any kind of social unit with stable membership except the nuclear family, (c) the vagueness of territoriality (in spite of the fact that a cluster of families maintain a loose contact with their respective core areas in a wider nomadic range), and (d) conspicuously egalitarian values and attitudes prevailing in various aspects of social relationships and interactions.

In a wider context of modern anthropology, the endeavor of the revisionists to ensure the “end of illusion” (Wilmsen & Denbow, 1990) is evidently consonant with the postmodern critics of anthropology who have relentlessly attacked the rhetoric of ethnography and the power relationship intrinsic to fieldwork (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Although the epistemological reflection on the radical condition of the discipline is worthy of respect, we believe that anthropological theory can be renewed only by continuing good fieldwork, rather than by nullifying all products brought about by previous fieldwork. And good fieldwork is possible only if the fieldworker respects the people he/she studies (Tanaka, 1990).

Before the rise of the revisionism debate, Tanaka’s interest had been oriented toward the ongoing socio-economic change. Since 1979, the San of the Xade area have formed a large community with a population of over 600 persons settled around the borehole at !Koi!kom, in accordance with the Remote Area Development Programme. The traditional hunting and gathering life has become rapidly transformed, and the people are now dependent on the aid distributed by the government. In addition, the cash economy has entered the life of the people through employment in road construction and the sale of arts and crafts.

Faced with this situation, Tanaka organized a number of research teams since 1982 in order to systematically study the process and effects of the transformations outlined above (Tanaka, 1987). M. Osaki analyzed in detail the equestrian hunting which has become popular following settlement (Osaki, 1984). K. Sugawara focused on the behavioral foundations of the egalitarian social system of the San by elucidating their social communications through an analysis of their face-to-face interactions, such as greeting, physical contact, and interpersonal distance (Sugawara, 1984, 1988).

Between 1987 and 1989, K. Ikeya, Sugawara, and Tanaka carried out a comprehensive research project with a more long-term perspective. The objective was to describe and understand all aspects of the society, economics, and subsistence ecology of the San in the settlement, and elucidate their adaptive responses to the new social and environmental conditions. We especially focused on those aspects of San society for which we did not have sufficient information.

Ikeya concentrated on various kinds of subsistence activity such as goat-raising (Ikeya, 1993), trap hunting, and group hunting with dogs (Ikeya, 1994). Sugawara systematically analyzed the daily conversations to elucidate the charac-

teristic of vocal communication among the San, as well as to understand the social relations, conflict, and cultural values (Sugawara, 1990). A major theme of research was to elucidate the characteristics of economic transactions following the settlement. In order to understand economic life, it was necessary to identify how people obtained and spent money (Tanaka, 1991), list the “property” actually possessed by people and the means of acquisition and exchange of such property (Sugawara, 1991).

Since 1990, our research took a new turn which the papers compiled in this volume show. First, we fully realized the urgent necessity to articulate the San subsistence ecology with the ideological and cognitive aspects of the natural environment. Although Tanaka’s article is not a direct outcome of recent research, it integrates his data and insights on the San view of animals accumulated throughout enduring research. Delineating the entirety of the “animal world” experienced by the San, this paper provides the basis for further studies on a wide-range of topics, such as cognition, folk-taxonomy, and folklore to be developed. Along this line, K. Nonaka explored a new area of ‘ethno-entomology’ on the diversified use of insects by the San made possible by their extensive knowledge and observations on insect habit and morphology. His work throws light on the importance of apparently minor subsistence activities which do not yield much caloric intake and, for this reason, have mostly been ignored by the previous studies on ecological anthropology.

Second, we have realized through our research that male-centered ideology underlays even the seemingly egalitarian value system of the San. It was necessary to study San society from a new or “female” viewpoint, that would allow us to go beyond the biased scope of male anthropologist. By means of intensive participant observation and quantitative analysis, K. Imamura identified the ecological/technical parameters which organized the gathering activity by women and pointed out the significance of social factors facilitating its efficiency.

Third, we felt strongly our responsibility as anthropologists to assess the recent drastic change in the social life of the San, as well as of predicting the direction of the “development” in future. Ikeya focused on the three main topics of greatest urgency, i. e., dry farming, wage labor, and handicraft production, that hold the key for the people to establish a self-sustaining ground of livelihood. Based on abundant data from both his observations and the literatures, Ikeya depicted a realistic figure of the people coping with the changing socio-economic and natural environment. Although the prospect is not necessarily promising, the documentation of these papers will surely provide us with valuable clues toward solving problems brought about by sedentism.

Finally, the scope of our research has extended to the critical domain of language to understand human culture. H. Nakagawa and H. Ono, both linguists, have participated in the research team since 1992. Hitherto, the formidably complicated phonological system of !Gui and ||Gana language, click consonants among others, had puzzled all the members of the research team with anthropological or geographical background. Nakagawa’s work is the first systematic linguistic description of !Gui, which is presumably one of the most ‘difficult’ languages in terms of phonological features in the world. Moreover, he proposes

an intelligible orthography adopted by this volume. Ōno reexamined the kinship terminology from the viewpoint of ‘ethnosemantics,’ analyzing the structure of the semantic field composed of related lexica. Her paper radically modifies the kinship terminology previously reported by Tanaka (1980) and Silberbauer (1981) both of whom failed to distinguish the address terms from reference terms. The most interesting point elucidated by Ōno’s analysis is that the semantically distinctive features of |Gui relationship terms are correlated with the restriction on sexual behavior, including extra-marital relationships, i. e., ‘záāku’ (Tanaka, 1989).

Sugawara began analysis of everyday conversation among the |Gui in 1987. But the more exact interpretation, not to mention accurate transcription, of the conversation samples, was not made possible until Nakagawa established the orthography and elucidated the paradigms in the grammar of |Gui language (Nakagawa, 1993). Sugawara’s paper reexamined the dichotomous model of joking-avoidance by focusing on the correlation between actual conversational organizations and social relationships. Sugawara in his empirical approach highlights other ways of understanding the San’s “lived experience” rather than the hermeneutic approach which equates culture with “an ensemble of texts” (Geertz, 1973: 452). Conversation analysis in ethnographic context, in collaboration with systematic linguistic description, will surely produce reliable “texts” of language activity of the people. But these “texts” should not be reduced to the subject of literary criticism. It is of crucial importance to examine how they are, as verbal behavior and speech acts, socially organized in the actual context of face-to-face interaction.

In his laborious work on the modern history of the Namibian “Bushmen” subjected to the terror and violence of colonialism, R. Gordon criticized “anthropological arrogance” as follows:

When we were lounging with a smug sense of ethnocentric superiority in the Victorian era, we saw the Bushmen as the epitome of savagery. But later, in the turmoil of the 1960s, when students were asking serious questions about the nature of Western society, social scientists reified the Bushmen’s egalitarianism and generosity, virtues seen to be seriously lacking in Western society. (Gordon, 1992: 217)

Throughout our research, we found the |Gui and the ||Gana maintaining their traditional value systems and social mores despite the dramatic cultural transformations brought about by settled life. In particular, the “form of life” similar to what has been called “egalitarianism” by Western anthropologists surely continue to permeate daily San social and economic transactions. It is this aspect of San life that evokes a profound respect for the |Gui and the ||Gana people, and prompts the authors to return to Kalahari again and again. However aware we are of the “troubling questions and contentious issues” raised by Gordon (*ibid.*, 220), we do not believe that the persistent effort to understand more thoroughly the uniqueness of the San must lead to the alienation of them into Others. We hope that we ourselves will be changed by this understanding.

One of the motives for us to compile this volume was an urge to make the

results of our lasting research available to the Western readers. This motive is closely related to the global topographical condition of anthropology by which we, the scholars in “the Far East,” are constrained. Most of our works, except Tanaka’s principal monograph, even when written in English, have received little attention in the Western literature. At best, in a quite comprehensive review of Khoisan ethnographies, A. Barnard commented that “[w]hereas Tanaka and his students take the Western-Japanese scientific world-view for granted, Silberbauer does not” (Barnard, 1992: 115). We feel this judgement unfair. For example, it is curious to include one of Sugawara’s papers, not cited by Barnard, in the category of Western-Japanese-centric ethnography, since it definitely aimed to criticize the Western body-mind dichotomy (Sugawara, 1990). We desire that the present volume will raise widespread interest and fair criticism.

On the Notation

We hesitated for a long time as to which term we should employ as the name of our hosts. Since in Japan the English term ‘Bushman’ does not evoke a derogatory overtone, we have often used it in discussions owing to its popularity. However, the frequent use of ‘Bushman’ in our English manuscripts turned out to be irritating to us not only because it may sound derogatory but because it was inadequate to refer to women. However, we are no more fond of the term ‘San,’ since this is never immune from the negative connotation in Khoekhoe language. The following argument by Gordon shows a decided attitude.

In Namibia, everybody uses the term *Bushmen*. Changing the label does not reduce the racism and invidiousness implicit in the relationship, since words get their emotive content from the social milieu in which they are used. To feel compelled to change the label is to submit to the effectiveness of colonial socialization. (Gordon, 1992: 6, Italics in original)

The simplest solution is, of course, to use the term used by the people to refer to themselves, i.e., ‘!Gui-ko’ or ‘||Gana-ko,’ namely !Gui-person and ||Gana-person. For the simple notation of the names of the dialect groups, we decided to use the abbreviated terms, !Gui or ||Gana. However, another problem remained. For the papers by Nakagawa, Ōno, and Sugawara, the solution was simple, since they focused only on the !Gui people. But the subjects of other papers are both groups, and the repeated use of “the !Gui and the ||Gana” may be awkward. The term ‘Kua’ was an attractive option, but this was applicable to a more generic category including the Nharo. Finally we concluded that 1) If the dialect group is specified, we use for either group (or people) !Gui or ||Gana, 2) When both of !Gui and ||Gana peoples are referred to, we use San, in order to emphasize the continuity between this volume and our previous English articles, where the term ‘San’ had been consistently used, and 3) When we refer to the Khoisan foragers in general we also use the term ‘San’ for convenience.

In accordance with the orthography established by Nakagawa, we adopted several different notations from what were popular in previous literature on the

San. 'G!wi' and 'G!lana' became '!Gui' and '!lGana.' Tanaka's notation '≠Kade' or Silberbauer's '≠xade' for the name of the research area came out linguistically incorrect. The correct notation should be '!q`are.' But this term is seldom used by the people to refer to the whole area where they live now, as it primarily denotes the large pan near the settlement or, in a narrower sense, the hollow on the exposed rock bed in the pan, which contains water in the rainy season. Thus, we adopted the notation 'Xade' for the study area, taking into consideration its prevalence in maps, official documents, and journalism both within and outside Botswana.

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