

# CHAPTER 11 Genders and Sexualities

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Around 1900, scholars of ethnology and folklore were fascinated by Japan's abundant artifacts of fertility and potency as well as its sexual rites and customs. Jurists and other visitors noted with astonishment, excitement, and perhaps pleasure their "discovery" of Japan's prostitution quarters, while ethnologists and medical doctors began to compile books on "the erotic" in Japan. Since then, studies of sexual practices, rites and customs, gender, women's status, nudity, and sexuality in Japan have crystallized, diversified, and eventually branched out in several distinct yet overlapping directions. This chapter traces some of these branches of an anthropology of genders and sexualities in Japan since the first attempts at capturing what was around 1900 referred to as the "Japanese sex life." I will show that today's inquiries into sexualities in Japan have a history (even if its authors are not always aware of it) that includes the approaches of sexual ethnology, women's studies, and gender studies.

Several features complicate the story of these four types of anthropological studies, namely, studies of gender and sexuality are perhaps more interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary than most types of scholarly inquiries. They draw from a number of academic and non-academic fields, including history and the social sciences as well as women's, feminist, and – more recently – gay and lesbian organizations' debates and publications. Moreover, the meanings of analytical categories such as sex, gender, femininity, feminism, manhood, masculinity, and so forth have changed significantly since the early days of the anthropology of Japan. These categories have also been constantly appropriated in different ways by different groups of people, including scholars, journalists, activists, and many others. Finally, "gender" and "sexuality" are intimately entangled with power, and so interest in the relations of sex, gender, and sexuality has rarely been far from attempts at changing these very relations. New approaches to the analysis of sex, gender, and sexuality have gone hand in hand with certain styles of engagement with normative scientific and/or sexual practices and attitudes.

### SEXUAL ETHNOLOGY AND THE ESCAPE FROM WESTERN PURITANISM

In fin-de-siècle Japan, books on the "Japanese sex life" by Japanese scholars were often driven by a nostalgic sense of a more harmonious and less self-conscious past and – at the onslaught of modernization – a supposed need to enshrine "tradition" in a scholarly form. Western scholars often framed their books as critiques of Western (European) puritanism and hypocrisy concerning sexual matters when they drew a picture of the "Japanese sex life" that seemed open-minded and unprejudiced by comparison. Dr. Friedrich Solomon Krauss, for example, agreed with other folklorists and ethnologists of East Asia that "the Occidental looks at Japan through Occidental glasses: He sees moral degeneration where there is in naked reality nothing but unmediated joy of life and irrepressible joy for sexual matters combined with a lack of any kind of hypocrisy" (Krauss 1911 [1907]:10).

On the one hand, praise for attitudes toward sexual matters in Japan was often directed at the restrictive sexual order at home in Europe or the United States. On the other, critics of sexual matters in Japan were occasionally put in place by prominent intellectuals. Nitobe Inazō, for example, wrote in a book on *Unser Vaterland Japan* (Our Fatherland Japan) in 1906 that "It is a general perception of foreign tourists (many of whom are *learned gentlemen* [my emphasis]) that Japanese life lacks morality just as its flowers lack a scent. What a sad confession of the moral and intellectual imagination of these tourists themselves!" (quoted in Krauss 1911 [1907]:13).

In 1907 Dr. Friedrich Solomon Krauss, a pioneer of sexual ethnology who had traveled from Vienna to Tokyo to collect material for a book on Japan's "sex life," published *Das Geschlechtsleben in Glauben, Sitte, Brauch und Gewohnheitsrecht der Japaner* (The Sex Life in Beliefs, Morals, Customs, and Common Law of the Japanese). It appeared as a supplement to *Anthropophyteia: Jahrbücher für folkloristische Erhebungen und Forschungen zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der geschlechtlichen Moral* (Anthropophyteia: Yearbooks for Folkloristic Surveys and Research on the History of the Development of Sexual Morals). Krauss was the editor of *Anthropophyteia*. Among other leading personalities from the world of science and medicine, Dr. Franz Boas, Dr. Albert Neisser, and Dr. Sigmund Freud served on the editorial board. In contrast to earlier works by Japanese and other scholars, Krauss included not only a description of the cults of male and female genitalia but also long chapters about previous works on Japanese phallicism, the beauty of Japanese women, the status of women, the meaning of menstrual blood, the "third sex" (homosexuals), pregnancy and birth, marriage practices, prostitution, erotic pictures, and several other phenomena he classified as sexual.

Krauss was eager to promote his sexual ethnology and claimed that the evaluation of a people by examining its military and its economic or literary successes was insufficient. As the development and progress of *men* depended entirely on the flourishing of *women*, the foremost goal of the folklorist, he declared, was to increase knowledge about the status of women in a culture. "Sexual activity," in his view, had to be at the core of any analysis of cultural development and progress (Krauss 1911 [1907]:1). Full-page photographs of stone phalluses, rather explicit erotic woodblock prints, and a long chapter on attitudes toward "homosexual love," in which he

claimed that “the old attitude of the samurai continues to live on in quiet and its main carrier still is the military” (Krauss 1911 [1907]:161) – even in a book that was explicitly restricted to a specialist readership, these had to be justified. Hence, in the preface to the first edition Krauss stated that recognizing phenomena “unbeautified and uncorrected, in their undisguised reality” before searching for explanations or for higher causes was the most important, if not the only guiding principle for a true ethnology and anthropology, as for any true scientific inquiry (Krauss 1911 [1907]: preface to the first edition).

In 1895 the University of Chicago Press had published a 34-page dissertation by Edmund Buckley, *Phallicism in Japan*, ironically at a time when the Japanese state had begun to prohibit phallus-related rituals as backward and uncivilized. There had been other authors, including William George Aston and W. E. Griffis, who had touched upon phallicism in their works, but Buckley’s was the first “serious study of any branch of phallicism to be presented to a university” (Goodland 1931:91). *Phallicism in Japan* apparently traveled to Japan but was only read by university professors in the fields of religious studies, anthropology, and archaeology. Only when Deguchi Yonekichi, the Japanese pioneer of sexual ethnology, published a translation of Buckley’s work in the Japanese Journal of Anthropology (*Jinruigaku zasshi*) did phallicism and sexual ethnology become a field of research in Japan as well. Deguchi Yonekichi completed his own book on phallicism, titled *Nihon seishokki sūhai ryakusetsu* (An Outline of Phallic Worship in Japan), in 1917 and published it in 1920. According to ethnologist Kawamura Kunimitsu (1999:5–7), Deguchi’s wonderfully rich account was based not only on the study of documents but also on conversations with locals all over Japan, at a time when “fieldwork” had not yet been established as a method of anthropological inquiry (Kawamura 1999:3–32).

Within a few decades, the study of sexual practices and attitudes changed radically under the influence of an emerging sexual science whose representatives included Richard von Krafft-Ebing in Austria, Havelock Ellis in England, Magnus Hirschfeld in Germany, Yamamoto Senji and Yasuda Tokutarō in Japan, and Alfred Kinsey in the United States. This new kind of sexology did not strive to simply document “undisguised reality,” as Krauss had thought he had done, but pursued a complex political agenda as well. Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, director of the Institut für Eugenik und Sexualwissenschaft in Berlin, a reader of Krauss’ *The Sex Life*, and a deeply impressed visitor to Japan, declared in 1933 that no two countries or peoples in the world had identical sex institutions. In Hirschfeld’s view, this dissimilarity was not based on differences in sex tendencies, which, taken as a whole, he considered absolutely alike in all peoples and races. A uniform solution of sex and love morality, Hirschfeld thought, could be based only on findings of biological and sociological sex research. At a time when homosexuality was a crime according to German law, Hirschfeld hoped that an objective scientific study of mankind and of sex would prepare the way for a complete realization of human sexual rights. He also hoped to find some clues in Japan, where sex and sexuality seemed to be dealt with so differently, and where homosexuality was not prohibited by law (Hirschfeld 1935 [1933]:xviii–xix).

By the beginning of the 1930s when Hirschfeld visited Japan, a handful of Japanese sexologists were discussing the results of their sex research, of the kind Hirschfeld had been promoting, in major physiological, smaller sexological, and general-audience mass-marketed women’s and health journals and magazines

(Frühstück 2000). However, even though Hirschfeld met with important figures of the academic world in Tokyo and Osaka, it does not seem that he came into close contact with Japan's sex researchers. They too had been marginalized by their academic peers, in part because of the object of their research and in part because of their political engagement in support of birth control, the legalization of abortion, and the reform of gender relations (Robertson 1999:22–24).

The works I have discussed so far are impressive in scope and accuracy even by today's anthropological standards, but they were printed in small numbers and circulated in relatively closed circles of specialists in ethnology, folklore, history, medicine, sexual science, and eugenics. To be sure, Euro-American works were translated and discussed in Japan, but the same was hardly true the other way around. Other books affected Western images of Japan much more, far into the 20th century. Authors such as Joseph E. de Becker (1905 [1899]), a specialist in international law who spent most of his life in Japan and wrote several books on the Japanese legal system, a certain Trésmin-Trémolières (1910 [1905]), whose identity remains obscure, and George Riley Scott (1943) directed the ethnological, male, Western gaze at a different arena of sexual conduct. The prostitution quarters of Tokyo – a “nightless city” for de Becker and the “Japanese city of love” for Trésmin-Trémolières – were condemned for their existence as well as praised for the exotic beauty of their *geisha*, the cleanliness of their establishments, and the seemingly well-treated and comparatively healthy female prostitutes.

The emerging abolition movement in Japan proved them wrong on all counts, of course. From 1912 onwards, members of the Purity Society (Kakuseikai), an organization that fought for the abolition of prostitution, denounced both rural fathers for selling their daughters to brothels and the state for tolerating, if not supporting, the practice. They demanded better health services for prostitutes and ways out of the “water trade” for them. Abolitionists initially debated the question of how to do away with prostitution; later, when that seemed impossible, they argued over how to better regulate the prostitutes in order to protect the health of Japan's men. By 1940, even most critics of the prostitution system agreed that it was better, or even necessary, to sacrifice what seemed to them a small number of women in order to keep the social order intact, protect “decent” women from male sexual violence, and to keep up soldiers' morale in the “homeland” and on the front.

Despite the abundance of anthropological research on sexual matters in Japan available at the time, in Europe and America the popular image of the gracious *geisha* as both an image of the Japanese woman and of a (traditional, almost lost) Japanese culture proved resistant to newer, more diverse, and more realistic pictures. I will turn to these subjects in the next section.

## WOMEN'S STUDIES AND THE END OF THE UNIVERSAL “MAN”

The era from the 1910s to the 1930s was characterized not only by a boom of phallicism studies and a new kind of social scientific sex research, as noted above, but also by heated debates about women's roles in Japanese society. In contrast to similar discussions at the end of the 19th century, these debates were to a significant extent carried by women. They shared an interest in a diverse set of problems,

including questions of love, motherhood, sexual freedom, birth control, and women's suffrage. Their views ranged from those of conservative feminists like Yamada Waka and Hiratsuka Raichō, who promoted the valorization of motherhood in order to improve the status of women, to more radical feminists like Yamakawa Kikue, Yosano Akiko, and Yasuda Satsuki, who insisted on a woman's right to abortion and birth control. For all their differences, however, sexuality in these women's everyday lives clearly had been more a domain of restriction, repression, and danger than a domain of exploration, pleasure, and agency.

Hence, much like their Western sisters, many of these early feminists pursued asexuality as an option for respectable women and used the concept of female passionlessness and male sexual restraint to challenge male prerogatives. The representatives of this first wave of Japanese feminism developed their ideas in debates with and over "Western" feminism, but grappled for an autonomous cultural synthesis of the concepts of autonomy, emancipation, and equality for women in Japanese culture and society. In a debate on motherhood protection, for example, Yosano Akiko brushed off what she perceived as Western feminism. She could not agree to the demand of some members of the Western women's movement that women should ask for special protection by the state in the time of pregnancy or birth (Kōnai 1984:85). Motherhood protection policies, she believed, would further undermine women's independence by acknowledging their value as mothers only.

Returning to the development of the anthropology of sex and gender in early 20th-century Japan, it was the exploitation of women in industrialization that first prompted quasi-anthropological studies of women as a special group. *The Sad Story of Women Workers* (Hosoi 1996 [1925]), for example, describes the pitiful living and working conditions of young female migrant workers. The book's author, Hosoi Wakizō, was a former textile worker and trade-union activist. Perhaps following the zeitgeist of the 1920s that practically burst with sex talk and script, Hosoi designated a whole chapter to the "psychology of female factory workers," in which he matter-of-factly wrote about these young women's sexual desires. As common features of factory workers' psychological make-up, he described their attitudes toward love, morals, and virginity, as well as instances of lesbianism, masturbation, jealousy, and other features of these women's sexual psychology.

Lacking similar reports, the sturdy peasant women and their migrant daughters studied by Hosoi and the feminist writers and intellectuals mentioned above, all of whom contributed to the survival of their household as well as to Japanese modernization, were widely ignored in the European and Anglo-American anthropology of Japan at the time. Ella Lury Wiswell was the first American exception. She was not an anthropologist by training but accompanied her husband John Embree and assisted him in his research in 1935–36, a few years before Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor would create a very different kind of interest in the study of Japanese culture. It remains unknown whether Wiswell had in mind the *geisha* image when she embarked on Japan's shores, whether she secretly, if unknowingly, bonded with the outspoken Japanese feminists of her time, or whether she sympathized with the exploited women in Japan's factories. Most likely, she did not know much about any of these worlds when she began taking notes of whatever exciting event was happening in the small village of Suye Mura in Kumamoto Prefecture, Kyūshū.

In contrast to her husband's and other anthropologists' claims, Wiswell (Smith and Wiswell 1982:149–175) found that women in Suyé Mura were quite independent when it came to marriage, divorce, and sexual matters. We have conflicting accounts about how well Wiswell spoke Japanese, but she did not seem to read the language and thus had little if any access to any of the Japanese anthropology I have discussed above. Had Wiswell's study been published immediately instead of in 1982, this chapter would most probably look quite different. A classic of the anthropology of women ever since its publication, *The Women of Suyé Mura* grants a short chapter to sexual matters and constitutes the first ethnographic study in English to focus on the everyday lives of rural women in Japan.

The "community studies" approach – portraits of Japanese women as a whole by studying one woman or a small community of women and their immediate environment – have been with us ever since. Gail Bernstein's *Haruko's World: A Japanese Farm Woman and her Community* (1983), for example, is based on research in a village in Ehime Prefecture in 1974–75. As a "portrait of contemporary rural Japanese women viewed primarily through the eyes of one woman," Bernstein's book describes these women's work and their family life as well as their feelings, problems, and aspirations – topics that Bernstein felt were often neglected in conventional village studies. "To observe the lives of farm women today," Bernstein suggests, "is to recapture something of Japan's past, but it is also to record the great changes overtaking rural Japan" (1983:xi). The book is a three-part richly nuanced description of how she as a scholar approached her subject, the life in the farm family she stayed with, and broader issues the farm community dealt with. Like a good novel, it leaves the reader amused, edified, and sorry when the final page is reached. One of the great merits of the "women's portrait" kind of studies is that they give a voice to comparatively "ordinary" and rarely heard women. They also put in perspective, if only implicitly, mainstream descriptions that still nonchalantly regard middle-class, white-collar, male employees of large corporations as the whole of Japanese society.

However, these studies also have their less satisfactory sides: one is no wiser about what Japanese and other anthropologists have to say about the subject. Bernstein – much like her predecessors as well as many anthropologists of Japan and particularly those who write "books on women" to this day – does not integrate Japanese scholarship on the subject. Nor is she interested in confronting mainstream anthropology with her findings. Hence, her book is – like many women's studies books – an "addendum" to the existing anthropology of rural Japan rather than provocative and creatively disruptive of the order of things anthropological in the Japan field.

Since the 1980s, female anthropologists have infiltrated the field which had analyzed almost exclusively spheres that were implicitly and unquestioned marked as "male," claiming a gradually expanding space for the anthropology of Japanese women, and in the process changing some of the discipline's written and unwritten rules. Useful and necessary as these descriptive accounts of the lives of rural and urban women, farmers, workers, and housewives are, they have tended to imply a situation in which society had need of particular sorts of acculturated persons, who were rather uncomplicatedly female and male. Gender identity was perceived as culturally constructed, but it was regarded in the end as little more than a self-evident outcome of sexual differentiation.

When these studies first became more than an aberration from anthropological writing on Japan, the anthropology of women turned the tide and began to cast doubt on the essential and universal “man” which was the subject and paradigmatic object of nonfeminist anthropology. Important studies emerged, ranging from Takie Sugiyama Lebra’s pathbreaking work that follows a lifecycle approach (Lebra 1984), analyses of the lives of housewives (A. Imamura 1987; LeBlanc 1999) and gainfully employed women (Rosenberger 2001; Tanaka 1995), to studies of women with rather unusual lives such as those of *geisha* (Dalby 1983) or of priestesses of Okinawa (Sered 1999). More recent works attempt to reintegrate men and grant more discussion to relationships between women and men. “Women’s studies” have become theoretically more sophisticated, but they still tend to fail at, or are simply not interested in, a critical examination of their research objects’ sexual and gender identities. These studies also assume that marriage is of central importance to and a quasi-natural element of women’s lives, while their heterosexuality is presented as a given, as is their ethnic homogeneity.

Karen Kelsky’s book, *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams* (2001), tells a quite different story. The subject is the “narratives of internationalism which some Japanese women use to justify their shift of loyalty from what they call a backward and ‘oppressive’ Japan to what they see as an exhilarating and ‘liberating’ foreign realm” (Kelsky 2001:3). The book is also, however, the first feminist study of Japan’s eroticization of the West and in a way the present-day reverse of the West’s (non-feminist) eroticization of Japan which I briefly discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

The number and variety of Japanese women’s studies is too vast to describe even selectively here. Suffice it to say that *Nihon joseigaku nenpō* (the Yearbook of Japanese Women’s Studies), published by the Women’s Studies Society of Japan, and the *Nichibei josei jānaru* and its English supplement *US-Japan Women’s Journal*, published by the Center for Intercultural Studies and Education at Josai University, reflect a phenomenally productive field. The *Nichibei josei jānaru/US-Japan Women’s Journal*’s pursuit of the international exchange of interdisciplinary feminist articles, reports on a wide range of women’s issues, men’s studies, and statistical information on the status of women is exemplary of the much-needed comparative study of women’s issues. Its agenda also points to the interconnections within the anthropology of Japan between women’s studies and gender studies, the subject of the next section.

## GENDER STUDIES AND THE TRANSGRESSION OF “WOMAN”

Gender studies have introduced an analytically useful distinction between “sex” as a signifier of biological characteristics and “gender” as a marker of sociocultural attributes. With respect to Japan, while these studies also focus overwhelmingly on women, they more critically examine gender-formation processes in areas ranging from the division of labor; institutions that reproduce gender norms, such as families, enterprises, and social welfare settings; female and male identities and self-concepts in their interaction; and social and cultural representations including images of femininity and masculinity.

Based on the erosion of the assumption of an essential sameness among women, the related doubts of the usefulness of analysis that has essential, universal "woman" as its subject or object, and of female gender roles as the quasi-natural outcome of sexual differentiation since the late 1970s, anthropologists of Japan during the past 20 years or so have established the notion that sexual and gender identities are interconnected in rather complicated ways, are constantly negotiated, and are much more malleable than their predecessors had dared to think. The shift from studies that add important perspectives on the female half of the population to "gender studies" that problematize gender roles, identities, and politics more centrally is an important one. The category of "woman" is no longer the "other" in society, but a crucial nexus of politics, the nation-state, technology, and women's (and, to a lesser extent, men's) everyday lives. In 1994 Ōsawa Mari – until a few years ago the only female sociologist at the Institute of Social Science of the University of Tokyo – called for a "gender revolution" in Japan's social science. In 1996, the government-sponsored Council for Gender Equality announced that this century was "significant in that equality between men and women has become accepted as a universal value" and claimed that "in Japan the construction of the social framework has taken place to materialize that concept for the first time in human history" (Council for Gender Equality 1996:1).

Subsequently, Ōsawa, Ueno Chizuko, Ehara Yumiko (1995, 1998, 2000), and other feminist Japanese sociologists and anthropologists have paved the way for an increasing number of publications that focus on mechanisms of gender inequality at the workplace, the commercialization of sex, the interrelations between women, violence and the nation, and gender questions concerning new reproductive technologies. A remarkable number of volumes in English also point toward future, more extensive and diverse, work in this area by scholars based in the United States. The defining parameters of "femininity" and "womanhood" are questioned by these scholars, and women have emerged in ever-increasing numbers as full-time white-collar workers (S. Buckley 1997; Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda 1995; A. Imamura 1996; Kondo 1990; Lo 1990; Ogasawara 1998; Roberts 1994; Saso 1990; Skov and Moeran 1995).

As a double-sided category, "gender" in these works functions as a system of classification of persons into gendered positions and as a category that legitimizes existing hierarchies between these positions as "natural." In order to disrupt its potential for the legitimization and stabilization of social inequality, approaches to gender imply several methodological consequences. As anthropologists have shown, a gender approach cannot limit itself to women but must research women and men as well as interactions and exchanges between different social spheres, aiming for an integrative perspective. Feminist anthropologists have realized, for example, that the choice to study only the household (and housewives), leaving the study of the workplace (and men's primary social spheres) to others to investigate, as many women's studies did, not only overestimates women's social strength in Japan but also reinforces gender role stereotyping. The establishment of the theoretical and analytical notion of the "sex/gender system" also has allowed for recent anthropological, historical, and sociological work on masculinity, men's bodies, men's lives, and problems of manhood in contemporary Japan.



The majority of the older generation of (male) Anglo-American anthropologists have accepted women's studies as an addition to the anthropology of Japan by women without letting it influence their own, usually gender-blind work. But a small portion of younger-generation scholars have turned to that complex interplay of questions following both Japanese feminists as well as the very few male scholars of gender studies (Inoue et al. 1995; Itō 1996). The first such collection of essays in English is *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the Salaryman Doxa*, co-edited by James Roberson and Suzuki Nobue (2002). Contributions on transgender practices, male beauty work, popular culture, the marriage market, the new "family man," working-class masculinity, day laborers, domestic violence, gay men, and fatherhood and work successfully make the point that not every Japanese man is an ideal-type salaryman, imagined or constructed, and not every Japanese man even strives to be like an ideal-type salaryman. One can only hope that the presently very slim body of works which examine notions of manhood and masculinity from the perspective of gender and history will not only broaden our understanding of the variety of Japanese men but also challenge "conventional" notions of manliness supposedly embodied in the salaryman. Remembering the "diversity approach" in 1980s women's studies especially, one must admit that we still know next to nothing about the gender of policemen, soldiers, yakuza, scientists, and many other social groups which are associated with a supposedly conventional manliness that the above-mentioned authors intend to challenge.

In addition, the quest for an integrated approach is also valid for relating gender to other categories of social inequality, such as social stratification and ethnicity (Honda 2000 [1993]; Keyso 2000; Nihon Joseigaku Kenkyūkai 1994). Despite their particular relevancy in Japan, where media and popular consensus stress ethnic homogeneity, and where consensus for "traditional" gender roles is demanded in the name of "Japanese culture" or true "Japaneseness," both sets of problems still are sorely understudied.

## SEXUALITY STUDIES

Perhaps because biological and sociological sex research in Japan was marginalized during the 1920s, repressed during the 1930s and 1940s, kept at a low profile during the 1950s, and for the most part shunned by the academy until the 1980s, anthropological studies of Japan's "sexual culture" only caught up and reconnected with the sexual ethnology of the fin de siècle very recently. It was not until the 1990s that Japanese as well as Euro-American scholars rediscovered that sphere of inquiry and began to question the kinds of Japanese "sexual knowledge" that had been created primarily between the late 19th and the early 20th centuries. This trend, however, is by no means a return to the sexual ethnology of Deguchi Yonekichi or the sexology of Yamamoto Senji from almost a hundred years ago.

Rather, the trend toward sexuality studies was inspired by several developments within and outside the discipline of anthropology. Histories of premodern and early modern Japan and elsewhere created a space for sexuality studies in present-day Japan. A new interest in the body in anthropology, history, philosophy, and other

disciplines (Inoue Shun and Tominaga 1991; Moerman and Nomura 1990) triggered a diversification of anthropological studies and a shift toward queer study-type analyses, focusing on the lives of homosexual men and women, bodily concerns including reproductive practices (Coleman 1983; Hardacre 1997; Lock 1993), the politics of physical beauty (Miller 1998; Robertson 2001), and attempts at grasping the meanings of sexual imagery in media and art (Allison 2000 [1996]; Napier 2000). In addition, the advent of HIV and AIDS not only caused a largely media-generated panic in Japan (Treat 1994) but also highlighted the lack of a systematic and inclusive sex education (Imamura et al. 1990; Kawahara 1996; Nishigaito 1993). Finally, the emergence of a gay/lesbian/queer movement in Japan prompted a growing number of coming-out essays and novels – reminiscent of the same development in early women's studies – ranging from Fushimi Noriaki's *Puraibēto gei raifu: posuto renai-ron* (Private Gay Life: After Love Discussions; 1991), to Itō Satoru's tearful *Otoko futarigurashi* (Living as a Male Couple; 1993), and Kakefuda Hiroko's *Rezubian de aru to iu koto* (The Meaning of Being a Lesbian; 1992). Besides these highly personal accounts of being a gay man or a lesbian woman in Japan, anthropological studies on these respective communities include Wim Lunsing's *Beyond Common Sense: Sexuality and Gender in Contemporary Japan* (2001) and Mark McLelland's more media-centered *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan: Cultural Myths and Social Realities* (2000).

In most general terms, the existing sexuality studies question the previously implicit, normative and exclusive prioritization of heterosexuality. Against the backdrop of American-style identity politics which tend to idealize a singular and whole self and to presuppose an "individual oneness" (Lunsing 2001:17–18), it is not surprising that anthropologists of sexuality in Japan continue to grapple with what is often perceived as Japanese "multiple selves." These anthropologists are not always aware that historically, in Japan and elsewhere, "sexual practices have not presumed a specific sexual orientation or identity, although today, some lesbian and gay activists and homophobic critics alike tend to fuse the two" (Robertson 1998 [2001]:174). One curious effect of the emphases in recent sexuality studies is that we now know more about homosexual lives than we know about heterosexual (and supposedly mainstream) lifestyles. There also seem to be more scholars engaged in the examination of sex, gender, and sexuality in representations of popular culture, especially comics, animation, and film, than there are students of the appropriations of a sex/gender system in "real lives."

While there is not a single available monograph in English on, for example, the pornography and/or prostitution industry in Japan (Fukushima and Nakano 1995), we have fine examinations of representations of sexuality – including "pornographic" ones – in Japanese animated films (Napier 2000). While we still know next to nothing about incest in Japanese society (Ikeda 1991), its representations in Japanese comics and other popular media have been tackled (Allison (2000 [1996])). Whereas we have a number of detailed studies about the wartime system of sexual slavery, we still almost entirely lack a thorough examination of "military prostitution" in present-day Japan.

The examination of what had been implicitly considered "marginal" identities in earlier anthropological research is fruitful and important, but it does not absolve us from the necessity of critical studies about "normative" sexuality. An integrated

analysis that focuses on gender and sexuality, women and men remains necessary in order to understand the workings of the sex/gender system, and in order to overcome a fragmentation of the field reminiscent of the position of early women's studies at the margins of anthropology several decades ago. To speak about sexuality means to speak about society, its gender relations in particular and its power relations more generally. Hence, even though dichotomies between men and women, heterosexuality and homosexuality, are empirically false, we cannot afford to dismiss them as irrelevant as long as they structure Japanese (as well as our) lives and consciousness. In perhaps the most challenging anthropology of sexuality in Japan to date, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan*, Jennifer Robertson makes a crucial point about the plasticity of genders and sexualities. It is the "composite character of gender," Robertson writes, that makes it fundamentally ambivalent and ambiguous. It is capable of fluctuating between or being assigned to more than one referent or category and thus is capable of being read or understood in more than one way. Such an excessive semiosis reflects an epistemology of *both/and* rather than *either/or* (Robertson 1998 [2001]:40).

## CONCLUSION

Over the past hundred years, the anthropology of genders and sexualities in Japan in both Japanese and English has undergone important changes. In addition to the formation of the four overlapping branches discussed above, other transformations have affected the anthropology of gender and sexuality as well as the anthropology of Japan more generally. One has to do with language, the other with processes associated with "globalization."

Up to the 1970s most anthropologists did their fieldwork with the help of an interpreter and spoke Japanese only rudimentarily or not at all. In recent decades, it seems to me that more anthropologists speak and read Japanese well enough to conduct research on their own. Another language-related flaw seems to be lessening as well. Many early American anthropologists of Japan hardly looked at what their Japanese colleagues (let alone colleagues from other linguistic communities) wrote on the phenomena they studied. Even though many anthropologists' bibliographies of Japanese-language sources and secondary material are still shockingly thin, this neglect of "indigenous" scholarship, especially in a highly bibliophile culture with an enormous output of scholarly publications like Japan, appears to be less tolerated today.

The effects of "globalization" are closely connected to linguistic requirements. Today, Japan-related scholarship in and outside Japan seems to be more a consequence of two-way interactions than has been the case in previous decades. Japanese ethnographies of female factory workers, as well as the writings of the early 20th-century feminists and of the sexologists, remained unknown to Anglo-American anthropologists until historians and historically oriented anthropologists rediscovered them. In contrast, the acceleration of interactions between scholars from different cultural communities and the physical exchange of students and scholars across geographic, cultural, and linguistic boundaries necessitate and further the speaking of the same language, both linguistically and in terms of the subjects these scholars

recognize as worth talking about and researching. Interactive and integrative efforts that are also historically informed will, in the end, not simply allow us to better understand how Japanese women and men live and think about sexuality, but will provide us with opportunities to come up with better problems to analyze than those with which we have started.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Research for this chapter was supported by a Japanese Ministry of Education Monbusho scholarship. I am grateful to Jennifer Robertson and Elise Edwards for comments on earlier drafts.

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# A Companion to the Anthropology of Japan

Edited by Jennifer Robertson





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BLACKWELL PUBLISHING  
350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA  
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK  
550 Swanston Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053, Australia

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First published 2005 by Blackwell Publishing Ltd

1 2005

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

A companion to the anthropology of Japan / edited by Jennifer Robertson.

p. cm. — (Blackwell companions to anthropology ; 5)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-10 0-631-22955-8 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Ethnology—Japan. 2. Japan—Social life and customs. I. Robertson, Jennifer Ellen. II. Series.

GN635.J2C65 2005

306'.0952—c22

2004022308

ISBN-13 978-0-631-22955-1

A catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

Set in 10/12.5 pt Galliard

by Kolam Information Services Pvt. Ltd, Pondicherry, India

Printed and bound in the United Kingdom

by TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

The publisher's policy is to use permanent paper from mills that operate a sustainable forestry policy, and which has been manufactured from pulp processed using acid-free and elementary chlorine-free practices. Furthermore, the publisher ensures that the text paper and cover board used have met acceptable environmental accreditation standards.

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