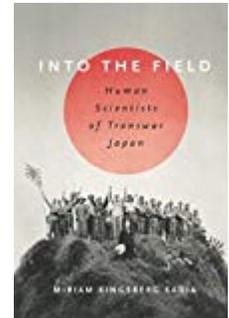




Miriam Kingsberg Kadia. *Into the Field: Human Scientists of Transwar Japan.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019. xviii + 317 pp. \$30.00, paper, ISBN 978-1-5036-1061-3.



Reviewed by Paul D. Barclay (Lafayette College)

Published on H-Asia (November, 2020)

Commissioned by Bradley C. Davis (Eastern Connecticut State University)

How can we, or should we, relate Japan's early twentieth-century history of militarism and empire-building to its postwar reputation as a paragon of pacifism and democracy? One school of thought posits that Japan changed dramatically with its defeat in the Pacific War and its occupation by a reform-minded, US-led coalition of victor nations. In this view, Japan's malevolent military leaders, right-wing ideologues, and other nefarious feudal elements were disabled or sidelined after the war, to make room for the more liberal wing of Japanese civil society to take the reins of government with the support of a population that was all too happy to be rid of its wartime state. The concept "transwar," in contrast, signals a historiographical pushback against this "abrupt break" narrative. Transwar scholarship highlights continuities in Japan's modern history and underscores the extent to which postwar Japan was as much a product of developments in the 1920s and 1930s, as it was of far-reaching occupation-era reforms. The transwar viewpoint frames *Into the Field*, Miriam Kadia's important study of institutionalized

knowledge production in twentieth-century Japan. Kadia takes a generational approach to the sociology of knowledge to focus on a cohort of academics and scholars who came of professional age in the 1930s as credentialed spear-carriers of Japan's expanding empire and war machine.

Izumi Seichi (1915-70), the exemplar of human science in this book, cut his teeth on the study of imperialized peoples during the wars of the 1930s and 1940s and went on to build an academic empire in Japan in the 1950s and 1960s. In the postwar period, Izumi established a reputation as a public intellectual, prolific scholar, effective organizer, and emissary of Japanese scientific prowess to the international community. The reign of Izumi's cohort as figures of academic influence and public fame lasted into the 1970s. Their mindset, and basic approach to depicting the peoples of the world to Japan's middle-class consumers of knowledge, remained hegemonic in Japan until the Vietnam era, which witnessed a youth rebellion against the interwoven discourses on progress, value-neutral

science, and technocracy that had been advocated by Izumi's "field generation."

This book can be read in two ways. First and foremost, it is a richly contextualized intellectual biography of Izumi Seiichi. *Into the Field* traces his life, times, and writings over the temporal arc of Japanese history from the 1930s through the 1960s, and across several continents, archipelagos, and institutional settings. In this register, it is an exemplary study of transwar Japanese history.

The "field" in the book's title refers to fieldwork, which before and after the war was apotheosized by Izumi and the field generation as the touchstone for social-scientific research that could claim the mantle of objectivity. As Kadia's book powerfully illustrates, the "field" was always much more than a space of observation and data collection for high rollers such as Izumi—it was the place of networking for Japanese anthropologists and associated scholars, who invariably got to know each other much better than the people they were researching. Moreover, the field has always been enmeshed in relations of power, circumscribed by logistical constraints, and shaped by exogenous forces such as funding agencies, political winds, and careerism. Read in a second way, then, *Into the Field* is an argument about how a group of interrelated academic disciplines it defines as "the human sciences" is historically yoked to empire-building and the construction of the Third World. In this argument, "objectivity" emerges as a shibboleth and as a discourse and cover story that masks the power relationships that perpetuated, and were perpetuated by, "human science." Izumi, and the researchers in his generational cohort and academic network, rode the coattails of empire to gain access to field sites but also to ensure their own physical safety. Their work after the war still depended upon robust institutional support from the American occupiers and then the state-funded university system. While much of their writing on human diversity and "primitive peoples" wrapped itself in the cloak of objectivity, Kadia writes, it of-

ten fell far short of disinterested, careful, and sustained observation and analysis.

The eight chapters of *Into the Field* follow Izumi Seiichi from his first fieldwork expedition to Manchukuo (the Japanese-controlled state in northeast China) to his last visit to the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico just before his death in 1970. As a student at Keijō University in Seoul, Izumi joined expeditions near the Soviet border to study the Oroqen and Goldi peoples, traveled with a larger team to Inner Mongolia (Mōkyō), and finally, as a dissertator, conducted research on Jeju Island (Korea), all in the late 1930s. During the Pacific War, Izumi again relied upon armed escorts, government infrastructure, and other perquisites of Japanese citizenship to participate in a major expedition to Papua New Guinea in 1942. As a member of these teams, he made his name as a prolific scholar and author while he and his co-workers supplied the Kwantung Army and the Imperial Navy with intelligence on the peoples they studied. Izumi's early scholarship was written under the spell of Bronislaw Malinowski. With the exception of Izumi's work in Jeju, however, Izumi and his fellow researchers in Manchukuo, Mongolia, and Papua eschewed the immersion method propounded by Malinowski. In Kadia's account, the tensions between participant observation as the standard for anthropological objectivity and the rapid pace, team approach, and geographic ambitions of Japanese colonial and wartime survey ethnography are palpable.

This book is at its best when Kadia reconstructs the social life and logistical realities of fieldwork that Izumi conducted before and after the war. Kadia draws out the implications of these temporally contingent and concrete details for more durable structures of knowledge production. The following passage is quoted at length because it encapsulates the ambivalence *Into the Field* displays not only toward the whole notion of objectivity, but also toward the relationship between anthropology and colonialism:

Outnumbered by soldiers, threatened by war, and cut off from female company, the researchers embraced an almost military discipline that was to characterize expeditionary procedure well into the 1960s. Yet, the custom of referring to fieldwork as “travel” (tabi) or as “study trips” (kenkyū ryokō) revealed their enjoyment of the experience. The human scientists sat down together for three meals per day.... They drank copious quantities of beer, a traditional lubricant of masculine sociability.... Solidarity among researchers inevitably impacted their relations with informants. As Malinowski discovered, solo fieldworkers often became desperate for friendship, leaving them no choice but to immerse themselves in local society (the goal of the exercise). Ensuing affections between human scientists and informants sometimes threatened the logics of imperialism. Among European and American fieldworkers of the 1930s and 1940s, respect and solicitude for indigenous peoples often tempered support for colonialism. By contrast, with each other for company, Japanese human scientists had scant need or opportunity to develop such intimacy and understanding of imperial minzoku [ethnic groups] (pp. 51-52).

In this passage Kadia holds open the possibility that anthropology, when conducted along the lines prescribed by the intellectual father of fieldwork, Malinowski, is a methodology that can produce knowledge of the so-called Other while mitigating racism. Not only does Kadia indicate that European or American fieldworkers came closer than Japanese team surveyors to the Malinowskian ideal; she also lauds Izumi himself for achieving a similar level of immersion and empathy during his doctoral research on Jeju Island. Having grown up in Korea, Izumi was able to conduct work there without interpreters. Moreover, it was the Jeju research that pushed Izumi to publish criticisms of Japanese colonial policy in Korea, revealing that even in the hands of Japanese investigators, fieldwork had a subversive potential.

However, as Kadia also indicates, most fieldwork at empire’s extremities, or later, when Izumi took teams to Peru, was consumed with the exigencies of survival, logistical problems, and timetables that obviated the development of personal bonds or the attainment of emic perspectives in “the field.” At the same time, these very exigencies created the ground for a deep form of sociability that produced long-lived scholarly networks and professional identification with the field. In short, “the field” became shorthand in Japanese professional circles for a space that was saturated with the intragroup dynamics of teams of investigators, a circumstance that diverted considerable energy and attention away from interactions with their putative objects of investigation.

In one register, the doubts raised about the objectivity of colonial and wartime anthropology in this book rest with the failures of practitioners to be objective, not necessarily with the professed goal of objectivity. In this respect, the critique offered in the opening chapters of *Into the Field* echoes those of Johannes Fabian, whose seminal *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (1983) also assailed academic anthropology for de-temporalizing the peoples who are objects of fieldwork by relegating them to the ethnographic present. For Fabian, and seemingly for Kadia, the problem is not anthropology per se, but rather that anthropology’s radically anticolonial potential remains largely untapped. In Fabian’s view, the antidote to stereotyping and denigration of the Other is indeed more and better fieldwork, because the immersion method prescribed by Malinowski forces sustained linguistic encounters that place researchers and subjects into a shared temporality, for prolonged periods of time.

With the support of the imperial state, as Kadia points out, Japanese anthropologists of the 1930s and 1940s largely reproduced the discourse on hierarchy, racial capacity, and primitivity that animated political and military discussions of the empire’s “confraternity” of subject peoples. After

the war, when it came time to look back at the shortcomings of the “field generation” and its claims of value-neutrality, the complicity of these anthropologists with conquest and wartime slaughter was whitewashed out of the history of Japanese anthropology. For Kadia, Japan here compares unfavorably with Germany, insofar as the youth of the late 1960s who criticized Japanese academia for its aloofness from the problems of the world did not go further and link tacit support for the United States, the Vietnam wars, and capitalism to earlier support for the Japanese war machine. While the Germans who came of age during the Third Reich were held to account, the Japanese men who served its empire were not, argues Kadia.

To be clear, it was not Japanese anthropology that was put on trial in the years following 1968, but rather non-Marxist social science and the stance that scholarship and activism are separate domains. The “crime” leveled against the academy in general was complicity in Cold War atrocities through support of US policies, and adoption of the modernization paradigm. For Kadia, these critiques fall short, because the field generation built its methodology and ethos amidst atrocities committed in Korea, China, New Guinea, and other places where Japanese fieldwork was conducted well before the US occupation of Japan and the unwholesome influence of the American imperialists. This charge of complicity has mixed support both within this text and more generally speaking. As Kadia notes, anthropologists never tired of claiming the practical utility of their work to government officials in order to secure funding and other forms of support for their science. But as Kadia also notes, “The Japanese government and military provided financial support for these ventures. However, much to the disappointment of policy-makers, human scientists [anthropologists] seldom generated usable results. Abstract information proved difficult to apply to on-the-ground problems, while the brief duration of imperial control did not permit administrators to act on even concrete information. Instead, the benefits of hu-

man science [anthropology] accrued disproportionately to researchers themselves” (p. 40).

In support of this statement—that anthropology was of little or no practical utility to the state and army—Kadia’s book produces only a couple of isolated and tentative links between anthropologists and exploitation. One survey party exchanged opium for information from informants, and Izumi stands accused for not doing more to avert a slaughter that occurred after the Japanese navy left Papua New Guinea. But there is little in the record to suggest that anthropologists provided much useful information to the military. It may be that Izumi and his mentor, Akiba Takashi, helped produce some maps and censuses for the colonial state and military, but it is far from clear that this data was any more useful than the reams of statistics, maps, and reports about imperialized peoples and places generated by policemen, military engineers, or physical scientists.

The other charge against the anthropologists is that their essentializing and racially denigrating discourse supported the maintenance and extension of empire rhetorically. Moreover, by blaming Chinese immigration to Mongolia and Manchuria for the penury of Oroqen, Goldi, and Mongolian peoples, Japanese anthropologists provided ideological cover for the imperial state, which itself was above criticism for its role in rural impoverishment in the writings of anthropologists such as Akiba and Izumi. Again, these charges are hard to assess in the absence of a fuller understanding of the quantity and quality of non-anthropological rhetoric about subject peoples and targets of military attention. As Kadia notes, journalists were important conduits of information about the peoples studied by anthropologists, and they radically simplified anthropological findings to sell newspapers. But for this reviewer, the larger problem is the large quantity and wide spectrum of views about Chinese, Koreans, and other occupied or subject peoples propagated via tourism, literature, commercial textbooks, military propaganda, and other

vectors. Anthropologists contributed to, but did not monopolize, the representation of race and ethnicity to the broad Japanese public before the war. It is difficult to find clear and convincing evidence in this book or elsewhere for the strong claim Kadia makes about the prewar period: “Ultimately, however, an entire generation of human scientists coalesced around the production of knowledge that supported the subjugation and even slaughter of colonized populations—legitimized by a steadfast faith in the ideal of objectivity” (p. 41).

The attributed positive correlation between objectivity as a research ideal and the exploitation of colonized peoples exists in tension with a concurrent strain in the book that asserts that if fieldwork had been more objective, it would have been more humane and less condescending. The charge that human science supported “subjugation and even slaughter” is plausible, but in Izumi’s case, there are no real smoking guns, at least in this book.

During the US Occupation (1945-52) of Japan, with the military sidelined and empire discredited, Izumi and his “field generation” filled an institutional and ideological vacuum, and were transformed from norm followers to norm creators. Desperate for employment but also eager to engage in academic exchange, Izumi’s cohort of colonial and wartime anthropologists participated in American-led surveys of agrarian Japan to gauge buy-in for land reform. They also attended US-led workshops that preached the twin gospels of democracy and scientific objectivity, where Izumi imbibed the techniques and ethos of purportedly value-neutral US social-science methodologies. With new tools and sources of authority, Izumi led research teams, who now also used questionnaires and other survey techniques, to measure Japanese sentiment while he also conducted a microstudy of Jeju Island immigrants to Tokyo. While the power relations between US occupiers and Japanese social scientists, and between social scientists and

informants, were still asymmetrical in this period, Kadia is careful to point out that US occupiers realized they were intellectually outclassed by the seasoned Japanese scholars they had assembled into research teams. Although the Malinowskian ideal was never approached in this period, readers are left with the impression that Izumi and his team conducted innovative and valuable social-scientific research in Tokyo at this time. In any event, a new layer of methodology was added to the team approach to field work, and its rationale shifted from support for empire to the promotion of democracy, peace, and objectivity in the late 1940s.

In the postwar dispensation, the American antipathy to Marxism and the category “class” and the Nazi discrediting of the category “race” left “culture” as a principle category for registering human difference in the US academy, but also among Japanese academics and writers who worked under the censorship of occupation authorities. “Culture” also became a master category for UNESCO, a norm-setting international body that lent prestige and funding to heritage projects that employed anthropologists. Thus, Kadia argues, the category “culture” (*bunka*) and the human unit that embodied it—the “ethnos” (*minzoku*), became primary referents of Japanese social science in the 1950s. But even more importantly, the culture concept permeated a new self-definition of Japan as a “cultural nation” (instead of as the divinely endowed race-nation asserted by imperial ideology). As Kadia points out, the concept “ethnos,” or *minzoku*, like “race,” presupposed human groupness and did not rule out the notion of global hierarchies of cultural capacity. In a word, the transition from race to culture did not entail the end of racial discrimination or denigration, but it changed the terms of discourse significantly.

In defining the “new Japan” as a cultural nation, the field generation led by Izumi took the US-inflected “holistic” approach to survey work to Tsushima Island and the Saru River in Hokkaidō in order to fold them into the Yamato (Japanese) eth-

nos/minzoku. Tsushima is still a contested interzone between Korea and Japan, as it was a liminal space in the early modern period. In the 1950s, Japan's human scientists claimed its past and present for Japan. Archaeologists, folklorists, anthropologists, and others compiled a large but inconclusive body of evidence during the Izumi-led survey of 1951. Some evidence showed affinity with the Korean ethnos, some evidence showed affinity with Japan's. Nonetheless, Japan's daily newspapers, which had also serialized accounts of the wartime New Guinea anthropological expeditions, eagerly reported the survey's executive summary, which announced that Tsushima islanders were, according to objective science, members of the Yamato ethnos (and not the Korean ethnos).

In Hokkaidō, the methods were similar, but with important differences. For the Japanese survey teams, Ainu who seemed assimilated to Japanese customs were deemed inauthentic, and poor informants for a supposedly disappearing ethnos. So fieldworkers made recourse to psychological profiling; reference to old texts by missionaries, explorers, and travelers; material culture; and photography. They concluded, by dint of several intellectual somersaults, that Ainu and Yamato people had been the same until the Yayoi period (300 BCE to 300 CE). Thereafter, they diverged when Yamato people became rice cultivators (having successfully domesticated elements of continental civilization). Interestingly, Izumi was upbraided and scolded by an Ainu woman for being insensitive to their poverty, and for wanting to cash in on the fieldwork. The rebuke effectively ended Izumi's personal interest in salvage anthropology in Hokkaidō.

Setting his sights once again on foreign and more seemingly exotic locals, more in tune with the Malinowskian archetype of the adventurer and hero (but always with a team in the Japanese context), Izumi conducted his first field research beyond Japan's sovereignty by traveling to Brazil in 1952 and 1955. The first trip was supported by

UNESCO and aimed at promoting reconciliation and scientific understanding of intracomunal violence among the two hundred thousand Brazilians of Japanese descent and Japanese immigrants who fell out over disagreements about the ending of World War II. The violence left many dead and raised questions about Japan as a suitable source of Brazilian immigration, which posed problems for both national governments. As Kadia writes, Izumi and his local partner, a Japanese-born Brazilian named Saitō Hiroshi, employed a battery of surveys and interviews to discover the regional sources of the tensions, which cohered around expectations of either returning to Japan or staying in Brazil. Interestingly, because Izumi, as an emissary and self-conscious exemplar of the newly retooled democratic, rational, and pacifist Japan, was embarrassed and repulsed by Japanese in Brazil who clung to the belief that Japan had won the war into 1952, he wrote them off as "fanatics" and did not publish the findings of his research. In short, the methodology was objective, but the prejudices and politics of the lead investigator colored the framing of the results and even led to the burying of the report. More famously, Izumi put studies of the Japanese diaspora on the scholarly map with this survey. He returned in 1955 on a boat also packed with Japanese emigrants to study the classic American sociological theme of assimilation among the diaspora in Brazil. As an emissary of peace, progress, and modernization, Izumi framed his findings that many people of Japanese descent in Brazil identified as Brazilians, that exogamous marriage was common, and that distinctive outward features of Japaneseness among this group could theoretically disappear, as positive. It showed that the Japanese spirit, or ethnos, was disposed to political participation and democracy, and that emigrants from Japan were contributing to the world's development because of their economic drive and their willingness to embrace citizenship in new countries.

The climax of this story arrives in chapter 6, which chronicles Izumi Seiichi's rise to interna-

tional scholarly renown and domestic celebrity as an archaeologist of pre-Inca civilizations in Peru. Izumi spearheaded fund-raising initiatives, academic leaves, government sponsorship in Peru and Japan, and a herculean logistics operation to launch Japanese field research in South America. The details of preparation for these journeys make for fascinating reading. Izumi's disingenuous Rockefeller Foundation application claiming that the research was a follow-up on the Nikkei (diaspora) studies of the early 1950s is followed by tales of Toyota factory visits to learn jeep maintenance in preparation for hard travel. The leading role played by Japanese expatriates in Peru was another notable element of the expedition's success. Izumi's legendary stamina, charisma, and scholarly ambitions are all on display in this chapter. His team rewrote the chronology and even methodology of pre-Columbian archaeology in a part of the world formerly dominated by European and American scholarship. The five major archaeological expeditions to Peru that occurred between 1958 and 1969 ran coterminously with the "Income Doubling" and Tokyo Olympics (1964) period of high-speed growth in Japanese history—the period when Japan is said to have redefined itself as a middle-class nation of consumers. As Kadia masterfully weaves these complex stories together, she demonstrates the many ways in which "the Inca" (the most famous digs were pre-Incan, but in the popular press they were all lumped together as Incan ruins) became a new archaeological foil for Japan in the postwar period. Lacking its former "Others" from the empire of the prewar era, Japanese anthropologists at first reconstructed the pre-Columbian Andean empires as failed despotisms that followed impersonal historical laws along the path from absolutist rule to self-inflicted dissolution. The story attached to these Peruvian relics relativized Japan's disastrous prewar trajectory as but one historical example of many such catastrophic downfalls.

The Peru expeditions at times employed hundreds of people, and they relied upon various

forms of local buy-in, from neighboring interpreters and porters all the way up to the Peruvian central government. As high-profile undertakings, they also became minor media spectacles in Japan, also because of newspaper sponsorship. In this public arena, travelogues, coffee-table books, department-store exhibits, and even cinematic treatments contributed to an "Inca boom" in Japanese middle-brow culture. This public interest coincided with the birth of the "discourse on Japanese-ness" (*Nihonjinron*) in the 1960s. In Kadia's telling, the infamous *Nihonjinron*, with its feel-good emphasis on the innate, unique, and laudable characteristics of the Japanese ethnos, was given scientific plausibility from the endorsement of Izumi Seichi and his colleagues. The group cohesion, endurance, and adaptability displayed by the expeditions to Peru were attributed to Japanese national character. The ability of Japanese emigrants to play a leading role in Peru's economy was also attributed to their Japanese characteristics. In the revised, upbeat version of Peru's prehistorical past, ancient linkages between Neolithic Japan and ancient South America were posited in light of diffusionist models of technology transfer. In the *Nihonjinron* era, even the ability of pre-Columbian civilizations to adapt and thrive was linked rhetorically to Japan's ability to do the same as the quintessential adapting and adopting culture.

The saga of Izumi Seichi came to an abrupt end in 1970 with his premature death at the age of fifty-five. His final years were consumed with the Tokyo University student protests, strikes, and their quelling. In the concluding chapter of the book, Kadia highlights some of the general concerns launched by Tokyo University students that were directed at the scholars of Izumi's generation. She notes that Izumi himself and other senior scholars had also grown uncomfortable with the modernization paradigm that equated economic growth and technological advancements with progress. For Kadia, these auto-critiques did not go far enough, because the field generation, and their younger critics, never acknowledged the complici-

ty of anthropology, ethnography, and archaeology in the expansion and maintenance of Japan's empire and war machine in the prewar period.

The post-1968 era inaugurated the unraveling of Japanese anthropology's transwar consensus about its goals to produce objective, field-based research that uncovered universal laws of social development and diffusion. It was not an abrupt break. Kadia points to the decentering of popular sources of anthropology away from the university with the building of National Museum of Ethnology (1977), and the emergence of Japan's naval-gazing variant of neo-folklore studies centered on Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962). Various post-1970 developments meant that university-based academics working in large teams of field researchers no longer produced the lion's share of knowledge that informed the Japanese public about human diversity. In this closing chapter, the suggestion that *Nihonjinron* and Yanagita studies filled the void left by the decline of the field generation raises interesting questions. Whereas objectivity was configured as a support for empire and slaughter early the book, by the end of the book, it is contrasted with patently nationalistic and anti-cosmopolitan outlooks. It is a credit to the author that she links Izumi's activities and oeuvre to several important theses that connect knowledge production and empire, while also remaining faithful to the documentary trail. *Into the Field* presents a complex portrait of survey anthropology's Shōwa-era (1926-89) historical trajectory. This magisterial account, based on a vast and appropriate source base, invites reflection upon the degree of fit between general theories that link anthropology to colonialism and war crimes, and the evidence left behind by Izumi Seichi and his associates. Readers will find instances in this book that implicate Izumi in the excesses of empire and nationalism, but will also find numerous examples of his intellectual integrity and broad-mindedness.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-asia>

Citation: Paul D. Barclay. Review of Kadia, Miriam Kingsberg. *Into the Field: Human Scientists of Transwar Japan*. H-Asia, H-Net Reviews. November, 2020.

URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=54867>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.