

The Legacy of Kinji Imanishi

Kyoto University's Heritage of Fieldwork and Primatology

ANTHROPOLOGY and primatology fieldwork at Kyoto University is rooted in the tradition of the Academic Alpine Club of Kyoto (AACK), which was established by Kinji Imanishi and his colleagues in 1931. The AACK's activities centered on climbing uncharted mountains, and the group made several expeditions into unknown parts of Asia under their motto of "ascent of virgin peaks." Their expeditions were always motivated by academic interests, with the members comprising an interdisciplinary research team of anthropologists, zoologists, botanists, geologists, and other specialists.

After World War II, the club splintered into several groups focusing on distinct academic fields, but the resulting groups continued to interact with each other. Imanishi was based in Kyoto University's Department of Zoology, and his initial field studies focused on feral



Imanishi at the top of Mt. Meru in Tanzania. It was his first research trip to Africa. (Photo from Itani Jun'ichiro Archives at PRI, Kyoto University)



From right, Itani, Imanishi, Kawamura. Upper, Tokuda, at Toi Cape, which was known for wild horses. (Photo from Itani Jun'ichiro Archives at PRI, Kyoto University)

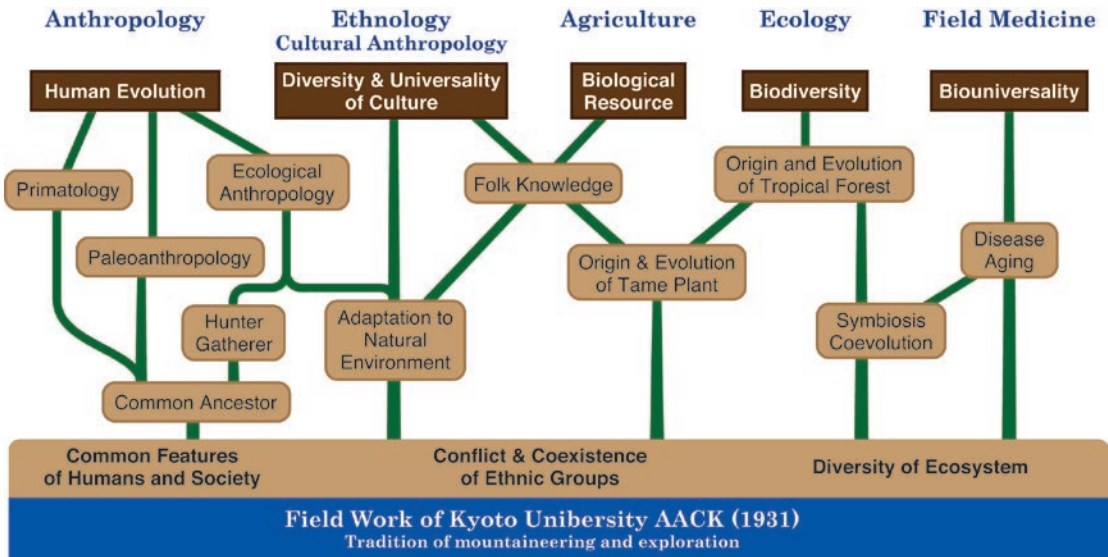
horses and Japanese macaques. He believed that understanding animal societies would aid in tracing the evolution of human society. Imanishi developed a new definition of society from the viewpoint of combining both the organism and its habitat, and he applied it to all living things. He devised a guide for field studies which entailed adopting the methods of comparative sociology, basing work on individual identifications, and recording social interactions through prolonged and continuous observations. This later came to known as the Japanese method.

After the retirement of Imanishi in 1965, Junichiro Itani led the university's studies in primatology and ecological anthropology. Field studies were conducted mainly on the great apes (bonobos, chimpanzees, and gorillas), hunter-gatherers, pastoralists, and slash-and-



Kinji IMANISHI (1902-1992)

Kinji Imanishi was an entomologist, ecologist, anthropologist, founder of Japanese primatology, and an accomplished mountaineer, who had great popularity as an explorer among the Japanese public (from the WEB site "The Kinji Imanishi Digital Archive at Alberta University," <http://tomcat.sunsite.ualberta.ca/Imanishi/>). He was also the founder of Kyoto University's Primate Research Institute.



burn farmers in Africa. Graduate students were directed to collect data by following their intuition and curiosity, especially firsthand data on phenomena that had previously gone unnoted. The phrase “let the data speak” became the motto of their research. New findings on the behavior of apes in their natural habitats, such as food sharing, hunting, tool using, face-to-face interactions, homosexual interactions, displays and greetings, have enabled scholars to present new arguments on the social features and social

evolution of the great apes. These findings are analyzed in comparison with human society in order to elucidate its evolution. Itani challenged the concept of the “natural man” asserted by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who described a process from human equality at the primitive state to inequality at the civil state. Itani proposed a possible evolutionary pathway from the equipotent state of an elemental society to the equality of a monogamous society, and compared the inequality of group-living non-human primates



Imanishi (center) and Itani (left) in search of wild gorillas in Uganda on March 6th 1958. (Photo from Itani Jun'ichiro Archives at PRI, Kyoto University)



Early Primates study group at Japan Monkey Centre in Inuyama. From right, Sonohara, Imanishi, Itani, and Kawai. (Photo from Itani Jun'ichiro Archives at PRI, Kyoto University)



Junichiro Itani (1926-2001)

Junichiro Itani was also a founder of the discipline of Japanese primatology. Objects of his research were from Japanese wild monkeys to chimpanzees and gorillas in Africa. He was renowned as a first anthropologist who found that chimpanzees and gorillas had distinct social comparable to those of humans. For this achievement, he was awarded the Thomas Huxley Memorial Medal from Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, in 1984.



Face-to-face communication of gorillas



Student field work at Arashiyama Monkey Park



Meat sharing among chimpanzees



Japanese macaque and deer



Researchers at the time gathered in front of the entrance of Japan Monkey Centre, completed in 1967. (Photo from Itani Jun'ichiro Archives at PRI, Kyoto University)

to the conditional equality of human society. The origin of human family and sociality is still a major focus in primatology and anthropology. The conservation of endangered species, including great apes, and the preservation of indigenous cultures have also become important tasks. With the rapid advancement of globalization, field studies on human and non-human primates are having an increased impact on policy making and bringing harmony to human communities.

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WEB jinrui.zool.kyoto-u.ac.jp/others/WelcomeE.html



Itani Junichiro Archives

Junichiro Itani (1926-2001), a student of Kinji Imanishi, was a founding member of the Japanese school of primatology. "Itani Jun'ichiro Archives" stores numerous pictures of his research, field notes, and many other handwritten documents.

WEB www.pri.kyoto-u.ac.jp/archives/index.html

