

【Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (S)】

Broad Section A



Title of Project : The Origin and Evolution of Sociality: Developing new theories of human evolution based on collaboration between anthropology and primatology

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Keyword : sociality, human evolution, anthropology, primatology, field study

【Purpose and Background of the Research】

Many primates, including humans, are gregarious, living with others in a variety of ways: sometimes peaceful, and sometimes hostile/competitive. Humans in particular are able to coexist not only face-to-face, such as in pairs, families, and co-habitation groups, but also in extremely large, more abstract, “imaginary” groupings, as evidenced by the co-existence of ethnic groups, peoples, and even mankind as a whole. Underpinning these diverse forms of coexistence is nothing less than the higher-order “sociality”. The purpose of this study is to construct a new human evolution theory with “sociality” as a key. To this end, we will develop interdisciplinary joint research focusing on dialogue with neighboring fields, and in particular based on collaboration between two field studies: anthropology and primatology.

【Research Methods】

In this study, we will adopt the humanities and social science perspective and methodology of ethnography in the broad sense to observe and describe the interaction process between individuals who meet as social beings, paying attention to “locality” and “totality” in the fields of human cohabitation groups and wild primate groups. However, it is difficult to collect data for comparative analysis of comparable quality and quantity from different types of cohabitant populations with starkly different activities and complexities, for example, across species. Therefore, one of the main research objectives of this study is to develop the survey method itself. The first step will be to apply “focal individual sampling”—a methodological approach common in primatology for observing and describing interactions between individuals - to anthropology, as well as elaborating upon a method of collecting qualitative data on said interactions between individuals.

- Ethnographic view point & methodology
- Exploration for new methodology
- Comparison and discussion



Figure 1 Research methods

【Expected Research Achievements and Scientific Significance】

Studies of various human characteristics within the framework of evolution are under way in many disciplines today. Humanities and social sciences can add new perspectives to the discussion on evolution. In this research, we will conduct a comparative study on “sociality” across regions and cultures, as well as species. This raises the possibility of overcoming the tendency often seen in studies describing evolution towards reductive formulation and reliance on mathematical theory to reduce explanations of social behavior and cultural phenomena to a matter of individuals and genes. After all, the ultimate challenge of anthropology is to reveal “where we come from, who we are, and where we are going,” and so it must look for ways to answer those questions.

【Publications Relevant to the Project】

Kawai, K.(ed.), *Others: The Evolution of Human Sociality*,

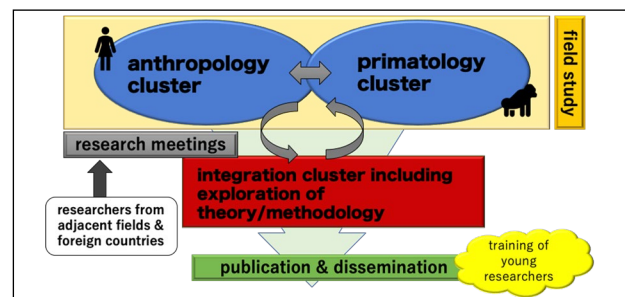


Figure 2 Research procedure and organization

Kyoto University Press & Trans Pacific Press. (2019)
Kawai, K.(ed.), *Institutions: The Evolution of Human Sociality*, Kyoto University Press & Trans Pacific Press. (2017)
Kawai, K.(ed.), *Groups: The Evolution of Human Sociality*, Kyoto University Press & Trans Pacific Press. (2013)

【Term of Project】 FY2019-2023

【Budget Allocation】 130,400 Thousand Yen

【Homepage Address and Other Contact Information】

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