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Into the Field: Human Scientists of Transwar Japan. By Miriam Kingsberg Kadia. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2020. xviii, 317 pp. ISBN: 9781503610613 (cloth, also available in paper and as e-book)

Alexander Bay
Chapman University, bay@chapman.edu

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Comments

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In a thoroughly researched and original work, Miriam Kingsberg Kadia makes a substantial contribution to the field with her biography of the ethnographer Izumi Seiichi. The genre of biography in Anglophone Japanese history has been neglected after the cultural turn, and this monograph is especially welcome in the East Asian science studies field because we know little about the career trajectories of the academics, scientists, and technocrats we often study.

According to Kingsberg Kadia, US Occupation authorities encountered their Japanese counterparts in the late 1940s and noted that they were “men of one age.” They had been born in the early 20th century, attended university together, served the Empire during the Fifteen Years War, and were at the height of their careers. *Into the Field* focuses on the most influential representative of “men of one age,” Izumi Seiichi. Izumi maintained a professional and international network of friends and colleagues, his work was highly respected around the world, and his research projects were always structured to put Japan in conversation with and become a leader in Western academia. *Into the Field* argues that Izumi and other Japanese human scientists believed that the production of objective knowledge should serve state and society. Izumi’s wartime ethnographic fieldwork, a combination of anthropological and folklore studies into lifestyle, religion, and family relationships, was carried out to support the values of Japan’s pan-Asianism and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, and after the war, similar fieldwork was a way to contribute to the Cold War values of freedom, democracy, and capitalism.

Izumi did his ethnographic training at Keijō Imperial University at a time when Japanese social and human scientists were turning Korea and its people into an object of knowledge for colonial rule. Ōtaka Tomoo, a Keijō Imperial University professor took Izumi along with a team into Mongolia in 1938 to collect ethnographic data, claiming that, “We scholars are humble troops in the culture war on the Asian continent.” (44) The Mongolian expedition created the pattern for subsequent team fieldwork throughout the wartime empire. In 1943, Izumi led his own expedition for the Empire to New Guinea where he catalogued flora and fauna that, he wrote, “our troops must defend.” (59)

Some of the data that Izumi’s team collected concerned the Biak people in Melanesia. This was soon used by the Imperial Navy to forcefully conscript the islanders into service, and subsequent resistance led to their massacre. Kingsberg Kadia calls this “an almost unknown imperial crime against humanity.” (61-62) Izumi never, even later in life, commented on how his research was used by the Empire to exploit or even murder the people he studied.

During the American Occupation, Japan was enfolded into US strategic Cold War planning and the production of objective knowledge was transformed into the foundations of democracy, capitalism, and peace in Japan and East Asia. One of Izumi’s first projects after the war was to study the Japanese diaspora in Brazil. In the immediate postwar period, deadly clashes erupted within the émigré population in Brazil between those who accepted Japan’s surrender and those who refused to concede defeat. Izumi, funded by UNESCO, went to Brazil to study this violence through the lens of assimilation. He was the first Japanese researcher to study the Japanese diaspora after World War II. Izumi’s fieldwork revealed that those who intended on permanent

residence in Brazil readily accepted news of defeat while those who hoped to one day return to Japan were holdouts. Izumi's research reaffirmed the idea that since democracy, capitalism, and peace were part of the Japanese national character, successful émigrés and their offspring, *Nikkei*, peacefully assimilated into Brazilian culture, politics, and lifestyle. The data produced through Izumi's fieldwork established Nikkei as a legitimate category for social science study.

In the 1960s, the student movement took aim at the university system, the production of knowledge therein, and Japan's subservient role in supporting America's war in Vietnam. Izumi, however, was not moved to participate. In an argument with his Kyoto University undergraduate son concerning the politics of the student movement, he yelled, "Scholarship and politics can absolutely not coexist." (207) It is hard to reconcile this statement with Izumi's history of service to the Empire. Indeed, Kingsberg Kadia shows that as much as seventy-five percent of the field of Japanese anthropologists and ethnographers served the Empire, and she argues, "For Japanese scholars in World War II, creating objective knowledge was tantamount to legitimizing the imperialist, emperor-centered polity." (68) Twenty-plus years after the war, Izumi was unable to acknowledge the role that the men of one age played in the Fifteen Years War.

As Kingsberg Kadia shows, Izumi was at once a great man in the history of the human sciences and a product of his times. His inability to acknowledge support for the wartime empire mirrors the story of Emperor Hirohito, who when asked about war responsibility, said, "Since I have not delved much into literary matters...I am unable to answer such a question."¹ Izumi did not live long enough to see the death of Hirohito and possibly reflect on his role in World War II; Izumi died of a cerebral hemorrhage in November, 1970. The era of the "men of one age" ended with his passing, although much of Izumi's scholarship is still referenced today.

Into the Field sets the standard for transwar biographical studies. Scholars interested in the history of knowledge production as well as the role of academics will be interested in the compelling narrative of this study. Graduate students focusing on empire and war in East Asia should also read this book. Finally, individual chapters are accessible enough to be assigned to undergraduates studying how science was used to assert Japan's superiority before and during World War II.

Alexander R Bay
Chapman University
bay@chapman.edu

¹ Kato Norihiro, "The Journalist and the Emperor," *The New York Times* (10/14/2014).