

Meaning of “Aging” for Women

Comparison of Kenya and Japan

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Gerontology has been a wide theme in several academic fields. As far, the natural and social sciences researchers are mostly focusing on the problems coming to the age of elderly, compared to the younger one. In Japan, “aging” become social issues and it is considered sometimes to be “problems”, and there are variety of services and businesses to support elderly people. It is getting to be wide from the basic services in public health and to make a profit such as “anti-aging” cosmetics etc.

Since 1990s, I have carried out several anthropological researches in the western part of Kenya, Kisii, and focused on women’s life stage events. I recognized it that it has been important in the society to step up life stages based on life events, like circumcision, marriage, and childbirth. Therefore women, who do not marry, nor bear children, are in the disgraced position, and the same time, there are several practices of adaptation of children and so on. In Japan, nowadays the percent of woman who do not marry is increasing, and it is not so surprising the couple decide not to have a child after the marriage. The declining of birthrate is social problem to increase the speed of aging in Japan. But for many women, to bear a child means to give up their carriers and women has to choose “to be a mother” or to raise her career.

In this paper, I would like to describe the differences between Kenyan local community and Japanese ones, raising some examples, focusing on elderly women in the society.