Neighbourhood life in rural Kyushu: Some advantages of long-term fieldwork

Based on some 40-odd years of research in a community in rural Fukuoka Prefecture, this lecture will describe and illustrate major changes in neighbourhood life over the period. The context for the analysis will be a wider view of Japanese society, including predictions made in the early days of the research, and the talk will demonstrate advantages both of observing change as it happens, and of using social anthropological research methods to understand the situation in the field. In other words, we will visit some real cases rather close-up, and we will see how their lives have developed over time, a mechanism designed to put some flesh on the bare bones of Japanese statistics. The speaker will finish by adding a small prediction of her own.

Joy Hendry is Professor Emerita of the Social Anthropology of Japan at Oxford Brookes University, founder of the Japan Anthropology Workshop and the Europe Japan Research Centre, and an Honorary Fellow of the University of Edinburgh. She has held visiting associations with Tokyo, Doshisha and Keio universities, carried out long-term fieldwork (over more than 40 years) in an agricultural/horticultural village in Kyushu, two longish spells in a seaside town south of Tokyo, and shorter periods in many other parts of Japan. She has published many books and articles on Japan, including the regularly updated textbook Understanding Japanese Society, which is about to go into a 5th edition, Marriage in Changing Japan, based on PhD work carried out in the 1970s in a community in Kyushu, and a collection of her articles entitled An Anthropological Lifetime in Japan, Brill (2017).

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