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# A Case Study of the Social Structure of a Japanese Rural Village

— with special reference to the life histories —

*Yasushi Naka*

In conducting research on the social structures of rural villages in Japan, the lineage groups called *Maki* and the neighborhoods called *Kumi*, which are found in many rural villages, are very important constituent units of them for they may be viewed as the cumulatives of *Maki* and *Kumi* groups.

It must be noted, however, that there have not been any obvious relationships of domination and subordination between *Maki* and *Kumi* groups in Minami-majino-mura, an old rural village near Lake Suwa, Nagano prefecture in the central part of Japan, where the study of political power structure and belief system has been conducted, and that the investigation of diversified individual motives and behaviors is necessary in addition to the study of two groups, *Maki* and *Kumi*.

In this sense, the author of this paper pays attention to some individual life histories and aims to explicate an aspect of the political power structure of the village by means of the description and analysis of the life histories and then to point out certain relationships between the political power structure and the belief system.

The main parts of the paper consist of the life histories of K. Kaneko, T. Hara, S. Kamijima and J. Hara, who are equally noteworthy persons in holding the political or economic or social leaderships in the village at present or in the past, although the former two were born in the families of the upper class while the latter

two belong to the middle or lower class.

In analyzing these life histories, the author has applied the concepts of *ascribed* and *achieved* statuses originated by R. Linton in his excellent work, *The Study of Man*.