International Symposium

Strong Asymmetries in Social Relations Compared: The Mamluk Sultanate, Medieval Japan and Beyond

October 15–16, 2022, Tokyo

Organizers:

Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies, University of Bonn

Historiographical Institute of the University of Tokyo

Toyo Bunko (The Oriental Library)

Venue:

Fukutake Hall, Historiographical Institute of the University of Tokyo (Hongo Campus)

Collaboration with:

Symposium Issue

The systems of rule and the social structures of the Mamluk Sultanate and medieval Japan show a basic similarity as hierarchical systems in which social relations are characterised by dependencies at different levels and in different subsystems of society. These hierarchies are accompanied by power relations, which we will call strongly asymmetrical, when one side of the social relation has much greater possibilities to influence the actions of the other side than vice versa. This ability to control the agency of the dependent side is based on various sanctioning options, such as the physical use of force, including military force, the control of resources, but also less tangible, but sometimes all the more influential factors such as loyalty and allegiance. As a result, multi-layered and variously interconnected asymmetrical social relations arise between those who have the power to control and those who depend on them, relations that also have a formative influence on the overall structure of the society in question.

In order to facilitate the comparison of power relations and options for action of the respective sides in different civilisations, in different social subsystems and finally on different layers of social hierarchy (e.g., between rulers and elites or the military, between landowners and peasants), we would like to propose the following set of guiding questions to compare the strongly asymmetrical social relations in this symposium:

- Which levels/ which social subsystems does the specific relation mainly relate to (politics, military/bureaucracy, economy, religion)?
- How do the agents enter the relation (by birth, by contract, purchase, loyalty relation, etc.)? Can they end the relation, and if so, how?
- In which of these subsystems do the dominating agents have options for action? What sanction options do they have?
- In which of these subsystems do the dependent agents have options for action, and which ones? What options do they have for protest?
- How does communication work between the agents and within society? How are the dependencies justified?
- How do the dominating agents and dependents differ, apart from their position in the social hierarchy? What intersectional markers of discrimination (race, gender, language, status, etc.) play a role in positioning in the social hierarchy?
- How do the asymmetrical social relations between individual agents and groups integrate into the overall structure of society? In what way do they influence and change it? What is the relationship between such asymmetrical social relations and other social actors/groups?

Program

October 15 (Sat.)

13:00–13:15   Opening Address

HONGO Keiko (Director of the Historiographical Institute of the University of Tokyo)

13:15–15:00   Session 1: Lord-Follower Relation

Chair: MIURA Toru (Toyo Bunko)

TAKAHASHI Kazuki (Meiji University), Warriors and Military Government in Medieval Japan

NISHITA Tomohiro (The University of Tokyo), The Lord-Retainer Relationship of Warriors in Early Medieval Japan

Florian SAALFELD (University of Bonn), A Somehow *Mamlūk*-ish Society? Or: Writing (about) Power! Interaction, Dependency and Loyalty among the Muslim Ruling Elites of the Early Delhi Sultanate

15:15–17:45   Session 2: Family and Other Ties

Chair: Bethany J. WALKER (University of Bonn)

HORIKAWA Yasufumi (The University of Tokyo), The Nanbokuchō War and Loyalty in an Age of War: The Struggle and Failure of Kyūshū Deputy Imagawa Ryōshun, 1370–95

Stephan CONERMANN (University of Bonn), Slavery in the Mamluk Sultanate (1250–1517)

NAKAMACHI Nobutaka (Konan University), The Political Structure and Marriage Policy during the Bahri Mamluk Period

Ahmad ALGHIZAWAT (University of Bonn), Literacy in the Black Desert: Preliminary Remarks on the Arabic Epigraphic Habit in Harrah during the Middle Ages

October 16 (Sun.)

10:15–12:00   Session 3: Slavery and Dependency

Chair: ITO Takao (Kobe University)

IGARASHI Daisuke (Waseda University), Freed Slaves and Their Descendants in Mamluk Waqf Documents

Anna KOLLATZ (University of Bonn), How Far Can We Trace Them? (Inter-)Dependency in Mamluk Biographical Dictionaries and Beyond

Lunch

13:00–15:30   Session 4: Landholding and Local Societies

Chair: Stephan CONERMANN (University of Bonn)

Bethany J. WALKER (University of Bonn), Were Peasants "Tied to the Land"? The Roles of Migration in Making and Breaking Asymmetrical Dependencies in Medieval Syria

ITO Takao (Kobe University), Amirs and *Iqṭāʿ* Holdings in Late 9th-/15th-Century Egypt

KANEKO Hiraku (The University of Tokyo), Political Authorities and the Military Power of the Clansmen (*Ujibito*)

of Kamigamo Shrine

Detlev Taranczewski (University of Bonn), Upstream, Downstream, and Water Rights: How Topographic Conditions Predetermine Power Imbalances in Pre-modern Japan

16:00–17:00   General Discussion

Chair and Discussant: Miura Toru (Toyo Bunko)

Abstracts

Session 1: Lord-Follower Relation

Warriors and Military Government in Medieval Japan

Takahashi Kazuki

(Meiji University)

Medieval society in the Japanese archipelago roughly spanned the eleventh to sixteenth centuries. One of its distinctive features was the political growth of a warrior elite (*bushi*) and a warrior government (shogunate, *bakufu*). The *bushi*, with both a military and a domainal lord function, became the main actors in medieval Japan.

The *bushi* emerged as a military aristocracy from among the bureaucrats of the central government in late antiquity (until tenth century). They grew up not only in the capital Kyoto but also in the provinces, developing differences in hierarchy. In the process, individual, decentralized lord-retainer relationships were formed between powerful central *bushi* and those in the provinces. The civil war at the end of the twelfth century led to the formation of *bakufu* headed by a powerful warrior aristocracy within which large numbers of *bushi* were collectively embodied, different from the traditional system of government that had preceded it. The historical transition traced out by the *bakufu* is an extremely important factor when thinking about relationships between *bushi* and their families in the medieval period.

This report sketches changes in the status and mode of life of *bushi* in the medieval period, focusing on the relationship between the *bushi* and two *bakufu*, the Kamakura and Muromachi Shogunates. In addition we will provide materials for comparative historical research by introducing various historical sources for the study of medieval *bushi*.

The Lord-Retainer Relationship of Warriors in Early Medieval Japan

Nishita Tomohiro

(The University of Tokyo)

This report provides an overview of the lord-retainer relationship of warriors in early medieval Japan.

Research into Japanese medieval society began in the early 1900s, based on a basic perspective that attempted to understand the overlap between the medieval periods in Europe and Japan. Here, medieval Europe was characterized by the development of Germanic tribes on the Roman periphery and the establishment of the Frankish Kingdom, while correspondingly, Japan's medieval period was characterized by the growth of provincial warriors, mainly in the eastern part of Japan, and the establishment of a warrior government (Kamakura Shogunate, *bakufu*). In addition, the lord-retainer (*gokenin*, i.e. vassal) system and the system of benefices given by a lord to vassals as a reward for services (mainly the land steward system) have largely been studied in a manner corresponding to the lord-retainer and *beneficium* (land donation) systems of the knights in the European middle ages.

Especially in Japan, there has been debate over whether the lord-retainer relationships of warriors were bilateral and contractual, as in Europe, or characterized by the unilateral and absolute devotion of the retainer. In this debate, it has been pointed out that in early medieval Japan there were two types of retainer, one who had the freedom to decide

whether to leave or stay with the lord (*kerai*) and one without such freedom (*kenin*).

In this report, I would like to consolidate the history of research into this lord-retainer relationship and consider it in terms of the relationship between the Kamakura shogun (*Kamakura-dono*) and his vassals (*gokenin*). Specifically, I would like to consider how the Kamakura Shogunate managed the *gokenin* and how it dealt with a *gokenin* becoming a priest.

A Somehow *Mamlūk*-ish Society? Or: Writing (about) Power! Interaction, Dependency and Loyalty among the Muslim Ruling Elites of the Early Delhi Sultanate

Florian SAALFELD

(University of Bonn)

Right from its founding at the brink of the 12th to 13th century, the Delhi Sultanate was ruled by slaves of sultans who became independent rulers themselves after the deaths of their masters. Research often refers to these rulers as the "slave kings" of Delhi, focusing on their origin and ignoring the claims of their contemporary historiographers that most of these rulers had been manumitted before their accession and that they tried to establish their own hereditary ruling dynasties thereafter. However, especially in the early years of the sultanate, those dynastic tendencies were often successfully opposed by the military slaves of the former sultan after his death. The true political power lay with the only formally dependent elites rather than with the ruler's descendants who served as vessels of legitimacy for their "loyal" servants until the latter could grasp the throne themselves.

This observation triggers the question of who depends on whom in the end. This first stage of (inter-)dependency, that is between rulers and their elite *mamlūk*s, might question traditional perceptions of hierarchy in which asymmetrical power relations were often reckoned as being top-down only. However, recognizing these power relations as being very dynamic, a second stage of again asymmetrical (inter-)dependency has to be taken into consideration: a new leader always was in strong need of convincing strategies to legitimize himself to his servants. This was often done by means of historiographic texts that circulated among the courtly elites that have survived down to the present day. This interaction of rulers with historiographers, often court officials themselves, as well as the mutual dependence on one another led to a strong shaping of those texts that researchers use today to make up our picture of the Delhi Sultanate times. In that respect, the agency of these authors did not only heavily impact the contemporary politics, but continues to live on today. This paper aims to give a short overview of the Delhi Sultanate's *mamlūk*-system and shall depict different stages of asymmetrical relations between the sultan, his (or her!) military slaves and their court officials in order to show that in this hierarchically organized system (formal) power and agency do not necessarily belong together—nor should they be confounded!

Session 2: Family and Other Ties

The Nanbokuchō War and Loyalty in an Age of War: The Struggle and Failure of Kyūshū Deputy Imagawa Ryōshun, 1370–95

Horikawa Yasufumi

(The University of Tokyo)

The warrior culture of medieval Japan has often been characterized by the relative lack of the contractual and bilateral nature of the lord-retainer relationship. In this respect, medieval warriors of Japan and mamluks of the same period show a similarity in that their loyalty tends to be emphasized—and often glorified. However, just as in Mamluk studies, where the notion of the mamluks' loyalty seems to have been challenged, that of Japanese warriors has also long been re-examined. It has now been revealed that Japanese warriors exercised considerable autonomy and acted in self-interest, with limited loyalty. This is most evident in a time of warfare, when the lord-retainer relationship can best be understood as an *exchange process*.

Imagawa Ryōshun (1326–ca. 1413), the Kyūshū Deputy (*Kyūshū tandai*), demonstrates such an *exchange process*. Following the destruction of the Kamakura Shogunate in 1333 and the subsequent collapse of the Kenmu Imperial Government in 1336, the Japanese archipelago experienced a widespread civil war lasting over six decades between the Northern Court in Kyoto with the Muromachi Shogunate on the one hand and the Southern Court in Yoshino on the other. In 1370, Imagawa Ryōshun was dispatched to Kyūshū to subjugate partisans of the Southern Court, spending the next twenty-five years there until his dismissal in 1395.

Ryōshun has long been portrayed as a tragic general who, despite his achievements in Kyūshū, was dismissed for no particular reason by the third Muromachi shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, who was wary of Ryōshun's growing power. However, a close examination of Ryōshun's letters addressed to local warriors reveals his fraught relations with provincial military governors (*shugo*) and provincial warriors (*kokujin*) who acted out of self-interest and sometimes collectively displayed local interests against Ryōshun. This paper aims to offer a more nuanced understanding of the lord-retainer relationship in medieval Japan by analyzing Ryōshun's struggle, strategy, and ultimate failure to mobilize local warriors.

Slavery in the Mamluk Sultanate (1250–1517)

Stephan Conermann

(University of Bonn)

In the Mamluk Sultanate, slavery was widespread. There is, however, the peculiarity that the term describes two very different groups of enslaved people. On the one hand, we have a military ruling elite made up of manumitted slaves. On the other hand, there are "ordinary" slaves working in the households of the elite, both military and civilian. Christian travellers report that even soldiers of middle rank had some 30 or 40 slaves, while an emir might own several hundred. In my paper, I'll elaborate on the role and function of enslaved people in Mamluk households. The majority of slaves were acquired for carrying out domestic work. The household duties of female slaves included cooking, tidying, cleaning; the washing and maintaining of clothes and linen, carrying water, chopping firewood, shopping, spinning, sewing and

weaving. Some of them had to fulfil the requirements of sexual services. Male slaves were frequently employed as doormen and guards.

The Political Structure and Marriage Policy during the Bahri Mamluk Period

Nakamachi Nobutaka

(Konan University)

Whereas the studies of the Mamluk political structure have been focused to their *khushdashiyya* (comrades) and master-slave relationship for a long time, recent trend of studies comes to deal with the other aspects of the mamluk elites, family, marital, and ethnic relationship. This presentation focuses to the marriage policy among mamluks and the other military groups during the Bahri Mamluk era and illuminates that the characteristic of their marital relationship changed reflecting the political and social situation of each period.

The first sultan of the Mamluk Sultanate, Shajar al-Durr, granted her second husband, Aybak, the authority as heir to the Ayyubid dynasty. However, her successors, Aybak, Baybars, and Qalawun, sought marital relations with outside military groups such as the Zangid, Kurdish tribes, and Mongolian *wafidiyya* (refugees), to establish their power base. Al-Nasir Muhammad, who succeeded in gaining absolute power, still sought marital relations with outsider mamluk amirs, i.e., al-*barraniyya*. In the post al-Nasir era, although the sultans' family lost real power, it continued to play a role in giving authority to the amirs through marriage.

This survey shows that the Mamluk sultans' marriage policy is deeply connected to their methods of acquiring power in every period. It would also help to understand complicated remarriage habit among the mamluk society.

Literacy in the Black Desert: Preliminary Remarks on the Arabic Epigraphic Habit in Harrah during the Middle Ages

Ahmad Alghizawat

(University of Bonn)

Constrained by the scarcity of data and the indirect nature of the evidence, Semitists have developed and adapted some of the methods of classical epigraphy and paleography, especially for the treatment of ancient texts. While sufficient for studying the fragmentary corpora of ancient texts, the extension of these methods to the study of Arabic epigraphy has had only limited success. Departing from such treatment of Arabic inscriptions and adapting methodologies that have proven to be successful in studying Greek and Roman texts, this paper will engage in an analysis of the Arabic epigraphic material from the Harrah, the north-eastern basalt desert in Jordan, during the middle ages on two levels: a) Identifying the shortcomings of the field of Arabic epigraphy and suggesting a remedy for them; b) Presenting a limited application of the newly suggested methodology to the Arabic graffiti of Harrah. This paper will examine two functions of writing within the illiterate society of Harrah, namely long-distance communication and the expression of piety. While the former is connected to the nature of tribal formation in the Arabian Peninsula, the latter, which manifests itself in the form of Sufi practices, has a particularly special bearing on the projection of power within the Mamluk Sultanate. The findings and remarks therewith will fill a lacuna left by literary sources in our knowledge of the

Bedouins of Harrah desert during the middle ages. Moreover, it will shed some light on the interactions of the Mamluk state with peripheral groups within its sphere of influence.

Session 3: Slavery and Dependency

Stereotyping Slaves as Evidence: al-Amshāṭī's (d. 1496) Work: *The Correct Account of Choosing Slaves* as a Case Study*

Abdelkader Al Ghouz
(University of Bonn)

This paper deals with a genre of literature known in the Arabic intellectual history as "advice on slave trade." The guidebook of the Egyptian author and physician al-Amshāṭī (d. 1496) entitled "The Correct Account of Choosing Slaves [*al-Qawl al-sadīd fī ikhtiyār al-imāʾ wal-ʿabīd*]" represents the main focus of the present analysis. Al-Amshāṭī summarizes his advices for buying slaves into three chapters. The author's main goal is primarily to provide slave traders with guidance based on race, ethnicity, and geographic origin. This has led to the advice being full of stereotypes. These stereotypes are reflected, among other things, in the detailed description of some supposed physical and psychological characteristics of slaves that the author describes as important when purchasing slaves.

The author has written this guidebook in prose using a terminology based on a catalog of ethnicity and race. In order to set al-Amshāṭī's book in its historical context, the first part of this paper sheds light on the geographical discourse in late fourteenth-century Cairo. Using an etymological and semantic analysis, the second part examines a selection of stereotypes and the ways in which they are portrayed. This analysis reconstructs the author's geographical imaginary that represents the logic of his argumentation threads.

*This presentation was canceled due to unavoidable reason.

Freed Slaves and Their Descendants in Mamluk Waqf Documents

Igarashi Daisuke
(Waseda University)

The military elite of the Mamluk Sultanate (1250–1517) frequently established waqfs (Islamic religious endowments) designating their relatives, especially their children and descendants, as beneficiaries and/or administrators of their waqfs, to ensure that their relatives could continue to receive financial support from the waqf even after their deaths. In these waqfs, they typically assigned various roles not only to blood relatives but also to their freed slaves and their descendants or designated them as beneficiaries, to ensure that their freed slaves could participate significantly in the waqf's management and receive financial support from it in the same way as their blood relatives and descendants. By using Mamluk-era endowment documents as historical sources, this paper demonstrates the numerous facets of freed slaves that appear in these documents.

How Far Can We Trace Them? (Inter-)Dependency in Mamluk Biographical Dictionaries and Beyond

Anna Kᴏʟʟᴀᴛᴢ

(University of Bonn)

This paper is a continuation of my research on dependency narratives in Al-Sakhāwī's biographical dictionary *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ* (Kollatz, "Dependency Narrated in a Biographic Manual from the Mamluk Sultanate: The *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ fī aʿyān al-qarn al-tāsiʿ* by al-Sakhāwī (1427–1497)" in Elke Brüggen and Marion Gymnich (eds.), *Narratives of Dependency*, Berlin: DeGruyter (Dependency and Slavery Studies), forthcoming 2023). In this article, I discussed a first selective inventory of dependency narratives from al-Sakhāwī's work and showed that strong asymmetrical dependencies can occur in a wide variety of forms and at different points in the biographies of Mamluk-era 'important people'.

In the present paper, I will extend the results of this first case study. On the basis of selected biographies, I will put al-Sakhāwī's short biographical narratives into dialogue with material from other Mamluk narrative sources, especially with mentions of the respective agents in historiographies. This cross-textual search is being facilitated immensely by the Mamluk Prosopography (Ghent University), which is now available online.

My guiding questions remain focused on the narrative representation of dependent or formally dependent persons on the one hand and on the narrative representation of their (inter-)dependency with owners, peers, and possibly other family members such as children or wives, who may also be affected either by their own or their relatives' dependency biographies. The aim is to explore which attributions are used to characterise these agents that form part of dependency relations, e.g., whether certain intersectional discrimination markers can be identified. In addition, in this paper I also look at preliminary results from my work on the connections between dependent persons and their owners, trainers and traders. In the long run, these considerations should lead to a better understanding of how far these individual networks of (inter-)dependency extended across groups and strata in Mamluk society.

Session 4: Landholding and Local Societies

Were Peasants "Tied to the Land"? The Roles of Migration in Making and Breaking Asymmetrical Dependencies in Medieval Syria

Bethany J. Wᴀʟᴋᴇʀ

(University of Bonn)

The freedom to live and move where one wishes is a basic condition of an autonomous life. There is a disconnect between what medieval Islamic legal theory had to say about the rights of peasants (who drove the economy of the medieval Islamic state) and the realities of their daily lives. In legal terms, peasants were free-born and did not belong to the lands they worked, had legal rights over their bodies and personal property, and could not be physically punished or killed. In the purely legal sense, then, their status was quite different from those of contemporary "feudal" societies, such as in Japan and Europe. In practice, however, peasants were tied to land they did not own. The state took great efforts, at most times, to keep peasants in their villages and working the land, and, when it served larger economic and political goals, uprooted them, relocating them against their will to other places.

This lecture explores the phenomenon of the forced migration of peasants and the physical form it takes in the

archaeological record. In doing so, it pulls on the results of recent fieldwork at the site of Tall Hisban (Jordan), an Ayyubid and Mamluk-era village which was (re)settled and abandoned through migration, under varied circumstances. It will focus on the archaeological and laboratory evidence for forced migration (on a regional scale), as well as methods of distinguishing migration as a form of peasant resilience, from migration as a method of state control. The long-term effect of this relocation of Syrian peasants, as well as the impact in changes in land tenure on their social and political status, are also investigated. The study of mobility and migration, then, opens a window on the making and breaking of the strongly asymmetrical dependent relationships that existed between the peasantry and the medieval Islamic state.

Amirs and *Iqṭāʿ* Holdings in Late 9th-/15th-Century Egypt

Itō Takao

(Kobe University)

The cadaster of Egypt compiled by Sharaf al-Dīn Yaḥyā b. Shākir Ibn al-Jīʿān (d. 885 A.H./1480 C.E.), *al-Tuḥfa al-saniyya bi-asmāʾ al-bilād al-miṣriyya*, is a unique resource that offers two valuable snapshots of land tenure in 778 A.H./1377 C.E. and in 880–81 A.H./1475–77 C.E. It was used to study the status of descendants of the mamluks, the development of *al-dīwān al-mufrad* (the sultan's special bureau) and *al-dhakhīra* (the sultan's treasures), rural depopulation over time, recordkeeping in land administration, among other things. Nonetheless, *al-Tuḥfa al-saniyya* has not yet been fully examined in terms of *iqṭāʿ* holders in 1475–77. Scholars have provided a general picture of the privatization of land, particularly the waqfization of land (increase in endowment land) during the 9th/15th century; as a result, the military elite relied less on the *iqṭāʿ*s, the revenues of which were decreasing. However, the questions of how and to what extent amirs' *iqṭāʿ* holdings in Egypt changed between the late 14th and the late 15th centuries remain unexplored. Primarily based on the oldest surviving manuscript of *al-Tuḥfa al-saniyya*, in addition to contemporary Arabic chronicles and biographical dictionaries, this study investigates who held *iqṭāʿ*s, where they were held, and how much income each amir earned from the *iqṭāʿ*s in 1475–77, as compared to the situation in 1377. Additionally, it sheds light on the relations between Sultan Qāytbāy (872–901 A.H./1468–96 C.E.) and his amirs. Thus, this study provides a better understanding of land administration and the economic and political history of Mamluk Egypt.

Political Authorities and the Military Power of the Clansmen (*Ujibito*) of Kamigamo Shrine

Kaneko Hiraku

(The University of Tokyo)

Kamigamo (Kamo-wakeikazuchi) Shrine is located to the north of Kyoto, the political capital of Japan from the eighth century down to the medieval period. It was closely linked to the imperial court through the Kamo festival, a national ritual, among others. Such annual rituals were performed by *ujibito* ("clansmen"), members of the Kamo clan that had moved to the area in the ancient period. They lived in six Kamo villages in the vicinity of the shrine and formed an autonomous organization called a *sō* to maintain both the shrine and their social group. From around the Kamakura period (1185–1333) the *sō* consisted of clansmen who were granted single-generation rice-fields called *oraiden*. These fields were subject to a tax called *mikechisen* levied to finance the important shrine ritual, the *mitanae shinji*. Thus the

proprietor's income served to support the *ujibito* as shrine priests.

Shrine priests below the rank of *kannushi* were selected from among the *ujibito*, but gradually a hierarchical confrontation deepened between the two factions. The result was a conflict between them in 1476, during which many buildings in the shrine precincts were burned down. This indicates that the *ujibito* possessed a certain amount of military power. It is clear that they were involved as a group in the Jokyu Disturbance of 1221 and during the conflict between the Northern and Southern Courts (1336–1392), being expected both by the court and the warrior clans to use that power.

The *ujibito* of Kamigamo Shrine were thus not only a group that served the *kami* but were also linked to managers of the rice fields, and at times complied with a superior political authority to provide military force. However they were fundamentally an autonomous group whose top priority was to protect their settlements from any external authority through their administrative organization the *sō*. Thus they can be regarded as a social group with a multifaceted character.

In this report, while taking an overview of the use military force by the *ujibito* during the Kamakura period, the conflict between the Northern and Southern Courts and the events of 1476, I would like to consider what their relationship was with the warrior government that ruled in Kyoto, mainly during the Sengoku (warring states) period of 1467 to 1568, and the role they were expected to play, using examples based on historical documents remaining at the shrine.

Upstream, Downstream, and Water Rights: How Topographic Conditions Predetermine Power Imbalances in Pre-modern Japan

Detlev Taranczewski
(University of Bonn)

Presumably the 'up/down' dichotomy is the most widespread or even a universal metaphor for expressing domination and dependence—Japan proves the rule, too. As metaphors are frequently supposed to provide the raw material of all notions, we use to combine sensual impressions we receive from things surrounding us into a comprehensible social reality this field should be worth an own detailed discussion.

The examples discussed in my paper can underline the above assumption. Social units—single agricultural holdings, communities or even associations of communities—which depend on water for agricultural use usually have to compete with other social units of the same shape for their access to water. A crucial factor determining the quality of their access is given by their respective topographic situation in relation to the water resource. Being located upstream usually predetermines a privileged access to water. This kind of a fundamental superiority of the right to water by topographic conditions often is interfered or counteracted to some extent by other factors. One important interfering factor is given when irrigation ditches or other devices for irrigation are situated on territory not under the control of the water using social unit. Other interferent factors might be institutional frameworks or legal contexts especially on a meso- or macro-level. Nevertheless, upstream/downstream structures dominate and also function as the most effective driving force of producing and reproducing social relationships of domination and dependence.

In this paper I try to approach this subject on the basis of historical water conflicts which occurred around river Katsura in the north-western part of Kyoto basin. My presentation includes three case studies of conflicts owing to or for water, firstly between the important shrine Matsuo-sha and several adjacent communities in the middle ages, secondly between upstream and downstream communities of equal status in early modern time, and thirdly a water conflict of similar structure in the mid-20th century. By these examples I want to show how power is developing again

and again caused by the aforesaid topographical circumstances also under changing social conditions and what kind of innovations, continuities, and perspectives can be discerned in the longue durée.