 Characteristics of Urban Society and the Compilation of a Pictorial Ethnography: Problems Surrounding the Production of a Pictorial Ethnography for Sawara

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This report examines the objectives, contents, method of compilation and the intentions behind an urban pictorial ethnography of Sawara City compiled for this research project. This research project has involved the compilation of a three-part pictorial folk chronicle with the objective of bringing to light the urban regional characteristics of Sawara City in Chiba Prefecture, which is a typical traditional, provincial city. The town of Sawara was divided into two large sections as far back as the Early Modern period, if not earlier. There were separate shrines and separate festivals were held annually, but at the same time they comprised a single urban society consisting of both opposition and solidarity. This type of regional social structure has been understood since the 19th century as the concept of a dualism. Sawara is an urban society that has a dualistic structure, something that is extremely rare in Japan.

The Sawara pictorial ethnography was produced to represent through pictures the regional urban characteristics of Sawara. Two of the three volumes are an ethnography of mainly the festivals of the Shinjuku district and the Honjuku district, while the remaining volume brings both of these districts together to portray through pictures the regional urban characteristics of Sawara as a whole. This paper looks at the various issues that arose in the course of compiling this ethnography, particularly those relating to taking the pictures and editing, and points out problem areas. There is also some discussion on the contents of this pictorial ethnography. There are many problems concerning the compilation of ethnography, particularly an urban ethnography, and there has yet to be sufficient discussion on this field. Pictorial ethnography are extremely important as a method of future research into urban societies.