The Social Construction of Natural Troops of Japanese Monkeys in Takasakiyama

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I. INTRODUCTION

It was in about November to December, 1952 that we first started artificial feeding of the troop of Japanese monkeys in Takasakiyama. Before this, in the autumn of 1950, Itani estimated the population of this troop to be 166 $+a$. He obtained this number by counting the monkeys that moved in procession across Tsubakidani where the mountain sloped down to the sea. His guess was that $a$ would not be a large figure. (Itani 1954) In the spring of 1953 Itani investigated this artificially fed troop and found the population to be greatly increased, as there were two delivery seasons in between, in the early summer of 1951 and 1952. In the spring of 1953 field records were made by observing the troop moving in procession. Itani obtained from the records two figures, 201 and 206 individuals, but he judged the troop size to be larger, about 220 to 230. (Itani 1954)

After the monkeys were artificially fed, we did our best to identify them individually. However, it was by no means an easy task to identify infants ranging from yearlings to 3 years old, and it was impossible to count one by one more than 200 monkeys scattered over a considerable area around the feeding ground. So, we adopted the following method to check the monkey population. We took 220 as the basic value. This represents the population estimated before the 1953 delivery season, that is, the estimate of 1952. From the 1953 delivery season, we counted every new born baby. This number was added to the basic value, 220. It is very often difficult to check how many infant and female monkeys die or leave the troop every year, so we thought up an approximate figure and deducted it from the value obtained. The method was repeated every year thereafter.

The task of investigating the troop was transferred from Itani to Mizuhara in 1956, but the above stated method was carried on (Mizuhara 1957) until 1962, the 10th year from the first feeding. In 1959 the troop split in two, A- and B-troops. Sugiyama (1960) reported on how the troop split. Thus A-troop was found to number 790 and B-troop 130, totaling about 920 individuals, in October 1962 after the delivery season.

In September 1962 Itani took charge of the troop investigation from Mizuhara. He was not so sure of this figure because, first, he suspected that more monkeys had left the troop or died, and secondly, it had become quite difficult to count new-born babies every year. Itani believed that the number of monkeys of Takasakiyama should be less than the official figure of 920. We will explain later how the population changed during these ten years.

The method of taking population census and analyzing the social structure now required a re-examination. It became the main study subject of the ecology team of the general investigation that took place during December