I must first thank the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology (JASCA) and its President Professor Motoji Matsuda for inviting me to this meeting. While I take it as a great honor and a truly meaningful step forward in enhancing exchanges among East Asian anthropologies, I must confess that the invitation initially came to me as a bit of a surprise. Although I have long known the sincere and conscientious efforts of some members of JASCA such as Professors Shinji Yamashita, Junji Koizumi, Takami Kuwayama and others to internationalize and globalize Japanese anthropology, I have always felt that the efforts have implicitly leaned towards Western hegemony. In other words, it has been my understanding that “globalization” for most Japanese, academics or otherwise, means primarily to have Japan known, recognized, and accepted by the West. Some of you may feel that my understanding is biased. However, I must say that it has also been true of most Koreans, for whom internationalization/globalization in effect means keeping up with “global modernity” or “the global standard” that has largely been generated from the West.

Such a one-sided orientation has indeed impeded the bilateral or multilateral flow of knowledge and information among peripheral and semi-peripheral countries, and we are all very well aware that, for complicated historical and political reasons, this has been particularly true among the countries and regions in East Asia. In this regard, this kind of endeavor on the part of JASCA is another welcome move that will no doubt provide us with an opportunity to reflect upon the present status quo of the hegemonic system of knowledge.
production and dissemination and to seek its possible breakthrough by facilitating mutual exchanges among the East Asian anthropological communities. Yet, as the current prospect does not seem to be very bright toward this end, I will try to focus in today’s talk, at the risk of some oversimplification based on limited knowledge, upon the issues that I perceive to be the major obstacles along the way.

As there have already been various attempts to figure the place of East Asian anthropologies in the context of world anthropology and in relation to American anthropology in particular (Yamashita et al. eds. 2004; Kuwayama 2004; Mathews et al. 2015), I will try to focus today upon the specificities of my experiences as a Korean doing Japan anthropology and, more broadly, as an East Asian studying an East Asian society. In this way, I hope that we can touch upon complexities of a more concrete and subtler nature than those already noted and debated.

2. Korean Anthropology in the Context of East Asian Anthropologies

To my embarrassment, I have sometimes been described as a “pioneer” in the field of Japan anthropology in Korea (Kweon 2015 among others). In order to help you understand the significance and background of such a designation, it might be useful to offer you a brief sketch of the development of anthropology in Korea. As some of you already know, the Korean Society for Cultural Anthropology (KOSCA) in its present form was established in 1958, and the first Department of Anthropology was opened at Seoul National University in 1961. In Japan, at the time of its re-establishment in 1964, the anthropological society which was formerly called the Japanese Society of Ethnology (prior to 2004) already had a significant stock of professional and amateur researchers from pre-war times who had carried out extensive ethnographic research in its colonies, namely Taiwan, Korea, China and Micronesia (Shimizu 1999; Yamashita 2004; Sakano 2005). In the case of Korea, on the other hand, there were not many properly trained anthropologists in this incipient stage, nor were there many who had any experience studying “other” cultures and societies aside from Korea. The major figures who initiated the Korean Society in 1958 were mostly folklorists with a background in literature studies (Han 1974; Moon 1999).

Into the 1970s, some Koreans began to go abroad, mostly to the United States and a few to Europe, for professional training in anthropology. Although there were some Korean anthropologists who carried out anthropological fieldwork among the local population in the areas where they studied, such as Asian migrant communities in Hawaii, the majority at this initial stage studied Korean society and culture, a somewhat similar feature to that of Japanese anthropologists studying their own society during the immediate postwar years (Shimizu ibid.). One notable difference is, of course, that the primary audience of the Korean graduate students doing degrees in the U.S. was their thesis committee. This means that, although this group may be characterized as “native anthropologists” in that they studied
their own society, they had to produce their research findings primarily for an English speaking audience, the implications of which I will try to address later in this talk.

Given this earlier tradition of Koreans studying Koreans, therefore, it was taken as the beginning of a new stage in the development of Korean anthropology when Kwang-ok Kim embarked on his long-term doctoral fieldwork among the Taiwanese aborigines in 1977-1979 and I myself in a Japanese village in 1981-1982. In the 1980s and 1990s, many followed a similar path of going abroad for graduate training and producing a doctoral thesis about a society other than Korea, with increasing diversification of field sites ranging from East Asia, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, South and North America, Europe and Africa. There has not been any notable concentration upon a specific area, mainly perhaps due to the limited pool of researchers, except for China and Japan, each of which has generated some twenty or so doctoral theses. (Moon 1997: Korean Society for Cultural Anthropology ed. 2008: Kweon 2015). While the total population of anthropologists is about 300 to 400 at most, one might say that Korean anthropology is truly “globalized” both in terms of the geographical distribution of field sites and in the fact that the initial research was written as a doctoral thesis in English, French or German.

So, although the history of Korean anthropology is not very long and its population is still relatively small, one can see that it has been dominated by those trained in the West, and this is particularly obvious for those holding university faculty positions. Of the nine current faculty members of the Department of Anthropology at SNU, for instance, six hold a Ph.D. from universities of the United States and the remaining three from Australia, U.K. and Germany respectively. The areas of their doctoral research cover Korea (one each on North and South), Japan, China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, the U.S.A., and Ireland. Of the five members retired from the Department, four obtained a Ph.D. from universities in the US with works on Korea and one working on China from Oxford, U.K. The picture seems to be quite different from the situation in China and Japan, although some first- and second-generation scholars had already obtained doctoral degrees in anthropology or ethnology from major universities in the West in the 1920s through the 1940s, for various domestic reasons, it does not appear that those trained in the West have dominated the anthropological scenes in those two countries to the extent that they have in Korea.

In comparison with anthropologies in China or Japan, therefore, Korean anthropology may be characterized by the following features. First, from its very beginning, it has been dominated, in terms of both research and teaching, by those with a background of training in the major anthropological centers in the West. Second, within a relatively short period of time, it has evolved from the studies of Korean society and culture to those of other cultures, with Korea specialists now occupying only a small minority in its total population. Third,

---

1 It was not possible for most Koreans to enter Mainland China until 1992. Since the late 1980s, however, Kim started visiting China and has continuously engaged in extensive ethnographic researches in northeastern China and elsewhere for nearly three decades.

2 The situation is not very different in other anthropology departments in the country, which have employed only a handful of anthropologists trained domestically or in countries outside the Western core.
with continuous inflow of young anthropologists trained in the States and in Europe, there has also been considerable diversification and speedy updating in terms of the selection of research subjects and theoretical orientations in line with the current trends at the Western anthropological centers. The transformations have been so rapid that even those in neighboring regions seem to have some difficulty in following, as can be seen in such an observation as, “In Korea, many anthropologists focus on traditional Korean society as against modernity” (Mathews 2016). There are not only very few Korean anthropologists studying Korea, those that do are mostly concerned with contemporary issues such as multiculturalism, diaspora studies, urban spaces, popular culture, welfare issues, biotechnology and so forth.

One final feature of Korean anthropology to be mentioned is its establishment as a field of social science in the 1970s through a deliberate breaking away from historical, ethnological and folkloric studies. I have argued elsewhere (Moon 1999) that this rupture or severance had perhaps been an inevitable step in order to establish an independent identity of anthropology at the time. It may be said that such a departure is not unique to Korean anthropology but is shared, to some extent, by anthropology in China and Japan. In Japan, for instance, there seems to be a clear discontinuity between prewar ethnological tradition centered on the ethnic origins of the Japanese and cultural diffusion, and the postwar institutionalization of social and cultural anthropology under American influence (Sakano 2005: 473-475). In China, also, a marked division has been noted between the so-called Northern School of social anthropologists such as Fei Xiaotong and Lin Yaohua with the background of Anglo-American social scientific approaches and the Southern School of historical and Sino-centric ethnologists centered on Academia Sinica in Nanjing since the pre-war period who were heavily influenced by cultural diffusionism of Germany.

In the case of Korea, one of the additional and distinctive vestiges of the move was that it was directly or indirectly motivated by the efforts of negating the Japanese colonial legacy. It is regrettable, however, that, while it has been widely believed that Japanese colonial scholarship distorted rather than enhancing the understanding of Korean culture and society, as a consequence of the very rapid transformation of Korean anthropology from the study of its own society to the study of other cultures and from historical inquiries of humanistic tradition to social anthropological analyses of contemporary issues in the mode of the American behavioral scientific tradition, the implications of the colonial legacy have been left largely unexplored. Although it is true that studies dealing with the colonial period seem to be increasing both in Japan and Korea, particularly in the context of the growing interest in historical anthropology in recent years, to my knowledge, there have not been many attempts at full-fledged critical reflection on the nature and political implications of the ethnological or folkloric knowledge produced during the colonial period. I believe that this is one of the areas where dialogue between Japanese and Korean anthropologies is urgently needed.
3. Doing Japan Anthropology as a Korean with Western Training

When Korean anthropologists began to go abroad for the study of other cultures in the late 1970s, China, Japan, and Taiwan were among the first sites they chose. In the 1970s, the University of Oxford where both Kwang-ok Kim and I studied had little interest in East Asia, at least from an anthropological point of view. Although there was Professor Maurice Freedman, the leading figure at Oxford in the anthropology of China, he abruptly passed away in 1975 and was not succeeded by another China specialist. The Institute of Social Anthropology, as the present-day ISCA (Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at Oxford) was then called, did not have a Japan specialist until much later. It was only in 1993 that Roger Goodman was employed as the first University Lecturer in the Social Anthropology of Japan. The main locus of East Asian Studies at Oxford had long been the Oriental Institute which was dominated by humanities fields such as language, literature, history, philosophy and religion, much in the tradition of Oriental Studies in Europe.

In the case of Japanese Studies, however, the establishment of the Nissan Institute of Modern Japanese Studies in 1982 provided a major turning point for its development or expansion from the humanistic Oriental Studies tradition into a full-fledged field of contemporary area studies. From its very beginning, the Institute invited a political scientist from Australia, Professor Arthur Stockwin, as its director and also employed a social historian of modern Japan from Stanford, Dr. Ann Waswo. The fact that the first members of the Institute were all from abroad tells us that there were not many Japan specialists in Britain dealing with contemporary issues until the 1970s, although there was of course Professor Ronald Dore at Imperial College London. The Nissan Institute soon became a major center of modern Japanese Studies in the U.K. and in the world. It now comprises an important part of the newly created SIAS (School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies) at the University of Oxford, together with the Centers for African Studies, Contemporary China Studies, South Asian Studies, Latin American Studies, Middle East Studies, and Russian and East European Studies.

While Japanese Studies underwent significant transformations from the early 1980s, many of these important developments happened toward the end of my stay at Oxford. When I was studying there from 1976 until 1984, with two years of fieldwork leave in Japan in 1981-1982, there was no one at the Institute of Social Anthropology who could teach about Japan, and, in this regard, one may say that Oxford or the Institute at the time was not the best place to pursue anthropology of Japan. However, as some of you may know, the Oxford system, which does not provide much structured formal teaching except for weekly tutorials with one supervisor, is somewhat different from the graduate programs in the United States. Instead of attending coordinated lecture courses and obtaining credits, students are expected to learn, under guidance, of course, very much on their own initiative. There were abundant seminars and special lectures, including the famous Friday Seminar to which not only the members of the Institute itself (Rodney Needham, Edwin Ardner, Godfrey Lienhardt, Peter
Okpyo Moon

Riviere among others) but also other eminent names such as Mary Douglas, Raymond Firth, Clifford Geertz, Jack Goody, George Balandier or Claude Lévi-Strauss were invited and gave presentations. These seminars were precious opportunities for learning in addition to the tutorials.

While some of the students found the kind of pedagogy at the Institute “liberating and life-enhancing” (MacClancy n.d.), the mode of teaching that is characterized by some as “methodological openness” was a bit difficult to adjust to, especially at the beginning, for a foreign student like myself who had been used to a much more regulated system of teaching imported from America. There was, for instance, no course that teaches how to carry out fieldwork, and students were supposed to teach one another through student seminars or by learning from those in similar fields. Fortunately I had at least one sempai in my field, Joy Hendry, who obtained a doctorate from the same Institute with an ethnographic study of Japanese marriage relations a few years before me in 1979 and whose graduate years overlapped with mine by several years.

Upon recollection, however, the training at Oxford with its emphasis on so-called “methodological openness” and individual in-depth teaching through one-to-one tutorials was quite effective in fostering in the students an ability to formulate their own research questions relating to their chosen fields. I had been exposed to a vast range of theoretical and ethnographic challenges during my years of undertaking the Diploma and M.Litt. Although they were not directly related to matters Chinese or Japanese, it was possible to learn through this exposure what Oxford expects you to do as a social anthropologist: before becoming an area specialist, one is expected to understand the social world, its basic assumptions and accountability. Everything social needs to be questioned, including solidly held beliefs and attitudes and ideas about causality, the self in society, and so forth. A phrase on the ISCA homepage succinctly summarizes this understanding: “Learning to relate different versions of the world to each other is learning to be a Social Anthropologist.” It is perhaps in this sense that Social Anthropology at Oxford has been described on the homepage as “empirical philosophy.”

It is often the case that people stop at Radcliff-Brown and Malinowski and structural-functionalism when speaking of British Social Anthropology. However, despite the fact that anthropological teaching in Britain started with E.B. Tylor in 1883 and Radcliffe-Brown became the first Professor of the Institute in 1937, what characterized Oxford anthropology at the time was Evans-Pritchard who succeeded Radcliffe-Brown in the Professorship from 1946 until 1970. During my graduate training, I did not hear much about “culture” or “structural functionalism.” It was Evans-Pritchard who had given the distinct color to Oxford Social Anthropology which might be termed an “Intellectual School” or “Philosophical School” as can be surmised in the description of Social Anthropology as “empirical

---

3 The then Institute of Social Anthropology at Oxford offered only postgraduate courses in social anthropology which started with one-year Diploma followed by B.Litt., Bachelor of Letters (renamed as M.Litt., Master of Letters, in 1980), and D.Phil. degrees.
philosophy” mentioned above. While dealing with “exotic” places, Evans-Pritchard and his disciples were interested, I believe, in showing how people in other societies conceptualize the world around them, and how they, as the same intellectual human beings as we are, think, imagine and symbolize. It closely reflected and connected with the Durkheimian sociology prevalent in France.

At Oxford, therefore, the main interests lay in belief systems, modes of thought, symbols and classification. Even in the study of kinship, the focus was not so much on its social, economic or political functions but more on how it works as a classificatory system and how it underlies the ways people conceptualize their social world and human relationships. Other distinct features of Evans-Pritchard’s social anthropology that set it apart from that of Radcliffe-Brown or Malinowski may be found in its emphasis upon history and its attempts to combine humanities and social sciences.


After completing my Diploma and M.Litt in social anthropology at the Institute, I went to Japan to do fieldwork when most of my fellow students went to Africa, Melanesia, the Middle-east, or South Asia. Despite the intellectual milieu of Oxford anthropology at the time focusing on different modes of thought, belief systems, classification, etc., these concerns were not much imposed upon the students with different backgrounds and prospects, perhaps thanks to the general atmosphere of “openness” at the Institute. From my own point of view, the choice of Japan seemed most reasonable, as Korean anthropologists were just beginning to go abroad for the study of other cultures. China was still closed to Koreans and Kwang-ok Kim had already finished his doctoral fieldwork in Taiwan. Margery and Arthur Wolf, who both studied Taiwan, were at Oxford in 1974-1975 as visiting professors, and given the limited anthropology job market, I was sure that I could never find a job when I returned to Korea if I produced another thesis on Taiwan, albeit on a different topic.

The experience of going to Japan for anthropological fieldwork from Britain was unusual in many senses. To begin with, a Korean studying Japan was obviously a reverse case of the usual anthropological practices in which the West/the colonizers/the more affluent and powerful study the Rest/the colonized/the peripheral. It was also not going to a remote place seeking for the “exotic,” but coming to a familiar place which was nearer home. As a Korean, I was not so conspicuous in the Japanese field as a British or an American anthropologist might have been and thus perhaps needed much less effort in “going native” and was accepted as such. It also means of course that I was not accorded the same kind of privileges as those enjoyed by most foreigners, gaijin, in Japan. The impact of my cultural affinities to the research field was felt in many other ways as well.

The initial experience was the language learning as part of the preparation for fieldwork. Being of the postwar generation, I was not able to read or speak Japanese. So I attended an
elementary Japanese class given by a historian, James McMullen, at the Oriental Institute. Since the students enrolled in his class were mostly British undergraduates, Dr. McMullen tried to change every Japanese sentence into English grammatical order to assist the students’ understanding. As Korean and Japanese languages have exactly the same structure, the teaching process was more confusing than helpful to me, an experience that convinced me that it would be perhaps quicker and easier to study the language by myself, assisted by my knowledge of classical Chinese.

Apart from this language learning experience, there were several other occasions that made me realize how British perceptions and approaches to Japan, its history and culture might be different from those of Koreans. For instance, it had never occurred to me that the phenomenon of most houses in Japan facing the south is of any “cultural” significance until I heard Joy Hendry explaining it at some length as one of the peculiarities of the Japanese. Due to the cultural affinities between Japan and Korea where it is also considered “natural” that houses face the south, I was oblivious to the phenomenon as anything “cultural.” Although Hendry, when addressing the issue, did not delve into any of the shared assumptions of East Asians regarding directions and human-nature relationships that are perhaps based on common geomantic principles, I learned through this simple episode that national/cultural background could indeed affect the range of things to be observed and explained.

On another occasion, I realized how specific historical experiences of an anthropologist might affect his or her perceptions of the same phenomenon differently. When Roger Goodman, a British social anthropologist who also did Japan anthropology at Oxford a few years after me and is now a professor at Oxford, visited Korea for a comparative research project, I had the chance to accompany him on a look around the Independence Hall at Chonan, some two hours’ drive from Seoul, where the History of Korean Independence and Resistance Movements during the Japanese colonial period was exhibited. The Hall was full of life-sized reconstructions and picture images of all sorts of atrocities committed by the Japanese against Koreans, such as mutilation of body parts, various massacre scenes, the operation of army “comfort quarters,” or the evidence of vivisections by the notorious Japanese Imperial Army Unit 731, etc.

The main purpose of the museum was to make the spectators reflect upon the cruelties and inhumaness of wars and colonialism, and, more specifically, to foster “patriotism” among Korean nationals by alerting them to what kind of plight they might fall into if their country was to be subjugated by another through force and lost its independence. To my surprise, however, on completion of our tour, Goodman’s first reaction was, with strings of conscience, that “It makes me think about what the British did in India.” It was clear that he projected himself from the viewpoint of an aggressor, the colonizer, despite the fact that the whole arrangement of the display at the museum was inducing the viewpoint of a victim, the colonized.
I have introduced these incidents at some length as I believe they effectively illustrate how national/cultural/historical background might affect the researcher’s perceptions and subsequent understandings in the field. Through formal education as well as through popular imageries, Japan and the Japanese have been stereotypically portrayed to the Koreans as “cunning, crafty and ruthless aggressors who would at any time prey upon the naïve and credulous Koreans”. On the other hand, Koreans in the popular conceptions of the Japanese are an “inferior race” or “people one level below” (ikkyū shita no minzoku), and if we borrow the words of Japan’s then-Foreign Minister, Taro Aso, they are “people of a low cultural level” (mindo ga hikui minzoku). There is little doubt that these historically formulated pre-conceptions somehow influence the nature of the first contact, especially since those an anthropologist encounters in the field are the lay people.

As I have discussed elsewhere, however (Moon 2006), the pre-conceived ethnic hierarchy was not the only factor affecting the relationship between the observer and the observed in the field. For instance, apart from ethnicity, other status markers such as foreign background, Tokyo connection, gender, marital status, age, education, and so forth were all gauged, interpreted, manipulated, and negotiated, both by the researcher and by the researched in different circumstances that arose during fieldwork. In other words, at least in my own experience as a Korean anthropologist in the Japanese field, “the construction of relationships between the observer and the observed is hardly monolithic or pre-disposed, but a multi-faceted, on-going and, above all, mutual process in which both the anthropologist and the research objects participate” (ibid. 121). It seems to me, therefore, that, even in the case of a Korean anthropologist in the Japanese field, the element of ethnic hierarchy or power relationship between the research subject and objects should not be unduly emphasized.

Also, although it has been argued that there are national traits in the study of Japan (Befu and Kreiner eds. 1992), it seems increasingly difficult to characterize “Korean” anthropology of Japan in a singular way. There are not only individual differences but also rather distinct differences emanating from the background of academic training. Although the population is relatively small, Korean anthropologists studying Japan can be divided into three different groups. The first group is those who take Japan as a research field after having been trained in the West. The second group is those who study Japan as part of their degree course at a Japanese institution. The third group, which is growing in number, is those who are trained within Korea and go to Japan for fieldwork. Despite having the same national background, these groups seem to display some significant differences in the selection of research topics and in the way they approach them. It has sometimes been argued that anthropologists in the West are more social-scientifically oriented and analytical while Japanese anthropologists tend to emphasize detailed description and an understanding of historical background with little concern for theorizing. It seems that, to some extent, the same kind of differences can be noted of the Korean anthropologists trained in the West and those trained in Japan (See Kweon 2015).
My first fieldwork was in a mountain village in central Honshu (Moon 1989). I chose a village in Gunma prefecture in the Kantō region, as the earlier village ethnographies by Anglo-American anthropologists were for some reason mostly concentrated in western Japan (Embree 1939; Norbeck 1954; Cornell and Smith 1956; Beardsley et.al. 1959; Smith 1978; Dore 1978; Hendry 1981; Moeran 1984, etc.) or on the Northeast region (Brown 1966). A professor of anthropology at Tokyo University, Michio Suenari also suggested that, if there were distinct regional characters between southwestern and northeastern Japan, the Kanto region would be the dividing line.4 The Japanese village I encountered was not a “traditional” one but one that was in the process of rapid transformation, and it was these transformational processes that interested me most from a comparative perspective, such as migration patterns, villagers’ adaptive strategies, the changing modes of social relationships and community organizations, etc. Also, while “culture” conceived of as something static, given, and of an essentialized totality was of little interest to me, I could not but notice the basic organizational principles of kinship and family or チク and 株, as they were so different from those in Korea. It seems, therefore, that, although it may not be easy to generalize about “national” traits in ethnographic writing, it can at least be said that there are certain areas or topics which an ethnographer is able to note, discern and analyze with greater acuteness and that these areas may differ with his/her national and cultural background.

The second major phase of my Japan study was my participation in a 3-year collaborative research project of sociologists and anthropologists focusing on social organization and citizens’ movements in Kawasaki city. After the Seoul Olympics in 1988 and into the 1990s, the Korean Ministry of Education launched a new program of Overseas Area Studies and this project was planned as the first round of this program. Kawasaki City had been known for its progressive political character ever since the Socialist Party took power in the early 1970s, and the political atmosphere provided fertile ground for many social, cultural and political experiments with regard to such matters as environmental and welfare issues, citizens’ participation in municipal politics, and policies concerning alien residents, etc. In an attempt to understand contemporary Japanese society, Kawasaki City was chosen as it was believed to be an ideal site to observe the possible directions of changes occurring in society at large in such matters as the transformation of “traditional” organizations, construction of urban communities, the growth of citizens’ movements and their impact upon the existing system, and so forth (Moon 2001, 2002).

Looking back, my interests in these early days, whether in rural or urban contexts, in change rather than continuity and in the atypical diversities rather than the typical seem to have arisen from my overall dissatisfaction with the mainstream Anglophone anthropology of Japan that tended to highlight the representative and often timeless or ahistorical features of the Japanese and Japanese Culture. For an East Asian anthropologist, what was

---

4 According to Izumi and Nagashima (1963), distinctly different characteristics can be noted between east and west Japan in terms of household succession system.
most frustrating about such an approach was that it seemed to have been trapped in the
deadlock of the Japan-West dichotomy and lacked the much needed comparative perspective.
In a similar vein, the attempts to represent Japan as ‘unique’ vis-à-vis the ambiguous West
seemed to me particularly hollow and inadequate.

For these reasons, I wanted to avoid as much as possible such topics as manga, anime, sumo,
geisha, tea ceremony, etc. and the discourses related to these cultural phenomena. All these
features have often been taken as epitomes of Japanese culture and might have satisfied the
desire for the exotic in the West, but they represented a reified image of the Japanese as
people with whom many East Asians had not very pleasant historical experiences. Even
themes like the vertical nature of social relationships, structures of politeness, honorific
languages, or the concept of relational or contextual self, etc. struck me, and many other
East Asian anthropologists, as better avoided, as many of those features are commonly
shared by East Asians as a result of long historical connections and consequent cultural
affinities, and thus appear to be too mundane to become an exciting research topic to the
audiences in our home countries.

For instance, despite many striking commonalities found in the rural societies of Korea
and Japan such as family farm structure, patriarchal dominance, community solidarity, etc.,
many subtle differences could also be noted in areas like concepts of the family and its
continuity, perceptions of kinship and territorial ties, organizational patterns, ancestor
rituals, gender role transformations, and so forth. It was these latter differences, I believed,
that determined the ways by which the village society was connected to external society, to
the regions beyond the villages, to the market, to the state, and to the increasingly
globalizing world. It seemed to me that only when these subtle differences were sufficiently
illuminated via comparisons with other East Asian societies that truly characteristic
features of Japanese society would come into view, and a breakthrough to a place beyond the
Japan-West dichotomy and an expansion of scholarly horizons in the global anthropology of
Japan could be achieved (Moon 2006).

5. Language and Different Modes of Knowledge Production

Even if we agree upon the need for further dialogue among East Asian anthropologists as
a way of expanding the horizons of anthropological knowledge, there is a language problem.
In a recent article published in American Anthropologist, Gordon Mathews argued that, due to
the lack of a common language through which different East Asian anthropologists could
communicate with one another, only the use of English may lead to the formation of “a
common East Asian anthropology” (Mathews et al. 2015: 369). In addition to the language
issue, however, there seem to be other more serious barriers impeding mutual dialogues
among the East Asian anthropologists, as the following incident illustrates almost like a
caricature.
In the mid-1990s, a leading Japanese rural sociologist, Professor Kyōichi Kakizaki of Waseda University organized an international joint research team composed of sociologists and anthropologists from Japan, China and Korea with an ambitious aim of delineating the commonalities and differences of the basic structures (kisō kōzō) of the three societies. At the final presentation of the 3-year research results, the panelists from the three countries were asked to present in their native languages and simultaneous translation was provided. This was because we did not have a common language for communication and the project organizer, Professor Kakizaki, firmly believed that the discussion could not attain any meaningful depth if participants were forced to present their findings in clumsy English. Despite the fact that research was conducted with the same objectives in all three countries, however, both the contents and modes of presentations showed stark differences among the three countries in their scale, depth, and ethnographic details.

The presentation of a Chinese speaker, for instance, began with the period of the Shang (c. 1600~1046 BC) and the Zhou (c. 1046~256 BC) dynasties. Within the forty minute limit, more than 3,600 years of history was covered, together with the discussion of possible topographic, administrative and sociological changes over the period. A Japanese speaker, on the other hand, spent most of the forty minutes allotted to him on the description of one hamlet-based religious organization in minute detail, without offering much interpretation or analysis. I had the impression that, given the strict rigors prevalent in Japanese academia, he could not dare to proceed any further, especially as a junior scholar speaking in front of his teachers. By comparison, a Korean speaker - there were several speakers from each country but I just give one example respectively - tried as much as possible to contextualize the findings by combining some of the related theoretical issues and particular ethnographic materials.

To the Japanese scholarly standard, what the Korean speaker attempted to do may possibly have been regarded in a negative way as something stuck halfway between description and theory. To Korean audiences, on the other hand, description per se, no matter how rigorous and detailed it may be, would not draw much attention. It may be valued in the field of folklore studies but will not be considered anthropology or sociology if one stops at description. I am quite aware that some Japanese anthropologists of Korea are rather skeptical about the Korean preference for theories, abstractions, and generalizations over ethnographic details and depth (e.g. Itoh 2001: 45). Given that theories are mostly derived from the West, one using such a mode of knowledge production may be accused of simply borrowing other people’s ideas without showing much creativity or originality of one’s own. If I am allowed to speak for Korean social scientists, however, many of them firmly believe that it is still worth an endeavor to explore the limits of existing theoretical formulae by applying them to different ethnographic material.

Many of the social scientific theories that have been formulated to understand and explain Western experiences are critically challenged when applied to non-Western contexts. Tourism studies are a good case in point. While many of the existing theories on tourism
have focused on “Western” tourists or on the encounters between Western visitors and their host destinations, we are witnessing today a rapid growth of both domestic and inter-regional travel for leisure and recreation in Asia, a phenomenon that calls for a reappraisal of how tourism is analyzed and conceptualized. In these reappraisals or critical reflections, more scholars from East Asia are actively participating, not only in tourism studies (Winter, Teo and Chang eds. 2009; Guichard·Anguis and Moon eds. 2009; Moon et. al. 2016, etc.) but also in food studies (Kim ed. 2015), in migration studies (Haines, Yamanaka and Yamashita eds. 2012), etc. These new developments are both desirable and valuable, as it is critical to know and communicate what is going on in the West in order to speak back or transcend the dominant discourses cultivated in the so-called centers of knowledge production.

What I have tried to emphasize here is that it is not only the language barrier that bars more fluid mutual communication and the creation of an East Asian anthropology. More important perhaps are the significant differences found in the modes of knowledge production and in the nature of audiences in each country and region as was vividly illustrated by the episodes of the Kakizaki Conference. Only through creating more frequent opportunities for contact among East Asian scholars can mutual communication among them be substantiated and deepened. It was with this background that a number of East Asian anthropologists sharing similar concerns gathered in Beijing in 2008 and created the EAAA (East Asian Anthropological Association) which held its 9th annual meeting at Sapporo in October 2016. On observing a slow but steady growth of interest in the Association over the years, I am hopeful that its annual meetings will continue to function as a rare but valuable venue for sharing and elaborating mutual concerns among East Asian anthropologists.

While it is true that we do not have much choice other than using clumsy English as a lingua franca at these EAAA meetings and that it is indeed an unsatisfactory means, what distinguishes the EAAA gatherings from attending Anglophone mega-conferences such as AAA and AAS or their regional branch meetings like SEAA and AAS-in-Asia, is that the EAAA meetings that have been hosted by five participating regions, China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong, are more accessible as well as more encouraging to non-native English speakers compared to those dominated by Anglophone natives. Therefore, even with limited means of communication, the discussions and exchanges at the gatherings of East Asian scholars can be of a different nature and depth, especially since most participants share extensive knowledge about the regional historical background as well as about cultural commonalities and differences of each other.

The fact that East Asian anthropologists studying other East Asian societies tend to refer to each others’ works much more widely and frequently can also contribute toward widening scholarly horizons. The reference lists of Korean anthropologists writing about Japan, for instance, quite often include nearly as many Japanese sources as Western sources. This is a quite different feature from their counterparts in the West, who have tended to take the native scholars more as a source of information or as a “Professional Other” if we borrow
Kuwayama’s term (1997: 529) than as an equal colleague. It should be admitted, however, that the practice of global reference is more conspicuous among Korean anthropologists of Japan with backgrounds in Western training and domestically trained students of those trained in the West, compared to those trained in Japan. The reference lists of the latter group or their disciples are almost exclusively confined to Japanese works, possibly reflecting the closed nature of Japanese anthropology, carried beyond its borders by its international students. If one argues for a deconstruction of the Japan-West dichotomy as a way of widening and globalizing scholarly horizons, the same should also be attempted with regard to this sakoku (closed country) tendency prevalent among Japan-trained anthropologists in Korea. In the case of an East Asian studying another East Asian society, such an attempt may indeed be helpful for avoiding the potential danger of “bidirectional” anthropology which may be more vulnerable to value judgments, as discussed by Professor Seiichi Matsumoto (2015: 231).

6. On the Issues of Regional Networking and Research Collaboration

The final issue I would like to address in relation to the globalization of anthropology in East Asia concerns the patterns of international research collaboration. It is true that there has already been abundant networking and collaboration among East Asian scholars, especially among those who are in the same discipline. The Department of Sociology at Seoul National University, for instance, regularly exchanges students and faculty members with the sociology department at Kyoto University, providing intensive lecture courses and research cooperation, etc. Similar kinds of exchanges, however, seem to be surprisingly limited between Japanese and Korean anthropologists or between departments of anthropology in the two countries. One important reason for this is probably related to the fact that anthropology in Japan has long been a study of other cultures and anthropology in Korea is increasingly becoming so. Even among those in the same specialized area, such as Korean anthropologists of Japan and Japanese anthropologists of Korea, however, research networking and collaborations have been much scantier than one might expect.

There have of course been several exemplary cases of collaboration in the past. In the 1990s, for instance, as part of research cooperation programs of the National Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku) in Osaka, Professor Mutsuhiko Shima organized a couple of international conferences on Korean kinship which were attended by specialists from both Japan and Korea, together with a couple of Anglophone scholars engaged in the same field of study, which later led to the publication of their collaborative results as a part of the Senri Ethnological Studies series (Shima and Janelli eds. 1998). This volume in many respects can be regarded as an ideal model of research cooperation between the two countries in terms of the clearly defined research focus, the scholarly depth of most contributions, and the degree of global collaboration. Since then, however, no publications of a similar standard have materialized as far as the anthropology of Korea is concerned, even at an institution like
Minpaku that aims at promoting both domestic and international research collaborations. While the Korea-related scholars at the museum have been active in networking with Korean scholars of their own specialties such as food studies or folklorists, their research collaboration with the mainstream anthropologists in Korea has been extremely limited.

A second major collaborative research project was carried out as part of the Japan-Korea Cultural Foundation Monograph Series in the early 2000s. While two volumes were published from this ambitious ten-year project involving five anthropologists respectively from Japan and Korea for each volume (Itoh and Han eds. 2002, 2007), the whole process cannot truly be considered as collaborative research, as the participants only met once or twice to present their respective research projects and submitted an independently written chapter at the end without much contact or dialogue in between. There may have been other attempts at exchanges, networking and collaboration that have escaped my attention, such as sporadic mutual invitations for lectures and seminars or the publication of the JRCA special issue in 2015 on “Korean anthropology of Japan and Japanese anthropology of Korea” which resulted from a panel at the IUAES Conference held in Chiba in 2014 jointly organized by the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology (JASCA) and the Korean Society for Cultural Anthropology (KOSCA).

With only a few exceptions, however, Japanese anthropologists of Korea do not seem to be very keen on communicating with anthropologists in Korea, nor with the global anthropological communities beyond the borders of Japan. This unwillingness may partly reflect a tendency to regard native scholars more as sources of factual information than as colleagues, a somewhat similar phenomenon noted by Professor Kuwayama with regard to the Anglophone anthropologists of Japan vis-a-vis Japanese anthropologists. Or, it may be because, as Professor Abito Itoh puts it, “most Japanese anthropologists specializing in Korea have been attracted by the descriptive style of folklore studies” (Itoh 2001: 40). If emphasizing the description of ethnographic details is indeed a uniquely Japanese way of doing anthropology, as Itoh seems to argue, it may again collide with the Korean preferences for theories, generalizations and comparisons, making mutual communication and collaboration more difficult. Research cooperation may be more active between Japanese anthropologists and Korean anthropologists of Japan who have been trained in Japan and who thus share a similar scholarly tradition, but I am not very well informed of those exchanges, because dialogue between those trained in the West and those trained in Japan is limited even among Korean anthropologists researching Japan.

On the whole, it can be safely said that networking and collaboration of Japanese anthropologists of Korea with their Korean colleagues is more common among those with an orientation towards humanities such as folklore, history, and food studies, while networking Korean anthropologists of Japan are more active with Japanese sociologists or anthropologists specializing in areas other than Korea who share a common research theme. In the case of my recent study of Nishijin, Kyoto, for instance, I was invited by Professor Ayami Nakatani of Okayama University to participate in a joint research team in Japan
which is composed of anthropologists working on textiles in Indonesia, India, China, and Japan (Moon 2013, 2016). Members of this particular research project have been for the past few years holding regular workshops, organizing panels for international conferences, participating in joint field trips to Okinawa, Indonesia, traditional textile centers in Japan, etc., thereby realizing research collaboration in its genuine sense.

7. Creating Common Platforms

What I have been trying to argue is that an expansion of mutual exchanges and dialogues among East Asian anthropologists is critically needed to overcome the current anthropological practices of the West studying the Rest, and to widen, enrich and diversify the world of anthropological knowledge. Often equipped with a deeper understanding and perceptions of complex regional histories and subtle cultural differences between each other compared to their Anglophone counterparts, East Asian anthropologists studying East Asian societies seem to have great potential to produce a different kind of knowledge that may contribute in deconstructing and transcending the dominant discourses and representations of East Asian societies cultivated by Anglophone anthropologists in the Western centers. Toward this concerted endeavor, I firmly believe that a space like the EAAA can serve as a most useful common platform in which the participation of young scholars needs to be more encouraged.

While English remains for the moment as an unsatisfactory yet unavoidable lingua franca for mutual communication among East Asian anthropologists, the fact that most of them often have a better command of the languages of their fields and shared local knowledge than their Anglophone counterparts can become a source of their relative strength that may compensate for limited English proficiency and the resultant barriers to mutual communication. The fact that some of them, if not all, have experience and knowledge of global anthropology may also enable them to make “triad” comparisons that will no doubt contribute to the widening of anthropological horizons. It is in this regard that the sakoku tendency of some Japanese anthropologists and other Asian anthropologists trained in Japan seems to be in need of adjustment. There are of course significant regional differences in the ways that anthropology is practiced, in the nature of audiences and in the styles of research cooperation, etc. within East Asia as I have discussed above. It is only through increased contact and with a genuine eagerness for multilateral dialogues beyond the language barrier that these differences can be addressed, challenged and hopefully overcome, so that East Asia may emerge as an alternative source of anthropological knowledge.
REFERENCES

Beardsley, Richard K. et al.
Befu, Harumi and Josef Kreiner (eds.)

Brown, Keith

Cornell, John B. and Robert J. Smith

Dore, Ronald

Embree, John F.

Evans-Pritchard, Edward E.

Guichard-Anguis, Sylvie and Okpyo Moon eds.

Haines, David W., Keiko Yamanaka and Shinji Yamashita (eds.)

Han, Sang-Bok

Hendry, Joy

Ishino, Iwao

Itoh, Abito

Itoh, Abito and Kyung-Koo Han (eds.) 伊藤亞人，韓敬九（編）

Itoh, Abito and Kyung-Koo Han (eds.) 伊藤亞人，韓敬九（編）

Izumi, Seiichi and Nobuhiro Nagashima 泉靖一，長谷信弘

Kakizaki, Kyoji et al. (eds.) 柿崎京一・陸學藝・金一鐵・矢野敬生（編）
Okpyo Moon

(Kyoto: Ochanomizu Shobō).

Kim, Kwang-Ook


Kim, Kwang-Ook (ed.)


Korean Society for Cultural Anthropology (ed.)

2008 Munhwa illyuhak bansegi (Fifty Years of Cultural Anthropology). Seoul: Sohwa.

Kuwayama, Takami 桑山敬己

1997 「現地の人類学者: 内外の日本研究を中心に」(Native anthropologists with special reference to Japanese studies inside and outside Japan)『民族学研究』(Minzokugaku Kenkyu) 61(4), 517-42.

Kweon, Sug-In


MacClancy, Jeremy


Mathews, Gordon


Mathews, Gordon, et al.


Matsumoto, Seiichi

2015 Comments. In the Special Issue, Anthropology of Japan in Korea and Anthropology of Korea in Japan, Japanese Review of Cultural Anthropology 16, 229-32.

Moeran, Brian


Moon, Okpyo

Seoul: Nanam.


Moon, Okpyo et al.


Norbeck, Edward


Sakano, Toru 坂野徹


Shima, Mutsuhiko and Roger Janelli (eds.)


Shimizu, Akitoshi


Smith, Robert J.


Walraven, Boudewijn


Winter, Tim, Peggy Teo and T. C. Chang (eds.)


Yamashita, Shinji


Yamashita, Shinji, Joseph Bosco and J.S. Eades (eds.)
