Evolving Transnationalism in the Asia-Pacific Region: The Perspective of Social Science in Japan

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Introduction

A recent trend in the international commitment of Japan is often diagnosed as ‘Galapagos Syndrome’ in Japanese media reports. In evolution theory, the Galapagos Archipelago is the area where evolution occurred independently because of its lack of communication with the rest of the world. It is understood that the Galapagos Archipelago did not have devolution but rather a kind of ‘involution’ (if we follow the terminology of the famous anthropologist Clifford Geertz), evolving and developing on its own. Japan has developed many high-standard systems such as mobile phones and medical systems which have no effect on the other areas of the world.

There is another feature of the Galapagos Archipelago which is not known to most of the world. It is the fact that the islands are a paradise of plant-eating animals. The absence of meat-eating animals leads to the absence of hard competition, since the animals do not fight to eat each other. In a similar vein, it is said that more and more Japanese, especially young Japanese, tend to evade competition and confrontation these days, in contrast to the period right after World War II, when Japanese society was very competitive in order to achieve rapid economic development. So, it is affected by the ‘Galapagos Syndrome’ also in this sense.

On 23 December 2010, newspapers in Japan reported that in 2008, the number of Japanese students studying overseas was 67,000 – 8,000 less than in the previous year, and that the biggest decrease was the number of Japanese students in the USA. The most probable reason for the overall decrease, according to these newspapers, was the prolonged period of job-hunting in which students must engage because of the shrinking job market. Another reason is the decline in the Japan’s population of younger people. These factors somehow have the effect of causing an involution among the youth. Although they take overseas trips for scenic tours, they are not much interested in going to live outside of Japan. They happily live in Japan, enjoying the Japanese involution of technology and not showing interest in what is happening in the other parts of the World.

We observe a similar phenomenon when we hold inter-university events for international students exchange program. We see only a small number of Japanese students among the participants, who are mostly overseas students studying in Japan. This trend is also obvious when a company tries to send young employees to overseas branch offices. Many of them are reluctant to be transferred. This is the reason why international corporations such as Uniqlo and Aeon are now increasing the number of foreign employees in their head offices.
The Japanese National Committee of AASSREC, as an organ of the Science Council of Japan, met on 8 November 2010 to discuss the general theme of the 19th AASSREC Biennial General Conference: 'Evolving Transnationalism: Challenges and Opportunities (Social Science Perspectives).’ In view of the importance of the general theme, the Japanese National Committee decided to hold a broader-based open forum by inviting scholars specializing in economics, education, anthropology, and sociology. Thus the Science Council of Japan held a symposium, 'Evolving Transnationalism in the Asian-Pacific Region: A Social Science Perspective,’ on 18 June 2011 in preparation for the 19th AASSREC Biennial General Conference to be held in Manado, Indonesia.

After an introduction to the recent argument on the ‘Galapagos Syndrome’ of Japan described above, the following scholars, who have been working on transnational endeavors in Japan in different sectors, presented their papers:

I. Yasuaki TODO, professor, the University of Tokyo
   Internationalization Will Save Stagnant Japan

II. Masahiro YOKOTA, professor, Meij University
   The 300,000 International Students Plan of Japan

III. Akiko ASAI, Associate Professor, J.F. Oberlin University; Yasuko MINOURA, Professor Emeritus, Ochanomizu University; Setsuko MIYAMOTO, Professor, Hyogo University of Education
   The Experience of EPA Indonesian Nurses in Japan: A Research Project from the Micro- and Macro-linkage Model Perspective

IV. Kazuhisa NISHIHARA, Member, SCJ/Professor, Nagoya University
   The Promotion of Transnational Academic Exchange in Asia: A Case Study

I. Internationalization Will Save Stagnant Japan

The GDP per capita of Japan increased rapidly until the breakdown of the bubble
economy in 1992, when it was about 90% of that of the USA. But economic stagnation after 1992 reduced GDP to about 70% (at present). In the GDP per capita, Japan has been overtaken by Singapore and will soon be caught by Taiwan (Fig.1).

Nevertheless, according to Professor Todo, who is a strong advocate for the open-door policy, it is possible for Japan to regain its growing power, overcoming the Great East Japan Earthquake of 11 March 2011. Climatic disasters are able to lead to a higher growth rate in the long run, if institutional changes are realized by the introduction of new technologies (Fig.2). Thus the focal point is to bring about appropriate institutional changes. The miraculous growth which Japan experienced in the postwar period was achieved by revolutionary changes in its institutions, and even now it is possible to realize such miraculous growth by bringing effective changes to its institutions.

Though technological innovation inside Japan is important, the introduction of technology and knowledge from outside is the key to technological innovation and economic growth in Japan. Japan needs to introduce overseas technology not because Japanese technology is inferior, but because Japan needs more ideas: as the old saying goes, “Out of the counsel of three comes wisdom.” According to Fig.3, which shows the degree of contribution to the productivity growth of the domestic research and development (R&D) and the R&D conducted outside the country, the R&D in Japan contributed 30% to its productivity growth while the R&D conducted outside Japan contributed 70%. On the other hand, in the case of Germany, France, and the UK, the R&D in each country contributed only between 10 and 20% to productivity growth, and they gained the rest from the R&D conducted in other countries. More than enough investment in the domestic R&D has not brought high economic growth in Japan. This means we need more endeavors to introduce technology and knowledge from outside of Japan.

The first step in economic internationalization
will be the overseas expansion of enterprises. Data show that an enterprise which begins to export is expected to be able to attain an increase of about 2% in its productivity on average. We assume that such activities will activate the communication between the Japanese headquarters and the overseas branch offices so that new information and ideas will be brought back to Japan, and that the exporting itself will increase productivity for sure because more production is needed to export.

Fig.4 shows how enterprises which started exporting gained higher productivity. The companies which started exporting in 2000 lost productivity in the next year but recovered by 2003 and have attained much higher productivity on average than the companies which did not export between 1995 and 2007. Fig.5 shows a similar result in the direct investment. Many fear that the internationalization of enterprises will bring about the hollowing out of industry, depriving a lot of people of employment within the country. If the enterprises invest overseas, domestic employment may decrease for the moment, but with the productivity gained by the internationalization, domestic employment
will recover and further increase (Fig.6).

There are many enterprises in Japan which show a high productive capacity without global commitments, irrespective of size, sector, and region. Here we call these enterprises 'LDEs' (Lying Dragon Enterprises) (Fig.7, Fig.8). Responses to a questionnaire show that the reason LDEs do not expand overseas is not that they lack funds or human resources but because they do not see the necessity of going overseas (Fig.9). It means they lack motivation. Thus we need policies to stimulate such companies to globalize in order to gain more productivity. For example, it is quite effective to make a mutual agreement between two countries such as an FTA (Free-Trade Agreement) to reduce customs duties or TPP (Trans-Pacific Economic Strategic Partnership Agreement). The prospect of increased profits might induce LDEs to export their products so that more Japanese enterprises will participate in transnational activities.

II. The 300,000 International Students Plan of Japan

The main theme here is that universities are to be the institutions to educate ’global human resources.’ We define global human resources as people who have the ability to speak English as a tool of communication and to understand and adjust to other cultures, in addition to having expertise in professional disciplines. In order to achieve the goal of educating global human resources, the main measure is to send students abroad and to receive international students.

In the past, most international students
went from developing countries to developed countries. Nowadays, many students from developed countries study in developing countries. Fig.10 shows the top 12 countries which send students abroad, and Fig.11 shows the top 12 countries which accept international students. Seven countries – China, the USA, Germany, France, Japan, Canada, and Russia – appear in both Fig.10 and Fig.11. We may expect that more Asian countries will appear in such graphs in the near future.

Students in the East Asian region are becoming more mobile, especially those in China and South Korea. More and more international students are studying in both countries. Most of the international students in China are from South Korea (Fig.12), and this will surely enhance the Korea-China relationship in the future. The country sending the second largest number of students to China is the USA, and the number is increasing. In South Korea, there are many Chinese students in disciplines of social sciences and humanities in undergraduate programs who receive private funding. In 2010, the number of international students in South Korea reached almost 84,000 (Fig.13), while the number of South Korean students overseas is 3.4 times that of the international students in South Korea. The number of South Korean students who study in the USA is 75,000, which is 3 times the number of Japanese students in the USA and 9 times as many if we use the
Australia is one of the most active countries in attracting international students. It accepted more than 600,000 international students (Fig.14), including 150,000 Chinese students and 120,000 Indian students, in 2009. Chinese, Indian, and South Korean students total half of the entire number of international students (Tab.1). Australia began attracting international students on the basis of its economic advantages. In Australia, education is the third most important industry, after coal and iron ore mining.

Japan will experience a population decrease after 2018, with a decline in the number of births annually from 1,200,000 to 870,000 over the next ten years. This means that the size of the population entering universities will decrease by 25%. Meanwhile, Japanese major enterprises will have expanded in overseas markets and will have set much higher target goals than now. The average overseas revenue of major enterprises was 48% of the total in 2010, compared with 26% in 2000, and the expansion into overseas markets, especially into the markets of newly developing countries, will be increasingly important for Japanese enterprises.

The 300,000 International Students Plan was launched by MEXT (Ministry of Education, Sports, Culture, Science and Technology) of Japan under the influence of the worldwide trend in international student mobility and the necessity of promoting transnationalism in Japan (Fig.15). We need to send more and more Japanese students overseas as well as to

### Table 1: International Students in Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Numbers 2009</th>
<th>% 2009</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>156,127</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>120,144</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>39,620</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>26,366</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>24,534</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>23,678</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>23,112</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>23,112</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>17,510</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>12,439</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>172,352</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>629,684</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: International Student Mobility of Students: The Australian Case by V. Lynn Meek 2011
receive more and more international students. In order to update the nation’s international student policy, it is appropriate that the official category of international students be broadened to include Japanese language students and short-term students.

III. The Experience of EPA Indonesian Nurses in Japan: The Micro- and Macro- linkage Model Perspective

A program introducing Indonesian nurses to Japan, based on the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA), was established by governmental and semi-governmental organizations in Japan and Indonesia, including MOFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), MHLW (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare), METI (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) and JICWELS (Japan International Cooperation for Welfare Services) from the Japan side and the Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Health, Agency of Protecting Overseas Laborers (BNP2TKI), Association of Nurses of Indonesia, and so on from the Indonesia side (Fig.16).

On the one side, MOFA attached importance to the promotion of human resource exchange in order to strengthen relationships with Asian countries, and METI emphasized the importance of economic relationships with ASEAN countries and was interested in introducing human resources from overseas to fill the deficit in the labor force in the future. On the other side, the Indonesian government emphasized that the Indonesian candidates working in Japan should be treated on equal terms with Japanese nurses. In order to ensure such treatment, the Indonesian government did its best to recruit nurses and caretakers with enough ability for the program to work.

The Indonesian nurse and caretaker candidates receive Japanese language lessons and nursing or caretaking training at the expense of the Japanese government. After starting to work in Japan, a nurse candidate will sit for the Japanese National Examination for Nursing three times over the period of three years. A
caretaker candidate will sit for the Japanese National Examination for Care-taking after three years of practical training. A successful candidate is entitled to obtain a working visa for three years, renewable without limit. Otherwise, the candidate has to go home (Fig.17). In actuality, however, the number of nursing candidates who passed the national exam was 0 in 2009, 3 in 2010, and 16 in 2011; as a consequence, the number of candidates beginning in 2010 greatly decreased (Tab.2).

Since then the Japanese government has tried to facilitate the IJEPA program. Candidates have been given additional language lessons beginning in April 2010, and in August 2010 the National Examination for Nursing was revised by adding furigana (indicating the pronunciation) to difficult Chinese characters and providing English translations for technical terms. For those who failed the third examination, the Japanese government extended the deadline by one more year, with nurses given an opportunity to sit again for the examination.

The transnational characteristics of this program can be summarized as follows: 1) The IJEPA program is based on a bilateral agreement by Indonesia and Japan. 2) While the Japanese government is planning to create an official program in which candidates try their best to pass the National Examination for Nursing and Caretaking, the Indonesian government expects them to receive equal treatment with Japanese nurses. 3) The Indonesian government hopes these nurses will become leaders in the field after they return to Indonesia. 4) Although there are constraints within the national legal and institutional framework, the nurse and caretaker candidates have been well taken care of by various Japanese institutions, including governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Table 2: Admission of IJEPA Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>phases</th>
<th>Nurse candidates</th>
<th>Caretaker candidates</th>
<th>total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1 (2008)</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2 (2009)</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3 (2010)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. The Promotion of International Academic Exchange in Asia: A Case Study

Transnational encounters have become not-at-all-special phenomena but just ordinary happenings in everyday life in local communities in Asia. Recently, we have been surprised at updated case studies and the latest information presented at Asian meetings in the social sciences. For example, we often find foreign technical trainees in depopulated rural communities in Japan. A study was conducted in Kawakami village in Nagano Prefecture, on the southern slope of Mt. Yatsugatake. This village has a population of about 4,100 and is well known as a lettuce production center. Kawakami village accepted four Chinese trainees in 2003; in 2009, there were 634 Chinese trainees and 62 Philippine trainees in the village. In 2011, the number increased to 805 (630 Chinese, 137 Filipinos, 20 Indonesians, 16 Cambodians, and 2 Nepalis). They are staying in 366 of the 550 households in the village. The system of agricultural trainees is often criticized as a system to make up for a deficiency in the labor force by using cheap labor (trainees) from overseas. Nevertheless, the research shows that cultural activities and exchanges have developed between them and Japanese residents. Another case study has been conducted on the matchmaking business of introducing Vietnamese women to men in rural areas in Taiwan and South Korea.

The sociologist Ulrich Beck has proposed what he calls ‘methodological cosmopolitanism.’ While we have been accustomed to perceiving a civil society within the limits of a nation, in ‘methodological nationalism’ a civil society has a more transnational context and involves more transnational actors. Now we wish to propose the concept of ‘methodological transnationalism.’ Many issues today are based on direct global or transnational social exchanges. For example, environmental problems have already become global issues. In the same context, a South Korean scholar used the word ‘social Asia,’ which symbolizes that anything happening today somehow involves ‘the global Asian society.’ In a disaster, for example, we have to be attentive to the needs of socially handicapped foreign residents, and this shows that the civil society should be transnational.

Now, in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake and the accident at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant, how shall we transmit the experience of the disaster globally? Research is being conducted on the experiences of foreigners in the disaster, including Korean residents, Chinese trainees, and foreign spouses of Japanese. This research has found many cases of transnational networks between such foreigners and Japanese.

The well-known case of the Sato Fisheries in Onagawa is an example. Twenty Chinese female trainees were working in the company factory when the tsunami came. Mr. Sato, the manager of the company, led all of them to the...
top of the hill while he himself went back to check the company building and lost his life. Onagawa is a small town, and it lost 10% of its population in the tsunami. Onagawa also has a nuclear power plant. There are several foreign spouses in the town, and the mixed-marriage couples helped foreign residents in the town.

Although there is top-down transnationalization promoted by the government, bottom-up transnationalization carried out by individuals, and mediate transnationalization engaged in by academic associations, the most important type of transnationalization is the face-to-face interaction between one person and another person.

**Concluding Remarks**

‘Transnationalism’ is a tough theme for Japanese scholars to cope with, since the term presupposes migration. As discussed in the introduction of this paper, Japan in ‘Galapagos Syndrome’ has not been sending a large number of migrants or international students abroad recently. Nevertheless, Japanese society is slowly becoming more multicultural, although Japan has strict rules for immigration.

We know that we must face the problem of declining population soon, and we need the smooth introduction of a good immigration policy. Generally speaking, Japan is guarded by its strict immigration rules as well as by cultural and customary barriers.

Even if the Japanese government tries to bring in skilled laborers under a bilateral agreement, cultural and customary barriers have a significant effect in hampering such transnational migration. The problem for policy-makers is how to invite skilled and intellectual laborers by helping them overcome such difficulties. The case of the IJEPAn nurse candidates showed an endeavor by the Japanese government to bring in skilled laborers within the framework of Japanese institutions. It may be characterized as top-down transnationalism. We must learn from this experience, and research should be done not only on the institutional level but also on the individual level. The ‘300,000 International Students Plan’ is also a top-down transnational endeavor by the government. The plan will not only bring international students to Japan but send Japanese students overseas. It will facilitate more transnational movement of people, which is crucial for activating Japan in ‘Galapagos Syndrome.’ Nevertheless, we should not forget the bottom-up transnational endeavors which are also crucial in activating Japan as well.