

# **COMMUNITIES IN ACTION**

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## ***Struggle for Peace and Sustainability in Asia***

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## PREFACE

Throughout our life, we constantly seek knowledge and engage in changing our environment. We do so because we want to elevate ourselves to a higher level in terms of moral standard and material comfort. We want to reach a greater height. This obviously calls for engagement with the experiences and practices that are available around us. Interpersonal and intercultural interactions thus help in our capacity building, as well as enlightenment. The Asia Leadership Fellow Program (ALFP) is an excellent opportunity in this respect.

ALFP is engaged in building a constituency among public intellectuals. We are talking about organic intellectuals. This means that one needs not only to attain the capacity to envision and articulate, but also to stimulate action for positive change. ALFP has been trying to be a gateway for the intensive interaction of people from diverse social conditions and intellectual backgrounds in Asia to facilitate development of an Asian perspective, if there could be any.

Although the world is becoming closer, it is still full of unknown diversity. People in “other cultures” have their own rich traditions, own ways of engagement with nature and the community and contextual ways of seeking alternatives to existing odds. It is always inspiring to become acquainted with their notions and struggles that may immensely benefit us in acquiring a regional and global perspective on issues that concern all human beings. Through ALFP, the International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation have been trying to facilitate such a process by bringing “public intellectuals” from diverse backgrounds and from different Asian countries and providing them with a space to interact among themselves, as well as with Japanese academia and practitioners in various fields, to find the meaning of Asianness. This can be stimulated and accelerated through a process for reorientation, for getting in touch with other ideas, understandings and applications.

For a considerable part of our professional life, we have been working with a certain mission. We have been playing the role of an academic, or an animator, or a researcher, or a creative writer, or an artist, or an advocacy activist, or a communicator.

The most common denominator for us is perhaps our engagement in activities intended to change the quality of life of the people through our respective works. We believe that ‘critical consciousness’ is a missing link between ignorance and enlightenment, between marginalization and empowerment. We strongly feel that we need to constantly enhance and update ourselves in attaining the required level of excellence, so that we can stimulate ourselves, as well as others, to steer the process of development, cohesion and harmony in society. This has been attempted through ALFP since its commencement in 1996.

In 2006, ALFP hosted its tenth group of eight participants, one each from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines and Vietnam. They were together in Japan from mid-September to mid-November. ALFP opened a new window to this group of eight and indeed helped familiarize them with contemporary Japanese society and culture. Though Japan is in Asia, many of us know very little about Japan.

Our aim has been to enhance our knowledge base. We had high expectations from ALFP, and ultimately it has been in fact rewarding. ALFP has been instrumental for achieving a higher level of companionship, understanding and enlightenment. This should help rebuild our mindset about our neighbors in Asia, stimulate our energy to work for meaningful interaction with other Fellows, broaden our horizon and bring greater clarity in the thought process.

As part of the program, we were supposed to prepare and present one paper centering on a theme. The theme of ALFP 2006 was first decided as “Unity in Diversity: Envisioning Community-Building in Asia and beyond.” Later the Fellows in consultation with the secretariat staff phrased it for the public symposium as “Communities in Action: Struggle for Peace and Sustainability in Asia.”

At the end of the program, it was decided to publish a book on ALFP 2006. This book has been designed to contain, among others, activities in which the Fellows participated and their individual works. It has three parts. Part 1 includes some introductory remarks, a summary activity report and a detailed report based on transcripts of selected seminars. Part 2 includes the final papers prepared by the Fellows. Out of eight, seven Fellows contributed.

It was also felt important to share the feelings, observations and experiences of the Fellows on Japan, which has been endeavored through essays contributed by four Fellows.

This anthology is the result of a team effort. Ms. Naoko Shimamura, Ms. Mayuko Sasanuma and Mr. Kimihiro Sonoda of the International House of Japan were instrumental in making our stay comfortable and facilitating the two-month program in a meaningful and purposive manner. Ms. Kazumi Yagi and Mr. Toru Oono of the Japan Foundation also deserve acknowledgement in this respect. Ms. Mattie Reyes has put a lot of hard work into preparing reports based on her notes and made transcripts out of recorded tapes. Ms. Mayuko Sasanuma has also made a selection of photographs and put on captions that would help readers to have a glimpse of the 2006 program. The managements of the I-House and Japan Foundation have always been supportive in all stages. Prof. Lee Jong Won, Prof. Masaaki Ohashi and Prof. Chiharu Takenaka, advisers of the ALFP, were inspiring icons with their counseling and participation. Finally, it was the Fellows with their unique professional backgrounds, participation and fellowship under a very expedient and conducive environment that made the 2006 program a success. All these contributions are acknowledged with gratitude.

Mohiuddin Ahmad  
Editor

## **A Decade of Collaboration**

*Naoko Shimamura*

I felt both honored and embarrassed when I was asked to contribute a paper for the ALFP 2006 book. Over the years, I had been cajoling the Fellows to write discussion papers and reports for the Program. But when it came to writing one me, it was another story. I have been heavily involved in the coordination of this beloved project since its initiation and what I have received from my experiences have been so immense that I have no idea how to put them on paper.

ALFP was conceptualized and has evolved during the decade when each Asian nation-state, and Asia as a region, was struggling for maturity. At the same time the acceleration of globalization was transforming people's lives and value systems. Therefore, it is not an easy task to reflect on the ALFP experience that mirrors the changing environment in which Asia and its peoples faced during such an eventful period.

When the program started in 1996, the Fellows came from the ASEAN countries where state development was still in a transitional stage. In most cases, the Fellows' domestic situation made it difficult for them to speak freely in a public setting about the problems of political/social issues. Talks of regional integration at the governmental level or through economic cooperation were beginning to be active around that time; but, on the other hand, it was still rare for Asian public intellectuals from various cultural backgrounds to meet at their own initiatives, especially when their professions or fields of interest were different.

The first three years of the ALFP were spent mainly to sow the seeds—to inform public intellectuals in various parts of Asia that they could spend two months in Japan as part of an innovative fellowship program, where they could discuss issues of common concern pertinent to the region. At the outset, there seemed to have been doubts and anxieties among the Fellows about the intention of the ALFP—i.e. why is Japan doing this, or what the participants are expected to do or to produce out

of the program, etc. But as time went on, the Fellows seemed to discover that the discussions they engaged in during formal or informal meetings (sometimes at the renowned I-House breakfast table or at McDonald's) were usually of a special quality and that they wouldn't be able to have these conversations if they were confined to their daily professional engagements.

During these years, many large-scale events affecting the lives of many Asians, such as the economic crisis that shook the whole region and how the magnitude of the economic crisis heavily hit the weakest members of Asian societies in particular, took place. Reflecting those challenges, discussions focused on questions of identity and more attention was drawn to local initiatives that were more sensitive to what was happening at a more micro-level of society.

It was during the 2001 program when the attacks of 9/11 occurred. Tensions between different ethnicities or religions began to be exposed; people became less tolerant to each other. It was only natural for that year's Fellows to begin a project focused on the realities of transnational migration, which had become one of the crucial phenomena related to economic disparity in the global society.

Thus, at the threshold of the new century, the need for creating more opportunities to have cross-border dialogue and to nurture mutual understanding grew ever more important, and with such a multicultural background, the ALFP itself had to evolve as well. While creating more seminars of alternative and diverse viewpoints, the program began to place more importance on field trips during which the participants could mutually learn from the positive/negative experiences of various movements in the localities.

There must have been numerous events happening to the Fellows without our knowledge, as it was often said by the Fellows that many of the more thought-provoking discussions happened in informal settings rather than in formal seminars or workshops. Field trips were those rare opportunities for the secretariat to be able to be part of such informal interaction. Organizing 4-5 days field trips, often considered to be an important highlight of the two-month program, has been a constant challenge. But knowing that the impact on Fellows' intellectual pursuits would be immense, we tried to take utmost care to cover critical issues of mutual concern, making the visits educational as well as entertaining. We began by getting feedback from the Fellows and asking for ideas from advisory committee members and friends of the ALFP in various

localities, and we spent several months in preparation. For the organizers it was often the first time we got to know about the movements or activities initiated by local communities, and this has been an important learning opportunity for everyone involved.

Over the years, I was fortunate enough to go on many field trips with the ALFP and to have so many rich experiences. In 1999, I went on the first field trip I organized. The group visited Rokkasho Village in Aomori Prefecture, a place symbolic of the nuclear waste and recycling industry in Japan. We tried to present to the Fellows the multi-layered viewpoint of the nuclear story—those of the local administrators (we met a Mayor of the village who later committed suicide due to a bribery case); the citizen activists who oppose the nuclear-related facilities; and personnel of the Japan Nuclear Fuel Ltd., a venture corporation run by the electric company and other trading companies, who are responsible in developing the energy plant and producing power indispensable for a vast energy-consuming country like Japan.

I remember the tense atmosphere of the visit to JNFL's public relations pavilion. They knew that some of the local activists were accompanying our group. Since the actions of those opposing the nuclear facilities were sometimes extreme, the JNFL staff seemed to be truly worried that the activists would harm their facilities. I could feel that they were on alert every time the activists made a move. I regretted organizing the trip, which seemed too adventurous (at least for an ordinary citizen like me). But, to my great relief, nothing happened. I later realized that it was indeed the anxieties arising from prejudice and ignorance of the counterparts' intentions or points of view.

Listening to various opinions of the stakeholders were very interesting, but what affected me most during the trip was the conversation I had with the driver of the bus (the bus had a lounge at the back, seats with unfashionable upholstery, and the engine was so weak that it hardly had the power to climb up Osore-san Mountain where Itakos practiced shamanistic prayers). While the Fellows were enjoying drinking and singing at the back of the bus (this was actually one of the most alcohol-dependant, song-loving groups we've ever had), I sought out the driver's frank opinion about the fate of his hometown. He said that even though he was little worried about an accident that could occur he was more grateful for the fact that he could now drive on the road that was no longer uneven, no longer strewn with pebbles and rocks. He was one of the villagers who were appreciative of the more "modern life" that was

introduced after the nuclear-power processing facilities came to the village. I told the bus driver that I would remember the village and the conversation I had with him every time I turn on the lights in my home.

Only a few weeks later, a terrifying accident at a nuclear-waste recycling plant in another village (Tokai-mura) frightened not only us but also all of Japan. I remember talking with the Fellows gravely about the fate of the employees who died from radioactive contamination and the residents who had to be evacuated from their neighborhood. This brought to us the complex reality of development and its influence on the local people—in return for the subsidies from the national government that brings affluence to the local community, the residents live right next to the danger of being exposed to radiation, a question of life or death. It's always the marginalized areas and peoples that have to face such irrational choices. After this experience, I became more attentive to the other side of the stories—that there are always different viewpoints aside from those expressed by mainstream sources—and I learned of the importance of conveying alternative messages to those who are ill-informed.

A project such as the ALFP usually has a mission for its operation and, in this case, the mission aims to create a network of Asian public intellectuals that tackles the problems that the region faces, in the hope that the network will eventually contribute to the building of a true civil society. But the mission doesn't stipulate what this true civil society is and what the task of alleviating regional problems actually demands. In other words, it is rather vague to where this network of Asian public intellectuals is leading. Are we trying just to create a loose network, or should we move further towards collective action? After covering 62 Fellows, what is the point of spending all that time and money if their two-month experience does not go beyond personal enrichment? That has been a big question that I've been thinking over the years, and I haven't yet been able to find an answer. We are constantly exposed to challenging issues that need to be sorted out. I know we should go further than nurturing friendships, but I also know there is a limit in what a program such as ALFP can do.

Whatever the program's official mission, my personal stance in coordinating the ALFP was to create an environment for the public intellectuals from various backgrounds to build trust among them—

a sense of confidence even if their ways of thinking or approaches to issues differ greatly. *Onaji Kama no meshi wo kuu*—eating rice from one pan (= live under the same roof)—is a key recipe for conducting such collaborative interactive programs for those who come from different cultural/social backgrounds; but being together for a short period of time such as a 2-3 day conference is not sufficient. I've observed that the dynamics of the Fellows' interaction changes after a month of being together and I believe two months is the right amount of time to get to know one another, intellectually and personally, fairly well. Even if participation in the program has taken on an important collaborative effort. Without the generous funding from the Japan Foundation, this program would not have continued this long, and I must thank my colleagues at the Japan Foundation for their constant support in securing the budget for the program. Appreciation from the people involved made us feel that we were doing something meaningful, but we have to go beyond self-satisfaction and convey these experiences to a wider audience at different levels of the society to which we belong.

That is the challenge place in different years, the Fellows' sense of comradeship in having experienced the same course of program at the same venue—the I-House—can add to the closeness they feel toward each other. The chemistry of each group has been interesting to observe (in fact it was during 1996 program when I first heard the word 'chemistry' used for describing human relationships), and I have always felt nervous at the beginning of each program: will this year's combination of the fellows be successful enough to build long-lasting relationships?

In recent years, the value of the ongoing projects has been determined through evaluation. More specifically, the results of the evaluation process will decide if the project is still worth funding. Those who are involved in the ALFP agree unanimously that it is a worthwhile program, but for outsiders it is not easy to judge the quality. We need to illustrate more in-depth what the program has been doing, and more specifically what it is doing for the betterment of the civil society.

On a personal level, it has been a continuous struggle to keep the program going, especially when the initial masterminds of the program left me with a project of this scale. But it was certainly a meaningful struggle, and an invaluable learning opportunity which could have never been

gained through studying in an ivory tower. There were limitations in what the organizers could do; but we constantly sought ways to carry out the programs effectively by placing importance on providing hands-on experiences according to the needs and interests of each participant. Each year the program has been different.

Needless to say, I have not been organizing the ALFP all by myself. I have had the privilege to work with many capable colleagues, and advice from various contacts through the I-House/Japan Foundation network, including the ALFP alumni and the advisory committee, who have been indispensable in making this unique pro for the Asia Leadership Fellow Program in 2007 and beyond.

## Profile of 2006 Fellows



**Mohiuddin Ahmad** (Bangladesh)  
Chairperson, Community Development Library (CDL)

Mr. Ahmad is an economist by training, a researcher by profession, a poet by passion and an occasional columnist. As a freedom fighter, he directly participated in the armed resistance movement against the Pakistani occupation army in 1971. Having obtained his M.A. in Economics from Dhaka University, he has been a development since 1977. He is a founding member (in 1980) and Chairperson (since 1996) of CDL, a network of development information and communication in Bangladesh. He is a well-known social communicator, development practitioner and solidarity activist in the region, having been a Fellow of Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA), a founding member of the South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE) and the chair of Jubilee South-Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD). He has so far authored and edited 31 books including six poetry books and two novels. Presently he teaches at the Graduate School of NGO Studies, Sungkonghoe University, Seoul, as a Visiting Professor.



**Albert E. Alejo** (Philippines)  
Professor, Ateneo de Davao University

Fr. Alejo, a Filipino Jesuit, worked first with labor groups in Manila before earning a doctorate in anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies (London). A poet and philosopher in his native Tagalog, he is now in Mindanao engaged in indigenous peoples' advocacy and dialogue with Muslim civil society, through the Mindanawan Initiatives for Cultural Dialogue which he heads. He spearheads the emerging nationwide Ehem! Anticorruption Movement and guides the Amuma Cancer Support Group that he founded. He is a professor of anthropology, philosophy and development studies at Ateneo de Davao University, where he is also director of the Research and Publication Office. His recent publications include *Generating Energies in Mount Apo: Cultural Politics in a Contested Environment*. Forthcoming are a book on the spirituality of integrity in public service and an anthology of mystical poems in translation.



**Kunda Dixit** (Nepal)

Editor, Nepali Times; Publisher, Himalmedia

Mr. Dixit is a well-known Nepali journalist and publisher whose group, Himalmedia, has gained a reputation for professionalism and integrity and played an important role in upholding press freedom and democracy in Nepal during the past year. Having received his M.A. in journalism from Columbia University, he worked for the BBC World Service at the United Nations Headquarters and later served as Asia-Pacific director of the news agency Inter Press Service, based in Manila. While there, Mr. Dixit was involved in reporting and editing stories from the region that were ignored by the mainstream media. He is the author of the book *Dateline Earth: Journalism As If the Planet Mattered* (Manila: Inter Press Service, 1996), which is used in journalism schools around the world to show students how to write meaningfully on environmental and development issues. He is also a visiting professor at Kathmandu University, where he teaches journalism and communications.



**Maria Hartiningsih** (Indonesia)

Journalist, daily newspaper "Kompas"

Ms. Hartiningsih is a journalist who has been working at Kompas Daily for 21 years. Her consistent commitment to marginalized groups in society made her the first journalist to be awarded "The Yap Thiam Hien Award for Human Rights Educator." Previously, she received numerous awards, including one from UNCHS Nairobi, for her reports on homeless people. Having graduated from the Institute of Journalism in Jakarta, Ms. Hartiningsih earned her Master's Degree in Women Studies at the University of Indonesia, Jakarta. Since 1992, she has been covering international conferences on the environment and development, population, women, children, and other social issues. She also has written essays for various anthologies such as "Luka-luka Peradaban" (The Wounds of Civilization) in the anthology and Gender and Law. Currently she is actively doing fieldwork, and writing in-depth reports on social injustices, with the focus on gender issues in contemporary Indonesia.



**Kamata, Yoji (Japan)**

Chairperson, Atelier for Development and the Future  
While studying Agricultural Economics at the  
University of Tokyo

Mr. Kamata visited several communes in Japan to find a place for people to live together. After graduation, he worked as a truck driver for organic foods and researcher of the KJ method in order to realize true democracy. He has been exploring creating a new development model of international cooperation based on traditional and folk wisdom. He received his M.A. in the anthropology of development and social transformation. His lifework is to support the revitalization of traditional Tibetan medicine, to initiate further the KJ method, and to try to realize the concept of "Ancient Futures" (Natsukashii Mirai in Japanese) where society is sustainable and people can live happily.



**Lee Seejae (Korea)**

Professor, Catholic University of Korea; Co-President,  
KFEM-Seoul (Korean Federation for Environmental  
Movement)

Having obtained his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Tokyo, Dr. Lee has taught social movements, environmental sociology and sociological theories at the Catholic University of Korea since 1982. He is a founding member of the Korean Federation for Environmental Movement, assuming chairmanship of the policy committee of KFEM, and is director of the Citizens' Institute for Environmental Studies. He is also a founding member of the Korea Association for Environmental Sociology and acted as the first president of the organization between 2000 and 2004. Since 2002, he has served as a board member representing KFEM in the anti-desertification campaign in Northeast China in cooperation with Jilin Province. He was a visiting professor at the China Center for Sustainable Development Research, Peking University, Beijing, for over a year until January 2007.



**Nguyen Thanh Son** (Vietnam)  
Literary-Art Critic; Managing Director, T&A  
Communications

Mr. Nguyen is a well-known literary critic in Vietnam. Having obtained his Master's degree in international journalism from the Moscow Institute of International Relations, he lectures now at Hanoi National University on communications, but is widely known in Vietnam for his first book, on Vietnamese literature, *My Literary Criticism* (Ho Chi Minh City: Youth Publishing House, 2003), and for his numerous contributions to the local press on arts, movies, literature and branding. In 2005, Mr. Nguyen received a Rockefeller fellowship, and currently he is working on his second book, *Vietnamese Literature in the Post Renovation Period*. He is also a founder and managing director of T&A Communications Vietnam, one of Vietnam's first PR agencies, where his responsibilities include development of client relationships and proposal formulation.



**Janet Pillai** (Malaysia)  
Senior Lecturer, University Sains Malaysia

Ms. Pillai lectures in Acting & Directing, Performance Theory and Children's Theatre. A pioneer and veteran director in the field of young people's theatre in Malaysia, she has directed more than 30 major performances at the commercial, educational and community level. She also co-ordinates ARTS-ED, a non-formal multi-arts education program in the state of Penang specializing in program development and training for young people in the traditional as well as contemporary arts. Ms. Pillai is also a regional consultant and trainer in heritage education for young people. Her research and publication focus is on non-formal arts education, heritage education, conflict and learning theories related to the arts.

## **Eight Weeks' Sojourn**

The two-months autumn program started with an evening reception and introduction of the 2006 Fellows on 15 September in the basement of the I-House, and concluded with a wrap-up and evaluation session on 13 November afternoon. In between, the Fellows had a weekend retreat workshop at Chiba, a day trip to Ogawamachi, a week-long field visit to Okinawa and a two-day public symposium at the lecture hall in I-House centering round presentations by the Fellows. In between were also several seminars given by guest speakers from different universities, mass media, parliament, as well as individuals with creative accomplishments. A summary of the activities is presented below. However, a transcript of selected seminars has been prepared in more details and has been presented separately in the following chapter.

### **1. Weekend Retreat Workshop**

The 2006 Fellows spent their first weekend in Japan in a retreat at the Seimei-no-Mori Resort in Chiba Prefecture. It was an opportunity for the Fellows to get acquainted with each other and their research interests. The after-dinner parties were lively, with the Fellows sharing their stories and jokes in a relaxed and informal environment. The Fellows also had refreshing walks in the spacious resort gardens and woods. Surrounded by nature's greenery and fresh air, they had an invigorating two-day exchange and discussion with the ALFP advisers, consultants and secretariat staff.

The first session had the theme, "Searching for Unity in Diversity." Maria Hartiningsih talked about the current situation in Indonesia, seemingly heading toward a religious state. She pointed out that religion had become a source of conflict and oppression rather than that of a conciliation and emancipation. She reflected that religion has become a mask for the real problems of the Indonesian society.

Although it seems that religion is coming to the surface as the cause of ethnic and socio-economic conflict, it is actually just a cover for the real issues.

Albert Alejo talked about the inter-relationship between corruption and conflict. He observed that corruption is another form of conflict that challenges peace in many post-conflict societies. He also talked about the role of religion or church in the corruption issue by sharing his own experience in the movement against corruption in the Philippines.

Janet Pillai presented a concrete case study of her experience in implementing a creative arts project for children at her hometown Penang. The project, which has been ongoing for six years, explores children's cultural historical identities through creative arts for more participatory and holistic learning.

The second session had the theme "Media and Culture in Building Communities in Asia." Kunda Dixit talked about his work and experience during the April 2006 people power movement in Nepal that ousted the autocratic regime of the king. He showed how media creatively expressed its defiance of the censorship that the king imposed. He pointed out the important role played by media in the people's empowerment process in Nepal.

Nguyen Thanh Son shared his own family's experience in Vietnam War. He brought attention to the Diaspora that ensued because of the war and the three million Vietnamese who are now living overseas. He talked about how media and the arts are bridging divided communities to heal the scars of war through new literature that caters to Vietnamese both in Vietnam and overseas.

The second day started with the third session on a theme "Practical Challenges: Community Initiatives in Realizing Sustainable Society." Mohiuddin Ahmad discussed the process of convergence and conflict that operates in human civilization. He shared his thoughts about development and the issues that the peoples of the world are facing today. From works in South Asia and Bangladesh, he talked about his experience in searching for different meanings and ways of looking at development concepts.

Yoji Kamata began his presentation by bringing to the fore and questioning the hidden assumptions of conventional development. He then presented his alternative vision and strategy, which he had formulated by living with various communities in Asia. He shared how

he is trying to change the damage that the western-capitalist concept of development had brought to local communities and ethnic minorities.

Seejae Lee started his presentation with the current environmental situation, the growing trend for trans-border environmental problems and the resurgence of nationalism among states. He pointed out that states now increasingly focus on their own national interest so that no viable international environmental governance system can be formed to solve the rising incidence of trans-border environmental problems. He presented concrete examples from his own experience organizing joint projects involving governments, business, civil society and academic institutions to demonstrate that transnational cooperation is feasible.

## **2. Field Trip to Ogawamachi**

On 25 September 2006, the Fellows made a day-trip to Ogawamachi in Saitama Prefecture. Ogawamachi has a population of about 35,000. Surrounded by hills, the town has abundant nature and forest, which has been a blessing for the residents. Ogawamachi is an agricultural town which in the old days was known for producing traditional paper, sliding doors called *shoji* and silk products.

NPO Foodo was the host of the Fellows. Yuko Takahashi, Vice President of NPO Foodo, gave a briefing about their organization and its activities. During Japan's bubble economy, the hills that surround Ogawamachi were golf courses and dumping sites for garbage from the cities. Faced with the problem of polluted water sources and growing concern over its ill effects for their health, the local people came together to form NPO Foodo in order to find ways to do business without harming the nature. The four objectives of NPO Foodo are to promote farming and forestry through active participation in conserving the environment, to develop the town by utilizing local resources, to nurture local culture and to disseminate information learned from local culture.

In order to achieve its objectives, NPO Foodo is engaged in various activities such as lectures and seminars to educate people, especially young people, about the environment, recycling and organic farming. One major project of NPO Foodo is the biogas facility which is the product of collaboration between different community stakeholders: the local government which wants to reduce the amount of waste the town generates the farmers who want a stable supply of organic fertilizers and the residents who want to contribute to the environment.

In conjunction with the biogas facility, a local currency system has been established to motivate the 100 households who are currently involved in the project. The cost of disposing of the town's garbage by incineration is 32 yen per kilo, while processing it in the biogas facility costs 12 yen. Based on the amount saved by the local government in processing the garbage in the biogas facility instead of burning it, coupons are distributed to the participating households which can be exchanged for farm products during the summer and autumn festivals, which NPO Foodo organizes with the organic farmers who use the liquid fertilizers produced with the biogas facility. Meeting the end consumers during these twice-a-year harvest exchanges encourages the farmers, while the residents are happy to obtain organic produce and at the same time protect the environment. In addition, NPO Foodo also collaborates with the Saitama Farming Research Center to study the effects of the liquid fertilizer produced by the biogas facility on agricultural products.

After the briefing at the Ogawamachi Community Hall, the Fellows with their hosts toured around the town to observe how a local community can successfully earn a living by making the best use of their resources without harming the environment. They visited a tofu factory where the owner, Mr. Shimizu, described about tofu making. The Shimizu tofu business is 85 years old and has supported the family for three generations. They also learned about the precise production of 'sake' and enjoyed a taste over lunch at the brewery restaurant. In the afternoon, they visited a papermaking mill where they observed each step of the process from cutting the branches of the *kozo* trees to collect the fiber until the final stage of drying the finished paper. Ogawamachi has a 1200-year tradition of papermaking and is famous for producing the strong *kozo* paper used for ledgers and record books.

The Fellows had a tour at the Kaneko farm where Mr. Yoshinori Kaneko showed them around his farm. Mr. Kaneko is a pioneer organic farmer in Ogawamachi. He decided to study organic farming in the 1970s because of his failing health resulting from the chemicals used at the farm. Since then, he has shared his knowledge of organic farming with other farmers both within Japan and abroad. There are 25 organic farms in Ogawamachi, the highest in any Japanese neighborhood. Ogawamachi has 3.6 percent of its total farming area devoted to organic farming while the national average is only 0.1 percent. Using solar panels, the biogas facility and the bio-fuel for his tractor, Mr. Kaneko showed the Fellows how energy self-sufficiency can be achieved while maintaining his health and contributing to the environment.

The Fellows ended their Ogawamachi field trip with a visit at the newly constructed biogas facility.

### **3. Field Trip to Okinawa**

The Fellows had a five-day field trip to the island of Okinawa. It was an opportunity for the Fellows to look at Japan and the information that they had learned during their stay in Tokyo from a different perspective. The Fellows visited several museums and famous sites during their stay in Okinawa, such as the Himeyuri Museum, Okinawa Peace Memorial Museum, University of the Ryukyus, Shuri castle, Tsuboya pottery district, Yambaru, Cape Hedo and Haeburu Town Museum. The Fellows also visited the American Consulate General in Naha City and were briefed on the US government perspective on Okinawa. During their stay in Okinawa, the Fellows were treated to warm Okinawan hospitality and relished sumptuous Okinawan cuisine.

#### *3.1 Himeyuri Museum*

The Fellows visited Himeyuri Museum in the southern part of Okinawa Island. The museum is dedicated to the high school girls and teachers who died while working for the Japanese military hospital during World War II. The high school girls, aged 15 to 17 years, started training to work in the military hospital in December 1944. From February 1945, the students started their field training at the Army hospital in Haeburu which was housed in the elementary school buildings. The students with their teachers worked in the hospital round the clock with very little sleep. Their duties included carrying messages between the doctors and taking care of wounded soldiers by bringing food and cleaning their wounds.

When the US military began their heavy raids, the hospital was moved to the caves surrounding Haeburu. On 26 May 1945, the hospital was again relocated to the caves in the Ihara area which is the current location of Himeyuri museum. The museum is actually built around the caves which served as a hospital for the Japanese military. The following day on 27 May 1945, the students and teachers were divided into a first, second and third surgery department with each department occupying one cave. Out of the 96 students and teachers working in one cave during the war, only five survived the Battle of Okinawa.

Out of 240 students and teachers who worked in the Army hospital, 99 survived the war. Among the survivors, 15 have volunteered in the Himeyuri museum to share their experience to visitors.

The Fellows listened to the testimony of Masako Arasaki, one of the high school girls who survived. She recalled her experiences in school before the war, working in the caves during the war and searching for friends and family after the war. She was only 16 at that time when she worked in the hospital with her best friend. Her best friend and many other young people including her younger brother died because a soldier told them that it was better to end their lives rather than be captured by the enemy. She is now 78 years old and hopes that everyone can live a healthy life in a peaceful world.

### *3.2 US Military Bases in Okinawa*

Many military bases in Okinawa were installed during the Battle of Okinawa, when the US military occupied most of the land as they advanced against the Japanese military. When World War II ended, Okinawa was placed under US military administration. In 1972, Okinawa returned back to Japan. However the US military presence remained in the island. Okinawa has one percent of the Japanese population and covers 0.6 percent of the territory of Japan. However, Okinawa and its people support 75 percent of the US military bases in Japan. Such concentration of the bases, according to Prof. Masaaki Gabe of the University of the Ryukyus, imposes a heavy burden on the land and its people. Although some of the bases have been returned, the returned land is divided fifty-fifty between the national government and the local government of Okinawa. The division is a source of contention as exemplified by the Naha airport, where the land adjacent to the airport is being used by the Japanese Self-defense Forces.

Prof. Gabe explained the triangular relationship between the US, Japan and Okinawa regarding the base issues. Legally, Japan and the US have bilateral agreement on the base issue. In reality, however, the issue should be considered in terms of the relationship between the national government and the US government, the national government and Okinawa, and the US government and Okinawa. He discussed briefly the major viewpoints that emerge while describing the issue relating the US government, the national government, the local government and landowners. For example, according to the statistics of the US government, Okinawa only has 23 percent of US military facilities in Japan while civic groups say that it would be 75 percent.

Ms. Suzuyo Takazato, former member of the Naha city assembly and women rights leader, talked in detail about the US base issue from the perspective of women rights. She mentioned with much pain and agony that women working as prostitutes suffered. She realized that the situation of these women is actually the situation of Okinawa with regards to the presence of the US military. Her decision to run for the assembly and later as Mayor of Naha was kindled by her desire to make the issue of women rights known to all of Japan and abroad.

Ms. Takazato presented a chronology of the post-war US military crimes against women in Okinawa. Collection of the data started in 1996; a year after three US soldiers raped a 12-year old girl. The incident drew huge attention to the base issue in Okinawa. Recalling the surge of journalists from the mainland and abroad who came to cover the story, she remembers being asked whether there have been previous incidents. Realizing that no comprehensive and systematic study has been done to document the base issue from women's perspective, Ms. Takazato and the Okinawa Women Act against Military Violence, an organization which she helped to form started the process of gathering information. Their organization went out for demonstrations to create awareness on military violence against women. In Okinawan belief, butterfly accompanies the soul after death when it travels. Butterfly symbols were used in banners to represent the women who were victimized, remembering them as sisters, daughters, aunts, and mothers.

Ms. Takazato criticized the US government for ignoring the women's issue, focusing instead on the economic contribution and civic activities that the military bases have been contributing for the local community.

### *3.3 Yambaru Tour*

Aside from its unique culture and history, Okinawa is also famous for its pristine beaches and diverse sub-tropical forests unique in Japan. Okinawa's economy depends on three Ks: kichi, koukyou jigyo and kankou referring to US military base, public sector investment and tourism. The number of tourist arrivals in Okinawa is increasing every year. In 2005 alone, there were 5.6 million tourists. With a population of only 1.2 million, such a large number of tourists have a significant impact on the economy and the environment. Eco-tourism is an important aspect of the Okinawan tourism industry.

Yambaru means mountain field in the Okinawan dialect. Kunigami village is one of the three villages which make up the Yambaru area.

Kunigami village, which is composed of 20 smaller communities, has a population of about 5,600. The Kunigami Tourism Association was the host of the Fellows for their tour of Yambaru. Professor Junko Oshima of the University of the Ryukyus and consultant of the association talked about the issue of environment and tourism development in Yambaru. Prof. Oshima's presentation focused on community-based education practices in developing the environment and empowerment of the local people.

Since 2000, Prof. Oshima, in cooperation with the Kunigami Tourism Association and the local government, has been organizing workshops for the local people in the Yambaru area. Aimed at empowering the community by transforming the unconscious knowledge of the local people to conscious themes to enable them to actively participate in the implementation of government schemes, the workshops have resulted in many changes in the community. Based on the focus group interview that Prof. Oshima conducted, the workshops has changed the peoples' view in looking at problems and finding solutions, improved their relationship with the local government, developed the political skills needed to negotiate with the government and other community members, and helped them recognize weakness which enabled them to focus on improving weak areas.

Prof. Oshima also discussed some of the problems both natural and man-made that the Yambaru area faces. She mentioned that the five big dams constructed in Yambaru to supply water for the cities and the forestry road as major contributors for the destruction of the environment. In addition, big typhoons hit Okinawa which cause landslides and erosion, damaging the coral and marine life. The problems are compounded as the aging of the population and migration of young people to work in the cities. Prof. Oshima also talked about the problem of public investments where billions of taxpayer money is wastefully spent in constructing buildings and roads.

In last six years that she has been working in the Yambaru area, Prof. Oshima has had the opportunity to share her knowledge and expertise with the local people, but more than that she learned from the Yambaru community about their distinct style of sustainable tourism. She concludes that adult learning is relevant to community development because it is designed to deliver instruction to the most able agents of community development.

Mr. Yasuo Yamakawa, president of the Kunigami Tourism Association, gave a brief introduction and history of the association. His presentation focused on various projects and programs that the association has been implementing. The primary goal of the association is sustainable community development for tourism based on the principle that the local people must lead in the formation of strategy to protect and develop their own community and environment. The association has five pillars of activities: community-based tourism and information for the public, environmental education and environmental field study, information to the general public, partnership with the various sectors of human resource development, and environmental and cultural conservation.

Mr. Masakazu Kudaka, professional photographer and environmentalist, guided the Fellows in a trek at Mt. Yonaha. The Fellows had the opportunity to see for themselves some of the indigenous animals of Okinawa. He brought them to see the forest road constructed by the Okinawa prefecture government to encourage a forestry industry in the Yanbaru area. Mr. Kudaka however criticized the construction of the road saying that it has no economic value considering that no forestry industry exists in the area even after the road was constructed. Although he acknowledged that a Forestry Association was established, it was only formed when construction of the forest road began in order to take care of the trees that were cut during the construction. He warned against the plan of the prefecture government to bring 11 million tourists to Okinawa because it can put a strain on the ecology. He admits that ecotourism is a way to protect the natural resources but he emphasizes the need for control so as not to put undue stress on the environment and for local people to be involved in the planning because they know well what is best for their community.

### *3.4 Haeburu Town Museum*

On the last day of their field trip to Okinawa, the Fellows visited the Haeburu Town Museum. The museum is converted from the building which was used for preparing lunch for students of the junior high school across the road. The museum has become the center for forging together the people of Haeburu wherever they may be in appreciating the rich cultural heritage of their hometown.

Upon entering the Haeburu Town Museum, visitors are welcomed by a tile design on the floor showing a usual map of Japan. The map reflects an alternative orientation that depicts Okinawa as the center of Asia. In its history, Okinawa had tried to create harmonious relationship between Asian countries through trade with China, Vietnam, Cambodia,

Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. Even though Okinawa is such a small island, many aspects of Asian culture have found a home on the island. Today, 600 years later, the Haeburu Town Museum is continuing the work of creating harmonious relationships between countries and fostering cultural exchange.

The museum presents four themes of the town's history in its exhibit. The town's experience during World War II plays a major part in its history. During the war many Japanese military personnel were stationed in Haeburu to protect the military headquarters which was located in nearby Shuri castle. The Japanese military personnel took over most of the houses of the residents. Four of these houses were used as comfort houses with Korean women. The Army hospital was also located in Haeburu where the famous Himeyuri students' medical troop was stationed. A network of about 30 trenches and caves was dug in the town for the Army hospital. From a population of about 8,000, 3,840 residents died, most of them during the 90-day Battle of Okinawa. Some of the survivors shared their experience of working in the caves and their stories were reflected in the museum display.

The caves used as a hospital are located behind the museum building. The town plans to build a passage from the museum to the actual caves so that visitors can feel the real atmosphere and conditions inside the caves. Work to prepare and reinforce the caves for visitors began in August 2006 and they are scheduled to open in March 2007. The Fellows saw one of the caves being prepared. The entrance of the 70-meter deep cave was burnt black due to the flamethrower that the US forces used to attack the cave. On the cave floor were medicine vials and bones of the patients.

The second theme of the museum focuses on the people who left Haeburu to work abroad before the war. Almost 1,800 left Okinawa to find better prospects in Hawaii, the Philippines, Saipan, Manchuria, the mainland US, Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Bolivia. The special space allotted by the museum for the immigrants was to ensure that they are kept in the town's memory. Members of the museum staff visited the countries where the immigrants went to identify their descendants and interview them. A data book was published by the museum to document the immigrants' lives abroad.

Okinawan traditional culture is the focus of the third theme. A diorama depicting Okinawan life from birth to death is the main exhibit in this part of the museum. Okinawans believed that children are susceptible

to diseases caused by evil spirits. So when a child is born, a pair of scissors is placed on the pillow to protect the child. On the first birthday, three objects are placed on a table: an abacus, money and a book. When the child grabs the money first, the child will be rich. If the child grabs the book, then the child will become smart. If the child takes the abacus, he will become president of a company. All children are shaven except for the hair left at the back of the heads, because Okinawans believed that this was where the God grabs the children to save them from falling. It also prevents the spirit from leaving the body because Okinawans believe that the human spirit goes in and out from the back. When girls reach the age of 13 or 14, tattoos are engraved on their heads. One theory is that this is done for cosmetic purposes. Another theory is that it was to prevent the girls from being abducted by people from Satsuma, the present-day Kagoshima prefecture.

The 97th birthday of Okinawans is celebrated with a special ceremony called the Spinning Wheel to symbolize birth and rebirth. The celebrant wearing white clothes and carrying a banner parades from the house to the cemetery, which represents a funeral procession. On their return from the cemetery to the house the celebrant carries a wind vane to represent rebirth as a child. Okinawans believe that the birth year of the person is a bad year. To release the bad omen, ceremonies are performed on the birth year and every 12 years based on the cycle of the Chinese horoscope. The 97th year is in the last of the cycle. Unlike the practice in other islands in Japan, Okinawans in the old days did not cremate the body but instead kept it in the ancestral tomb. When a new person died in the family, the bones of the previous occupant were taken out, washed in the ocean, placed in a shell and returned in the family grave so that there would be space for the new occupant. Although at present Okinawans cremate their dead bodies, some of these ancestral tombs still exist and can be seen at the foot of mountains and hills facing the ocean.

The brighter side of Haebaru town's history is shown in the fourth theme. The Fellows started their tour of the museum with depressing images of the war period; they ended it with peace and Okinawan Arts. The central display of the exhibit is a scene from an Okinawan play about the three elements of happiness: a long life, many offsprings, and a good harvest. The personification of Okinawan happiness is a 120-year old man leading a festival with his descendants, while at the back women pray to the gods by giving offerings of their harvest. Okinawans

have one of the longest life expectancies in the world. However, they believe that there is no meaning to have a long life if one is alone. A good harvest for Okinawans happens when one rice stalk produces 333 grains.

After the tour around the museum, the Fellows had an outdoor tour to see the actual caves used as the hospital and cemetery on the side of the mountains. While returning to the Haebaru Museum auditorium, they participated in a seminar by Mr. Ben Takara. Mr. Takara described his two-faceted life as a scholar of Okinawan history during the day and then transformed to a poet in the evening. He began his seminar with a presentation about his works and research at the Okinawa Prefecture Archives. He ended it by hosting a poetry reading session with the Fellows, which continued on to an evening party. The party began with everyone introducing him or herself and sharing their impressions of Okinawa during the past four days in the island. The Fellows not only enjoyed watching performances of traditional Okinawan dance and songs, they also participated as their Haebaru hosts taught them some dance steps. Everyone enjoyed singing, dancing and poetry recitation.

## **4. Summary of Seminars and Lectures**

### *4.1 Regions and Regionalism in Asia History*

Fresh from attending the ceremonies to receive the Fukuoka Award, Professor Takeshi Hamashita joined the 2006 ALFP retreat at Chiba to give a seminar entitled, “Region and Regionalism in Asian History.” Through his study of the Asian regional systems, he gives an alternative perspective. By thinking from outside the box and looking from the perspective of Asia rather than the West, he puts places on the periphery such as Okinawa at the center of Asian history and provides explanation for various types of networks for trade, migration and tributary relations who would otherwise be considered informal and illegal from the Western point of view.

According to Prof. Hamashita, in order to understand Japanese modern history accurately, particularly the Japanese aggression that led to World War II, it is necessary to put the period in a wider context of Asian history. He looks into the role that Japan played in the Asian regional system without distinguishing between the pre-modern, modern, war, and postwar periods. Prof. Hamashita argues that the West or Perry’s “black ships” did not trigger Japanese modernization during the Meiji

restoration. The focus to explain modernization in Asia is the Sino-centric regional system in East Asia. Most historians look into the Asian regional system from the perspective of the Chinese emperors. On the other hand, Prof. Hamashita presents an alternative view by looking at the regional system from the fringe.

Asian regionalism is very complex; looking at the maritime region that shows the common inter-relations within Asia. Prof. Hamashita proposes that it is better to look at Asia not in terms of continents and landmasses, but in terms of the chain of seas that are connected with each other. He argues that cross-sea relations were more important in history before nation-states divided the seas into land-based territories. Asian regionalism is not sovereignty-based; rather its foundation is maritime trade. The key is to look at coastal ports as individual units without classifying them under nation-state boundaries. For example, Nagasaki merchants and Chinese coastal merchants traded more easily compared with inland trade. He also highlights the important intermediary role of trading ports such as Hong Kong in connecting the East China Sea and South China Sea, and Singapore for the South China Sea and the Bay of Bengal. By looking at inter-maritime city relations and examining the flow of people, commodities and money, he discovers that they were significant in history as well as in contemporary relations.

#### *4.2 East Asian Community*

Yoshihide Soeya, professor of political science and international relations at Keio University, gave an overview on the current situation of the East Asian Community, particularly at the governmental level. He argues that community-building efforts need government processes, as well as initiatives from the grassroots.

Prof. Soeya notes that the formation of regional organizations in Asia was activated from outside. Economic integration that began with the European Union reached Asia in the 1980s. In North America, regional processes culminated in the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The formation of the EU and NAFTA was a response to the trend of globalization. The merit of regional integration processes is rooted in the sense of vulnerability that each country experiences because of globalization. One country cannot cope with globalization by itself; so regional organizations are established. In the Asia-Pacific region, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) was institutionalized. The regional organizations which took shape in Europe,

North America and the Asia-Pacific started at the level of economics, eventually moving into the domain of politics and then security.

The end of the cold war had a huge impact everywhere in the world. Seen as a mega structure affecting the entire world which emanated from the confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States, every country had no choice but to respond. However, the Asian response was unique in the sense that China acted as a third pole in what was otherwise a bi-polar structure. Refusing to take sides and insisting upon its independence, China was an important consideration for most Asian countries with regards to their response to US-Soviet Union competition. The emergence of China as a central factor in the region at the end of the cold war has prompted a divided Asian response. Some countries are willing to accept and accommodate China while others are more cautious. Common to everyone though is a sense of worry at the rise of China.

The third dimension is culture, particularly the impact of popular culture in the region. Citing examples of Japanese anime, Korean drama, Hong Kong films and Taiwanese idols, Prof. Soeya points out that the spread of Asian popular culture has resulted in similar lifestyles of city-dwellers in the region. He observes that the cultural base has been very open in promoting a sense of community among Asian countries. In this changing environment, Asian countries formed various regional organizations such as the Asian Regional Forum, ASEAN+3, ASEAN+3+3 and East Asian summit; using their unique Asian approach to regionalism by including the involvement of China, Japan, the US, and the EU. There are skeptics of the Asian way who are criticizing that it is not useful, is difficult and cannot solve issues. But Prof. Soeya believes that the merit of creating these organizations is to have a forum for dialogue and increasing transparency.

#### *4.3 Power and Terror*

John Junkerman is a filmmaker who has produced several films about Japan. His interest in Japan began in high school when he came as an exchange student. He has been living in Japan for seven years.

It was nighttime in Japan at the time of the 9/11, and he recalls staying up all night watching the television news. Like many in the world, he was shocked by the attack, but he was even more shocked by the response of the US that immediately separated the US from the rest of the world. He watched with great distress as the US launched its attack

on Afghanistan. While many people in Japan and the world had very serious doubts about the US response after 9/11, in the US 98 percent of Americans supported the way their government was responding.

Noam Chomsky began to do interviews and published a book entitled "9/11" four weeks after the attack. It immediately became a best seller in the US. Translated into Japanese and released in Japan in December, the book also became a best seller in Japan. The president of Siglo, an independent film company, read the book and was very impressed. He thought it was important to have another perspective, a non-George Bush perspective, to be presented in Japan so preparation began to make the film with Chomsky. They first contacted Chomsky about 3 months after the attack. Noam Chomsky was very busy with lecture requests all over the US and all over the world in the aftermath of 9/11. He agreed to one interview for 90 minutes. Chomsky also allowed them to film the public talks he gave. They filmed about five of the public talks and put together the film which was simply a documentary on Noam Chomsky talking. The purpose of the film was to present Noam Chomsky's ideas about the 9/11 attack and about the whole structure of American dominance.

The film had its first screening in Japan on the first anniversary of 9/11. It was released in Japanese theaters for four months. It was shown in New York for five weeks and in 35 other cities in the US. It has been translated into about 10 languages and shown around the world. Although the film was put together quickly with limited resources, it had impact and is still being watched.

After narrating the background of producing "Power Terror," and watching the film with the Fellows, director John Junkerman had a lively discussion with the Fellows.

#### *4.4 Self-Autonomy*

Seiji Ohsaka is a former mayor of the town of Niseko in Hokkaido. He became famous throughout Japan because of his advocacy for local autonomy. In 2005, he ran for a congressional position and is currently a member of the Diet.

Mr. Ohsaka gave a seminar on Japanese politics. Focusing on the Japanese self-autonomy, he talked about the major changes that took place in Japan since the Meiji era. The first reform was the dramatic militarization and wealth accumulation in the beginning of the Meiji period which was triggered by the arrival of Commodore Matthew

Perry's huge steam ships at the port of Uruga. The reforms resulted to drastic change in Japanese culture and opened up Japan's close society by infusing models from Germany and other European countries. The second reforms took place after the defeat in World War II which aimed at restoring the nation's economy and establishing people's infrastructures.

In 1985, the Plaza Accord was concluded between the industrialized countries. The agreement appreciated the Japanese currency from 240 yen to 120 yen a dollar, resulting in dramatic change in Japanese economy. Export and manufacturing companies which depended on raw materials from abroad suffered setbacks, forcing them to transfer their production base abroad. The Plaza Accord contributed to the decline and bursting of the Japanese bubble resulting to long years of recession, erosion of the family and community as demonstrated by high incidence of family-related crimes and collapse of local community. These problems which Japan is now facing have been compounded by declining birth rate, food security issues which is lowest among industrialized countries and social burden with more than one million dependents on welfare. Mr. Ohsaka maintains that the third wave of reforms that Japan is currently undergoing is the response to the changes that were brought about by the Plaza Accord. Comparing the three reforms, Mr. Ohsaka points out that the events that triggered the latest wave of reforms were not clear and transparent to the people unlike the previous two reforms.

Mr. Ohsaka recommends that Japan needs to be a true democratic nation to change its current situation and to solve the problems that the country is facing. He concedes that Japan had been democratized after the war, but it is a dependent democracy. The people left everything to the government and policymakers. Dependent democracy is only effective during a period of economic growth, where people share common goals and government power is centralized. But with the many different challenges today, Japan needs to shed its dependent democracy. True democracy begins with diverse values and aspirations. What is important is sharing the process of going forward together; for the people to express their opinions and become stakeholders in policymaking and implementation. He concludes that autonomy is a requisite for democracy. The key to self-autonomy for the people is to have ownership by learning and understanding the public sphere that relates them. The starting point for self-autonomy for the people is to be informed about

their town. If there is no information, there is no self-autonomy; therefore no democracy can develop.

#### *4.5 Japanese Politics*

Professor Naoyuki Agawa of Keio University gave a seminar entitled, "Peace and Security in East Asia: Japan's role Past, Present and Future". Outlining the historical perspective of Japan's role in Asia, Prof. Agawa maintained that the location of Japan determined the character of its relation with Asia. Being detached from mainland Asia and at the same time near China has enabled the Japanese archipelago to be isolated so that it was able to individually develop without interference but still it is close enough to be actively involved in Asia when it chooses. According to Prof. Agawa the unique geopolitical position of Japan has resulted to the Japanese identity crises. In the history of its relationship with Asia, Japan has demonstrated the ambiguous character of its position vis-à-vis Asia wherein it would go in to the extreme character of perceiving itself as part of Asia or as separate and isolated from Asia. In addition, Japan's entry and defeat in World War II has major impacts on its policy towards East Asia that continued on until the present. Through history Japan has shown shifting engagement with Asia. Today, Japan tries to be a part of the East Asian community in a healthier and more constructive way.

Analyzing the speeches of Foreign Minister Aso, Prof. Agawa enumerated three apparent trends in Japan's foreign policy with regards to Asia. First, Japanese foreign policy focused on the increasing importance of China and devoted new emphasis on India because of their huge population. Second, priority is given on securing oil from the Middle East, the same concern shared by China and Korea. Third, Japan aims for a new strategic security role through the military in providing humanitarian missions and aid as indicated by the dispatch of the Japanese Navy in the Indian Ocean. Prof. Agawa agreed with Prime Minister Abe that Japan had gone into extreme after its defeat in World War II with article 9 of the constitution but now it is beginning to change. Due to the changes in its foreign policy orientation, the emerging theme of Japanese foreign policy has also shifted into increasing communication with Asia through trade, elevating Japan's principal position in the world as a "thought" leader and promoting Japanese culture as Asia cool.

#### *4.6 Okinawan Identity*

Prof. Katsunori Yamazato traced back the history of the University of the Ryukyu in his presentation at the Center for American Studies in the University, Okinawa. This university was established in 1950, the first university in the history of Okinawa. It was established by the American Military government. In 1972, it became a national university when Okinawa was reverted to Japan. This is the American Studies Center. The center was established in 2002. Although the center is still new, there are many people who are engaged in American studies because of Okinawa's post-war history. He introduced Mr. Oshiro Tatsuhiro's works, particularly his famous story "The Cocktail Party." He also referred to a book written by Prof. Eiji Oguma of Keio University entitled, "The Boundaries of the Japanese" that includes a long chapter on Okinawa. The book points out Ryukyu or Okinawan role in determining the Japanese sense of identity. Historically and culturally, the Ryukyu has occupied a marginalized position in Japan. It has been marginalized for a long time that Okinawan writers often focus on their own sense of identity. Oshiro Tatsuhiro, the author of "The Cocktail Party" was the first winner from Okinawa of the Akutagawa prize in 1967, the most coveted award for fiction among aspiring writers in Japan.

Okinawa was occupied by US from 1945 and was returned to Japan in May 1972. The reversion to Japan in 1972 was another signal that the southern islands sent to the northern islands. People here are used to the term "mainland" but Prof. Yamazato decided not to use it. He rather uses geographical term, that way it is neutral.

Prof. Yamazato narrated how under the US administration, which lasted for 27 years beginning in 1945, Okinawan writers wrote on their own sense of identity and they meditated on what it meant to be an Okinawan during the years under US administration. Separated from the northern islands culturally and politically, and deprived of human rights under the US Military Administration, this semi-colonial period ironically provided Okinawans with an excellent opportunity to shape and sharpen their identity. The US emphasized that Okinawans are not Japanese. Unlike the Japanese government who discouraged Okinawans from promoting their own culture from annexation towards the end of the 19th century, the US Military Government of the Ryukyus tried to separate Okinawa from Japan after 1945 and promoted Ryukyuan culture such as traditional performing arts. The US established the first university in Okinawa and they preferred the ancient name, Ryukyu to modern name Okinawa.

Early modern Okinawan fiction shows that Okinawan writers tried to use Okinawan or Ryukyuan dialect and provide translations in standard Japanese immediately after the passage. They had to write in standard Japanese but they could not forget their own language so what they did was insert indigenous words, vocabularies or sometimes the whole sentence and then put translations in standard Japanese. This practice is still being done and Prof. Yamazato hopes that it will persist even in the 21st century.

#### *4.7 Media, Culture and Globalization*

Professor Koichi Iwabuchi of Waseda University explained the development of East Asian media culture connection by discussing its positive and negative impacts in the region. For about 10 years, Prof. Iwabuchi had been studying media culture globalization by focusing on power structure in the context of cultural globalization.

Cultural imperialism theory which assumes a US-centered domination of the periphery of non-western countries has dominated the study of media culture transnationalization for some time. By the late 1980s however, the theory was criticized primarily for its assumption of a passive audience; American culture may be everywhere but it does not necessarily mean that everyone is Americanized. Prof. Iwabuchi cited as example the East Asian cultural market where the most popular media culture is produced locally instead of coming from the US. Although Prof. Iwabuchi conceded the continued existence of uneven cultural connection, he proposed the need to go beyond the cultural imperialism theory to understand the complex process of the expansion of capitalist culture by looking into the contradicting directions of media culture globalization. Professor Iwabuchi identified the three pairs of opposing and contradicting forces working simultaneously in media culture globalization; homogenization-heterogenization, decentering-recentering and nationalizing-transnationalizing.

In recent years globally shared cultural format that were initially developed in the US have spread to express differences in culture. For example the spread of hiphop which was originally from the US had created various expressions of hiphop in Japan, Korea, Indonesia and India which shared the same style but still different. Prof. Iwabuchi warned however that the dynamic expression of differences cannot be naively celebrated as the uneven structure still exists. The phenomenon demonstrated that the global spread of US-centered cultural format through contemporary commercialized media and popular culture has

not erased cultural difference or diversity in the world; rather it reproduced more cultural diversity and differences. The expressions of differences orchestrated by the forces of global homogenization have resulted to standardization through diversification and diversification through standardization. Prof. Iwabuchi recommended scrutinizing the process in which globally dominated cultural format become localized or hybridized to understand the dynamics of restructuring cultural diversity or similarity based on the logic of capitalism.

In the late 1980s there has been a rise of non-western players in the field of media popular culture and intensified regional media culture connection. These changes testified to the decentering of US-centered media structure and reflected the shifting nature of US-centered power structure. Prof. Iwabuchi disclosed that the relative decline of the popularity of American popular culture does not mean that US-centered global power has disappeared. It indicated that closer ties and intensified collaboration among cultural industry among various mega-cities have developed. In East Asia, the development and spread of cultural production has exhibited various kinds of trajectory in which one cultural product travels in different parts of Asia then back to its original source through systematized mutual promotion of popular culture by media industries. Prof. Iwabuchi stressed the importance of understanding the uneven media culture growth especially because the connection of media companies that produced the cultural product is not based on international relationship. Cultural imperialism emphasized international relationship and domination but actually the closer tie between media cultural industries is responsible for media culture globalization.

Intensified media flows and connectivity beyond the national boundaries of media culture globalization has resulted to cosmopolitan consciousness. Prof. Iwabuchi noted that media culture globalization has enhanced cultural dialogue and mutual understanding, different from classic cultural exchange of traditional culture or international political relations. It has produced a new kind of understanding and perception common modernity in the East Asian context. On the other hand however, national feeling has not been erased; in fact the national sentiment of imagined communities has been strengthened. In the Japanese context, transnational reality is comprehended as an international framework; the nation has become a brand which the citizens patronize in many global gathering or competitions.

For the Japanese audience the immersing sense of living in the same kind of temporality among Asian audiences is particularly significant. Japan colonized most part of East Asia and Southeast Asian countries which had constituted a kind of arrogance in the Japanese social imagination placing Japan in Asia but at the same time above Asia. The Japanese audiences that consume popular culture from South Korea whom Prof. Iwabuchi has interviewed have discovered that their perception of other East Asia culture is outdated. They realized that the relationship between Japan and other parts of Asia cannot be comprehended in terms of developmental lag where Japan is always on top. They have begun to appreciate a similar but different kind of modernity expressed through popular culture in other parts of Asia resulting to critical re-thinking of their own society and cultural history.

Market-oriented connectivity which targeted urban audiences ignored the unprofitable voices of citizens thereby excluding many other cultures. Prof. Iwabuchi noted that what is circulating as popular culture is actually the dominant culture in each country. The popular culture within the country is able to cross the border because of the system that export and import such cultural products. In market oriented media culture globalization, a hierarchy among the cities exists which excludes many parts of the region. East Asian media connections have created a perception of living in the same temporality but have also reproduced a perception of time-lag; a nostalgic view of other Asian culture. For example, Japanese audiences comparing Japan 20 years ago with the present situation of Korea which according to Prof. Iwabuchi softly reproduced the orientalist perception of other Asian countries.

In Japan, there is a strong expectation that cultural diplomacy would soften anti-Japanese sentiments in Asia and overcome historical issues. Prof. Iwabuchi suggested that Japan show sincere engagement with history along with its policy of promoting cultural diplomacy using popular culture. Cultural diplomacy or “Soft Power” is easily used as a resource to promote national interest. Prof. Iwabuchi criticized that the cultural diplomacy promoted by the state and media industry is a dialogue among the dominant which is inattentive to the shared social issues brought about by the process of globalization and disregard marginalized groups. Prof. Iwabuchi asserted the importance of cultural exchange but when it is mostly understood in terms of international relations, it tends to miss issues that are below the international level. Prof. Iwabuchi emphasized that the role of government is not just to

support market development but also to enhance the suppressed voices of the public.

Culture has expanded into the political and economic sphere through the promotion of the government in alliance with industry. The danger of this kind of cultural policy is the subjugation of political discourse on culture and its pragmatic uses for the sake of national interest. Prof. Iwabuchi ended his discussion of media culture globalization with an appeal to the 2006 ALFP Fellows for their involvement in extending the discourse of cultural issues by being critical and pragmatic with the public good in mind. He espouses enhancing the dialogic capacity of media culture to eradicate the many kinds of borders that society has drawn.

#### *4.8 Japanese Popular Culture*

Roland Kelts, author of the book “Japanamerica” had discussion and sharing of ideas with the Fellows about globalization, perception and impact of the spread of Asian popular culture in the US. He shared his observation as he traveled around the US particularly on how Americans view Asia after 9/11.

Showing the Chinese character for crisis, he pointed out the diverge perceptions of globalization between the US and Asia. The US perceived the danger of globalization while Asia mostly perceives the opportunities. Globalization for the US means the Americanization of the world where borders would breakdown and everyone would embrace the American way of life. Clearly it is not happening. What is happening instead is a concomitant rise of nationalist sentiments as a response to globalization. There is a great deal of anxiety in the US about the Asian region which is partly caused by ignorance. There is a huge imbalance of information where Asians know more about the US than what Americans know about Asia. The US feels a connection and unity with Asia, especially with regards to popular culture which have incorporated a lot of American influences in its identity.

Identifying some metaphors of globalization, Kelts talked about how each metaphor embodies the meaning of the concept. Globalization is a quilt rather than a melting pot where cultures are touching but are not quite keen on blending with each other. Next is the Internet where people are aware of each other but they are nevertheless independent. People are communicating with each other across borders but are not keen to believe into one another. Finally, he talked about the long tail effect

particularly with regards to cultural goods. Before, producers searched for the big hit in selling products, today however, looking at the sales graph; the trend is the long tail for niche ideas and niche products.

## **5. Public Symposium**

At the end of the program, a two-day public symposium was organized under ALFP on 9 and 10 November at the Lecture Hall of the I-House, which was attended by about sixty people from academic institutions, NGOs, media and other spheres of social life. The symposium was titled *Communities in Action: Struggle for Peace and Sustainability in Asia*. Fellows, based on their research works and experiences, made their final presentations in the symposium, which was followed by a question-answer session. Prof. Lee Jong Won, member of the advisory committee for ALFP, was the moderator.

## **6. Evaluation**

The program was rounded off by an evaluation session on 13 November participated by all Fellows together with I-House and Japan Foundation secretariat staff. Fellows shared their expectations and to what extent those had been fulfilled. It was a moment of happiness with some outburst of emotions and grief, as the curtain would drop in a few minutes.

# *Discourse and Dialogue*

Seminar Room

26 September 2006

## **Memory of Wars and the Asian Region**

*Kiichi Fujiwara*

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Today a new prime minister by the name of Shinzo Abe has come to office. Abe is a known member of Nippon Kaigi, one of the most reactionary local associations in Japan, which has been pushing the agenda to make Japan a “normal” country. According to Nippon Kaigi, Japan is an “abnormal” nation. Japan is in a state of moral anarchy because many Japanese have lost the sense of “Japaneseness”. If you listen to conservative like Abe and other Nippon Kaigi members, they will tell you that the Japanese remember World War II in the wrong way. They want to straighten out the issue so that the Japanese will remember the war in the right way.

What does the war mean to conservatives in Japan? The war means that those who did not support the war, including the liberal intellectuals, especially those people who teach in universities, took over political power in postwar Japan. It is time, they say, to take political power away from these liberals and give it back to the nationalists who believe in national unity. If this were only about Nippon Kaigi or conservative politicians in Japan, this could be easy to understand. What is surprising is that nobody seems to care about Abe assuming political power. Looking at major newspapers, we learn that there is an expectation in Kasumigaseki, the quarter of Tokyo where government offices are concentrated, that Japan’s relationship with China is going to be much better under Abe. Japan being the largest economic power in Asia, it simply does not make sense for China to continue its broken relations with Japan, because that does not work for China itself. On the contrary, the perception of South Korea is that Seoul will be more resistant to the new prime minister. But that does not really matter, we hear, because Korea is internationally isolated at the moment.

What I want to do is discuss war memories in Japan. How has World War II been remembered in Japan? How has the memory changed? Where does Japan stand right now, and what are the political implications in the region?

I want to talk about how the Japanese are thinking and how diverse their thoughts are on the issue.

Japanese war memories are a highly politically charged issue, which has led to many tensions among the actual war memories in Japan. Outside Japan, many people, especially Chinese and Koreans and including Singaporeans, Indonesians, and Filipinos, would argue that the Japanese simply have failed to remember the war. Japan has not paid any attention to what happened during World War II. As they see it, the problem is not about war memory but about amnesia, the disregard of war memories. On the other hand, in Japan right now, many conservatives argue that Japanese politicians have been kowtowing, giving in to the demands of Beijing or Seoul or Washington, in relation to what happened during the war. The Americans, the Chinese, and the Koreans have imposed upon Japan a very revolting view of Japan's aggression in Asia in World War II, the conservatives assert, and it is time for Japan to get rid of it.

War memory in virtually all nations is about the memory of their own people. In Japan, memory of World War II is about the experiences of Japanese. One of the first countries that took war commemoration seriously was Great Britain. British war memories are strictly about British sufferings. In Singapore, symbols were built for all the Singaporeans, Indian, Chinese, and Malays who fought and suffered in World War II, but not in Britain.

Chinese war memory, similarly, has also been about the Chinese. Moreover, attention is only given to mainland Chinese suffering. It is only quite recently that mainland China started paying attention to the atrocities by the Japanese to overseas Chinese. A case in point is the Japanese killings in Singapore, which China recognized only two years ago. Nanjing initially was almost totally forgotten, because at the time it was under Kuomintang rule. Not until the 1980s did the Nanjing Massacre really become a national issue in China.

War memory is not really a memory in the sense that it is historically accurate. It is a memory that caters to political identity; it is a memory that works for the sense of "us" versus "the others." Remembering the war easily becomes part of nationalistic discourse. A book I wrote titled

*Remembering the War* discussed the very different kinds of memories that emerged about the war in the US, Japan, and Singapore. I chose Singapore partly because I am a Southeast Asian specialist and also because in Japan it is so easy to dismiss Chinese memory as Communist Party propaganda. I chose Singapore to show a case in which there is sizable Chinese public opinion as well as government policy that has been running against the Japanese war memories.

Each nation having its own particular political memory of the war was quite natural in the old days, but this is no longer the case today. If there is one actor who believes that the prevalent view of World War II does not fit into the actor's own memories, then the issue becomes a danger not only in historical memory but in reality now. Therefore, the way the Japanese remember the war has become an international issue. Although it might be natural for a society to base its war memory on its own particular suffering, the memory could conflict with the universally held war memory, which could lead the nation into a very dangerous situation.

Japanese war memories are based on Japanese discourse, though the content of the Japanese suffering discussed has changed. Looking into Japanese textbooks on social studies, we find that there is quite a lot of discussion about the war. Most of the textbooks discuss the Asia-Pacific theater of World War II as an act of Japanese invasion. Most observers only check to see whether the word *invasion* is used in the textbooks or whether the language used tends to justify the war. A Ministry of Education directive makes it mandatory to have discussion about the war along with discussion about the war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution. In every textbook there are at least two pages of discussion on this. The second part is a discussion of the war, which is always about Japanese civilians. The feature that is totally lacking in the picture is that there are no Chinese, no Koreans, no Filipinos, and no Indonesians, in short, no non-Japanese. There are also no Japanese soldiers. What the Japanese soldiers did, how they killed people, and how they suffered do not appear in Japanese textbooks at all.

Before World War II, there was no real demarcation line between the state and the nation. The Japanese state was organically united to Japanese society with the idea of a nation of the Japanese spirit, or *Nihon seishin*. This spirit connected the terrain, the state, and the nation into one world. An individual meant nothing if the individual was not part of the spirit. Each person had to learn to be a member of the Japanese

nation, and only then could the person enjoy glory. This is typical organic nationalism, the kind that you can see in pre-World War I Germany. There, instead of a liberal confrontation between the state and society, there was a unification of the state and society.

I do not mean to be cynical when I say that the Japanese public strongly endorsed the idea of the Japanese nation as long as Japan kept on winning. The majority of the people obviously supported the war. In World War I, Japan managed to become one of the winners without even fighting, and so the war was a grand bonanza. Certainly everybody supported that war. World War II was the first war that brought huge casualties among Japanese citizens. It became an experience showing people that the government did not deliver victory but instead made the Japanese into victims. Naturally it brought about a strong sense of distrust in the government.

It is an interesting historical moment when the seeds of political liberalism emerged in Japan.

Liberalism in the beginning was essentially a matter for the intellectuals. It was certainly present in the University of Tokyo, but you could not find it elsewhere, for few people would even pay attention to it. Japan did have a limited democracy before World War II. Compared with most nations in Europe, the Japanese electoral system and the party system were quite democratic, although no woman could vote in those days. Nevertheless, the idea of liberty and of the state versus society never really took root. Japan's defeat in World War II was the historical moment when the contentious relationship between the state and society was digested and supported by the Japanese public for the first time in our history. It was a glorious period for intellectual liberals, who tried to construct a liberal postwar Japan instead of an organic state that united the government as well as the people. It was an opportunity to construct a government by the people and to install legal restraints against government actions, so that the government would behave in line with liberal principles. All these liberal ideas came into play after World War II, and they are ideas which former Prime Minister Jun'ichiro Koizumi, current Prime Minister Abe, and the Nippon Kaigi have reacted very strongly against. It was a period when we could find public intellectuals who had been virtually silent during the war suddenly started to speak out.

The *Asahi Shimbun* and the monthly journal *Sekai* were part of the liberal establishment media, which were used in everybody's education.

In school, the Japanese were taught to respect Article 9; Japan should be a pacifistic nation renouncing warfare. Japan should not have any military, which meant that the nation's Self-Defense Forces were unconstitutional. The power holders did not talk about political ideas. The conservatives relied not on political ideology but on sentiments favoring material secular prosperity as well as security for legitimacy. Beginning from the late 1960s, there emerged a counter ideology against the liberal establishment in Japan. It criticized the liberal establishment for being soaked with wishful thinking toward China and the Soviet Union, and it proposed that it was high time for the Japanese nation to reassert itself. Conservatives blamed the US occupation of Japan for taking away the Japanese spirit.

The second point is about the Nanjing Massacre. It surfaced as a Japanese textbook issue that was fought between the left and the right in Japan. In Japan there was an idealistic and Stalinist teachers' union following the tradition of the Soviet Union, but there also was a traditional, conservative Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education never really liked the view of the teachers, and so a domestic civil war about history textbooks broke out. The textbook issue did not really become an international issue until the 1980s. At that point the Nanjing Massacre developed into a huge issue, because the Stalinist teachers' union was losing. The only way the union could regain the upper hand was to make this an international issue. Anticipating Chinese anger, they started a campaign asserting that the war had been distorted in textbooks. It is interesting that the teachers' union did not pay much attention to non-Japanese victims until the 1970s.

The absence in the textbook accounts of the Nanjing Massacre that 300,000 people had died, which is the figure the Chinese government supports, drew an angry reaction from the Chinese side. Chinese scholars have unofficially acknowledged that the 300,000 figure may be an exaggeration, but they are not likely to say so publicly unless Japanese scholars publicly accept the view that a monstrous atrocity did indeed occur in Nanjing.

If the 300,000 figure is incorrect, some Japanese assert, maybe the whole atrocity itself is a fake. In the same way, the execution after the Tokyo war crimes trial of Prime Minister Koki Hirota, who actually had opposed the war, was used to support the claim that the whole International Military Tribunal for the Far East was a bogus affair. The 300,000 number became a symbol used by conservatives to indicate

that the Nanjing Massacre did not take place at all. In the case of Hirota, the reason he was executed was because as a prime minister he was in a position to stop the nation from proceeding down the path to war. Hirota was one of the very few class-A war criminals who did not object to his sentence. He did not object because he felt guilty about not having been able to stop the war. There were also a number of other people whose war responsibility is not that clear. These discrepancies and weaknesses of the Tokyo trial became cases used by conservatives to build up their arguments that the whole trial was a sham, and this view is one element of the revision of historiography in Japan.

War memory in Japan has changed over time and is still changing. Remembrance of Hiroshima was not really that popular right after World War II, partly because of censorship, and more emphasis was placed on the aerial bombardment of Tokyo and Osaka. But because of nuclear tests, fear of nuclear war suddenly resurfaced in Japan, making Hiroshima a symbol of Japanese war memories. Most of the people who died in Hiroshima were civilians.

Another element, which could be more important when talking about Japanese politics, is the absence of the Japanese communists. I would argue that many Japanese soldiers went to war against their own will. They were conscripted; they did not go to war because they wanted to. Most people really did not want to fight the war, not because they thought the war was wrong but because they did not want to get killed. They wanted to be with their families. This aspect of the war has never been seriously discussed in Japan. Soldiers were essentially left out of the postwar discourse; they were never really openly talked about, although talking about civilians was fine. The discourse about soldiers being ambiguous, it turned into the Yasukuni issue.

Yasukuni Shrine is dedicated to remembering war, to the war memory not of civilians but of soldiers, who otherwise have been totally dismissed in public war memories. Yasukuni's position is an issue in Japanese political dynamics. Most relatives of the soldiers argue that Japan should honor Yasukuni and that the prime minister should pay visits to it so as to pay respects to the souls of their husbands or fathers or brothers who died during wartime. Yasukuni touches a soft spot even in the hearts of the soldiers who went to war against their will, who have the right to be remembered. The problem is that Yasukuni is a shrine that not merely remembers but even commemorates and glorifies the war.

Koizumi used this issue by arguing that he would keep on visiting Yasukuni to show that he would never be pushed around by China. People who may object to Yasukuni nonetheless went along with Koizumi's argument. After all, nobody wants to be pushed around by foreign powers. Koizumi projected the issue as one in which China and Korea had taken his Yasukuni visits hostage, which produced a strange sense of victimhood among the Japanese. They felt that they were being pushed around by the Chinese and Koreans and that it was high time for Japan to stand up and stop the pushing. When it comes to the younger generation of Japanese, I believe that war memory is definitely perceived as Japan's being traumatized and victimized by Chinese and Koreans aggressiveness. But this perception is totally unacceptable to many Chinese and Koreans, especially youths, because from their point of view it is the Japanese who have victimized them, not only during the war but also in the present era.

## Dialogue

**LEE SEEJAE** Why did Koizumi keep on going to the shrine despite the protests and negative implications, especially to Japanese business interests in China?

**KIICHI FUJIWARA** I can see why you ask that, but I also think that this may be related to the different experiences your country had. You see, Japan was important for Korea because many Korean-Japanese were fighting against the dictatorship in South Korea.

Your contacts in Japan were university professors, teachers, and students. If you go to my campus, you will find that Koizumi and Abe are not widely supported. The point I am trying to make is even when you come here as a student, in many ways you will probably be isolated in the sense that what you experience is different from the reality in the rest of Japan. You grow up, you come back to Japan as a professor, but this time you will not be talking to university intellectuals. You start talking to other persons, many kinds of Japanese, and suddenly you find out that the university is a lonely place in Japan.

**JANET PILLAI** The picture you painted is as if the Japanese people, except for the progressives, are polarized or have always been hiding under the influence of the state. I mean that in terms of the power of the intelligentsia to move the mindset of the public in a particular direction, the impact of the intelligentsia is very small in terms of the general lifestyle of the public, although ideologically they might have impact

on the public. I am curious to know, if that is the case, why there is any need for the state to come up with measures, since presumably it has control over the public in Japan? My second question is, do people's movements have a chance of survival?

**FUJIWARA** I do not think there is a state ideology to speak of in the Japanese system. We have a government that does not clearly endorse any particular ideology except for delivery of welfare. That is exactly the point, because those people who are in the government are conservatives.

The conservative agenda, when brought in the open, is confronted by the public. The public mind is still under heavy influence from liberal ideas, so the only way the agenda can survive is to base it on material politics and not ideology. During the heyday of the faction of former Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, which for quite a while was the leading faction within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, the government's leaders did not really care about political ideology. I do not think Tanaka was an ideologue. This was a period where the ruling party had been ruling the political system but not ruling the minds of the people. This was a source of frustration among many LDP party members, especially those who belong to the Seiwakai, which is a rival of the Tanaka faction and which has served as a power base of Prime Ministers Yoshiro Mori, Jun'ichiro Koizumi, and now Shinzo Abe. This faction tends to be more ideological than the Tanaka faction, and it is critical of the government's not speaking about the Japanese spirit.

Regarding people's movements, they are even more active right now than in the 1970s, which is surprising. Popular movements nowadays have become less politically engaged. If you compare nongovernmental organizations in Korea and Japan, there is a remarkable difference. NGOs in Korea are almost a political entity; they are like a political party that declares it is not a political party and that works against political parties. They have a clear political agenda. A number of the Japanese popular movements right now are very apolitical NGOs with no particular political issues. They would certainly not confront the government like the ones that you can see in South Korea. Popular movements are no longer ones that are related to an alternative political regime. They are essentially close to cause-oriented groups that can have great say in environmental protection, for example, but have little effect in changing regimes. The largest one would be the international aid movement.

**MARIA HARTININGSIH** I was here in 2000, in the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery. I was really disturbed with the national identity issue. If national identity arises from war in which violence is used, and if freedom and justice can be achieved only through conflict, then war becomes simply inevitable for those who would achieve nationalism. I have a question about memory, because memory is like a paradox for me. We have suppressed memory, false memory. If memory is like that, my question is, who can be right?

**FUJIWARA** I totally agree with your point. We cannot really talk about real or true memory. I never support the postmemory syndrome argument. I also do not support the idea that a traumatic past has been repressed in all cases. When it comes to collective memory, I would argue straight forward that this is an ideology in its own way. Collective memory is not really a memory. For groups do not remember, groups learn, and they learn by several ways. What we call collective memory is actually a social institution that is supported by education and government policies, as well as by one's personal decision to tell one's story to another generation.

The best discussion on memory is that by Maurice Halbwachs, who uses the metaphor of the seashore where waves come over the sands and leave again, but there would be some puddles of water remaining. Puddles remain because there were some pebbles, and if you change the arrangement of the pebbles, you see a different puddle. If the ocean is the total of human experience and if those puddles or ponds are what we have as collective memories, you can see that those pebbles or stones would be social institutions. By altering the particular arrangement of pebbles or social institutions, the kind of memory that would become collective would change. Japanese war memory has been changing because war memory is a source of nationalism; but then war memory is changed by the given political circumstances and institutions, so it is a two-way road.

As a scholar, I would have to argue that it is very difficult to dissociate nationalism from war memory. Many nationalists try to rely on a revival of traditional symbols. The sense of nationalism is easily stimulated by the shared or presumed-to-be-shared experiences of war. The task that rests upon us is to construct a collective identity that does not rely on wartime experience. I say constructing a collective identity and not destroying it. One of the major mistakes of postwar intellectuals is that

they tried to deconstruct nationalism; they tried to deconstruct political identity. A typical case would be Masao Maruyama, who spoke strongly against nationalism, for nationalism is a chauvinistic idea that runs against a sane intellectual mind. The trouble is if an intellectual starts to go along that line, it is easy to become isolated from the policymakers. Liberty, after all, is meaningful only when you are constructing a liberal government, a project that began in the postwar days but is still to be achieved in Japan.

**HARTININGSIH** The tribunal was organized by women journalists from Japan and Korea, and then Indonesia, China, and the Philippines.

**FUJIWARA** NHK tried to cover it and make it into a program for e-TV, channel 3. When it became known that the program was being produced, a number of legislators in the National Diet exerted strong pressure to stop the program. First it was revised and then it was cancelled. This was a well-known story, but nobody really has hard evidence of its truth. The people placed under pressure did not meet directly with such figures as Prime Minister Abe or Shoichi Nakagawa. But an *Asahi* reporter named Masakazu Honda wrote a front-page article saying that politicians pushed NHK to cancel the program. This is censorship.

**HARTININGSIH** What do you think about the tribunal?

**FUJIWARA** It was not a tribunal. It does not count as a tribunal.

**HARTININGSIH** Yes, it was not a tribunal. It was a moral tribunal.

**FUJIWARA** It was not a tribunal, and I also do not think it paid much attention to what actually happened. I am sorry to say that. It was a movement. A movement is not a scholarly work; but as a scholar, I have to pay attention to so many things. If you wanted to make the tribunal credible, you would need a defense.

**NGUYEN THANH SON** We went to a symposium on Yasukuni the other day, and there was an interesting comment that actually the Japanese did not fight only one war. They fought several wars during the Pacific war: the war in Asia, which they regret; the war with the United States, which they never regret; and the war with Russia. Does each have different war memories?

**FUJIWARA** I do not think there was one World War II. I think the European theater and the Asia-Pacific theater should be strictly divided.

These were different wars. The European theater was actually a continuation of World War I. The Asia-Pacific theater was closer to World War I in many ways. It started with an invasion into a territory that was not occupied by a major power. It did not start from a major-power war. It started from the China theater, and then the China theater became a ground on which major powers started to contend against each other. The two wars were not only geographically different but also different in character.

The war in the Asia-Pacific should not be divided, though, as all the theaters were related. The Japan-US war was a direct consequence of Japanese aggression in China.

**MOHIUDDIN AHMAD** I come from Bangladesh, a country where war memory has changed in my generation. The way I felt when I was fighting, the way I have changed today, time is a very big factor. What I see is that the perception of the postwar generation in Bangladesh is completely different. I have talked to many young people in Pakistan; their attitude toward Bangladesh is completely different from that of the leaders who fought the war. When you mention the young generation of Japan and their perception of Chinese and Koreans, I ascribe their perceptions to a new view of reality. In Bangladesh the young generation does not understand this nationalism. These young Japanese today, how do they perceive Japanese nationalism? Are they scared of China and Korea because of competition in the economic sphere or something else?

**FUJIWARA** The starting point is a bit different. In Bangladesh you start from a war that made you independent, so you start from nationalism. In Japan you start from a lack of nationalism, from a state that delivers but does not preach, and now it is becoming a state that preaches. I still do not think that this is a sign that the majority of the Japanese have become nationalistic. Nationalism, after all, is always an ideology that is promoted by a sizable minority. Take a look at the bulletin boards in the Internet; if you take a look at the current bestsellers, Shinzo Abe's book is a current bestseller. Such bestsellers talk about the morals of the state and the particular virtues of the Japanese that we should support. It is a very difficult situation to analyze. I do not see a significant change in public opinion. But there is definitely a sizable group, large enough to make a bestseller that appeals to the long-disregarded morals and ideals of the nation.

**KUNDA DIXIT** They say that history is written by the victim. But as you mentioned, even the victims only remember the victims, those who were on their side. I was wondering in that context about Burma. Was Japan just exploiting the weakness of the British at that time, or was there really an intention to go into India and beyond?

**FUJIWARA** So long we are talking about actual strategy, I do not think there was any plan to go into India in the minds of the chief of staff. There was no genuine interest in Indian independence. The point was to make it as difficult as possible for the British. There were a number of arguable dissents within in the military about the belief that we were fighting this war for Asian independence. It might sound crazy, but that is true. I always find it difficult to understand why they would believe so. Burma was an important case; some Japanese launched a nationalist movement, and there was some strong influence from Japanese troops. They were politically inspired, based on the idea that Japan should bring liberation from the foreign powers. So there is a difference between what was being thought in the command centers and what was being thought in the field. The Burmese campaign was terrible in every way; the British casualties were heavy, but the Japanese casualties were even heavier. The campaign also destroyed the trade route that connected Thailand all the way to Bengal.

**ALBERT ALEJO** I would like to pursue the discussion on memory and go to the other side of it. I was also in the Yasukuni symposium, and beside me was an official of the Chinese embassy. While the discussion was going on, there seemed to be an absence of a Japanese memory of other Asian countries like Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore; it seemed like the chess war was just among the big names, and the small pawns were forgotten. The woman from China asked me, “What about the Philippines, what do the Filipinos say about Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni?” Well, I don’t know, I have never heard it discussed, and probably the Filipinos would not mind. I think maybe the Vietnamese also would not care. I said, it looks like in the Philippines, the Japanese are forgiven, Filipinos have forgotten; only very few would dig into the atrocities, except probably for the experience of the comfort women. Recently, I learned that it was not just Indonesian women and Filipino women who were victimized by the Japanese, that Japanese women were also victimized. The Chinese official said, “You mean the Filipinos have forgiven the Japanese? What a pity.”

**FUJIWARA** I think we need to discuss the issue of forgetting on the part of the victor. The atrocities as well as the sufferings of the enemies and victims are forgotten by those who were beaten and victimized, because they just want to get along with Japan as an economic partner. Forgetting is also a different kind of abstraction. What I am worried about is the forgetting that is imposed by the suppression of memory or the suppression of voices. In that sense, forgetting and forgiving could be a technology of silence.

**NGUYEN** It was very difficult to understand why the Vietnamese are so forgiving. I was a translator for a group of US legislators who came to Saigon and met the director of Saigon Tourism, a prisoner of the US-led forces for a couple of years until he was rescued in 1975. The Americans asked him why he did not hate them. He said, "Hatred is so bitter for us that we cannot move forward. We want to move forward."

**FUJIWARA** That is totally true. In fact war memory in China became more important in the later years than in the years immediately after the war. Survival was more important than talking about the atrocities of the past. But another reason is that the Chinese government was afraid of a possible war with the US. So talking about the war in the future was more important than talking about the war in the past. It was only after the Chinese government became more stable and stopped worrying about a potential war with the US that it started to talk about the war in the past.

**AHMAD** I read today's *Japan Times*. Abe said he would not repeat the same thing as Koizumi did but that he would pay a visit in a private manner.

**FUJIWARA** You see the government position is that it is high time for China and Korea to grow up and understand that whatever happens, our prime minister is going to visit Yasukuni and there is nothing they can do about it. This is not a progressive movement. Conservatives are people who say that unless we put a stop to it, more extreme voices in China and Korea will come out, and the issue will never be solved.

I am not taking sides here. Although I do not think visits of the prime minister to Yasukuni are right, that does not mean I agree with some of the Korean or Chinese arguments. I do think that some of the arguments that have been made are in themselves a distortion of history. But then there is the concept that is forming in Japan, which is that if Japan does not stop doing this, the worst of both sides will keep on coming out.

**DIXIT** Then we start not remembering history at all, it is all about geopolitics. Geopolitical rivalry is being played out involving Korea, China, and Japan by evoking memories.

**FUJIWARA** Not only do I know what you mean, I deplore the ease with which geopolitics is being used. The People's Liberation Army, which is a totally dysfunctional, overgrown body with its own ambitions, only thrives on geopolitical crisis. If there is no threat of China being contained, they have a need for Japan. I am very sure that they want the Japanese prime minister to visit Yasukuni to show that there is a real enemy out there. I mention the Chinese side, but there are ridiculous people on the Japanese side, as well. A ridiculous conservative argument would be that we need the Chinese threat to keep American forces in Japan. If there is no major threat, the US forces will leave, and Japan will be in a precarious position. A radical argument would be, well, Americans will eventually leave anyway, and so this is a good time to take the military path and start working on war preparations. These kinds of arguments are not only unsupported by the public but also being disregarded by strategists, because they are counterproductive. But these arguments can still catch the popular imagination. The trouble is that Abe's advisers are not scholars, but they give talks in academic meetings. The most marginalized, meaningless scholars have become the most meaningful voices in the cabinet.

**LEE** If Abe does not go to Yasukuni, have they calculated the possible political losses?

**FUJIWARA** I do not think it would be that significant. It would mean, of course, the loss of the votes of the Nippon Izokukai, the soldiers' families association, which is one of the largest voting blocs in Japan. I personally believe that the reason Koizumi visited Yasukuni was for this purpose. Koizumi is not an ideologue. Nevertheless, he visited Yasukuni because he wanted votes.

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## **The Recent Movement toward “Community Solutions” in Japanese Society**

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There has been enormous structural change in Japanese society in the past decade, partly due to Prime Minister Jun'ichiro Koizumi's reform policies. There are some good things; there are also some bad things. The orientation toward deregulation and the market mechanism is very evident in most of the reforms including those in the fields of elderly care, nursery schools, and education, as well as business. I would like to focus my discussion on the emergence of nonprofit organizations and social entrepreneurship in Japan recently, along with deregulation and the reforms.

I obtained a Ph.D. at Stanford University in the 1970s in applied mathematics. I taught at the University of Wisconsin–Madison for nine years in the computer science department. The event that led me to change my interest was the Kobe earthquake in 1995, in which 6,000 people lost their lives. That was during the time when the Internet was used only among researchers and large businesses. Most network users were using proprietary networks. In the process of trying to help the quake victims, I found that network communication was enormously useful. More than 1 million volunteers rushed to Kobe to help out the victims. It was a disaster, but it was a good opportunity for Japanese people to gain satisfaction from helping each other voluntarily. At that time, Japanese people thought that Japan did not have a volunteer spirit; but it turned out that the volunteers did a very good job. And the use of electronic networks was very much useful for connecting volunteers and quake victims. Local government was shattered; the central government did not have much to do in the direct assistance, at least for the first few weeks.

The volunteerism so emerged as a result of the 1995 Kobe earthquake changed my view. A few years later in 1998, legislation for the incorporation of NPOs was enacted. Since then, a lot of NPOs have been born in Japanese society. Many citizens in Japan now depend on NPO services on a daily basis: elderly care, nursery schools, getting information, child-care, technical services, helping out with the computer.

NPOs are now an integral part of Japanese society. There are over 20,000 incorporated NPOs in Japan, but still they are very small in size and financially weak. Fifty percent of Japanese NPOs' annual income is less than \$9,000, and 30% of their staff members serve without pay. The staff members who do get payment are paid only to the extent of 30% of the pay for their counterparts in for-profit companies. Many NPOs have only 1 or 2 full-time persons attending the office, and most of them are acting voluntarily, with small revenues coming from membership fees and personal donations.

The total economic size of Japanese NPOs is a mere 0.08% of gross domestic product, excluding the quasi-NPOs virtually controlled by government agencies. Comparable figures are 8.3% in the US, 9.3% in the UK, and 18.8% in the Netherlands. I do not have the exact figures, but NPOs or NGOs are very strong in many Asian countries. Grameen Bank, for example, has literally changed the world, and its impact is very strong in Asia.

Briefly speaking, NPOs in Japan are beginning to have a substantial social importance, but economically they have a very limited impact. On the other hand, there may have been some changes coming in the last several years, at least in some particular areas. In these areas, NPOs are engaged in nonprofit business, earning revenue from selling services to general citizens in competition with for-profit companies and government agencies. The total economic size of Japanese NPOs' nonprofit business is about \$2.4 billion, representing 38% of the Japanese NPO market. The most salient area in which NPOs' presence is substantial and in which NPOs are competing with for-profit companies is care for the elderly. There was a large structural change in the elderly care area in Japan in 2000, when the national nursing-care insurance system was created. Before that, people had no choice but to go to a senior citizens' house run by a local government. There was a long queue for being admitted, there was no choice, and there was only a fixed service menu. In 2000 and thereafter, a market was

created, and elders are now able to choose services and service providers. So, now there are choices. And more importantly, the market has been created for NPOs to enter the nonprofit business. The market size for elderly care service was as high as \$35 billion in 2000. At present, it is about \$66 billion. It is quite a large market, although the NPO share is limited, amounting to only 3.8% in terms of the number of service providers.

The area in which NPOs' presence is particularly large is group homes for elders. The market share of NPOs is about 8% in terms of the number of service providers. Nursery schools also underwent substantial structural deregulation in 1998, which allowed for-profit companies and NPOs to build and manage nursery schools. Prior to the deregulation, only local governments could open nursery schools. In 2000, the market size was about \$24 billion. It is thought to be a bit larger now, although the NPO presence is less than 1%. The third area is certified evaluation services. I do not know the situation elsewhere in Asia. But in the US, Europe, and Japan, a series of laws was passed by governments for organic food certification around 2000. In Japan, the change was realized in the form of the JAS label. For farmers to be able to get a JAS label for organic food, they have to have the produce certified by accredited bodies. The accrediting body can be NPOs or for-profit companies. More than 40% (in terms of the number of service providers) of certifying bodies for organic food in Japan are NPOs, because they have a two-decade history of working with farmers and consumers in organic food production. The total economic size is small compared with that of welfare services, and is about \$5.5 million.

These three areas, elderly care, nursery schools, and certified evaluation services, are examples of what we call the "mix market" in which NPOs and regular for-profit companies are competing with one another, under a certain set of government regulations. We have to note the fact that two of the areas mentioned above were created by the national government through deregulation. So NPOs did not get the share by themselves, so to speak. It was given them by the government. Reforms of the national health insurance system and the deregulation which followed made it possible for NPOs and as well as for companies to enter the market. As a matter of fact, the deregulation scheme set the players on an equal footing; so there is no preferred treatment of NPOs. A survey shows that for-profit companies are actually given more benefits than NPOs because they are able to obtain the authority for the accreditation and certification system given by the government. In any

case, at least in these areas, NPOs have been activated in the nonprofit business in the last five years or so; but we have to note, on the other hand, that these businesses were created by government policies. It is a conflicting situation based on the fact that these nonprofit businesses were established as a reflection of major structural changes in deregulation and market orientation in Japanese society. NPOs now have to compete with for-profit companies on an equal basis. Today, NPOs in Japan are not just a group of volunteers helping each other or the socially weak on a small scale; in fact, there are several very large NPOs engaging in economic activities, although the areas are limited. And these areas were created by the government.

There has been a small but very strong trend among the members of the younger generations, who are becoming interested in what is now in Japan called social entrepreneurship. The word itself is not exactly new. It means somebody who is engaged in solving social problems, not as an NPO per se, but as an enterprise. Whether it is an NPO or a company is not so important. There are many well-known social entrepreneurship activities carried out by taking the form of a for-profit company. These young people who are the so-called new generation entrepreneurs are interested not just in volunteering or in setting up NPOs but also in trying to solve social problems by their own innovative thinking and a businesslike mind.

I will cite a typical new generation social entrepreneur as an example. In Japan, there is a rule that a nursery school will not admit a child when the child is sick with a fever over a certain degree. When the body temperature of a child goes over the limit, then the school will call up the child's parents, and the parents will have to come and pick up the child. In most cases, the mother would be the one to go and pick up the child; as a result, mothers lose their jobs in some cases. Only 5% of all nursery schools in Japan have the capacity to take care of sick children. This is a typical example of a serious social problem that cannot be solved easily, because caring for sick children would require medical doctors, and so the solution could be very costly. Local governments are not willing to bear the cost. For-profit companies would not enter the market because it would not be profitable. A large proportion of young couples tend to be working. So it does pose a serious social problem. This is a difficult situation for NPOs, because they cannot charge too much, and yet they need help from doctors. They have a very low profit structure. So nobody was doing anything

until last year when a young person came up with a very interesting idea.

A man by the name of Komasaki organized a group of experienced mothers who wanted to work part-time and also to contribute to the society. The NPO is called Florence, named after Florence Nightingale. Komasaki is one of the graduates of Keio University Shonan Fujisawa Campus where I teach, and he was a famous figure even when he was a university student. When he was a junior, he set up an information-technology venture with his friends. He was earning a lot of money from the IT business. But after two years he quit the company. He thought that just earning money was not enough and that he would like to contribute to the society. And he wanted to earn enough money to live and to continue his social venture. The business model for his nonprofit business to help out sick children and their parents was formed with help from his mother, who was a working mother when she was raising him. His business model basically uses a network of people instead of a facility. He makes good use of community power by putting together a network of experienced mothers in a community, community doctors, and a group of doctors giving advice to Florence staff members when needed. When a mother or father with a sick child calls Florence, an experienced person is sent to pick up the baby and have the baby examined by a local doctor. If the doctor approves, the baby is taken home with the Florence staff person until the parents finish work to pick up their baby. A 24-hour telephone service using doctors is available to answer questions on the phone. In this way Komasaki came up with a community-based model with a low-cost structure that still is profitable. The business is based on community power rather than market power. Komasaki is now a well-known figure as a successful social entrepreneur.

I have observed that in Japan successful nonprofit businesses and social ventures like the one started by Komasaki make good use of community power. This idea sounds Asian. Japanese NPOs and social ventures tend to limit their activities to a relatively small area, and their missions are not global. They are not engaged in, for example, fighting against all the injustice in the whole world. One reason is that there is very little money contributed to large-scale social activities. Komasaki's social venture is, however, an exception. He started it in a small area

but is extending the business model so that the Florence service will cover the entire Metropolitan Tokyo area. Still, Florence does make use of community power to solve an eminent problem nobody had been successful in solving so far. We call it the “community solution” as compared to the market solution.

## Dialogue

**MARIA HARTININGSIH** I can sense some division of labor in Japanese society; women have multiple burdens as a wife, mother, caretaker, and worker. I think even with the presence of NPOs, the structure in Japan does not really support women.

**IKUYO KANEKO** Florence is filling the slack of the society. The current social system is that most women have to work for pay, do the housework, and raise children. A lot of women do want to work; but what are they to do if their child gets sick? Before Florence, there was no social institution to support that situation.

**YOJI KAMATA** I am interested in the trend of promoting localization instead of promoting economic globalization. I am also interested in the concept of the community solution. I would like to know more about community tools and your involvement, both on the policy level and on the ground level.

**KANEKO** Many of the social services in Japan have been monopolized by local and central governments. Some of them are now open to NPOs and companies due to the wave of deregulation I mentioned in my speech. This has some good effect on promoting community solutions in Japanese society in the social service area. But it is far from adequate. The child-care market has been deregulated partially, but the system is not made for promoting entrepreneurial activities. In fact, Florence is not enjoying any benefits from deregulation.

The Japanese public school system is still part of a very big bureaucratic system. There have been some moves to create a way by which a community solution method can be applied to the system. I have been involved in a movement to promote what is called the community school system. Six years ago, I proposed a community school for which a group of citizens, parents, and local people, along with teachers and the schoolmaster, would form a council or educational board. The board would decide on what to do with the school, including selecting teachers.

In Japanese public schools, prefecture-level educational boards hire and allocate teachers to all elementary and middle schools in the prefecture, and schools and local communities have nothing to do with hiring and choosing teachers. I worked on the proposal for several years. Two years ago, the Ministry of Education came up with legislation to make it possible to start community schools. My observation has been that good schools exist in good communities, and that a community's effort to create a good school will make the community a good one. I believe that community schools will be a good framework for the community solution to occur in many localities in Japan.

**JANET PILLAI** Do you mean that national-type schools were converted to community schools, or are they private schools?

**KANEKO** A community school is a part of the public school system in which a city education board can decide to convert a regular public school to become a community school.

**KUNDA DIXIT** Is home education allowed in Japan?

**KANEKO** Generally no. Japan has what we call special zones for deregulation. There has been a system in which local people propose special zones where a part of the existing regulations are exempted. Home education or similar education can be done when such a special zone is created.

**DIXIT** Regarding the long-tail phenomenon, the new trend is that instead of building virtual communities that are cohesive, they are actually a fragmented society. Instead of building bridges, the virtual community has actually led to where people who believe in a particular type of ideology would gravitate toward sites they agree with; so it becomes a group of like-minded people, supporting each other's beliefs. Is there such a trend in Japan?

**KANEKO** That is exactly the reason why I am not so much interested in social networking services. The younger generation in Japan tends to be more closed; they are more shy and reluctant to speak up. The younger generation tends to gravitate toward very small groups, and such a tendency makes SNS very popular. I am a little worried that people are comfortable in very small groups without breaking the divide.

**PILLAI** I am curious about the dramatic rise of NPOs. Is it a people-led movement or an elite-movement where the educated-elite leads the people and organizes them? What is the reaction of the people on the

ground? Are they just falling into a reaction led by concerned citizens, or are they waking up themselves?

**KANEKO** Partly yes for your question. In many areas, including environmental protection and human rights at the small community level, they have volunteers, but many of them are of my age, 40–60 years old. A lot of younger people give a much lighter commitment to society. The rise of NPOs is in general voluntary and bottom up, but many of them are very small and financially unstable. These small-scale NPOs tend to be interested in things around them and not interested in what is happening in the world in such places as Africa and Asia. At the same time, the emergence of many, varied NPOs do reflect the fact that Japanese people are interested in a lot of things.

**PILLAI** I am asking more on the structure within the NPOs. Whether the leaders are themselves educated-elite.

**KANEKO** Not necessarily. They are ordinary people. Not elite or highly educated. By the way, Japanese professors tend to be inactive. I am an exception.

**MOHIUDDIN AHMAD** Ordinary people in Japan and ordinary people in Bangladesh are different. We have many NPOs and NGOs, more than 30,000. Some are very big, even one with 35,000 full-time staff is also an NPO.

**KANEKO** What is the reputation of Grameen Bank? I heard a lot of good things about it. What do Bangladesh people think about it?

**AHMAD** Different people think differently. I think it has already reached its stage of saturation. Servicing millions of small shopkeepers but not being able to transcend beyond. It is just recycling debt.

**KANEKO** I see; so just going into a particular group and not breaking through to the others.

**AHMAD** Yes, not actually breaking the barrier. Recent thinking actually favors small and medium-sized enterprises.

**KANEKO** What is the area of the large NPOs?

**AHMAD** BRAC is the biggest NGO in the world. They have 35,000 full-time staff and another probably 50,000 part-time staff. NPO or NGO in Bangladesh are defined as nonprofit, but they do make a profit and it is reinvested in the program. They have no shareholders, so they do not give out dividends. Grameen Bank is a nonprofit company. But

it runs many enterprises, although these are not nonprofit, such as Grameen Phone. It has a different structure and a lot of investments, so that it is involved in many businesses that are separate from the structure of NPOs. Maybe the same person is chairman of all these, but he has different identities.

**KANEKO** Is it a common practice in Bangladesh? Are a lot of NPOs doing that or is it just Grameen Bank? Is it similar in other countries in Asia? In Japan, people are starting to do that but are not necessarily successful.

**AHMAD** Yes, a lot. There are many such organizations. For example, BRAC has outlets for their craft products, and it makes a lot of money out of it. It has good quality control, but runs on a nonprofit basis; the whole proceeds are invested in other programs. Now they are also running a bank and a private university that is like a company.

**KANEKO** So it is a conglomerate. People think it is a business? Or just a charity or NPO? What is the reaction to that?

**AHMAD** It has a mixed reaction. When the bank was opened, there were a lot of criticisms from members of the intelligentsia and other banks saying that because they are NPOs, they enjoy a sort of tax relief. Others are demanding that there must be a level playing field. Charity works in Bangladesh are from individual donations and are mostly not tax-free. There is a ceiling; if you give outside the capital city for certain programs, then you can enjoy tax relief, otherwise not.

**LEE SEEJAE** I want to ask you to clarify some points. When you say community resources, what is the content? It seems to me it just mobilizes the labor market. When you say deregulation, what are the contents? How did deregulation enable them to make social enterprises?

**KANEKO** To answer the first question, the definition of a community could be very ambiguous. I am supposing two kinds of community. One is a local one, a group of people living in the same vicinity. Florence makes use of a local community resource. Staff members working for Florence are, for example, 50 or so experienced mothers living in a relatively small area. They are interested in contributing to society while getting some income. On the other hand, there are "theme communities" where people interested in the same theme get together to form a community. Net communities are such examples. Deregulation can be designed so that it creates a market allowing a variety of service

providers to enter the market. A community school is not to open up the market for business, but it opens up the management system to citizens.

**PILLAI** I am interested in the deregulation. Is it possible that the pressure for deregulation actually came from the corporate and business side because they wanted to take a part in elderly care, and the NPOs are just taking advantage of that?

**KANEKO** I do not know if they are successfully taking advantage of it, but the fact is that many NPOs have entered the market. The motivation is more economic as well as social.

**AHMAD** Do Japanese NPOs get any overseas funds?

**KANEKO** Very few do. I have not heard of any Japanese NPO getting money from the Rockefeller Foundation. Japanese NGOs are not globally oriented. They are doing a good job in small businesses, but this does not have an impact in changing the whole world.

**PILLAI** Do you think that is the trend, that kind of commercial investment?

**KANEKO** There is a small group of people in finance who have ideas along that line. But business is so powerful and active, and all active people go into the moneymaking business, which I do not blame. There is little room for NGOs and NPOs in Japan to be a major player in society, as in Bangladesh.

**NGUYEN THANH SON** It looks like we face a big problem on the Internet. An Asian person is not like a Japanese person. We see the need of conversion of modern communication with tradition. What is your view on that kind of conversion? In the virtual community, a new wave of charity and activism gathers. There is an invasion of the virtual community, because they have money and resources; so they can go into the community. But there is no connection and participation between the communities. How can we make that happen?

**KANEKO** Similar things are happening in Japan. Cellular phones are very popular. Users of cellular phones tend to have communications in a limited group. PC users tend to be communicating with a larger group including strangers. A large proportion of people using the Internet in Japan are using the Net through cellular phones. They do access some of the convenient information on the Internet or the cellular phone web; but this does not mean that they are creating new information. They are

getting active in a small and familiar world; the vast majority of people using cellular phones communicate with people they already know. SNS is supposedly changing it, but very superficially. Koreans tend to have a wider Internet base, while Japanese people are more clustered.

**LEE** There is a world of difference between the Korean Internet and the Japanese Internet.

**KANEKO** I know that Japanese games are more personal and Korea has more Internet-interactive-type games.

**ALBERT ALEJO** I was looking at the implications of what we are learning on community solutions. One implication is for social analysis, and the other one is for education. They are connected. I notice that in the Philippines many social interventions and social analyses start from and probably focus too much on the community, but hardly anything is mentioned about community efforts. I think the approach to community solutions is identifying needs, but it also is not jumping ahead into finding the solution elsewhere. Instead, it is reflectively coming back into the community and checking the assets and solutions for community problems or needs using community resources. I recounted this problem in the way intervention agencies look at communities. The typical approach is for funding agencies to see the need and offer solutions to NGOs.

**KANEKO** Japanese NGOs and NPOs are not active in trying to get money from worldwide foundations. There are some active groups of people taking outside money. But the majority of Japanese NPOs tend to be self-funding and doing what they can do with the money they can get. One of the points of my talk today is the emergence of NPOs with independent thinking and activities, which are trying to solve problems on their own without depending on the government or the market.

**LEE** Your lecture is about who can change Japan. NGOs do not have many resources, but they can mobilize; they cannot produce services, but they can reorient society and politics so that they become agents for information in the society. In Japan, who is the agent?

**KANEKO** I want to say that NPO people are major agents; but the current situation does not allow me to say so. There is a group of bright and socially oriented young bureaucrats. They work for the government for some years and then branch out to universities and NPOs and social ventures. As I said, half jokingly, university professors in Japan tend to

be inactive. But more people are using their professorship as a base for social activities. At the local municipal level, there are citizens who are redirecting the course of local politics.

**LEE** I researched the situation in Kawasaki City. There were some political reforms in the 1990s facilitating the employment of foreigners. Of course there is movement from outside, but finally it is the local level government official who holds the key to change.

**KANEKO** I agree with you. On the local level, we find many groups of ordinary people who are very active in the daily life situation, and then they talk to active-minded city officials who are interested in these things. Then they form a coalition and do change local policies at a day-to-day level. These things are happening all over Japan. It is a good sign. But as I have said, they do not broaden out on a large scale.

**LEE** That means you cannot expect the NGOs to initiate change.

**KANEKO** We have to look very hard to find positive signs in that direction.

**PILLAI** Did these movements have an impact on the government? Did the citizen's initiatives at the local level and the elite initiatives have some contact with the bureaucracy?

**KANEKO** Oh yes, the community school has been adopted into the formal legal system, for one. Five or six years ago, the Education Ministry was very much against my idea, because the idea of the community school is opposite to central educational control. But for some reason, they changed their priority and went along with my plan. A good part of the reason is that there was a lot of pressure from the cabinet to try to localize education.

**PILLAI** Could you elaborate a bit about the process on how an elite research group pushes something into the groove of politics?

**KANEKO** I have to do a lot more research to be able to say anything clear. But I think the good output of the Koizumi government is that some of the reform-minded bureaucrats were given opportunities to be active. One representative idea was the "special zone" system to exempt regulations in a certain area. The idea was formalized by a group of active bureaucrats. They are close to the elites some of you have been mentioning. In general, however, Japanese social changes are driven not by elites but by ordinary people.

**DIXIT** I would like some elaboration on the demographic crisis of the aging population. From your research, I found it quite astounding that the cost for care of the elderly doubled in four years and yet the NPOs have only 1.3%. Given the fact that the pension fund is in crisis, there seems to be a real need and opportunity. Could you elaborate on that?

**KANEKO** There is a chance, but NPO workers are not in general well trained. They are very active in specific things. If something starts, they are very good. I may be wrong, but my impression is that they do not have the power to grab that opportunity.

**DIXIT** What would catalyze it? What would be the spark?

**KANEKO** Many of the younger students are now interested in looking at what's happening elsewhere in Asia, including the microfinance idea in Bangladesh, and they are trying to learn what to do with it. I would like to see if something would move along that line.

**DIXIT** What would they expect the government to do?

**KANEKO** They do not have much expectation toward the government. Japanese citizens are in general well to do. They do not have to worry about their basic needs; so maybe they are satisfied with the status quo. They do not have an aspiration or a strong motivation to really try to generate a breakthrough to create a new society. As I have pointed out, I do see some motivations within a group of local and central bureaucrats. They are well educated and well trained. Sometimes they become major driving forces of structural changes. Once a change occurs, a lot of people are mobilized and do a lot of good things at the local level. One of the points in my lecture today is that in recent years there has been an emergence of NPOs engaged in the nonprofit business, but that this basic structural change was initiated by the government. How about in Bangladesh? What is the reason for people-driven social change? Is it because the government is so weak?

**AHMAD** In Bangladesh, there is really a different community, because these NGOs or NPOs started not from economic assistance but due to the devastation after the war of 1971. I think now, about one-fifth of the total official development assistance is channeled through NGOs. The NGOs and the bureaucracy have a lot of rivalry competing for resources. I would like to ask you one question. Do these community schools only look after the management, or do they also decide on the curriculum?

**KANEKO** Now, any public school can apply, through the local educational board, to be certified as a special zone for an exemption from part of the national curriculum. Come to think of it, this is quite extraordinary, because the national curriculum is mandatory. So far there have been 130 or so applications for special zones to do that. But most of them remain to be minor exemptions.

**AHMAD** In a situation of a falling birthrate in Japan, what will happen to the schools?

**KANEKO** Due to the declining population in Japan, public schools are being closed all over the country. This means that there are a lot of empty school facilities. NPOs can make use of them. There is one particular case in Nagano Prefecture, one very small village of 1,000 people. They spent some village money to renovate an abandoned school and make it into a dormitory. Then they applied for a special zone to work with an NPO to come up with a small middle school for people who are reluctant to go to school for various family or personal reasons. They were successful in opening a boarding school, which now has 16 students. They graduated three kids last year, and all entered high school.

**AHMAD** I have a question about the recent verdict in a court about singing the national anthem or not singing the national anthem. How is this perceived in Japanese society?

**KANEKO** In Japan, there is a group of people, not just old people but younger people also, who are very nationalistic in a very superficial way. They tend to be, in my opinion, very inward looking. They tend to be nationalistic because they want to be able to think that they are superior, though they have no good reason for thinking that.

**LEE** You have been making reference to social entrepreneurship. Is this different from social enterprise?

**KANEKO** The same thing is called differently in different contexts. Nonprofit entrepreneur, nonprofit business, social enterprises, social innovation, social venture; they are all about the same thing.

I-House Seminar Room

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## **United Corporations of America**

***Yu Tanaka***

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I will talk about structures that predispose people: the problem of peak oil, the world going toward war, structures that make wars profitable, and the trick called “globalization,” which is related to recycling in Japan.

Recycling programs in local communities in Japan started 10 years ago. However, something wrong happened, and gradually it became harder to maintain recycling in a community. The reason that recycling had to be stopped is because raw materials imported from developing countries were much cheaper than recycled products. Usually we go back to production by recycling. However, when recycled products are much more expensive than the original materials, the factory at the production phase has to buy new materials rather than using recycled products. Since recycling does not function well, a lot of the products created are not recycled.

In Japan there are only three ways to treat garbage: burn it, bury it in landfills, or dump it in the ocean, which all damage the environment. The garbage problem came into being in Japan because export products sold by developing countries were much cheaper than recycled products. The volume, not the yen amount, of imports to Japan is eight times the volume of exports from Japan.

For this reason, we cannot solve the garbage problem in Japan.

I did research on why imported materials from developing countries were cheaper. The first factor was Japanese official development assistance.

In local communities, we have been recycling aluminum cans. But importing brand-new aluminum is cheaper than buying recycled

aluminum. Cheap aluminum is imported from Brazil and Indonesia. It takes a lot of electricity to produce aluminum. The cheapest way to generate electricity is to build a dam. To secure electricity for producing aluminum, Japanese ODA builds dams in these countries. In Indonesia, Asahan Dam was built by Japanese ODA, while in Brazil it was Sukuroy Dam. Asahan Dam is not profitable for the local people, because 90 percent of the electricity generated there is used for aluminum production. And 100 percent of the aluminum produced there is exported to Japan. Indonesia does not have any factory to process the aluminum into products. The Japanese ODA structure allows the Japanese government to decide the export price of aluminum from Indonesia. And the dam was built by Japanese companies.

One interesting point of Japanese ODA is that 55 percent of it is in the form of lending money to the recipients. Japanese ODA has created the largest portion of the debt burden of the developing countries in the world. Japan also has the largest share of loans to least developed countries. I think Japan is the country most responsible for the poverty in the world. Japanese ODA does not only make products cheap. It has another element, i.e., structural adjustment programs recipients of ODA must adopt. The more debt the developing countries have accumulated, the smaller the value of their raw materials that remains with them, because of structural adjustment programs, or SAPs. The debt of developing countries is growing. Structural adjustments forced by the IMF and the World Bank in developing countries are composed of three major elements. First, to enforce debt payments, the currency of the recipient country is devaluated, making imported items more expensive and exports cheaper. Second, the recipient country's national budget for education and welfare is used for repayment. Third, local food production in the recipient country is not allocated for domestic consumption but for exports to earn foreign currency.

Right after the financial crisis in Asia, nearly 60 percent of the people in developing Asian countries were suffering from malnutrition because governments in these countries had to allocate their budgets for debt repayment rather than allocating them to feed the people. SAPs have been imposed by the IMF/World Bank on more than 100 developing countries in the world. They do not have anything to sell but raw materials. All these countries export raw materials, so they are selling the same items to the world. Over 100 countries are selling the exact same 30 items to the world. As a result, the price of raw materials has

become cheaper than the original price. Keep this in mind and let's get back to recycling in Japan.

When you are in a position to buy materials for your company, you look for low-cost, high-quality materials, don't you? When you can get raw materials really cheap, why bother paying more for recycled materials? That's what's happening in Japan. Recycled materials are more expensive than raw materials exported by developing countries. And that's because of the SAPs. Then, things that can no longer be recycled in Japan are being exported to developing countries. These products are exported at very low price. So scavengers in the cities of developing countries are no longer able to sell garbage that they collect from garbage dumps. And what scavengers do, or used to do, in developing countries is also a form of recycling. So, recycling in both developed countries and developing countries doesn't work today because of the SAPs imposed by the IMF/World Bank.

Now let us take a look at the Japanese ODA figures. Japan says that the UN is the major recipient of its aid; however, the real situation is different. A breakdown of Japanese ODA shows that 51.1 percent is given to SAPs. So we can see that many people are suffering through SAPs largely due to what Japan is doing. Japan has reduced its ODA recently. Today, many countries have repayment figures higher than the aid figures. What Japan calls "aid" these days is money that is repaid to it. Japan is actually taking money from countries where people are already starving to death. The largest source of ODA funds is the savings of the Japanese people; this money comes from postal savings, bank savings, or agricultural cooperative savings. This means that ordinary people in Japan are involved in this process. If you deposit your money with one of these financial institutions, you may be supporting the government's official exploitation of developing countries.

Next, I would like to talk about the water issue in Japan. The demand for water in Tokyo has been going down since 1971. Despite this fact, many dams have been built just for use in Tokyo. How is water from the dams being used? It is not even "used," it's actually just being channeled straight into rivers. The financial formula used to support this apparent waste is called the "general cost formula." The utility rates for water and electricity are decided based on the following framework: no profit more than 3.8 percent is allowed to be made. For example, if the total income from water-use rates is ¥1,038, then ¥1,000 is the actual cost, and the remaining ¥38 is the profit. Although the framework of the system has been determined, companies still look

at how to increase profits without going over the 3.8 percent limit. For example, if you want to make ¥3.8 billion as a profit, ¥1 trillion worth of utilities needs to be consumed, which means that in order to increase utility production, unnecessary dams are built for fictitious needs in order to boost profits. This is why water-use rates are different in regions that have dams and in others that don't have dams.

Now, I would like to talk about a different topic: the peak oil problem, which is often referred to as the most serious problem the world is facing today. Most of the large oil fields had been discovered by the 1970s. From then until now, only small oil fields have been discovered. However, the demand for oil is increasing each year. Although the output of oil fields is increasing, once it reaches a certain peak, it is going to decrease. People say oil resources will someday run out. However, the real problem is not when oil runs out but when production can no longer keep up with the demand for it. This is the problem known as "peak oil". The time the peak is reached is the issue; many scholars say it will probably be around 2010.

Three and a half years from now, we will reach a time when oil prices will rise so high that no one can afford it any more. When that time comes, who is going to make profits? Well, it is the companies that have possession of oil fields. Charts of world oil reserves list Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Iran, Venezuela, the former USSR, Mexico, and the United States as the countries with the most oil reserves. The amount of reserves in Iraq has not been tested for the past 15 years. Researchers assume that if research is done at this point, the Iraqi oil reserves would be more than what Saudi Arabia has, and for this reason, Iraq is occupied by the United States. The next target for the US is Iran. In Venezuela, President Hugo Chavez was captured by the CIA a number of times. We know that the oil reserves of Kuwait are actually half of what is listed. If a proper list is made after proper research, it will be observed that oil reserve charts are directly related to the areas of war.

There are so many countries with oil and natural gas resources that are related to war. One example is Aceh in Indonesia. Of the 250,000 people who died in the 2004 tsunami in Asia, 200,000 died in Aceh. However, aid never arrived in Aceh, because there was a conflict going on there involving people who wanted independence. In reality this conflict was not because of the independence issue. It was the natural gas in Aceh that was causing the conflict. It is well known that Aceh has abundant

natural gas reserves. One-third of Japan's natural gas imports come from Indonesia. And the majority of that came from Aceh. Actually, Japan has built a natural gas refinery in Aceh through its ODA program. (By the way, the refinery is currently used as a torture site, to torture independence activists.) East Timor is another example. It became independent after the Asian currency crisis. The Asian currency crisis devastated the Indonesian economy, and President Suharto, who had exerted enormous power over the country, had to step down. And what happened next? Australia stepped in! Why? Because East Timor has an oil field called Timor Gap. You may think gaining independence is good, and countries supporting independence are good, but it's more complex than that.

Another example. In Mindanao, the Philippines, just to eradicate 80 members of the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group, 20,000 troops composed of Philippine and US military personnel were sent in, resulting in the displacement of 50,000 people from their homes. I personally think that to eradicate 80 people, using 20,000 soldiers and taking five years to do it is too much. In reality, the objective was to control the resources of Mindanao Island. We all know that there are oil reserves in Mindanao.

In many places in the world, similar things are happening. At this point, the most exported resource of Africa is oil. And in Sudan, Nigeria, and many countries in Africa, conflicts are happening. It is the same situation in Latin America. The United States launched Operation Orange to get rid of the drug production in Columbia. However, if we take a look at the amount of drug production in the world, the country that is producing the most drugs is Afghanistan after the removal of the Taliban regime. If the real purpose of the United States is to root out drug production, US forces should go to Afghanistan to enforce Operation Orange. And we know that there is underground oil in Columbia. In Chechen, meanwhile, half of the population died because of the conflict there. Why did Russia not allow Chechen to go independent? It is because Russia's only oil pipeline goes through Chechen's capital. There is a strong relation between conflict areas and areas rich in natural gas and oil. If oil and natural gas are not the reason, then water or minerals will be the reasons for the conflict. Conflicts over resources precipitate wars.

World military expenditures show that the world is ready to start a war. Not all countries in the world have increasing military expenditures. Half the military expenditure of the world is accounted for by the United States, with \$520 billion allocated to the US military budget. US military

expenditures are 1.4 times larger than the Japanese annual governmental budget. More than 5 percent of US workers are working in the defense industry.

Directors of defense companies are also directors of oil companies. No matter how much profit Unitel makes, however, politicians could not make money from that. So a system was created to benefit politicians. How do you do it? You make investments in defense corporations.

The Carlyle Group, an investment fund, is the biggest investment company in the world. The company was started less than 20 years ago. Carlyle buys stocks in the defense industry, and when the stock prices rise, Carlyle sells them to make capital gains.

Stocks in the defense industry can only be invested in or bought by governments. We all know of George Bush senior, and his son, who is of course George W. Bush, the current president of the United States. If Bush senior buys shares from Carlyle and his son orders military equipment from Carlyle, then Bush senior will definitely make a profit. Do you think it's too obvious for the Bush family to actually do that? Well, here's what happened. United Defense Industries made an artillery product called the Crusader, but it was too big and it did not sell well. So the stock price of United Defense got really low. That's when Carlyle bought UD's shares in 1997.

For some reason, the son, President Bush, placed an order for the Crusader artillery system in 2001. Through this purchase, the company made a profit of \$280 million. The former president of the Philippines, Fidel Ramos; the former prime minister of Britain, John Major; the former director of the CIA, Frank Carlucci; former Secretaries of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld and Caspar Weinberger; former Secretary of State, Colin Powell; former Prime Minister of South Korea, Park Tae Joon, these were all advisers of Carlyle. Another famous person who has invested in the company is Osama Bin Laden.

An analysis of US military expenditure and its distribution shows that over half of it is being paid to just seven corporations. In 2002, Carlyle ranked 9th in amount among companies that received orders from the Department of Defense. Strangely, Carlyle fell to just 20th in 2004. Why did it fall to the 20th in just two years? Or was no. 9 too high for them? We will never know, but there's one thing that may explain this. The former President George Bush left the company in 2003.

Interestingly, Halliburton went from rank 38 to 7 in those years. Halliburton is represented by US Vice-President Richard Cheney. Looking at the number of US soldiers killed in Iraq and the revenue that Halliburton has made from the war, we can observe that they are both increasing. Prior to its involvement in Iraq, Halliburton was in bankruptcy because of suits about their illegal treatment of asbestos; but the company has grown larger since the War in Iraq.

If the military expenditures of the world were spent to eradicate the debt of developing countries, to get rid of all the weapons in the world, to give food to people suffering from starvation, to remove land mines, to reconstruct Afghanistan, and to provide services for women's reproductive health and water, there would still be \$209.9 billion left over. If only we decided not to kill each other. If the military expenditures for one year were used for these programs, we could solve most of the world's problems. Yet we haven't done this. We, instead, go ahead with killing each other.

Oil is expensive, because in order to get control of oil resources, the United States is spending a lot on its military. But the cost to develop and control oil must also include the cost caused by the damage of hurricane Katrina in the United States and the cost of global warming. Then you can see how expensive oil is.

And that expensive crude oil is driving globalization. When you compare fees for transporting goods within Japan and fees for transporting goods from Singapore to Japan, you'll see it is actually cheaper to send goods from Singapore to Tokyo than to send the same things from Kobe to Tokyo. You may think it's funny but it's because oil consumed across national borders is tax-free. So it's cheaper to import goods than producing them domestically. If taxes were imposed on things that are transported internationally, just like in the case of domestic transportation, it would be cheaper to produce things domestically.

Economic globalization has lots of tricks. Here's another example, wheat production in the United States. When the wheat is exported, it is sold at a cheaper price than the cost of its production. Why? Because agricultural products are dumped, and it's done systematically by industrialized countries. Due to dumping by developed countries, developing countries are not able to produce food. Wheat imports are rising in Indonesia and the Philippines. So some industrialized countries are dumping agricultural products to developing countries.

Some other industrialized countries are doing something different in the same context of globalization and division of labor. Look at Japan. The agriculture sector in Japan is losing its competitiveness. To obtain food, Japanese people have taken control of lands abroad so that they can have food produced there and have it imported to Japan. The developing countries are exporting food to Japan. This phenomenon is called in Japan “hunger export.” People in developing countries can harvest, but that is not for their own consumption. Because of this structure, the people in developing countries, no matter how hard they work, suffer from starvation.

The United States has a huge deficit in its finance and trade. So it cannot support the war on its own. The United States issues bonds abroad to earn money for the war. Japan is the biggest buyer of United States government bonds, followed by China and Britain. The bond issuance enables the US to wage war. The money paid by the Japanese government to buy US bonds comes from postal savings. In addition to building dams or nuclear power plants, the postal savings of Japan are used to finance war. In the past, when Japan invaded Asian countries, postal savings money was put to use then, as well. During the postwar period, the Self-Defense Forces were established, and that was also funded by the postal savings. Of course, ODA given to developing countries is also funded by postal savings. The money you deposit with Japanese banks is invested, by the bank, in US bonds, and eventually is spend to support war. Therefore, we can say that your money is sometimes more powerful than you think. Your saving for the future can sometimes destroy someone else’s future.

Well, I’ve talked a lot about the structural problems that are too serious and too embedded in our life. What can we do to make the world a better place? I personally think that there are three directions of movements when you talk about changing the world. One is the vertical direction: you go up the social ladder and become someone influential. Become a lawmaker yourself, or become someone that can influence lawmakers so that you can make changes.. Another traditional way is movement in the horizontal direction: convincing the person next to you or creating an advocacy movement. Traditionally, Japanese people have made use of the vertical way and the horizontal way. But they have not worked well, and a lot of people have given up on changing the world. I think there is another way, a diagonal way, which is to come up with alternatives and put them into action.

An example of the diagonal way is the creation of an NPO bank called the Future Bank. It was founded with seven members including myself. The seven members contributed about \$40,000 at the inception of the bank. In the past few years, the Future Bank has invested \$1.5 million in civil society organizations, with a cumulative investment totaling \$7 million. So far there is no credit loss, and we have a \$47,000 reserve against bad debts. Three kinds of projects are financed by the Future Bank: environmental, welfare, and civil society projects, all with a 3 percent fixed interest rate. The idea was put into action 14 years ago, and a lot of different organizations started doing the same. Now in Japan there are many NPO banks, and more are being formed.

If the world's military-related emissions were reduced by 60 percent, global warming would have stopped. If you leave the military as it is, global warming will continue. A lot of people tell me that the movement to save the environment is separate from and not related at all to war. But this is a wrong perception. There is no meaning to focusing on environmental issues if we do not focus on peace issues.

Pollution cannot be eliminated by just focusing on household emissions. If you look at the emissions from Japan, half comes from 167 corporations. If businesses start to change their behavior, then pollution can be reduced and eventually stopped. But if businesses don't change, then pollution can't be stopped. In Japan, almost all the focus is put on individual reduction of energy consumption, not on efforts on the business side. But it's actually the businesses that need to make efforts in reducing energy consumption. We really need to make businesses take actions. In households, electricity accounts for most of the emissions, and it comes from four items: air conditioners, refrigerators, lighting, and television. The energy consumption of appliances has been reduced in recent years. The energy consumption of refrigerators has decreased by 80 percent, while the other three items reduced their energy consumption by about half. If you replace the appliances in your house with energy-saving ones, you can reduce your household's emissions by half. I invented a financing scheme to encourage people to replace their old appliances with new, energy-saving appliances. Switching to energy-saving appliances doesn't just save electricity and cut down emissions, but it also saves your money!

Extra effort, suffering, and perseverance are not necessary to save the earth from global warming. There are different ways to do this. One example is what I just said here. Replacing energy-draining appliance

with energy-saving ones. Another example is to install window blinds. Window blinds reduce the intensity of sunlight coming into the house. So they don't let the room temperature go up so much and you don't need to turn on your air conditioner. And it is much better to put the blinds outside the window, rather than putting them inside the window. This way, the intensity of the sunlight is reduced even before it reaches the window. And if you spray water on them, it will be a lot cooler inside. This does not mean you need to have someone out there spraying water all day. Something that has the same effect as spray is a green curtain. By having greenery outside the window, the temperature inside the room can be reduced by two degrees. Just by doing these things, you can reduce air-conditioner usage, and thus, you can reduce energy consumption. This, of course, means that your household emits less greenhouse effect gas.

In Japan, nuclear energy is said to be the cheapest form of energy and safe to use. This is a lie, but that is what the government is telling us. In reality, renewable energy is the cheapest form of all the energies available. It is best for electric power companies to buy electricity from renewable energy sources.

We are living in a society that is built upon oil. If we turn this around and make a society built upon renewable energy, we can change the social structure. Energy will be generated by small units in society, and local groups and communities will be stepping forward to support small energy plants.

Today, energy security is what's driving countries to war. But if and when households can generate energy just enough to meet their household demand, then we don't need that kind of war any more. And it's not a wild dream now. If we use energy-saving types of electric appliances, we only need solar panels just as big as an eight-tatami mat room (approximately 10 sq feet).

When Bush comes to us offering oil, we can say "No, we do not need it anymore!" This means that we shall be able to transform society into one that is not revolving around oil. Until now, when people gave thought to changing society, they assumed they had to change everything and make everything green. But in a way this is a kind of fascism. Rather than trying to make a sweeping change of everything, let us go into all the different reasons, all the different places, and try to make little patches of green and help it grow from there. If we start doing this, eventually it will spread.

## Dialogue

**MOHIUDDIN AHMAD** This is really a fascinating presentation. I have been able to discover a completely different life within Japan. I would like to connect this global hegemonic powers issue to the local level in the field of nature. We in the Asia region are in many ways victims of global financing. In Asia, the major institution is the Asian Development Bank. How does Japanese ODA promote the ADB? I can cite the example of Bangladesh. I think Japan is the single largest creditor. Much of this aid comes directly, but loans also come from the ADB, which draws on Japanese money. I know that in certain regions in Asia where the World Bank is shy of funding because of resistance from community groups, the ADB comes in to fund them. Incidentally, we cannot sue the ADB for committing crimes. I do not know if this is the case in other countries, but in Bangladesh the ADB has immunity. I would be very much interested if you could give us some insight into the Japanese ODA-ADB connection. Are there any discussions within Japan on how to deal with the ADB?

**YU TANAKA** First of all, the IMF/World Bank and regional banks like the ADB are working based on investment. Half of the funds of the IMF and the World Bank are from the Group of Seven, and decisions are made within the G7. In the case of the ADB, Japan has the highest investment and so it comes first in terms of voting rights. Pretty much following Japan is the United States, and they together make up half of the voting rights. So Japan and the United States make the decisions in the ADB. The budget of the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund of Japan (OECF), which finances ODA projects, is just as big as that of the World Bank, but the number of OECF staff members is just 1/20 of that of the World Bank. So OECF opts for financing a few large projects that need a large amount of funding, instead of funding numerous small projects, because it's more time and effort consuming to handle numerous small projects. So OECF just gets on the bandwagon and participates in large projects that are designed by organizations such as the World Bank and the ADB. I think the most effective way to deal with this is to place the problem before the Japanese government.

In Japan, there is one group that focuses a lot of effort on things related to the ADB, but the bank is still not a very large focus of attention among activists. The way these groups usually think is that ADB projects are good and beneficial; they are not thinking about the actual structural problems involved. What has to be done to make meaningful changes

is to have the real damage being caused by the ADB known to the Japanese government, using Japanese NGOs to convey this message.

**LEE SEEJAE** I have three questions. First, you said household use of electricity has a quite limited impact on climate change in Japan. Do you have any ideas about changing companies or enterprises to reduce emissions? My second question is about changing refrigerators. I am always confused about whether I should buy a new one or not. I have many electrical appliances at home, and I keep them as long as I can use them. Of course, buying a new one means garbage, and also there is a lot of energy embedded in the electrical appliance. You counted only the savings in electrical energy achieved with a new refrigerator. How would you explain it? Third is how postal savings get into the debt structure. Do you mean that postal savings are used to buy Japanese government-issued bonds? Recently, former Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro reformed the postal savings system. How will his reforms affect the scheme?

**TANAKA** First, I will talk about electricity consumed by businesses. In Japan, around 4 am to 5 am is the time when the least energy is being consumed, while the peak time is 2 pm to 3 pm. The total amount of energy consumed in a household is 23 percent of the total energy consumption in Japan. Household energy consumption is high in the morning, low in the afternoon, and high again at night. Electricity cannot be saved for use, and so just to meet peak demand, electricity is being generated.

And when it comes to electricity bills, the more electricity is consumed by households, the higher the electricity rates get. So there's incentive for households to cut down on their electricity use. On the other hand, the more electricity is consumed for industrial use, the lower the electricity rates get! So there's no incentive for industries to cut down on their electricity use. The very simple solution to cut down on total electricity consumption in Japan is to change the energy rate matrix.

Refrigerators are usually used for an average of 12 years, and 91.7 percent of the energy consumed by a refrigerator is in the form of electricity during the life of the refrigerator; the next 7 percent is for the mining and refining of raw materials.

Energy used in disposal of a refrigerator is just 0.3 percent of the total energy consumption of a refrigerator throughout its product life. After taking into account the amount of energy required to produce the

refrigerator and also the energy needed to dispose of it, we find that the 1.4-year period is the breakeven point to recoup the energy needed for a new refrigerator. If you are going to use your old and energy-draining refrigerator for more than 1.4 years from now, then it is energy-efficient to replace it with one that consumes less. To save energy, some people pull the plug out. But then the temperature inside goes up, and considerable energy will be necessary to get it back down when you plug the refrigerator in again. New appliances consume less energy, so it is more energy-efficient to replace old appliances than to continue to use them for a long time.

The Postal savings system is a very handy system for the Japanese government because the government can tap into the large deposit base. The deposit base that the government uses for its projects is as big as ¥600 trillion. Do you know how big is the Japanese government's annual budget? It's just ¥80 trillion. And of the ¥80 trillion, ¥40 trillion is not really utilized by the national government because a part of the ¥40 trillion is spent to redeem governmental bonds, and another part goes to prefectural governments in the form of subsidy. So, only the remaining ¥40 trillion is actually spent by the national government to cover all national needs. Compare this amount with the amount that the government has a free hand to spend, the ¥600 trillion!

Government bonds are mostly used for domestic development, for example, for construction. The source of this money for investment is the postal savings system. One person who built a base on postal savings and the construction industry was former Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka. He got all his votes through appeals on the postal savings issue, and then he spent all the money on construction.

**KUNDA DIXIT** I was wondering whether the general strategy is to change people's lifestyle to be less energy intensive. Or is it to not change lifestyles but make them more cost effective and energy efficient? I liked the horizontal-vertical analogy, which way to go. I used to be horizontal, now I am diagonal. Being in the media, I face the same problem at home: how to convey this kind of activism through media to change the mainstream economic culture. I am completely frustrated. I wonder how you handle outreach.

**TANAKA** First I would like to create a society that is not energy dependent. I would like to create a program where people who have no particular interest in energy issues will come on board. Lay people are

sensitive to costs, to money, so if you make something that is more cost efficient and cheaper, then they will come on board.

The media issue in Japan is in a desperate situation. Changing to digital broadcasting costs a lot, and the money to finance the change has to be taken from mobile phone usage fees. This is one of the reasons that mobile phones in Japan are very expensive. This allocation was decided upon by the Liberal Democratic Party. In Japan, if you do not follow what the LDP says, then you cannot get subsidies. Since the advent of digital broadcasting in Japan, the broadcasting agencies have stopped reacting against the government. Another factor is that television, radio, and newspapers are all being run by the same conglomerates. I think the only thing that we can do for the moment is to start with little patches of green. Personally, the one method that is available for me is to start these little points of green by giving this kind of presentation and publishing books to get the message out.

**ALBERT ALEJO** I wonder if you can say something about mining. You talked about water and oil, but what about mining? How does it enter the picture?

**TANAKA** It is something that I do not want to talk about in particular. The two companies that are owned by Rothschild are the two companies that are the biggest culprits in terms of this issue. The subsidiaries of these companies are involved in all the mining activities throughout the world. Many people who protested against these activities have been killed for their activism. The fact that this is such a huge issue in terms of the environment and that people are being killed for their activism means that it has not been taken as seriously as it should have been.

**ALEJO** Why don't you talk about it? What is Japan's role?

**TANAKA** Japanese companies are not the major companies undertaking mining; they just come in and take part in a small part of the mining, or they come in after big companies that are not based in Japan. I think the original problem is Rio Tinto. I think there should be investigations into Rio Tinto; these things have not come through yet. Which companies are involved in Mindanao?

**ALEJO** All the major companies are involved in Mindanao right now. Rio Tinto wanted to go in, TVI of Canada, and I think Chinese mining companies are coming to Mindanao.

**TANAKA** I think that if Japanese companies take this up as an issue, it could have an effect on making improvements. I think the capital funds for Rio Tinto and the Canadian company all are coming from the same area, from Rothschild in England.

**MARIA HARTININGSIH** In Indonesia, the areas of conflict, both horizontal and vertical, are in places very rich in mining and gas resources. We have a conflict in Patuana that has been going on for more than 25 years. In Aceh, it is not only gas exploration but also mining exploration. We have big problems with Freeport, Rio Tinto, and Newmont in all these areas. There are conflicts now between people because they use the divide and conquer method.

**TANAKA** I think this issue of creating conflict within the region is always being carried out by these kinds of operations. In Bougainville, Rio Tinto was doing the same kinds of things. The mining in Bougainville made up two-thirds of Papua New Guinea's foreign currency reserves. The conflict there was between Bougainville and the island. I think it was a war set up by Rio Tinto, which went there for mining purposes.

**DIXIT** I would just play the devil's advocate a little bit and ask you this: There are countries that have benefited from globalization. There are raw material producers that have benefited: Chile from copper, Malaysia from oil and rubber, Singapore from trading. Maybe it is not globalization per se that is bad but how national governments become involved in an accountable way. I just want your reaction on that proposition.

**TANAKA** If you look at the world, if you look at the top 100 profit earners, you find that 51 of those are corporations. There are about five developed countries that gain from globalization; after that, the list is a whole big list of corporations. In the United States, there is actually a deficit in trade. But when you put together all the multinational corporations that come out of the United States, it usually comes full circle. If you take IBM or McDonalds within Japan and you put them into the picture, you will see it is the main companies in the United States that are making profits. Because these profits are not taken back into the US, because they are hidden in other places where they have tax-free zones, the main profits do not return to the United States. So it looks like there is a deficit. I think the whole planet now is revolving around corporations. The power of the state is being reduced so the power is with corporations now.

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## Some Ideas on “The Cocktail Party”

*Oshiro Tatsuhiko*

Writer; the first winner of the Akutagawa Award in Okinawa

I want to focus on the short story “Cocktail Party.” First of all, it seems to be important to provide an outline of the history of the modern literature of Okinawa. Okinawa was an independent kingdom called the Ryukyu Kingdom until the last stage of the eighteenth century. The language basically originated from the same roots as those of Japanese, but it went through major changes in the course of history. The genre of literature was limited to short poems called *omoro* and *ryuka*. Novels did not develop in the Ryukyus. To my knowledge, only one short love story was written in the Japanese language in the eighteenth century. It was influenced by Japanese examples. It is interesting to think about why the novel did not develop. This is because the history of the kingdom lagged behind Japanese history for as long as 10 centuries: 1,000 years. The system of private landownership and feudal society was not developed in Ryukyuan history. In such an immature system of society, the Satsuma domain of Japan invaded the Ryukyu Kingdom in the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Under the control of Satsuma, a new stream of history was developed; a semifeudal society was formed under the king. Aristocracy was maintained, but the people of the governing class did not wear any weapons, and farmers were not permitted to own their land. The kingdom was controlled only to produce tax with agricultural products. The objective of Satsuma was to exploit the profits of the Ryukyu Kingdom in trade with China, which had started in the fourteenth century. It is useful to point out that personal names did not begin to appear in the Ryukyu Kingdom until the first stage of the seventeenth century, although they had already appeared in the sixth century in Japan. In the eighteenth century, an original style of drama like opera was achieved. It was called *kumiodori*, created by the genius Tamagusuku Chokun.

*Kumiodori* is still performed, and it was designated as an intangible cultural asset when Okinawa reverted to Japan in 1972.

A new stage of the Okinawan history of spirit and culture evolved beginning with the abolition of the kingdom and annexation to the modern imperial nation of Japan in 1879. Japanese society and its government required Okinawa to follow Japan in its aspiration for the wealth and military strength of the modern nation. But this was a big burden for Okinawa, because it was not trained for productivity. The influence of this time lag in history has continued to be felt since the beginning of annexation until now. Okinawan society was discriminated against by Japanese society because of radical differences in language and the customs of daily life. More than that, Okinawans experienced a feeling of being a minority within Japanese society, and they waged a spiritual struggle born from an inferiority complex against mainland Japan. As you may know, Okinawan people suffered from the Battle of Okinawa in the last stage of World War II. This sacrifice was stimulated by the inferiority complex, especially among students. They fought to be bona fide Japanese and to free themselves from the status of minority.

Modern Okinawan literature did not start until the beginning of the twentieth century, and it took the style of imitating the Japanese traditional form. The first novel was written in 1910. In most literary works, especially novels, the main theme was the depression and frustration arising as Japanese, and the biggest problem was how to express the feelings of the Okinawan dialect in the Japanese context. This still remains a major problem in contemporary Okinawan literature. When the Battle of Okinawa ended in 1945, some people felt liberated from Japanese control. But soon political control by the US military government became a burden for the Okinawan people.

In the new stream of literature, the activities by the students of the University of the Ryukyus, starting in the 1950s, were outstanding. The group called themselves the Ryudai Bungaku, which means "literature by the University of the Ryukyus." The main theme for them was protesting against the US military government based on the ideology of social realism.

I began my literary work in the beginning of the postwar period. I wished to be free from every stereotype including the works of the Ryudai Bungaku. I often strongly criticized them. They did the same to me. The opposing positions between the Ryudai Bungaku and Oshiro Tatsuhiro are well known in the cultural history of postwar Okinawa's

literary works. Shadows of America have been a big motif. In various forms, this shadow has been portrayed by many writers, including those in mainland Japan. But I was not satisfied with those works. In the last stage of the 1950s, I was interested in the friendship between America and Okinawa. In many places we found scenes of friendship. But I thought that these scenes had been covered with deception. The truth should be presented clearly, and so I believed in clarifying the extraterritoriality behind untrue friendship. But when I started writing, I found a problem, that simplistic criticism and resistance to the military bases are hardly acceptable in literature. I believed that such issues should be dealt with only in essays. Reflecting deeply, I thought about how to answer if I were asked about our crimes in China in the last war. If our crimes in China are forgiven, the crimes of America can be forgiven as well. Based on this question, I decided to answer that we should not forgive either. I found that this idea could build an entire fiction. By the way, I will confess that I conceived this idea through my experience in China. I lived in Shanghai as a student for three years during the last stage of World War II.

In my evaluation, I believe that Okinawan literature has emancipated itself from the feeling of victimization. Standing from this point of view, the Ryudai Bungaku group simply switched Japan in the prewar modern literature of Okinawa to America in the postwar literature. In describing the feeling of victimization, you may know that some US ex-servicemen opposed the exhibition of the atomic bomb at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington in 1995. They claimed that the crime of atomic bomb should be forgiven in exchange for Pearl Harbor. If we take into consideration the theme of my “Cocktail Party,” both should not be forgiven. I believe that this idea may be radical in the twenty-first century. In conclusion, I would like to propose this idea, which I call “absolute ethics” and which could be one of the major achievements in modern Okinawan literature. I reached this idea through struggles and difficulties after World War II, through the long history of Okinawa.

## Dialogue

**MOHIUDDIN AHMAD** I would like to know about your writings on Okinawan political and cultural assertion; how are your writings perceived by the writers in the northern islands of Japan?

**OSHIRO TATSUHIRO** I think the mainland writers only portray the inside of the person; what they are thinking. Many people focus on my

protest against the US military occupation in “The Cocktail Party.” But my real intention was for readers to understand absolute ethics, which is the main focus of the novella. But many people still do not understand that point; that is why I keep on talking.

**ALBERT ALEJO** Can you explain more about absolute ethics? When you say both crimes should not be forgiven, are you saying, “should not be forgotten but should also not be forgiven?” Why do you say they should not be forgiven?

**TARSHUHIRO** By not forgiving, both sides would be able to reach absolute peace. If we forgive war crimes or mistakes, we may repeat the same mistakes. Not forgiving means not forgetting. We can create peace in our society.

**MARIA HARTININGSIH** How would you balance between forgiving and forgetting the crimes in war?

**TATSHUHIRO** In “The Cocktail Party,” the protagonist’s daughter was raped; so he wanted to criticize the crime of the US soldier. But then he has to think about what happened in China during the war; the crimes committed by Japanese soldiers. So by not forgiving either side, he realized he could not forgive himself. He then gained the right to criticize both sides and to understand himself. That is what he means by absolute ethics. That is the merit of not forgiving both crimes.

The US is now criticizing Iraq. The Arabs also criticize the US. How should we think about that? Should we forgive them and forget them? This is the dilemma of absolute ethics. By criticizing both, the narrator gained freedom to think of what happened in Okinawa.

**KUNDA DIXIT** Yesterday we went to two museums, Himeyuri no To and the Peace Memorial Museum. It was a very shocking story of civilians caught in the violence of both sides, which usually happens in many war situations. The truth is so dramatic that you do not have to invent fiction in literature. Is absolute ethics a way to expose hypocrisy? What more of a role can literature play? For example, in the antiwar or pro-peace movement, is there more of a role for testimonies in the museums where there is more fact than fiction? What is the role of literature when the truth is much more dramatic than fiction?

**TATSHUHIRO** I write about war. But people say that is different from what they experienced. So it is difficult. You are right; the fact itself is heavy, dramatic, too shocking. Fiction may not be powerful enough to

face that kind of situation; so that is the difficulty that writers have to face. I wrote a long novel called *Hi no hate kara*, meaning "From the End of the Day," which won the Hirabayashi Taiko Award. It was about the last days of the war in Okinawa, the battle fought on the southern end of Okinawa, the fierce and the terrible war. It was very, very realistic and very shocking. But as you say, the fact can be more shocking than that. Nevertheless, it is the fate of writers to face this kind of heavy, difficult fact; but still they have to write; it is the fate of writing.

**LEE SEEJAE** I come from Korea. This is my third visit to Okinawa. Okinawa is in a very important position to view the Japanese occupation in Korea, the Japanese occupation in China, as well as the US military position in Asia. I would like to ask how Japanese crimes in China can be compared with US military crimes in Okinawa. When you talk about the Japanese crimes in China, do you feel yourself part of the Japanese? Or is it *their* crimes? Would that be the identity problem?

**TATSHUHIRO** Okinawa is part of Japan in that case.

**Seejae** So you feel responsible?

**SEEJAE** Yes. That is where the fluctuation occurs all the time. Sometimes you become Japanese, sometimes you become an Okinawan.

**ALEJO** When I saw the museums yesterday, it appeared to me that Okinawans had two enemies, the Americans and the Japanese. If you say, "Let us not forget the crimes," what is the crime of Okinawans? It is like you are just being implicated by the crimes of the Japanese.

**TATSHUHIRO** That is a big question. Recently, some Okinawans had started seeing Okinawans themselves as victimizers in the war. "The Cocktail Party" discussed the issue of victimization. By bringing in what happened in China, the protagonist said, we are also victimizers. We are part of the oppressive forces. That trend, that kind of thinking may have started with "The Cocktail Party." Many Okinawan historians and scholars started to talk about what Okinawans did in China, Taiwan, and even here; so that is part of our crime, too.

**JANET PILLAI** I wonder whether the geopolitical location of Okinawa, which is so strategic, has an impact on the vacillating identities of Okinawans. I am talking about the Ryukyu maritime kingdom when it was under Chinese domination, then Japanese. Will the vacillation ever be resolved because of its geopolitical position?

**TATSHUHIRO** As long as I live, it is not clear if we can resolve it.

**KAMATA YOJI** I heard you wrote about Okinawan culture, Okinawa within. That was the first attempt to grasp the cultural and speech tradition of Okinawa in the 1970s. My question is what you think about the so-called essence of the cultural tradition of Okinawa. My second question is, as Japanese, I feel that, through the process of modernization, most Japanese have lost any connection to their spiritual roots, including me. Will Okinawa's cultural tradition help Japanese to find their spiritual roots?

**TATSHUHIRO** There is a time warp with the mainland of 1,000 years. That time span has a rich potentiality. The Japanese life is way ahead of Okinawan life. Set against the Japanese standard, what we are doing may look inefficient and slow, but that slowness could contribute something to Japanese fast life. The potentiality has not been accepted yet in Japanese society. It could change the Japanese lifestyle; it can contribute to changing or enriching Japanese life.

**SEEJAE** It would be a good contribution; Okinawans enjoy long life.

**TATSHUHIRO** For example, if a Japanese company goes to another country in Asia, the kind of efficiency the Japanese company demands may be too much for the Asian country. But if an Okinawan company goes to other Asian countries, there will be some kind of compatibility. We get along well. But then, the Okinawan company will be controlled by a Japanese company, and it has to follow the lead of the mainland company. That is the kind of difficulty we see.

Ten years after Okinawa's reversion to Japan in 1972, the bureaucrats from mainland Japan and its capital invaded Okinawa. Okinawans experienced a big crisis, struggle, and confusion.

Haeburu Museum, Okinawa

13 October 2006

## Okinawan Identity

### *Ben Takara*

Poet; Archivist

Okinawa Prefectural Archives

### History of Okinawa

It is said that people started inhabiting Okinawa Island 18,000–20,000 years ago. The Minatogawa Man, whose skull was discovered on Okinawa, was one of the oldest excavated in Japan. There are many theories on where the Minatogawa came from, but a leading theory now is that they came from Indonesia. Looking at a map of the Ryukyu Islands, you can see that from Okinawa Island it is easy to hop from one island to another to go north to mainland Japan, and you can also travel by boat from the Miyako and Yaeyama islands in the southern part of Okinawa Prefecture to Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia. However, there is a long distance between the Miyako and Yaeyama islands and the Okinawa islands (the central group of the Ryukyus). Because of this distance, until the tenth century, the northern and southern parts of the Ryukyus developed two different cultures. Archeologists also back up this notion of different cultures. The Amami islands and Okinawa islands in the northern half had influence from mainland Japan. They also had Japan's Jomon and Yayoi periods. But these cultures did not cross over to the Miyako and Yaeyama islands, where shell fragments, used for cutting and boiling stones to cook materials, have been excavated. The people on those islands did not use any pottery. There is history of non-pottery use in the southern part of the Kingdom of Ryukyu. Archeologists say that during the tenth century, those in the southern area were closely related to Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia in terms of cultural heritage.

Not until the twelfth century did the northern and southern cultural areas begin to merge. Then, mainland Japan was in the Kamakura period, and in Okinawa, the Gusuku period. *Gusuku* means castle in the Okinawan dialect. During the Gusuku period, many castles were built

in the Amami and Yaeyama islands. In any Gusuku excavation, there are five common features. First are iron tools, which were probably imported from mainland Japan or the Korean Peninsula. Second, chinaware from China and Southeast Asia is also found in Gusuku excavations. Third is Sueki pottery. Fourth is a stone that is only found in Nagasaki Prefecture. Lastly, Gusuku-style pottery, which is common to local Okinawan people. From Amami in the north to Yonaguni in the south, those five materials were excavated in every Gusuku site. It can be concluded that the people who were ruling the Gusukus developed trade with Japan, Korea, China, and Southeast Asia. Some Gusuku lords became stronger and gained more control over the land.

By the fourteenth century, the island of Okinawa was divided into three kingdoms: Hokuzan, Chuzan and Nanzan. In 1429, for the first time in Ryukyu history, King Sho Hashi succeeded in unifying the three kingdoms into one. The Sho dynasty of the Ryukyu Kingdom was a trade-oriented kingdom, having trade with Japan, Korea, China, and Southeast Asia. At that time, Shuri Castle became the capital of the kingdom. The Ryukyu Kingdom reached its apex during the rule of King Sho Shin. The kingdom had a trading agreement with the Ming dynasty in China (the so-called Sappo system).

In 1609 Satsuma domain in current-day Kagoshima prefecture invaded the Ryukyu Kingdom. After the invasion, the kingdom was turned into one of the colonies of Satsuma, which meant that the approval of Satsuma was required to become the king. The people of the Ryukyus tried to balance the situation by utilizing political negotiation to maintain a balanced relationship between Satsuma (Japan) and China in order to sustain their independence. During the same period, European and American influence started to come into the Ryukyu Kingdom. Holland, Britain, and the US wanted to have some trading relations with the kingdom, and they sent messengers. The most major incident with the Western nations was in 1853, when Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States came. By means of military power, Perry threatened to open trade between the Ryukyu Kingdom and the US. From there, Perry went to mainland Japan to try to open Japan's economy.

King Sho Tai was the last king of the Ryukyus. In 1879, the Japanese government abolished the Ryukyu Kingdom and replaced it with Okinawa Prefecture. King Sho Tai was abducted from Ryukyu to Tokyo, and he remained there until his death. After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Japan also took over Hokkaido, the northernmost of the main

islands, where the Ainu people lived. The Meiji government told the Ainu that their land was part of Japan. In 1869 the name Hokkaido Prefecture first appeared in the records. Ten years later, King Sho Tai was abducted to Tokyo, and the Ryukyu Kingdom became Okinawa Prefecture and another part of Japan. In this process, Japan also annexed Taiwan and, 10 years later, the Korean Peninsula.

Before World War II, Okinawa was a domestic colony of Japan. Many Okinawans went to foreign countries as migrants to earn extra money. The migrants worked in Hawaiian sugarcane plantations. They also migrated to Peru, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, the Philippines, Bolivia and Singapore. During World War II, we suffered the Battle of Okinawa. In 1945 Okinawa was placed under US occupation, which lasted for 27 years. I was born in 1949, during the occupation era. When I was 21, Okinawa reverted back to Japan. So I lived in the era when people used the US dollar as their currency and all high-ranking Okinawan officials were US military members. When I see the Afghanistan or Iraq situation on TV, I cannot help but remember my younger days.

### **Okinawan Identity**

Until 1879, the Ryukyu Kingdom was independent and had its distinct culture and heritage. From 1879 to the prewar period, Okinawans identified themselves as Ryukyuan. But the Japanese government did not view them as Ryukyuan. They said that we were Japanese. During that period, the people were Japanized through education and cultural cleansing. The persecution of Ryukyu culture is very similar to what was done in Taiwan and Korea and to the Ainu in Hokkaido. A major strategy was to stop the people from using their own language.

The head curator of this museum and I are high school classmates; we have been friends since then. We speak only the Okinawan language. We are 57 years old, and people of my generation can speak Okinawan. In school the use of the Okinawan language was prohibited. If students spoke Okinawan, they would be punished. A similar thing happened in Korea: People had their names changed to Japanese names. In Okinawa, there are names that are very difficult for mainland Japanese to read, and so these names were changed into common Japanese names. For example, a popular Okinawan name, Shimabuku, was very difficult to understand for mainland Japanese, and so they changed it to Shimabukuro. But even that was difficult, and so they further changed it to Shima. The name of the curator of this museum is Oshiro. In

Okinawan pronunciation, it is *Ufugusuku*. But that is difficult for mainland Japanese to pronounce, so it became Oshiro.

Sometimes I wonder why the colonizers focused on language and names. One theory I came up with is that, in order to build a strong military, the commander needs to be clearly understood by the troops, so it is necessary that they speak in the Japanese language. They also need to be able to call out soldiers' names. In the process of assimilation into Japanese culture, there occurred a change in terminology in journalism from *Ryukyuan*s to *Okinawan*s, i.e., the Okinawan people as an ethnic group. However, the term *Okinawans* was not acceptable to mainland Japanese people, either. By 1935, they started calling us *Okinawa kenjin*, meaning the people from Okinawa Prefecture. Hence, when the Ryukyuan were made into Okinawa prefectural people, they were sent to wars as Japanese people; they went to war in Korea, China, and Southeast Asia to annex overseas lands. According to research done at the University of the Ryukyus in November last year, asking about the identity of Okinawan people, 50% of those who answered said they are Okinawans who are different from the mainland Japanese. Because of these underlying background of Okinawan culture and history, every time a major incident happens, a cry arises in Okinawa for cultural reformation or reversion to independence.

From 1945, when the war ended, until 1950, the majority of Okinawan people said that they would become independent again. A kind of national flag of Ryukyu was created in 1945. In 1972, right after reversion to Japan, there was much discussion in new Okinawan literary works about whether it was right to be part of Japan. The idea of creating a Ryukyu constitution was proposed in 1981. In 1997 a forum with over 1,000 participants was held, and they proposed the possibility of Okinawa becoming independent. Last year, a University of the Ryukyus questionnaire asked if it was better for Okinawa to be an independent country. Some 25% answered in the affirmative, saying that Okinawa should be an independent country. However, this is not a political movement; the cry for Okinawa's independence as a political movement is very minor. In terms of cultural and heritage aspects, however, 25% of the people were saying that Okinawa should become independent.

### **Okinawan as an Indigenous Population of Japan**

For the past 20 years, Okinawans have communicated with the Ainu people in Hokkaido as indigenous peoples of Japan. There are about 25,000 people who acknowledge themselves as Ainu. But because of

the oppression that still exists, it is said that about 50,000 are still hiding their Ainu identities. Okinawan people identify them as *Uchinachu* in the Okinawan dialect. I was a chemistry teacher in high school. When I once asked my class what their identity was and what their nationality was, my students answered, "My nationality is Japanese but my identity is Okinawan." Within Okinawa, 1.3 million people call themselves Okinawans. Overseas, there are about 350,000 people who say that they are Ryukyans. For the past 10 years, representatives of Okinawa, together with those of the Ainu, have petitioned in the UN to be recognized as native groups of Japan. Some Ainu people lost their lives in the Battle of Okinawa in World War II. There is an annual memorial service for the war dead held in Itoman City, where there is a memorial called the Namboku no To, the north and south statue. Every year we have a memorial ceremony there with Ainu people, and every five years we have a special ceremony. Haeburu Cultural Center is one of the very first centers to have started exchanges with Ainu. We had Ainu craft exhibitions, offered demonstration of Ainu songs and dances, and held Ainu cultural workshops.

I was born in a community in the south of Haeburu. Right now I live in Haeburu. Oshiro, my high school classmate, invited me to work together with him, and so I moved to Haeburu. I have been one of the councilmen of the Haeburu Community Center since it was established. The center maintains communication with Asian countries. Filipino, Indonesian, and Korean exhibitions have been held in the center. We have peace envoys to all nations. In the 1980s, before Kim Dae Jung and Kim Jong-Il met, we actually had a South and North Korean convention here.

The center used to be a food preparation place for a middle school. After renovation, it became a cultural center. Even though the space is very limited and the building is very old, what we are doing here is very international and valuable. I am also one of the members of the historiographic institute of Okinawa. Basically, we collect historical documents and edit and publish them in historical books. Among the output of our section is a collection of immigrants' historical documents. I also assist in writing and producing the city records and history books. The institute also has documentation on the Ryukyu Kingdom; all the official documents that passed between China and Southeast Asia have been collected. I am also a member of the Okinawa Prefectural Board of Education. The scholastic works I have done have been used in school textbooks and other materials. An example is the Okinawan history

and culture booklets, which are distributed to middle school students. Part of my job is to collaborate with Haebaru Cultural Center researchers and publish documents to improve our cultural heritage and history.

### **My Literary Works**

Right now I am a public servant. But at 5 pm, I become a poet. My name also changes from Chosei Takamine to Ben Takara after 5 pm. In 1990 I went to the Philippines to study for seven months. I have kept ties with Sionil Jose, one of the famous Filipino novelists. In 2001 I was invited to Indonesia for a poetry festival. I have also visited Korea many times. The focus of my work is to maintain a network with other Asian poets. I started publishing poetry when I was 17. We have a magazine called *Kana*, which means love—love for people, love for all—in the Okinawan dialect and also in ancient Japanese dialect. In the Okinawan dialect, “*Kana san do*” means I love you. When four to five poets gather together and contribute their works, we publish an edition of the magazine. The latest one is the twelfth edition.

My first poetry book was published when I was 22 years old, and so far I have published seven poetry books. Unfortunately in Japan, poetry books do not sell. I was very surprised when I went to Indonesia. I was asked many questions, such as how many poetry books I have published. When I answered “About 500 to 1,000 copies,” they told me that I would be a bestseller in Indonesia. In Japan, it takes a bookstore about five to ten years to sell 20 copies of a poetry book. One of the most primitive ways to sell books is to carry them around and sell them retail in street markets. I have been to the Amami and Miyako islands, hosting poetry reading sessions and selling my books in this way. Unfortunately, in the whole country of Japan, I know only one person who is a full-time poet, Shuntaro Tanikawa. He is not only a poet but also writes lyrics of songs and animation. He lives solely on his literary works. The rest are professors or civil servants or something else, and part-time poets.

### **Dialogue**

**LEE SEEJAE** What kinds of topics do you choose as poetry themes?

**BEN TAKARA** There are universal themes, joy of birth, sadness of death, love, and hate. Those four may be universal themes of poetry work. What do you think?

**MOHIUDDIN AHMAD** I wrote about different feelings at different times.

**TAKARA** It is very difficult to answer that question. If I can come up with a very good answer, I will win the Nobel Prize for poetry.

[Text partly omitted.]

**LEE** To preserve the Okinawan language, is this nationalism for you? In the Philippines, is it only Tagalog?

**ALEJO** It could be language, it could be the state, but it is ultimately love, the vagueness of that message.

**LEE** How many people can read you if you write in the Okinawan language?

**TAKARA** People above 50 years old maybe are able to read it. But Okinawa also has different problems. The Okinawan dialect, Miyako dialect, and Yaeyama dialect are different from each other. As I said earlier, because of the separation into northern and southern cultural areas, communication between those two has been difficult.

**JANET PILLAI** So do you use Okinawan to talk to each other?

**TAKARA** We cannot communicate using the Okinawan dialect with Miyako people. The Ryukyu language has five different dialects: Amami, Okinawa, Miyako, Yaeyama, and Yonaguni.

**LEE** Do you have any moments writing in Japanese when you cannot express something, for example, difficulties arising from the meanings of words?

**TAKARA** I do have that. In the Okinawan language, there are expressions that cannot be reproduced in Japanese.

**LEE** Using the Japanese language and having that gap of meaning, is it difficult to express Okinawan ideas and identity in Japanese?

**TAKARA** Of course, if I say it is difficult, that is the end of the story. Take, for example, a person who is suffering, who may have lost a leg in a fire and has low income or something like that. In the Okinawan language we say *chimugurusa*, which when translated into Japanese is something like *kawaiso*. The direct translation is *chimugurushii*, which means your liver or gut is tormented. But in Japanese, *kawaiso* is kind of the wrong way to express that. In Japanese your emotion is emphasized, but in *chimugurushi* this person is bitter because of suffering, and that feeling is the same as mine.

**LEE** How about writing Okinawan literature in the Japanese language?

**TAKARA** Probably some expressions are overlapping, some are not. There are some portions you cannot directly express in Japanese but some you can. We have Japanese-Korean poets; we also associate with them, and their emotions are also similar.

**AHMAD** You mean that among people, because of age, it may be difficult to communicate with them in the Okinawan language.

**TAKARA** Right.

**AHMAD** So after 30 or 40 years the language will die?

**TAKARA** Nice question. September 18 has been designated by Okinawa Prefecture as Okinawan local language day. An Okinawan councilman said that if we just leave it alone in the course of nature, the Okinawan dialect will become extinct. We should preserve the Okinawan language. The Ainu are already restoring their language. In Okinawa we are planning to restore the language. This is a school textbook; we have a subtext written in the Okinawan language. Starting from Okinawan history and social studies, we are writing in Okinawan. This is for middle school, and the other one is for high school.

**AHMAD** Are you aware of the international mother-language day, which is on February 21? It was declared by UNESCO and has been celebrated for the last five years. In 1952, students in the University of Dhaka were demanding that Bengali be made a state language of Pakistan. Some students were killed by the police. Since then, February 21 in Bangladesh is a language day.

**PILLAI** Can I ask why this generation of writers, who speak Okinawan and think in Okinawan and also write in Japanese, why didn't they write in Okinawan?

**TAKARA** There are two reasons. Some literary works used the Okinawan language. Some people from Yaeyama wrote in the Yaeyama language. If I read that, I cannot understand most of the meaning.

**LEE** You are bilingual. Why didn't you write in two languages?

**TAKARA** That is precisely why I sometimes write bilingual poetry, in Okinawan and Japanese. The first reason is that each work is a literary piece, so we cannot really do anything. The second reason is that even if I write Okinawan or Yaeyama or Miyako or Yonaguni, the number of people who can read what I write is limited. But if you write in Japanese,

maybe you can publish 500 copies. If you do that in each language, less people would understand fully.

**LEE** In the US occupation period, what was the US idea about this dialect?

**TAKARA** Up to 1950, before the outbreak of the Korean War, the US troops were thinking that the Ryukyus would be separate from Japan and could become independent. So they started education in English. They started producing textbooks in English. Actually in school they encouraged children to speak the Okinawan language. But Okinawan teachers saw through this scheme, and they protested and said, Okinawa should go back to Japan. The reversion movement began. At that time, if we had educated children in the Okinawan language, we might have become independent. But the Okinawan people had to decide whether to choose English or Japanese, and they opted for Japanese. After the Korean War, US troops were trying to monitor and suppress China and Korea. They had to stay in Okinawa. So US troops had to agree to the demand from Okinawan teachers that education be conducted in Japanese.

I-House Seminar Room  
17 October 2006

## **Required of Journalism in Asia: From the Perspective of an Independent Journalist**

*Akihiro Nonaka*

Founder/ Representative, Asia Press International

We use TV and newspaper to know what is going on. If the information we get through the media is warped or biased in some way, it means that we do not get accurate information about the world. Very unfortunately, the amount of biased information given in the mass media is getting bigger. This is why people are looking into alternative media. The need for “alternatives” is becoming stronger around the world. Today I would like to talk about the actual experiences of Asia Press by giving you some specific examples. I would like to talk about the status quo of the online media as well as what we can get from it.

Members of Asia Press go to all kinds of areas in Asia, and their objective is not just to cover conflicts and wars. For example, last year in February there was a coup in Nepal. The national media was under the censorship of the king. The Nepalese had to rely on broadcasts of BBC to learn about their own country. In Afghanistan in October of 2001, after 9/11, the US and British forces attacked the Taliban. I went to cover the conflict there. If you went to little towns that did not even have electricity, you found that they too were attacked. They knew why it was happening, because they were listening to BBC broadcasts by radio. I have also been to East Timor several times. The world was watching the situation in East Timor as they fought for independence from Indonesia. The people in East Timor were watching BBC and CNN. But BBC and CNN were regarded by the pro-Indonesia people as the enemy, because their broadcasts were pro-independence. Sometimes you would see someone being interviewed by BBC or CNN in the morning. Then in the afternoon people would watch that interview, and in the evening you would find the same person being critical of BBC or CNN.

The public broadcaster of Japan, NHK, has no influence whatsoever. That is because NHK is only broadcasting in Japanese. The news broadcasts that are watched all over Asia are mainly the English channels. It seems we do not have a system in Asia yet where the people in Asia can provide information or broadcast information to the outside world. As a result, people around the world are only learning about Asia through the Western media.

I would like to look at how biased or twisted the Western media can be. I would like to use as an example the US footage of the Iraq war. [Text partly omitted.]

The war in Iraq started on March 20, 2003. By April 9 Saddam Hussein's regime had fallen. We have seen the scene many times where the statue of Saddam Hussein was toppled. A member of Asia Press was in Baghdad when it happened. But the Japanese journalists who were covering for Japanese TV and newspapers were already out of Baghdad before March 20. On April 9, apart from three people from Kyodo, only independent journalists were in Baghdad to cover that day. The member of Asia Press provided coverage from Baghdad for many major news agencies in Japan. I discussed with the person in Baghdad what kind of comment he would give about the scene when the US military came into Baghdad. To be more specific, the point that we discussed was whether the people in Iraq welcomed the US military or not. Which side should we have presented? Our reporter was there before April 9 and had been covering Baghdad for about a month.

The journalist said in the first report that when the US military came to Baghdad, only a few residents welcomed them. But the next day, on April 10, two major Japanese newspapers, the *Asahi* and *Yomiuri*, both said that the residents welcomed the US military. For example, the *Yomiuri*, which had the Iraq story on its front page, said that the citizens of Baghdad welcomed the US military, saying that they were their liberators. On another page, they had a second story with the headline, "We are now free, the citizens rejoice." The reports were completely different from what the reporter in Baghdad said. The person who wrote this for the *Yomiuri* actually was in Amman, not in Baghdad. We asked him how he wrote the story without being in Baghdad. He said that he watched TV and wrote the story. If you visit a correspondent working abroad, you will usually find in his room four TV screens tuned in to the BBC and CNN. I asked the *Yomiuri* reporter if he had watched Al Jazeera. He said no, because he did not understand Arabic. When these major news agencies said that the Iraqis welcomed the US military, the

Japanese people's perception, even people who were against the war, was likely to be that if the Iraqis were happy, maybe the war was right.

Regarding Saddam's statue, the *Asahi* reported that there was a big crowd of people rejoicing in the fall of the statue. But according to the Asia Press reporter, there were only about 150 to 200 people there. Can you really call this a big crowd? If you remember the TV coverage of the statue's toppling, you will recall that the camera was focusing only on the people around the statue. This created an image of people rejoicing on the fall of the statue. That image was created through camera work. The fall of the statue and the fall of Saddam Hussein regime created an image that this was a historic event equivalent to the fall of the Berlin Wall. There were people in the United States who thought that the image created by the US media was questionable. The ABC report said that on the scene you would find people dragging the head of Saddam's statue. There were 18 people involved, 7 of whom were reporters. With the camera zooming out of the crowd away from the statue, you could see that there was no crowd. The camera panned out, and you saw from the top. Not many people were around the statue three minutes after it fell. Even with such a historic event, we may not be learning the real story of what actually happened.

In an NHK report, it was analyzed how the world media in Britain and the US as well as Japan reported the war in Iraq through their news bulletins. The first image that was broadcast over and over again was the rows of US tankers coming in. The second image was missiles being launched from US vessels. Third were the Iraqi bases that were attacked by US and British forces. What we did not see much was the damage caused to Iraqi people. Intentionally, the damage on Iraqi people was not shown. Let me give another example, what was broadcast on NHK about the war. What we saw most was the attack and the operations of the US military. Only ranked eighth was the citizen's damage and casualties. If the ranking had been reversed and we had heard more about the damage and casualties, probably we would have had a larger voice from around the world against the war.

Before we sent people to cover the Iraq War, we had one thing in mind about the viewpoint that should be there, and that was to show the damage on the side of the Iraqi citizens. We thought that already the mass media had their embedded journalists in the US forces; therefore, we were sure to learn a lot about that. What we could not expect to hear much about was what was happening to the citizens. So our viewpoint

was on the citizen side. An NGO from the US and Britain compiled a body count. The count as of today is a minimum of 44,000 and a maximum of 68,000. A report made by a US research institute said that so far 650,000 people have died in Iraq. Obviously there has been great damage, but nobody knows its true scale because nobody is actually counting. One US general said, "We do not do body counts." He was saying that casualties are not a priority.

I went to the ceremony for 9/11 last month. There you could see the bereaved families calling out the name of each person who died. The names of the victims of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were not being called. There was nobody out in the world mourning their death. At Asia Press, we believe this is totally unfair. It is impossible to report from a neutral stand and have an objective report. For example, suppose you are reporters and I ask you to file a neutral and objective report on Iraq. What would you go out to look for? I have been to Iraq, and I have spoken to the US soldiers there, very young men, 19 or 20 years old. There are also women soldiers. It seemed I was talking to high school kids from rural parts of the US. They believe that they are there to save and liberate the people of Iraq. They are there for the sake of democracy. For the Iraqi people who lost a family member because of the US attack, the war is a national terror for their country. In a war like that, there is no way you can report from a neutral and objective viewpoint. In democracy what is important is not to have biased reporting, and yet there are many reports from a biased viewpoint. When there is just one biased viewpoint, then that causes many problems. But when you have several, many reports, many programs from different viewpoints, with each one maybe biased, we will then be able to get a larger picture of the actual situation. When Asia Press reporters go out, we try to have a very clear idea of the viewpoint from which we are going to look at the situation. If we are asked whether or not we are biased, we will say, yes, we do have a bias. But in this democratic world of the media, we believe that our role is also essential.

Sometimes our view at Asia Press may conflict with the view held by the government or the nation. We still have people in Iraq. Almost every day I get a phone call from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs telling us not to send reporters to Iraq. The ministry is making this request because there are many reporters or NGO workers getting caught as hostages, sometime being killed. If we believe that there is a reason to be out there, we will send reporters. The viewpoint held by the Foreign Ministry will in no way influence our thoughts. I believe that among the many

media reporters in Japan, Asia Press is probably the organization that has the most reporters being smuggled in and out of countries. If we want to cover the guerrillas and their activities in Afghanistan, it means that we will cross the border from Pakistan. If we want to cover the militant minorities from Burma, we cannot travel from the Burmese capital. It means we will have to cross the border from Thailand into their territory. Of course we may get arrested at borders or captured as hostages, but we are totally responsible for whatever happens to us. We discussed this with the reporter in Iraq before he left: what to do if he were arrested or captured.

In the past, when a Japanese national was taken hostage in Iraq, they might ask for money. Sometimes there would be a request to withdraw the Self-Defense Forces. It is our rule that if one of our members is taken hostage or captured, no rescue operation will be carried out. Be it an NGO that wants to intercede with the hostile party or even the government, we would reject any request or any proposal made about a rescue operation, because we are journalists. If we are journalists and are covering a war, we need to be out there in the battlefield. Whatever happens to us when we are out there, we are totally responsible for that. It is not the government that should be responsible for whatever happens to us. Our viewpoint does not need to match the view of the government.

There are several issues that the Japanese mass media have in relationship to the government. When it comes to working with the government, it seems that they forget about the rules of journalism. On the issue of Takeshima, or Dokdo Island as the Koreans call it, this is a territorial dispute between Japan and South Korea that was a big issue last year. Even though it is such a big issue, however, Japanese TV stations broadcast almost no reports on Takeshima or Dokdo itself. I wondered why nobody was covering the island itself, or even the area surrounding the island. I decided to go myself. I first went to Seoul and met a correspondent of a major newspaper and asked why the Japanese journalists in Seoul did not go to cover the island. Did anybody have any clue or answer? Why they did not think to go out? I was told that they did not go to Takeshima because the Japanese embassy there asked them not to. The embassy's stance is that Takeshima is a Japanese territory; so if a Japanese journalist travels from Korea to Takeshima, it means that we are accepting the fact that it is a part of Korea.

Japan has another territorial dispute, one with Russia regarding a group of islands in the north, but the same kind of logic works there, as well.

We had a member who covered the islands to find out what the Russian residents of the islands thought about the issue. We wanted the report to be broadcast by NHK. But the NHK producer, when I approached him, said that this would be very difficult. He asked me how the reporter got there. I replied that the visa came from Russia. Because the islands are under the rule of Russia right now, you cannot get to them without a Russian visa. Upon hearing that, the producer told me that because the Japanese government takes the position that the islands off Hokkaido are part of Japanese territory, going there on a Russian visa is totally unacceptable. To do so would imply acceptance of the fact that the islands are part of Russia.

There is something really weird going on here. As a journalist, you have to go out there to meet the people to get their stories. But it seems that the mass media is voluntarily refraining from going out there because of the demands or pressures of the government, which as a journalist is a totally unacceptable attitude. Anyway, I traveled to Takeshima last year. I asked a person I knew in the South Korean parliament to facilitate my visit to the island. Since I was only the second Japanese person to travel to the island in 50 years, staff members of the Korean broadcaster KBS went with me.

As I was covering these stories, people told me, “You aren’t a Japanese, you’re anti-Japanese.” When I try to cover other stories like the controversy over Yasukuni Shrine, some people tell me that I am such an unpatriotic person I should leave the country. I say to them, “Sure, if you pay me \$3 million, I’ll leave the country for you.” When I traveled to Takeshima, I rode in a boat also carrying Korean passengers. I was told to remain quiet, because if people found out that I was Japanese, there could be a problem. But when I got on the boat, I heard people saying, “That’s a Japanese person.” They knew right away. So I ended up getting a chance to chat with the South Korean residents. They wanted their views to be known.

Several years ago there was a big issue about a Korean fishing vessel operating in Japanese waters. I tried to cover the story because it was a story about Korean and Japanese fishermen in conflict. I tried to get a Japanese member of Asia Press on a South Korean fishing vessel, so we could learn why they need to operate in those waters. But Japanese people cannot board such a vessel. So I asked a Korean member of Asia Press from Pusan to go instead. The small fishing boat was an illegal vessel in South Korea. Its operations were a problem for Korea

as well, because it was an illegal vessel to begin with, and it was fishing in Japanese waters. When a correspondent of KBS learned that we would have a Korean member of Asia Press boarding the ship, he told the Asia Press member that he should remember that before he was a journalist, he was a Korean. "What are you thinking, trying to report the shame of South Korea on Japanese TV?" The program was aired on NHK, and on seeing it, some Japanese fishermen got in contact with us to say that through the program, they learned that Korean fishermen had similar problems to theirs. It was a shared issue between the two. Without such a program, they would just be enemies. The Japanese and Korean fishermen had no opportunities to get together to speak with each other. But because they learned about each other through the program, they are now able to see those on the other side as human beings.

North Korea is a big problem now. The question is how we should report on North Korea. Several years ago some North Koreans tried to seek asylum in a Japanese consulate in China. It was a big issue. Major Japanese TV networks asked Asia Press whether we had videos of people fleeing North Korea to China. I wondered why Japanese TV stations and newspapers did not have any footage of their own of North Korean refugees crossing the border with China. The North Korean issue is the largest international issue in Japan. If we want to know about the issue, the quickest and most accurate way to learn is to interview the people from North Korea crossing into China to ask them what is happening. But nobody is asking questions. Japanese correspondents are not there on the border to speak with the people who flee, because the Chinese government does not look at the people fleeing into China as refugees. It regards them as illegal immigrants, and it does not welcome foreign journalists who want to cover their stories. Major Japanese TV stations and newspapers have large offices in Beijing, and they do not want to anger the Chinese authorities.

I believe the number-one role for a journalist is to provide information on what Japanese citizens want to know. Right now Japan wants to know what is happening in North Korea. The weakest point of Japanese journalists is that they cannot stand up against the authorities. A friend at CNN said that he is never worried about not getting a visa or getting kicked out of the country when he goes out to cover a story. The problem with the Japanese media is that, although we need to be the watchdog of authority, critics of what is happening, we are not doing that. Sometimes the mass media even bow before the authorities. Members of Asia Press have covered the border issue several times. We know

that the Chinese police have photographs of us and are watching to see that we do not wander across the border into North Korea. As we are journalists, we have people who are happy to cooperate with us, so we do not have to stay at hotels when we travel. Members who cover Korean issues can speak Korean. Therefore, we have been fortunate not to be arrested by the police as we cover the story of the North Korean refugees.

Some Japanese mass media do have good coverage and do produce good work. However, when it comes to the Iraq War, North Korean issues, and territorial issues, topics which the Japanese want to know about, the reports of the Japanese media may be problematic.

The Asia Press is a group of professional journalists. When we go out to make a report, we want to make a difference. We want to be different from the mass media.

## Dialogue

**MARIA HARTININGSIH** I totally agree with the reporting on the Iraq War. However, a photo shown in your reports from the psychological perspective was very frightening and violent. I am afraid that journalists may tap into what psychologists describe as the pornography of violence. You also spoke of the history of the Taliban, the Mujahedin, and the war in Afghanistan, saying that the violence has been there for a long time. According to many books I have read, before the Soviet invasion, Afghanistan was not that kind of state, it was a more peaceful state.

**AKIHIRO NONAKA** I do believe that people may have similar opinions about what you have mentioned on the Iraq War. But what happens in war is that people kill each other; that is the reality. As a journalist, one's first rule is to show the reality. So when we try to show what is happening out there, sometimes we have to show a dead body.

[Text partly omitted.] The first time I visited Afghanistan was in 1983. You remember General Masud, who was killed before 9/11? He was still a hero, a person who stood up against the Soviet Union. I was the first Japanese to meet Masud face to face. I crossed the border from Pakistan and visited a valley called Panjshir, which was 100 kilometers away from Kabul. Since then, I have been back and forth between Pakistan and Afghanistan. We have been covering Afghanistan for over

20 years. One other thing about Japanese TV is that they are very concerned about viewer ratings, how many people watch a program. When we cover such issues as Palestine and the Israel-Lebanon warfare, viewership will go down. In Japan, the rate is calculated every minute. Although we have covered the Afghanistan issue, Palestine, and the conflict between Israel and Lebanon, this is not really welcomed by Japanese TV.

**LEE SEEJAE** What do you think about Japanese TV reports on North Korea? Do they tend to emphasize the difference with South Korea? When you report on North Korea, what is your viewpoint?

**NONAKA** The coverage of North Korea in the Japanese media is stereotyped. We cannot really see the faces of the people living in North Korea. Many Japanese people, because of the news coverage on TV, think that North Korean people are like robots, that they are brainwashed. Because we cannot freely walk around North Korea to make reports, in some ways we cannot help that. There are two major issues. One is that even when Japanese correspondents travel to North Korea, they do not send back many critical reports. There is one thing that Japanese media want when covering North Korea, which is a one-on-one interview with leader Kim Jong-il. wants to have an interview with Kim, and if it criticizes North Korea too much, it will be shut out of the country. The other issue is viewer ratings, which are calculated every minute. For example, in a news bulletin, suppose there is a feature on North Korea. If it is about North Korean history, the ratings will definitely go down. On the other hand, if the North Korean feature is on entertainment women, called “women who give joy” in Japan, that will bring up the ratings. That is reality, especially with the commercial broadcasters, to whom the ratings are everything.

I sometimes teach at universities. From time to time, I ask the students if they know why there are two Koreas. The other day, I taught 30 students at the University of Tokyo; only three of them came up with the correct answer. In short, students do not know history. Last July North Korea test-launched some missiles, which was a very big issue in Japan. I think that North Korea is not a threat to Japan. Some people said that the missiles were meant for Japan. But if you look at where the missiles fell, you find it was within or close by Russian territorial waters in the Sea of Japan. Even today we have one member in Pyongyang. Among the military there, there is a great food shortage. There are many soldiers who are malnourished. There is a blackout

almost every day in Pyongyang. The economic scale of North Korea is equal to one prefecture here in Japan, Shimane Prefecture. North Korea may be capable of launching several missiles, but they are not capable of waging a war. They have no rational reason to attack Japan. For the Japanese mass media or Japanese politicians, the great danger North Korea poses is that it provides a reason to remilitarize Japan, to change Japan's Self-Defense Forces into a full military. People who want to change the opinion of the Japanese toward remilitarization can utilize it. If there were going to be a war in Northeast Asia, it would be caused by actions of the United States. I believe that war is not going to be initiated by North Korea.

I am not pro-North Korea. I am just trying to think logically. As a journalist, I believe that our job is to provide materials that can help viewers or readers to think about North Korea, to learn about North Korea, including its history. Right now, the coverage of North Korea has an emotional touch to it. There is a sense of urgency in Japan. We are making an appeal for people to look calmly at the issue. Sometimes, I imagine that President George W. Bush, Osama bin Laden, and Kim Jong-il are connected by a hotline. As long as the US is fighting a war on terrorism, bin Laden has an excuse to carry out his war. If Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has a hotline with Kim Jong-il whenever he needs to increase his power, he may have Kim fire a missile or carry out a nuclear test. There is a rather funny relationship between two sides: the enemy is making its enemy stronger. The enemy is providing strength to the other.

**JANET PILLAI** What do you think of the future of alternative media in the light of the trend for the media to be politically and financially controlled by governments in Asia? Another question is whether you think there is room for neutrality on the Internet.

**NONAKA** Unfortunately, online journalism is only successful in small parts of the world, for example, in South Korea. In Japan, online journalism is not established yet. Some people say that online journalism will replace the TV and newspapers that we have today. But I believe that it may take 10 to 20 years for that to happen. If you look at the Japanese Internet, you find that Yahoo, Google, and a number of other portals are providing some news. However, it is not journalism. It is just an information industry. I say this because one major role of journalism is to assign priority to issues. There are many things happening around the world. The role of journalism is to pick out the

important issues and provide information on them. Sometimes some of our work goes to Yahoo. The people working at Yahoo are not journalists; they are simply computer engineers. They do not prioritize which issues are more important than others.

It would take 5, 10, or more years for the *Asahi Shimbun* to change to operations focusing only on the Internet. One reason is that newspapers are physically delivered to households. There are 82,000 people who deliver newspapers. This means that the *Asahi* buys the newsprint, prints the news on it, and delivers the papers to delivery centers, from where people deliver them to households. It is a high-cost operation. For example, if you want to subscribe to the morning and evening editions of the *Asahi*, over a month it would cost roughly \$33. The good thing about a newspaper is when you take one look at a page and see the size of the headlines, you see what are the important issues of the day. We do have some online papers. However I believe that they are not going to succeed. Several years ago, one Japanese Internet newspaper was established, but it is not doing well. I am not optimistic about online journalism.

For people at NGOs or NPOs, the Internet is a very strong tool. But there is one big danger: The Internet provides a lot of information, and so we may think that it is the smartest medium. What is actually happening is that it is changing people's thoughts into more simplified thinking. We are getting too much information that we cannot digest; so we are asking somebody else to make the judgment and select which items are important. It seems that with more information, Japanese society is becoming more uniform. Thought is becoming simpler because the large amount of information is not making people think smarter, it is making people stop thinking.

Finally, I would observe that we have a member of Asia Press in China, and it seems that freedom of expression is slowly but steadily growing there. I believe that this trend is not going to be reversed. On the one hand, freedom of expression in Asia is spreading; but on the other, the media in the US as well as in Japan are coming under the control of big capitalist conglomerates. We believe this picture is not going to change.

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## **The Most Dangerous Scenario of the Yasukuni Problem**

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The Yasukuni issue has been a major topic ever since the advent of the Koizumi administration. This is not the first time, however, that Yasukuni Shrine has been at the center of controversy subsequent to Japan's defeat in World War II. It is, I believe, the third round of controversy. Yasukuni Shrine has evolved in association with war. In the nineteenth century, at the end of the Meiji Restoration of 1868, it was constructed as a shrine to worship the war dead, consequently becoming a symbol of the military and militarism. Initially the shrine was run and managed by the state. After the defeat in World War II, it was separated from the state and made a religious corporation. As a state shrine and military shrine, 2.46 million fallen soldiers were enshrined in it.

After the defeat, the first round of controversy over Yasukuni occurred during the period of 1969 to 1974, when a nationalization bill was submitted in order to make it again a state shrine. At the time, there were militant arguments between those for the nationalization of the shrine and those against it. Consequently, the bill was not passed. The second round of controversy was the period of 1985 to 1986, when then Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone announced that he would make official visits to the shrine. On August 15, 1985, Nakasone visited the shrine, thinking that postwar politics had totally resolved the issue. Japan had been exercising restraint, and it was the end of the troubled past. Nakasone asserted that Japan should move forward, become a major power, and play a major role in the world.

The Nakasone government was said to be a hawkish government. Because of the official visit, there were criticisms within Japan. Many

considered the government's position to be problematic. For the first time, China criticized Japan, because 14 class-A war criminals were enshrined in Yasukuni as *kami*, or deities. These were the criminals adjudged in the Tokyo war-crimes trial (International Military Tribunal for the Far East) as the leaders of Japan's war of aggression. So for the Japanese prime minister to make a show of public worship at Yasukuni offended those countries that were victimized during the war. The media in South Korea, Southeast Asia, and other places also severely criticized Japan. Because of the intense criticism of his 1985 visit, in the following year Nakasone discontinued the visits.

The third round of controversy began when Jun'ichiro Koizumi became prime minister in 2001. Every year in August Koizumi would visit the shrine, and each time the Chinese and South Korean governments would harshly criticize the visit, resulting in the cancellation of summit talks between Japan and China and Japan and South Korea. The arguments over the Yasukuni visits of Koizumi centered on the charge that it was problematic to have the prime minister visit a shrine where class-A war criminals were enshrined. The visits were hardly good for Japan's political relations with China and South Korea. To the end, Koizumi continued to be criticized on this matter by China. But despite the criticisms, he announced that he would not give in to arguments from overseas because they were attempts to meddle in domestic affairs. This stance enhanced his popularity in Japan.

The war of aggression and Japan's colonial rule in China, Korea, and surrounding nations in Asia have not been settled and dealt with properly. I feel the matter of war responsibility has not been properly addressed. In the 1990s there were 70 suits made to Japan's courts seeking apology and reparations. For Japan to regain the trust of Korea, China, and other countries, the prime minister should not visit Yasukuni Shrine.

When we consider the increasing opposition and criticisms of foreign governments, we must conclude that the Yasukuni issue cannot be resolved as a diplomatic problem if we strictly limit our thinking to foreign relations. One argument is that if Japan gives in, that would be a disgrace that could result in rising feelings of nationalistic thoughts on the part of the Japanese. In addition, a mechanism has been created whereby the prime minister can leverage the issue in order to maintain popularity. The Yasukuni issue in terms of diplomatic relations focuses on the class-A war criminals. According to Prime Minister Nakasone and others, if Japan were to remove the war criminals from the shrine,

the criticisms of China and South Korea would probably stop right away. Therefore, there is a trend among Japanese politicians to favor the separation of the criminals from the shrine, to take them out of the picture. However, the shrine officials assert that all the war dead have been enshrined as *kami*, and once they have been enshrined, it is impossible to remove them. In Shinto, they say, it is not possible to consider a deity already enshrined as no longer being enshrined. This argument makes it difficult to seek a solution by simply removing the war criminals from the list of the enshrined.

Hypothetically, what might happen if the war criminals were dissociated from the shrine? Without the criticisms from China and South Korea, the Japanese prime minister would be able to worship there. However, if the prime minister visits the shrine, it would still violate the article of the Constitution that separates religion and state. Until the end of the war, Yasukuni was a state shrine, one which played a major role in the war. If the prime minister visits the shrine, it would mean the return of a relationship between the shrine and government that violates the Constitution. The stronger the association between Yasukuni and the government, the larger is the possibility for state politics to utilize the leverage of the shrine in order to foster a positive mindset toward war among the Japanese public. The state would be able to urge the public to pray for the war dead who fall for the sake of the nation. The Constitution, though, forbids the use of Yasukuni by the government for war.

There were three lawsuits made by the people against Prime Minister Nakasone's visit, each saying that it was unconstitutional. For Prime Minister Koizumi, seven lawsuits have been lodged. Two court judgments have agreed that visits to the shrine violate the Constitution. One judgment said that there was a strong possibility or suspicion of the visits being unconstitutional, while the other said that if the visits continued, they would become unconstitutional. The issue has not reached the Supreme Court yet, but a High Court ruling of the visits being unconstitutional has been delivered.

The class-A war criminals were enshrined in 1978. From 1985 onward, the governments of China and South Korea started to view the visits as problematic. But the fact that the war criminals were enshrined is unrelated to the fundamental matter of the shrine, because Yasukuni without the war criminals would still be Yasukuni Shrine. The shrine was founded in 1868, and it remained a state shrine until 1945. After

the defeat in 1945, it became a religious corporation functioning without the class-A war criminals until 1977. As for the war criminals and the shrine, it is not as if they are indispensable to the shrine. The focus of the discussion on the Tokyo trial, which found the class-A war criminals to be guilty, was the war responsibility for the events from the Manchurian Incident of 1931 onward, that is, the Japanese aggression in China and the Pacific War.

What Japan did prior to the Manchurian Incident was not covered by the class-A war criminals concept. At the time of the Manchuria Incident, Japan was already an imperial nation with several colonies: Korea was annexed in 1910, and Taiwan was placed under colonial control in 1895. The war dead who had fought for the state and contributed to the colonization of the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan were enshrined in Yasukuni. Thus for Korea and Taiwan, consideration of the Yasukuni issue and Japan's responsibilities in terms of aggression in Asia cannot be fully covered by talk about the class-A war criminals, because the shrine played a major role in Japanese colonialism prior to the time of their acts. This is a problem of the scope covered by the class-A war criminals concept and the scope of Japan's responsibility for aggression in Asia, as well as of the constitutionality of visits to the shrine by prime ministers.

The recent discussions of the Yasukuni issue have been focused just on Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to the shrine. But deep down there is an even more important issue: worship by the emperor at Yasukuni. For the people supporting the prime minister's visits, the ultimate goal is not to fully establish these visits but rather to resume the visits by the emperor. The current foreign minister, Taro Aso, who was also foreign minister under Koizumi, said last year that from the point of view of the war dead, they did not die saying *banzai* to the prime minister; they said *banzai* to the emperor. The war dead, in short, died for the emperor. So the most important thing is to make visits by the emperor a reality.

The Japanese education system until the end of the war taught children from elementary school on that it is the people's obligation to give their lives for the sake of the state and the emperor. It was instilled through the education that soldiers who acted on their obligation and had fallen in war for the emperor were models, and so they were enshrined in Yasukuni. The soldiers lost their fear and anxiety of war by thinking that if they died, they would be enshrined as *kami* and would receive visits from the emperor. The thought of becoming a model

for the Japanese people and receiving praise restrained their fears and anxiety and pushed up their morale. That was the kind of role played by Yasukuni Shrine. The significance of the emperor's visits does not only have meaning for soldiers; it also played a major role in sublimating the sorrow of the bereaved families of the war dead, turning sorrow into joy. Naturally it is painful for a mother to lose a son or a wife to lose a husband. But once these sons and husbands are enshrined and the emperor comes for a visit, the bereaved families are invited to the ceremonies, and when they see the emperor worshipping at the shrine, they find joy from death in war.

I have a 1944 magazine article that is quite interesting. It is about a woman named Matsu Tsutsui who was married to a farmer in a poor village on the island of Shikoku. She went through physical hardship working in the fields. Her husband died from illness, so all by herself she raised her four sons, who all entered the military. Out of the four sons, three died in war and were enshrined in Yasukuni. Despite the family's poverty and her difficulty in raising her sons, she became recognized and praised as the mother of the military nation. The article talks about her feelings when she lost her eldest and second son in the war. While she was working in a field, the town officer came to tell her of her eldest son's death. She was so shocked to hear the news that she sank to the ground until she was just gazing up at the sky. When the second son was reported to have died in China, she was saddened again. When these two sons were enshrined, she was invited from the deep mountains of Shikoku to Tokyo. At the ceremony, her thoughts were changed as she saw the emperor worshipping at the shrine. She said in the article, "We poor peasants, even if we died of old age and sickness, no one would care; but because my sons died in war and died for the sake of the state, the emperor is worshipping their souls at the shrine. There is nothing that could make me happier."

In order to have visits by the emperor take place, discussion of nationalizing the shrine will have to come up. Actually visits did take place in the past, the last one occurring in 1975. This summer, one of the influential politicians of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party said that it was important to have the emperor visit the shrine once again, and for that it was necessary to have the shrine nationalized. After making it a national shrine, the government could decide to move the class-A war criminals out of the shrine. The logic is that with the war criminals removed, naturally the prime minister can worship, the

emperor can visit, and there will be no criticism from China and South Korea.

I believe that this nationalization logic is a very dangerous scenario. The LDP wants to change the war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution and to have Japanese military forces go into action with the US forces. Recently Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said that within his term, in six years or less, he would like to have Article 9 amended. He is also thinking that even without revising Article 9, the government can change its interpretation of collective self-defense, thereby permitting Japan's Self-Defense Forces to exercise military power when acting in self-defense alongside US forces. In this way, with or without an amendment of Article 9, the time may come when the Japanese SDF or a new military body would exercise armed force, and soldiers who died in combat would be enshrined in the nationally run Yasukuni Shrine, where the prime minister and the emperor would go to honor their spirits. That is a landscape I can envision for the future. When the SDF were dispatched to Iraq, a study was started on whether SDF troops could be enshrined in Yasukuni if they died. The conclusion of the study was that under the current Constitution with its separation of the state and religion, war dead from Iraq could not be systematically enshrined. But if Yasukuni were made a state shrine, the war dead of the SDF or some other military body could be enshrined.

The system of the old days, which Japan has not had since 1945, could be revived. In the nineteenth century, when the Japanese military was first created, Yasukuni Shrine was established to support it. This system was dismantled with Japan's defeat in World War II. But what we may see in the twenty-first century is the revision of Article 9 by the Japanese government, the creation of a true Japanese military, and the foundation of a nationally run Yasukuni Shrine. The scenario I am sharing here is not related to the class-A war criminals. With the removal of the war criminals from the shrine, it would work even better. Thus Yasukuni is not just an issue of memories of the past; it is an issue of grave meaning to the present and the future.

## Dialogue

**KUNDA DIXIT** By going to Yasukuni, successive prime ministers have been doing a popular thing. The visit itself is a populist move. Is there a problem in public opinion, which has not coalesced against militarism? And is the media at fault?

**TETSUYA TAKAHASHI** I think you have pointed out appropriately the linkage to populism. But the issue only became clearly visible after Koizumi became the head of the government. Until Koizumi, criticism by the Chinese and South Korean governments had been given a certain amount of consideration or care by Japanese prime ministers and the government. When Prime Minister Nakasone was harshly criticized, he considered having the class-A war criminals removed from the shrine. But because the shrine rejected that idea, he stopped going after just one visit. In the case of Prime Minister Koizumi, despite the criticism, no matter how often he was criticized, he continued to make visits. He realized for the first time that his stance increased his popularity. Among the postwar prime ministers, he was the first to utilize the populism associated with Yasukuni.

Using the media is very necessary for a populist politician. For the Koizumi administration, the major point of the Yasukuni issue was the fact that the harsh criticisms by China and South Korea were reported by the media as a clash of nationalism between Japan and China and Japan and South Korea. This led to the enhanced popularity of Koizumi. I find problems with the manner in which such reports were made. The media tended to be sensationalistic, to seek something that was stimulating and to report in a manner that would be popular among the masses. The Japanese media tend to appeal to nationalistic emotions in their reporting.

**MARIA HARTININGSIH** What the politicians have been doing so far reminds me of the ethics of responsibility.

**LEE SEEJAE** Why were the class-A war criminals enshrined in Yasukuni in 1978? I did not really understand the Yasukuni problem. You explained that the problem is not limited to the war and colonialism, so I learned a lot. Is there any support for the idea of a secular national cemetery? We have one in Korea. At the final stage of the Koizumi government, the Yasukuni problem was really devastating in terms of national interests. I recall that Japanese businesses requested the government to defend their interests. While Koizumi was in power he was very powerful; even without the Yasukuni issue, he could maintain his position. Why is it that when he was almost finished with his term, he still went to the shrine? His aim was not to gain popular support at that point.

**TAKAHASHI** When the shrine was separated from the state, full information regarding the war dead could not be obtained from the

shrine only. Information as to who would be enshrined as war dead came from the Ministry of Health and Welfare. For the 14 class-A war criminals, some were sentenced to death, others died in prison. They were treated as those who died during official duties, and the MHW instituted measures to provide the bereaved families with pensions. That happened some years ago, before 1978. Since the MHW considered the class-A war criminals as war dead along with the others, a list of the war dead including them was provided to the shrine in the 1960s. Naturally, when the shrine received the list, it prepared to enshrine them. But the chief priest at that time felt that if the war criminals were enshrined with the others, it would create social problems, and that could make it impossible for the emperor to visit the shrine. Therefore he stopped the enshrinement. When the chief priest died, the new chief priest, Nagayoshi Matsudaira, who thought that the Tokyo trial was a case of victor's justice and that the war criminals were just scapegoats, decided to go ahead with the enshrinement.

Despite the fact that Japanese business leaders wanted Koizumi to stop his visits to Yasukuni, feeling that they were not in line with Japan's national interests, he still continued to worship there even at the end of his term. I think that was a decision he reached based on whether to emphasize national interests or maintain his own popular image. He did not want to give in to criticism from China and South Korea. If he canceled the visits as a result of the criticism, it would mean that he had bowed before foreign countries. His personal nationalistic emotions did not allow that.

I believe that so far there have been three reasons for the visits by Japanese prime ministers. One is elections. Yasukuni is supported by the Nippon Izokukai, the association of the families of fallen soldiers, which is a sizable organization. Naturally, with the passage of time, the size of this association has become smaller, but in the postwar days it was a major group. So LDP leaders wanted their votes. Koizumi had publicly promised that once he became president of the LDP and prime minister, he would visit the shrine. Among party members of the LDP, about 10% have connections to the military. Second, the prime minister has to think about the defense of Japan. When the prime minister visits the shrine, it enhances the morale of the SDF. The possible enshrinement of those who might be killed in the Iraq War, together with an amendment of Article 9 and an upgrading of the SDF into a true military, are options for enhancing the morale of the SDF. Yasukuni Shrine is a symbol honoring the war dead of the SDF or the military in the highest possible

way. Third, as Koizumi discovered, politicians can utilize Yasukuni by playing on populist sentiments to maintain or increase their popularity.

**MOHIUDDIN AHMAD** I am not interested in Nakasone's or Koizumi's visits, because these are not important to me. You gave us two dimensions of Yasukuni, religious and political. Those people who believed that enshrinement would bring consolation can be logically questioned. But the visits of the prime minister to Yasukuni have political logic. There was another Tokyo tribunal in 2000, the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery, and there Emperor Hirohito was convicted as a war criminal. Those people who died for the state are personified in the emperor. I have some difficulty in understanding your logic of de-enshrining those class-A war criminals. I read in the newspaper that 70% of the Japanese support the visits of the prime minister to Yasukuni. How could you ignore that?

**TAKAHASHI** It may have been a complicated question, I am not certain if I fully understand your question. Regarding Japanese support rates for the prime minister's visits to the shrine, the numbers differ depending on which opinion poll you consider. In opinion polls, more people will respond in the affirmative to a question asking whether the prime minister should "refrain from visits" than one asking if they "oppose the visits." Immediately after Koizumi's visits, those who said that it was good for the prime minister to visit the shrine tended to outnumber those who said otherwise. But when asked whether Prime Minister Abe should visit the shrine, more people say he should refrain from visits.

As to your information that 70% support the visits, I do not know the timing. The support rate would depend on which opinion poll it was and when the poll was conducted. Actually when you simply ask whether the respondent supports or opposes visits, the content of the support or opposition are not the same. Even among those who support visits, there are those who say it is natural to have the class-A war criminals enshrined and to have both the prime minister and the emperor make visits. Others say that the class-A war criminals should be removed from the shrine. And yet others say that no visits should be made at times when China and South Korea are upset but that the visits should be resumed when they have calmed down. Among those against the visits, similarly, some actually support the visits but want them discontinued during times of criticism. Then there are people like me who say that even without criticism from foreign countries, no visits

should be made because of the constitutional question. In fact, some say that Yasukuni Shrine itself should not exist. There is thus not just a simple split between those who are for or against the visits but a diverse range of opinions under discussion. I think we can understand that it is not a situation where 70% are a unified bloc in support.

You pointed out the distinction between the political and religious levels. I also believe that there are aspects where one should separate the political and religious levels in discussing this matter. As a researcher, I am focused on the religious level rather than the political. Prior to Japan's defeat in the war, there were hardly any criticisms of visits or people against the shrine because of education. After the defeat, criticism emerged regarding Yasukuni Shrine's role in the war as well as in colonization control. Yasukuni is associated with a specific religion. So not only Koreans and Chinese but also some Japanese bereaved families wanted their dead relatives removed from the shrine. There are many bereaved families who are campaigning against Yasukuni for religious reasons; they find it unacceptable to hold belief in Yasukuni. Against the backdrop of constitutionally protected religious diversity and religious freedom, it is hardly proper for the government to be associated with a specific religion in the way it is at Yasukuni.

# Unmasking Identity

*Maria Hartiningsih*

*An identity would seem to be arrived at by the way in which the person faces and uses his/her experience<sup>1</sup> (James Baldwin).*

And I would like to start it from something personal....

Myself. I was a daughter of a woman, who was a daughter of a Muslim cleric in a Javanese village. My late mother was more literate in Malay-Arabic than Latin. My father, who has also passed away, came from a middle-class coastal community and used to play violin and piano.

My grandparents from both my father and mother's side had built a little mosque in the village where they had been raised in a rural tradition in the coastal community. Although raised within Muslim tradition, both my parents, as far as I remember, observed more Javanese traditions than religious rituals.<sup>2</sup>

Some of my relatives also observe rather strict Javanese traditional customs,<sup>3</sup> though they declare themselves as Muslim and non-Muslim.

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<sup>1</sup> The "her" is mine.

<sup>2</sup> Islam projects itself in various faces and "varieties" letting it more easily find fertile grounds compared to others according to the time and space. It is futile to see Muslims as one heterogeneous group. Indonesia and Java Island in particular have been, for the last 2000 years, the junction of most important cultures and civilizations. Indian, Islam, Chinese, European were converging there, being digested, developed and rejuvenated. Historians would find Java to be an excellent specimen for research on concepts of tradition, cultural influence, ethnicity and acculturation. For further discussion, see Denys Lombard, *Le Carrefour Javanais: Essai d'histoire globale II, Les réseaux asiatiques. Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya, Kajian Sejarah Terpadu, Bagian II: Jaringan Asia* (translated edition, Gramedia, 1996). Personal note: my family's circumstances would not serve as reference for all Javanese families.

<sup>3</sup> Undertaking "white fasting," sleeping only beyond midnight and then offering prayer in one's own way, commemorating birthdays for children and other family members, cleaning of cemetery prior to the fasting month, etc.

During the month of *Ramadhan*, the Islamic fasting month, we often held a gathering dinner to break fast together. On the *Eid* day, the biggest celebration following the *Ramadhan* fasting, the whole clan gathered to do *sungkeman*,<sup>4</sup> paying respect to and asking for forgiveness from the elders. And yet, as far as I know, religion was never talked about.

I was the only daughter who was raised in Javanese tradition and grew up in a catholic educational environment. The first name Maria was added to my original maiden name Hartiningsih after I was baptized at the age of six. Margaretha was an additional name added between my baptized and maiden name when I got Confirmation Sacrament at the age of fifteen.

However, in everyday life, nothing had changed since then. I joined my mother while she delivered her *wirid*, the chanting of Allah's great names after the daily mandatory prayers, and *tahajud*, midnight optional prayer, almost every night when I was still living with her. During *Ramadhan*, I did fast with her. Following my mother's ritual, I also fasted on certain days in months other than *Ramadhan*.

Every week my mother woke me up for church mass. Every Christmas, my mother bought me a new dress and waited for me coming from the church, then warmly kissed me and wished me Merry Christmas. My mother even bought me a cross pendant that I still keep with me.

When I became an adult, I asked her why she allowed me to embrace a religion different from hers. And she answered, "Religion is only *ageman* (the Javanese word for cloak). She then brought her hands to her heart and continued saying, "What is more important is here. It is how you see life, how you treat others and yourself. There is no difference between us, human beings. We breathe the same air, drink the same water and walk on the same earth."

Those words have been my guide to live my life. For more than 35 years of my life, I could not build a sense of identity in me. The solid sense of mutualism, politically verbalized into the word of "tolerance," had been something that I took for granted.

Identity, or the lack of it, pricked my senses during an episode when the *Monitor*, a popular tabloid in Indonesia's early 1990s, got a libel suit for allegedly defaming Prophet Muhammad.<sup>5</sup> Quite out of the blue

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<sup>4</sup> "Sungkeman" to the elders on Eid-ul-fitr Festive days, to me, is closer to tradition than spiritual.

one editorial management staffer in my office inquired, “I thought you were a Chinese.” For some moments I was dumbfounded and did not know how to react to that. In a flash a set of characteristics of mine constructed my identity. All of a sudden I realized that my skin complexion is fairer than an average Javanese. My eyes are not that large. And I also became conscious of my not-so-common Javanese name.

That “sense of not so clear identity” was, again, awakened when some sub-district officials of Rawa Belong, West Jakarta, summoned me not long after the *Monitor* case surfaced. The architect of my newly built house had attempted to overcome Jakarta’s humidity by raising the roof and doing away with dividing walls. When the house was completed, the officials thought I had built a church amidst a Muslim kampong community.

I could not help but feel as if I was in a “tribunal” by those local officials and some prominent Muslim figures, who all happened to be men. An explanation from my architect, a pious Muslim himself, could not satisfy them. They demanded an explanation holding me responsible and settled for nothing less.

First, they pored over my ID-Card before quizzing me on oodles of things that, later, I realized were pieces of my own identity: from my job, where I work, the time I come home every night, to very personal things such as who my husband was and how many children I had. This last line of questioning was apparently to determine whether or not I was married. At the end of all that, the deputy head of the district asked me in undertone, “Are you Chinese?”

I refused to react with an answer of “yes” or “no,” as it would not bring any different consequences.

That incident opened my eyes to a novel horizon of realization. All along I thought I was just a normal person with some “irregularities,”

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<sup>5</sup> Taking place in October 1990, when *Monitor* conducted a survey of who are the most popular individuals and it yielded Muhammad at 11<sup>th</sup> rank. The Chief Editor, Arswendo Atmowiloto, was cursed, accused of inflicting pain to the 90 percent of Indonesians who are Muslim. Throughout October – November the Kompas-Gramedia complex were subjected to demonstrations in the name of Islam. The impact was cascading: the Indonesian Journalist Association dismissed his membership, his company stripped him from all his positions, and after he completed his jail term he was quietly asked to resign. The court of justice, the last place he sought the ray of justice, pledged him with a five-year jail term.

i.e., an unmarried woman in her thirties (then), speaking with a thick Javanese accent, a journalist working for a prominent Indonesian daily, wrongly branded as being “Catholic,” coming home from work irregularly at night, officially registered as a non-Muslim, and with facial features of a Chinese look.

That day I realized that those characteristics created an identity in me to be “the other” and not “one of us” in the eyes of the mainstream. I became an “alien” who, in the eyes of any person with power at any level of any form, is predisposed to be treated as they wish including trampling my fundamental rights as a citizen.

This very issue of identity woke me up at night with a cold sweat when I heard the news of mass rape of Chinese women in the riot in Jakarta in May 1998,<sup>6</sup> despite the fact that I was in the United States at that time.

## II

*“Who am I” has become a tricky question to me.*

“I” am a single subject. It bears with it an assortment of identities that support one another, although at times refuting each other, and thus giving the sense of a degree of complexity within the single self of me. Amongst those identities there are some that others, who are outside me, attached to a certain community, religion, ethnicity, tribe, group, class, or whatever color without first corroborating with me.

Albert Alejo, an anthropologist from the Philippines, brought me to an understanding that identity is something created, asserted, invented,

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<sup>6</sup> The May Riot took place on 13-14 May in Jakarta, but the rape of Chinese women still went on several days afterwards. Humanitarian Voluntary Team / Tim Relawan Kemanusiaan possesses a set of data that confirm the incidents. Even though the government of Indonesia in the UN meeting rejected the report by the UN special reporter on violence against women, Radikha Coomaraswamy, President Habibie formally requested apology to the people and acknowledged the rape incidents, July 15, 1998 (Kompas, 15/7/98).

<sup>7</sup> Albert E. Alejo, SJ (2000), *Generating Energies in Mount Apo: Cultural Politics in a Contested Environment* (Manila: Ateneo University Press), and private discussion with the writer in the course of ALFP, Tokyo, 14 September 2006 – 14 November 2006.

<sup>8</sup> *Kompas* 1 March 2006 carried a news item regarding a session in district court against two women accused of prostitution. The rounding up of these women signified the enactment of Tangerang city ordinance No. 8/2005 prohibiting prostitution in the city’s jurisdiction. This news

constructed or generated. Rather inert identities are fluid and mobile according to space and time. It treats itself as a sum of shared characteristics but it is hidden in a twin strategy of shedding off unwanted or disintegrated elements.<sup>7</sup>

I, for example, could not force others to accept my identity solely as a journalist when they wanted to attach other identities to me in association to certain characteristics. Even when, for instance, I tried to use peace journalism as my identity while advocating for resolution of conflict with a religious overtone, many would still identify me to be a person belonging to one of the conflicting parties.

Let me cite the latest example. I was covering the issue of injustice and discrimination to women particularly associated with local ordinances that were loaded with Islamic *Sharia*.<sup>8</sup> Such local ordinances have been rampant in the last five years following the Bill No.22 of 1999 on regional autonomy.<sup>9</sup> There have been 51 similar laws and local ordinances in several localities in Indonesia that have been enacted based on what is claimed to be “moral, ethical, and the norms of Islam.” Ahmad Suaedy, Executive Director of the Wahid Institute, stated that the draft bill on anti-pornography and porno-action (RUU APP) proposed by legislative members could not be separated from this

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was followed up with a feature write-up the day after, on the first page, on a tragic story of a primary school teacher who was accused and later convicted jailed. On Friday, 17 March 2006, hundreds of people calling themselves Aliansi Masyarakat Tangerang (Almakta) / Tangerang Residents' Alliance mobbed the *Kompas* editor's office in Jakarta. They protested the news items run on 2, 3, 4 and 8 March 2006 that were said to be unbalanced and unproportional. The mob demanded the apology from *Kompas*, revision of the write-up regarding the anti-prostitution ordinance and demanded that the *Kompas* journalist in Tangerang be replaced. In the hard and threatening orations, the *Kompas* journalist was herself accused of being prostitute. Ms. Sulastri, the writer, shared with me

that she received malicious threats related to her religion. This release of stories on the implementation of the anti-prostitution ordinance also resulted in *Kompas* to be accused of a being Catholic newspaper that is anti-Sharia.

<sup>9</sup> Record at the Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (Indonesian Women's Coalition) show that, to this date, 25 localities in Indonesia have implemented ordinances of this kind and six others are preparing similar bills. At the time of this writing the city of Depok was on the verge of enacting such an ordinance. An ordinance of the government of Aceh Darussalam enacted the Islam *Sharia*, effective 2005, to be applicable to all members of the general public. This includes symbolic and ritual matters such as the muslim women clothing decorum for district civil servants, requirement for the ability to recite AL Quran for pupils and brides-and-grooms-to-be, Malay Arabic characters on signboards, anti-prostitution and local regulations on beliefs and faith.

phenomenon. All these policies disrespect social and cultural diversity in Indonesia.

In a meeting with me, Prof. Jan Michiel Otto from the Van Vollenhoven Institute for Law of Leiden University in the Netherlands said that in practice, several states applied different interpretations of *Sharia* law. There are in fact differences amongst *Sharia* laws in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Afghanistan, Malaysia, Egypt, and Morocco. Historically speaking there has always been a tension between *Sharia* law and local legal systems in a particular country.<sup>10</sup> It is unfortunate that in Indonesia this has been left unresolved both by those who oppose and those who support it.

On 16 June 2006, as many as 56 members of the Parliament of the Republic of Indonesia from different factions and parties officially wrote to the House Speaker asking for the abolition of such “morality” laws, ordinances and bills are based on *Sharia*. There were rallies in many localities organized by both the groups who supported and who opposed such legal instruments.

Those who opposed argued that tolerance and diversity in Indonesia are at risk. Those two things have been the very fundamental foundation of the *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia* or the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia that was proclaimed by Soekarno-Hatta on 17 August 1945.

This principle of diversity has been secured by the 1945 Constitution and the five pillars of *Pancasila* as the state policy. *Pancasila* as a shared ideology prohibits any group to dominate others or to impose one’s ideology or principles on other groups or parties.

Unfortunately it is not easy to restore the tainted reputation of *Pancasila*. It was once misused to safeguard authoritarian power and was manipulated to justify oppressive, malicious, arbitrary, and tyrannical acts during the era of the New Order. And thus the word *Pancasila* is

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<sup>10</sup> Interview on 3 July 2006 and a paper, “Sharia and National Law: Clash or Civilization,” presented at the 15th International Congress on Legal Pluralism, Faculty of Law of University of Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia, 29 June-2 July 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Darmaningtyas of Yayasan Sosial Untuk Kemanusiaan expounded in great detail in her paper, “Pendidikan *Pancasila*: Belajar dari Kegagalan Orde Baru” (Pancasila Education: Learning from the New Order’s Failure) presented in a seminar entitled “*Pancasila* vs the Threat of Cultural Uniformity Imposition,” conducted by the Aliansi Bhinneka Tunggal Ika in Surabaya, 23 June 2006.

often enough to stir horrid experience: it is a myth, an indoctrination tool, impediment and a boring subject at school.<sup>11</sup> Its appeal for national tolerance and as the upholder of diverse identity is gone.

Those who supported the “morality” laws argued that those regulations were the product of democracy in the localities emanating from a political process of accommodating people’s aspirations involving all fractions in the parliament. This is stated in 134 letters – also officially – submitted by members of the Parliament on 26 June 2006; but this time it came from political parties in favor of such “moral” laws.

Meanwhile, a study by Dr. Musdah Mulia discovered that proposals for these local ordinances on *Sharia* have typically been copies of similar ordinances from other localities. In some cases even the name of the locality was carelessly retained on the official submission.<sup>12</sup>

Research reports of various independent organizations on *Formalisasi Agama dalam Kebijakan Publik* (Formalization of Religion in Public Policy) in South Kalimantan, South Sulawesi and West Nusa Tenggara (2006)<sup>13</sup> brought to light interesting findings. *Inter-alia*, proposals by local executives to formalize religious morality contain the vested interest to either whitewash or to cover their liabilities in issues of corruption, political competition, and budget irregularities.

The attempt to instate *Sharia* law in the Constitution has always been a contentious debate in Indonesia since independence. During the preparatory phase of independence, this raging debate between the Muslim bloc and the nationalist bloc was resolved amicably by the investiture of *Pancasila*. A decade later, in 1955, the debate was resurrected in a Constituent Assembly session. The nationalist bloc succeeded in maintaining *Pancasila* as the basic state policy. Four years

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<sup>12</sup> Dr. Siti Musdah Mulia, “Perda Syariat dan Peminggiran Perempuan: Ada apa dengan demokrasi di Indonesia? (Sharia Ordinances and Marginalization of Women, What’s going on with democracy in Indonesia?),” a paper disseminated through women’s emailing list, 10 August 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Conducted by LK3 Kalsel (South Kalimantan), Lapar-Sulawesi Selatan (South Sulawesi) and YPKM Nusa Tenggara Barat (West Nusa Tenggara) and supported by the TIFA Foundation.

<sup>14</sup> Soekarno noted, “We are in the conviction that Jakarta Charter of 22 June 1945 inspirits the 1945 Constitution and is part and partial with the said Constitution.”

<sup>15</sup> Partai Bulan Bintang (the Crescent and Star Faction) and Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (the United Development Party) submitted a draft amendment to the 1945 Constitution art 29 para (1) into, “(Indonesian) State is based on the belief on God’s almighty with the compulsion to implement the Islam Sharia for the believers.” The last seven words were adopted from the Jakarta Charter.

later, on 6 July 1959, Soekarno issued a Presidential Decree that halted the polemic.<sup>14</sup>

In 2000, the specter of *Sharia* law was making a comeback, but was put down again in the debate on constitutional amendment.<sup>15</sup> Notwithstanding, such discriminatory elements based on religious morality were passed as law in the National Education System (Law 20/ 2003)<sup>16</sup> and the Law on Child Protection (Law 23/2002).<sup>17</sup>

Zuly Qadir and Novri Susan in their studies argued that the seeds of Islamic conservatism have been planted since 1984, started by certain groups of young people on prominent university campuses who strive for a state and community systems based on Islamic principles.<sup>18</sup> The growing trend is particularly observable not only in the drafting of *Sharia* law in numerous localities and the drafting of the anti-pornography and anti-porno-action bills, but also in violence targeting groups of

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<sup>16</sup> The Government did not take any steps to implement controversial provisions of the 2003 education law that required private elementary and secondary schools to provide students with religious instruction in their own faith. Under preceding laws, students had to choose religious instruction from five types of classes, representing only Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, and Hinduism.

<sup>17</sup> The Child Protection Act of 2002 makes any attempt to convert minors to a religion other than their own through “tricks” and/or “lies” a crime punishable by up to five years in prison. This act was used to convict three Christian women who were convicted for allegedly trying to convert Muslim children.

<sup>18</sup> Zuly Qadir and Novri Susan, “Islamic Fundamentalism and Radicalism: A Study on Hizbut Tahrir and Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia in Jogjakarta, Indonesia” in Kamarulzaman Askandar (2005), *Understanding and Managing Militant Movements in Southeast Asia*, Penang, Malaysia: SEACSN Publication.

<sup>19</sup> As cited in the Religious Freedom Report 2006, in 1980 the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) issued a “fatwa” (a non-legal, nonbinding but influential opinion issued by Islamic religious leaders) declaring that Ahmadiyya did not form a legitimate part of Islam. In 1984 the Religious Affairs Ministry issued a circular banning the Ahmadiyya from disseminating their teachings in Indonesia. In 2003 the Home Affairs Ministry affirmed Ahmadiyya’s legal recognition. However, on July 28, 2005, the MUI renewed the 1980 fatwa. The press quoted the Minister of Religion M. Maftuh Basyuni in February as stating that Ahmadiyya members should either form a new religion or come back into the fold of mainstream Islam. Some local governments banned Ahmadiyya activities after militant groups attacked Ahmadiyya mosques, homes, and other private property. The central Government condemned the use of violence; however, despite its jurisdiction over religious matters, the central Government did not speak out against or formally review the bans.

people who espouse views or schools of faith that are different from the religious mainstream.<sup>19</sup> Groups claiming to represent the Muslim community have also committed violent acts in the name of religious morality.

Ahmad Suaedy<sup>20</sup> contended that those cases revealed narrow-minded observance of Islamic ways of life and demonstrated the so-called religious illiteracy. This situation is easily aggravated by elite Muslim politicians. Unfortunately, this has not been the case only with Islam.<sup>21</sup>

In this light, the politics of identity is moving fast to a new level of absurdity.

### III

Journalistic work related to the whole problem has brought me to a similar difficult situation. A group of friends who support *Sharia* law accuses me of being part of the “contra-*Sharia* law” people. Those who are against the law assume that I am part of a party fighting for diversity. It is difficult for me to explain to both sides that, according to me, the problem is not a “pro or con.” At a certain point, however, I must submit that it is not easy to get out of those binary oppositions.<sup>22</sup>

I feel that in that situation, multiple identities are easily manipulated, imposed and reduced to a single identity ¶<sup>a</sup> religious identity ¶<sup>a</sup> and

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<sup>20</sup> Ahmad Suaedy, “Agama dan Kekerasan Kolektif” (Collective Violence and Religion), a paper presented in book review *Ketika Fatwa Menjadi Penjara (When Fatwa Becomes Prisons)*, Jakarta, the Wahid Institute, 2006, at PBNU Building, Jakarta, June 2006.

<sup>21</sup> In December 2005 the World Hindu Youth Organization (WHYO) protested the film “Shinta Obong”, a film based on a story “Ramayana,” a holy Hindu book, for deviating from the original story. The filmmaker, Garin Nugroho, met with the Hindu community in Bali, in January 2006 to apologize.

<sup>22</sup> I am one of the signatories of a statement against the Anti-pornography and Anti-porno Action Bill, organized by the *Aliansi Mawar Putih* under the leadership of Dr. Gadis Arivia and colleagues from the *Women’s Journal*, aligned with 200 other persons. This statement was published as a paid advertisement in national dailies in Jakarta in May 2006.

<sup>23</sup> Karlina Supelli, “Sesudah Tegangan Dua Gagasan: Syarat Kemungkinan dan Ketidakungkinan Indonesia” (After the Tension of Two Ideas: The Requirements of Possibilities and Impossibilities of Indonesia), paper, presented at the *Symposium Nasional tentang Restorasi Pancasila* (National Symposium on the Restoration of Pancasila), FISIP Campus, University of Indonesia, May 31, 2006

are pitted in a confrontation. Differences are made absolute, fully activated and politicized.

It was not out of the blue when Karlina Supelli,<sup>23</sup> a scholar in philosophy, quoting Richard Sennet says that, “We” (*kita*; you and I are inclusive in the context of people within the group) can be a “Dangerous Pronoun.” When differences are politicized, the “We” disappears and what is left is reduced to only “Exclusively We” (*kami*). This “Exclusive We,” Supelli went on, can be a hidden place of the hated past and, at the same time, of the present time. “Exclusive We” becomes a protective cocoon of “us,” because “we” defines with and for what purpose we talk.

Within the “Exclusive We” the morality color of viciousness has changed depending on whose side commits it. And thus, good and bad depend on who commits the crime and for what side they commit it. When one’s experience is criteria to justify a perspective, the community is fragmented into nothing but crowds of identities, and yet still calling itself a “community.”

Identity politics has roots that can be traced back to hundreds of years ago. One sees it in labor movements, feminist movements and in the struggle against racism. Then it is used in a movement to fight for justice for the groups marginalized by dominant political-social logic ranging from race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation up to people living with HIV all those that basically fight for identity acknowledgement could easily be shifted to the politics of recognition.<sup>24</sup>

Supelli further reminds us that when it comes to politics of recognition, the demand is no longer just a specific identity but acknowledgment of a status and a socio-political role in defining public institutions. Identity politics moves from the simply cultural to the legal category. Its purpose changes to de-institutionalizing the patterns of culture that are regarded to be weakening the group’s status and replacing it with certain patterns that are seen as strengthening it instead.

By making differences absolute, the politics of recognition tends to be sectarian and ethnocentric. This phenomenon of increasing strength of acknowledgment politics centered on the religious, ethnic, and national primordial became more prominent after the end of the cold war. Yugoslavia is a good example of this.

<sup>24</sup> Further reading: Franz Fanon (1968) on national culture in *The Wretched of the Earth* (NY: Grove Press), Kate Millet (1970) *Sexual Politics* (NY: Doubleday & Company) and Shulamith Firestone (1971) on gender and class in *The Dialectics of Sex* (NY: Bantam).

Supelli points to several successful cases in Indonesia where sectarian groups have launched acknowledgment politics such as the above-described local ordinances, anti-pornography and anti-porno action bill, and the Law of Educational System. The groups exploit politics through democratic institutions, i.e., national and local parliaments, and optimize this exploitation to weaken the waves of rejection.

In the politics of recognition, difference tends to be intention without a clear vision on what the target or purpose is. As Supelli stated, what is left behind is merely differences and its accumulation. What was once claimed to be a difference now ends up to be coercion from one party towards the others through normative claims. In short, difference that is being held high is, at the same time, also uniformity.

Hereby it can be understood that refuting politics of recognition by advancing another politics of recognition actually remains on the same level of thought. Researcher Risa Permanadeli puts simply that the pro and con groups both use the same platform, debating women's body. Those who support it are likened to the Middle-Age European community that was dominated by religious rationality and philosophy that loathed women's bodies. Those who reject it represent the bodily interest when fighting over state domination and joining forces with the power of consumption.<sup>25</sup>

Researcher Hendro Sangkoyo<sup>26</sup> further dissected this issue by examining the history of the formation of the Indonesian State. The Dutch colonial administration constructed the diversity in the island country to attain a "socially representative" form in the framework of colonial politics. At the "end game" of the colonial regime at the end of the 1940s, the colonial ideology launched its last attempt by using a matrix of "colonial customs" through puppet entities. Unfortunately, the political elite and religious leaders were unsuccessful at using the agenda of integration to exorcise the ghosts of colonialism from their respective institutions and paradigms. They ended up strengthening the majority-minority polarity.

It is these divisions of major-minor that bind the perspectives of many people, including nongovernmental organizations working at the grass roots. Therefore, the researcher further proposes that most energy should

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<sup>25</sup> Maria Hartiningsih, 'Mempersoalkan Negara' (Questioning the State), *Kompas*, July 29, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Interview, through e-mail, September 29, 30 and Oct 18, 2006.

be allocated in the attempt to resolve them at this level rather than reusing the language or religious traps even if the pretext is of “inter-faith.”

Permanadeli also cites historical failure to be a factor that determines the Indonesians never understanding the meaning of living together and, therefore, continuously being trapped in the majority-minority polarity concept. Furthermore, while Permanadeli examines the existence of the state, Sangkoyo asserts that in the long run, state or stateness is not the sole machinery configuration or the operator of power.<sup>27</sup>

Permanadeli reminds us about what is at stake in a diverse situation such as in Indonesia where more and stronger concepts could not be used as guidance in politics of diversity. Sangkoyo added an explanation that procedural democracy as political metabolism cannot attain its meaning unless one comprehends the power systems of the actors.

In a micro scale, the stagnant and even transgressed regional management following the decentralization policy in 2001 can be understood if we know the fibers of its overriding political processes. If our reference is limited to a standard course of “democratization” or efficiency of state bureaucracy, or in other words, focusing only on the state system, one would never be able to talk about meaningful reformation.

The conundrum is that Indonesian leaders appear to be faltered by the trap of modernity, a concept that accrued and touted varying definitions of political systems but disregarded and denied the actual experience of their very own populace and, consequently, forgetting the concept of their humanity.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Sangkoyo further explained that the state system is like a wagon or equipment that can be loaded by more than one interest. Conversely, real power does not always have to be played through the state machinery. There are countless examples, e.g. church-state tension; the operation of psyche/social representation of the Javanese kingdom in the power agenda of Suharto although the two are centuries apart; political loyalty to quasi-state systems (the Catholic church, Wahabi-style faith, or religious loyalty to capitalistic power holders). State systems in the neo-capital liberalism nowadays have a lower level of diversity and their variants are a derivation of higher power systems. Power here should be read at the genotypical level, constantly exercised.

<sup>28</sup> One example was a comment by Aburizal Bakrie, the then Coordinating Minister for Economy and Industry, on the price hike of LPG that triggered people’s anxiety. “Quit using LPG if you can’t afford it!” (*Kompas* 20/12/2004). Also the government’s attitude of blaming the people in cases of forest fires, mining conflict, land and ancestral domain conflicts, and in health issues such as dengue fever, bird flu, polio, malnourishment, TB, malaria, HIV, etc.

Permanadeli raised some crucial questions: do Indonesians really know one another under the auspices of the so-praised Indonesia diversity? Or is it quite the opposite that the diversity is actually just the state of perceptions, as in reality they do not really know one another?

In my journalistic work, I encountered quite a few communities in remote islands, which do not speak Indonesian and have no idea of what is going on outside their small world. They just see strangers suddenly coming along with sophisticated machines wrecking, destroying and robbing natural resources, and their source of life.

Then, why is there no apparent eagerness to resolve this issue?

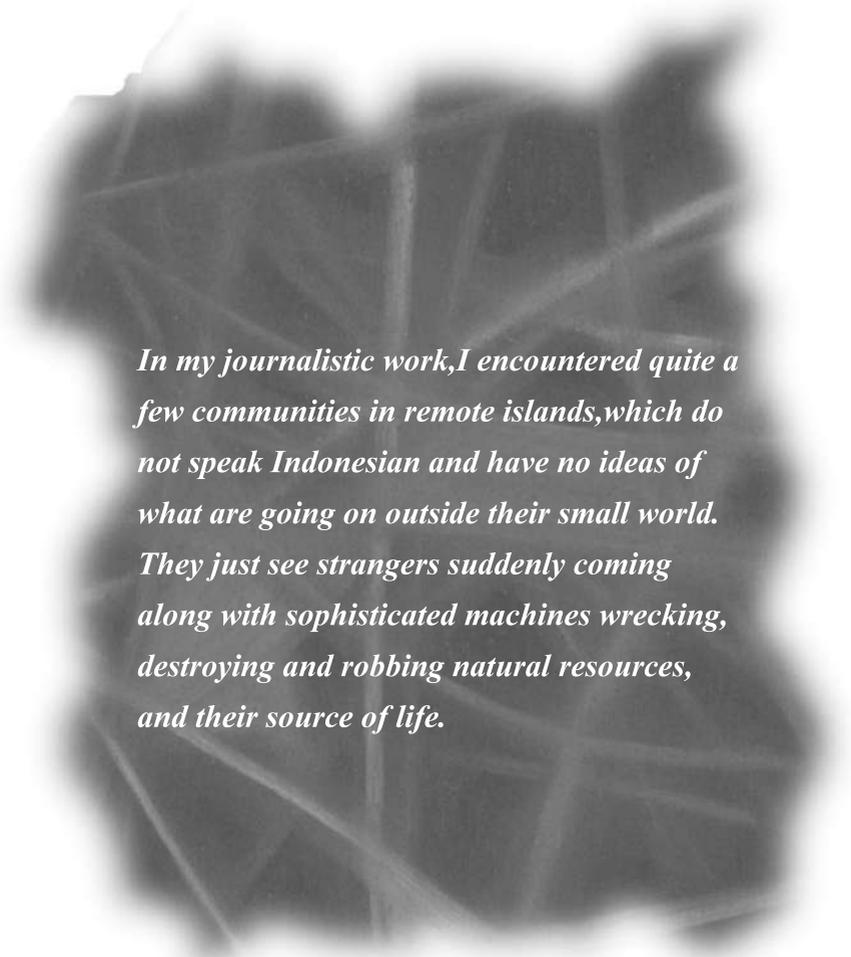
#### IV

I have to revisit my previous issue of identity. If the whole world is indeed built out of differences, and if thinkers reject the idea of a possibility of “similarities” like Terry Eagleton’s criticism quoted by Supelli, then no one can talk about anything that makes sense. And thus, the encounter of “I” with “those other than I” soon causes a paradox. The person facing “I” suddenly imposes upon “me” to acknowledge his/her independence. What s/he demands is not how I understand her/him but my ignorance of not knowing about her/him instead. “I” as a subject of State appears not to be possible to acknowledge “my” ignorance – in order to respond to the diversity of population of this archipelago. Such acknowledgment of ignorance would mean denying one’s own existential premise.

In order to cover up such ignorance, many usually would resort to employing jargons such as the Constitution and its derivative legislation. Alternately, it is just a big nonsense that most politicians say differently in different situations depending on who the audience is. What happens in practice is shallow and disgraceful. The diversity is completely reduced into symbols without touching its substance by any means.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Admission to diversity should have placed all cultures of the nation in equality. But even in symbolic languages there clearly transpires the domination of one upon the others. Indonesia’s Miniature Park, for instance, positioned a Javanese Cultural Performance Hall right in the central core of the complex, constructed large and imposing, as if reflecting the grandness of the Javanese kingdom in its past glory, surrounded by ethnic houses of various cultural ethnic groups of Indonesia.



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One is made to be charmed by the beauty of Minahasa Island by its traditional customs, its costume, its beautiful young ladies, but not many spoke up when Newmont Mining Corporation reduced Buyat into dismal villages. When people from Buyat complained of what had happened to their health, many doubted if the condition was indeed caused by the pollution or if their poor health status has been bad all along. People then were busy collecting evidence. Ultimately, the experiences of the victims were rendered insignificant.

The modernity project called *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia* (NKRI)/ Unitary State of Republic of Indonesia requires security and uniformity, conformity and generalization. And thus, according to the analysis of Sangkoyo, the diverse ways and perspectives of life of communities in the pre nation-state villages in remote islands are confronted with an agenda of national development that demands deconstruction and rationalization of protocols that are based on tradition. Therefore, the military was needed to reinforce “security” in the mantra of “unity” and “integration” in order to smoothly proceed with the “nation-state” modernization project, and of course, capital expansion.

The Buyat case is but one of the cases where foreign capital in the mining industry defeated people’s destiny. Indonesian soil sustains open wounds resulting from exploitation of natural resources that have truly destroyed human and natural ecosystems. Plenty of bloody conflicts that have religious or ethnic overtone have actually been latent strife over natural resources as happened in Papua and Kalimantan;<sup>30</sup> in addition there have been those that were set against the backdrop of social and political issues such as in Ambon and Poso.

This country also shoulders a heavy burden of untamed corruption in every facet of activities. It is sad to note that the devastating hot mud bursting from a gas exploration drilling in Sidoarjo, East Java-the most recent of such disasters- reflects more elements of corruption and greed than a work of nature. Eight villages were completely submerged; more than 20 factories were buried up to the rooftops; and some 13,000 people have been evacuated. The mud is rising by the hour and now spewing forth at the rate of about 170,000 cubic yards a day, or about enough to cover Central Park. And it shows no sign of stopping. The company is part of a conglomerate controlled by Aburizal Bakrie, a cabinet member

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<sup>30</sup> The conflict in West Kalimantan, for example, goes far beyond issues of ethnicity (Dayak against Madurese) and religion. Also significant are problems having to do with politics, as well as the marginalizing effect of development on the indigenous population. West Kalimantan, like other regions on the island, has been the site of extensive development focused mainly on logging, plantation farming and gold mining. The population grew 1.5 times from 2.49 million in 1980 to 3.74 million in 2000, quite a high rate compared to the 1.38 times increase experienced by Indonesia as a whole. The province owes its above-average population growth to immigrants coming in through government-sponsored transmigration programs as well as on their own. These new residents make up a mere 3.3 percent of the total provincial population, a figure hardly high enough to excite concern if not for the loss caused to indigenous groups by the two hectares of newly cleared land per household promised to all settlers entering under transmigration, of whom there were 132,000 from 1970 to 1985, to give only one figure. For the Dayaks, the forest is essential to their way of life. The Soeharto regime, however, actively encouraged logging in so-called “backward regions” such as Sumatera, Maluku, Papua and Kalimantan. The forests of West Kalimantan rapidly disappeared once the government began granting forestry concessions (known as HPH, short for Hak Pengusahaan Hutan) to businesses in 1968, while also encouraging settlers from the islands of Java and Madura. In 1995, 45 companies had been licensed to clear 5.34 millions hectares of forest. The usage on usable woodland in West Kalimantan went from 1.92 million hectares (9.2 percent of the forested area in Indonesia) to 1.43 millions hectares, a full 25 percent decrease in the 16 years from 1983 to 1999. The area of farmland meanwhile nearly doubled, from 0.92 to 1.74 million hectares in the same period. Most of these farms are oil palm plantations. At the same time, West Kalimantan has always had a high poverty level, with 33.8 percent of its population living below the poverty line as of 1990, as compared to a national average of 19.9 percent. The majority of the poor are Dayaks. Murai Yoshinori, “Development, Conflict and Refugees: Globalization and a Global Citizen’s Community, in *Aglo News* No.7, November 2005.

<sup>31</sup> The Report of Transparency International 2005 put Indonesia into five infamously corrupt countries in the world based on the Corruption Perception Index. The Jakarta bureaucracy is the most corrupt (*Kompas*, 18/02/05).

This situation answers partly the question of for whose sake are these modern projects, so-called “development,” while this country is incurring the highest level of debt in the world.<sup>32</sup> IMF’s Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) that was imposed on Indonesia caused suffering and destruction in every aspect of life including the bulldozing of landless and small farmers, and marking down the budget allocation of education, health and social welfare assistance.

UNICEF (2002) has warned that Indonesia is soon facing a lost generation from malnutrition and poor health condition and the low literacy rate of its people. Millions of people had their chance to improve their living snatched away from their hands because the government has to repay debts.<sup>33</sup>

At the same time, one was shocked by the *fatwa* (decree) of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI),<sup>34</sup> issued following the meeting of the *fatwa* commission in sessions of religious deliberation (Ijtima Ulama) at the Modern Darussalam Islamic Boarding School in Gontor, East Java, on 26 May 2006. The Council implicitly allows foreign companies to continue the exploitation of local natural resources and gives consent to foreign debt. In a sense, the Council takes the side of global capitalism and neo-liberalism.

That *fatwa* came after the Council issued previous ones regarding differential treatment and status for Islamic schools that, in effect, banned pluralism, secularism, and liberalism. The *fatwa* went on pointing out the importance of harmonizing the framework of thinking between

<sup>32</sup> The Anti-Debt Coalition (KAU) has cited that domestic and foreign debts have reached 134 billion US dollars with a debt–GDP ratio at 50–52 percent, exceeding the safe threshold of 35–42 percent. The situation in Indonesia today is no better than in poor African nations.

<sup>33</sup> This situation is not made better because of the tsunami that struck Aceh and the earthquake that cascaded in different parts of the country that most certainly will divert development funds into infrastructure reconstruction, and thus almost certainly the poor will shoot up in number. The latest data showed that the number has reached 40 million people with unemployment at 11.9 million.

<sup>34</sup> The MUI / Indonesian Ulema Council is an organization formed by the New Order on 28 July 1995. MUI has not taken much of an opposing position against Suharto because of its financial dependence on the regime. Each member has an equal vote including the largest Muslim organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah. MUI’s *fatwas* with their extreme Islam outlook are manifestations of Islam organizations that although smaller in size are more in total number. As people from NU and Muhammadiyah are speakers representing the MUI, the *fatwas* appear to be supported by Islam majority groups. Ahmad Suaedy, foreword in A. Syafii Maarif et al. (2006), *Kala Fatwa Menjadi Penjara* (Jakarta: The Wahid Institute).

religious matters and national interest as well as reinforcing the uniformity of religious thinking. The *fatwa* also affirms that the NKRI framework is final but fell short in mentioning national diversity.

## V

While fretting over politicized identity, we are oblivious to other aspects of identity that are more closely related to culture, and overlook that culture is human-induced and is always related to power regardless of its form. One simply needs to catch sight of how advertisements constantly attempt to stimulate people's desires and incessantly create needs by targeting the personal concept: the concept of self. This is what Permanadeli has warned of groups who reject uniformity but are forgetting such traps.

The *capitalista* coined a jargon, "I shop therefore I am," from the French Philosopher Rene Descartes, "I think, therefore I am," to show human superiority in Cartesian perspective.

The real culprit is not consumerism itself, nor is it the material stuff, but rather the giant networks of capitalistic organizations whose survival hangs on selling more volume and ever more. Much of this material stuff carries symbolical meanings that are created to become important needs of the buyers.

Through fancy advertisements, this material stuff is made for people to know and to define "who we are." The jargon of free choice in neo-liberal capitalism actually is an illusion. That free choice could only be realized through buying.

Choosing is a crucial act in capitalism, because through this act people are stating their individual "identity." Although capitalism individualizes people, yet individual image is put in social relationships, through commercial advertisements that always flash expectations and the glitter of life.

A new religion has been born by the politics of the market: consumerism. Its worship places are malls and shopping centers. Very few people could resist their temptations.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps this is what was meant as a real revolution by the French thinker Alexis de Tocqueville. Therefore, diversity that is now popularly used as a term to rebuff uniformity also hides another risk. As stated by Sangkoyo, in an atavistic and capitalistic

<sup>35</sup> This explanation on consumerism is taken from Colin Barker "“Consumerism’: I shop therefore I am” *Socialist Worker Online*, 21 December 2002.

political context, multiculturalism is none other than a mask to sell identity in a more competitive market to seize access to power in this country of brokers.<sup>36</sup>

Two identities that seem separate — one is formed by the sectarian group, the other by market politics, according to Supelli, in comparison between the ritual and performance masks. The market politics are *fascinosum* (charming and seductive), while sectarian politics is *tremendum* (frightening). Although the two appear to be enemies, in reality both are hand-in-hand. They carry the same agenda of unifying public interest and making them subordinate to their own interests.

Those masks have camouflaged the real problems that are happening to Indonesia. The neglect of intricacy of the diversity is not only on those who are considered as “the other” but also on the country’s geological condition. The Director of Jakarta’s Art Institute, Sardono W Kusumo,<sup>37</sup> reminds us that it is an important problem to be addressed, as it will affect the whole social, political, and economic setting of Indonesia.

Such is the situation of the land and sea of Indonesia after being in the destruction of the so-called “development”; we now face a 200-year cycle of geological peril.<sup>38</sup> The change of soil and water properties and the general geological situation will affect identities that ultimately will also be united by one single identity: people’s vulnerability when faced with nature.

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<sup>36</sup> Jusuf Kalla’s speech in a Symposium on Tourism Marketing Strategies in the Middle East at the end of June was a clear example. Kalla, as quoted by the Jakarta Post: “If there are a lot of Middle East tourists traveling to Puncak to look for (Indonesian) widows, I think that it’s OK. The children resulted from these relationships will have better genes. There will be more television *actors and actresses from these pretty boys and girls.*” Such practices not only violate Indonesian marital regulations, but are also only a step away from trafficking of women. Women’s activists slammed Kalla for the statement.

<sup>37</sup> Maria Hartiningsih, Ninuk Mardiana and Bre Redana, “Tanah Air Sardono W. Kusumo” *Kompas*, Sunday edition, August 13, 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Numerous points in Indonesia are disaster-prone, mostly to earthquake, tsunami, flood, and volcanic eruption. Indonesia is traversed and surrounded by Eurasian, Indo-Australia, and Pacific plates. At any time the plates could collide into one another and generate earthquake. When such tectonic collision happens in the seabed its ripples trigger tsunami such as the case in Aceh, North Sumatera and Yogyakarta earthquake. In addition, Indonesia is also traversed by the Pacific Ring of Fire with the world’s chain of active volcanoes. Indonesia has no less than 240 and almost 70 of them are active. Earthquake zone and Circum Pacific volcanic chain are reknowned for inflicting great numbers of life loss everytime they generate great earthquakes or devastating tsunami.

However, this perspective that my mother also had asserted in simple words could never be digested by politics of power. The actors of politics of power tend to exploit differences to win their political games. Therefore, it is those identities considered to be the most strategic, for the citizens will be the ones that are manipulated and then reduced into a single identity. That tactic is a way of miniaturizing human beings, as it is also used by Samuel Huntington in his book, *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996).

As asserted by Amartya Sen,<sup>39</sup> individual identity is far more complex than group identity in which an individual is an integral component within it. My confusion over the intricacy of identity that is being attached to me is a clear example. That complexity, however, is not calculated when human experience is disregarded.

Perhaps, the bitter reality of ecological crises associated with land and water would be a useful reference to resolve the issues of humanity that are caused by politicization of identity. People in remote islands whose villages are just unseen spots on the map of Indonesia are the final judges of these concepts, who with their local genius could strain the seeds spread from the upstream of thoughts of scholars.

As proposed by philosopher Hannah Arendt,

*Without being bound to the fulfillment of promises, we would never be able to keep our identities; we would be condemned to wander helplessly and without direction in the darkness of each man's lonely heart, in its contradictions and equivocalities, a darkness which only the light shed over the public realm through the presence of others, who confirm the identity between the one who promises and the one who fulfills, can dispel.*

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<sup>39</sup> Amartya Sen (2006), *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny (Issues of our time)*, NY: WW Norton & Company.

# From Revolution to Devolution

## How democracy's "long tail" can sustain press freedom, development and peace in Asia

*Kunda Dixit*

### Summary

Globalism transcends national governments, and it can foster internationalism and solidarity. It has facilitated trade, and some Asian countries have used their access to global markets to dramatically reduce poverty. A globalized media can also reflect the world's diversity and the spread of the information society has shrunk distances.

But economic globalization has also concentrated wealth and power; convergence of media ownership has brought about cultural homogeneity. It is leaving many further and further behind, increasing the gap between rich and poor between and within countries in the region. This is breeding discontentment, triggering violence and extremism.

What can be done to ensure that opportunities from economic progress are equally spread? How can democracy be made more participatory and inclusive so it can deliver development? There are many examples across Asia of alternatives in action, of empowerment through inclusion. The common thread running through them is devolution of decision-making to local units of government, to grassroots groups and communities.

Across Asia, these working alternatives to globalization involve political processes, culture and entertainment, media and information, fair trade, environmental activism and alternative lifestyles. This "long tail" is what will ultimately wag the dog.

### **First the bad news...**

As we look around the world today, what we see on the surface is a sweeping monoculture.

Economic globalization driven by advances in information technology is wrapping the world in grey uniformity. What people buy, how they talk, what they eat and even how they look is becoming more and more the same whether they are in Singapore or San Francisco, in Kathmandu or Bogotá.

This sterile homogeneity is riding a globalized media that treats individuals across the world as consumers, not citizens. As ownership of media is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, the global culture industry delivers its products, mass-produced and packaged, to the widest international audience. Culturally, this has flattened the earth.

The marketing strategy for cultural products is the same as for mcnuggets or frappuccinos, which taste the same wherever you may be in the world. Content is entertainment-driven, packaged and sold to the lowest common denominator. The Internet, multimedia and the convergence of communications technology have accelerated this trend, extending market reach.

Ten years ago, we still thought the Internet would level the playing field and give a voice to the voiceless. But it didn't take long for cyberspace to be also dominated by the same corporate entities that ruled over traditional media. Television, telecommunications and computers came together and forced ownership to also converge with non-media businesses. Instead of narrowing the digital divide, it widened the gap. Globally, 90 percent of Internet use is in the industrialized countries. Ninety percent of Internet subscribers in Nepal are within a four km radius of the centre of the capital.

Even when one can find meaningful information and wisdom on the net, it is drowned out by the cacophony of trivia or vitriol. People in search of information relevant and useful to them gravitate to sites that create virtual communities of those who agree with each other. This, in turn, further ghettoizes them. The Internet, instead of building bridges, erects walls between communities that are supposed to talk to each other. This fragmentation of society leads to polarization, hardening positions on both sides of the debate.

Perhaps we were naive to believe that somehow the Internet would be different, that it would give equal space to everyone. But the mainstream discourse still reflects the corporate values that controlled traditional media. So information on the Internet has ended up being little different than what it replaced. The owners of Internet will sacrifice freedom for

money just as multinational manufacturers did. Yahoo had no qualms about handing over the identity of a Chinese cyber dissident without even being asked. Typing “Tiananmen” on a Google image search in China will show only postcards of flowers and fountains. Rupert Murdoch sacrificed BBC TV when it displeased the powers in Beijing.

In the euphoria over the democratizing impact of the Internet, we forgot all about how we have squandered the power of good old-fashioned media as a force for democracy and freedom. Technology is never value-free, and perhaps it is not the digital divide we should be worried about, but finding ways to reduce the school divide, the health divide and the income divide that exists globally and within our countries. And it may not be the Internet that is leveler, but community radio and civic journalism.

The full impact of economic globalization and a market-driven global media has eroded cultural diversity. Languages are disappearing and so are festivals, songs and ways of life. A global consumer culture is delivered to a worldwide audience by the internationalized media, changing people’s eating habits and determining what they watch, how they dress, how they talk and with whom.

And as people eat refined grains, indigenous foods disappear. When they vanish, so do the livelihoods of farmers who grew millet, amaranth, or brown rice. When trawlers sweep the oceans for fish, traditional fishermen don’t have enough catch and they migrate to live in urban slums. Fishermen in the central Philippines used to have many different words for various types of wind that blew over their islands. When they stopped going out to sea the words also vanished.

As farmers are uprooted they lose valuable wisdom that used to pass down through generations. This software for survival hasn’t been replaced by useful knowledge to cope with the modern globalized world. There is corrosion of indigenous cultures, languages and human diversity. When Nepali farmers migrate to the Gulf seeking work, their link with their home soil is severed and with it vanishes the knowledge of herbs in the cloud forest, the know how for carving terraces out of mountainsides. Modernization and movement sets off a cascade of extinction, and we may not know what we have lost until it is all gone.

It will be wrong to only romanticize indigenous societies that live in harmony with nature, but they knew something we seem to have forgotten. Wherever a globalized world has ‘modernized’ it hasn’t

necessarily become more self-sufficient. China has performed the miracle of lifting 500 million people out of poverty in the past 30 years, but at what cost to the global environment? And even after inscrutable evidence that over consumption and waste will ruin the planet; those with the heaviest ecological footprints are slow to change.

### **Now the good news...**

But all is not gloom and doom. Just as the power and reach of the global consumer economy spreads across a wired world there are examples of resistance. Grassroots initiatives, alternative lifestyles, community action and local media use freedom's power to defend democracy and diversity while helping raise living standards.

It is possible to imagine a different future guided by other basic understandings of what development really is. There are movements and ideas in the periphery that will grow in influence and provide alternatives to the current world order so people can live in dignity, ecological harmony and connectedness. Local communities around Asia have shown that they can magnify their impact if they join hands with other institutions and actors in mutually reinforcing ways.

E F Schumacher was way ahead of his time when he wrote *Small Is Possible*. Indeed, his prescription in 1975 for a healthier planet was based on his observations of how most people in the South lived. The working conditions of many of these subsistence farmers haven't changed in the last 40 years; they still rely on an intricate knowledge of the seasons that tells them when to plant and when to harvest. Far away from the effects of globalization, they still live without destroying the nature that sustains them.

Across the world, there are many examples of communities, which have resisted the changes or adapted them to suit local needs without giving up what was good and wise in their traditional lifestyles. They have thrived despite government policies designed to wreck their lives, or mis-planned 'aid' projects that would have wrenched them away from the land. The key in all these places has been empowerment at the local level. Wherever communities are given political and economic control with decision-making devolved from the centre, they have taken their destiny in their own hands.

Community radio stations and forest user groups in Nepal have changed the rural landscape, an education campaign in Bangladesh has attained universal girl enrolment in primary schools, locally-run biodiversity

conservation in China or community-based eco tourism initiatives in Indonesia are other examples. We know what works, and there are success stories in the most unlikely places. We just have to look, we have to replicate them and scale-up planet wide.

From Internet blogs to community radio, local forest committees to organic farms, peoples in Asia are trying to make alternatives work. They may not be much organized yet and they aren't completely networked, but it is happening: a community of communities is being built. Local groups and publics are now a force to be reckoned with. And added up, this "long tail" is bigger than the spike that is made up of the few big companies that control the global marketplace.

In Asia, we looked to Japan, Taiwan and Korea as models for how modern media and cultural preservation can go hand-in-hand. And it is true that beneath the veneer of westernized dress codes and behavior, media in these countries helps their audiences promote and preserve their own traditions. East Asian pop culture may use western genres but have developed its own local hybridization that has become spectacularly successful worldwide. Media globalization may still have the United States as its epicenter, but there is now decentralization and multiple re-centering going on simultaneously.

### **What's wrong with that?**

Some regions of the world like South Asia have been less successful in indigenizing media content. Just because television is in a local language, it hasn't meant that the entertainment programming defends indigenous culture and values. News and current affairs are the superficial coverage and escapism seen on global news and entertainment channels. There are soap operas in Hindi where the storylines are almost exact copies of American TV serials and is alien to a vast majority of South Asians.

The programs homogenize thoughts and desires because the information contained and products advertised push a certain way of thinking and advertise consumer items for the global market. There is little attempt to look at alternative lifestyles or advocate less wasteful consumption in order to protect the earth's biosphere. Whether they are in Hindi, English or other local languages, magazines in South Asia have no time for suicides by cotton farmers or the problems of caste discrimination. In a country where nearly one half of the children go to bed hungry every night, the mainstream magazines and TV in India are dominated by shows on how the affluent can lose weight.

The result of all these is that the media is not just distorting the reality it is also directly promoting an unsustainable lifestyle. The United States with two percent of the world's population consumes 25 percent of its resources. Suppose the whole world consumed the same amount of energy and resources as an American household? India would need two earths full of energy if its 1.1 billion people lived like Americans. Fish would disappear from the world's oceans in a few years if China's 1.2 billion people consumed the same amount of seafood per capita as the Japanese. The media defines 'rich' and 'affluent' as a lifestyle to aspire for that doesn't take into account what such consumption does to the earth. Globalization presumes that the economy can just keep on growing indefinitely. But there are few in media that are ringing the alarm bells.

To bring about behavior change, first there has to be awareness that there is a problem. Only by first informing the public about what their actions and behavior are doing to nature can they start to change. People must think about how their consumption affects other human beings. Does one country's affluence keep another country poor? Media should be telling people these things. It should be analyzing and interpreting trends, but it isn't. Yet we know that awareness through media works. Heightened acceptance of global environmental problems in Europe compared to America has a direct correlation with the quality of coverage of world affairs and environmental issues in the European media. Public concern in Europe forced politicians to take notice and legislate cutbacks in emissions and a carbon tax. America is much slower in doing this because there isn't enough public pressure, and the reason for that is an insular American press.

Media is asking these questions less and less in Asia too. China's total emission of greenhouse gases will soon overtake the United States. There are dire warnings about pollution levels in the Asian Brown Cloud over the subcontinent. Fish stocks worldwide are depleting so fast that many species may be extinct in the next 20 years. Driven by greater purchasing power in China, smuggling contraband tiger parts has grown so fast that the big cats have been decimated in India's national parks, undoing decades of conservation. There is very little coverage of these issues in China's controlled media environment.

There is widespread awareness and concern about environmental issues in Japan, and conservation norms are strictly applied to preserve forests, control pollution and preserve marine biodiversity. But there is much

less coverage of the impact of Japan's demand for natural resources have on Asian countries, and indeed worldwide.

### **How shallow media undermines democracy**

The most worrying aspect of the dumping down of media is in politics. A media owned and controlled by big business has scant regard for public service values. When TV, radio, newspaper and the Internet are treated as marketing tools there is no difference between selling a hamburger and selling a newspaper. The idea is audience maximization so that the ratings can be converted into commercials. Despite its obvious advantages, the Internet is going down the same path in trying to turn eyeballs into dollars.

Citizens exposed to escapism in media become apathetic and fatalistic. News, when it is reported, is treated like a spectator sport and is a perpetual quarrel between today's talking heads replying to yesterday's talking heads. Media has neither the time nor the inclination to go beyond the operational strategy of politics to analyze, explain and interpret events so citizens can understand issues and form opinions about them.

In a democracy, this is a fatal flaw. If media doesn't inform and objectively foster public debate, policies can't be made. Democracy demands participation, and participation needs a vibrant, free and pluralistic communication environment. The media is an essential part of this feedback loop that allows citizens and their rulers to know what is happening in society and react appropriately. Without this feedback, decisions they take can be flawed, misguided, delayed, or distorted. To preserve democracy, the channels of communication within society have to be clean, sharp and reliable. Governments, whether they are in Sri Lanka, Singapore or Japan must treat the media differently than other types of industry. The press has a higher calling; governments that meddle with it or do not regulate it at all undermine its role. The trick is to find that right balance so the meddling and regulation do not undermine journalistic credibility.

It is a cliché, but nonetheless true, that democracy and press freedom are two sides of the same coin. Undermining one hurts the other. The lesson from Asian countries in recent years is that press freedom doesn't come with any warranty, it has to be defended by its maximum application even in countries with long traditions of free press. As we have seen in Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand and Nepal, even when press freedom is enshrined in the constitution it can easily be revoked in the name of national security.

The threats to media freedom these days don't just come from tyrants and dictators, they also come from owners who see it as just another business, from under-motivated journalists, publishers who prefer tabloidization and trivialization because it is cheaper and safer than doing serious in-depth journalism. It is the numbing effect of the market that has done more to undermine press freedom worldwide than direct crackdowns by dictatorial regimes.

The overall effect is that commercialization leads to what John Pilger calls 'censorship by exclusion'—a trend that makes editors not want to rock the boat and publish only the least controversial lowest common denominator material. Such self-censorship is more insidious than overt control where at least the readers have no illusions that what they read in the papers or see on television news is free.

### **From the grassroots to the canopy**

Fortunately, there are groups across the world that is struggling against the global trend of media over-commercialization. Grassroots organizations, local communities and citizens are using networks of local media to promote horizontal communication so that information not just entertains but also empowers. They are rediscovering the public service values that allow participation in decision-making, foster public debate, so people can weigh their choices and allow people and their elected leaders to interact. Especially in parts of the world where lack of affordability and accessibility have limited the Internet's reach, these media are a potent force on the side of democracy and pluralism.

Wherever grassroots communication has worked as it should, it has strengthened democracy and this in turn has helped deliver development. Wherever there is inadequate or inappropriate communications, there is a democratic deficit at the grassroots and development has lagged behind.

In Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia the spread of community radio has directly empowered rural communities to gain a voice so the people's opinions are heard. After Suharto, Radio 68H became a powerful new voice in freely informing people across the vast archipelago about what was going on. In the Philippines, rural radio is such a powerful force in combating corruption that journalists are killed by those who are exposed. But in rural northern India, where radio news is still controlled by the state despite that country's long tradition of democracy and television news content is dictated by the market,

local officials are not forced to be accountable, keeping the people underdeveloped and disenfranchised.

In Nepal, FM radio was deregulated in 1996 and a nationwide network of community radio stations is helping empower communities. The full impact of this was seen during the pro-democracy uprising in April 2006 when people well informed through radio news and current affairs about what was happening poured out into the streets to oppose an autocratic king. The radio stations also gave villagers a say in their lives and a confidence to take control over their own destiny. This has often transformed their attitudes: turning them from fatalistic and passive peasants into politically alert citizens who know and demand their rights. Combined with political decentralization, media and democracy in Nepal have helped support and strengthen each other.

Across Asia, there are many other examples of how devolving decision-making to local communities is helping change the way people decide on how to use and share natural resources. Twenty years ago, for example, international media hyped how poverty was driving Himalayan farmers to destroy forests, in turn causing soil erosion, landslides and unleashing floods downstream in India and Bangladesh. While this was partly true, what the media doesn't report now is that the Himalaya today has seen a dramatic regeneration of forest cover. There is 15 percent more canopy cover in the mountains of Nepal than there was in 1980.

This was a direct result of the devolution of political power to village councils, which were forced to be accountable to voters. Local politicians then worked with forest committees to bring back traditional conservation practices and to protect the commons. Community media and a free information environment allowed public participation in decision-making and the check and balance so the conduct of local officials was transparent.

Wherever else it has been tried, in India, Philippines, Bangladesh, Indonesia or Sri Lanka, decentralization of decision-making and devolution of political power away from the centre has improved living standards. It is no coincidence that Nepal's two successful models of rural development have been made possible because an elected parliament in the 1990s legislated political and economic devolution that allowed local initiatives: community forests and community radio. Environment protection and grassroots communications have therefore

gone hand-in-hand and have in turn helped local communities across the Himalaya regain their self-esteem and made them more self-sufficient. Here is an example of how democracy combined with public service media can deliver development and conserve natural resources. After all, this is what politics in a democracy is supposed to do: lift living standards.

### **Mixed picture in Asia**

Elsewhere in Asia, it is a mixed picture. The impact of media globalization and ownership on content can be seen across the region, and it parallels worldwide trends. In addition, changes in ownership patterns have their regional parallels in the Asia-Pacific. As telecommunications, television and computers come ever closer so do the companies that control content and transmission. And yet, the technological leaps that have made multimedia content possible and the recent spread of pluralism and democracy have not always resulted in a commensurate maturity, professionalism and independence of media.

On the one hand, media in Asian democracies have not been able to employ fully their public service role with meaningful journalism due to over-commercialization. At the other end of the spectrum there are countries in the region, which continue to be 21st century anachronisms: Burma and North Korea where media and society exist in a time warp.

Asia isn't one continent; it is at least four. It is a fluke of history that the region is called "Asia". The disparities in the region are so stark that the difference in living standard between the East Asian tiger economies and South Asia actually resemble the contrasts between North Africa and Europe. The Asia we know that stretches from the edge of the Mediterranean to the Pacific coast is also uneven in terms of press freedom, democratic norms and media professionalism. Countries range from total state control to semi-free media, from emerging democracies experimenting with pluralism to societies where despite constitutional guarantees of press freedom, elected strongmen (and women) are regressing and using indirect methods to turn media content in their favor.

As leaders in hardware production for the information revolution, the East Asian tigers have been at the forefront of a great leap forward in the advancement of computers and telecommunications, which have affected media. Paradoxically, information content in some of these

countries has not kept pace with hardware. Countries which have hitched their wagons to the IT revolution like China, Malaysia and Singapore, keep tight restrictions on access to information by their citizens and on political freedoms. It is not a coincidence that it was in the past decade that two East Asian economies (Taiwan and South Korea) made their transitions to full democracy and press freedom in part because of the nature of the development of new media. They have thus been able to play catch-up with Japan (South Korea, in fact, has overtaken Japan in broadband access and is much further ahead than the United States) thus leading to both hardware and software development and a more creative use of multimedia.

The role played by the media is thus determined not just by technology but also by the freedom to use new media (proving McLuhan's "medium is the message" dictum right). Singaporeans may have broadband access through their computers to watch movies on demand at home, browse the net and follow streaming television news, but the content of that information has not changed, it's still only what the state wants Singaporeans to watch.

Curbs on internet use, monitoring, severe penalties for accessing restricted sites, and crackdown on independent news portals carrying non-official sources of information have dampened the initial euphoria in East and Southeast Asia over the internet playing a leading role in democratizing information.

### **The more things change...**

The other hope was that information technology would level the playing field and bridge the digital divide. Nowhere is this digital divide more glaring today than within Asia. Despite India's entry into the IT age with the emergence of Bangalore's silicon plateau, the region still lags behind in phones per capita and internet connections, although mobile telephony is increasing dramatically.

But before we stick computers into classrooms, we must first make sure classrooms have roofs, schools have electricity that there are teachers and students don't dropout. In many parts of South Asia, malnutrition is so widespread; schools have to double as feeding centers for children, so they get their minimum calorie intake.

We don't just need to leap frog technology. We need to see how media can help bring about social and political reform needed to raise living

*It is no coincidence that Nepal's two successful models of rural development have been made possible because an elected parliament in the 1990s legislated political and economic devolution that allowed local initiatives: community forests and community radio. Environment protection and grassroots communications have therefore gone hand-in-hand and have in turn helped local communities across the Himalaya regain their self-esteem and made them more self-sufficient. Here is an example of how democracy combined with public service media can deliver development and conserve natural resources.*

standards. But information technology by itself is not going to provide answers to deep-seated structural problems of social justice and equity. For that, there needs to be structural changes in governance at the outset.

This can be best seen in the spread of the supranational media conglomerates riding the information technology revolution to spread their reach in Asia. Rupert Murdoch's News Corp, for instance, is well on its way to capturing the gigantic 2.3 billion-strong Indian and Chinese markets. In the subcontinent, STAR takes an Indian-centric line on news and current affairs even though its footprint is region wide. STAR's entertainment channels now reach up to 45 million households in East Asia, South Asia and the Gulf. STAR's viewership is already 40 percent of Indian households, 65 percent of homes in Taiwan, and through the Hong Kong-listed Phoenix TV Murdoch has already captured 45 million households in China alone. News Corp is getting greater access to the cash-rich Guangdong province in exchange for beaming state-owned CCTV to the US market. In Japan, News Corp has partnered with Japan Sky Broadcasting Company.

The international and regional patterns of Big Business-owning media are repeated within countries. There has been a boom in television channels in South India with a dozen new channels going satellite. The political leadership in many countries has their own mini-Berlusconis. This is television without borders, as Tamil and Malayalam channels reach the Diaspora in Sri Lanka, Malaysia and the Gulf. Similar trends can be seen with Bangla channels with regional footprints, and new Nepali channels beaming via satellite from India to Nepal and vice versa to each other's Nepali speaking populations.

Media is not just journalism, and satellite television is essentially an entertainment medium. News and current affairs, for instance, do not even come on the top ten rated programs in India and China. In times of crisis, such as border clashes with Pakistan, or hijackings and terrorist attacks, 24-hour news channels carry large trans-boundary viewership. But internationally owned channels with regional footprints, it seems, can be as jingoistic as any nationalist media because the owners always prioritize the main market that they target.

### **The center cannot hold**

There are indications that globally centralized media companies are becoming top heavy. Can they adapt to the proliferation of multimedia

distribution? As audiences are fragmented by hundreds of cable channels, how will the main content providers cope?

When cable television and the music channels first started broadcasting in East Asia in the late 1980s, most analysts wrote obituaries to local music and entertainment and said they would soon be devoured by the global monoculture of Hollywood and American pop music. Yet, 20 years down the road, we can see that the opposite has happened. Across Thailand, Taiwan and China there has been a phenomenal increase in local content. Japanese pop, the Korean Wave, Taiwanese singers and Chinese movies are now popular in Asia and are global hits. As US political power wanes, it seems there are now multitudes of culture. East Asian countries that wish to project their power in the world stage see the potential of turning their cultural products into “soft power”, just as the United States has tried to do.

In India’s neighborhood Bollywood songs, it was feared, would obliterate local music. Instead, in Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and even within India, local music, dance, drama in local languages got a boost as well.

But it is in news and current affairs that the power of television has turned the tables. It used to be that daily newspapers set the news agenda; it is now more and more the other way around. Newspapers and magazines compete not with each other so much as with Internet and across the region we see them becoming less text-heavy, more visual and graphics-rich. This trend can be seen even in the established papers in New Delhi, Bangkok, Manila and the Gulf region. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but the content has also been tabloidized to compete for the reduced attention span of readers.

But it is perhaps in radio that there have been the most lost opportunities, especially in the poorer parts of Asia. Nothing competes with radio for access and affordability, yet precisely because of this the lid has been kept firmly on radio—even in bastions of democracy. In the Indian subcontinent, radio has been used as a public address system for government propaganda, and for decades its potential for development communication has been squandered.

The paradox is that officialdom in these countries does not regulate the newest communications technologies. No one controls private cable companies, there is competition among cell phone operators, there is a choice of Internet service providers, FM radio is beginning to be

privatized. And yet, the one medium that can reach the maximum number of people is still under the grips of most governments.

But even here, things are changing. Media activists in Nepal lobbied for five years for the government to deregulate FM licenses. Nepal became the first country in South Asia to have a public radio service in 1996, and today has a network of community radio all over the country. After King Gyanendra sacked an elected Prime Minister and took over power in February 2005, his regime banned news on private FM arguing absurdly that ‘nowhere in the world is news allowed on radio’. The irony was that news on television was never allowed, and news continued to be broadcast on state-owned radio. Governments that maintain strict control of the radio waves even in vibrant democracies do it for one reason only: it is the medium of the poor and they don’t want them to know what is going on.

In Nepal FM radios fought back throughout 2005 with creative forms of resistance: singing the news, reading bulletins from simulated studios set up in town squares, disguising news in studio conversations. Finally, they went to the Supreme Court and re-won the right to broadcast news. The achievement of Nepal’s citizens’ radio in establishing community broadcasting and then defending it from a regime bent on taking away that freedom has become a role model for public radio in other parts of the region. It looks like the message is spreading. India is now finally debating legislation to allow community FM. Sri Lanka and Bangladesh look set to do the same.

In India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, the press plays an important role in covering politics. Politicians take journalists and opinion makers seriously. Whereas in India most of the mainstream national newspapers have seen steady commercialization by owners, in the other three countries the main print media has taken the role of a staunch defender of fragile freedoms. After the 1999 coup in Pakistan, the mainstream press has walked the thin line but always upheld its independence and preserved professional integrity. In Bangladesh, national newspapers in Bangla and English have flourished and have been involved in in-depth coverage of development and social issues. The Sri Lankan national newspapers have only now begun to recover from the retrogressive nationalization of the 1970s and years of control during the war.

In Nepal, King Gyanendra’s coup threatened to take the media back to pre-1990 controls under absolute monarchy. Armed soldiers were posted

at radio stations and newspaper offices where they prevented news broadcasts and censored galleys. The press fought back by leaving white holes, writing absurd editorials and when told not to leave any blank spaces filled them up with gibberish. When the soldiers left, despite strict laws on press control under a state of emergency, most of the media defied them. Editors and reporters were detained, others were harassed, pressure was put on publishers through advertisers, but the Nepali media remained largely united to fulfill its role to uphold press freedom and writing on the struggle to restore democracy. During the Indian emergency, it was said that the media was “asked to kneel, but it crawled.” But in Nepal it was asked to kneel and it stood up.

In Southeast Asia, the media scene is patchier. At one end is Burma where the junta controls the media completely, journalists are detained and tortured. Then there are the authoritarian states of Vietnam, Laos, Brunei, Singapore and Malaysia where journalists are well aware of the limits of what they can write and hardly ever over-step the bounds. The state has complete control over most forms of mass media, in some cases even online media. The Internet is restricted and monitored, a strict licensing policy deters publishers from taking any risks and the media can't take any recourse in the courts.

In Malaysia after the departure of Mahathir Mohammad there has been a slight relaxation of controls on the press and Malaysian journalists have used the Internet to sidestep official control despite strong pressure, threats and raids by state security. Alternative news sites like Malaysiakini have been audaciously pushing the envelope. While the content of these independent portals would be considered tame elsewhere, they expose official misconduct through investigative Internet journalism. Numerous bloggers are flourishing despite official threats of crackdowns on editors, webmasters and journalists. While the refreshing freedoms in cyberspace are not reflected in the mainstream print and broadcast, there is hope that online journalism will open the space for the rest.

Heavy media restrictions remain in place in Singapore with no signs of loosening up despite the city-state being the most affluent in Southeast Asia. Any unsanctioned criticism or content in the media is dealt with harshly, and even the international media has not escaped the state's wrath for daring to criticize officialdom. The tactic used is to sue media companies and journalists for defamation for astronomical sums of money, and it has worked brilliantly.

At the other end of the spectrum in Southeast Asia are the Philippines and Indonesia where the media is vibrant and rambunctious. The press takes its adversarial role seriously and has been able to serve as a check and balance in these democracies. New laws in all three countries now give journalists unprecedented access to information and guarantees of press freedom. This has allowed journalists in all three countries unfettered access to official documents, to monitor election financing and public records.

One of the most vivid examples of media power was the investigation of the assets of President Joseph Estrada, which led to his impeachment trial and removal from office by a people power uprising in 2001. Ever since the end of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986 the Philippine media has been one of the freest in the region, and since then it has proven experience in investigative journalism, rural radio and community media. Media freedom is not just important for journalists; the Filipino people and civil society have often demanded and struggled for that freedom. Paradoxically, the Philippines tops the list of countries with the highest number of journalists killed including many radio commentators in the provinces. One of the chronic problems with Philippine media has also been the fact that the main media conglomerates in Manila are controlled by big business usually close to political figures—this vested interest has colored coverage of certain issues. Politicians have therefore often used pressure on publishers to tone down criticism. The latest tactics of the ruling elite has been to sue reporters for libel and defamation as an intimidation tactic, and there has been a spate of unexplained murder of journalists.

In Thailand, investigative reports also haunted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra when he was in power. Journalists who were using that country's constitutional guarantees of press freedom to expose official attempts of hostile capture of critical newspapers and magazines as well. The military coup in September 2006 removed Thaksin, but the army put its own restrictions curbing press coverage and cancelled the licenses of community FM radios.

In Indonesia, private media in the post-Suharto era remains independent because of its economic clout and has a strong influence in the country's political arena. Indonesian print and radio journalists have strong networks, which allows them to magnify their strength when rights are threatened. Indonesia's achievement with provincial radio has made it a vital medium for information in this vast archipelago. The state is

uncomfortable with criticism, however, and has used libel and defamation provisions in the criminal law to cow down media. Affected businesses have also unleashed hired goons to attack media offices. There is now a strong civil society and media lobby to change these laws.

Although the situation is much worse in authoritarian regimes in the region, what Thailand, Indonesia and Philippines prove is that constitutional provisions on press freedom are no guarantee that government won't try to stifle media that are critical of them. Rulers have discovered that the best pressure point is the ownership of media, and favorable coverage can be guaranteed by putting pressure on businessmen who publish newspapers and own broadcasting stations. Just as Thaksin has used his cronies to pressure media owners, President Gloria Arroyo in the Philippines has also been using underhand means to pressure the press. These pressures have shown a lack of commitment on the part of these leaders to democratic norms and a tendency to look at media freedom with suspicion rather than as an effective watchdog that can nurture and protect democracy itself. They are enamored with the Mahathir and Lee Kuan Yew models of governance and appear convinced that only by curtailing freedom can they achieve economic prosperity. However, Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand have all tried dictatorships in the past and failed.

The intertwined ownership of business and political elite in these countries who use their economic and political clout to pressure the media make a formidable enemy for the defenders of press freedom. Media is constantly being threatened with libel and defamation suits to dampen criticism.

## **Conclusion**

Despite gains in some countries that have been able to take advantage of economic globalization, the impact on many parts of Asia is patchy. Aside from rising income gaps, the economic growth model of the market mantra is seriously undermining the planet's ecosphere.

At a time when alternative lifestyles, less wasteful consumption and reducing Asia's ecological footprint should be actively pushed by media, it is doing just the opposite. The reason appears to be that global and regional media ownership patterns reflect the strategic interests of corporate players. Even the Internet, which started with so much promise

of leveling the playing field and democratizing information, now reflects the same ownership patterns as traditional media.

Rulers, even democratically elected leaders, tend to look at the media as a threat. Throughout Asia, the challenge is to use to the democratic process for service delivery, development and economic growth. Young democracies are grappling with good governance but see the media not as an ally but as an adversary. The power of media must be used to force elected leaders to be more accountable, and as an effective check and balance. The interlinked interests of private sector media with political elites have undermined the media's role in many democracies, undermining the public service role of the press—especially television and radio.

The answer lies in media activists and civil society keeping the space open for the press and to struggle against attempts to control or gag it. The Internet offers hope to bypass these controls in dictatorships and expand participation in democracies. The technology has to be made more accessible and affordable to bridge the digital divide.

Leapfrogging technology and bridging the digital divide, however, doesn't make sense in countries where the potential of old-fashioned media like radio have been squandered. Nowhere is the power of media to empower people at the grassroots more potent than through citizens' media and community broadcasting and there are plenty of examples from Asian countries of where it has worked well.

The impact of media globalization has not been universally negative. The cultural imperialism theory is giving way to a more nuance understanding of the re-centering of the world. Regional powers are creating their own multiple centers. And there are many examples of grassroots groups and communities that are resisting the homogeneity that comes with a globalizing media.

When political power is decentralized and decision-making is devolved to local communities people find their own solutions to problems. Nepal was a case study in a functioning grassroots democracy that was overtaken by revolution, but now has to find a way to return power to local communities.

## Nepal case study

From 1996 to 2006 the Nepali people were caught up in a war waged in their name. The ‘people’s war’ is what the Maoist called their revolution, which was appropriate because in the years that followed it was mostly the people who died and suffered.

Nepal hadn’t seen a real conflict since the Anglo-Nepal wars of 1814-16. Since then, Nepal’s Gurkha soldiers have been fighting in foreign wars, laying down their lives for countries other than their own.

This past decade has changed the face of Nepal. By February 2006, nearly 15,000 people had been killed, most of them non-combatants. Hundreds of thousands were widowed and orphaned; millions were forced to abandon their homes and farms.

Nepal lost its innocence and the violence scarred the national psyche. In the outside world, coverage of Nepal’s abject poverty, the royal massacre of June 2001 and news reports of the violence tarnished the country’s image of tranquility and harmony.

To be sure, given the country’s inequality and social injustices, Nepal has been ripe for revolution for some time. The exclusion of citizens, a feudal ruling structure with its links to the military, Kathmandu’s apathy and neglect of the rest of the country, an expanding population forced to share limited resources, and millions of youth without opportunities created the objective conditions for insurrection. Add to those feckless rulers preoccupied with greed and ambition and all you needed was a spark.

Anger ignited in the streets first in 1990 when the People’s Movement forced King Birendra to devolve his absolute powers and allow multi-party politics. But the euphoria of freedom did not last as political parties soon got bogged down in petty bickering and corruption. A newly free media reported this with daily headlines, spreading cynicism in the public, not just about politicians but made many doubt whether we were ready for democracy.

After 1990, Kathmandu’s ruling class was partly replaced by politicians from the hinterland, but a winner-takes-all electoral system still kept out the historically marginalized from decision-making. Worse, elected incumbents kept ruling as if no one else mattered, while the opposition boycotted parliament or took to the streets to bring down governments the moment they took power. Chronic instability at the centre meant democracy was unable to live up to the development expectations of people in the periphery.

By February 1996 the disenchantment was reaching a climax. A faction of the Maoist party presented a list of 40 demands to the government and launched its threatened armed struggle without waiting for the Prime Minister to respond. The comrades were impatient; they felt that there was no way they could come to power through a patronage-ridden electoral system dominated by the main parties.

Yet, had they waited just a few more years, Nepal's adolescent democracy might have been able to sort out its mess. After all, it had been only six years and there were young political figures with vision and integrity, who, had there been more internal party democracy, could have replaced the tired old faces.

Indeed, it was at the grassroots that democracy was bringing forth a new crop of leaders who proved they could be honest and efficient managers to bring basic services to rural Nepal. In districts across the country, a new decentralization law was handing power to the people. Villagers who finally had a say in their own destiny responded with dramatic self-confidence and forced their local leaders to be accountable.

By 1996, elected village council members knew they had to perform or they would not get re-elected. It almost didn't matter to which party candidates for chairmen belonged to, as long as they had a demonstrated ability to ensure that schools ran properly, health posts had doctors, roads got built and bridges were repaired. Most elected district councils also had leaders with vision and these politicians were trickling up the ranks to national-level politics.

It was just when this hope for the future was beginning to spread across Nepal that the Maoists launched their armed struggle in 1996. The first target of the rebels was local government units: the newly-empowered councils that had only just begun to prove that given the chance, grassroots democracy could raise living standards. Over the next ten years, the Maoists destroyed 90 percent of the 4,000 village council buildings all over the country, district councils were bombed and their members chased out. When elections couldn't be held because of the spreading violence, the Prime Minister in Kathmandu decided not to extend the terms of local councils, thus creating a nationwide vacuum at the grassroots that the armed rebels ultimately filled.

The promise of a vibrant pluralistic system of representation that could deliver services, bring economic progress and institute social reforms was sabotaged by a combination of left- and right-wing extremist

violence. As the country plunged deeper into war, development was undone and the country set back decades. King Gyanendra's coup of February 2005 dismantled democracy and the chance of peace. But within 14 months, a pro-democracy movement had sidelined him and the country was swept by a republican wave. The person who did the monarchy most harm turned out to be King Gyanendra himself.

The king said he had to take over because he needed to crush the underground communists and restore peace. But within minutes after his speech to the nation at 9:30 am on February 1, 2005 it was clear who he was really after. Soldiers moved into newsrooms, arrested politicians and hounded civil society members. The security apparatus was being used to crush democracy instead.

Although the royal coup was unpopular, many across Nepal who were fed up with the violence and disillusioned with politicians hoped that the king could deliver peace. But as the year wore on, the violence got worse and an average of 30 people were being killed every week. The royal government was internationally isolated, donors suspended aid to Nepal and the army even stopped getting military assistance from the US, UK and India.

Initially, the political parties failed to muster spontaneous support for their pro-democracy protests. Most people in the towns only watched from the sidewalks as political cadre carrying placards chanted slogans against the king. This changed after the signing of the 12-point understanding between the seven-party alliance and the Maoists in New Delhi in November 2005.

When the slogans on the streets changed from 'democracy' to 'peace', people started coming out for the rallies. Nepalese desperate for peace appear to have understood that the agreement between the Maoists and the parties had a greater chance of resolving the conflict than letting the king and his army seek a military solution. While the Maoists kept up the pressure with attacks on security bases near Kathmandu, political parties started staging ever-bigger rallies nationwide.

By the first week of April, the street protests had snowballed into massive demonstrations. Community radios, TV stations and a defiant press relayed news and printed pictures of the rallies and the government's crackdowns, keeping them fully engaged. As the curfews grew longer, it fed the people's frustration and they started pouring out into the streets in open defiance of curfews.

The king at first went halfway to hand power back. But when this did not quell the protests, he finally heeded the army's advice and announced the restoration of parliament on 24 April.

What Maoist violence couldn't achieve in ten years and with 15,000 deaths was done in a spontaneous 19-day people power uprising. To be sure, without the tacit support of the Maoists the protests would probably not have taken off as they did. But the People Power 2 was a lesson in the moral victory of non-violence over violence, because even the rebels conceded this tactic was more effective than armed struggle.

More than bricks hurled at police on the streets, what ultimately forced the king to let go was the power of ridicule. The recital of satire poetry in front of thousands of students in Kiritpur, posters, effigies, impersonations and open lampooning of the king proved that his time was up. A nationwide network of community radio stations, and journalists dedicated to defend press freedom were factors in supporting the pro-democracy movement.

A restored parliament has been restructuring the state. Changes that in other countries may have happened only after much bloodshed have been legislated with the stroke of a pen: the Shah dynasty has been stripped of traditional powers it enjoyed for 237 years, the king no longer commands the army, royal succession will now be decided by parliament and Nepal has been declared secular.

# DEMOCRACY, DEVELOPMENT AND DIVERSITY

*Mohiuddin Ahmad*

## I. CONCEPTUAL CONSTRUCTION

### Context

When I was born, the people of my country were engaged in a *Bhasha Andolon* (language movement), as our mother tongue *Bangla* was denied the status of a ‘State Language’ in Pakistan<sup>1</sup>. Organizers of the movement were accused of separatism and enemy of the state. After nineteen years, in 1971, when I was 19, I joined Bangladesh liberation movement to dismantle the state of Pakistan that had refused to acknowledge and respect cultural diversity and denied our right to self-determination. The Pakistani army committed genocide and the price was too high for independence. Nearly all families lost something, home and chattels and someone dear.

In November 1972, the Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh approved a ‘Constitution’ that failed to acknowledge the identity and rights of the ethnic minorities. This largely alienated half a million people belonging to about 45 ethnicities<sup>2</sup>. They were less than one percent of the total population and they became victims of majority chauvinism. History repeats itself. Now the victims are the victors and they imitate their past oppressors. At this point, democracy, nationalism and chauvinism become synonymous.

Here we confront a situation of representative democracy where the law of the majority is the rule of the game. There is only one stream, the mainstream. The minorities are not allowed to choose how they like to live.

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<sup>1</sup> *Bangla* was the first language for 56 percent of the population in Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup> 30 ethnicities are reported in the population census.

They are

- culturally at risk;
- politically discriminated;
- socially outcast; and
- economically marginalized.

These together define a context of vulnerability corresponding to powerlessness. Here lack of power is poverty. The poor are those who cannot make a choice for themselves. Poverty eradication thus calls for empowerment, an enabling environment, where people decide for themselves. This is more an institutional issue that goes beyond economics.

### **Poverty**

An enabling environment is required for a human being to live with dignity. Perceptions on living conditions may vary. People talk about basic needs. Here comes the dominant theory of poverty that epitomizes a situation characterized by lack of access to basic goods and services necessary for survival.

Many Asian governments have failed to provide millions of people with basic health and education services, clean water and sanitation. According to a report of Oxfam International, two out of three Indians cannot afford essential medicines even as the country gears up to become a medical tourism destination for Westerners looking for cheaper surgery. At least a third of children in Pakistan and Nepal do not go to school. In Bangladesh, arsenic-contaminated shallow tube-wells are exposing an estimated 25 million people to the toxin, while 87 percent of Afghans have no access to clean drinking water.<sup>3</sup>

It is claimed that the world produces enough to feed and cater the basic needs of its entire population. Still more than a billion people are swinging between the *poverty line* and the *famine line*. In Asia, this is a hard reality that we face almost everyday. Here, there are too many vulnerable households.

Theories keep on changing. Poverty is being redefined in almost every decade. And there comes the right-based approach and the issue of human security in terms of food, health, housing, water and energy. But these are all mundane matters. Hence we talk about right to mobility, information and franchise. From there follows right to freedom, the

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<sup>3</sup> The Daily Star, Dhaka, 20 October 2006.

freedom of choosing conditions of existence, the way of life. Here comes the notion of lifestyle and also of vulnerability.

Vulnerability is the lack of capacity to withstand or cope with exogenous conditions that are difficult or impossible to control. So people feel increasingly vulnerable because of the advent and influence of conflicting ideas, values, doctrines and lifestyles imposed by others against their will.

### **Who is poor**

In development literature, households are often grouped into two broad categories using different synonyms, such as, poor and non-poor, poor and rich, haves and have-nots, disadvantaged and privileged, proletariat and bourgeois, and so forth. In a global context, this boils down to the north and the south. Once I undertook a survey in the coastal zone of Bangladesh<sup>4</sup> to have a sense of the perceptions the people have about poverty. How they define poverty by themselves? Among the respondents were farmers, fishers, farm laborers, artisans and small traders; 50% women and 50% men. The responses are summarized in the following table.<sup>5</sup>

These answers may not satisfy planners to take decisions for the poor, as these do not fit the way poverty is officially defined. Poor people do not have the sense of per capita Gross National Product (GNP), nor they understand the thin line between *absolute poverty* and *extreme poverty*. What they yearn for is 'happiness'. Happiness corresponds to a state of mind that may not necessarily corroborate consumerism. To them, happiness or lack of it is an indicator of poverty. When a nearly blind old person with benign outfit sings a mystic song with *ektara*<sup>6</sup> in a remote railway station or under a banyan tree in a marketplace, he expresses himself with divine pleasure:

*Amar moto shukhi bhobey keoto noi*

(There is no one as happy as me in this world)

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<sup>4</sup> Coastal zone of Bangladesh has 19 districts with a population of 37 million as of 2001 population census.

<sup>5</sup> Ahmad, Mohiuddin. *Living in the Coast: People and Livelihoods*. Program Development Office for Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan (PDO-ICZMP), Water Resources Planning Organization, Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Indigenous musical instrument made of water gourd shell and a piece of wire.

### Perceptions of the Poor

Indicator	Response of poor households	
	Who is poor	Who is non-poor
Land	No, poor quality	Yes, good quality
Asset	No	Yes
Income	Insufficient	Sufficient
Occupation	Less diverse, day-labor	Multiple
Savings	No	Yes
Debt	Yes	No
Housing	Poor	Good
Dependent	More	Less

While undertaking a research in a village, I saw a bridge being constructed over the river, which would threaten livelihood of many *majhi* (boatman), as they were involved in ferrying passengers and merchandize across the river. I inquired to one of them about “alternative livelihood”. His answer was plain and simple, “*Pat dichhen jini, ahar diben tini*” (God who has given me a stomach will also provide food). I looked at the water shimmering in the late afternoon sunlight. Boatman’s shadow was swinging in the ripples of water. He was taking me in an endless cruise from the terrestrial world to eternity. He was singing a folk melody that described the metaphysical world of a *majhi*, who is the custodian of a mythological boat.

*O the benign Messiah I call you  
Protect me while I cruise  
In your gracious name  
I sail across the mighty river.<sup>7</sup>*

The million yen question is do we have the right and the logic to bracket him as poor and vulnerable? Under conventional yardsticks, he is poor because he doesn’t have electricity and sanitary latrine in his house and

<sup>7</sup> Ahmad, Mohiuddin. *Dream Merchant*. Nabodhara, Dhaka, 2001.

<sup>8</sup> *Jhupri* is a shanty with a ceiling less than four feet and is made of very cheap construction materials like straw, bamboo, grass, leaves, polythene sheet, gunny bag, etc.

he earns less than two dollars a day. He lives in a *jhupri*<sup>8</sup>. He has no regular job. His future is uncertain. But the risk of occupational displacement does not haunt him at all. He may not see rain piercing through the roof; rather he imagines white clouds toddling in the sky in the autumn afternoon; or he wonders about a black curtain with million stars twinkling at night. He has no greed for power, no lust for assets, no deadline for a task. His world is poles apart. While rejecting his world in the chase for ‘development’, we tend to inflict our world on him. We presume that he is poor, ignorant and unaware, and we have to ‘educate’ him, ‘train’ him, ‘empower’ him and ‘develop’ him.

## II. DIVERSITY AND DISCRIMINATION

### Nationalism and chauvinism

People’s attitudes are manifested through interest-oriented coalitions and institutions including the state. These are causes and consequences of the collective psyche that promotes or opposes chauvinism. While nationalist movements are built up for autonomy against centralism, they often fall prey to chauvinist syndromes.

About one-fourth of the world’s population lives in South Asia. The regional bloc, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has eight member countries.<sup>9</sup> About 90 percent of them live in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh who were part of a single political entity till August 1947. The region broke into pieces and majority chauvinism was a key element in the fragmentation. That legacy still continues. At present, Islam is the state religion in Bangladesh. India is a secular country *de jure*, but a Hindu state by performance. Nepal was a Hindu Kingdom and has recently been declared a secular state by people’s movements. Pakistan is an Islamic Republic. Constitutionally Sri Lanka is a Democratic Socialist Republic, but gripped in severe ethnic conflict. Bhutan is ruled by absolute monarchy. Afghanistan is in a state of disarray and has virtually been colonized by the USA. Maldives has a ‘life-long’ President.

Inner colonization is widespread in many parts of Asia, such as, India (Kashmir and the northeast region), China (Tibet), Sri Lanka (Jaffna), Russia (Chechnya), Japan (Ryukyu), Philippines (Mindanao), Pakistan

<sup>9</sup> SAARC was founded in August 1983 with seven member-countries, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The first summit meeting was held in Dhaka in December 1985. Afghanistan joined as the 8th member in 2005.

(Baluchistan), Bangladesh (Chittagong Hill Tracts), Indonesia (Aceh), Turkey (Kurdistan) and so forth.

Indonesia was colonized by the Dutch and then by Japan. But what is Indonesia? It is a state with many nationalities. Java has been the center and other islands groan in the periphery. What the Dutch and the Japanese did to the Javanese, the Javanese did the same to the people of East Timor. When the people of East Timor stood up from the ravage of genocide that reminded me of our own situation three decades ago.

*In my reminiscence those days peep  
In the womb of time the people search  
A newborn flag that unfolds fast  
With tune of freedom millions march.*<sup>10</sup>

### **Bias and bigotry**

Ethnic and religious chauvinism is increasing. The state is provoking bigotry in many respects. The *Hindu-Muslim* riot, *Shia-Sunni* skirmish, marginalization of the *Dalits* (lower caste, untouchable) by *Brahmanism* (upper caste prejudice), increasing *Sinhala* (Buddhist) chauvinism against the *Tamils* (Hindu), persecution of ethnic Nepalese in Bhutan, killing of Christian priests in India and Pakistan, discrimination and persecution of the minorities by the majority community, all are manifestations of a society, which is hardly civil.

As religion has become more and more instrumental in molding a collective hysteria, states are increasingly at loggerheads. People's rights are curtailed in the pretext of 'national security'. At the same time, there are people's movements seeking constitutional guarantee for autonomy to independence in various parts of the region. This is reflected in the imagination of an activist in the following verse.

*Kashmir to Mindanao Belfast to Basque  
Ryukyu to Kurdistan whomever I ask  
They all say in their mind freedom tops the list  
We are all freedom fighter not a separatist.  
I am a freedom fighter to fulfill my need  
I fight for my people and indigenous seed  
I fight for land rights raising my fist  
They call me an insurgent and a terrorist.*<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ahmad, Mohiuddin. *Pita Hi Paramantapa*. Ekkhon, Dhaka, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmad, Mohiuddin. *From Jamuna to Nile*. Nabodhara, Dhaka, 2006.

Asia is the birthplace of many religions where the people from different faiths have managed to live together for centuries. Despite its historical rise and fall, the region has also succeeded in safeguarding some of its secular institutions. Some of the values, beliefs and practices of such institutions have made a significant contribution to human civilization. Those days still glitter in our memory.

When the cloud of pessimism overshadows the mind, we take shelter in the words of the poet.

*My world will light its hundred different lamps with the flame  
And place them before the alter of thy temple.  
No. I will never shut the doors of my senses.  
The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy light.*<sup>12</sup>

### **Steam of life**

The most profound use of the concept of unity in diversity has developed since the last century as an integral aspect of an ecological understanding of the world. The concept is based on the knowledge that biological diversity is necessary to sustain the healthy existence of ecosystems and that the healthy progress of the planet is dependent on the diversity of such ecosystems. Scientists and environmentalists lament the loss of species that will never be found, because the environments in which they live are being destroyed by massive transformations. A great deal of human endeavor to address the problem is needed. The issue of water is central to it.

Beyond water's domestic uses, which are critical to life and livelihood, it is associated with fertility, purity and spiritual nourishment. Its great value is a deep and central element of the culture. There should be no surprise at the strength of feeling that surrounds water issues, nor at the vehemence and deep-rooted emotions that can emerge in conflicts about water.<sup>13</sup>

People's mindset is deeply influenced by ideological perceptions of which the religion plays an instrumental role. People often take guidance from holy scripts, what to do and what to refrain from. The point of convergence across doctrines and dictums is the fact that water is a sacred endowment from the creator of the universe. It follows naturally

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<sup>12</sup> Tagore, Rabindranath. *Gitanjali*. Bangla Academy, Dhaka, 1993.

<sup>13</sup> ISPAN. *Eastern Water Study – Strategies to Manage Flood and Drought in the Ganges-Brahmaputra Basin*. USAID, Washington, D.C., 1989.

that the humankind will use this unique gift and protect it for future generations. For example, members of the Hindu community consider the *Ganga*<sup>14</sup> a great sacred river. Here are some quotations from the *Qur'an*, the holy book of the Muslims.<sup>15</sup>

*Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joint entity, and I separated them and made from water everything living thing (Chapter 21, Verse 30)?*

*And you see the earth barren, but when I send down upon it rain, it quivers and swells and grows (something) of every beautiful kind (Chapter 22, Verse 5).*

*And have you seen the water that you drink? Is it you who brought it down from the clouds, or is it I who bring it down? If I would, I could make it bitter, so why are you not grateful (Chapter 56, Verse 68-70)?*

When things go wrong, sometimes the nature takes its toll. People suffer and they beg the mercy of the divine spirit.

*Allah megh de pani de chhaya de re tui  
Allah megh de  
(O God  
Give us cloud over our head  
Give us water and bestow shade.<sup>16</sup>)*

This is a very popular folk song in Bangladesh.<sup>17</sup> It reflects the desperate urge of farmers to God for rain when crops are hit by severe drought.

Cloud, rain and river are the trinity in the life on earth, for human beings, animals and plants. They give comfort in scorching heat; they endow land with lush green crops; they keep watercourses traversable. They are the lifeblood. They bring passion in the heart of the poet.

*White clouds toddle in the sky  
I watch them as they fly*

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<sup>14</sup> River *Ganges*, as pronounced by the Europeans.

<sup>15</sup> *The Qur'an*. Translated by Saheeh International. Abulqasim Publishing House, Jeddah, 1997.

<sup>16</sup> Traditional *Bangla* song, translated by the author.

<sup>17</sup> Abbas Uddin Ahmed, a noted singer of the country, was the vocalist. The Gramophone Company of India first recorded it in the 1940s.

*I yearn for you and surmise  
One more poem I could write.*<sup>18</sup>

### III. DEVELOPMENT DISASTER

#### The ordeal

We are in a development race. We are changing the face of the earth. So we are heading fast towards a catastrophe. Rampant climate change could turn 200 million people into refugees amid drought and flood. The cost of unchecked climate change would be up to \$6.98 trillion. Unless the world acts, it would cost more than the World War-I, World War-II and the great depression of the 1930s, while rendering large parts of the planet uninhabitable.<sup>19</sup>

Minamata has exposed how vulnerable the people are amid the race for indiscriminate growth and modernization. Many people became sick, which was caused by years of discharge of mercury into Minamata Bay by Chisso Corp. The number of victims is believed to be more than 20,000. Since a Supreme Court ruling on erased criteria in 2004, more than 4,300 people have applied for official recognition and more than 1,100 non-certified patients have sued the central government, Kummoto Prefecture and Chisso.<sup>20</sup>

#### Neo-liberal terrorism

In past years, we have witnessed a dramatic escalation of neo-liberal terrorism, taking also the form of imperialist aggression including invasion and occupation of sovereign nations and escalation of militarism in many parts of the world. At the same time, however, there has been a growth in the number and scale of movements resisting war and the spread of neo-liberal corporate globalization.<sup>21</sup>

We also observe and experience a new form of slavery, slavery of debt. Colonization is today pursued through the neo-liberal model of development, which has accelerated the appropriation and commodification of natural resources in the resource-rich countries of the South. This model forces nation-states into indebtedness and to accept aid with harmful policy reform conditionality and widens trade

<sup>18</sup> Ahmad, Mohiuddin. *Sorrowful Yard*. Ankur Prakashani, Dhaka, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Governments' failure to act on global warming could cost up to \$7 trillion. Excerpts of a report by Sir Nicholas Stern, *The Japan Times*, Tokyo, 30 October 2006.

<sup>20</sup> 50 years on - Minamata disease relief still elusive. *The Japan Times*, 7 November 2006.

imbalances. It mutilates our democratic institutions, processes and spaces. It perpetrates untold violence on our communities in the name of national and public security. It causes continuing marginalization and pauperization of our peoples. It fuels militarization of our polity, legitimizes suppression by the state of peoples' struggles for self-determination, and exacerbates violation of human rights. Worst affected by these are women, children, indigenous communities, *dalits* and the minorities.<sup>22</sup>

For example, Bangladesh has received over US\$ 22 billion as loan from external sources from 1971/72 to 2003/04. This is in addition to US\$ 19 billion received as 'grant'. The country has so far paid back over nine billion US\$ including three billion as interest. Outstanding debt stands at about US\$ 19 billion.<sup>23</sup> The country is still crawling as a LDC.<sup>24</sup> The question is, where all these money go?

Much of the debt is odious, illegitimate and immoral. The Ashuganj Fertilizer Factory in Bangladesh is a unique example of adverse donor conditionality, *vis a vis* country's weak bargaining position led by a military dictatorial regime in negotiating the purchase of technology. With a capacity of 528,000 tons of urea per year, the project was conceived in 1975 with a cost of \$242.2 million. IDA, ADB and USAID were the major lenders. After the approval, the project underwent various cost revisions and the latest estimate put total cost at \$410 million. This was almost double of the cost of similar projects with similar capacity set up elsewhere. The project was unworthy of export on price competition, and also uneconomic and unviable for the domestic market. The project increased debt burden on the people. Huge subsidy is provided to sell the product in the market. A similar project, KAFCO, was pushed by Japan where the government has to sell natural gas at a rate much lower than the international rate and buy the product (urea) at a rate higher than the international price.

Every child in Bangladesh is born with a debt obligation. Per capita debt has increased from \$7 in 1973/74 to \$137 in 2003/04, while per

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<sup>21</sup> Jubilee South Declaration. 2nd Global Assembly, Havana, 28 September 2005

<sup>22</sup> *Hyderabad Pledge*. Declaration of the people's forum during annual meeting of the Board of Governors of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), held in Hyderabad (India) in May 2006.

<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Finance. *Bangladesh Economic Review 2005*. Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka, June 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Least Developed Country as categorized by the UN. There are 50 LDCs including 5 in South Asia and 15 in Asia.

capita GNP is only \$482.<sup>25</sup> Annual debt service payment is as much as combined investments in education and health sectors.

The question is, why the people of the South should pay for illegitimate debts — debts they have not benefited from, debts that financed projects that caused displacement of the communities and damage to the environment, debts wasted on corruption or failed projects, debts contracted through undemocratic and fraudulent means, debts with grossly unfair terms and harmful conditions, odious debts incurred by dictatorships, debts contracted in the context of exploitative international economic relations, debts for which peoples of the South have paid many times over? So the slogan is now: we, the people of the South, are creditors. We don't owe we won't pay.<sup>26</sup>

*Farmers plough and they say  
We don't owe we won't pay.  
Fishers row and they say  
We don't owe we won't pay.  
Children play and they say  
We don't owe we won't pay.  
As we march we all say  
We don't owe we won't pay.*<sup>27</sup>

Anti-debt movement has been intensified. The message is very clear. The neo-liberalism under the aegis of market fundamentalism has to be resisted.

We don't live any more within the realm of economic growth-driven development. Now we talk about sustainable development. The question comes as a logical corollary whether we can sustain the earth for our living. Can we?

### **And quiet flows the life**

Step by step, nature has set the stage for *Homo sapiens*. It was not until 7,000 years ago that Neolithic man took to agriculture and began to domesticate animals. The ethereal beauty of the *Himalaya* and the

<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Finance. *Bangladesh Economic Review 2006*. Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka, June 2006.

<sup>26</sup> *Call for global actions against International Financial Institutions at International People's Forum*. Organized during the World Bank-IMF annual meeting at Singapore, 14-20 September 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Composed and recited by the author at the polycentric World Social Forum held in Caracas on 26 January 2006.

bounty of the *Ganga* vested them with attributes of divinity. Kalidas<sup>28</sup> spoke for poets and philosophers alike in describing the *Himalaya* as Earth's measuring rod. *Himalaya* was not always there. Nature itself has transformed the landscape. Rivers have changed course. Fauna, flora and eco-cultures have migrated and intermingled. Nature is not unchanging. And what Man has done to change this changeful nature is what is to be seen.<sup>29</sup>

In the *Gangetic* delta, human settlement and actions are conditioned by the water regime and land elevation. In the floodplain, village platforms are at higher elevation. People build houses on raised earthen mounds to protect themselves from *borshar pani* (monsoon water), which drenches low-lying areas.<sup>30</sup>

Rural people follow local wisdom in everyday life. Khona is their mentor.<sup>31</sup> She is associated with many forecasts, known as *Khonar Vachan*, about weather, astrology, crops, productivity, and so on. Khona's advice work as guide to farmers, telling them when to plant, how to till the soil for different crops. She also suggested which way a house should face, where trees should be planted and where a pond should be excavated. Mothers often cite her advice to children about what and how much one should eat. "A little bit of salt, a little bit of bitter, and always stop before you are too full". Homestead gardens are key to the prosperity. How did Khona express it?

*Kola ruye na keto paat*  
*Tatei kapor tatei bhat*

(Planting banana tree, do not cut leaves  
This will produce enough for food and clothes)

In order to live comfortably, one needs to get the benefit of monsoon wind in the summer coming from the south, and protection against cold wave coming from the north. Khona has a wise advice for all how to build a house.

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<sup>28</sup> Great Indian poet of 4th century B.C.

<sup>29</sup> Vergheese, B.G. *Waters of Hope - Himalaya-Ganga Development and Cooperation for a Billion People*. Oxford & IBH, New Delhi, 1990

<sup>30</sup> Ahmad, Mohiuddin. *Social Audit of Water Management*, in Ahmad (ed), *Bangladesh Towards 21st Century*. CDL, Dhaka, 1999.

<sup>31</sup> Khona, composer of nature laws. She lived between 800-1200 AD. According to one account, she belonged to village Deuli in Barasat, West Bengal (India). Her father was *Acharya* (teacher), and she stayed in King Chakraketu's monastery for a considerable period.

*Dokshin duari ghorer raja  
 Purbo duari tahar proja  
 Uttar duarir mukhey chhai  
 Poshchim duarir khajna nai*

(South-facing house is the finest  
 One facing the east is the next best  
 A house is unpleasant facing the north  
 A west-facing house one shouldn't have sought)

### **Dreadful dams**

Life flows from birth to death, as that of a river from the glacier to the sea. When it is young, it is turbulent. At the time of maturity, it replenishes land with fertility of silt and water. At the fag end of the journey, it joins the sea, the eternity. Then came the regime of 'development' that shattered the fabric of the earth and of our life.

The history of 'development' is virtually the history of human encroachment into rivers and other water bodies. Some people tend to tame the river. They call it 'river training'. Dykes are built, dams are installed and spurs are constructed to contain a river. In a protest rally against World Bank-funded big dams, once the activists put up a banner mentioning, "Dam the World Bank, not the World's Rivers".<sup>32</sup>

Around the world, large dams have caused massive irreversible harm to rivers, riverine ecosystems and the people who depend on them for their livelihood. Millions of people have been forcibly evicted from their homes and lands to make way for large dams. Most have been left worse off. Millions more living in the downstream has had their livelihoods destroyed by changes in river ecosystems. Some of the world's most diverse wildlife habitats and fertile farmlands have been flooded beneath reservoirs. Entire river ecosystems have been irreversibly harmed.

Although the rate of dam building has dropped to less than half of its peak in the early 1970s, many projects still remain under construction and many more have been proposed. Japan plays a key role in promoting this development internationally.

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<sup>32</sup> Author's personal experience of participating in a rally in Washington D.C. as a member of the Third World Network delegation at the time of World Bank-IMF annual meeting in September 1990. There were protests against the *Three Gorges Dam* (China) and the *Narmada Dam* (India).

In September 2002, communities affected by the *Koto Panjang Dam* in Indonesia filed an unprecedented lawsuit. The project, supported by the Japanese government and built by Japanese construction companies, forcibly evicted around 20,000 people from their homes and land and destroyed important habitat for endangered species such as elephants, tigers, bears and monkeys. The 3,861 plaintiffs demanded that the Japanese government and the Japanese company, which designed the dam, take measures to restore the rivers destroyed by the project and pay compensation of five million yen per person.

The *San Roque Dam* in the Philippines is another example of a destructive dam project funded by the Japanese government. The affected people have repeatedly called on the Japanese government to halt its funding of the project; yet their pleas have fallen on deaf ears. Among those affected are the indigenous *Ibaloi* people who live in fear that their land and villages would be buried in sediment backing up behind the dam, as well as thousands of people who were forcibly displaced to make way for the construction site and reservoir.

These two cases are perhaps the most well known in Japan, but several more are there. Many of these projects would not have been built without support from the Japanese government through the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). It is Japanese taxpayers' money that is being used to subsidize these destructive projects, all in the name of "development".<sup>33</sup>

When the Government of India commissioned the *Farakka Barrage* on the *Ganga* River in 1975 and later in 1976 started diverting water unilaterally to another channel *Bhagirathi*, vast areas in Bangladesh became dry and many farmers were dislocated. This created a lot of tension between the two peoples. Although a water sharing agreement was signed between the two governments in 1996, the river had already been depleted by numerous dams and barrages in the upstream.

### **Accord and action**

A growing people's movement in Asia is challenging JBIC's destructive development model and promoting alternative methods of meeting needs for energy, water and flood control. People's movements to regain rights

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<sup>33</sup> Rivers Watch East and Southeast Asia (RWESA). *Development Disasters: Japanese-Funded Dam Projects in Asia*. International River Network and Friends of the Earth Japan, March 2003.

to water, land, forest and other shared resources are expanding beyond national borders and across regions. In July 2000, Rivers Watch East and Southeast Asia (RWESA), a network of NGOs and people's movements, was formed to stop destructive river development in East and Southeast Asia and to press for reparations for affected communities and restoration of damaged ecosystems. RWESA is demanding that JBIC adheres to its own environmental guidelines and the WCD (World Commission on Dams) recommendations in all future planning. In addition, RWESA is demanding that JBIC takes responsibility for repairing the harm from existing projects, as recommended by the WCD.

<sup>34</sup>

Some civil society groups of South Asia met in Chennai (India) in August 1993 and decided to form a "South Asia People's Commission on River Water and Environment". As a follow-up, three NGOs, namely CDL (Bangladesh), RRN (Nepal) and IMSE (India) joined hands in a meeting in November 1993 in Dhaka to do a study on the *Ganga*. Three separate studies were done and the findings were presented in a workshop held in Kathmandu in July 1994. There was a consensus that

- Farmers across borders need water.
- Rivers catchments do not necessarily follow political boundaries.
- Water is a critical environmental resource and should be used in a sustainable manner.
- Rivers should not be engineered for short-term, narrow, commercial purposes.
- Let the rivers flow.<sup>35</sup>

Some experts and activists with diverse and even conflicting 'national' interest have decided to work together for common good.<sup>36</sup>

At this backdrop, many of us joined together to develop a process of people's SAARC to spearhead trans-border democracy. In the people's agenda were uniform charter of civil rights, demilitarization, free flow of information and labor and so forth. Some civil society groups and NGOs organized solidarity actions and collaborative works to this end. Notable among these were the founding of the South Asian Forum of Human Rights (SAFHR), South Asian Forum against Destructive

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<sup>34</sup> RWESA. Op cit.

<sup>35</sup> Ahmad, Mohiuddin. *South Asian Perspective*. Nabodhara, Dhaka, 1996.

International Aid (SAFDIA), a peace process initiated by the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPFPD), People's SAARC and South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE). A need for convergence of the people in the region has increasingly been felt.

#### **IV. DEMOCRACY DOWN TO EARTH**

##### **Governance**

People want to come together, not through forcible assimilation, but through a process of cooperation based on shared vision. Such a process of convergence is often threatened by chauvinism and centralism. Right to autonomy is branded as separatism and is brutally suppressed in the pretext of national security and integration. Here the states are too strong, distant, atrocious and indifferent to the sensitivity of the communities with distinct identity.

We live under the dictum of the state. We create states to deliver services and they emerge as super institutions to regulate us. Governance becomes state-centric and not people-centric.

The core issue is, however, the relationship between the state and the people. John Locke argued that the relationship between the government and the governed was in the nature of a contract – the Social Contract. By this contract, the people give their consent to be controlled by a government on condition that the government does not violate the natural rights of life, liberty and property. If any of these rights is infringed, the contract is broken and the people have a right to rebel to change the government.<sup>37</sup> Locke's political concept of natural rights produced the doctrine that the people as a whole should have complete control over their political destiny.

Locke's ideas were demonstrated in the revolt of the American colonies. In this context, the following words may be quoted from Jefferson's Declaration of Independence.

*We hold the truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and pursuit of Happiness.*

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<sup>36</sup> After 20 years of squabble and consultation, a water sharing agreement was finally reached between the two countries in 1996.

*That, to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, - That whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it.*<sup>38</sup>

The issue of governance is recently being addressed in development literature. In most Asian countries, fruits of development are often lost due to bad governance. This is manifested through corruption, harassment, humiliation and deliberate wastage of time, lack of respect for common people, unfriendly attitude, negligence to duties, plundering of public resources, nepotism and violence against minorities, women and children.

A major weakness in the governance system is lack of people's participation, which is in-built in public institutions dealing with development projects. This has been well reflected in a government document of Bangladesh.<sup>39</sup>

- The governance agenda has suffered from being insufficiently grounded in an understanding of where the governance 'needs' of the poor and of vulnerable groups including women lie and of the real-life constraints impinging on the initiative potential of political actors on governance issues.
- Burgeoning election expenditures have narrowed the field of political competition to a moneyed class and fuelled a propensity for corrupt practices to ensure 'recovery' of expenditures incurred.
- An inherited colonial system of criminal and civil justice, which ensures 'certainty of expense but uncertainty of results, poses major barriers to the poor in terms of accessibility and affordability.
- Systems loss in the process of delivery of some services appears to be huge, making the system inefficient and ineffective.

Good governance embodies participation, transparency, accountability and equity. It makes participation a right and hence ensures that voice of the poor and the excluded is heard. It also calls for democratization

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<sup>37</sup> *Of Civil Government* (1689).

<sup>38</sup> Second paragraph of "A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America in General Congress Assembled", in Heater, D.B., *Political Ideas in the Modern World*. George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., London, 1967.

<sup>39</sup> PDO-ICZMP. *State of the Coast*. Water Resources Planning Organization, Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 2006.

of national governments, the international financial institutions (IFIs) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the reform of the United Nations (UN) to ensure a pro-people governance system in place. Moreover, good governance applies both to the North in their dealings with the South, as well as within the South itself, as the prevalent rampant corruption only keeps the poor and the disadvantaged, again, at the receiving end.<sup>40</sup>

### **Criminalization of politics**

Whether we like it or not, our lives are controlled by political parties. They are now inseparable part of our system of governance. The first striking feature of the political parties is that these are person-oriented. Each party has a central figure, a main leader, the *Supremo*. In many countries, the main leader holds the office till her/his death. S/he cannot be replaced.

In a society of unequal, politics is a convenient tool for a small section of the people to establish and perpetuate their individual and clan interest. This is manifested in the dynastic regimes at all levels: local government, parliamentary constituency and central leadership of the political parties. In many Asian countries, we observe third, fourth or even fifth generation of family rule legitimized through elections.

The entire process has been criminalized. Still we observe popular participation in elections. The members of the electorate still go to the polling booths with twin objectives. First, they like to exercise their right of franchise, which in many Asian societies has been earned after prolonged struggle and bloodshed. Secondly, the voters want a change. However, there are many who cannot vote. Particularly the vulnerable groups, such as, religious and ethnic minorities, the *dalits* and women are not allowed to cast vote by the power elite in many areas. Women's participation in the political process is hardly allowed in West Asian countries with few exceptions like Iran, Lebanon, Palestine and Israel.

Parliamentary election has become a big industry with high investments and even higher rate of return. Money and muscle power is now *sine qua non* for elections. The increasing participation of the "new rich" in elections reinforces this hypothesis.

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<sup>40</sup> LDCWatch. *Civil society concerns of the implementation of the Brussels Program of Action for the decade of 2001-2010 at the high level meeting of the UN General Assembly on the mid-term review*. 18-19 September 2006, New York.

What is the alternative? Shall we do away with the parliament, the electoral process and political pluralism? The overhead cost of running a state, a parliament and a government is too high. The people are very poor. Why the poor would continue to pay for processes and institutions that do not deliver? The enterprise named state needs to be more meaningful and relevant. We have to find ways and means to evolve a process that ensures accountability of those who are elected to run the government. This is the task of the civil society.

### **Civil society role**

Amidst philistine outlook, hypocrisy and feudal remnants, there are rays of hope. Civic actions take place against the prejudicial acts of the governments and the multilateral agencies. They are not many in number, but are increasing. Indigenous people's resistance against large dams in India, garments workers' movement for fair wage in Bangladesh, citizens' movement for a sovereign parliament and constitutional democracy in Nepal, citizens' movement for a corruption-free and more accountable government in the Philippines and resistance of farmers, fishers and a section of the intelligentsia across the region and beyond against the axis of evils constituted by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the WTO are few such examples.

The struggle for peace and justice is on. One commendable example is the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery, held in Tokyo in December 2000. The tribunal sought to bring justice to survivors, and to end the cycle of impunity for wartime sexual violence. It says:

*Here we all take action for the future, through the global solidarity of people and not of States, with women playing a central role alongside men.*<sup>41</sup>

A poet in Okinawa still remembers in profound grief the plight of the schoolgirls in the World War-II that devastated the land of the Ryukyus.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Matsui, Yayori, organizer of the tribunal. Cited in *Toward a future of peace and non-violence*, Women's Active Museum on War and Peace (WAM), Tokyo.

<sup>42</sup> Takara, Ben. *Dream Revelations*.

*In a society of unequal, politics is a convenient tool for a small section of the people to establish and perpetuate their individual and clan interest. This is manifested in the dynastic regimes at all levels: local government, parliamentary constituency and central leadership of the political parties. In many Asian countries, we observe third, fourth or even fifth generation of family rule legitimized through elections.*

*In the sacred grove of Hamakawa  
in the shadow of the rocks on the shore,  
their hair died red  
lipstick moist  
two island girls  
white arms bared to the pit  
waited,  
staring into the distant  
blue green channels of nirai kanai<sup>43</sup>  
for the black-skinned, white-skinned GIs  
who would come.*

### **The vision of Minamata**

How is our contemporary world? In the late 1980s, there was an attempt to conceptualize PP21 (people's plan for twenty-first century) in the form of an idea, a network and a movement for trans-border alliance for grassroots democracy. It was an earnest and resolute effort to develop an Asian regional perspective and a vision for future. It says:

*The slogan at the beginning of the 20th century was progress. The cry at the end of the 20th century is survival. The call for the next century is hope.*

*The present system has begun to undermine itself by creating its own contradictions: growth against nature, militarism against need for collective security, uniformity against cultural diversity, alienation against human dignity, mindless consumerism against humankind aspiring to regain lost values.*

*A new internationalism is being born out of these local, national and regional popular struggles confronting common enemies.*

*The ruling powers maintain themselves by dividing the people and encouraging hostility among them.*

*Trans-border political actions, support and solidarity campaigns will gradually develop a new 'people' that transcends existing divisions.<sup>44</sup>*

*Our vision projects global democracy – trans-border participatory democracy to counter and to finally dismantle global power centres*

<sup>43</sup> The other world in Okinawan cosmology.

<sup>44</sup> *Minamata Declaration*. PP21 Assembly at Minamata (Japan), August 1989.

*and also overcome the overreaching problem of human society today – the division of the people of the world into the North and the South.*<sup>45</sup>

The vision of Minamata has spread across continents. The World Social Forum (WSF) has been carrying the torch of trans-border alliance forward since 2001. Many people perceive the WSF with all its limitations as an ‘alliance of hope’ in the post-cold war era.

## **V. COMMUNITY CONVERGENCE**

### **Participation and partnership**

When we founded the CDL in Bangladesh<sup>46</sup>, we were wondering how to create an enabling environment where people from diverse cultures and backgrounds will converge for enlightenment and action. The goal was to facilitate a process that would lead to a higher level of participation. In order to prepare a society to perform a pro-active role, people need to be well informed, aware of all options and should be free to choose some. We started organizing discussion forums and study circles, preparing dissemination materials and developing instruments for advocacy and lobbying. This has led us to realize some issues from a governance point of view.

Development is a right and not a privilege. People need an enabling environment to assert their rights. An enabling environment includes a set of conditions that facilitates the performance of certain individuals or social groups in a better way. Such an enabling environment particularly corresponds to an institutional framework that contributes positively toward enhancement of livelihoods of the people. This is invariably linked to the wider aspect of how resources are managed and how access to these resources is regulated. The functioning of this framework is the consequence, as well as reflection, of certain processes. These processes either accelerate the pace of enhancement, or impede its course. Any change in these processes will change the institutional environment and will thereby affect the livelihoods of the people and vice versa.

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<sup>45</sup> *The Sagarmatha Declaration*, PP21 Assembly, Kathmandu, March 1996.

<sup>46</sup> Community Development Library (CDL) was founded in October 1980 as a center for development learning, communication, research and advocacy. It is a non-profit organization (NPO) with 25 centers across Bangladesh.

People need a government in terms of services it delivers and they do not want a government to control and regulate their lives. The next important question is where the government should be located. It is now widely agreed that people should be empowered at the local level to plan and manage their own affairs. At the higher level (i.e. the central level), the need of the government can only be rationalized in terms of its facilitating role.

While the aspirations of the people can find expression in an environment of freedom, an enabling institutional setting envisages the following:

- Participatory local governance;
- Community management of resources;
- Secularism.

In the art of governance, the notion of authority has increasingly been replaced by the concept of participation. Its connotation goes beyond consultation process and it includes within its fold the role in decision-making at all stages of an intervention affecting livelihoods. Here the key word is ‘partnership’.

Partnership evolves through meaningful interaction and convergence of interests. This requires a facilitating mechanism that would ensure critical balance between diverse needs and interests. It is important to note that there are different interest groups with conflicting objectives. In the context of an enabling environment, conflict management and consensus building are two critical tasks that need special attention.<sup>47</sup> These together create condition for unity in diversity. This is quite different from ‘democratic centralism’ envisioned by the communists for a long time. In the mid-sixties, Mao Ze-dong said, “Let hundred flowers bloom; let thousand schools of thought flourish”. This concept was expounded together with a slogan, “bombard the headquarters”, in his campaign against party bureaucracy. Ultimately centralism defeated democracy.

Communities yearn for freedom, cry for freedom, fight for freedom and die for freedom.

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<sup>47</sup> Ahmad, Mohiuddin. *Living in the Coast - People and Institutions*. PDO-ICZMP, Water Resources Planning Organization, Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 2005

*When I was born  
 Birds didn't sing  
 They were in chain.  
 When I was born  
 Flowers didn't bloom  
 There was no rain.  
 When I was born  
 Plants didn't grow  
 There was no grain.  
 When I was born  
 Rivers didn't flow  
 There was no crane.  
 As I roam around  
 I see no home to rest  
 I see no one to love  
 Birds don't find a nest.  
 O sister... O brother  
 Free the land, free the river  
 Free the sky, free the flower  
 Free the birds, free the mind  
 Free the children, free mankind.<sup>48</sup>*

### **Language of protest**

Participants in resistance movements are considered as terrorists by the state and are hailed as freedom fighters in their own communities. Language of the state and that of the victims are different. The question is from whose perspective one speaks. Around the world, resistance has become a dominant language of protest against plight and persecution of the marginalized communities. This perhaps reinforces the hypothesis: either resist or perish.

Protest is a manifestation of the injured mind. It indicates the extent of injury that one suffers. If the injury is far too grave, the injured mind may explode losing coherence and sanity. A language of remonstrance is then transformed into a language of coercion, which is often violent.

A display of this syndrome has been observed in the Israel-Palestine conflict where “your children for our children” has surfaced as a means

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<sup>48</sup> Composed and recited by the author in the 2nd South-North consultation in Havana organized by the Jubilee South, 30 September 2005.

of intimidation. This is where all reasons end and forces of vengeance triumph.<sup>49</sup>

In the ideal world of representative democracy where the state is strong in terms of responsibilities to its citizens and weak in terms of power over its citizens, a different language of protest is heard. In the sixties and the seventies, anti-Vietnam war rallies symbolized the radicalization of the youth. The *Russel Tribunal* was a classic example of protest of the enlightened mind against hegemony. A similar tribunal was organized to seek justice for the victims of Minamata at the second PP21 assembly in Bangkok in December 1992.

Role of a conformist is to emulate, while a rebel ponders to create. A rebel never gives in. When Prometheus retorted to the servant of the Gods, Hermes, he said:

*Be sure of this, I would not change my state  
Of evil fortune for your servitude,  
Better to be the servant of this rock  
Than to be faithful boy to Father Zeus.*<sup>50</sup>

Prometheus is the most eminent saint and martyr in the philosophical calendar.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ahmad, Mohiuddin. *Language of Protest*, in Ahmad (ed), *Thorny Path - essays on contemporary issues*. CDL, Dhaka, 2004.

<sup>50</sup> Aeschylus. *Prometheus Bound*.

<sup>51</sup> Marx, Karl. *Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature*. Doctoral Dissertation.

# Building Cultural Sustainability among Young Communities in Asia

*Janet Pillai*

## The Development of Cultural Collectives

While some persons fit comfortably into the textual, discursive space of academia, I do not. I prefer to read the stimulating theories put forth by academics and to experiment with them on the ground. I am more of an action researcher examining the role and relevance of the arts in different contexts. My practice involves facilitating young people to make art that is culturally relevant or functional in different settings or fields. My work has drawn me away from my urban tribe to touch base with different communities. Over the last 15 years I have moved from being a theatre practitioner to become what may be termed a cultural worker.

Cultural workers are usually activists or activist artists who position themselves as development workers or non-formal educators within small communities. They use the arts (performing arts in particular, writing and visual arts,) as a participatory, exploratory or communication tool to deliver information or to ignite social/cultural transformation. 'Cultural collective' is a term that might be loosely used to describe an organization led by such activists, which promotes cultural, ideological and civil development.

*Cultural collectives are popular in India and to an extent in Southeast Asia (particularly in the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand). They operate as small non-profit groups at grassroots level, engage young*

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<sup>1</sup> Although some of these organizations have been criticized as 'project culture', i.e. dependence on western donors, donor's criteria and keywords, young activists prefer to work for these NGOs, which remain independent of state administration and media, both of which predominantly promote national propaganda. Some examples of global movements, which give policy support and fund projects, are Save the Children UK, CARE, Asia Network, Danish Association for Cooperation and World Vision. They initiate programs via development workers to empower communities, fund training programs for development workers and the development of materials and tools.

*university graduates as volunteers and are supported by funds obtained from local and international foundations.<sup>1</sup> As culture is one of the strongest transmission tools at grassroots level, cultural collectives often team up with local artists to devise critical cultural development programs. Cultural collectives are more popularly known as Theatre for Development, Popular Theatre, Popular Education, Participatory Theatre, Theater in Health Education, Educational Theatre, and Edutainment.*

PETA in the Philippines, MAYA and MAKHAMPOM in Thailand, Young Theatre Penang in Malaysia, KUNCI in Indonesia and Alternative Living Theatre in West Bengal are examples of cultural collectives, each with a history spanning approximately 10-25 years. Their formation can be traced to sentiments and ideology rising from the 1970s student movement in Asian Universities.

The political action of the student movement of the 1970s in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and India was orientated towards ideological issues at a broader societal level. Philip Altbach<sup>2</sup> describes such action as having ‘value’ orientation (i.e. where action is taken around ideological issues such as dismantling dictatorship or elevation of corruption) and ‘societal’ orientation (i.e. where issues were viewed as political, economic or cultural in nature and were of national concern). These particular orientations of the student movements in India and Southeast Asia seem to have a strong impact on engaging students in civic and political roles, producing the first generation of student activists<sup>3</sup> who carried their commitment into community work, after graduation. Students who came out of this movement, and chose to set up social or In analyzing the function and location of social collectives (in India),

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<sup>2</sup> Altbach, Phillip. “*Student Politics and Higher Education in India*” Bombay, Lalvani Publishing House, 1968, India. Altbach describes the political action of student movements as moving along 4 particular orientations; *normative* orientation is action taken on very specific issues while *value* orientation refers to action taken around wider ideological issues. *Etudialist* orientation focuses on issues limited to student or campus as a site while *societal* orientation refers to taking action at a national level

<sup>3</sup> In Thailand and Philippines small but vocal political theatre movements appeared as part of the student democracy movement. These groups regrouped as NGOs after periods of censorship. Despite being counter culture movements they worked within the framework of indigenous culture, which they believed held the key to alternative development.

<sup>4</sup> Prakash, Asseem. *Is Civil Society the Panacea?*, article presented in a Symposium entitled India Shining- Gainers, Losers and Development Performance May 2004, Chennai, India.

Aseem Prakash in his article '*Is Civil Society a Panacea*'<sup>4</sup> observes that social collectives "...provide a space between the family and the state/market for translating individual consciousness into collective cultural collectives can be considered to be apart of the civil society. consciousness. Most commentators locate civil society either as a necessary part of a democratic and secular state trying to protect the interests of the citizens/members or as standing against and outside the structures of state registering protest against wrong practices/policies of the latter."

The cultural collectives set up by students attempted to articulate a people-orientated agenda using popular culture. It focused particularly on communities marginalized by right-wing politics, market forces and national policies. A checklist on characteristics of these organizations will reveal the following:

- Non-hierarchical/democratic set-up;
- Emphasis on social responsibility;
- Work with marginalized groups;
- Activist or education approach;
- Focused on transformation;
- Perceive themselves as change agents ;
- Against cultural imperialism and globalization;
- For conservation of 'local' culture (values, norms, institutions and artifacts).

I am often asked if the urban intellectual (who may or may not hail from a privileged space) turns to cultural work as a form of resistance, to escape institutional set-ups, to seek alternatives or to find themselves. I suppose there are those who have a more prophetic vision of an alternative reality or a transformative praxis rooted in politics or religious ideology. Then there are those who are more pragmatic, simply making an inquiry rooted in experiment and located in action.

Culture workers fresh from universities attempt to negotiate theory and application by bringing objective ways of seeing to interface with subjective cultural ways of doing. They negotiate moving between the confines of suburban institutions and the openness of the natural environment and living culture, where peoples' bodies retain as much significance, functionally and symbolically, as their minds. They negotiate diverse identities as urban individualist, member of a cultural community, member of the larger society, region, etc.

When such interaction occurs between the culture worker and the site or between the culture worker and the community, cultural engagement between the interventionist and the community is inevitable. Hijacking a term used by Homi Bahba in his *Location of Culture*<sup>5</sup>, I'd like to note that this cultural engagement is produced 'performatively' in a "liminal" creative space or a "hybrid" site, which actually witnesses the production of new cultural meanings rather than reflecting the cultural heritage of the community or the cultural worker.

The most interesting aspect of this interface and exchange between cultural collectives and communities in the region is that it produces cultural hybridities through the complex ongoing process of negotiation. This hybrid culture incorporates mutual and mutable recognition of cultural differences and universal similarities between the urban interventionist and the community. 'Alternative' is the term used often to legitimize whatever transformation has occurred as a result of the interactions and exchange between culture worker (and cultural collective) and the community.

In this essay I look at some examples of cultural collectives in Southeast Asia, which work predominantly with the younger sector of community. I try to locate the liminal space within which they work, the struggle between individual self and the collective, between aesthetics and politics, between theory and application, between the marginalized and the dominant, which produces a cultural hybrid often referred to as 'the alternative mode'. Does this alternative serve a meditative function? Is it a transformative movement...or just another construct?

### **Engaging Community through the Arts**

In Asia, we can almost trace an interregional civil movement using the arts for cultural action. This movement heated up in the 1980s led by India and the Philippines. The use of arts by cultural collectives ranged from adapting indigenous cultural forms of expression to carry new content to using modern artistic tools such as video, camera, etc. to revitalize tradition. There were practical reasons why the arts were used to engage young people in the community.

Cultural conscientization was considered the most suitable means to develop local place-based models of development. Artistic and cultural forms of expression are very much embedded in indigenous culture

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<sup>5</sup> Bahba, Homi (1994), *The Location of Culture*, London, Routledge.

and are a part of daily life in small rural and urban communities. Artistic expression is a safe vehicle/platform, being culturally appropriate and non-intrusive. The arts encourage ensemble and consensus work styles, which is crucial to community building. It gives voice and ownership to silent sectors, allowing for diverse mediums, comfortable to all. It produces creative and cultural energy and is thus able to mobilize people. It can demonstrate and communicate to the masses. It can lead to attitudinal / behavioral change. It is a perfect tool that combines socialization, education and awareness raising with entertainment.

Cultural initiatives in Southeast Asia clearly vacillated between implementation of artistic programs and advocacy-related programs and sometimes merged the two trajectories. In one trajectory (particularly cultural initiatives with young people led by educators and artists), we can see that arts-education maintains two dominant pedagogical perspectives, the aesthetic and experiential (Sternudd 2000<sup>6</sup>). Young participants were reconnected to their environment and community through exploratory and inquiry-orientated fieldtrips. They collected stories, images and skills and used artistic means to organize and represent people and situations, history and tradition.

- ***Aesthetic*** – this artistic perspective concentrates on the creativity of the young participants. The aims are more orientated towards developing creativity and sensitizing participants to appreciate and understand form/content and develop fluency in visual, movement, linguistic, spatial, thinking and problem solving skills.
- ***Experiential*** – this holistic learning perspective focuses on learning about human situations and conditions from different perspectives. Conflicts are studied as a normal force in the development of mankind in daily, historical and legendary events.

The Children's Theatre Workshops (CTW) run by the Philippine Educational Theatre Association (PETA) was responsible for igniting the development of arts in social/cultural education in Southeast Asia in the 1970s. Focused on young participants, the workshops combined Freirian principles of empowerment and the liberal educational tenets of Dewey and Rousseau with integrated-arts-education.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Sternudd, M.M.F. (2000) Dramapedagogik som demokratisk fostran? Fyra dramapedagogiska perspektiv - dramapedagogik i fyra läroplaner. (Educational Drama as a means of fostering democratic values? Four perspectives of educational drama in four curricula) Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Uppsaliensis. Uppsala Studies in Education 88, Sweden.

*PETA's workshops used an experiential approach to help children in small communities reflect on their local culture and environment through creative dramatics, creative writing, music and visual arts. Their approach of learning about locality through the arts became the prototype of cultural work particularly with young people in Southeast Asia.*

*In the 1980s, PETA's workshop model influenced MAYA, a leading Theatre for Development Company located in Thailand.<sup>8</sup> MAYA can be credited with building a sound theoretical base for educational theatre in Southeast Asia by applying child development, communication theory and brain theory to strengthen the methodology for place-based cultural education.*

In Malaysia, the *Teater Muda* (TM) program run by Five Arts Center, Kuala Lumpur (1990-2004) was inspired by PETA's decolonization of the arts and MAYA's orientation towards child development. The program evolved from integrated-arts experiments carried out in 1980-1990 into a methodology on 'localizing' arts-education for young people. This program (run by an artists collective) focused on the development of artistic skills and aesthetic appreciation in relation to local resources such as traditional arts, environment, and living culture.

The second trajectory of cultural collectives (led by cultural workers from political/social science or from mass communication) was focused more on local issues and pressing social concerns. The objective of this second trajectory was the general improvement of the community in relation to development issues. In this second trajectory of cultural work we can discern that cultural workers directly in the field to engage the community use arts and this engagement take on different pedagogical perspectives described by Sternudd.

- **Humanistic psychology** – a personal development perspective that concentrates on group dynamics and human growth. The aims here are more affective and therapeutic, intending to sensitize feelings and relationships to promote emotional /psychological healing.
- **Social Science** - the critically liberating perspective focuses on conscientization and advocacy for change. The aims are more

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<sup>7</sup> Philippine Educational Theater Association was begun as a cultural initiative in Manila in 1967 by Cecile Guidote. The Children's Theatre Workshop is a culmination of work begun in 1968 when PETA offered summer programs for children and teachers in the Philippines.

cognitive and intended to provide understanding, insight and awareness of social structures.

The orientation of the second trajectory was on using cultural processes in advocating awareness of issues such as health, poverty, human rights, gender equality, environmental and educational concerns etc. Cultural action was used as value-added interventions in activities and programs designed to advocate attitudinal or normative transformations. Popular folk media and traditional arts were often employed to communicate information to the community or to promote their participation in programs. When the need was felt to reach larger audiences, radio, television and video were resorted to as common tools.

The most significant aspect of this home grown cultural advocacy program was its urgent agenda to conscientize local population (particularly young people) to be discerning of which aspects of development to accept and how to adapt development to the local context. As they were particularly concerned with the impact of multinational corporations on local economy and culture, this movement strongly promoted local resources, cultural systems, practices, and values and strongly opposed the infiltration of alien goods and services into the domestic and personal lifestyles of rural population.

As an example MAYA from Thailand used integrated arts to work directly with young people through advocacy workshops and campaigns for healthy lifestyle based on positive traditional values. Simultaneously they staged highly popular outdoor musical comedies in traditional soap-opera style criticizing the consumption of tobacco, junk food, western medicine, purchase of irrelevant electronic equipment, etc. Negative traditional practices also became the butt of their criticism.

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<sup>8</sup> MAYA (Arts and Cultural Institute for Development) is a cultural collective formed in the 70's. by Thamatsat University student, Santhi Chitrachinda. MAYA dedicated in its early years to development work and campaigns using integrated arts to work with school going children. From 1999 it has concentrated on an innovative teacher development program to promote local capacity in managing early education and producing localized (place-based) curriculum. Since 2002, teachers in 14 provinces have been taught how to develop local curriculum and build local networks. Teachers are taught how to apply integrated arts and cultural approaches to facilitate learning. They are also trained to develop local learning units which address local problems, needs, vision and resolutions. The program has developed an experiential pedagogy where children are to be sent out into the community to identify problem issues related to local resources. Solutions are solicited, brainstormed and presented back to the community in cultural performance by the children.

MAKHAMPOM worked directly with diverse communities of rural youth groups, urban slum dwellers, factory workers, prisoners, the hill tribe villages— and refined a methodology that was adaptable to their specific needs. With the help of a facilitator, the target group is given the opportunity to select the social issue they wish to address; dialogue with experts and community members affected by the problem; express the potentially divisive issue in front of elders and peers in a nonconfrontational way, using role-play, local dialect, traditional music and dance. Outcomes are concrete and simple such as a youth group publishing a newsletter to educate the community about AIDS and another group initiating a series of local radio programs that featured interviews with elders and discussions among children about community concerns.

As independent non-formal educators, cultural workers were often free to adopt strategies to deal with different political/social environments and different target audiences. In the cases mentioned above, their articulation of the central problem was social/economic injustice and the core concept around which they developed their educational practice was cultural action.

MAKHAMPOM for example, works on the assumption that injustice arises because people do not understand and/or are unable to communicate with the dominant system or are ignorant of the real competing political/economic interests of more powerful parties. In handling such cases cultural workers emphasize the critically liberating perspective focusing on conscientization and advocacy for change. The aims here are more cognitive, intent on providing understanding, insight and awareness of social structures, cultural and historical contexts and equip minority groups with communication skills.<sup>9</sup>

When dealing with street children, victims of abuse or oppressed squatter populations, PETA's works with the assumption that victims'

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<sup>9</sup>The Makhampom Theatre Group (Grassroots Micromedia Project) was formed in 1981, less as a company of artists, than as a group of activists. Makhampom, together with its sister organization, Maya, provided the basis of a community-oriented, educative approach to theatre, characterized by the term, "grassroots". Makhampom was fundamentally an experiment in theatre within an NGO movement that was itself an experiment in progressive social and political change. The group formed as "an ad-hoc group of teachers, journalists, actors, and dancers". Most volunteers joined with the socio-political objectives of the NGO movement.

Source: <http://www.makhampom.net>

experiences in life have resulted in the lack of appreciation of their own identity, self-worth or dignity as people. As a consequence of this, they lack energy and political agency to exert their rights. In their work with victims, PETA cultural workers use the personal development perspective concentrating on group dynamics and human growth. The aims here are more affective and therapeutic, intending to sensitize feelings and relationships to promote emotional /psychological healing.

### **Strategies for Cultural Sustainability**

While non-formal education by cultural collectives (through creative arts-based projects and activities) provided alternative perspectives and pedagogies, the impact of their work was miniscule. It became obvious that significant change would not occur unless more established societal structures such as local organizations, the local education system, local government departments, etc adopted this thinking. It became necessary for the more permanent structures in the community to adopt these fresh strategies for reasons of sustainability as well. Cultural collectives began forming temporary partnerships with NGOs, government agencies or service institutions and drew up joint educational projects to engage organized groups or institutions in cultural action for change. At this point the cultural communication modes developed by the collectives found their match in issue-based NGOs.

NGOs embraced this non-formal education through the arts rather enthusiastically. Besides making critical social/political analysis, NGOs were interested to improve their educational programming, particularly to find means to engage the public at a deeper level. The arts provided a safe platform that allowed civil society to participate in critical and sensitive issues within the safety of metaphor.<sup>10</sup>

In Malaysia, Young Theater Penang (YTP), a company targeted at young audiences, worked closely with the NGO ‘Women’s Crisis Center’ for 6 years between 1994 and 2000. YTP researched, devised and toured Theatre-in-Education as a tool to conscientize school-going children on issues, such as child abuse, sexual safety and conflict literacy. YTP’s

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<sup>10</sup> The exploration and mapping of an issue through an experiential or “actionist process” such as the creative arts adds more dimensions to the examination of a theme. The simulation of events through metaphoric expression (mostly non-verbal) allows the disenfranchised especially to objectively deconstruct a problem using indirect media. These media can further provide a safe platform for them to rehearse and reexamine creative responses to their problem.

programs focused on the affective and sociological perspectives applying Boal's participatory and forum techniques.<sup>11</sup> YTP also worked with pediatric wards of government hospitals using art therapy and performance to enhance mental health care for children. YTP's activities were not simply confined to performance, but were preceded or accompanied by educational and awareness-raising activities.

In the Philippines, PETA also took on a new dimension in the 1990's where they readjusted their strategies to develop partnerships with organized groups such as NGOs, the church and service organizations, sometimes even setting up a desk officer or planner at the partner's premises. In their relationship with these organizations, they used what can be referred to as horizontal and vertical strategies.

Horizontal strategies refer to tackling a theme or issue of social concern together with a partner organization. In such an approach PETA would research the issue/theme with the help of the partner, design and execute an experiential workshop on the target group, publish informational brochures and culminate with a performance for the larger community on the same theme/issue.

Vertical strategies refer to the capacity building or training structure where PETA would work with the target group and simultaneously lead facilitators from partner organizations (NGO or church workers) through the training process by sharing their 'techniques and method' with trainers, and their 'vision' with the directors of the partner organizations. They would then slowly withdraw leaving a 'method' and a 'philosophy' behind for the partner organization to adopt while they followed up with visits or consultations.<sup>12</sup>

Workers in both government and non-formal citizens' organizations use rather top-down strategies and lack skills to engage citizens' participation in social development. In these partnerships, cultural collectives try to build up the capacity of educators, social development

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<sup>11</sup> Augusto Boal is an innovative and influential Brazilian theatre director whose practice grew alongside Paulo Friere's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In the 1970s, Boal developed a form of participatory theatre that transformed spectators into "spect-actors", not just passive audiences but protagonists who are actively involved in developing solutions to conflict. Boal created a space for them to act out these solutions on stage, creating a theatre, which was "a rehearsal for life." Today the methods are practiced with marginalized and oppressed groups in many places in the world as a tool for self-empowerment.

<sup>12</sup>Information from interview with graduate student Wong Oi Min in Tokyo, October 2006.

agencies, social entrepreneurs, and community outreach workers. Training focuses on the use of the arts as a tool to engage young people and the use of participatory, culture-sensitive methods.

Although cultural collectives have valuable skills and knowledge to share, personnel from formal organizations are reluctant to utilize these skills when they return to their organizations. The socially critical stance and empowering modes (interactive and participatory) of using the arts as a tool are not popular with curriculum developers, government departments or even conservative community organizations. They find the levels of sharing, participation and empowerment awkward because it conflicts with power-distance relationships and consensus-seeking postures, which predominate in the government or formal community sectors.

Since these particular cultural collectives dealt mainly with young people, they attempted to develop sustainability by penetrating the formal education system. Until recently, the highly centralized nature of education in Asia did not permit outside input into curriculum design. However, education reforms in Thailand, for example (instigated by the World Bank after the 98 financial crisis), forced decentralization, resulting in local provinces being given autonomy over educational content and material. As provincial education departments struggled with their new role, cultural creative such as MAYA and MAKHAMPOM took advantage of the reform and stepped in to train teachers to develop creative teaching techniques to integrate into their new curriculum. MAKHAMPOM is currently forming a network with schools to infuse media literacy into the curriculum.

MAYA has taken a broader initiative to transforming education at district levels in several parts of Thailand. As an example, since 2004 MAYA worked in Isaan, the southern region of Thailand, on an innovative teacher development program. Teachers in 14 provinces have been taught how to develop local curriculum which is 'place-based' and to develop networks within the community and between teachers. Teachers are taught to acquaint children with the socio-economic and historical aspects of their locality, and then send the children out into the community to identify problems and issues related to local resources. Solutions are solicited, brainstormed and presented back to the community through cultural performances by the children. In order to advocate for this new curriculum, MAYA plans to organize national level seminars for 3,000 participants from their teachers' network in the North and in the South.

Over the years, cultural workers have grappled with the problem of keeping cultural environments and resources intact while helping communities adjust to positive development or fight off the negative aspects of development. The role of culture workers was to facilitate critical, creative thinking towards development that was in tandem with local culture and local resources. But as physical environments began to suffer under excessive development, they had to focus not just on living culture, but also on natural and built heritage.

Cultural initiatives to conserve tangible and intangible capital together can be traced to the efforts of UNESCO's 1972 international treaty on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage which called for the conservation of heritage sites, traditional crafts, performing arts, etc., for its historical and aesthetic value. In the face of rapid development, conservationists called for management plans, technical assistance, public awareness, and participation of government institutions and the local population. However, the early conservation movement was more successful harnessing government efforts at saving important monuments and precincts, but less successful in their call to involve citizen's participation in conservation and development of their cultural capital. As a result, urban conservation initiatives in heritage cities (such as Agra, Chiang Mai and Georgetown) find themselves more and more relegated to the antiquity business, and peoples' participation limited to servicing the tourism industry.

UNESCO, urban authorities, and non-profit heritage organizations came to realize that the conservation and revitalization movement was in danger of becoming a hollow exercise where showpieces had no relationship to the new touristic roles they were being assigned. There was a recognition that it was as important (and more difficult) to conserve and revitalize 'living heritage', as cultural diversity in particular was under serious threat. This new problem invited cultural collectives into the realm of 'heritage education', particularly their expertise in working with cultural conservation and revitalization.

*Anak-Anak Kota* (AAK)<sup>13</sup> or 'Children of the City' is an example of a local initiative for young residents that began in inner-city Georgetown, Penang, in 2001 to complement a conservation effort by heritage groups.

*Anak-Anak Kota* (AAK) is a heritage education program to help young residents retrace the lost narrative of their multicultural heritage through the arts, and develop an appreciation for their cultural assets.



*Cultural collectives are realizing that a much more integrated plan is needed for sustainable cultural conservation of communities. The challenge to keep up with development places increasing strain on the bonds that traditionally hold a community together. Integrated relationships and integrated economic systems begin to fall apart with change of lifestyle resulting from new job markets, migration and mobility.*

The initiative involves young residents in urban and rural communities to participate in mapping and documenting their history, cultural assets (performing arts, crafts, etc), built and natural environment. Participants use the arts to interpret and to promote their living culture through apprenticeship, performance, publication and exhibitions.

The AAK model has succeeded in different degrees to raise the levels of awareness of young residents and the community to cultural issues and to increase their appreciation of the value of their cultural assets. However, much of the learning that has taken place in AAK benefits the young individual participants on a personal level rather than impacting the community as a whole. In this particular area of constraint we need to rethink innovative strategies on how to engage young people at a broader community level and how to integrate their transformation to impact civil society.

### **Integrating Disciplines and Integrating Capital**

The outstanding feature of cultural collectives is their attempt to bring the field of culture, social justice and development to mutually complement each other. Modernism, according to Ken Wilber,<sup>14</sup> has diffused the three fields of arts (self and group expression), moral (collective ethics, norms), and science (empirical evidence), setting them apart as disciplines. With the advent of ‘modern’ education in Asia, more value was put on according freedom to each of these three disciplines to pursue its own search for truth. Aesthetic and normative experiences and the corporeal and material world are isolated for positivist analysis. This fragmentation in learning may provide room for objective study but fails to pay sufficient attention to how the integration of knowledge works within the complex layered context of our real life.

Privileging the arts in the modern context of (as something to be dissected and researched) removes it from the realm of living culture

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<sup>13</sup> The Anak-Anak Kota program is a heritage education program begun in 2001 supported by Penang State and corporate funds in partnership with the University Sains Malaysia School of Arts. The education program covers a wide range of interdependent subject matter such as inherited architecture, ecology, human settlement, trades, craftsmanship, customs, foods, religion, values etc. It involves the local community as well as advocates such as state and NGO sector as co-participants as well as parties such as residents, craftsmen, historians, artists, conservationists, and teachers etc who contribute skills, information and knowledge to the programs.

<sup>14</sup> Wilber, Ken. *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science and Spirituality*, Shamhala Publications 2001, Boston, USA.

and bleeds the community of its collective energy. 'Living culture' embodies both aesthetics and functionality, and generates cultural and social energy through everyday rituals, the crafting and use of domestic or personal artifacts, festivities and ceremonies etc. Traditionally, this generation of energy was a key element in collective identity formation. Cultural workers believe that the generation of cultural energy is a prerequisite for community action and can revitalize civil action.

Cultural collectives are realizing that a much more integrated plan is needed for sustainable cultural conservation of communities. The challenge to keep up with development places increasing strain on the bonds that traditionally hold a community together. Integrated relationships and integrated economic systems begin to fall apart with change of lifestyle resulting from new job markets, migration and mobility.

As problems in communities reach extensive scales, cultural collectives realize that tackling single issues or problems or dealing with specific age groups is not a sustainable approach to equip the community in the long-run. Additionally, the effort to act as interface between NGO, government, business organizations and the community has increased communication, but not necessarily the engagement of these groups in community development.

Traditional communities in urban and rural areas need dedicated partners and mechanisms to cope with the challenges of development just as development agencies need to be sensitized to community capital. Thus cultural movements have to take a more encompassing approach by facilitating the strengthening of existing natural and social capital, and integrating governance and education into the dynamics of environment and community. The local community and local environment should 'inform' and 'give meaning and function' to development.

Nara Machizukuri Center<sup>15</sup> is an example of an initiative that has enlarged/expanded the concept of community by encouraging wide-ranging participation of citizens, government, students, scholars, technical experts and corporate bodies voluntarily to initiate activities. Activities include cultural activities for children, gatherings for university students to workshop or conducting study or projects on Nara Machi, seminars on restoration, concerts, lecture series, monthly meeting with citizens, etc. The establishment of several 'laboratory' projects in Nara Machi by students and conservation and culture experts serves as a platform for citizens and experts to collaborate and act on actual needs.

The peculiarity of tools, local knowledge, natural resources, skills, materials and space in Nara Machi informs the realm of not just community life but academic study, professional practice and council policies. The setting up of a Consulting Desk for Housing and Welfare Care for citizens and the Network for Technical Experts serves to channel information, inquiry and requests between citizens, experts and the council. This recognition of human resources, social structures and cultural practices are a powerful leverage for the sustainable development of Nara Machi.

Cultural initiatives like KUNCI<sup>16</sup> in Indonesia, Punjab Lok Raahs<sup>17</sup> in Pakistan and AAK in Malaysia are focused more on facilitating research of cultures and development of cultural capacity among young people. They view culture as the sociological dynamics, which should drive the direction of social and economic growth and changes, by harnessing traditional knowledge, indigenous skills, local resources, etc. The hope is that the young generation will push for cultural revitalization, enterprise, and changes in cultural policy at community level.

Cultural collectives have thus shifted their articulation of the central problem to the sustainability of cultural resources. The core concept around which they now attempt to develop their educational practice is the reintegration of cultural knowledge at community level. The promotion of cultural diversity and cultural self-confidence will become crucial survival issues in the long term.

## **Conclusion**

Humans navigate through life via personal as well as collective vehicles. Our personal profile (gender, psychological, physical, emotional and mental make up) and our cultural milieu (structure, norms and philosophy of the collective) determine how, why and what we learn and experience. This subjective collective intelligence that develops

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<sup>15</sup> Nara Machizukuri Center Incorporated Association is an NPO organized by citizens in Nara, a UNESCO heritage site. It has been active for 20 years in conservation of urban area of Nara and historic and natural environments in Nara prefecture. It has established databases and provides a library as well as space facilities for citizens and experts meetings on conservation issues.

<sup>16</sup> KUNCI Cultural Studies Center was set up in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in September 1999. KUNCI Cultural Studies Center in an independent initiative, studying culture, empowering young people, and carrying out popular education with the community. Rather than view culture through indicators such as aesthetics and morality, KUNCI looks at how cultural difference and practice is created through social relations.

from the relationship of people to their environment should be nurtured and given an equal footing as objective modern education is given to navigate learning and growth.

For this reason we see cultural collectives reinventing themselves in the arena of cultural anthropology, cultural studies, and beginning to work towards transformative cultural reform and developing the arena of cultural literacy for local resources, knowledge and skills. Across Asia we can see the development of cultural heritage education models designed to have young people develop awareness and appreciation of cultural assets in their locality. In the Nara Machizukuri heritage conservation project in Nara Japan, the Penang Anak-Anak Kota Project, the Bagio City project in the Philippines, young people have begun to study their micro-environments to identify heritage values and concepts embedded in indigenous resources, traditional integrated economic systems, etc.

To be able to create a balanced learning model, institutions ideally should be able to apply the knowledge it is perpetuating or disseminating to examine itself and the local system within which it is located. To address any change, education, practice and governance need to place themselves within the local and engage with it so that any visualization or innovations for the future is grounded in the complexities of a society and environment with its own potentials and limitations.

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<sup>17</sup> Punjab Lok Raqs started as an independent alternative theater group in 1986. It started as a group of young men and women, primarily students that were concerned with military oppression of arts and cultural activities in Pakistan.

(Besides classical epics, street skits, foreign adaptations), Raqs stages improvisation with community and performances at villages and urban slums... It has dealt with subjects like child marriage and women's right to marry of their free will and staged plays against arms race and military dictatorship.

The group has imparted theater training to a number of civil society organizations as well. It has supported scores of other organizations by performing for the communities with which they work. Raqs draws inspiration from Punjab's indigenous theatre tradition. The group aims to marry the tradition with modern techniques and concepts and make it an effective tool in the hands of organizations working for social change. Raqs performs plays only in the mother language of its audience – the people of Punjab.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki>

# Toward Future which Brings Back Our Wisdom within

*Kamata Yoji*

## Shifting the direction of development

It is becoming clearer that the society in which we are living is not sustainable and it does not bring us happiness. Regarding the direction of ‘development’ and ‘progress,’ we may have to re-think and shift it. The future I am propagating in Japan as a part of alternative movements is named ‘*Natsukashii Mirai.*’<sup>1</sup> ‘*Mirai*’ is ‘future.’ ‘*Natsukashii*’ is said to be one of the most difficult Japanese words to translate into English. It is the feeling when we encounter something which brings back memories. It is the feeling of re-connecting to a place and time where we were in the past. It is more than just sentimental feelings of nostalgia for the good old days. It is also the feeling when we re-connect to something essential which has been almost forgotten. So it relates to the dimension of soul and spirit. We may be able to say it is the feeling when sleeping DNA of our soul, spirit and culture is switched on. Exploring ‘*Natsukashii Mirai*’ is to explore the wisdom within us.

Until now modern civilization has been developed in conjunction with the consumption of fossil fuels, especially oil. The production of oil has been increasing but now it is said that the peak of production is coming and gradually production will decrease though demand will not decrease accordingly. We are living in an era of Peak Oil. So one of our tasks is to shift the direction of development and progress in order to avoid a catastrophe of the system and to alleviate worsening social conflict and environmental degradation. This catastrophe is also called ‘dynamism of overshoot.’ Once we exceed the limitations of the capacity of the environment, the ecological system may collapse suddenly by the multiplier effect.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘*Natsukashii Mirai*’ is related to the concept ‘Ancient Futures’ of Helena Norberg-Hodge, a Swedish activist and the ‘Traditional Futures’ of James Clifford, an American anthropologist. See Norberg-Hodge’s book *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh*, Sierra Club Books, 1992.

But toward which direction should we change the direction and how? Somebody named such a shift as 'From Industrial Growth Culture to Descent Culture.' 'Descending' is related to grounding to nature, community, culture and spirituality. 'Descending' leads us to voluntary and 'Elegant Simplicity.'<sup>2</sup> It is the opposite direction from modernization, which is characterized as a liberation of individual greed and dis-embedding from traditional norms and communities.<sup>3</sup> So we should create not only a new social and political system but also a new value system and culture. We should be careful not to fall into the reductionism of system theory. We need a more holistic and integrated theory which deal not only with system but also with soul and spirit.<sup>4</sup>

We need some map or big picture to grasp and re-think the direction of development and progress. Below is a chart I developed in the early 1990s. I have been discussing this chart with local vision leaders in several countries. It is a simplified diagram but according to my experience it is useful for discussion.

Modern civilization has brought a kind of 'development' and 'progress' at the sake of environmental degradation and exploitation of the weak.<sup>5</sup> Now social conflicts and climate change have become worse and unendurable. We can not continue to proceed in the direction of conventional development.

On the other hand, the so-called 'South' is in the process of 'developing' in the context of modern civilization. Not having been developed means, at the same time, that what is the most valuable for humans and nature is still preserved in the South, especially in remote areas. Based on and utilizing such resources, the South can explore new directions of development and progress instead of following the 'developed' countries. We may need technological invention to proceed in the new direction.<sup>6</sup>

If it is true that modern civilization is leading the world in the direction of catastrophe, North cannot be the model for the South. Conventional development has promoted economic globalization. Free market

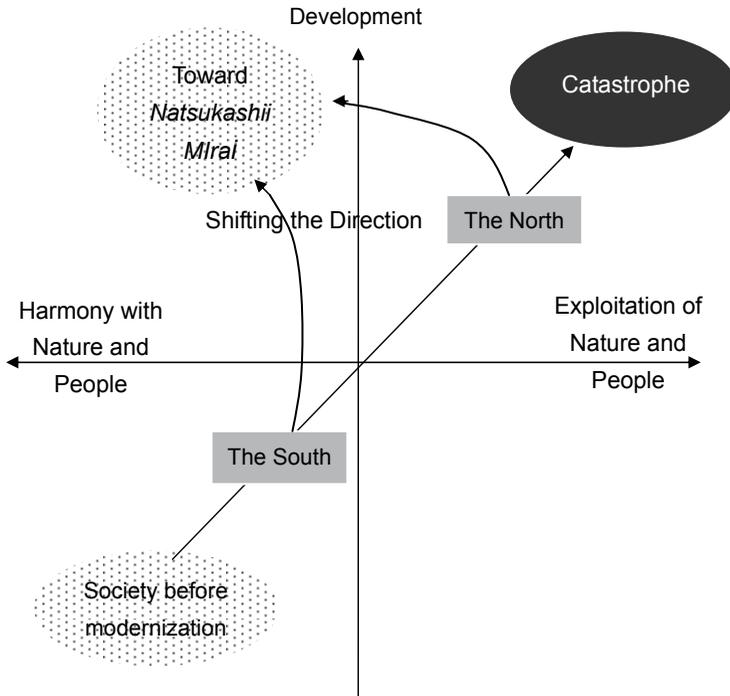
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<sup>2</sup> Satish Kumar, 'Spiritual Imperative'.  
<http://www.resurgence.org/2005/kumarspirit229.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Stanford University Press, 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Ken Wilber is exploring an integrated theory to go beyond the confusion and desert of post-modernism. See his *Theory of Everything*, Shambhala Publications, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> This is the essence of the book *Gendaishakai no Riron* (A theory of contemporary society)', Iwanami Shinsho, 1996, by Mita Munesuke, a leading sociologist in Japan.



economy means a system of freedom for big corporations to earn money. Consumer culture has been imposed on people and spread all over the world through the clever and bombarding advertisements. We need Economic Literacy <sup>7</sup> to reveal the hidden cost and driving forces of economic globalization.

When we explore the new direction of development, the meaning of culture will also be changed. Until now culture has been treated as an obstacle to the development. At the best culture is considered as a factor of the locality for better adaptation. However, in the context of a transformation of civilization, we should invent new ways of development based on local culture. Culture can be a source for community enhancement, ecological sustainability and psychological

<sup>6</sup> Lester Brown named such new technologies as Leap-Frogging Technologies which are less material-dependent and also reduce materials use. But he does not understand fully the importance of localization.

<sup>7</sup> Economic Literacy is also a term propagated by Helena Norberg-Hodge.

and spiritual development. Culture is a data base for diverse futures.

A new direction of development suggested by Norberg-Hodge is 'From Economic Globalization to Localization.' Localization is to shorten the distance between producers and consumers, circulating materials, services, energies and money locally. Through localizing the economy, human-scale local communities will be enhanced. People will be reconnected to nature and the community socially, culturally and spiritually. People will have feelings of belonging and feel fulfilled.

Local self-governance is also one important factor of localization. A recent comparison study of local governments in Switzerland revealed that the more the local people participate in the decision making and local governance, the more people feel happy.<sup>8</sup>

As a pioneer of the concept of localization, we may recall the concept of *Swadeshi* (self-sufficiency) and *Swaraj* (self-governance) showed and practiced by Mohandas Gandhi. Actually he fought not against the rule of Britain but against modernization. Gandhi realized the poisonous aspects of modernization and globalization, and explored real alternatives to them.

It may sound paradoxical that an expansion of information and travel range does not make people wiser. Rather it makes the power of compassion and responsibility for people and nature weaker. In our long history as human being, we have enhanced such a power through taking care of people and nature in and nearby the community.

Therefore 'Think Locally, Act Locally' will be more important in the future. Promotion of localization instead of economic globalization will make the society and environment healthier.

In Japan there are several emerging movements toward localization: local currency, *Jimoto-gaku* (study of the locality), *Chisan-Chisho* (produce locally and consume locally), local energy and Slow Life. *Jimoto-gaku* started in Minamata, one of the areas most affected by environmental pollution caused by a company which produce chemical fertilizer, and is prevailing throughout Japan. One of the key concepts of the Slow Live movement in Japan is '*Han-Nou-Han-X* (Half-Farming and Half-X)'. The 'X' can be any work which utilizes the talents of the individual. Through this Slow Life movement, more and more young

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<sup>8</sup> Bruno S. Frey and Alois Stutzer, *Happiness and Economics: How the Economy and Institutions Affect Human Well-Being*, Princeton University Press, 2002.

people are attracted to an ecological life style and working style.

The negative impact of modernization and globalization in Japan is very severe though the connections between cause and effect are not necessarily recognized. One of my diagnoses of the pathology of Japanese society is ‘over-adaptation’ to the West. In 1853 the arrival of the Black Ships of Commodore Perry shook the Japanese society and Japan was forced to open its country to the West with a fear of losing its independence. Since then ‘to catch up the West’ is the national slogan of Japan until the 1980s. The Japanese government systematically demolished the Commons (the common natural resources such as forests and ponds), the traditional educational system such as *Terakoya* (“*Terakoya*” literally means “temple hut” in Japanese. The word refers to the civilian-run schools popular from the 14th to 19th centuries providing literacy and basic education to the children of the common people), and traditional medicine known as *Kanpo* (“*Kanpo*” literally means Chinese medicine of the Han dynasty. It was introduced to Japan since the 8th Century and has been Japanized). The Japanese government systematically distorted Japanese spiritual traditions and utilized them as Institutionalized Shintoism<sup>9</sup> which empowered the emperor as a living god and legitimized its absolute power. The driving force toward modernization and globalization has been more or less internalized and is exerting pressure on people and society.

One of the most negative impacts of modernization and globalization is the increasing number of ‘hikikomori.’ (‘hikikomori’ literally means pulling away, being confined, i.e., acute social withdrawal. It refer to their lives.) According to estimates by psychologist Tamaki Saito, who first coined the phrase, there may be one million hikikomori in Japan, 20 percent of all male adolescents in Japan.<sup>10</sup>

In the past, Japan was expected in the Meiji (1886-1912) and Taisho (1912-1926) eras to play the role of bridge between the East and the West. But such expectation has not been told for many years. I think if Japan really learn from Asia to explore common spiritual traditions, Japan may be able to play that role in the future.

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<sup>9</sup> See Kazuko Tsurumi, *Aspects of endogenous development in modern Japan*, Research papers; Series A-2, Sophia University, 1979.

<sup>10</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hikikomori>

### **Possible strategies and actions I have taken**

Looking at the world from the perspective described in the chart, we may be able to extract the three strategies below.

Strategy 1: To empower the local people in the South to support local initiatives toward new direction of development.

Strategy 2: To promote deep dialogue between the ‘South’ and ‘North’ and promote movement toward new directions.

Strategy 3: To raise awareness in the North of how they are destructing and misleading the world. And also to propose alternatives.

Following Strategy 1, one of the actions I have taken is to revitalize local health traditions. The traditional medical system is the heart of a local cultural system. It deals with disease, aging, death and life. Through promoting western medicine in the South, the traditional cultural system has been heavily dismantled.

The doctors of traditional Tibetan medicine, Amchis, have developed altruism and treat patients as a spiritual offering. Empowering the Amchis in Himalayan countries, especially in Nepal, I expect them not only to provide health care in very remote areas but also to strengthen local communities.

Revitalization of traditional medicine enhances localization. Traditional medicine utilizes at the maximum the local knowledge, local medicinal resources, local talents and local reciprocal relationship.

I have supported Amchis in formulating their own vision and strategy. Now I am supporting for the institutionalization of the educational system of traditional Tibetan medicine in Nepal in order to ensure the transmission of knowledge, skills and wisdom from generation to generation.

A second action for Strategy 1 is to revitalize the local learning system for ethnic minorities and enhance cultural conservation by themselves. I feel ethnic minorities are one of the most severely affected victims of the modern educational system. When the Nepalese government started environmental education after Rio summit, the text books were based on the assumption that ‘local people do not have environmental consciousness nor knowledge to take care of natural resources.’

*When we explore the new direction of development, the meaning of culture will also be changed. Until now culture has been treated as an obstacle to the development. At the best culture is considered as a factor of the locality for better adaptation. However, in the context of a transformation of civilization, we should invent new ways of development based on local culture. Culture can be a source for community enhancement, ecological sustainability and psychological and spiritual development. Culture is a data base for diverse futures.*

So what I supported in 1994-96 was to produce a sub-text book of environmental education which contains local knowledge about the utilization and preservation of local natural resources.

Also I encouraged local people to write down their oral histories themselves. It is their first book about themselves written by themselves.

In 2004-05, my organization, ADF, supported educational reform for ethnic minorities in the Philippines based on their indigenous knowledge. Now I am planning to organize forum in a long run for the enhancement of indigenous education in Asian countries to tackle the issues of schooling and de-schooling, envisioning the future, identity and cultural politics

A third action for Strategy 1 is to empower youths to become change agents. Youths, especially from a disadvantaged background, have a potential of the vulnerable and they can play an important role for non-violent action for problem solving toward a new direction. Many youths in Nepal are confused and depressed due to the failure of development and civil war.

I organized with a local NGO a 10-day residential intensive workshop for youths from various ethnic background to be confident of becoming change agents. The basic curriculum of the first youth camp was as follows.

Yoga and meditation.

Goal Setting: Life goals.

This is especially important in a society of caste discrimination.

Life Skills: what is the self, how to deal with emotion and conflicts etc.

Ancient Futures: to examine the basic assumptions of development and progress.

The KJ Method: a participatory methodology for collective understanding and consensus building about the situation, causes and solutions of urgent social issues. It is a methodology to bring about break-through of the framework of perception through letting the data speak for themselves.

True love.

Global and local environmental issues.

Social activities.

Cultural programme.

Integration of learning etc.

From 2007 I will expand this programme to empower youths through practical peace education in Nepal getting financial support from the Japanese government. 'Peace from Within' is the key concept of the programme. 'Peace from Within' means (1)

Initiatives by the People themselves, (2) Integration of Inner and Outer Peace, (3) to approach the issue of corporal punishment and the abuse of children as a psychological cause of violence in Nepal, and (4) to re-discover the indigenous wisdom of democracy and conflict resolution.

Following Strategy 2, one of the actions I have taken is to promote deep ecotourism in Nepal. The people of the North can learn so many things from mountain people in Nepal.

The most impressive learning by Japanese people is that a community is like a family. People are supporting each other quite closely and naturally. And I used to organize a session to discuss what are real development and happiness among foreigners and local people as a part of the program. Participants record their findings on Discovery Cards and formulated a Discovery Bank in the program. It has become a source of information to promote indigenous education and cultural conservation because it can provide new view points for local people to re-consider the value of local knowledge and culture. Another action is to promote deep ecotourism in Mongolia. In 2002, the first Ecology School in Mongolia was organized. It takes two days by mini-bus to reach the place. I was the leader of the Ecology School until the third one in 2004 and handed over the program to MoPI, a Japanese NGO. The Ecology School has been continued by the NGO until 2006.

A third action for Strategy 2 is to support a 'reality tour' in Japan. It is essential for local vision leaders to understand deeply the negative aspects of 'development' in the North. And also it is very useful to know the initiatives in the North toward a new direction. This kind of information is usually not available in the South. That is why it is called a 'Reality Tour.'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> This concept was proposed by Helena Norberg-Hodge.

Following Strategy 3, some actions I have taken in Japan are to organize a ‘*Natsukashii Mirai*’ Network in Japan in order to raise awareness in the North of how they are destructing and misleading the world, to translate and disseminate a message for Economic Literacy and resistance against economic globalization, and to translate and disseminate a message for the renewal of societies.

### **Re-thinking the modernity and the traditional**

Holding such a vision and strategies, I feel it is necessary to re-think what is modernity and what is traditional. The four tables below are aspects of the traditional in comparison with modernity. I dare to compare the dichotomy of the traditional and the modern in order to illuminate their characters. We should not think of the traditional as a substance. Rather the tradition in my context is a kind of direction with a mirror of modernity and an orientation of value consciousness. The traditional is our recalled memories and imagination. And the future will be enriched and sustainable by the diversity and vitality of cultural traditions. The traditional and the past are not a goal to go back to. We may evolve not linearly but spirally, approaching the process again which we had taken. And we should go beyond the modern and the traditional using our power of imagination and creativity for the future.

Chart 1: Modern Medicine and Traditional Medicine

<b>Modern Medicine</b>	<b>Traditional Medicine</b>
To disregard healing power within	To attach importance to healing power within
Partial treatment	Holistic treatment
Symptomatic treatment	Fundamental and preventive treatment
Division of doctors and patients	Close relationship between doctors and patients
Manipulation	Compassion and trust
Dependence on chemicals	Utilization of natural resources
Dependence on machines	Utilization of human sensors
To attach importance to surgery	To attach importance to inner medicine
To disregard emotion, spirituality, life history and life style of patients	To attach importance to emotion, spirituality, life history and life style of patients
To disregard morality and spirituality of doctors	To attach importance to morality and spirituality of doctors
To disregard healing in Altered State of Consciousness	To attach importance to healing in ALC
To dismantle local knowledge and cultural system	To maintain and strengthen local knowledge and cultural system
To disregard/dismantle local reciprocal relationship	To maintain and strengthen local reciprocal relationship
Dependence on outer resources	Utilization of locally available natural resources
To disregard relationship between micro and macro cosmos	To enhance harmony of micro and macro cosmos

Chart 2: Modern Education &amp; Traditional Education/Learning

<b>Modern Education</b>	<b>Traditional Medicine</b>
Division of generations and ages	To strengthen linkage between generations and ages
Curriculum decided by Govt.	Curriculum decided by the people concerned
Developed by need of industrial society	Developed by the need to survive in specific environment
To be apart from living, working, enjoying social life	A part of living, working, enjoying social life
Compulsory	Based on the wish of elders and learners
To attach importance to cleverness	To attach importance to wisdom and compassion
To attach importance to knowledge	To attach importance to experience and practical skills
Mass education	Individual and group learning
Division of teachers and learners	Close relationship between teachers and learners
Knowledge is open	Some knowledge is secret. Secret rituals are conducted.
Disregard learning in Altered State of Consciousness (ASC)	Attach importance to learning in ASC
To attach importance to write/script	To attach importance to oral transmission
To accelerate competition	To foster cooperation
To arouse arrogance and inferiority	To learn to live together
Systematic selection of elite	Occasional selection of elite
To dismantle local knowledge, skills and culture	To maintain local knowledge, skills and culture
To encourage talented learners to go to cities and foreign countries	To encourage learners to stay in the locality
To attach importance to analysis	To attach importance to holistic understanding

Chart 3: Modern Agriculture &amp; Traditional Agriculture

<b>Modern Agriculture</b>	<b>Traditional Agriculture</b>
To force to grow	To activate the power to grow
Dependence on chemical fertilizer	Utilization of organic manure
Dependence on pesticide	Biological prevention
Dependence on machines	Dependence on manual work and farm animals
High input of energy	Low input of energy
Monoculture	Diversified cultivation
Mass production	Small production
Disregard sustainability	Attach importance to sustainability
Non-circulation of resources	Circulation of resources
High waste	Zero waste
To seek for cash income	Based on Self-sufficiency
To disregard local culture	Unity with local culture
Dependence on outer resources	Maximum utilization of local resources
Dependence on oil	Utilization of local energy
Controlled by upper structure	Self determination
To disregard/dismantle ecology	To attach importance to ecology
Dependence on "scientific" and experts' knowledge	Utilization and enhancement of local knowledge
To disregard vital energy of food	To attach importance to vital energy of food
Farmers are specialized in agriculture	Farmers have various skills to make cloth, build house etc.

Chart 4: Modernity and Traditional

<b>Modernity</b>	<b>Traditional</b>
Duality of Subject and Object	Unity of Subject and Object
To manipulate from outside	To activate powers within
To disregard and dismantle locality and local communities	To maintain and strengthen locality and local communities
To attach importance to knowledge	To attach importance to wisdom
To arouse individualism and selfishness	To develop compassion and altruism
To liberate desire and greediness	To calm down desire and greediness
To disregard/dismantle spirituality	To attach importance to spirituality
To arouse mono-culture	To foster diversity
To disregard/dismantle sustainability	To attach importance to sustainability
To arouse loneliness and anxiety	To enhance feeling of belonging and safety
To disregard/dismantle harmony of micro and macro cosmos	To enhance harmony of micro and macro cosmos

## **Toward ‘Natsukashii Mirai’ through Deep Transformation**

The basic directions for a solution might be summarized as follows:

1. From Globalization to Localization
2. From GNP to GNH (Gross National Happiness)
3. To achieve real sustainability
4. To activate the power within
5. To foster a fair and horizontal relationship between the North and the South
6. To deepen spiritual dialogue between the East and the West
7. To unite alternative movements especially for resistance.

And it might be better to consider possible pitfalls such as:

1. Nostalgic and past-oriented attitudes.
2. Projecting romanticism onto the past and the life of the South.
3. Strengthening egoism and narcissism instead of developing the self as a declining egocentrism.
4. Closed community.
5. Nationalism and patriotism.
6. Religious fundamentalism.

In order to explore the way toward ‘Natsukashii Mirai’ further, a conceptualization of shallowness and depth might be useful.<sup>12</sup> Here I propose a tentative concept of shallowness and depth in ecology, democracy, economy, happiness, peace, healing, learning and ecotourism.

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<sup>12</sup> The concept of ‘Deep Ecology’ was developed by Arne Ness, a Norwegian philosopher. The concept of ‘Deep Democracy’ has been mentioned by Arnold Mindell in his book *Sitting in the Fire: Large Group Transformation Using Conflict and Diversity*.

Chart 5: Toward Deep Civilization

	<b>Shallow</b>	<b>Deep</b>
<b>Ecology</b>	Human-oriented consideration of protecting environment	To give equal right to all beings
<b>Democracy</b>	Majority Decision	Continuous transformation of society and oneself through inclusion of the marginalized
<b>Economy</b>	Competition	Sharing
<b>Happiness</b>	Satisfaction of desire of self	Connectedness to something great
<b>Peace</b>	No bothering within self and surrounding	All overt and potential problems are to be properly addressed.
<b>Healing</b>	Partial cure	Holistic cure
<b>Learning</b>	To get additional knowledge to existing perception grid	Transformation of perception grid
<b>Eco-tourism</b>	To enjoy nature as object and try not to destroy it	To enjoy and learn nature and culture from within

# **NGO Initiatives in Northeast Asia Environmental Cooperation**

## **Cases of KFEM-Jilin, Kitakyushu-Dalian Cooperation**

*Seejae Lee*

### **1. Framing Problems**

East Asia is emerging as one ecological sphere. Trans-border air pollution, sand storm from desertification, depletion of oceanic resources and toxic waste disposal are all new environmental problems that our generation began to face in the region. East Asian countries belong to an emerging market economy due to development of information technology and communication, trading of commodities, capital investment and labor migration. Japan and other East Asian countries are major suppliers of manufactured goods in the world. East Asian countries with dense population have become production bases and massive consumption of resources and energy.

However, Asian countries are so politically divided and socially diverse that mutual cooperation and exchange within the region have relatively been weak. Even though the market economy integrates Northeast Asian countries more and more closely, and even though environmental impacts of industrialization in the region are getting stronger, there is not yet any viable environmental governance that can address regional environmental problems. Although there are some environmental cooperation and exchange between countries in the region, this cooperation has not yet developed into effective governance.

Governments in this region have also perceived these trans-border environmental issues as problematic since 1990s. There emerged a lot of inter-governmental cooperation and exchange frameworks to counter environmental problems. Bilateral agreements for environmental cooperation were made between countries like Japan, South Korea, China and Russia. Multilateral cooperation bodies have also been created in the region. There have been a lot of projects that bridge between

East Asian environmental NGOs since 1980s. Generally speaking these environmental cooperation have not yet developed into new environmental governance. It is because inter-governmental cooperation has limits so that it cannot be free from national interests, and or because on the part of NGOs, their resources are too limited to address environmental problems.

There are also massive countermeasures to cope with desertification within China and outside. Chinese government began to take a measure to fence out peasants and animals from barren cultivated lands and grassland, then to plant grass and trees in order to recuperate ecology. In Japan and Korea, many NGOs are organized to plant trees in China to fight against desertification. Even though these efforts to combat desertification are made, the more rapidly lands become deserted. Therefore, the desertification is hardly controlled.

I think we have to create a new framework by which NGOs, as well as government and businesses, also cooperate to build up new systems to address trans-border environmental problems. I would like to take up a few examples, which will show us significant possibilities that can be emulated elsewhere.

For this purpose, I would like to highlight environmental cooperation projects that NGOs, local government, citizens' groups and private companies participate to cope with China's environmental problems, that is, desertification and urban environmental problems.

This paper aims to highlight a unique mix of resource mobilization to cope with the problem of desertification and urbanization, a mix of NGOs, local government, and business resources. I would like to show how NGOs and local government initiated mobilization of resources of government and business sectors work for the environmentally good cause.

I am one of the founding members of KFEM and had led the anti-desertification project. I have been working as a board member of an anti-desertification project. Basic data I have used here are based on my personal interview, my field notes and official documents of cooperation.

I have also taken up the case of environmental cooperation between the city of Kitakyushu in Japan and the city of Dalian in China, which also demonstrated a successful resource mobilization and mix from various sectors. This also demonstrates what local governments in twinning

relations can achieve beyond the intergovernmental relations. I visited Kitakyushu and Dalian and interviewed persons related to mutual cooperation between these two cities

## **2. Environmental Cooperation in Northeast Asia**

### *2.1 Intergovernmental cooperation*

In Northeast Asia, intergovernmental environmental cooperation began to emerge in the 1990s. China's rapid industrialization by reform and open-door policy and introduction of market economy accelerated environmental cooperation among Northeast Asian countries. Bilateral agreements for environmental cooperation were signed between Korea on one hand and Japan (1992), China (1993), and Russia (1994) on the other. Japan also made agreement for environmental cooperation with China (1994), and Russia (1991). Japan and Korea have taken initiatives to make cooperation with China, Russia and other Northeast Asian countries.

Between Japan and China, bilateral cooperation is remarkable. Japan renders assistance to China in the areas of reforestation, protection of migratory birds, development of environmental model city, networking of environmental information, technological assistance, education and training. Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) was used to build Japan-China Friendship Environmental Conservation Center in Beijing where major Japan-China environmental cooperation is planned and implemented. In 1997, Japanese and Chinese governments agreed to develop environmental and development model cities in China with ODA and technical assistance. Three cities of Chongqing, Guiyang and Dalian were selected to improve air pollution and form sustainable social system, and to develop measures against global warming.

Japanese government, business, local government and NGOs cooperate each other to organize cooperation programs for China. Japanese government use the ODA program to mobilize local governments and NGOs to help China, and Japanese business provides NGOs to send volunteers to China for reforestation. Japanese government founded Japan-China Fund for Greening Exchange in 1977 in order to support NGOs to participate in reforestation projects in China. In Japan there are other available financial sources, such as International Volunteer Saving, Global Environmental Facility (GEF), Foreign Ministry's NGO support subsidies, etc. For instance, Kitakyushu helped its sister city

Dalian in urban planning and training technical personnel for upgrading environment, funded from JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency). Aeon Group Environmental Fund provides financial assistance to NGOs to send volunteers to China.

Besides Kitakyushu, Hiroshima, Toyama and Niigata Prefecture also have various programs to help China for environmental improvement.

There is also multilateral inter-government cooperation within the region. There are some significant developments in the 1990s for multilateral cooperation among Northeast Asian countries. Northeast Asian Conference on Environmental Cooperation (NEAC) is a good example in this regard.

NEAC was first organized in Niigata, Japan, and it celebrated the 10th Conference in 2001 in Incheon, Korea. In NEAC, government representatives and local government officials from Korea, Japan, China, Russia and Mongolia are main constituents of the NEAC. From the 9th Conference in Ulan Bator, NGOs of participant countries were invited. The NEAC has talked on migratory pollution, networking recyclable resources among member countries, acid rain, national and local environmental agenda, international transshipment of toxic waste, migratory birds, conservation of water level, environmental cooperation among local government, actions for climate change, etc.

Meeting of senior officials on Environmental Cooperation on Northeast Asia (NEAREP) organized by ESCAP is also another system of intergovernmental environmental cooperation. NEAREP started in 1992, with membership from South and North Korea, Japan, China, Russia and Mongolia. The NEAREP has an agenda to build environmental capacity through exchange of information, training, joint research, etc. The third model project is currently being implemented to enhance capacity to cope with energy and air pollution problems.

Besides these, ESCAP ministerial conferences on environment and development have been held from 1985, and the fourth conference was held in September 2000 in Kitakyushu. Participants were not limited to northeast Asian countries, but 47 member countries sent their ministers of environment to the conference.

Japan's ministry of environment organized Environmental Congress for Asia and the Pacific, Eco-Asia. In order to prevent the oceanic pollution, northeast Asian countries comprising South and North Korea, Japan, China and Russia formed Northeast Pacific Action Plan.

Most active intergovernmental cooperation is the meeting of three (Korea, Japan, China) environmental ministers (TEMM). Later, Mongolia was also included in TEMM meeting. The third TEMM held in Tokyo in 2000 resolved to survey long-distance migratory pollutants, such as acid rain, to establish Northeast Asian Environmental Data Center to implement Northeast Asian Eco-community, and to build cooperation for environmental education.

United Nations Development Plan (UNDP) proposes and promotes Tumin (Douman) Regional Development Plan. Tumin River has borders with North Korea, China and Russia. UNDP made a TRADP environmental memo so that the Tumin development project would not destroy the ecology of the area. China, Mongolia, Russia and South Korea are invited to carry out environmental cooperation for this purpose. The TRADP meeting also invited NGO representatives in 2001.

In the multilateral cooperation system, there is not so much substantial cooperation among the member nations with some exceptional cases.

### *2.2 NGO cooperation in East Asia*

In the mid-1980s, Korean anti-nuclear activists were invited to Japan, and Japanese scholars came to survey Japan's export of pollution to Korea. These moves were one of the earliest cases of Korea-Japan NGO environmental cooperation. It was a Japanese human rights advocacy organization that sent regularly environmental materials and books to a Korean who became a leader in the environmental movement in Korea.

Anti-Nuke Asia Forum was organized in 1993 in Japan, where NGOs from South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, and Thailand participated. The 2001 Forum was held in Seoul. Anti-Nuke Asia Forum stages campaign against nuclear power plant and has supported local residents' struggle against nuclear power plants. When the Taiwan Electric Company made a contract with North Korea to ship the nuclear waste to North Korea, Korean NGOs in cooperation with Taiwanese environmental NGOs staged massive campaign in Taiwan and Korea. The Anti-Nuke Asia Forum was a platform on which concrete cooperation between NGOs could be realized.

Atmosphere Action Network East Asia (ANNEA) was organized in 1995 in Seoul, where NGO representatives from Korea, Japan, Mongolia, China, and Taiwan participated to deal with trans-border air pollution. ANNEA regularly hold a symposium at the time of the UN Climate Change Conference.

Japan Environmental Council hosted Asia Pacific NGO Environmental Conference APNEC in 1993 in Kyoto, and had meeting every alternate year. The fifth conference was held at Agra, India in September 2000. In 1997 and after, the APNEC published Asia Environmental White Paper in Japanese, Korean and English. Scholars and lawyers, who surveyed Asian countries, attend these conferences.

Leaders of Japan Environmental Council visited Korea frequently for survey and exchanged ideas with Korean scholars.

When the Conference of Parties (COP3) of the Climate Change Convention was held in Kyoto in 1997, Japanese NGOs made a coalition called Kiko Forum to have NGO conference in Kyoto. This Kiko forum became a medium by which Asian NGOs could participate in the COP4 in Buenos Aires. Japanese Kiko forum invited Asian NGO activists to the COP4.

Korean UNESCO made Eco-Peace Network for Northeast Asia in July 2000 after its international conference on Environment and Peace in Asia. This network met at Yanbian in 2001 for the second meeting.

In the early 1970s, a group of Japanese students and youth organized a campaign to oppose transfer of Japanese pollution chemical plants to Korea. The chemical plants were criticized in Japan, because it emitted toxic chrome complex. Their slogan and newsletter was 'Don't Let Pollution Run Away!' Since the pollution problem was not prioritized in Korea, there was not substantial cooperation and exchange between Korea and Japan.

However, when a pollution disease broke out in the mid-1980s in Onsan, Korean environmentalists took it to public attention. Japanese activists and scholars came to Korea to survey pollution situation in Onsan where many Japanese chemical and nonferrous metal companies moved to operate. Japanese environmental sociologists came to Onsan accompanied by Korean sociologists for survey. In 1999, scholars from Japan and Korea conducted joint research on people's environmental consciousness and practice of four countries, that is, Japan, Korea, China and Indonesia.

Korea's wetland network and Japan's wetland network (JAWAN) have cooperated recently. Both networks conducted a joint research on the tidal flats of Korea, because Korea's tidal flats are major food depot for the migratory birds. At the time of the 7th Ramsar Conference at Costa Rica, activists from both networks had a joint workshop, and passed a resolution.

Japan's Citizens' Alliance to Save the Atmosphere and the Earth CASA was formed in Osaka to support the victims of Amagasaki air pollution. CASA was active to report an alternative scenario for reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emission in Japan. It asserted that Japanese economy could cut CO<sub>2</sub> emission by 23% by 2010, while Japanese government cut only around 8%. CASA is also a vital member of ANNEA, but it also communicates with Korean Federation for Environmental Movement (KFEM) on a bilateral basis. KFEM and CASA had cooperation in the area of joint action, seminar and sharing the research method and outcomes.

In the international dam conference that was organized by the KFEM in 1999, Japanese activists came to report on Japan's case study.

From 1998, reforestation movement became active. Movement of Forest for Peace was launched in 1998, and sent seeds, fertilizer, and planting machines to North Korea in order to rebuild forest there. In addition, the Northeast Asian Forest Forum (NEAFF) also inaugurated in 1998 with an aim of preventing desertification of the Northeast Asia, participated in making Korea-China Friendship Forest in China in April 2000.

Korean Federation for Environmental Movement invited environmental activists from Mongolia and Indonesia to share respective activities. As mentioned earlier, Taiwan Environmental Protection Union (TEPU) in 1997 cooperated with KFEM and Green Korea United to oppose the shipment of nuclear waste from Taiwan to North Korea.

Japanese NGOs are active to render environmental cooperation to China. Their activities are composed of reforestation, prevention of air pollution, Clean Development Mechanism and Joint Implementation, which are developed within the framework of Climate Change Convention. There are active joint researches, symposium, and other academic activities.

Japanese NGOs depends on financial sources from government and business environmental funds. There are a lot of fund sources that Japanese NGOs can make use of. ODA and GEF are major government sources. Coalition of Economic Organizations, and Aeon Group Environmental Fund are important financial sources for Japanese NGOs to make cooperation with Chinese counterparts.

In Japan-China cooperation, various incorporated foundations are active, which are closely affiliated with government and business circle. Some foundations are operated with government funds and others run by

business organizations. It may be proper to say that Japanese government and business are very much interested in working with China. This cooperation is quite different from other NGO cooperation between Korea and Japan.

On the part of China, there are not many NGOs in a literal sense. They are semi-official youth groups, local governments, research institutes and universities that became counterparts of Japanese environmental cooperation.

### **3. Three-Party Model for Resource Mobilization**

#### *3.1 Contextual values of resources and resource mix*

Resources can be defined as any tangible or intangible thing that can be mobilized for use to realize certain objectives, such as money, labor service, relational goods, influences, technology and skill. However, resources are always contextual. A certain resource can be valuable to a certain actor, but not always to anyone. Resource can be evaluated in their contextual allocation. To say simply, what you have plenty and therefore not very much valuable to you, but it can be valuable to me because I do not have much. Thus scarcity should be contextually defined.

In this context arises exchange of resource. Those who have plenty but 'less valuable' resources tend to hand over what they have to others. On the other hand, those who do not have necessary resources tend to seek from others. Some resources are exchanged for other types of resources; for instance, economic resources for political power, or social relations for economic resources. Those involved in exchange cannot be so much competitive; because they tend to yield what they think is less valuable.

Here comes a strategy for resource mix. We may easily mix valuable resources from those who consider them less valuable. We may raise resources of power from those in power, or raise economic resources from those in control of wealth, may raise legitimacy resources from those in a position to give legitimacy, and mobilize influence from those can exert influences.

In considering the cross-sector or cross-border cooperation, it is very important to mix various resources from various actors who can easily yield resources with less cost.

*We may easily mix valuable resources from those who consider them less valuable. We may raise resources of power from those in power, or raise economic resources from those in control of wealth, may raise legitimacy resources from those in a position to give legitimacy, and mobilize influence from those can exert influences. In considering the cross-sector or cross-border cooperation, it is very important to mix various resources from various actors who can easily yield resources with less cost.*

### *3.2 Outline of project*

From 2004, Korean Federation for Environmental movement (KFEM) or a Korean environmental NGO, Jilin Province of China's Northeast Local Government and Hongri Group launched a joint project to plant grass seeds in a barren desert area of Northeast China. Three parties took up financial responsibility of 45%, 45%, and 10% respectively and have since then planted 600 hectares of grass seeds for three years. In addition, this project includes environmental education for local residents and educational exchanges between Korean and Chinese college students. This desert land is so saline that trees cannot grow. Jilin University researchers developed a new variety of grass that can grow in the saline land and grass hay can be used as animal fodder, which might make this project relatively profitable.

An agreement was concluded among three parties in 2003 for five years to plant grass on 2000 hectares. The second-five year stage is now under examination, whether or not to continue this project or to change it into a new one. A study is under progress to find out a possibility to use hay as a more value-added renewable energy source instead of using it as fodder.

A company was established to carry out this project. Hongri Group, whose main office is located in Guangzhou, South China, is specialized in recuperating the shattered ecology, such as planting trees and grasses. Some specialists of Hongri Group were transferred to set up a new company, and its equipments were used for planting grasses. A board was constituted to make annual plans of grass planting and reviewing achievements.

### *3.3 Three actors and their resources*

KFEM with its 80,000 members is the largest and one of the most influential environmental NGOs in Korea. Founded in 1993, KFEM has been addressing many environmental issues in Korea. In 2002, KFEM became a member of the Friends of Earth, and it had sought a positive role in the global and regional environmental issues. KFEM has been demanded by some Asian NGOs to take a positive role in coping with Asian environmental problems. Leaders of KFEM visited Jilin Province in 2002, and concluded an Exchange and Cooperation Agreement with the Anti-Desertification Fund of the Jilin Government and another Cooperation Agreement with Hongri Group in China. The President of the group is very much concerned with the environmental

issues and is also convinced that the key to environmental protection is to change the political leaders' attitude and enhance people's consciousness. It is Mr. Hong Hao, the President of the Group that introduced KFEM to Jilin Province Forestry authorities. KFEM leaders visited desert lands of the Northeast region that is one of the sources of the sand storm.

### **(a) KFEM**

This project has been initiated by KFEM, setting up agendas and providing people's education and public awareness on environmental protection. KFEM gives this project a global environmental nature, a new justification or ideology in planting grass in desert land. KFEM has staff in specializing campaign, educating people, and managing international exchange. KFEM took a role of educating local residents in China and promoted Korea-China college students exchange as a part of environmental education.

However, KFEM itself cannot provide enough financial resources for this project. KFEM therefore applied for a reforestation project to the Forestry Bureau of Korean Government. This Government Bureau was also in charge of green lottery, and should dispose the profits from the green lottery for environmental projection. It is the KFEM that persuaded the Korean government agency to allocate some budget for addressing global and regional environmental problems.

KFEM's major functions in this project is thus to rationalize the project and mobilize Korean government funds for anti-desertification campaign.

### **(b) Jilin Province**

Jilin Province set up an anti-desertification fund in 2001, because the Chinese central government had already decided to reinforce the anti-desertification policy in 2001. Although the fund takes a form of NGO, the Jilin Government is responsible for staffing and funding. There was no significant participation from non-governmental sectors before KFEM joined anti-desertification campaign. Jilin Government welcomed KFEM participation because this joint project could be a model for government-NGO cooperation. It is not their major concern to have more money from Korean NGOs; rather they are more concerned with the form of cooperation. They are also interested to learn from Korea in the area of reforestation and environmental policy in general.

For leaders of Jilin Province, the prime concern is to make use of this project as a lever to make their political career a success. That is to say, this project can be used as a political marketing in China. The Chief of Forestry Bureau of Jilin Government has been chosen as one of the ten 'newsmen' in 2002, and his photo was used in a commemorative stamp. In China, if a project is chosen as a national model, the developer usually becomes a national figure and the model is encouraged to be emulated in other places. Therefore, local Chinese political leaders tend to mobilize all resources to produce a good model.

### **(c) Hongri Group**

Hongri Group is basically specialized in recovering ecology by planting grasses and trees. The Group is connected with agricultural and forestry sector of the Chinese government. The Group is also specialized in urban landscape architecture. The major customers are the public sector institutions, that is, local government or government agencies. The Hongri group has two companies in Jilin Province; one planting grass in the desert land, other involved in landscape architecture in urban areas. By nature of business, relationship with local government is very important. A kind of commodification of political relationship can be developed between private business and local government.

It is important for this Group to persuade the government leaders to give higher priority to the environmental policy. The more government is concerned with the environmental problems, the more chances this Group has for business. Therefore, it is very 'profitable' to invest in this three-party grass project. Although this Group takes over responsibility of grass planting work, the Group does not extract direct profit from this project. The Group's grass company takes contract workload from the local government more than 10 times of the three-party project.

For this company, the relationship with government officials is very important, and can mobilize KFEM's environmental strategy to persuade the Chinese government leaders. This company introduced KFEM to Jilin Government officials. More important is that this company provides grass planting technology and business management.

## **4. Kitakyushu-Dalian Local Government Cooperation**

### *4.1 Project process and outline*

Kitakyushu city's environmental cooperation with its twin city of Dalian in China has similar characteristics. Its uniqueness lies in the local government's initiatives in mobilizing resources from NGOs, both from national governments and the local business.

Since Kitakyushu has a history of severe pollution problems and has successfully overcome them since 1970s, it had accumulated experiences, measures, manpower and technology countering pollution problems. In 1981, Kitakyushu dispatched two experts to its twin city of Dalian for a seminar to counter environmental problems in Dalian, and this event led to create a program of training of Dalian officials in Kitakyushu. In 1993, about 70 Kitakyushu government officials, local company leaders, NGO leaders and academicians went to Dalian to attend Dalian-Kitakyushu Technical Exchange Seminar, which was attended by some 700 Chinese people. In this Technical Exchange Seminar, Japanese participants proposed Dalian Environmental Demonstration Zone.

In December 1993 when Mr. Song Jian, a Chinese Minister of State, visited Kitakyushu city, Kitakyushu's NGO, KITA (Kitakyushu International Techno-Cooperative Association)'s representative Mizuno Kaoru met Chinese Minister and proposed him to designate Dalian as an Environmental Model District. In 1994 China's Deputy Prime Minister Zhu Rongji visited Kitakyushu city. Mayor of Kitakyushu city also directly requested him to help designate the Dalian city as China's environmental model city. In September 1994, Kitakyushu's Mayor visited China to meet Deputy Prime Minister Zhu Rongji and said that Kitakyushu would render support and cooperation to Dalian, if the city be designated as an environmental model city.

In response to these requests from Japan, China's National Environmental Protection Agency designated the Dalian project as a national priority project. Chinese government requested the Japanese government to provide its ODA loan and technical assistance to carry out the master plan of the Dalian Project. In response to China's request, Japanese government formally decided to use ODA to support the Dalian Project in 1996. Chinese central government also provided massive financial support for the project. On the part of Japanese ODA, 8.5 billion yen has been used to improve the environment.

In formulating the master plan, Kitakyushu local government requested Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to make a draft master plan to drastically improve Dalian's environment. JICA took more than three years to draw the master plan. In March 2000, the master plan was finalized. Kitakyushu city officials provided public environmental inputs, such as monitoring environment and improving water treatment, garbage disposal, etc. KITA team that was composed of professional technicians provided technical knowledge of low-level pollution production system.

The position of Dalian city Mayor should also be noted. Mayor Mr. Bo Xi Lai was a second-generation revolutionary leader and was very influential in the Chinese political arena. He was also in a favorable position to mobilize financial and organization resources from the central government. After his success in Dalian renewal projects, he was appointed as Governor of Liaoning Province and was elevated as Minister of Commerce of the central government.

When I visited Dalian in 2003, the city had already been completely transformed. The Dalian Environmental Demonstration Zone covers 217 square kilometer and living spaces of 1.7 million people.

In implementing the project, the role of retired government officials and private companies was very important. Through the Kitakyushu International Techno-Cooperation Association, their know-how and management knowledge was fully mobilized. Since 1980s, Kitakyushu has trained many Chinese officials from Dalian in the field of urban environmental management, solid waste disposal, sewage and water, air and oceanic pollution.

By recommendation from Kitakyushu city that already won the Global 500 award in 1991, the UNEP's environmental award, Dalian also won the award in 2001. Dalian became the best model for Chinese urban planning.

#### *4.2 Kitakyushu's resource mobilization strategy*

Kitakyushu city mobilized various resources from both countries and from various sectors. Kitakyushu made use of city's useful manpower, who retired from local government and companies for international cooperation. Retired manpower was mobilized to train personnel from Dalian and other Asian cities, and dispatched them to Dalian to help urban renewal.

In proposing the Dalian Environmental Demonstration Zone in 1993, initial actors that prepared the Dalian Project were the International Environmental Cooperation Department of the Environmental Bureau of Kitakyushu and the Environmental Cooperation Center of the Kitakyushu International Techno-Cooperative Association, in other words, local government in collaboration with NGO group. The project team received continuous consultation and supports from the International East Asia Research Center (ICSEAD), the Global Environmental Strategic Research Agency (IGES), the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women and the city of Kitakyushu.

In the process of making the master plan, Kitakyushu used the technical resources from JICA that has resources for international cooperation.

Kitakyushu's strategy to mobilize resources from both national governments should be particularly stressed. Without Kitakyushu-Dalian initiatives to mobilize national resources for environmental cooperation, Japanese ODA and Chinese central government's subsidy would be used otherwise. It is this Kitakyushu-Dalian project that 'reoriented' resources of both countries.

Kitakyushu-Dalian project demonstrated that local governments have a lot of resources within themselves. They have management experiences, for example, addressing urban environmental problems. They can also mobilize technology amassed by industries in the field of environmental administration (legislation, environmental education, etc.) monitoring, sewage treatment, and cleaner production. Using these resources, Kitakyushu has taken a lead in international environmental cooperation in East Asia.

Based on these resources, Kitakyushu could mobilize other financial and technical resources from national governments, technical groups and academics.

## **5. Resource Mix and Implications**

### *5.1 Resource mix*

In the case of KFEM's anti-desertification project, three parties have different kinds of resources and their resources are virtually not competitive to each other. Each party exchanges what each has plenty for what each has not much. Jilin Government can mobilize financial resources, and organizational power, but it has to find a decent

cooperation model a concept, technical and managerial power. KFEM can provide environmental ideology and environmental education, but lacks access to Chinese government and has difficulty in launching anti-desertification campaign and technical knowledge of grass work. On the other hand, Hongri Group has technology for grass work and business management knowledge. But it needs business relationship with local government, wants to make access to more business chances, and needs ideological support for ecological recuperation projects. As a result, each of the three parties needs support from one another.

To launch and promote grass planting in the Northeast desert lands, resources from different sectors and different countries have been mobilized. It is a particular position of Korean NGOs in the Korea's political context that can mobilize fund from Korean government. NGOs' voice in Korean politics became stronger and they are institutionally empowered to gain bargaining power with the government. It is because Korean NGOs were born from the tradition of long democratization struggle since 1980s. Korean governments since democratization were relatively favorable to civil society movement organizations. It is in this background that NGOs could make accesses to government fund for international cooperation.

Jilin government officials are also personally satisfied with this project, because they can travel to Korea at least once a year to attend the board meeting. They can enjoy and learn a lot from Korean environment. In order to provide opportunity to them to look around Korea, the board meetings have been held in many places other than the capital city, Seoul. For Chinese partners, this sort of exposure and personal satisfaction cannot be ignored.

To make a dent in the Chinese bureaucratic ladder, one has to show one's ability in a certain sector. Environmentalism is a new chance that demands heroes. In 2006, Chinese Government launched a socialist new agricultural community movement in order to mitigate rural-urban disparity. In this area too, many Chinese villages and counties compete against each other to be selected as a 'model' village. Many villages combine agricultural economy with ecological development or ecotourism. In the same way, ecological reconstruction has become a key word in China. Government officials in Jilin have a chance to become ecological icon if this project succeeds to produce a really viable model for China's anti-desertification policy. Therefore Chinese local government resources really matter in the Chinese political system.

Hongri Group's CEO is not simply seeking profit in this project. He is convinced that environmental protection is an essential condition for further economic development in China. For him environmentalism is not simply an instrument to make money. Rather he is seeking opportunities to help protecting environment from the part of business activities. It is also very specific to China's political situation. Although there are some environmental NGOs in China, their activities are very much limited. Hongri's CEO thinks that it is through business activity that he can contribute to environmental protection. His activities in the area of environment have extensively expanded. He enrolled in the graduate school of the China Center for Sustainable Research Center, Peking University, and researching on the regional economic-ecological development. Recently he designed a regional development plan of Cangxi County of the Sichuan Province, which combines the economic development with ecological reconstruction. Where there are various restrictions in civil society movements, he could participate in this project through his business activities. This project could succeed to some extent by combining different sources of resources in Korea and China, and by combining different motives of each party.

Kitakyushu-Dalian Project is also a very successful case of resource mix. Kitakyushu city itself has a plenty of technical resources in the area of anti-pollution measures and green production. But it needs financial resources to help Dalian city and technical knowledge to evaluate and draw a master plan of Dalian Environmental Demonstration Zone. Therefore it mobilizes resources from the Chinese and the Japanese government.

### *5.2 Implications*

Northeast China's trans-border project has some implicit goals. Jilin Government provided barren desert land for thirty years for this project. The project land's grass coverage is generally less than 15%, and the goal is to upgrade the grass coverage rate to more than 85%. This land is suitable neither for agriculture nor for stock farming.

#### **(a) Creation of market model**

This alkaline land is apt for grass planting, not for planting trees. Moreover grass planting is assumed to be more profitable in comparison with tree planting, because grass planting can yield business outcome in a couple of years. Grass can be harvested into hay and processed as fodder. Since major investments (seeding, watering, fencing) are

concentrated in first one or two years, project participants are convinced that they production will, in the long run, become profitable. The participants also believe that once grass production is proved successful in yielding profit, business enterprises will eventually participate in grass planting, that is, anti-desertification campaign. One of the important objectives of this project is to prove it as a successful market model. Therefore, board meeting demands the managing company to use a commercial business accounting method, so that the data can be used to prove it as a successful market model.

In the case of Kitakyushu project, market elements are rather limited. Some of ODA finances are used in Japan, such as JICA's consultation fee and purchasing Japanese equipments for Kitakyushu-Dalian project. Kitakyushu-Dalian project has virtually no implication in terms of market principle.

### **(b) Politics of 'model'**

This project also aims to produce a successful policy model in China. This model is unique in a sense that the public sector of Jilin Government combines with civil society initiatives of foreign NGOs and rational management technology of the market. This can be a model not because it could plant grass, but in the sense that a model of government, civil society and market forces have cooperated in a grass planting project, mobilizing resources from three sectors. Once this project can be taken up as policy model by the Chinese government, the grass planting or tree planting work can be done much more efficiently. This kind of model politics has been used for long time during socialist construction of the economy. This three-party model is new, but still acceptable to the Chinese government, as its resource mix can produce good results.

Kitakyushu-Dalian project has a remarkable feature of political marketing. For politicians public financing for the project will not be a big problem, because what they pursue is not market-oriented profit, but political success. Kitakyushu's strategy for political marketing was very successful to mobilize Chinese central governments' support, and Dalian case became a national model in China.

### **(c) NGO and local government's strategy for resource mobilization**

NGOs have very limited resources for anti-desertification program. They have to mobilize resources from various sources. In this sense KFEM is successful in mobilizing Korean government fund and support in planting grass in northeast China. In three-party cooperation, KFEM

Table 1 Summary of Resource Mix

Major Party	Jilin Government	KFEM	Hongri Group
Minor Party	*Anti-desertification Fund of Jilin Province *Jilin University	*National Forestry Bureau of Korean Government	*Local Grass Planting Company
Plenty resources	*Funding *Organizational Power *Scientific Research	*Agenda setting *Campaign and Environmental Education *Mobilizing Korean fund	*technical Knowledge and *Project Management
Major Gains	Political Marketing	Identity	*Expanded Business Chance
Major Legitimizing(Ideology)	Public Responsibility	Environmentalism Internationalism	Social Contribution

has always been an initiative in setting forth agenda for new programs, because it is basically environmental by nature. The NGOs, in this case, have a privilege because they neither represent national interest nor pursue profit. NGOs' basic concerns are global environmental problems. If KFEM would not have proposed the government to use the money for anti-desertification project, it might be used otherwise. Here NGO re-oriented the flow of resources in favor of environmental protection.

Kitakyushu city also had a privileged position, even though it may not supply necessary financial resources for Dalian project. However its goodwill stance towards the twin city of Dalian had impacts on the Chinese government leaders and Japanese government to provide necessary financial and administrative resources. Kitakyushu city's attitude of non-profit and trans-border strategy is a successful platform from which it could mobilize various resources from within and outside.

## 6. Conclusion

Foreign NGOs and local government initiatives alone cannot solve China's environmental problems. It is very important for neighboring countries to help solve Chinese environmental problems. However, it is ultimately the Chinese people and their government that should solve China's environmental problems. The Chinese are themselves responsible for environmental degradation and its own victims.

In addressing environmental problems, it is very important to mobilize resources from various sources. Even though Chinese environmental problems cannot be solely solved by some NGOs or local government efforts, the goodwill NGOs and local governments can effectively mobilize various resources and mix them into an effort to solve problems.

In 1980s, while Japan's ODA was under criticism, Kanagawa Governor proposed Minsai (inter-people) diplomacy and 'Kanagawa ODA' which aimed to help foreign NGOs and individuals directly from Kanagawa. Kitakyushu-Dalian project demonstrated what national governments should follow in international environmental cooperation. KFEM's anti-desertification activities also demonstrated how the business community, the government and citizens can cooperate in addressing environmental problems. That is why NGOs and local governments, which can be considered as minor actors in the international world, may make a breakthrough in the global environmental problems.

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# RELIGION AND CORRUPTION

## Advocacy for Integrity in Philippine Church and Society

*Albert E. Alejo*

*I propose that we seriously examine ourselves: Do I use God to get money, or, do I use money to get towards God? We who so preach to others to share, do we also share?...I dream of the time that there would be no priest in need because we share with each other. Whether one is in the city or in the provinces, whether one is in a big or a small parish, we all share among us. The gap between the rich and the poor among our people will not be bridged if among us priests, who are configured to Jesus Christ and preach love and sharing, have rich and poor among us.*

-Bishop Broderick S. Pabillo

### Uneasy Introduction

In their protest against the way the government was imposing “Charter Change” in the Philippine Constitution, the Filipino bishops quickly called for “Character Change” among the legislators. It was not the Fundamental Law of the land that needed to be overhauled, they argued, it’s the heart and soul of the politicians that required a radical turn around. Equally quick, however, were letters sent to the editors of major dailies, challenging the Church leaders to apply the same prophetic cry for reform upon themselves: “They should first address the ‘character change’ message to themselves before they preach it to others.”<sup>1</sup> It

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. “I always believe that Christ wants the clergy to lead in promoting love and brotherhood. Sadly enough, some priests, and even a few bishops, add to the chaos and misunderstanding in Philippine society today. They even encourage the use of violence to change governments. They should first address the ‘character change’ message to themselves before they preach it to others.

would seem that some of the most tenacious problems that we encounter in the secular arena—including corruption—are also found within the religious temples. The sooner the Church acts on this with integrity (and that includes myself as a man of the Church), the better for both the Philippine Church and society.

My task in this paper is to speak about the social dimension of the central religious worship of the Catholic Church—the Eucharist. I guess the best statement on this theme has already been said by the Eleventh Synod of Bishops, which adopted the title “The Eucharist, Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church” (October 3 - 23, 2005). In Proposition No. 48, the Synod describes the “social dimension of the Eucharist” in this powerful paragraph:

*“Christ’s sacrifice is a mystery of liberation that calls out to us. It is in the commitment to transform unjust structures and to re-establish the dignity of man, created in the likeness and image of God, that the Eucharist assumes in life the significance it has in celebration. This dynamic movement opens up to the world: it questions the process of globalization which not infrequently increases the gap between rich countries and poor countries, it denounces the political and economic forces that dilapidate the earth’s resources, it reiterates the grave requirements of distributive justice in the face of inequalities that cry out to heaven, it encourages Christians to commit themselves and to work in political life and social activity... Those who share in the Eucharist must commit themselves to creating peace in our world, which is marked by violence, war and, especially today, by terrorism, economic corruption and sexual exploitation. The conditions for building true peace are the restoration of justice, reconciliation and forgiveness.”*

From the long and heavy list of concerns that call for committed action, I highlight “corruption.” It is identified as one of the new and special problems that confront those who would take the spirit of the Eucharist seriously in contemporary society. And since I have been in *Ehem! Anticorruption Movement*<sup>2</sup>, I zoom in my presentation on the connection

<sup>2</sup> *Ehem!* is the popular name of the Jesuit Anticorruption Program. The program offers seminars to government and private sector personnel, using the *Ehem! A Self-Check Manual for Combating Corruption*. The program has been adopted by the Office of -the Ombudsman as its corruption prevention strategy, and the seminars have been accredited by the Civil Service Commission for officer’s development. Recently, *Ehem!* also produced the *Aha! A Citizen’s Primer on Whistleblowing*, the product of long partnership with the Ombudsman’s Office.

between the Eucharist and injustice, between communion and corruption.

I believe—no, I can clearly see—that some of the problems that we are fighting against in society are also found within the Church. And among these problems, perhaps the most sensitive to discuss, is corruption. This is the slant that I am going to take in this presentation.

I suggest that the profound and authentic renewal of our society requires a corresponding renewal precisely from within our Philippine Church institutions and communities. The scandal that rocks the Church today is probably not so much the sexual misconduct of the clergy, but the disconcerting fact that those who lead the faithful are as economically and politically divided as the society it wants to convert. The Christians who cheat in public service as well as the victims of their cheating are probably seatmates in the same parish Church and supposedly receiving the same Eucharist.

There at the back of the Church, a mother is crying to the Lord, because she cannot buy the overpriced medicines for her dying child. Here in the front pew, a regular churchgoer praises the Lord in jubilation for a good pharmaceutical business. Somebody is making a living by literally making a killing! What would St. Paul say to this kind of Church? Probably the same sad and angry words he said to the Corinthians.

*“But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. When you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not... Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.” (1 Corinthians 11: 17-29, English Standard Version)*

I hear from St. Paul that receiving the Eucharist has very serious social and spiritual implications. The social divisions in society ('those who have their own meal' and 'those who have nothing') are very much reflected in the church and thereby "despise" it. In no uncertain terms, St. Paul exhorts the believers to examine the serious implications of this juxtaposition of social and spiritual disgrace.

Taking cue from St. Paul, I divide the rest of my presentation into two. The first section is the social context of the Eucharist from the perspective of the problem of corruption in the Philippines. The second portion is an attempt at a theological reflection on the issue. (Please take these reflections as coming from an anthropologist, and not from a professional theologian.) Towards the end, I will offer some prospects for pastoral action in living out the meaning of our Eucharistic communion amidst a society and a Church that are both challenged by corruption.

## **SOCIAL CONTEXT OF A RELIGIOUS PRACTICE**

A friend of mine approached me one day, crying. "Albert, I just want to be a teacher, but I was told that my application is pressed down under the heap of other applications." "Why?" I asked. "You have all the credentials necessary." The superintendent, apparently, was demanding that she agreed to surrender her first three months salary. And she refused. My friend consulted her relatives and former teachers and even her mother who went to church and received communion everyday. They, all as if in a chorus, told her to be practical. "Give your first three months check, and get on with real life!" I have told this story in all my seminars on *Ehem!* In each time, I got confirmation that this scandal was not at all rare. The whole society apparently suffers from this distorted values and dysfunctional institutions.

### **Corruption in the Philippines**

Stories about corruption find an ally with statistics. A World Bank Study in 2000 estimated that, in 20 years, the Philippines lost US \$ 48 billion because of corruption, and this amount surpassed the entire foreign debt of US \$ 40.6 billion. The National Health Insurance Program continues to lose as much as P300 million a year to fraudulent claims, including those involving so-called ghost patients. The said amount is at least 4 percent of P6.8 billion representing payments for Medicare claims in 2000 (Philippine Health Report, 2001).

Corruption has also infected schools. The latest Global Corruption Barometer Survey (2005) of the Berlin-based Transparency International (TI) revealed an increasing incidence of corruption in many schools and universities worldwide, including bribes to secure a student's admission to school or to pass university exams, or selling diplomas and other academic credentials. The report importantly noted that such anomalous "practices in schools and universities contradicted basic values of integrity, equity and the public good and risked perpetuating the problem by fostering a negative perception of authority and institutions." When the students are exposed and formed to corruption and have lost respect to campus institutions, they can easily lose respect to the broader institutions of governance when they are brought into the mainstream society.

According to an earlier report of the Philippine Center of Investigative Journalism, up to 65% of textbook funds are reserved as bribe money. The range of bribery runs from 20% to 65%. In the purchase of medicines, books, magazines and other instructional materials, the kickbacks are distributed to supplier 40%; congressional aide 5%; head of implementing agency 10%; and legislators 45% (Parreño, 1998). This has probably improved—but I guess not substantially—during the past few years.

In the year 2000, a whooping 21 billion pesos of the government's procurement budget apparently went to the pockets of legislators. (I was talking to a contractor of public works. According to him, he goes to prayer sessions, but with a feeling of guilt, because in the real world of public works, he cannot do anything to change the standard operating procedure. You cannot win a construction contract in the government if you do not pay bribe.)

Now, 21 billion pesos is not an abstract thing. It is nearly half of the DPWH's budget and about a fourth of the DepEd. Maybe some of these figures could not be accurate at this point. But 21 billion pesos have equivalents. It could mean 44,716 new classrooms, 21 million new books, new desks and new computers. Then the backlog for classrooms and computers could have been remedied.

News abounds—and as matter of fact, we know it from personal experience—that fake diplomas and academic credentials are being manufactured (cf. Philippines Daily Inquirer, 15 April 2005). If you want to buy some fake diploma, go to Recto Avenue. I studied in the university belt and I saw students submitting cannibalized papers in

Rizal course. Students just copied lyrics from song hits magazines, and they got passing grades! Maybe the teachers were very tired for having too heavy a load. This is true even of the graduate schools. I see plagiarism being committed left and right. Some government officials, who are trying to get a DBA or graduate degrees, simply ask their secretaries to do the research papers for them. If that is possible in their academic life, I wonder how they do in their public office.

A few years ago, the Jesuits did a cross-sectoral study of corruption in the Philippines in 2002. We conducted twenty-five focus group discussions from Baguio to Basilan, and the results include rampant cheating in exams and take-home assignments, plagiarism, selling of tickets and illegal collection of fees and illegal deductions from teachers' salaries. Other anomalies that emerged from the research include illegal use of PTCA funds (Parents-Teachers-Community Associations, illegal use of class funds, teachers and school administrators getting 'commissions' from suppliers of school supplies or printing press of yearbooks and school papers, and non-remittance of teachers' benefits premiums (SSS).

We should also include here the recent scandal on the leakage in the nursing examinations and the Php 1 billion worth of insurance that was collected from the lowly teachers but was not remitted to the agency. I must also add the painful experience of many public school teachers who were used by Marcos in tampering the ballots during the martial law period. All these sad stories in the world of education in the Philippines are both a product and productive of a society that has very minimal respect for truth and dignity.

This does not, of course, mean that each individual education personnel is corrupt. As a matter of fact, I am passionate about this advocacy because I see so many ordinary teachers and educators who try to live a life of integrity despite the odds. And it is very unfair to make sweeping statements. Having said that, we still want to call for more decisive action toward a genuine transformation.

### **The Church as Part of the Problem**

For most of the ordinary faithful, the Eucharist—or the Mass—is not simply a liturgical practice. It is also a social and even an economic event. Many things happen during mass. People enter the church and “find their place”: some instinctively stay at the back, while some prominent personalities would insist on occupying the front row even

if they come late. And people see this. Parents teach their kids to be silent. People look at what other people wear. The homilist tries to connect the readings to contemporary issues, calls for prayer for victims of disasters, announces leadership training, denounces anomalies in elections, or at times blesses controversial projects. For some, the mass is a simple opportunity to learn how to use the microphone or try their singing skills. The church then becomes a culture bearer, aside from being a sacrament dispenser.

On top of this, there is the circulation of money. Parishioners hear the sound of the coins and see who is donating the bigger amount into the collection pouch. Sometimes, there is even a second collection for a construction project or in support of a missionary abroad. A disturbing silence, though, is the rarity of financial report coming from the church officials.<sup>3</sup> The inclusion of money, among other things, places the Eucharist and the Church in general within the context of the brewing interrogation of poverty and corruption in the wider society: Where does the money go?

This question is raised in a recent television special. Very respectable TV journalist Howie Severino aims his lenses and his analysis on the use of the faithful's contribution to the Church. The video-documentary originally entitled *Banal na Barya* or Holy Money is the first of GMA7's 6th anniversary month-long series of hard-hitting, investigative documentaries, and was aired on April 4, 2005. The blurb on this episode describes the problem:

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<sup>3</sup> This lack of transparency within the parish apparently flows from the temporal nature of the Church itself. Bishop Leonardo Y. Medroso, explains: "The Church is not a democratic institution. It is a hierarchical (Cf. Canons 204, §2; 336; 375; 753). In a democratic institution, the power of the official basically emanates from the people and is therefore accountable to the people. In a hierarchical Church, the power of the officials (the clergy) emanate from Christ who entrusted the government of the Church to them in a hierarchical order. In consonance with this order pastors are accountable to their bishops as the bishops are accountable to the Holy See or the Pope. Hence, just as no pastor should allow his parishioners or a 'self-appointed group' thereof to dictate that he submits to them the parish financial report, similarly neither the bishop should submit to the priests the diocesan financial report. It is, however, the responsibility of the pastors to submit the parish financial report to the Bishop (Can. 1287, §. 1) as the Bishop in turn has the responsibility to submit to the Supreme Pontiff all matters, including financial, of how he administers them in his diocese (cf. Can. 399)." "Transparency in the Church" *Impact: Asian Magazine for Human Transformation*. Vol 40: 13-14, 22.

*Few parishioners ask where their money goes. I-Witness asks the questions for them. From collections at church masses, I-Witness dares to follow the church money trail and learns that while priests are sources of spiritual comfort, they do not always inspire confidence in their financial management. Sometimes, they are accused of - gasp! - stealing. Bishops frequently denounce government corruption and social inequalities. But some priests are starting to look in the church's own backyard and do not like what they see. Several thousand priests recently surveyed said that material extravagance was the number one problem of the church. Sex scandals only came in second.*

Perhaps the more controversial segment in this I-Witness episode is the case of the Archdiocese of Manila who owns commercial buildings, rents out its land to banks, and even runs a hotel — all of them generating profits, but for the past several years, has refused to pay tax. Howie Severino openly reveals that his source for this observation is Aries Rufo's article "The Untaxable Church" (Newsbreak October 27, 2004). Rufo exposes many details about the expansion of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila (RCAM) commercial properties, which, according to government officials should have been paying several millions of local and national taxes.<sup>4</sup> But apparently, the hotel does not even have a proper building permit. For the record, both Bishop Oscar Cruz and Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales admit that some of Church's commercial properties must be taxed, and that they have been doing that in their own dioceses. But when we look at the trend in print and Internet opinions, this will continue to haunt the Church. While church tax may be small compared to that of huge corporations, the stigma of being a "tax evader" certainly weakens the Church's prophetic role in social transformation.

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<sup>4</sup> "Church sources disclose that the center has been operating the lodging inn for years and charges commercial rates. BIR officials say the inn, which is a commercial business, is taxable. They explain that tax exemption covers only the income derived from religious, charitable sources. They say that area on which the lodging inn stands should be imposed with realty tax. In 1999, the center opened a five-story, 74-room hotel at the back of its compound. Documents submitted to the BIR showed the center's gross income for 1999, 2001, and 2002 reached P32 million, P46.24 million, and P44.718 million respectively. The center did not submit its income tax return (ITR) for 2000. For 2003, the center surprisingly declared zero income." Aries Rufo, "The Untaxable Church" (Newsbreak October 27, 2004).

One obvious conclusion here is that the Church, in its social existence, is also very much part of the problem. According to a familiar columnist, Conrad de Quiros, “There’s a whole history to show that the Church, though part of the solution, is also part of the problem. As with the society itself, the pocket of wealth and opulence at the top is matched by breathtaking deprivation below, a spectacular divide that doesn’t suggest it holds on to values conducive to honesty, or indeed Christianity.”

What does the Church say to this?

The Catholic bishops very well know the ‘evil of corruption’. In 1989, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines condemned it in a pastoral letter appropriately entitled, “Thou shalt not steal!” This was followed in 1997 with CBCP’s comprehensive social treatise called “Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Politics.” In these and other documents, the bishops decry the foulness of corruption that “plucks food from the mouth of the starving” and “weakens the moral and spiritual fiber of the people.” The Pastoral Letter on Graft and Corruption in 2003, poetically entitled “Let Integrity Flow Like a Stream” continues the same condemnation, but this time with a totally different tone, one which is both confident in its condemnation of corruption as well as repentant of its own collusion to the problem. On its third paragraph, the bishops make a public confession:

*Today we once more point an accusing finger at ourselves. The entire Church in the Philippines is suffering in great anguish as its integrity is raked over the coals with cases as actual or alleged sexual misconduct of some of its shepherds. We are aware, too, that in other areas of Church life as in parish financial management, some Church members and leaders, through loose and dishonest stewardship, stray from the path of righteousness and integrity and we all suffer from the pain when one part of the body of Christ, that is the Church, does wrong. (CBCP, “Let Integrity Flow like a Stream.” Pastoral Exhortation on Graft and Corruption, 2003)*

This confession is matched by empirical data. In 2004, as a response to the sex scandals that hit the Philippine clergy and hierarchy two years ago, the National Congress of the Clergy was convened. Some four thousand priests and bishops gathered together under one roof. It was a very touching and very moving experience of renewal of commitment to the life and mission proper to “men of the Eucharist.” Part of the program was the conduct of a survey on the “Traits and Behaviors

Incompatible with Priestly Ministry and Spirituality”. Out of 2,911 respondents coming from 85 dioceses of the country, 76 were bishops.

On the question of “indecent lifestyles” of the clergy, 1,363 or 46% of the respondents identify “material attachment and extravagance” as the number one lifestyle that mars the image of the Filipino clergy today. Such materialism, according to the interpretation of Msgr. Manny Gabriel, breeds “arrogance” and “inconsiderateness,” with no sense of sacrifice” and “discipline.” Far second is sexual relations with women or homosexual liaisons and activities” at 26%, third is “habitual recourse to worldly good time” at 11.6%, and fourth is “closeness to the rich and powerful” at 9%.

As to the question on the “factors that weaken the Institutional Church,” the results are equally disturbing. The delegates gave a very high 52% on “lack of transparency and honesty in the management of Church resources.” This “problem from within” is felt as “more disturbing.” Again, according to the somber reading of Msgr. Gabriel:

*The clergy’s inability to manage the Church resources due to plain and simple dishonesty militates against very basic human and Gospel values. It brings to the fore the Gospel’s battle cry against sin and corruption, the moral imperative of honesty and truthfulness in the presence of the Lord and His people, the demand for responsible stewardship in the governance of the earth’s resources. And in a country where corruption is woven into every fiber of its societal institution, people expect the Church to lead the moral crusade, to witness to responsible governance and pastoral care. Should this Church be found wanting in this transparent, Gospel-inspired stewardship of resources, because the leaders themselves have failed to practice what it preaches, the institutional Church weakens its moral foundation and credible leadership?*

“Clerical intrigues and politics” comes second at 33% and “arrogance and abuse of power” third at 14%. The survey was conducted by the social research office of the Pontifical University of Santo Tomas, and published as part of the book called *History and Grace*, also published in 2005 by the University of Santo Tomas Press. The book contains the speeches and the activities as well as the proposals for a renewed clergy for a renewed Church in a renewed Philippine society.

## Parallel Challenge to Filipino Muslims

It is reasonable to expect that there should be some parallel self-critique among the Muslim leaders in the region. Unfortunately, very little of this cleansing process seems to be happening among the Islamic institutions in the Philippines.

One of the few who have openly expressed a call for correcting the prevalent corruption among Muslim officials in Mindanao is Amina Rasul, a columnist who belongs to a political clan in Sulu. In her courageous article, Rasul traces the malpractices in government to extremely strong feudalistic patron-client relationship that is being manipulated by those who are in power.

*All three governors [(Zacaria Candao (1990), Liningding Pangandaman (1993), and Nur Misuari (1996)] have been accused of tolerating corruption, but few formal charges have been filed, and for those filed, none prospered. The grinding poverty and ignorance, and the dependence of the people on informal structures are permanent fixtures in the near-absence of governance in the area. There is a failure to [sic] deliver basic services and a general breakdown of government institutions. These function dismally or not at all, or are misdirected to serve the personal interests of those in power. Any delivery of services must go through the local kingpin. The feudalistic patron-client relationship remains the norm.*

This cultural baggage runs counter to the real tenets of Islam. Islam has very specific teachings against corruption. Rasul quotes a *hadith* that says,

*When I appoint someone among you to public office and he puts away by stealth a needle or someone else, that is embezzlement, and he will be called upon to produce it on the Day of Judgment. Earning one's own living and making money are legitimate quests, wasting wealth is unlawful, and spending extravagantly on lawful things is prohibited. It is also unlawful to abuse others' wealth. It is prohibited to possess other people's property illegally, which explains why the thief's hand is amputated as a punishment. Usury is likewise prohibited.*

Rasul laments that despite the clear and forceful Islamic condemnation of corrupt practices, the “informal relationships and customs in society” are able to “subvert” the teachings of the Prophet. This is a deeply

religious problem, because “this is also true of the majority of the Christian population who is deeply religious and moral, yet constantly turn a blind eye to practices that are clearly immoral.” (Rasul 163)

For Rasul, not everything is lost, though. Muslim missionaries and groups like the *Tableegh* and the *Sabbab* go around at the grassroots level, “re-educating the people on the true ways of Islam. Although the focus of the teachers/missionaries is not specifically on corruption, their admonition to live according to the tenets of Islam serves as deterrent to corrupt practices.” Rasul admits that “the fight against corruption is not a major concern among Muslim communities; survival is. However, Muslim religious and civil society leaders in Mindanao have acknowledged corruption as an issue, and are using the strong moral foundation given by Islam to address it” (Rasul, 164). Instead of waxing cynical about religion, Rasul prefers to call on a more intensified spiritual campaign.

*Given the general absence of governance where state institutions fail to work, the only alternative is seeking remedies beyond the state, or into the very moral fiber of the people. Religion is where Filipinos, particularly the Muslims, can relate as it is the tie that binds the different ethnic groups of Filipino Muslims together. (Rasul 2003:162)<sup>5</sup>*

Such a call for a faith-based politics requires a serious reality check, if we compare with the experience of a neighboring country. According to a recent article in Jakarta Post (8 Sept 2006), “Religion has not played a major role to date in efforts to eradicate corruption” at least if we use the terms of the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) presented in Transparency International’s Report 2005. In the said report, “More than half of the bottom 10 places were occupied by Muslim countries”. said Abdullah Badawi in a forum of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The best ranking Muslim country was only ranked 29 out of 158 states surveyed.

There have been substantial religious efforts addressing corruption in Indonesia. In 2002, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Chairman Hasyim Muzadi, then Muhammadiyah Chairman Ahmad Syafii Maarif representing Indonesia’s two largest Islamic bodies and Partnership for Government Reform in Indonesia signed a memorandum of understanding for joint action against corruption. An NU congress in 2002 in Pondok Gede,

<sup>5</sup> For an account of this “impunity”, see Gemma Bagayaua. 2006. “Systems breakdown” *Newsbreak*, January 2 & 16, 2006. pp. 49-50.

Jakarta, even decided that officials embezzling public funds — unless they returned the money — would receive no prayers when they died. This is based on the words of the Prophet that people in debt do not deserve prayers.

Unfortunately, these initiatives coming from the religious leaders have not served as deterrent to corrupt behavior. A former religious affairs minister is serving a five-year prison sentence for stealing public funds. Several people have also been tried including the case of Rp 684 billion (US\$70 million) *haj* fund in the Religious Affairs Ministry, involving former director general of *haj* management affairs Taufik Kamil and Religious Affairs Minister Said Agil al-Munawar. Following their appeals, the Supreme Court sentenced Taufik to four years imprisonment and Said to five years.

Why has religious reform fared badly? The Jakarta Post article offers a number of explanations. Some Muslims apparently think that corruption is a “minor sin” that is light enough to be easily forgiven by God. On this point, I would rather quote the article at length, as this certainly has parallels with both Muslims and Christians in the Philippines:

*Under such circumstances, the public shows little concern over whether or not donors’ contributions come from corrupted money or whether the financial management of the funds is transparent. Furthermore, there is an understanding among embezzlers that their sins will be lightened when their money is partially donated for the construction of a place of worship.*

*Believers, Muslims as well as non-Muslims, in expounding their religious tenets put greater emphasis on external, ceremonial aspects rather than their spiritual nature, which could enhance the character of believers to uphold the principles of justice, integrity and responsibility. Consequently, religious communities prioritize physical symbols like the numerous houses of worship, instead of the quality of religious propagation.*

*Even NU and Muhammadiyah maintain that there is a misconception among many Muslims that corruption is a minor sin God will forgive if the perpetrators are consistently charitable and perform the obligatory prayers five times a day. This belief is of course in stark contradiction to the Koran (Holy book of the God) and Hadith (Prophet’s words and deeds), because corruption is actually a major sin, with perpetrators likely to be “sentenced to death on a cross”*

*or “mutilated”, depending on the frequency of the acts and the amount of material losses caused.*

*The growth of corruption also results from the fact that individuals and religious institutions such as mosque or church management take little initiative to eradicate corruption. They are more interested in ritual worship rather than “social worship” like corruption elimination and the creation of good governance.*

Like Amina Rasul, the Islamic reformers in Indonesia are not dismissing the power of values transformation as “alternative to prevent corruption,” but this has to be reinforced by the family and the school. “This move will not succeed... unless this is reinforced by parents who also serve as role models in the home.” But where would parents and school teachers get their good examples? From their religious leaders, we hope. Religious leaders, both Christians and Muslims, have the task of edifying the believers. Serious efforts toward renewal, however, must begin from within their own ranks.

## **CALL TO SOCIO-SPIRITUAL LIBERATION**

I heard that among the many speeches and homilies delivered during the National Congress of the Clergy, probably the most moving was the sharing of Father (now Bishop) Broderick S. Pabillo, who spoke from his experience of being a poor priest living with the poor. One of his paragraphs, I think, can really take us from the sociological observation and statistical computation to spiritual reflection:

*I propose that we seriously examine ourselves: Do I use God to get money, or, do I use money to get towards God? We who so preach to others to share, even to give tithes ... do we also share? Do we tithe ourselves? The early Christian community in Jerusalem had no one in need among them because those who have would sell whatever they have and give them to those who have none (cf. Acts 4:34). Therefore many were added to the number of believers. Their life of sharing was a great factor to this increase. Is this also so among us, even at least among us brothers in the priesthood? I dream of the time that there would be no priest in need because we share with each other. Whether one is in the city or in the provinces, whether one is in a big or a small parish, we all share among us. The gap between the rich and the poor among our people will not be bridged*

*if among us priests, who are configured to Jesus Christ and preach love and sharing, have rich and poor among us.*

Fr. Pabillo is echoing Conrad de Quiros' indictment of the Church, but Fr. Pabillo transforms the social condition into a prophetic call for conversion. Anyone who wants to be enriched spiritually by listening to an account of ministry to the poor would better read the rest of his sharing. What I notice in Fr. Pabillo's sharing is that scripture passages seem to naturally bubble from experience and then flow very gently into new insights. The rich young man of Mark suddenly leads to Moses of Exodus. Matthew 6:34 "Tomorrow will take care of itself" blends easily with the anecdote on *may awa ang Diyos* (God will show mercy). The issue of some people being *mukhang pera* (literally money-faced) becomes a jumping board for understanding the Eucharistic sharing in Acts 4:34.

## **CORRUPTION AS BETRAYAL OF COMMUNION**

Let me now go back to my main focus that is the call for internal renewal within the Catholic Church and Philippine society. In this section, I would like to pursue a couple of biblical reflections based on my experience in *Ehem*, Anticorruption Movement. I would just like to share with you how I "discovered" some Biblical texts that, for me at least, have transformed my political action against corruption into a more pastoral ministry for communion.

When I was reading the account of the institution of the Eucharist in the Gospel of Matthew, it dawned on me that right at the very beginning, during the Last Supper, on the first Maundy Thursday, Jesus became the victim of bribery and extortion, as Judas secretly accepted the thirty pieces of silver paid by the religious authorities. Imagine the pain of Jesus, sharing bread and wine with somebody who would betray him?

I am sure that a trained scripture scholar or a biblical spirituality expert can expound on this angle in more detail and probably more poignantly. But to me, the impact of this vision of that dark night dinner came with the death of a whistleblower, Marlene Esperat of Tacurong, Sultan Kudarat.

Marlene was a chemist who turned journalist. While she was monitoring the Department of Agriculture, she uncovered many anomalies. Her expose later on became the notorious Php 728 million fertilizer scam.

She filed dozens of cases touching on overpricing of farm inputs, spending millions of government funds on ghost irrigation projects, and even smuggling of chicken wings. Marlene was aware that she was threatening powerful people, but she was fearless. All she was thinking of was the injustice that a handful of people were inflicting on the farmers and the government. Her family simply had accepted and respected her crusade for justice.

When Marlene died, her sister knew exactly what Psalm she would use for the paraliturgy—Psalm 17. They requested me to lead the prayer that her sister had prepared. I was astonished at the beauty and power of the song of the righteous person seeking protection from God, and yet ultimately expressing inner joy if in the end she can simply “behold your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with your likeness when I awake.”

*Hear a just cause, O LORD, give heed to my cry;  
Give ear to my prayer, which is not from deceitful lips...  
Keep me as the apple of the eye;*

*Hide me in the shadow of Your wings  
From the wicked who despoil me,  
my deadly enemies who surround me...*

*They have now surrounded us in our steps;  
they set their eyes to cast us down to the ground.  
He is like a lion that is eager to tear,  
And as a young lion lurking in hiding places.  
Arise, O LORD, confront him, bring him low;  
Deliver my soul from the wicked with your sword...  
As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness;  
I will be satisfied with your likeness when I awake.*

Corruption is violence. Corruption kills. But what the Eucharistic passages in the Gospel seem to imply is that corruption, moreover, is a betrayal of trust, of divine trust. The person of integrity, however, clings to the friendship with truth—and therefore with God—even at the risk of one’s life.

Thank God, not all whistleblowers get killed, although they continue to be persecuted through harassment and continuous death threat. Ruben M. Manatad understands this perfectly well. He exposed the “rice-for-sawdust scam” in the National Food Authority, where somebody replaced four trucks of rice with sawdust, and threatened him when he

refused to sign the delivery receipt. His continuing struggle has inspired him to write his own psalm, “A whistleblower’s prayer”<sup>6</sup>:

*Dear God, please make me strong  
In the midst of threats and enticements.  
Powerful people are determined to break my will  
and compel me to retract my statements.  
If they fail, they will see to it that my reputation  
is tarnished and my credibility demolished.  
I am emotionally burdened.  
People close to me may be involved in this wrongdoing.  
I just exposed an anomaly that is detrimental to the nation.  
But I am prepared to face the consequences of my action.  
Please shield me against ill motives and retaliation.  
My belief is powerful. My faith is formidable.  
I cannot forsake Young people whom I am sworn  
to serve faithfully. Help me. Amen.*

## COMMUNION AS LIBERATION FROM CORRUPTION

During one of our *Ehem!* seminars for the regional office of the Land Transportation Office, I had a clearer hint on what Jesus did when he visited Zacchaeus, the notorious tax collector. The regional head had several corruption cases filed against him. But he still arranged the seminar. He invited the group to dinner in his house. Nobody came, except my brother Jesuit scholastic and myself. The amount of food indicated that he was expecting a lot of visitors. Apparently, people did not want to be seen dining with him because of his alleged anomalies. I don’t remember what happened next, but he admitted to having those cases looming over his head and promised to be better public servant.

I think there is need for pastoral care for those who have been involved in corrupt activities but are now, like Zacchaeus, craning their neck, as it were, to get a glimpse of Jesus. Jesus knew what was going on in Zacchaeus’ heart, and out of his wisdom and compassion, Jesus used the very human sacrament of dining together, as an approach to conversion. Zacchaeus burst into liberation from his attachment to his ill-gotten wealth that he promised to return more than what the law could have demanded on him to pay. Jesus declared after the meal, “Today, salvation has come to this house” (Luke 19:1-10).

<sup>6</sup> Mr. Ruben M. Manatad’s prayer is later printed in the *Aha! A Citizen’s Primer on Whistleblowing*. Davao City: Ehem! Aha! Technical Working Group, Office of the Ombudsman and the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus (2006).

*Corruption is violence. Corruption kills. But what the Eucharistic passages in the Gospel seem to imply is that corruption, moreover, is a betrayal of trust, of divine trust. The person of integrity, however, clings to the friendship with truth—and therefore with God—even at the risk of one's life.*

Secretly, a number of people come to me saying, “Father, I am not really a bad guy. It’s just that I was not strong enough to overcome the pressure of the office. I cannot go on with this admittedly corrupt behavior, but I am afraid of the consequences if I expose myself to the law.” I had another case of surprise revelation. I was walking in the Ateneo de Manila campus. A car stopped by me. The window opened and I heard a voice. “Excuse me, are you Father Alejo? Are you the one who gives *Ehem* seminars? Father, you should talk to me. I am attorney so and so, graduate of Ateneo Law School, and I’m corrupt.

Right now, I have a murder case and it has just been dismissed, because we bought the judge. When you have time, let’s have dinner or coffee. I will gather a few others, and we will tell you how things are done.” I wonder if I can muster the courage and the creativity, like Jesus had, to explore talking with the alumni of our schools or parish ioners of our churches, at that moment when they are at the brink of conversion. I suggested this to some sisters who were running good schools, but who, they admit, had alumni who have become corrupt. Why don’t you visit them, I said. “*Nakakahiya!*” (it’s shameful!), they answered. Why do we feel awkward approaching our alumni in their homes to remind them of the values that our schools stood for? And yet we are not ashamed of asking money for contributions back to the school? Come to think of it, Jesus, in the Zacchaeus liberation story, is probably teaching us a pastoral approach to societal change—and again, through the Eucharistic meal?

## AN URGENT ADVOCACY

As the Church begins the all-important surgical self-criticism, there are positive signs that can give us energy to proceed with this “urgent advocacy.” In its most recent survey on corruption, the Social Weather Station included, for the first time, the category “local church leaders”. The result is that local church leaders got the highest rating for sincerity in fighting corruption, scoring higher than the Supreme Court and Social Security System. This is not conclusive but it certainly signals both hope and responsibility. Hope in that many people still trust the Church as an important actor in social transformation. This also implies a great responsibility to go beyond being part of the problem to being part of the solution.

Some Church groups have actually been involved in the punitive as well as preventive aspects of anticorruption work. Bishop Dinualdo

Gutierrez enumerated some of these initiatives during our participation in the symposium “The Fight against Corruption” convened by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in the middle of 2006. The National Secretariat for Social Action, for example, has grassroots level lifestyle check and Internal Revenue Allocation (IRA) Watch Campaign. Along with the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC), the Office of the Ombudsman and civil society groups, NASSA signed a memorandum of understanding committing itself and the dioceses under the social action network to the campaign for good governance. Many devout Christians are in government and private agencies, trying to introduce reforms from within their sectors.

A seriously felt need is to root this political and governmental work onto a more solid spiritual foundation. The DILAAB movement, developed from Cebu, is a great move to fill this need. Dilaab, which literally means ‘flame’ or ‘on fire’ in Visayan, is a moral-spiritual renewal movement harnessing faith, igniting spaces of hope, and channeling the energies of love for a transformed Filipino nation through heroic Christian citizenship; Christ-centered leadership; and Christian (or God-centered) advocacy work.

*Ehem!* Movement starts from a cultural analysis of the endemic nature of corruption and offers a spirituality of integrity as it networks primarily with government, church and school action and energy centers.

Fighting corruption and working for good governance is emerging now as a top priority in our renewed social ministry of the Church. This issue, however, gains more urgency and sensitivity when we consider Mindanao. Studies have shown that controlling corruption in post-conflict countries usually looks like fighting another war. If these funds do not land on the proper beneficiary communities, then we may have to face another war. We know even now that corruption breeds violence. When a court cannot give justice to a person’s cause, then he might take the law into his hands. When clan conflicts are settled using public funds as blood money, then we realize that preventing corruption is actually working for peace and development.

What remains a gaping lacuna is the articulation of the political and economic reforms to the sphere of spirituality that looks at the basic integrity and morality of every individual as a member of the political and economic systems. As the World Bank (2000) exhorts, there is a need for a spiritual and ethical-based initiatives to complement the political and economic reforms. Perhaps the turn to Eucharistic

spirituality may prove enriching and enlivening, especially when we start (and rightly so) with the reform of our own personal and communal lives as Christians.

The National Congress of the Clergy is correct in focusing on the renewal of the clergy from the very beginning of formation of seminarians. Perhaps a corresponding articulation of the Eucharistic spirituality of integrity should also be developed among the laity whose divine mission is precisely to evangelize the secular sphere. Our discerned strategic response is to build up women and men of integrity, equipped with appropriate expertise and solid spirituality in the moral use of power and in the technical requirements of achieving good governance, both in public and private sectors, but also in the Church institutions. All this goes back to the call of the Synod of Bishops to live the spirit of sharing one bread, and to make sure that others too have something to eat, have peace of mind, and freedom from manipulation and deceit, as well enjoying good governance. Such is the Eucharistic vision of a transformed human community.

But then, again, the words of the Carpenter from Nazareth haunt us who wish to induce a transformative encounter between religion and corruption: “Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.”

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# The Tokyo Tribunal 2000 and Beyond

*Maria Hartiningsih*

*Here we will take action for the future, through global solidarity of people not of state, with women playing central role alongside men.  
(Yayori Matsui, 1934-2002)*

Yayori Matsui's statement above, which is memorialized in a museum, namely the Women's Active Museum on War and Peace (WAM) in Shinjuku, Tokyo, reminds us of the most historical event just prior to the new millennium: the International Tribunal on War Crimes Against Women regarding Japanese Sexual Slavery During World War II, in Tokyo held from 8 to 12 December 2000.

The museum is very simple and modest. There is a library, a part of which stores Yayori's personal collection. Then there is a chair and a table where Yayori worked during her lifetime. Visitors are free to use the chair, to find and read Yayori's work on the Internet.

There is also a video booth and photographs of women victims, who bravely broke the conspiracy of silence on the war crimes against them by speaking out the truth to uphold justice. A recording of the Tribunal is available for complete viewing there.

Yayori Matsui is a prominent figure in the Japanese organization, Violence Against Women in War-Net (Japanese VAWW-Net) and a member of The International Organizing Committee of "the Tribunal" in the year 2000. The verdict of the Tokyo Tribunal was presented at the Hague in December 2001. I was present at both those very important events, and months before, very intensively met the survivors from Indonesia, to directly hear and witness their personal experiences and living conditions.

WAM made my visit complete by going to the office of the Asia-Japan Women's Resource Center (AJWRC), which measured only approximately five times five square meters, located in Shibuya, Tokyo.

AJWRC was also founded by Yayori and is sort of a “struggle center”, to repudiate injustice towards women.

The mission, which was the foundation for her entire struggle “Beyond Borders, Action for an Alternative Future”, underlined cross-border solidarity, not only between women, but also amongst men, in order to struggle hand in hand to achieve equality without violence on a continuing basis. Hisako, whom we met at that office, explained the center’s activities after Yayori’s passing.

Cancer had sent Yayori to her final place of eternal rest in the early hours of 27 December 2002 at around 1 a.m. local time or 23.00 hours West Indonesia time at the age of 68. Her demise has been a great loss for women’s movements throughout Asia.

For the past ten years, Yayori had been a foremost Asian world activist, who was outspoken in international forums on women in relation to racism, militarism, and globalization. She was also well known as a peace activist, campaigning for the struggle against human trafficking as a result of militarization in Asia.

“She was an outstanding woman,” said Mohiuddin Ahmad, a poet, novelist and a peace activist from Bangladesh, who knew Yayori for more than 20 years. Mohi, as friends call him, confessed that it was Yayori who introduced him to the perspective of eco feminism in the environmental movement. “Her spirit will continue to live with us,” continued Prof. Lee Seejae from the Catholic University of Seoul, South Korea, who in the past also frequently met Yayori on several occasions.

In her office that afternoon, I felt her presence...

## II

Yayori Matsui is a hero to all the victims whose voices were silenced for almost half a century. She managed to attend the Final Judgment in The Hague, the Netherlands on the 3rd and the 4th of December 2001, where the Tribunal passed a guilty verdict to Emperor Hirohito and Emperor Showa, who between 1937 and 1945 were respectively the reigning Head of State and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Japanese Empire. A number of high-ranking military officers who led the war expedition to various regions of Asia were also convicted for war crimes.

The decision was made after the Tribunal heard testimonies from 35 survivors out of 75 who attended the tribunal process in Tokyo. The Tribunal, which was thereafter known as the People's Trials, was the answer to the failure of the country in fulfilling its responsibility to uphold justice for approximately 200.000 women in Asia who were forced to become *jugun-ianfu*, or "comfort women" at "comfort stations" for Japanese soldiers during World War II.

The term "comfort women" was used to legitimize criminal actions during the war. Between 1994 and 1997, a number of high-ranking government officials stated that comfort women were volunteers. The statement was a systematic political effort to deny any existence of deception, threat, coercion and kidnapping towards the victims.

In the People's Trials in December 2000 in Tokyo, the Japanese historians Akira Yamada and Yoshiaki Yoshimi convinced the Tribunal that the Japanese military commando who had private access to the emperor developed the system of comfort stations properly and systematically. This method was a response to the mass raping in Nanjing in 1937.

The Japanese government had committed a violation towards its responsibilities to the country by destroying various documents, including documents related to the sexual slavery system during the war.

The failure of the country to account for its criminal actions has already taken place in the International Court for War Crimes for the Far East in Tokyo, during April of 1946 and November of 1948. The courts did not raise the issue of cases of sex slavery by the Japanese military at all.

The entire process, which took place since 1997 until the Tokyo Tribunal in 2000, according to the Head of the Prosecution Team from Indonesia, Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, was a sophisticated method in compiling data, organizing it into an international legal framework, enabling people to take legal action in a much simpler manner, on a national as well as an international scale.

In that process, the Indonesian team provided new information by presenting proof of the Peace Treaty signed by the Government of Indonesia and the Government of Japan in 1958. The treaty included reconstruction due to physical damage during the war. However, the treaty failed to mention anything regarding victims and survivors of sexual slavery.

That means that the Japanese Government did not acknowledge the occurrence of sexual slavery conducted by its soldiers during the war. “The Government of Indonesia who accepted the treaty as it was also did not realize that sexual slavery was a serious violation during the war,” exclaimed Nursyahbani.

Although it has been mentioned in the opening of the Charter, the Tribunal has no power to enforce its decisions, but the process of the hearings were very seriously conducted, involving judges and prosecutors in the International War Tribunal for Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, together with expert witnesses and world renowned lawyers.

“This court has moral authority to acquire a great deal of support from the international community to execute the court’s verdict,” that was the statement of Yayori Matsui, which I quoted from a report directly from Tokyo. (*Kompas*, December 13, 2000).

Professor Fritz Kalshoven from the University of Leiden, The Netherlands, who was an expert witness regarding the state’s responsibility was in a way concurring to Yayori’s statement, when answering a question from Willy Mutunga, one of the judges, regarding the significance of the Tribunal.

“This court has the same significance as any other international war crime court,” stated Prof Kalshoven. All the decisions of the Tribunal, according to Prof Kalshoven, should have the support of the United Nations, in view of the fact that some prominent UN officials were also involved in this process.

“The Tribunal is proof of the power of civil society,” continues Prof Kalshoven, “If countries do not react towards crimes which are carried out systematically, the international community cannot do something to overcome the silence.”

The Tribunal, as explained by Gay J McDougal, Special UN Envoy and Director of the International Legal Group on Human Rights, Racism, and Sexual Violence in War, is also a positive step to end impunity on sexual violence crimes and offer special attention towards injustice related to World War II.

In the meantime, the International Court on War Crimes for former Yugoslavia and also Rwanda is an important step to disallow impunity on war crimes and crimes against humanity related to sexual slavery and violence in war and armed conflicts. That is why the court is staffed with a team from law offices specifically for gender-based crimes,

headed by Prosecuting Attorney Patricia Sellers – who in “the Tribunal” was the lead prosecutor.

The primary motivation for conducting an International Court on War Crimes for the former Yugoslavia is sexual violence against women in Bosnia. More than half of the indictments were cases of violence based on gender.

In a similar court for Rwanda, gradually the cases of sexual violence became the main issue. The council of judges determined that rape and sexual violence conducted during the war in Rwanda was an act of genocide, crime against humanity, and torture. It was also established, that the accused were not directly involved, they were responsible for giving the order, intimidating, and compelling people to perform inhumane acts.

In relation to the two international courts, the International Crime Court (ICC) is also a significant development in international human rights laws and a campaign to end impunity. The main crimes, which the Court focuses on, are genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

The statutes of ICC explicitly include gender and crimes based on gender. The statutes also acknowledges that various acts of sexual violence including rape and sexual slavery, as crimes against humanity and war crimes.

“The Japanese Government has confessed to the direct involvement of the government and the military in establishing and operating the ‘comfort women’ system,” said McDougal in a meeting in Manila in April, one year before the Tokyo Tribunal.

Some documents, which were not destroyed, became solid proof, which could not be refuted. Among these was an Operations Journal of the Empire’s War Department, which stated that there was a spreading of venereal disease around Bandung, West Java, Indonesia; hence “comfort stations” had to be built, under the strict supervision of the military.

Also, 32.1 million condoms were supplied during 1942 in China to approximately 400 “comfort stations” built in that area. From certain documents, it was also found that “comfort stations” were a direct response to the mass rape in Nanjing carried out by Japanese soldiers in 1937.

Living proof came forward and testified in court, which I managed to note, like Kaneko (80), Joshio Suzuki (80), who confessed taking part

in raping native women in the North China region in 1942. “I felt tortured for the rest of my life as a result of my actions,” they said.

The Japanese Government also acknowledged that many women were recruited using force, by way of deception and threats – the number of women was around 50,000 to 200,000 in the Asian countries then occupied by Japan. However, they did not acknowledge that the “comfort women” system was a military sexual slavery and a violation of international human rights, humanity laws, and crime.

The Japanese Government refused to take legal responsibility, because it was of the opinion that the “comfort women” system was not slavery; even if it was, slavery was not prohibited at that time. The Japanese Government also stated that the problem of “comfort women” had been resolved through peace treaties and post-war reparation.

“The Japanese Government has actually refused this issue until 1992 and stated that no claim is relevant since it occurred over 50 years ago,” continued McDougal.

Time cannot expunge the truth. However, 50 years of denial have made many members of society and the Japanese politicians to maintain persistence, that “comfort stations” are places of prostitution; that “comfort women” are those who voluntarily become prostitutes; that the “comfort women” system is a private affair, not operated by the government and the military.

The same matter, ironically, was also persistently consented by the Indonesian community, and strengthened by the Indonesian Government’s attitude, and as a result, the survivors experienced humiliation and exclusion.

“I was only 13 years old when I was deceived and forced to enter the rape center in Banjarmasin. I haven’t experienced my period yet. Did it make sense that I volunteered to become a prostitute?” exclaimed Mardiyem, survivor from Indonesia, in a press conference, answering such questions.

The Japanese Government exercised all effort to erase all references related to “comfort women” from schoolbooks. “History must be re-written. The people must be educated,” said McDougal.

### III

But it is not easy to change a perspective, especially when it politicized. The image of mainstream politics in Japan regarding this matter is clearly visible at the Yasukuni Shrine – constructed to commemorate the 2.5 million soldiers who died on the frontlines, including 41 women who “gave their lives for Emperor and country”. They died while performing their tasks, in supporting the duties of the military.

They, as told by Prof. Tetsuya Takahashi from the University of Tokyo, received special honors with the publishing of the book, *Women of Yasukuni* (1941) by The Society to Honor the Women of Yasukuni. In the War Museum on the Yasukuni Complex, there is no mention whatsoever regarding “comfort women” or the countless acts of cruelty carried out by the Japanese soldiers, only for victory and the greatness of their Emperor.

Although it is accepted as a great historical event, which closed the last century and was an opening for this century, the Tokyo Tribunal still continues to attract controversy. Prof. Kiichi Fujiwara from the University of Tokyo said that the Tribune is not too convincing and is academically weak.

On the other hand, Prof. Takahashi views the Tokyo Tribunal in 2000 equivalent to the Russell Tribunal in 1967, which was created through the initiative of Bertrand Russell, conducted in Denmark and Sweden, headed by the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre. The Russell Tribunal was a court of morals, to judge the aggressions and war crimes by the United States during the war in Vietnam.

The Tokyo Tribunal of 2000 still has a pending problem, regarding the NHK case, a public television broadcasting station, which conducted a sensor to the ETV 2001 series, *Senso o Do Sabaku ka* (How Should We Adjudicate Wars). The topic discussed in this documentary was the Tokyo Tribunal of 2000.

According to various sources, on 27 January 2001, or three days before broadcasting, NHK was “visited” by 30 ultra-nationalists, arriving in a convoy of trucks, wearing Para military uniform, demanding not to broadcast the program, which was considered “not patriotic”.

Other sources state that NHK was “visited” by two right-winged politicians, who conducted a sensor on the program, which was ready for broadcast, and added to it some interviews, which were in their political interest.

This controversy affected old problems that have not been solved, regarding historical accountability: problems that involve Japan's relationship with neighboring countries in East Asia.

In the last controversy, the question is not about the contents of the documentary, but regarding the events occurring a few days before broadcasting: the event that was cloaked in mystery, full of claims and counter claims. In reality, certain facts are no longer debatable.

#### IV

The issue of "comfort women" is not only an issue prevailing outside of Japan. The visit to Okinawa made history that was vague, become bright as day, when we met Suzuyo Takazato, a prominent woman figure in Okinawa who is head of an international network, campaigning for the repudiation of a military base on Okinawa.

I met Takazato on several occasions before. Among them was at the Tokyo Tribunal in 2000, in Beijing during the Fourth World Conference on Women and Development in 1995. This is a woman who, for more than half of her life, has been continuously struggling against a military base and violence against women.

We (Albert Alejo, a Jesuit priest, an anthropologist, a professor at the University Ateneo de Davao, Manila, and a peace activist, and myself) were fortunate because we were given the opportunity to meet privately Takazato on Sunday (15/10/06), after formal meetings in our schedule during our stay in Okinawa.

"We do not know the meaning of peace," said the founder of Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence in 1995. A 66 year old woman, a mother of two, and a grandmother of one child stated that 'war', particularly towards women on Okinawa is ongoing, when foreign troops were placed in a situation categorized as "peaceful", a situation when there is no actual armed conflict being waged in the area.

#### V

Okinawa was a basis for Japan's defense against the US and Great Britain. During World War II, Okinawa was a "hell battlefield". The big battle commenced on April 1, 1945, after US battleships stormed the island with 600,000 grenades and 1,760,000 grenades from land.

The “storm of steel” continued for 82 days on the main island, which had a length of 130 kilometers. The Japanese army deployed 2,400 Kamikaze pilots from Kyushu and Taiwan and hundreds of suicide ships from the beaches of Okinawa. Around 200,000 died including 72,900 Japanese soldiers (not including natives of Okinawa recruited as soldiers).

Okinawa, which was once an independent region under the kingdom of Ryukyu, experienced a long and complicated history before being annexed by Japan in 1879. China did not acknowledge this and asked that Ryukyu be divided into three.

The talks between China and Japan, which was facilitated by the US, failed. In 1880, China, which was continuously having problems at home, surrendered and signed a treaty with Japan. Japan, which won the Sino-Japan war, then took control of the entire region of Ryukyu.

The Kingdom of Ryukyu has had relations with the US prior to that. When Japan opened its doors – forced by Commodore Matthew C. Perry in 1854, Ryukyu signed an agreement with the US, and after that with France. After Japan’s defeat in World War II, Okinawa came under the control of the US and returned to Japan in 1972. “Before 1972, we used the US Dollar as our currency,” said our guide Inafuku Tsutomu from the Peace and Anti War Network.

But the US military base was maintained. Okinawa, the size of which is less than one percent of the entire area of Japan, with a population of 1.36 million, must forgo 10 percent of its area, and 19 percent of its largest island for use by the US military base. Around 75 percent of its entire area is exclusively used for US military facilities. The peace activists are certain that the military facilities include guided missiles, and even nuclear weapons. US military personnel stationed in the area up to 2003 totaled 50,826.

As pointed out by Political/Military Official of the US Consulate General in Naha, Carmella A. Conroy, the purpose of the US military base in Okinawa is to protect Japan from outside aggression. “If the Japanese government wants us to leave, then we will leave. This is a matter of alliance, which is mutually beneficial,” he said casually, answering a question asked by Mohiuddin Ahmad.

Carmella seems to be indifferent regarding the facts, which for decades has been a significant problem on the lives of the people of Okinawa, especially women.

The sex industry in Okinawa does not thrive like other areas where US military bases are also located, and as Takazato said, prostitution was prohibited in 1972. But rape and rape threats by US soldiers stationed there continues to trouble women and younger girls in Okinawa. She told us of a tragic event in 1995, when a 12 year old girl was raped by three US soldiers.

That is a “sign”, which, according to Prof. Katsunori Yamazato from the University of Ryukyu, was sent from that area to the Northern area, and made people there feel uneasy. While on the other hand, the event reminded people of “Yaponesia”, which had decentralist connotation, introduced by novelist Toshio Shimao in 1970.

“I think, it is presently difficult for many Japanese to not care for the Ryukyu people, at a time when they are trying to understand the new image about Japan or when they try to explain the meaning of becoming a Japanese,” says Yamazato, regarding the identity and nationalism of the people of Okinawa who are caught between the interest of the US and the interest of Japan, with no significant voice from the people itself.

This is the problem that still surrounds many people of Okinawa, leaving them helpless in a feeling between “assimilation” and “dissimilation”, as explained clearly by Oshiro Tatsuhiro, the novelist who won the Akutagawa Award in 1967 with his novel, “The Cocktail Party”.

The tragedy of 1995 also left the people of Okinawa wondering, what is the significance of being an Okinawan after the Cold War. Meanwhile, in “The Cocktail Party”, Oshiro has written not only about the American soldier who raped a little girl on Okinawa, but also wrote about a Chinese expert on law, Mr. Sun, whose wife was raped by Japanese soldiers in China.

The Okinawa protagonist in that story (the father of the little girl who was raped) not only found himself marginalized amongst the Americans (when he was searching for justice), he also found a character who was marginalized in Mr. Sun, whose character was to release the protagonist from a narrow sense of identity. By looking at himself through Mr. Sun, he found his personal identity on a much broader scope, in an Asian context. He was also able to liberate himself from the feeling of victimization and narrow sense of nationalism.

In a meeting with participants of the 2006 ALFP at the University of Ryukyu, Oshiro said, “If Japan’s mistakes in China can be pardoned,

what happened in Okinawa should also be forgiven. I started thinking, war cannot be absolved, and the truth is traumatic,” he stated, while reminding, in war, violence is executed by both sides, for whatever reason.

“Not forgiven, not forgotten,” that was Oshiro’s statement on absolute ethics. Violence carried out by both sides cannot be forgotten, cannot be forgiven. That is why he elaborated on the psychological situation of both sides, in order to find freedom.

## VI

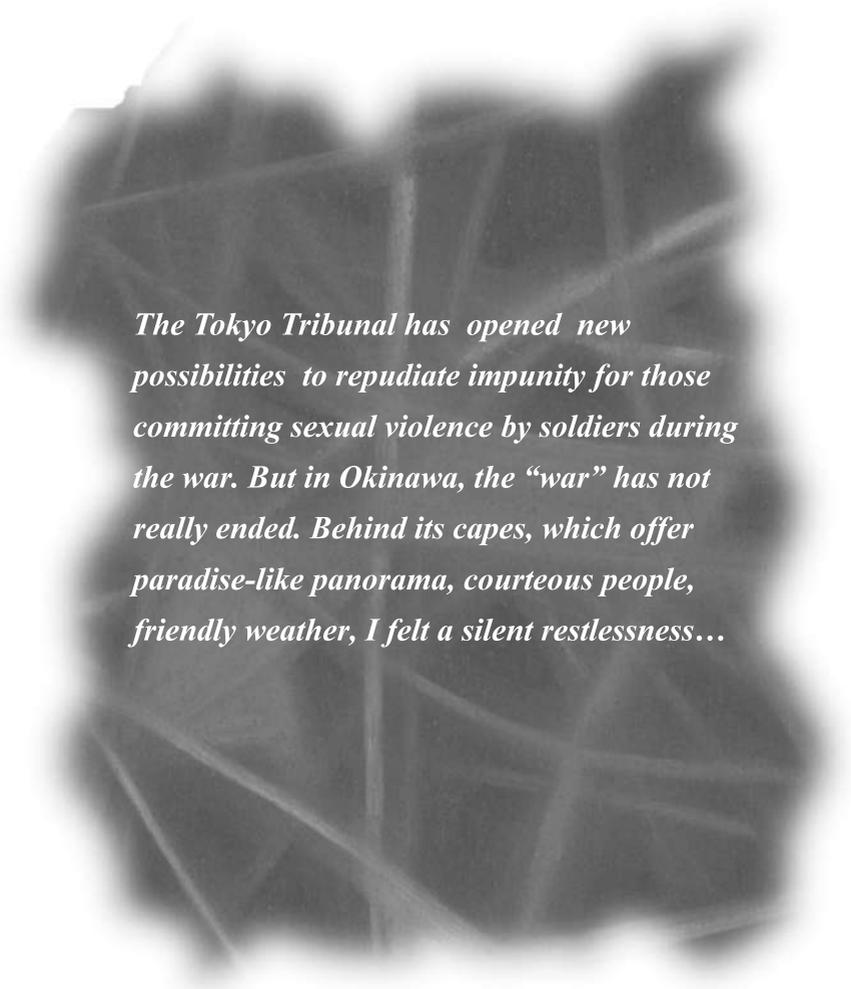
But absolute ethics is not something simple. The war is still going on, for whatever reason. Okinawa, which is the southern most prefecture of Japan is situated midway between Tokyo and Manila and has been called the “keystone of the Pacific” by military planners because of its strategic location. In 1991, the US military base there played a vital role in deploying troops to the Gulf War. This was also the case in efforts to intensively assault Iraq in 2004. Even Japan sent their fleet also to the Gulf.

Before becoming a US military base, the history of violence against women in Okinawa, which was strongly related to militarism, is very long, in line with the region’s history as a military base.

Takazato believed that between the years 1943 and 1945, women from Korea were brought to Okinawa by the Japanese Imperial Army and then spread out to all the islands and were forced to sexually serve the Japanese soldiers who fought to defend the Japanese mainland. At that time, there were 130 brothels in Okinawa. Many women of Okinawa were also forced to become “comfort women” to serve the Japanese soldiers.

One part of Okinawa that was returned to the US military in September of 1950 was immediately turned into an area of prostitution. This was done in order to avoid raping by US soldiers, which occurred continuously in the housing district and to prevent the spreading of sexually transmitted diseases.

During the Vietnam War during 1965-1973, Okinawa became an R&R area. Brothels thrived. Women in that area were completely deprived of their rights as human beings. They were under strict supervision, strangled in debt, and were vulnerable to brutality by the soldiers, at



*The Tokyo Tribunal has opened new possibilities to repudiate impunity for those committing sexual violence by soldiers during the war. But in Okinawa, the “war” has not really ended. Behind its capes, which offer paradise-like panorama, courteous people, friendly weather, I felt a silent restlessness...*

the same time vulnerable to infectious diseases. Cases of rape continued to occur in those places.

Between 1972 and 1995, places of prostitution decreased and the number of sexual abuse towards school children increased. At that time, Filipino women started to enter the region, using a short-term work visa, as “entertainers” with all their vulnerability, physically, psychologically, and sexually. At that time, many cases occurred related to childbirth, the fathers of who were US soldiers.

Rape and rape threats continued to occur until this day. “Even if the case goes to court, the most that can happen is a concession. Most of the cases are covered up or considered closed,” said Takazato. She said it is uncommon that a rape case is settled in a fair manner. The Japanese government was also not firm regarding these problems. Meanwhile, a soldier who is sent back to the US because of a rape case developed a website, supporting rapists.

Takazato also has to face various groups of people – including peace activists – who consider rape cases “small problems” compared to the “big issues” surrounding the Japanese – US Defense Treaty.

Nevertheless, Takazato confirms that the “big problem” is but half of the entire problem, when not viewed from a woman’s perspective, and the problems of violence against women and children are not taken into consideration. The most important thing for Takazato is to put the issue in a long-term perspective. There you have it.

The Tokyo Tribunal has opened new possibilities to repudiate impunity for those committing sexual violence by soldiers during the war. But in Okinawa, the “war” has not really ended. Behind its capes, which offer paradise-like panorama, courteous people, friendly weather, I felt a silent restlessness...

*(I dedicate this story to all my dear friends, fellow participants of ALFP 2006. Note: Some material on the Tokyo Tribunal were taken from my journalistic works, published in Kompas.)*

## Discovery of Japan

*Mohiuddin Ahmad*

Hindi films are usually filled up with many songs and some are very melodious. It was probably a day in the early 1960s. I was a kid and I heard a Hindi film song. The first line was:

*Mera juta hai Japanee*  
(*My shoes are made of Japan*)

It says about a person wearing different nice things from footwear to headgear, but he is still Indian by heart (*fir bhi dil hai Hindustani*).

Instantly I concluded that Japanese shoe might be the best. Still I don't know whether I was right or wrong. But that was the first time I heard about something of Japan, and maybe about Japan.

In the school we were taught geography. We were introduced to many countries, cities, oceans, mountains, volcanoes and rivers. I knew that Amazon is a big river, Pacific is the largest of the oceans, Mount Everest is the highest peak in the Himalayas, Sahara is the largest desert, and so on.

I also learned some stories about Japan. It is called the land of first sunrise. It has many volcanoes. Fujiama or Mount Fuji is a big volcano, though it is dead. Because of frequent volcanic eruptions and consequent earthquakes, people live in cottages made of paper, and so forth.

In the school, when I started using fountain pens, I was not happy with any of those. They were very rough, not so colorful and ink used to leak and spread over my palm and often spoiled my shirt. Then came the Japanese 'Pilot' pen in the market with a golden cap. I bought one with nine *taka* (slightly over two dollars), spending almost two months' scholarship money. My status got elevated. Soon a couple of Chinese brands swept the market with similar quality but much cheaper, each pen selling at six *taka*.

In our school, we had anniversary celebration each year on third September. We used to commemorate the day with a cultural evening. The program started with prize giving for best academic performance. In each grade, the school authority used to reward the three highest scoring students with books as prize. When I was promoted from grade five to grade six, I stood second. In the following anniversary occasion, I was rewarded with three books. One of these was titled *Japan ghurey elam* (I traveled to Japan). The author was Mohammad Modabber. He was the chief of a juvenile organization called *Mukuler Mahfil* (assembly of the buds). *Bagban* was his pen name. It means ‘gardener’. He visited Japan for some months under a fellowship program and this was his travelogue.

At this time, I was fond of some writers, but not this gentleman. Even I had never heard of him before. I was a member of another juvenile organization, named *Kochi Kanchar Ashor*, bearing the same meaning as that of the other one. Some newspaper houses patronized these organizations. For example, *Mukuler Mahfil* belonged to a vernacular daily *Azad*, while *Kochi Kanchar Ashor* was with another daily *Ittefaq*.

As I started reading the book *Japan ghurey elam*, it fascinated me. It gradually unfolded to me a totally different world. *Bagban* had collected all the flora for me from the garden of Japan. I became familiar to a bit of the Japanese society, people, culture, family life, children, food, dress, rituals and so on. I also picked up few words that enriched my vocabulary, such as *sayonara* and *mushi mushi*. I learned about the traditional dress *kimono*. Since then, I had been traveling to Japan in my dream. The dream came true after more than four decades. I arrived Tokyo on 14 September 2006 to take part in the Asia Leadership Fellow Program (ALFP).

### **The early birds**

I met few Japanese before coming to Japan. The first one whom I met in 1969 was my Judoka instructor at the Japanese Consulate in Dhaka. I forgot his name. But I still remember his strong and stout physical outlook. We, a batch of about 20, used to visit the Consulate on Saturdays and Sundays in the afternoon for about a couple of hours to take Judo lessons. This continued for about six months. These lessons helped me later to some extent during our war of liberation in 1971.

The second Japanese I came to know was Prof. Nakamura Hisashi. In August 1983, I got a letter of invitation from Lawrence Surendra, the

coordinator of ARENA. It took more than a month to set my trip in motion, as we had to depend on postal mails and telex messages for correspondence. It was my first trip outside the country except for 15 weeks in 1971 when I was in India, first as a refugee and then as a cadet in a military training camp in Assam. (Though I was a freedom fighter, we were termed as separatists and insurgents by the enemy.)

The flight from Dhaka to Bangkok was delayed by six hours and when I reached WMCA Bangkok at around seven in the evening, I was totally exhausted. Next morning we took a bus and finally reached Hua Hin, checked in the Railway Hotel right on the beach and soon started our business.

Among the participants, perhaps I was the youngest and Prof. Nakamura from Japan was the senior most. Incidentally or accidentally we were put in the same room at the hotel. In the evening he told me in his usual gentle and soft voice, "Look, I go to bed early and I am an early riser too." I said, "No problem." Later I found a new meaning to his "early". He used to go to the bed at around eight in the evening and get up at two o' clock midnight. What did he do at that point in time when the whole world was asleep? He switched on his bedside lamp and started writing. He was very careful, so that the light won't disturb me. He continued this routine for the whole week and I never felt disturbed.

One day, the council meeting was over. But my relationship with Nakamura-san continued. We met several times after that. He lost his voice because of throat cancer. But still he is active, energetic and vibrant.

The third Japanese I could socialize with was Masaaki Ohashi. He is almost of my age. I don't remember when we met first, probably at the Bangkok house of Sabur, Coordinator of ACFOD, at sometime in 1991. Before that we knew each other by name but never had a chance to meet. Ohashi was in Dhaka with *Shapla Neer* (citizen's committee in Japan for overseas support), the lone Japanese NGO with activities in Bangladesh since the early seventies. Ohashi worked as its CEO for two years. He speaks good Bangla. First I used to speak English with him and he always responded in Bangla. I understood his Logic. English is none of our language. Either we should use Bangla or Japanese for communication.

Ohashi visits Bangladesh twice or thrice a year. Each time he informs me about his schedule. Sometimes we manage to meet, sometimes not.

On most occasions, he brings something for me, some traditional dry food, a small souvenir, a packet of rice wine or a bottle of whisky. He is one of the very few Japanese who has a world outlook and genuine love for the common rural people of Bangladesh. He often complains about the attitude of the Japanese government that gives an impression of a ‘donor’ and not a ‘friend’.

Some years back Ohashi told me that a Japanese publisher would bring out an anthology on Bangladesh. It would be a book on Bangladesh in sixty chapters, each chapter centering round an issue or a field. Different Japanese authors would be writing different chapters. He requested me whether I would contribute a chapter on ‘environment’. I agreed and delivered. Ohashi got it translated in Japanese. After few months, the book was published. During the next visit, Ohashi brought a copy of the book and also some royalty, fifty US dollar. I found that I was one of the two non-Japanese writers, the other being rather a half-Japanese living happily in Tokyo for twelve years with a Japanese wife. Within a year, he brought a copy of its second edition and some royalty. I told him to keep the money for *Shapla Neer*; that would be my humble contribution to their philanthropic work. Later a third edition was also published.

### **The Ainu**

Only after arriving Japan and spending few days in Tokyo, I realized that Hokkaido was Japanized several centuries ago and there lived an ethnic community named Ainu. Now there are not many Ainu people in Hokkaido and many of them are living in Tokyo.

From the very beginning I was keen to visit Hokkaido to meet and talk to Ainu people. In Bangladesh, we have over thirty minority ethnic communities about whom not many people of the ‘mainstream’ Bangalees know. Travel to Hokkaido is not easy. It’s far away and one needs to be there for at least one week to understand little bit of the people and the area. We had two weeks recess to prepare our paper and I didn’t find anyone so serious to join me. Traveling alone would be very boring. I didn’t know that our Korean Fellow Lee Seejae already made a plan to visit Hokkaido and my son also prepared a travel plan to visit Tokyo for about ten days during that recess period. So I had to forgo the plan of my Hokkaido trip. Our Japanese Fellow, Yoji, was kind enough to take some of us to visit the Ainu Cultural Center in Tokyo where we could talk to two Ainu girls, see some of their craft products and watch a video on Ainu culture and people.

While reading some booklets published by the center, I came to know that Ainu is a precious word that means ‘human’ in Ainu language. It is also the name of their ethnic group, and an honorific title for Ainu men meaning a ‘manly man’ or a ‘husband’. As this term was sometimes used to insult them, the Ainu began to use the word *utari*, which means ‘compatriot in their language. According to some reference, they lived in Hokkaido Island for about ten thousand years while some claim that it could be five thousand or maybe only seven hundred years. At present, their number in Hokkaido is about twenty-four thousands.

The Ainu people had their own language. But many of them are forgetting it because of lack of use. While talking to the two girls at the Center, we were curiously asking them some common words in Ainu. We found that one of them is still comfortable with the language and the other has virtually no knowledge of it. I learned some Ainu words from them, like *kani anakne aynu ku ne* (I am an Ainu), *e iwanke ya* (how are you), *ku iwanke wa* (I am fine), *yayraykere* (thank you), etc. While answering a question, they mentioned that though Ainu people feel discriminated in Hokkaido, they don’t feel like that in Tokyo. The Government of Japan enacted a new law in May 1997 that came into force in July in the same year, which acknowledged the Ainu as an ethnic group.

### **The third world**

On 24 September 2006, the Japan Times published a review (by David Cozy) of Yoshihori Tatsumi’s book *Abandon the Old in Tokyo* that gave a vivid description of the plight of the Japanese ageing generation. It says that an old man is reduced by the debt that has ruined him to performing like a dog (“Why don’t you spin around three times and bark?”). He later finds relief performing with a dog. A younger man consumes an eel that, until captured, had swum free in the city’s sewers. A woman, face and breasts destroyed by botched cosmetic surgery, gets revenge on the men she had hoped to please with her altered features. A man who works among the consumer goods that urban Japanese have discarded hears a co-worker say, “People get rid of anything old,” before going home to his aged and incontinent mother. A pet monkey is murdered when thrown together with his fellow primates at the zoo.

“Economic development was considered more important than the way people actually lived their lives,” Tatsumi remembers of that time, and this goes a long way toward explaining his view of the world.

According to a data of 2005, 21 percent of the Japanese population is 65 years and above. There are 4.49 million households with ageing population and 3.86 million of them live alone. On the other hand, population is falling. In Japan, population below 15 years is less than 14 percent, while this proportion is as high as 39 percent in Bangladesh.

One afternoon, some of us made a trip together to the Meiji Shrine. After that everybody left except Yoji, Janet and I. We wanted to visit some homeless people. So we went to the adjoining Yoyogi Park. We saw some makeshift tents made of polythene sheets occupied by the homeless. They are old people. Each of them has their own 'household demarcation' with a rope around the tent. They use the nearby public toilet. They are called the 'homeless'. Yoji told that there were many more in some other parts of Tokyo including Shinjuku.

Then Yoji guided us to a special tent where we met a young couple. They were in their thirties, very handsome and lively. They quickly fixed a table; some chairs and we started our conversation.

The man is Tetsuo Ogawa, a painter. The woman's name is Misako Ichimura. She is a poet. While we were talking, Tetsuo was making a sketch of us swiftly with a pencil. Misako prepared fruit-flavored tea. The conversation went on.

There are quite many homeless in Japan. Most of them are old people, who do not have a fixed address and are not entitled to government benefits. Their children whom they raised with their blood and sweat have abandoned them. There is a mystic poem in Bangla that says:

*Dara putro poribar  
Tumi kar ke tomar*

(Spouse, son and the family  
Whom do you belong and who belongs to you?)

But what does this young couple do here? The man is living there for last three years. She joined him after six months. They run a cafe for the homeless. The couple is homeless by choice. They are from Japanese middleclass background but want desperately to taste a different life, far away from that of a careerist. They also practice a very innovative mode of exchange. They don't take any currency for the goods they sell. But they accept anything else, a toy or some snacks or a painting or a book and so forth. They mentioned that it's their protest against consumerism.

Misako told us that her first book of poem would be published in the following week. There would be a launching ceremony and the media would cover it. She was worried whether her mother would locate her and would drag her back home.

Yoyogi Park reminds me of the fact that there is a first world in the third world and there is indeed a third world in the first world. A country is not rich or poor. There are rich people everywhere, so also there are poor people.

While returning back we heard a familiar sound of music and found a young Japanese with Bangalee outfit playing *sitar*. He was alone. We sat in front of him without making any noise. He played *sitar* for another half an hour. Then we started conversation. The man stayed in India for six years to learn *sitar*. Each year he visits India and stays there for several months. He would be going to Kolkata again on the following week.

### **Chandra Bose**

When I was a student, I read a book on Subhas Chandra Bose, the great Indian Nationalist leader from Bengal. The title of the book was *In Search of the Mystery of Netaji*. (Chandra Bose was popularly called *Netaji*, meaning the honorable leader). There I read that he died in a plane crash in Taiwan and ashes of his body had been kept in a casket at the Renkoji Temple in Tokyo. While staying at the I-House, once I informed Yoji of my intention to visit the temple and he agreed to guide me there.

By the time we reached the temple at around seven in the evening, it was closed. We almost decided to return. Suddenly an Indian Embassy car arrived and two gentlemen got down. A monk of the temple received them. We realized that they were members of Indian Parliament and they had a prior appointment to visit the temple. One of them was a Bangalee representing a constituency of the Island of Andaman. Andaman was infamous for deportation of political prisoners by the British colonial government. Most of the prisoners were Bangalees. Later, many of them married natives and settled there. As the MPs entered the temple, we followed them.

Whenever Indian VVIPs visit Tokyo, usually they pay a visit to this temple to pay respect to Chandra Bose. I saw photographs of some former heads of the state and the government of India along with their messages kept on a cupboard. They include President Rajendraprasad

and Prime Ministers Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Vajpayee. Incidentally all except Nehru mentioned about Chandra Bose with much respect. In the message of Nehru, there was no mention of Chandra Bose. On 15 October 1957, he wrote, “May the Buddha’s message bring peace to mankind.” Nehru and Chandra Bose were political rivals and Nehru was highly patronized by Gandhi, the father figure in the Indian National Congress, while Chandra Bose was a rebel and defied Gandhi on various occasions. He wanted to free India through armed resistance movement, while Gandhi was preaching non-violence. In the council meeting of the Congress in 1929, Chandra Bose defeated the candidate nominated by Gandhi to become the President of the Congress for a consecutive second term. This outraged Gandhi and he went to self-exile in his village home. Frustrated by the role of the ‘big brothers’ of Congress led by Gandhi, in one fine morning Chandra Bose disappeared from his house in Kolkata and ultimately arrived Tokyo.

Ras Bihari Bose, another senior leader of Congress who was in exile in Tokyo for some years, introduced him to the Japanese imperial government. Chandra Bose negotiated with the Japanese government, freed all Indian prisoners of war fighting for the British army and with them raised his famous Indian National Army (INA). A section of the Congress leadership and the Communist Party of India termed Chandra Bose a traitor and an agent of the fascists, while; many Indians and the majority in Bengal admire him as a hero till today. Recently, the ‘Marxist’ government of West Bengal changed their position on Chandra Bose and renamed Kolkata Airport as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport.

Chandra Bose is one of the enduring mysteries of India’s freedom struggle, but a long awaited report on the fate of this charismatic leader has failed to solve the riddle of his disappearance more than 60 years ago. After a six-year investigation, a report published last year said Bose was dead but was not killed in a plane crash as widely believed. But the report said it could not say how he died, and the government, which backed the plane crash theory, contradicted its conclusions. The investigation also said that the ashes in a temple in Japan were not that of Bose — again rejected by the government.

Earlier, official reports said Bose died in a Japanese air crash in Taiwan in August 1945 at the age of 48 and his cremated remains were sent to Japan. But Taiwanese authorities denied this, saying there was no record of an air crash at the time, boosting the claim of those who believe Bose faked the crash to escape secretly to the former Soviet Union.

The debate raged for decades until New Delhi set up a panel headed by former Supreme Court judge M.K. Mukherjee in 1999 to investigate his mysterious disappearance and report his whereabouts if he was still alive. The panel submitted its report to the government in November 2006 and it was tabled in parliament along with the government's response.

Bose remains an iconic figure in the eastern state of West Bengal, his home state, and his role in India's freedom movement is taught in schools across the country where his statues have been erected.

Those who believe Bose was not killed in the air crash say he returned to India from the Soviet Union after World War Two and lived in his homeland in the guise of a Hindu monk and died eventually in 1985. But no one has been able to explain why he kept his identity a secret if he did return to India. According to another 'report', Stalin sent him to a concentration camp in Siberia and later he died there.

According to one source, when the Japanese authorities made a general request to all to asking someone to volunteer to keep his ashes, all refused except the authority of the Renkoji Temple.

Before leaving the temple, I wrote a few words on a visitors' book. I wrote, "I pay homage to this great nationalist leader who inspired me to fight against the Pakistani occupation army in 1971 for the liberation of Bangladesh." I wrote the message both in Bangla and English. However, after visiting some war museums in Okinawa, Nagasaki and Tokyo, I started rethinking about Chandra Bose. I have been wondering whether his famous theory "enemy's enemy is friend" is at all palatable.

### **Tokyo Shure**

As we started knowing Japan, we have been informed that Japanese education system is of high quality, as well as coercive. Many students cannot really cope with this. It's too hard, too professional and too competitive. There are dropouts and even cases of suicide. One major reason behind suicide is unbearable bullying. I saw one report in the Japan Times that five kids wrote letters to the Minister of Education threatening to commit suicide. One letter was postmarked Machida and another Seijo, both in Tokyo, and a third was mailed from Amagasaki-Kita in Hyogo Prefecture. The ministry officials mentioned the young people said such things as "I've been bullied" and "I'm going to kill myself." So there emerged a need for alternative schools to look after those 'school refusals'.

The term ‘alternative’ often becomes a buzzword for many of us. Some of us wanted to visit one such ‘alternative’ institution. We asked Yoji to arrange it and he happily did it. So we visited Shure University one day, talked to one teacher, Mr. Kageki Asakura, also talked to one student named Takeshi Nagai, and then left.

Shure University of Tokyo is one such institution that was founded in April 1999 to address the educational need of those special students who have talents but are misfit under conventional systems. It has presently forty students from Tokyo, Hokkaido and Kyushu area, ages ranging from 18 to 20s. The institution is financed from tuition fees of the students. It cannot afford many teachers. It has six fulltime teachers and it also pulls many volunteer teachers.

Students, in consultation with their teachers, choose their own subject of study, class timing, vacation, and so forth. They say,

*We all have something we want to do or something we want to know about. On the other hand, we sometimes find it difficult to keep having our interests and wills. Now and then, we have to repress our feelings or deny our possibilities for some reason. And it is not a very good thing to lose those feelings or interests. We think we want to pursue something that interests us or something we want to know more about in a way that fits us. We want to make a study place by ourselves. This is why we founded Shure University. We learned the principle of this university through interactions with children and young adults who don't go to conventional schools. We have learned the joy of creating something on our own and the importance of doing it in our own way.*

I was not so happy with this short visit, as I wanted to interact with the students spending more time with them. So I requested Yoji to inform them that I would volunteer to take one class. If they agree, then I would feel obliged and happy. After few days Yoji informed me that the Shure University happily accepted my offer and they would like me to give a talk on ‘Poetry’. In one afternoon, I, together with Maria, went to the University. Maria had a similar feeling like me and when I informed her of my wish, she happily joined me. She remembered the location and with her help we found the place.

Mr. Asakura and about ten students were waiting for us. The stage was set ready for the talk on poetry. And I started unfolding myself. But it was just not a lecture. I didn't prepare anything. It was purely an

extempore talk. Mr. Asakura and other students participated in the discussion. Maria also participated, but she was also taking photographs. Takeshi recited the following poem titled *The Night*, which he composed. Shure teacher Mr. Asakura translated it. He literally enthralled us.

*How can I deal with this night?  
 At the frozen night.  
 I feel no one can reach me tonight.  
 How can I deal with this night?  
 I can't help loving people.  
 I look for smiles in people and myself,  
 Even though I hardly find it.  
 I have frozen something in myself.  
 I want to meet that,  
 Then I pour alcohol into my throat  
 And call someone again*

*I stare at my hands.  
 These are tiny.  
 My eyes can see various things.  
 I put too many things on my hands.  
 If that heaviness smashes my hand and bone,  
 Can I be myself?  
 The poison and my blood flow out  
 From my smashed hands.  
 How can I deal with this night?  
 How can I deal with this night?  
 Before this pain kills me.  
 Before I kill myself.*

*These hands are not myself.  
 These eyes are not myself.  
 Even though I have to cut or smash these,  
 I am eager to be myself.  
 I am gazing at the flame of the candle.  
 The flame blinks.  
 My heart shakes.  
 My brain is being soaked in the alcohol.  
 Soon, I fall asleep.  
 I probably forget this pain next morning  
 Again, I'll kill myself.  
 I'll kill someone.*

*Now, I want to tell you.  
I want to tell myself*

(Translated by Kageki Asakura)

After that, I also recited part of my poem *From Jamuna to Nile*. Mr. Asakura translated it for the students. Then I left one copy of the book for their library.

We found that the students are not only unique in terms of temperament, they have talent and interest in creative art and literature. Three of them write poem, two are painters, one loves to write play and so forth. One girl, who was a painter, was so naive in describing her experience and lessons learnt, suddenly her eyes became full with tears. Her name was Nanako Sakamoto. She was crying without making any sound. She was perhaps expressing her suppressed deep emotion and anger, as well as joy, finding a favorable environment.

### **Social distance**

Lee Seejae was our Fellow from Korea. He was also our ‘official’ interpreter for his knowledge of Japan and Japanese language. He was also our ‘official’ photographer, as he had two good cameras and loved to take photographs that could make stories of their own. He made almost all of us his ‘model’. One of his famous photographs was that of Maria and I taken from behind while we were walking. Seejae smelled a sense of intimacy between us while maintaining some distance of about half a meter while walking and talking. He captioned the photo as ‘social distance’.

Seejae had been too helpful to all of us. Once he suggested *tol sop bibim pap* (a Korean rice and vegetable dish served in a stone pot) for me and I enjoyed it very much. I promised him that if I ever write a biography, I would write at least one paragraph about him. On another occasion, I pledged to him, “I owe you a poem.” So I thought that I should write a poem and dedicate it to him.

In May 2006, I was in Kampala to attend a civil society meeting of the LDCs. Suddenly a theme erupted in my mind and I decided to write something in the form of some questions. While returning to the Entebbe Airport from the city, I was trying to play with some words that ultimately boiled down to a poem. But it was incomplete. It holds only man’s view and might be perceived biased against women. I wanted to make it fairer. Then I put my pen, hand and heart together in Room 326

of I-House where I was staying and captured a different version. On the following day, I circulated the poem to all and mentioned that it had been dedicated to Seejae. It was the only poem I could write in my two-months stay in the I-House. Its title was *Gender Analysis*. After returning to Bangladesh, I composed the third and final part.

### ***Man's view***

*Like Moses in Mount Sinai  
I shall climb the peak to find  
The God who dwells on the top  
I have three questions in mind  
As you have created men  
Why didn't you stop there  
Why did you crafted women  
And made the world unfair  
Even though you created them  
Why they're made so cute  
Although they are beautiful  
Why did you make them rude  
I have been roving all the years  
I haven't rested for a while  
To seek out answer to all these  
I will go up thousands mile*

### ***God's view***

*Man, you don't know  
Nobody knows what I know  
Have those who disbelieved  
That the heavens and the earth were joined indeed  
And I separated them for living  
And made from water every living thing  
Don't you know what have you seen  
All that is beautiful is feminine  
All beautiful rivers have feminine name  
Ganga and Kaveri or Rhine and Hamme  
And all the flowers are feminine too  
I bestowed them with seed  
While men hunt for greed  
The world without women  
Is like the body without vein*

*Like the cloud without rain  
 And there grows no grain  
 I created women to give birth  
 Through children they sustain the earth  
 And those rude women  
 They're more masculine than men  
 Do not follow me but the Pope  
 They live in despair than hope  
 When women become men in fact  
 I'll perform the penultimate act  
 I'll bring doomsday if there is no eve  
 Men you can defer it if you believe  
 Our planet will remain alive  
 On condition that women survive*

***Woman's view***

*I want love  
 I want to love  
 Nowhere there is love*

**Unforgettable Yayori**

When I met her first? Sometimes memory fails. I am not very organized. I never keep diary. I have a lovely daughter who keeps family photographs in her safe custody. While digging her treasure, I found two photographs that reminded me of the past.

In one photo, I was sitting beside Yayori. It was October 1986. We were attending a conference on “Forestry resources crisis in the third world” in Penang organized by Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM), a sister organization of the Consumer Association of Penang (CAP). The annual assembly of the Friends of the Earth International followed the conference. It was my first ever exposure to a gathering dominated by ‘environmentalists’. Vandana Shiba was one of the participants. I heard from her about the *Chipko* movement of India and about Sundarlal Bahuguna who masterminded the movement through a Long March from Kashmir to Mizoram.

The second photograph reminds me of another occasion. We were having a “river cruise”. With an invitation from SKEPHI and WALHI (Indonesia), we assembled at Banjarmasin in South Kalimantan in December 1986. Yayori was also there. We traveled together, crossed

several hills and rivers on foot to visit a “Manglikin” village, a habitat of an indigenous community. There we met Sundarlal Bahuguna. We had a long conversation with him and Yayori was taking notes. Later she told me that she was not “impressed” by Sundarlal.

On way back to Jakarta, we stayed at Banjarmasin for a couple of days. In an informal session, Yayori was discussing environmental issues with some Indonesian participants. I joined the discussion and soon found myself in a hot debate with her. Yayori was emphasizing that the indigenous people should be left alone to decide their affairs and nothing should be imposed on them from outside in the name of development. My contention was simple. The indigenous people should be given options. And if they are aware of options, they may change their attitude and lifestyles, as we did. The conversation ended there and we agreed to disagree.

Probably Yayori was right. Probably not. We are caught in the illusion of “development”. Are we happy? Are we progressing? Or what is progress? We may not have an answer in our lifetime.

Since then we met on few more occasions. But I still remember her dissenting me, “Mohiuddin, you are wrong. Don’t impose your ideas. Let them live their life.”

Yayori died in 2002. She won’t be debating any more. She lived in accordance with her conviction. She was a “friend of the earth.”

On 8 October 2006, I visited WAM (Women’s Active Museum on War and Peace) in Tokyo founded by Yayori. I saw her empty chair. There was a framed portrait of Yayori on her desk. I saw a brochure that contained a statement of Yayori:

Here we will take action for the future, through the global solidarity of people and not of states, with women playing a central role alongside men.

I do not want to mourn for her. She is not around. But I hear her voice. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore, she still whispers to me:

*I have got my leave.  
Bid me farewell, my brothers!  
I bow to you all and take my departure.  
Here I give back the keys of my door  
And I give up all claims to my house.*

*I only ask for last kind words from you.  
 We were neighbors for long,  
 But I received more than I could give.  
 Now the day has dawned  
 And the lamp that lit my dark corner is out.  
 A summons has come  
 And I am ready for my journey.*

### **Paradise on earth**

We had a week out during our stay for ALFP and the Secretariat organized a five-day trip for us to Okinawa. As the trip would end with two-days weekend, almost all of us decided to stay back and spend those two days on our own. So hectic alignment and realignment among us went on, how to spend those days, where to go, whom to group with, etc. I had been chasing Yoji to make a special program, something that would be remembered for a long time. I wanted to spend the time in a quite place outside the mundane world. Yoji then contacted his friends and prepared a program for two of us. Accordingly we started implementing our plan.

In the first morning, we took a bus and at around noon joined an anti-US base group in the middle of Okinawa Island. In front of the barbed wire of the Futema Base, I met Ayumi, an under-graduate student of Sophia University. She briefed me about the whole program. Incidentally I came to know that she was a student of Prof. Murai, a friend of mine and an ARENA Fellow. We met another group of thirty activists from Europe, North America and Australia who came all the way from Hokkaido riding bicycle. It took three months for them. Then we took part in an 'earth run'. We were six persons in two cars and each of us ran or walked for two to three kilometers one by one. It was arranged in a nice way. We were dropped at certain points and almost simultaneously we covered about 20 kilometers or more. We spent the night together in the house of Mika, one of the organizers of the earth run, at Chatan.

In the following afternoon we took a ferry from the port. It took about thirty minutes to reach Kudaka Island. As we were getting down to the jetty, the sun was leaning closer to the blue water of the Pacific. Over the horizon, the Mountain of Okinawa Island was clearly visible.

We walked toward the hotel, a Japanese-style two-storied building having guest rooms with *tatami* bed. Still some daylight was left and we went out to walk around. The day slowly passed into the dark of the

night and we lost our way to the hotel. However, we found it at last. Then we got out again to find some food. We went to a restaurant. Yoji ordered soup with sea snake and I asked for fish soup. We talked to some people there and learned about the island.

Kudaka is a sacred island, an island of God, where all women are God's envoys and men are people of the sea. The island is very small with an area of 3km by 7km. Men go to far away places in the ocean to catch fish and women take care of the land and the children. They have their own religion, own rituals and own community life. All lands belong to the community where farmers are allocated land to farm. There are two restaurants, three hotels and one utility store, all owned by the community. There are only 400 people living in the island, mostly old and children. Young people work outside. There is one high school with residential facilities where many 'school refusals' from Okinawa and even from Tokyo have been enrolled. The community elects one woman, called *Noro*, once in every twelve years on a full moon day of November to lead the island in all its social and religious aspects. However, there has not been any election since 1978, as none was found 'suitable'.

While we were sitting beside a table and drinking beer, suddenly a man in his mid-seventies came to me and started shaking my hand, then my whole body and embraced me with all his physical might and enthusiasm. He was speaking Japanese and I could not understand a single word. Then Yoji had to intervene and I was rescued. The story goes like this. While fishing in the ocean in the past he had friendship with one Indonesian fisherman. Incidentally I looked like him. He thought as if he met his old friend after many years. When he understood his mistake, he didn't cool down. He forced us to drink one more bottle of beer, which he paid. He also wanted to pay for our dinner, which we politely refused. I was really moved by the friendship the man still cherishes in his memory for his Indonesian friend.

His name is Sotoma Aeiko, a native of Kudaka. He visited Indonesia twelve years ago and stayed there for two months. Now he has given up fishing. He now works as an 'architect', counseling people to build houses. While talking to him, I understood that he was a very lonely man. His children left him. His wife also deserted him. He spends the evenings drinking and looking for people to talk to.

*I was wondering, how millions of people in Japan get the inspiration to collect contributions through this innovative “donate one meal” campaign and spend it for poor people in remote villages of South Asia. It’s a paradox that Buddha was born in South Asia to preach the message of non-violence, while South Asian governments spend billions of dollars in militarization and nuclearization to kill their own people.*

The man, who used to cruise from the coast of Australia to Cape town and pulled with ease tuna from the net weighing 50-60 kg or more with bare hands, is now completely fallen, abandoned and retched. Is it the destiny he deserved?

While returning to the hotel after dinner, we were passing through a lonely road. On the top was a dark canopy with twinkling stars. On both sides was dense shrubbery with million insects making noise. I could never imagine that darkness could be so deep, so divine and so beautiful. I was walking and thinking.

*You always long for the light  
I care no more than shadow  
Under the sky in a cool winter  
I look for a deep sacred night.  
You want to win all the fight  
There is no harm if I lose  
Through the fog to the end  
Yet I like to walk upright.*

We left the island on the following day. One night's stay was not enough. But it is better to live with unmet happiness. While cruising through the Pacific once again I was trying to recollect the verse of a Persian poet of the Middle Ages, who, after visiting the *Mughal* palace at Fatehpur Sikri (India), commented:

*Agar ferdous bar rui jaminast  
O haminast o haminast o haminast*

(If there is any paradise on earth  
It's here, it's here, and it's here.)

## **Hibakusha**

Through the courtesy of Albert Alejo, I could make a trip to Kyushu. One day Albert told me that he had been invited to give a talk at the Kyushu University in Fukuoka. He told me that there was one more slot and, if I wish, I could join him. I accepted the offer happily. Then started a series of correspondence with Reiko Ogawa, who teaches at the Kyushu University Asia Center and was known to Albert for some years. Our task is very simple. We shall make separate presentations in the university. Then we shall make a tour to Nagasaki and stay there for one night. Reiko arranged everything as we requested for.

When we arrived Fukuoka Airport, Reiko was waiting to receive us. When we visited the campus, we saw all the walls were full with posters that included not only the notice of our seminar, but also our photographs. The audience in the afternoon was reasonably big and the seminar it was more than satisfactory.

Next morning we took a bus to Nagasaki. We visited one NGO center that had been running educational program for children in the field of creative art. They have several publications. Michiko Fukuda, an executive of the center, gave me a book with a note: *Welcome to Nagasaki*. The book is in Japanese but contains many photographs and paintings drawn by children. She was with us all the time during our tour of Nagasaki.

Later we visited Nagasaki peace memorial park and some other places. In the evening we had a session with a group known as *Hibakusha*. They are the radiation victim survivors of 1945. They were all in their seventies. They have formed an “Organizing Committee of Nagasaki Global Citizens’ Assembly for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons”. Mr. Masahito Hirose, who was 15 years old at that time, is its Secretary General. He welcomed us. One after another, they were telling their tales. Perhaps they had already narrated it several hundred times to thousands of people. But when I was listening to them, I thought, as if I am the first person hearing their ballad of the fateful August 9. I was wondering, how much patience, courage, and love for life one needs to survive after such an ordeal. One of them was Mr. Fukhura, aged twelve years at that time. He narrated his story how he lost his elder brother, younger brother, younger sister, mother, aunt and uncle, one after another, in a span of only one week or two.

Mr. Hirose gave me copy of a booklet titled *A Journey to Nagasaki* published by their society. While reading it, I was moved by the poems of the Nagasaki bombing by Matsuo Atsuyuki written in the form of a diary.

August 10: I find my wounded wife at the roadside with the bodies of two of our children. She tells me how they died (one was 4 years old and the other 1).

*In his mother's arms he smiles one last time  
The smile he had only just learned  
Left alone on the barren ground  
Flies swarm around the child*

*In his final moments he chews a branch saying,  
"This is good. It's a sugarcane."*

My oldest son (1st year Junior High School) dies in the bomb shelter.

*Under the blazing sun I search for water  
For my son's last drink  
Crawling over to his mother, he smiles  
And draws a final breathe  
At his mother's side he passes from this world  
The moonlight touches his face  
The moon draws over all three of them,  
One in the shelter and two outside*

August 11: Alone I gather wood for the cremating of my children.

*A dragonfly lands  
On three small bodies from one family  
Flames reach two bodies  
Pressed up against the other brother*  
August 12: As day breaks, I collect the bones.  
*In the early morning mist  
The bones take on the forms of my children  
Bones like flower petals  
A life of seven months.*

August 13: My wife dies (she was 36).

*"There is a tomato for Hiro-chan in my sleeve"  
My wife's last words*

August 15: I cremated my wife. The surrender is announced.  
*These hands that have lost everything  
Now hold four atomic bomb death certificates  
Rising from the summer grass I stoke the fire  
Cremating my wife  
As the imperial order for surrender is issued  
The flames of my wife rage*

(From *Genbaku Kushu*)

Mr. Hirose informed us that the Americans have been collecting samples of blood and photo from the survivors from September 1945, but never cared for their treatment. He had a son. An American doctor used to come to collect blood sample from him. Probably they use the radiation

victims as raw materials for research. This was very painful for him and his wife. “We were very much shocked by their attitude and behavior,” Mr. Hirose lamented.

Reiko was with us all the way and ultimately bid farewell to us at the Fukuoka Airport. She was so nice, so friendly, and so passionate that made me very difficult to forget her. I requested her to contribute an article for our next publication on “women’s life stories” to be published by my organization, CDL (Bangladesh). She agreed and also promised to collect few more essays for the book. (She kept her promise and the book was published in February 2007).

As we passed through security check at the airport, Reiko was waving her hands and so also I. She told me that she had a feeling as if we knew each other for many years. I also had a similar feeling.

### **Rissho Kosei-kai**

I met Shogo Nakano, a staff of Niwano Peace Foundation (NPF), in Dhaka. One day he came to I-house to take me to his office located in Suginami-ku. Shogo had been my guide in Tokyo on some occasions and had been very helpful.

We first went to visit the sacred hall of *Rissho Kosei-kai*, a socially oriented Japanese Buddhist movement. A statue of Buddha has been enshrined there. Unlike in most Buddhist temples, this is a standing Buddha, 3.2 meters tall. The height from the pedestal to the highest point of the nimbus surrounding the statue is seven meters.

There are more than 240 *Rissho Kosei-kai* establishments across Japan and overseas preaching a mission of creating a peaceful and happy world. Its peace activities are based on the teachings in its basic scripture, the *Lotus Sutra*:

*Truth is universal and all religions are manifestations of it. All life springs from the same source, and thus all people are related and belong to one family.*

One of its activities is the *Donate a Meal* campaign. Members forgo one meal a day on particular days each month and contribute the money saved to the *Rissho Kosei-kai* Peace Fund through their local units. Donations are pooled to fund various aid and peace projects and serve as a driving force for its other peace activities. A chunk of the fund is provided to NPF, which spends the money for its South Asia Program

for poverty eradication. This year they have selected two partner NGOs in Bangladesh and would spend the money for capacity development of the indigenous people through these two partners. They have also programs in India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Afghanistan.

At the fag end of my stay in Japan, I was invited by NPF to give a presentation on social movements and NGOs in South Asia together with an Indian Gandhian Mr. Manabendra Mandal. I know him quite well and we met few times before. On the day of presentation, I was introduced to Rev Nichiko Niwano, President of *Rissho Kosei-kai* and NPF. He is the son of the founder of *Rissho Kosei-kai*, Rev Nikkyo Niwano.

In that afternoon, many people gathered and listened to our presentations. I was wondering, how millions of people in Japan get the inspiration to collect contributions through this innovative “donate one meal” campaign and spend it for poor people in remote villages of South Asia. It’s a paradox that Buddha was born in South Asia to preach the message of non-violence, while South Asian governments spend billions of dollars in militarization and nuclearization to kill their own people.

### **Integrity**

It was all over in I-House. I was ready to check out. I had to pay some telephone bill. I paid a thousand Yen note. I was waiting at the lobby of I-House. It was about seven o’clock in the morning. The restaurant was not yet open. The man at the front-desk told me that a taxi would come to drop me to a nearby ANA hotel from where I would get on a limousine bus bound for Narita Airport. Then the taxi arrived. A lady on duty at the front-desk handed over a packet to me and smiled, “Here is some pastry for your breakfast. Please take it”. They helped me to get on board with my luggage. I left the I-House with so many sweet memories where I spent almost two months. I arrived at the hotel and checked in my suitcase for the bus and then was waiting in the hotel lobby. Suddenly I found the front-desk man of the I-House. He looked very tired, as if he was running after my cab. Then he put his hand inside the pocket of his trousers and took out a coin of 500 Yen. “I am extremely sorry Sir. I beg your pardon. I forgot to give the change.” I was not only surprised, I was overwhelmed.

“Had you been running?”

“No Sir, I took a taxi.”

“How much have you paid?”

“One thousand Yen, Sir.”

“And you will pay another thousand Yen to go back”.

“That’s right, Sir. It was my fault. But I am happy that I could return you 500 Yen.”

I shook hand with the man and wished him Godspeed. As he left, I was wondering how I should characterize this incidence. I found only one word to explain it, ‘integrity’. I wrote down his name on a piece of paper. His name is Mihura. I remember him almost everyday and take inspiration from him to live a life with integrity.

### **Forget me not**

I-House has been lost from my daily routine. I don’t know whether anybody is using the breakfast table discovered by Janet at the corridor outside the restaurant. She also taught me at an Okinawa restaurant how to dance. Seejae who invented the theory of social distance had been my neighbour in the gym on a treadmill. I miss him. I miss Maria who used to call me Pak or Bapu and often happily mentioned how many grams of weight she had lost in the past twenty-four hours. I miss Kunda who introduced a new Nepal to me that I didn’t know. Yoji was my window through which I could see a glimpse of Japan. Albert was the first Fellow to greet me on the first morning inside the I-House restaurant after I arrived. He was the also last man to bid me farewell at the lobby of I-House, and still I see him waving his hands.

Naoko, Mayuko, Sonoda, Ono all now belong to a fairytale world, which I still yearn to locate. Still I yearn for someone to call me “Babu-chan”. I hear Prof. Lee Jong Won whispering to me, “Mohi-san, do you still feel like what you had been in the past, an angry young man?” I see Prof. Masaaki Ohashi driving me along the road through the Tokyo Bay, as if he is steering a mythological boat to the weird land. In response to my greetings to Oono, “*Hi Sarar bab*” (father of Sara), he says, “*Hi Kittyr bab* (father of Kitty)? I yearn for that green turf and the bonsai forest in the I-House compound, those silver ripples of the Pacific on the shoreline of Kudaka Island, those golden rice fields along the railway to Ogawamachi, those big trees in the Yoyogi Park that survived from generation to generation. Like Poet Jivanananda Das, I want to have a dip in the days of yore.

*I will come back again,  
To this Isikari riverside  
Maybe not as a man  
But as a blackbird or white chest kite;  
Or a dawn crow maybe,  
New-rice time, in misty flight  
To the jackfruit-tree-shade  
One autumn day will glide;  
Or a duck – a girl owns it on its red feet  
Small bells are tied in seaweed-smell  
Now the whole day floats by till night  
I will come back in a loving daylight.*

# Japan Diary

*Seejae Lee*

## Introduction

In autumn 2006, I stayed in Japan for more than two months as a participant of the Asian Leadership Fellow Program (ALFP). Although I stayed for seven years studying in the graduate school from 1974, I could not make trips that much during my student time. I enjoyed this occasion to find Japan again in my age of late 50s. As ALFP group, we visited Okinawa and also made a tour to an island, stayed idly in the beach, catching shells and sea cucumbers. I also traveled to Hokkaido, Northeast Japan and 'back-Japan' rural regions. I watched the disputed islands of Kunashiri and saw wild animals in the Shiretoko peninsula. I enjoyed staying at Uonomachi and Niigata, watching brilliant yellow and red leaves over the mountains, and eating wild mushrooms and fish. I was struck by Munagata Shiko's woodprint works in Aomori and movingly read Ishikawa Takuboku's poem at Hakodate Takuboku Memorial Center. After finishing ALFP, I traveled again to Kyoto and Shiga Prefecture to research on environmental movements there, changing waste vegetable oil into biodiesel, and visited several places of workers' collectives in Tokyo and its suburban areas.

Tokyo's autumn is culturally rich, and has a best weather. We visited my exhibitions and cultural fairs and attended good lectures. I think I may not have a better opportunity than I had in autumn 2006. I appreciate staff of International House of Japan, Japan Foundation, and our fellows from Asia for this memorable exposure to Japan. I like to share a bit of my experience in Japan.<sup>1</sup>

## Modern Prophets of Japan

Prophets of ancient Israel are not simple fortuneteller of the future, but critics of the socio-political problems of the time. They were entrusted

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<sup>1</sup> I originally wrote for my Chinese blog (<http://360.yahoo.com/seejaelee>).

with the voice of God that cares the destiny of the nations and community. Since they were entrusted with the wisdom of God that could foresee the crisis of the nations, they could not keep silent, but raised voice to criticize the secular and sacred power holders of the time. Therefore they dared to criticize kings and were even put to death. Our contemporary prophets, who have sensed the crisis of this civilization, have never raised noisy voices, but through their silent practice, give inspirations to ordinary people. They think that environmental degradation and depletion of resources on this earth will definitely bring forth the gravest crisis on humankind. Due to excessive consumption of energy sources and resources, the future generation will not enjoy economic development any more. Unless we change our mode of development, global crisis will in the near future come up. For this reason many conscious individuals, organizations, and states make efforts for environmental protection and resource conservation. ALFP prepared a program to visit environmental model town of Ogawa in Saitama Prefecture. I would like to introduce some Japanese cases for realization of '*junkan*' (recycling) society. They operate on a very small scale, but its implication is really far-reaching.

Mr. Kuwabara (born in 1958) finished his study at the graduate school of the University of Tokyo and worked as a specialist on water resource management and renewable energy for Japanese Government developmental aid activities. He promoted the use of livestock and human excrement to produce biogas in developing countries, such as Nepal and China. After returning to Japan, he settled down in Ogawa town. He cultivates two hectares for rice production and one hectare for other vegetables, and also produces fruits and honey. With his town people, he led a study group to address energy problems and developed local energy sources. In 1992, he himself organized an NPO called Ogawa Town Foodo Use Center (Foodo in short), and started natural energy production. Even though a small town with a population of 3700, he analyzed that it had a good condition for material circulation between farming and non-farming households.

Ogawa's food waste has until been incinerated, never been recycled. He proposed local government to transfer to Foodo the incineration costs; then he could use the money to transform the food waste into biogas and liquid fertilizer. Ogawa town government accepted his proposal. He had to persuade local farmers and non-farming citizens, because farmers should participate in the material circulation program, as local citizens should take over the responsibility to separate food

wastes and local farmers should understand the benefits of liquid fertilizer.

Local government pays annually 3000 yen per household to Foodo, which is almost equivalent to the incineration cost. NPO Foodo distributes this money in a form of 'local currency' to each household that participates in separating the household food waste. The biogas, thus produced, is provided to local residents for heating bath water or for heating the neighborhood center. Some residents use this biogas for cooking. On the other hand, liquid fertilizer, as a byproduct of this process, is distributed for free to local organic farm households. All local residents and farmers get benefit from this project and they are all happy with it. Local currency that the local residents received for separating food waste activities can be used to purchase vegetables and fruits from the organic farms, and the farmer can convert this local currency into Japanese Yen.

For a few years, 100 households participated in Kuwabara's NPO Foodo. As more households want to participate in the program, he is now constructing a new food waste processing plant that can process food wastes from 600 households. Farmers, local residents and local government authorities all are convinced of the possibility of '*Junkan*' society through using local natural energy sources.

We also visited Mr. Kaneko Mito's organic farm in Ogawa Town. He had a farm of three hectares including farmland and forests. This farm's energy supply is almost self-reliant. He pulls out underground water by using solar power, cooks food by using biogas that he produces and heats rooms by used wood blocks. His farming machines are all powered by 100% biodiesel. Mr. Kaneko mentioned that he suffered from farming chemicals 20 years ago, and changed his production system into an organic farming. He is almost completely self-reliant in terms of energy and food supply.

Ogawa's Foodo has a vision to regenerate local community as a whole. Foodo is a medium to organize local government, farmers and local residents to realize this vision. Between these four parties, local currency, labor, material and information, are interactively exchanged, and these interaction will finally be envisioned to form a *Junkan* system of material circulation. This community-level *Junkan* structure is no other than an epitome of a sustainable society. Sustainable society should be realized not only in local community, but also at the national level. Any efforts

for sustainable society on whatever level should be evaluated and promoted, because these small sustainable communities can be bases for global sustainability.

Globalization in economic terms has both good and bad sides. Globalization led by market has both good and bad aspects. However for agriculture, peasants and rural community, globalization brings destructive impacts such as decrease of rural population, destruction of agricultural economy, social disintegration, and collapse of cohesion and cooperation networks. By reviving the material circulation system on the local and regional levels, it is believed that we can revive agriculture, peasant and rural community as well.

Ogawa's small *junkan* system is not simply an isolated action. Linked to this junkan system is the Artist Power Bank that is led by the superstar musician Sakamoto Ryuichi. Sakamoto and his two fellows Kobayashi Takeshi and Sakurai Kazutoshi have capitalized from their own money and have been collecting fund through musical concerts and have set up the Artist Power Bank that selectively lends small credits to renewable energy projects, eco-friendly farming, and energy conservation projects. Mr. Sakamoto acted in the 'Last Emperor' and composed theme music for the movie, and won Academy Award for the music composition. He is also a social and environmental activist. In order to appeal for the cancellation of reprocessing of high-level nuclear wastes in Japan, he led a movement in May 2006 called 'Stop Rokkasho' (Rokkasho is a place in Aomori Prefecture where nuclear wastes are reprocessed).

Renewable energy sources such as solar power, wind power, biogas and biodiesel have not yet earned sufficient competitiveness in energy market, because they are still small in terms of market scale, and production costs for equipments are still high. However, it is also true that solar power is gradually getting cheaper and wind power equipments are getting cheaper as well. Therefore it is vitally important to support renewable energy projects in order to sustain and expand its use.

These three artists lend money to expand the renewable energy projects at the annual interest rate of 1%. NPO Foodo of Ogawa also borrowed 4 million yen (approximately 3.5million US dollar) to expand the biogas and liquid fertilizer production project.

These artists hold musical concerts at the small restaurants in Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto for fund raising and campaigning for renewable energy, and they also make music CDs for campaign. In every summer,

they hold three-day open-air music festival. In 2006 for three days, 60,000 young people attended the festival. During the festival, not only music fans, but also environmentalists and renewable project-related citizens participated and some of them opened their own booths for campaign. Sakamoto and his fellows also make use of TV talk shows to campaign about energy issues.

New attempts as such have not yet form a mainstream in this world. However, these are points for reformation. These points are linked to each other, and thus finally make a reformed space in a corner of the world from which the world itself begins to change. Industrial revolution, information-communication revolution, China's peasant revolution and all other reform movements started not from the center of the world, but from the margins. Although these experiments still remain very local, these will eventually become a central trend in the society. We do not know when it will become an alternative stream, but, I believe, it will definitely come true. They are indeed prophets in our world that we have longed for.

### **Solidarity Economy for the Weak**

I visited a restaurant at the suburban city of Misato near Tokyo. The restaurant, called Community Space Aosaora (Blue Sky), is a workers' collective. It is surrounded by some houses and vegetable fields. I exchanged name cards with the representative of the workers' collective Ms. Asakusa Hideko, and found in the backside of the name card words written such as 'networking for safety and security of food, cooperation and mutual help'. Seven women run the restaurant, investing 500,000 yen each, and formed a worker's collective. All members can participate in work and management. This Aosora is not simply a restaurant, but also functions as a center for other local activities. This place is rented out for meeting and used as a place to exhibit and sell handicrafts that the local people make. Aosora also delivers food to the elderly people in the neighborhood and renders helping hands to those who need assistance. This restaurant has a function to link social relations and exchange materials and services in this region.

When we visited Aosora, three or four members were working, two in the kitchen and another two in the serving hall. It seemed to me that there was no director on one hand, or all seemed to be directors of their own work. I met a 22 years old young woman working there. She served tea and took orders from us. We were later informed that she has a disease called '*hikikomori*'; she is afraid of meeting people and avoids

social contacts. The disease can be cured through stable social contacts and training. Her parents sent her here to have training on social adaptation. Therefore, she pays training fee instead of getting wages. In the back of the restaurant, there was a mental hospital. Psychiatrists recommended patients to visit this restaurant to socialize with other guests and local people. Patients use this restaurant for preparation to return to 'society' by talking with workers and local people. This Aosora is always ready to help any one who needs it. When a certain child refuses to go to school, and his or her parents have to work and cannot take care of him or her, Aosora sends on request a person who takes the child to school. If an old man cannot go shopping, Aosora sends a person to buy something for the old. For these services, community space Aosora receives a certain amount of fee.

For any workers' collective, members have a right to work. But all members do not necessarily work. Some members just pay shares and do not work. Any member can work as many hours as he or she wants. A retired member works only half or one day a week. When members want to work, the Aosora allocates working hours. Members receive hourly wage at the end of every month. In decision-making, members have equal rights irrespective of their share or working hours. In Aosora, there is nothing that can be called employer-employee relationship. They are conceptually self-employed. This employment mode is quite different from the capitalist one.

Every people basically have some abilities. In modern society, that ability that has value in the market is evaluated and traded. There are plenty of socially useful abilities, but do not have market value; they are considered useless. Is it proper to say that the retired people's labor power has not social value? How is it possible to properly evaluate housewives' domestic work to sustain reproduction of labor power? Labor power of the retired people, housewives, or the disabled has also definite social value. We encountered this issue in another workers' collective, the café Foo, where 40% of the members were disabled. Some were mentally retarded, others were physically. They all participated in the Foo, as workers as well as members. They participate in work and management. Some disabled persons cannot work for long time for health reason. They decide working hours by themselves. Since their wages are paid on the basis of working hours, their 'quality' of labor is not discriminated.

What does working mean for the disabled or the retired? It seems to me that they do not work only for earning wage. What they really seek in the work is a social and economic engagement. Work gives them a feeling that they are alive. Work is a livelihood activity without which one cannot express one's existence. Through their activities, they experience what life is like. Labor is social by nature. Our living is constructed on the basis of others' labor, and we also through our labor sustain others' life activities. These disabled or elderly people also, through their labor, engage themselves in social reproduction, because labor mediates between individual and society.

Market economy in this modern society has always been a function to select and exclude human abilities. Market can make certain normal person a fool, and stigmatize him as useless. Through severe competition, even an able person can be weeded out. Workers in such competitive societies acquiesce in slave-like labor tread-mill. In the long run, the capitalist mode of production can not be sustainable, because it depletes human and natural resources. Instead, I think, workers' collectives like these that are operated on the principle of social solidarity can be a mirror to expose the contradictions of capitalist system, and can be developed into an alternative to the neo-liberal production system. Women of Aosora and the disabled of the Café Foo are examples of good practice that revive democracy in the work place that has been eroded in institutionalism.

### **Memories of Okinawa**

As part of the ALFP, we traveled Okinawa. Okinawa was a country of Ryukyu Kingdom for 450 years since the 15th century, and annexed in 1979 to Japan through so-called 'Ryukyu Disposal'. When Japan was defeated in the World War II in 1945, Okinawa had been occupied for 28 years by United State until it was 'returned' to Japan in 1972. Okinawa was the only place where ground operation was fought during the World War II, killing more than 200,000 persons. Among Okinawan war victims were Korean soldiers, laborers, and comfort women.

I feel a peculiar intimate feeling about Okinawa. Okinawa people are war victims as we were. They also have US Base problems as we have. I felt I could fully understand them when they were forcefully mobilized, abandoned, or killed by Japanese Army during the war.

*Market economy in this modern society has always been a function to select and exclude human abilities. Market can make certain normal person a fool, and stigmatize him as useless. Through severe competition, even an able person can be weeded out. Workers in such competitive societies acquiesce in slave-like labor tread-mill. In the long run, the capitalist mode of production can not be sustainable, because it depletes human and natural resources.*

Their stories of war drastically revealed what a state should be like, and what it is in reality.

Local peace activists explained day-by-day occurrence of the war sites for three months from March 1945. They reconstructed the war stories of each date and place. They also explained those names that suffered and sacrificed. They told us how high school girls of the Himeyuri School were mobilized as nurses and sacrificed along with Japanese army. A survivor of the Himeyuri School narrated her terrible memories of suffering.

In present-day Okinawa, there are some people who desperately try to memorize their pasts. Their memory of the war is directly connected with their aspiration for peace. Not simply war, but they want to memorize their rapidly eroding vernacular language and culture. They insist that their history, language, culture and environment as well should uninterruptedly be remembered.

We watched the royal dancing of '*shodon*' at the garden of the Shuri Palace. More than 100 tourists watched the dance. I did not know even the name of the dance, what the dance takes in the cultural constellations of Okinawa. Without any prior knowledge, I was immensely shocked by the dance. The climax of *Shodon* was almost immobile action of Triangle Eyesight. The dance did not move at all except slight motions of lower jaws and glance. I learned later that the motion was neither asleep nor awake, still expresses longing for the departed lover. I was shocked by such immobility. The immobility can move people. I learned such superhuman expression of moving immobility can be mastered through long and intensive training. Memory cannot simply be stored in brain. Okinawans, through their bodies, minds and actions struggle against erosion of their memories.

### **Ando Tadao and Water Chapel**

On 24 October 2006 I stepped down the unmanned rail station of Tomamu at Hokkaido. There were no houses around the station. I saw yellow and red leaves and white birch were brilliantly shining by reflecting autumn sunshine. The reason why I came to this place was to visit a 'water chapel' that the world famous Japanese architect Ando Tadao designed. I have watched the photos of the water chapel for long time and I wanted to look at it with my own eyes. I also wanted to feel solemn sacredness by sitting at the Church. This was why I came to find this water chapel as if I visited to a sacred place as pilgrimage.

I have been for last several years interested in Japanese architect Ando Tadao. He had a special idea ad career. After graduating middle school, he learned woodwork under his father, a carpenter. On the other hand, he was a professional boxer. He did not get higher education, and instead traveled to Europe for about seven years, and watched famous architectures and independently studied them. Even though he did not get professional training in architecture and no diploma, he opened Ando Tadao design office in Osaka.

Sumiyoshi detached house project in Osaka is one of his early works. An oblong three-room row house was by his idea and his hands transformed it into a world famous house. This project is very important, because his architectural philosophy has been elegantly expressed. He divided a land of 3.5 meter wide and 14 meter long into three parts, and built a two-storied building at the side ends, and left the middle part as a courtyard. The upper floors of two buildings were connected by a bridge, and each upper floor has respective bedrooms, while lower floors were equipped with living room, kitchen and toilet. Since there was only one toilet in the lower floor, a person in the upper floor may go through bridges and stairs, while breathing outdoor airs. Even though this structure apparently seems to be inconvenient, this design leads people in the house to communicate with nature while walking in the winds and possibly in rain. This communication with nature was consciously designed for people in the house to be exposed to nature. This bridge is a space for communication and meditation. This design eloquently expresses Ando's philosophy that is simplicity, communication with nature, enhanced spirituality, and lowering cost.

He designed major architecture such as the Meditation House of UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. He taught at the University of Tokyo and lectured at Harvard University and Yale University in the United States. When he came to Korea some years ago, I arrived 20 minutes earlier than scheduled to attend his lecture in a more than 1000-seat auditorium. I could not enter because many more people were waiting outside to listen to his lecture.

He specially designed really inspiring religious architectures. He designed a Buddhist temple at Awajishima, and making use of a slope, he designed a temple and a lotus pond at the top of the temple, symbolizing a heavenly garden in the sky. If one steps so many stairs and passes through the temple rooms, one may suddenly enter the other-worldly lotus garden. Osaka's light chapel is also a famous project. He

hollowed a cross shape in the front of a dark church room, through which light enters. Therefore if you enter the chapel, a cross shaped light will welcome you. This cross light gives strong inspiration. The religious architecture as such expresses special spiritual implication, and architecture as such is a holder that contains the human spirit.

He also designed the water chapel in Tomamu, Hokkaido. He placed the transparent wall in the front of the chapel. In front of the chapel is also placed a calm water surface. A large iron-made cross is put up in the right front of the chapel. Behind the cross are forests and the low mountain. Any Christian will notice that the cross symbolizes the Christ who walks over the lake. I previously thought this chapel had the best condition for prayer and meditation. When I saw the photo of this chapel for the first time, I thought just sitting in the chapel would be sufficient to enrich my faith and spirit.

It is the human being that makes architecture. However, once architecture is completed, it is the architecture that shapes human idea and lifestyle. Therefore, it is why human beings want to live in good architectural environment. In Fengshui of Oriental thought it is also considered that housing sites and tomb sites determine one's destiny. Most architecture on the earth is designed by common people, that is, architecture without an architect. In other words, most architecture was built with local materials. However, any architecture as such still gives impact on human lives that live there.

Cherishing such a good expectation, I visited the water chapel. In a sense I was fully ready for intense inspiration. I pondered on what to talk with priest. I thought Japanese churches are small in size. I thought I had to donate some money to encourage the priest. A bus was waiting for guests taking off from the express train, and I took it. Bus driver told me to get off in front of a wedding house. A lady attendant of the wedding house, brightly smiling, guided me to the water chapel. I asked the lady, how many Christian members were attending the chapel, who was the priest, and when they would have a service.... I was stunned by her replies. She said that this chapel had no Christians, no priest and no Sunday service. My expectation fell asunder. This architecture is not of a religious chapel, but an annex structure of a wedding house, and an outdoor set unit for wedding ceremony. In Christian tradition, Church does not necessarily mean architecture, but a group or community of believers. Church without member is not a church any more.

As I entered the chapel, I saw a large iron cross on the surface of water. The scene was not very different from what I have searched in the internet. Checking closely, I could not find small tools such as piano, choir rows, offering box that a chapel should have. I felt that every facility in the room looked counterfeit. I went out of the room and walked around outside, and looked at the chapel from behind the cross and water pond. I found that there were some deceits in the photo of the chapel too. By changing angles, the photos were so manipulated as not to include wedding house building. In the photos, the chapel was photographed as if a single building standing in the calm and beautiful landscape. How strongly did I get inspiration from the photos of this chapel? I wanted to feel on the spot what I have seen in the photos. My expectation also fell asunder. The photo of the water chapel did not convey, but conceal the truth of reality.

The lady told me that many Japanese visit this chapel for wedding after searching photos in the internet. Most of them are not Christians. It may be possible for any building to change its use. However, it is not an objective of architecture to construct a fake building from the beginning. Any architecture should have its proper genuine objective, and such architecture should be matched with its natural, social and historical backgrounds.

When Ando Tadao designed this chapel with a misplaced objective, what did he think? I earnestly want to ask this question and to hear his reply.

# Asian Face of the Struggle for Integrity

*Albert E. Alejo*

*To put the world right in order,  
we must first put the nation in order;  
to put the nation in order,  
we must first put the family in order;  
to put the family in order,  
we must first cultivate our personal life;  
we must first set our hearts right.  
- Confucius*

My present concern is how to struggle against corruption in a way that goes beyond the prevailing discourse of anticorruption movement and the trendy managerial technologies for good governance. I suggest that a promising approach is to develop the discourse on integrity.

What, by the way, is ‘integrity’ in Nihongo? Is it ‘*keppaku*’ meaning pure of heart, the opposite of ‘*fu hai*’? Or is it ‘*kouketsu*’ which connotes living one’s life on a high moral ground? Who among the leaders of our countries can we consider “a person of integrity”? In my Tagalog language, the nearest term is probably *dangal* so that a person of integrity is said to be ‘*taong marangal*’, one who earns his living in an honest way, one who does not cheat his way to success, who can face any other person without blushing, one who is respected by others, although probably not rich and not necessarily winnable in an honest election.

In most of our Asian languages, I guess, integrity connotes the quality of a person who is both sincere in finding what is true and also steadfast in doing what is right; one who is ‘clean’ in business transactions as well as can be trusted in fulfilling one’s promise. A person of integrity is incorruptible, her principles are not for sale, and whether somebody is watching or not, the person is alert in

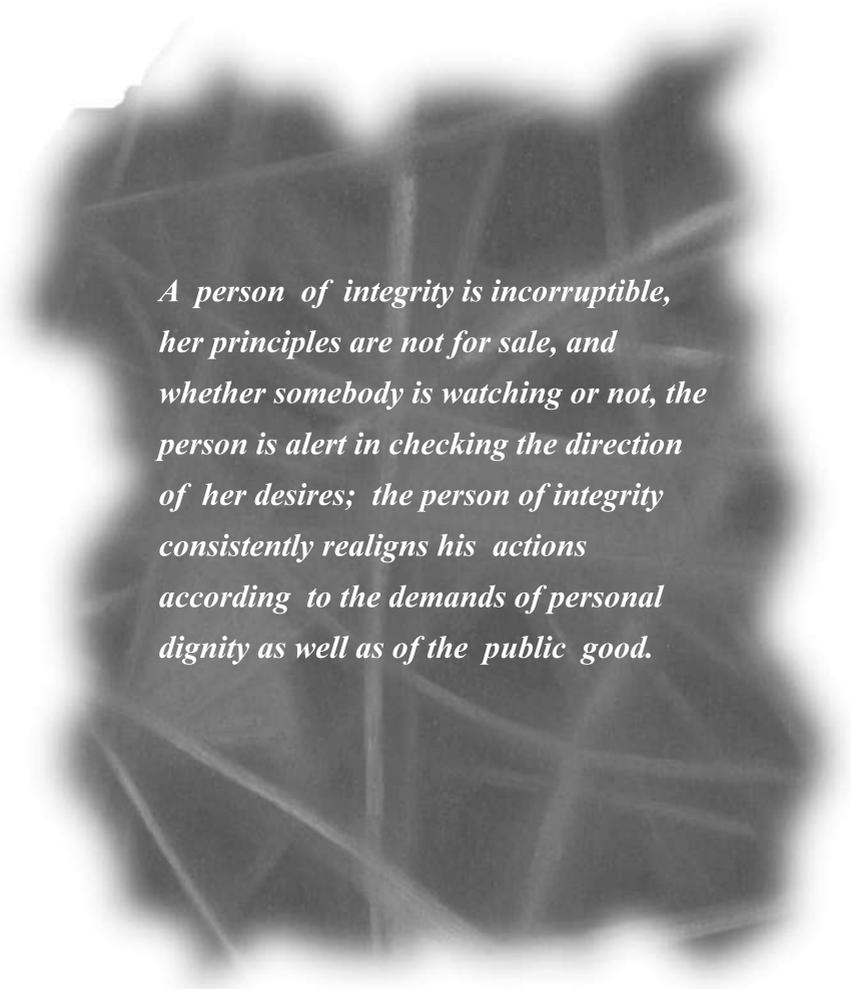
checking the direction of her desires; the person of integrity consistently realigns his actions according to the demands of personal dignity as well as of the public good.

If you check the internet, other uses of the word ‘integrity’ appear, such as ‘*integrity of the data base program*’ (meaning it is protected from the corrosive effects of pernicious viruses), ‘*integrity of infrastructure*’ (implying the strength of material and construction cannot be shaken by earthquakes and other pressures), ‘*territorial integrity*’ (which means that the boundaries of a particular state is kept whole and under control), and ‘*psychic integrity*’ (as in therapies for maintaining mental and emotional wholeness). If you apply these metaphors to integrity in public life, it becomes quite obvious that my topic is very ambitious.

This search for a new language does not arise from a safe academic agenda. It emerges from our four-year experience of conducting *Ehem!* anticorruption seminars among government, educational, business and religious institutions in the Philippines. At this very moment, one of our *Ehem!* champions in Mindanao is seeking legal assistance and a safe house because he has a death threat from those whose interests were hit by his agrarian reform program. The chief auditor, who investigated the plunder case of a military general, also emailed me last week, raising soul-searching questions about the apparent futility of her sacrifice when some of the cases they have filed have been dismissed by high-ranking public officials.

It dawned on me that the fight against corruption and the campaign for good governance demands a deeper foundation. For why should whistleblowers, for example, risk their jobs and sometimes their lives, to expose irregular practices in their offices, or companies, or even NGOs? On the other hand, how do we assist those who privately admit to having committed corrupt behavior, but are afraid of the full force of the law if they come out in the open? (Many of them, at least in our Philippine situation, are alumni of Christian schools suffused with moral lessons or scholars of State universities funded by taxpayers money.) And how do people who have good track record (so far) sustain their life of integrity with meaning, discipline, and energy?

These issues get highlighted in our region where most of Asian countries are perceived to seriously corrupt. In the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of the Transparency International, which came out just a few



*A person of integrity is incorruptible, her principles are not for sale, and whether somebody is watching or not, the person is alert in checking the direction of her desires; the person of integrity consistently realigns his actions according to the demands of personal dignity as well as of the public good.*

days ago, only Singapore has made it to the top five of countries with consistently good record, garnering 9.4 points where 10 is the perfect score. Hong Kong and Japan got 15th and 17th places, respectively, out of the 159 countries that participated in the rating. Macao, Taiwan, South Korea and Malaysia got a score of 5 or above. The rest of the South, East, and Southeast Asia continued to get miserably poor scores of 3.6 and below.

There is hope, however. Based on the number of online searches, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary's 2005 Word of the Year was "integrity." The other top searches were "refugee," "pandemic," and "tsunami." The fact that "integrity" was the most searched word in 2005 most probably indicates that more and more people are concerned about the ethical dimension of anticorruption work.

What I would like to do in the rest of this sharing is to highlight one learning from the very rich experience I had during the Asia Leadership Fellow Program, held recently in Japan, under the sponsorship of the Japan Foundation. I got insights on the relationship between integrity and ecology, integrity and peace, integrity and the body. I shall however, focus on one thing, that of integrity and the media. We had some very interesting discussion on the tension on those who wield the power of communication but who have a difficult relationship with truth.

What could be the shape of integrity in the media?

Asian experiences offer a range of practices in the media practitioners' struggle for a life of integrity given the complex task of covering events and catching deadlines. Sheila Coronel, in the lead article of *AsiaViews* last year<sup>1</sup>, affirms the contribution of a courageous press. In Asia, however, there is so much that blocks journalists from ethical practice. A good number are poorly trained in the meticulous and even risky investigation of corruption in high places. And so sometimes honest officials are 'unjustly pilloried by the mob mentality of an overzealous press.' Many practitioners are easily lured by 'envelopmental journalism.' Corruption, therefore, also infect the press people themselves. In 2001, the Alliance of Independent Journalists based in Jakarta found that '70 percent of journalists in East Java and 97 percent in Jakarta were taking envelopes of cash from their news sources.'

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<sup>1</sup> Sheila Coronel, 'Digging for Dirt: The Challenges of Investigating Corruption in Southeast Asia's Democracies' *AsiaViews* (November 2005), pp. 5-8.

Similar statistics can be found in the Philippines<sup>2</sup>, and there is reason to believe that this practice is rampant in other countries as well. In the midst of this, it is consoling that there still exist individuals and groups who have not succumbed to the temptation of leaving their professional ethics behind.

My reflection on integrity in the media is enriched because ALFP has journalists in the group. Kunda Dixit is a publisher-editor of a big nationwide group of newspapers and magazines in Nepal. Maria Hartiningsih maintains a column in the well-respected *Kompas* daily in Indonesia. Mohiuddin Ahmad writes for a Bangladeshi newspaper while at the same time rendering consultancy work on development programs. Our group had a night caucus on alternative media plus a whole morning session with famous Nonaka Akihiro, the pioneer in independent journalism in Asia. The challenge to uphold one's principles in the context of this 'history on the run' also figured prominently during our focus group discussion on integrity. What comes out from our sharing and from my own reflection is, among other images, of picture of integrity as the 'balancing of biases'.

Kunda Dixit from Nepal reminded participants that integrity and ethics are on the gray area. There is a moral priority in it. According to Kunda, Son can have 2000 USD without losing his integrity. "But, according to me, this is an ethical issue. He feels more comfortable not to accept it," he observed.

Kunda spoke about journalists being given 'wrapped-in-envelope money' by their news sources. This is almost a standard practice. And it is quite difficult to stand up alone and refuse it when everyone else is understood to be in the take. Some conscientious reporters have decided to strike a compromise. They would take the money but place it in escrow for some social fund or to finance some worthwhile causes. This, according to Kunda, has been considered 'Soft corruption.' Janet Pillai, another fellow from Malaysia, compared this practice to some kind of late-bloomer philanthropists. In Penang, according to Janet, many old Chinese businessmen do the similar thing. Business people rake in a lot of money by unscrupulous means when they are younger, and then try to patch up their past by all of a sudden being generous with their loot. In their final years of doing business, they use the money

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<sup>2</sup> For a Philippine study, see the monograph *Media and Corruption* by the Center for People Empowerment in Governance (CenPEG), 2005.

for philanthropic activities, like building hospitals and temples to pray. “They do that as an act of washing what their hands did in the past,” she claimed. This tradition called “repenting”, doing a lot of charity with the money from corruption. “Buddha has similar kind of tradition in this case,” she maintained. Such is a gray area in ethics that Kunda, at one point, was trying to introduce—with a certain amount of hesitation because he also, by word and deed, was fighting against ‘moral elasticity’ and ‘hypocrisy.’”

Maria Hartiningsih of *Kompas* brought up the issue on the close relationship between top editorial staff in media with political or military leaders and businessmen in the country. She mentioned one case in Indonesia that of the damaging hot-mud eruption caused by mismanagement of gas exploration. The corporation is owned by one official of the coordinating ministry in the cabinet under President Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s administration.

The hot mud eruption so far has sunk 400 villages and thousands of people have lost their houses and land. But, to Maria, the solution of this problem is not only giving compensation settlement and relocation of the people, because with their ownership of the land, the owners are attached to the land emotionally and psychologically.

In its report, however, the country’s most well-known and most credible daily, did not probe into the issue. In a big newsroom meeting, the editor-in-chief rebuked deputy head of regional desk because the report was allegedly no more than a simple account from the field situation. “Such an issue is already known to everybody else. Why do not we try to find a solution so that this issue can be solved,” the chief editor exclaimed. For year, *Kompas* has not published even a single word on the scandal just because of the intimate connection of the top editorial staff with those who were involved in the case.

In our discussion on integrity, Maria conceded that she feared to stand up and to express her disagreement to her editor-in-chief. In her silence, she had to ‘endure the guilt of being too cowardly.’ Maria promised to do something as soon as she goes back to Indonesia. It was at this point when Kunda proclaimed that media is practically ‘the fourth state,’ wielding power over the people but with neither the legitimacy that comes from the people’s vote nor the accountability that goes with public office. The values that each journalist has to live by must be entrenched in the mainstream media itself.

It is easier said than done, as Nonaka Akihiro, one of our resource persons, experienced when he spoke about what is 'Required of Journalism in Asia: From the Perspectives of an Independent Journalist. 'Much of what we know about Asia,' Nonaka complains, 'is given to us by western media: BBC, CNN, and Fox. The perspective is western...While we use TV to learn about what is happening in the world, we do not really know what is the balanced view. He and other self-ascribed 'independent journalists' have to struggle hard to achieve some difficult balance. This is especially true of Japanese mass media.

For example, the Japanese papers are told not to send reporters to Iraq. But, Nonaka asserts, 'If we believe that there is reason to be there, we will go there.' Sometimes they get arrested on the borders. They can become hostage. They insist, however, that 'we are responsible for our work. Our rule is: no rescue operation...Why do we say this? We are journalists. We need to cover the war out there in the battlefield. So, whatever happens to us, we are totally responsible. The government is not responsible for what happens to us. Sometimes the governments forget about the rules of journalism.' Nonaka cites one example. He inched his way to cover Iraq war. When he asked an American official about the 'body count' of the war victims, the official apparently said, "We don't count bodies here.' If this is the situation, who is going to report on the side of the victims? When a fellow confronted him with a question on objectivity and bias, Nonaka waxed philosophical: 'In a war like this, you cannot report with absolute objectivity. In democracy, you should have many "biased" reports. There should not be only one biased report. If you have several biased report, then you can have a wider view of the world. We have a bias but in this democratic world, we believe that our bias has a place and must be included.'

This is integrity, but integrity that is not simplistically equated with objectivity. One does not have to be extremely astute to appreciate this argument, especially if one realizes that although there is freedom of expression in Asia, in reality, big corporations are still in control, not just of media but also the military.

What all this and other discussions reveal is that the struggle for integrity may be a complex combination of structural, technical, cultural, and political forces, but it does not cease to be personal. There remains the reality of the persons, flesh and blood individuals and groups, who have to embody the principles that they have discerned and decided to be worth living for.

I know that framing the issue of corruption and integrity like this may immediately spark a critique from those who would tend to reduce corruption issues into questions of political structures at the expense of personal values. While I strongly appreciate the absolute necessity of institutional pressure, this sharing unashamedly focuses on the personal dimension of holding fast to integrity. At the end of the day, it is still persons, most often as individuals but also as communities, who carry the burden of making integrity both a private commitment and a public institution.