

# ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE COLONIAL WORLD: EAST-WEST PARALLELS

著者	BREMEN Jan van
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# ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE COLONIAL WORLD: EAST-WEST PARALLELS

**Jan van BREMEN**

Leiden University

## GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

This is a reflection on the panel that met in Kyoto in October 1994 to discuss the theoretical, methodological, and institutional developments in anthropology in the colonial period. The period called "colonial" here runs from the middle of the nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth century. Most of the world was colonized and colonialism at a height. The material presented in the panel was empirical and descriptive. The analysis was comparative with a global outreach. Followed by general discussion, five scholars gave a presentation: folklorist Fukuta Ajio, historian Timothy Tsu, and anthropologists Shimizu Akitoshi, Nakao Katsumi, and Jan van Bremen. Tsu, Nakao, and Shimizu read papers on Japanese anthropology in Taiwan, Manchuria, and Micronesia. Fukuta elucidated the attitudes of the leading school in Japanese folklore studies towards the colonies and colonized peoples. Van Bremen reviewed similarities and parallels, and traced the growth of worldwide connections and dependencies, in the course of the professionalisation and institutionalisation of anthropology.

The history of anthropology in Europe and America tends to be too self-focussed at the expense of anthropology elsewhere in the world. Japanese anthropology deserves a central place in the panel for this reason alone, but even more so as its colonial anthropology is only now beginning to be studied. When countries are compared it becomes clear that anthropology developed in Europe and America but also in Asia, and due to similar social, historical, and institutional conditions.

The word "anthropology" is used here in the broadest sense. It refers to all the academic fields and sub-fields that developed in anthropology in the colonial period at different times and places, although they may actually go by other names such as "ethnology", "minzokugaku", or "Völkerkunde". The word also refers to the "imagined communities" shared in professional identities and associations. One observer spoke of the "culture of anthropology" which "refers not only to fieldwork culture but also to the set of norms, values, and expectations that cover all of what anthropologizing entails" (Ben-Ari 1995: 158). "Colonial anthropology" is the anthropology produced in colonial contexts and visited upon the colonized peoples. The very wide usage of these terms is not an endorsement of carelessness and confusion. There are important distinctions among the various colonies and

research practices that no account can overlook. But I look for similarities more than differences. The analysis differentiates between three levels: anthropology, colonial anthropology, and colonialism. Anthropology is separated from colonial anthropology even in the colonial era as not fully congruent with colonialisms but contingent, existing before, in, and apart from colonial contexts.

The motivation to study the colonial era comes from concerns with the past, the present, and the immediate future. "The object of history is not the past but the past-present-future relationship", as Robertson (1994: 72) put it. Unquestionably, anthropology profited more from colonialism than colonialism seems to have benefitted from anthropology. What anthropology and colonial anthropology did to, and for, the colonized peoples is a cardinal question. The answer are partly revealed in the representations made of the colonised and colonies at the time.

In the colonial era in several places in the world anthropology was established under comparable circumstances. The sequence may become compressed in case of late colonizers like Japan. Shimizu argues that the different types of anthropologists found in Micronesia surfaced more in consecutive order in Europe and America. Contacts among different centres and scholars around the world developed from the beginning. The establishment and professionalisation of the new discipline at the time meant the separation of fields hitherto less divided. Each turned into a separate discipline and spawned further sub-fields, reflecting the growing specialisation in the uses and production of knowledge.

I should like to stress that anthropology developed simultaneously in colonies and metropoleis. Anthropologists studied both thus making the strange familiar and the familiar strange.<sup>1</sup> This two-tiered structure is characteristic for the development of anthropology in Europe, America (Schippers 1995), and Asia. Participant observation was not only done in colonies but also in metropolitan countries in different places in the world, such as the United States of America, Canada or Japan, since the 1920s. Although participant observation became the main method and trademark of anthropologists, they were not alone in developing ethnography. Sociologists, psychologists, human geographers, and folklorists also did fieldwork.

## COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

Commemorations occasionally spark off studies in the history of a discipline. The Japanese Society of Ethnology marked its 30th and 50th anniversary with the publication of overviews of work by its members and developments in the discipline, both scientifically and institutionally, in these periods of time (1966, 1968, 1984, 1986). The Folklore Society of Japan produced a special Anniversary Issue of the 200th edition of its Bulletin in November 1994. A lack of knowledge may become apparent on such occasions. In 1994 Dutch folklorists decided to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of their journal, *Volkskundig Bulletin*, by publishing an issue dedicated to the history of folklore studies in the Netherlands. Soon it

became clear that so little was known that a symposium was first held. The commemorative issue received the title, "Antiquarians, amateurs and professors".<sup>2</sup> It vividly captures the course of professionalisation and institutionalisation and types of interests and scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth century in Dutch folklore studies. In Japanese Manchuria, the three speakers who opened the First Congress of the Ethnological Society of Manchuria in 1942 in Shinkyô (Ch'ang-ch'un) were a typical colonial trio. They personified the administration, the judiciary, and the university in the territory (Nakao 1994: 137).

Anthropologists of the colonial period carried over, or re-established, anthropology in post-war and post-colonial times, drawing on existing organisations and structures. The heritage of colonial anthropology remains visible today. There are the works by the anthropologists who were trained in colonial times and did their fieldwork in colonial settings. They held leading positions far into the second half of the century in Holland and Japan. Today their students are in the leading positions.

The political economy of colonial anthropology has much in common. Means came from governments, enterprises, universities, museums, endowment funds, maecenases. Learned societies played important roles. They sponsored anthropological research and helped to establish the discipline in universities, museums, and institutes. It enabled research and training at home and in the colonies. The development began in the middle of the nineteenth century in various places around the world. In Germany, a late colonizer like Japan, the first regular university post for anthropology was created in the University of Berlin in 1869. In England, the University of Oxford established a readership in anthropology in 1884 and turned it into a professorship in 1896. In Japan, the first anthropological society was founded in 1884, and the first chair for anthropology established in 1893 in Tokyo Imperial University. In the Netherlands, anthropology was established in 1836 when the Royal Military Academy (Koninklijke Militaire Academie) in Breda designated a chair for the Malay language and the Geography and Ethnography of the Dutch East-Indies. A year later, the first ethnographic museum was opened in Leiden. Leiden University founded a chair for the Geography and Ethnology of the Dutch East-Indies in 1877, and a general chair in 1922 (Vermeulen 1995).

Universities and research institutes operated in the metropoleis and in the colonies. To take a British case, the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute was founded in 1938 and located at Lusaka, the administrative capital in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). In the same year, the new professorship in the Ethnology of the Dutch East Indies (*Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië*) in the Law School (*Rechtshogeschool*) in Batavia (Jakarta) was inaugurated. In Japan, Hokkaidô Imperial University was established in 1919 as the fifth imperial university and became a leading centre for North Asian and Ainu studies. Keijô Imperial University (the present University of Seoul) was founded in Korea as the sixth imperial university in 1924 and opened in 1926. The anthropological research was done in the Department of Sociology and Religion. In Taiwan, Taihoku Imperial University (the present National Taiwan University) was established in 1928, and the Institute for Ethnology in it. The University of

Manchuria (*Manshū Kenkoku Daigaku*) was founded in 1939 in Hsin-ching (the present day Ch'ang-ch'un). Private schools and universities were also active in the colonies.

Anthropology became established as an academic discipline and a profession in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in a number of countries that colonized peoples outside or inside their boundaries. Anthropology flourished in both provinces, but survived the end of the colonial era. Ongoing and new institutes and projects have sustained it, such as universities, museums, contract research, development projects, education, consultancy and other activities. Anthropology is funded by similar agents and uses structures and ties already in place while creating new ones.

## ANTHROPOLOGY IN METROPOLEIS AND COLONIES

The history of the colonial anthropology of Western countries has been studied more than the history of the colonial anthropology of Asian nations. The findings so far suggest that anthropology, colonial anthropology, and colonialism of these nations have a number of traits in common. The studies by Tsu, Shimizu, and Nakao of colonial anthropology in Taiwan, Micronesia, and Manchuria corroborate this view. Japan began to build a colonial empire late in the nineteenth century, late compared to Holland. It acquired the Ryukyu Archipelago in 1879, the Bonin (Ogasawara) in 1873, the Kuril Islands in 1875, Formosa and the Pescadores in 1895, southern Sakhalin (Karafuto) in 1905, Korea in 1910, Micronesia in 1914 (annexed in 1938), Manchuria in 1932. Other territories in Asia were occupied but not for so long. The empire was lost in 1945 and the country brought back to its mid-19th century boundaries.

The colonial institutes were mostly staffed by people who came from the metropoleis, seniors, juniors, and students. Some played leading roles in the universities and professional associations in the metropoleis and the colonies. The means for the research, personnel, and institutes came from learned societies, governments, armed forces, commercial enterprises, and endowment funds. They commissioned the library research and archival studies, the production of summaries and translations, and the expeditions and fieldwork carried out by personal inclination, opportunism, or command. This research and support structure is typical of anthropology in the imperial nations of Europe, America, and Asia. The unfolding international relations built on shared or competing interests in certain regions, methods, and data.

Fukuta reports that the school in folklore studies headed by Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962) began to propagate a "one country study" approach in the 1930s, and largely kept away from colonies. The rationale was that sufficient data had to be gathered first before meaningful comparisons could be made within a country, let alone of different countries. Some scholars trained by Yanagita nevertheless came to do research in the colonies. They had been ideological dissidents in the 1920s and 1930s. Ômachi Tokuzô (1900-1970), for example, who taught anthropology in the Sociology Department of the University of Manchuria (*Manshū kenkoku daigaku shakaigakubu*), studied different peoples in Manchuria, through written sources

and fieldwork. Many former dissenters were called up to serve at home and in the colonies and do research, translations, administration, education, or help in the war effort. Specialists indigenous to the colonies were also engaged and new students trained when personnel from the metropolises became scarce.

The public and the private sector in the colonies commissioned an assortment of anthropological research. Ethnological societies were established to bring this research more together. The societies were sponsored by government, business, and universities. Most of the members resided in the colonies and belonged to the administration, business, and scholarly communities. The societies had their daily offices in the newly founded universities and institutes. The Ethnological Society of Manchuria (*Manshū Minzokugakkai*) (1942-1945) was in the Sociology Department in the University of Manchuria, and published the "Transactions of the Ethnological Society of Manchuria" (*Manshū Minzokugakkai Kaihō*), in Japanese. In Taiwan, the Society for the Study of South-Eastern Asia and Oceania (*Nanpō Dozoku Gakkai*) was active between 1931 and 1944. Its office was in the Institute of Ethnology in Taihoku Imperial University. The Society published a quarterly in Japanese entitled, "Ethnographical Journal of South-Eastern Asia and Oceania" (*Nanpō Dozoku*). The name was later changed to "Ethnographical Journal of South-East Asia, Oceania and Taiwan" (*Nanpō Minzoku*).

Indigenous scholars and students were engaged by the administration and the university in the colonies when personnel became short. In Manchuria, Taiwan, and Korea it was a result of the drain on personnel caused by deployments elsewhere under the southward expansion policy. In the Dutch East-Indies, indigenous specialists were engaged and students trained. J. Ph. Duyvendak opened his inaugural lecture on publicly accepting the new professorship in the Ethnology of the Dutch East Indies (*Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië*) at the Law School (*Rechtshogeschool*) in Batavia (Jakarta) on Friday 23 September 1938 with these words:

"Ethnology is originally an European discipline. But by the expansion of European culture she counts in our century among her practitioners also sons of peoples, who until recently as a whole belonged to the object of ethnology. She is now also taught in the middle of her field of research. This is an important situation, that cannot remain without influence upon the nature of ethnological interests, as after all it is not a matter of indifference to ethnology as to any of the humanities, who practices her. Hereby we do not think of differences of an individual nature, but of differences connected with the cultural milieu from which the researcher stems" (Duyvendak 1938: 3, my translation)<sup>3</sup>

In the address, Duyvendak also stressed that European ethnology did not seem to penetrate to the heart of a matter if it could not command the respect of Indonesian intellectuals as having something meaningful to say (Duyvendak 1938: 4). The training of scholars of different indigenous backgrounds in anthropology in the colonial period is an important research topic.

Hokkaidō apart, ethnographic research for the purpose of Japanese colonial administration began in Okinawa in the 1880s and 90s. It was modelled on French Indo-China. Okinawa became a model for colonial research in Taiwan, Taiwan for Korea and

Manchuria. The case of Micronesia was somewhat different, as was the research done in Southeast Asia during the Pacific War. The main thrust of Japanese colonial development was aimed at the three colonies of Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria. There is a marked difference between the research carried out in Okinawa and the other areas. The “old customs” in Okinawa were in fact a part of the administrative system that remained from the former feudal domain of Satsuma, that preceded the Meiji state as ruler of Okinawa. Under this system, villages and not households or families were the main social constituents, and therefore the main focus of research. The religious institutions of the islanders were hardly studied. In contrast, research in the other colonies was focused on landholding, customary law, kinship relations, religious institutions, and sects.<sup>4</sup> An explanation for the different research agendas may be that Okinawa was considered to be like Japan (Nakao 1995).

An imperial edict in 1901 demanded the creation of a “Provisional Committee for the Investigation of Taiwanese Old Customs” (*Rinji Taiwan Kyūkan Chōsa Kai*). The Government General of Taiwan established the committee in 1902. One division was charged with the study of the legal customs, the other with the study of the economy of the Chinese population on Taiwan. The committee published multi-volume reports about the customary and administrative laws of traditional China between 1903 and 1911. The instructions issued by the committee furthered the development of social anthropology. The Committee insisted that fieldwork be done in order to study the living practices of the commoners. It placed fieldwork on an equal footing with historical and documentary evidence, and shifted the focus of research from elites and archives to common people and living practices. The committee is also important as the prototype of the Research Bureau (*Chōsabu*) established by the Southern Manchurian Railway Company (*Mantetsu*) in 1908. That bureau studied issues pertaining to the government and development of Southern Manchuria as well as to the advancement of Japanese interests in other parts of China. Combining fieldwork and archival research, the Research Bureau not only collected a large amount of data but also produced analyses of Chinese society.

The study of the so-called indigenous peoples of Taiwan began close upon the seizure of the island. The first anthropologist to study the indigenous peoples was Torii Ryūzō (1870-1953). He made four lengthy expeditions, that included periods of fieldwork, in 1896, 1897, 1898, and 1900. Torii was in the field more than 500 days and left records in writing and collections of photographs and artifacts. Some of the peoples still lived their lives free from state control but the colonial government sought to assimilate them rapidly. It was the end of the cultures that Torii found (Chen 1994).

Botel Tobago, an island off Taiwan in the Flores Strait, was the aim of Torii’s second field trip. When he came in 1897, only indigenous people lived on the island. They called themselves “ponso no tau” or “people of the island”. In his reports Torii called the islanders “Yami”. They have become known by that name in the ethnographic literature.<sup>5</sup> Today, the people themselves use the name “Yami” to vindicate their claim of an indigenous origin. Torii reached Botel Tobago in October 1897 and stayed for 70 days. He did not know the language

and found no common tongue. He tried to learn some of the language from the children. The anthropologists of the Institute of Ethnology in Taihoku Imperial University, who worked after 1928, could use Japanese with informants.

The Provisional Committee for the Investigation of Taiwanese Old Customs began to publish ethnographies of the indigenous peoples in 1915 when the first volume of the "Report of Investigations on Taiwan's Aborigines" (*Banzoku kanshū chōsa hōkokusho*) appeared. The Office of Police Affairs of the Government General issued a work in five volumes about the native inhabitants of Formosa entitled, "Research report on the Takasago-peoples" (*Takasagozoku chōsasho*), between 1936 and 1938. The colonial government regarded the aborigines as "savages without sovereignty" (*mushu no yabanjin*), to be civilized and made more like the Japanese. This view of non-literate peoples has been current from the eighteenth century in Japan<sup>6</sup> and other countries in Asia, Europe, and America. Throughout this period some anthropologists supported this view while others contested it.

## COSMOPOLITAN ANTHROPOLOGY

The concern today is with anthropology in every context, pre-, post-, and non-colonial, national and global, past and present. When anthropology in Europe, America, and Asia is compared similarities and parallels can be seen in its development as an academic and applied discipline and a profession in colonial and imperial nations. Is it useful then to remain within the framework of a single nation? One author deliberately stayed within the boundaries of one empire. One reason was the limit to what one person can know, but more important was the desire to show that there were several competing models of colonization (or "colonial projects" as he calls them), such as missionary, settler, and plantation colonialism, within one and the same empire (Thomas 1994). Such a plurality was true of Holland and Japan as well.

In conclusion, I quote two lengthy passages, one from 1986 and another from 1993, to illustrate the current level of thinking among anthropologists in America and Europe about transnational and global anthropology. The visions are vague and faulty. In the introduction to an influential book of 1986 it said that:

"This is. . . a time when the heightened awareness of global interdependence challenges the idea of distinct national traditions in scholarship itself. Such traditions remain subtly important, but increasingly, they are operating less as barriers to communication and interaction. New anthropologies in Brazil, India, Israel, Japan, and Mexico, among other countries, are developing by a mix of locally informed issues of concern and of classic issues of Western social theory" (Marcus and Fischer 1986: viii)

I agree with the global interdependence but not with the rest. Apart from countries with absolute regimes, like the former Nazi Germany or Communist Russia (Linimayr 1994; Dostal 1994; Kabanov 1992), and countries at war, the boundaries between metropolitan countries were transparent in the colonial period. The extent of the international contacts between anthropologists attests to it, as does the fact that anthropologists used four or five languages



in scholarly communication until the middle of the century. Today some of those languages are no longer as widely used and new language enclaves have come into existence. As a result much scholarly work is unknown or under-used. Lastly, it is misleading to call anthropology in countries like Mexico or Japan “new”. The qualification is appropriate only if it means an original theoretical synthesis of different traditions. If it means recent in time it deprives these anthropologies of their histories. Anthropology became an academic discipline in every nation mentioned, except Israel, late in the nineteenth or early in the twentieth century. Moreover, it is more than a mix of locally informed concerns and classic issues of Western anthropology in these countries.

The next quote is from a recent bookreview where it says that:

“Anthropology has little time for schools at the moment. The old certainties, simple but limited, of evolutionism, functionalism, structuralism etc. have largely disappeared. Complexity and scepticism are rife. There is no new school and no new label. Much of this arises from the thought in recent years that anthropological writing is not just a compromise, but irredeemably flawed as a scientific document by the anthropologist’s own, almost invariably Western background (at least as regards training)” (Parkin 1993: 237-38).

Again, the presentation is only partly right and too one-sided and imprecise. “Schools” do exist, not everyone is sceptical, not every anthropologist’s background is invariably Western, not everything Western in training and everything besides is irredeemably flawed. One wonders how much longer anthropology can be presented, as if in a vacuum, as mostly a Western domain. The belief vaporizes in the face of the fact that in 1994 the membership of the Japanese Society of Ethnology stood at 1600, which makes it the second largest anthropological association in the world (Kreiner 1994).

But more important, while some territories in the world remain as colonies, others have been newly colonized, and the internal colonization of peoples by states is widely found. The conclusion is that colonial anthropology is not entirely a thing of the past and not wholly a thing of the West.

## Notes

- 1 Play on a phrase by John Van Maanen (1995: 20).
- 2 Antiquaren, liefhebbers en professoren. Momenten uit de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Volkskunde. Ton Dekker, Paul Post & Herman Roodenburg, eds. *Volkskundig Bulletin* Vol. 20, No. 3, 1994.
- 3 “De ethnologie is van huis uit een Europese wetenschap. Maar door de expansie der Europese cultuur rekent zij in onze eeuw tot haar beoefenaars mede zonen van volken, die tot voor kort in hun geheel behoorden tot het object der ethnologie. Zij wordt thans ook gedoceed midden in het terrein van haar onderzoek. Dit is een belangwekkende situatie, die niet zonder invloed kan blijven op de aard der ethnologische belangstelling, daar immers voor de ethnologie zomin als voor een andere geesteswetenschap onverschillig is, wie haar beoefent. Hierbij denken wij niet aan verschillen van individuele aard, maar aan verschillen die samenhangen met het cultuurmilieu, waaruit de

onderzoeker voortkomt.”

- 4 The studies and surveillance Japanese governments commissioned and made of indigenous religious leaders supports Iletto's (1979) argument that marginal people like cult leaders were important in the rise of nationalistic movements in Asia. They are usually omitted from the official histories of the nationalist movements which play up the role of the indigenous elites.
- 5 Pointed out by Asai one page one of the thesis he defended in Leiden in 1936.
- 6 In the essay, "The Japanese Concept of the Savage and Anthropology in Japan. Land Rights of Taiwan's Aborigines under Japanese Occupation," in *Kwansei Gakuin Sociology Department Studies* No. 64, November 1991, pp. 39-46 and, "Mushu no yabanjin" to Jinruigaku," in *Kansei Gakuin Daigaku Shakaigakubu Kiyô*, No. 64, 1991: 47-71, Yamaji Katsuhiko discusses the notion of the savage as used in these studies and in Japanese anthropology at the time. I thank Shimizu Akitoshi of the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka for bringing this work to my attention.

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