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Reply to Hansen, Nakano and Kajigaya

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I feel greatly honored to have three colleagues (one a former student of mine) comment on my paper of a very personal nature. Dr. Paul Hansen questions my attitude toward “Japan” and raises an interesting question about forced and chosen cosmopolitanisms both in Japan and in a globalizing world at large. He also offers a different reading of Rapport’s *Anyone* (Rapport 2012). Dr. Lynne Nakano thoroughly historicizes my experience in Hawaii and situates Ichy Numazaki in the class/ethnic/gender structure of Hawaii in the 1980s. She also points out a new possibility of autoethnography. Mr. Takeshi Kajigaya relates his own experience in Hawaii in the 2010s to mine in the 1980s, highlights some differences between the two, and asks me if I did not find any *uncommonality* with the Japanese Americans in Hawaii.

I shall first consider Mr. Kajigaya’s more concrete question, next reflect on Dr. Nakano’s question about the “objective” positionality of myself in Hawaii in the 1980s, and finally try to respond to Dr. Hansen’s big question on “Japan” and cosmopolitanisms.

Mr. Kajigaya asks, “Did *everything* Dr. Numazaki saw, heard, and experienced trigger him to imagine the commonality?” He suggests that I “(consciously or unconsciously) ignore the trivial differences – or *uncommonalities*” in my imagination of commonality between myself and the Japanese Americans I met in Hawaii.

Surely I noticed many differences. For one thing, the Japanese Americans in Hawaii spoke English with a peculiarly Hawaiian accent and intonation. The way they pronounced “Honolulu” and “Hawaii” for example was very different from my “Mainland” pronunciation. Their dress was another salient difference. I have to confess that I never felt comfortable seeing

middle-aged Japanese American women in Hawaiian “Muu Muu” dresses—completely different from those “Muu Muu” dresses sold to tourists—which were more or less standard work clothing for women as were Aloha shirts for men. The sense of temperature was another difference that separated me from the local people. I did “stand out” one winter day in office because I was wearing only a short-sleeved T-shirt when everyone else was in sweaters or jackets. I remember hearing on radio that day that it would be “chilly.” It was very warm by Michigan standard.

The trivial habits that I thought I shared with the Japanese Americans in Hawaii were the ones that I did not share with the “Americans” in Michigan. Those habits that would mark me as a foreigner in Michigan were widely shared not only by the Japanese Americans but also by other ethnic groups in Hawaii. What I imagined as commonality between me and the Japanese Americans in Hawaii was the *uncommonality* that differentiated “us” from “them” in the Mainland. Also important was the fact that “we” were different from the Japanese tourists who did not speak English fluently; “we” often joked about and sometimes criticized “them.”

I felt that the set of trivial habits that the Japanese Americans in Hawaii displayed mostly overlapped with my set, and that was a pleasantly shocking revelation for me at that time because I used to feel that my set of habits did not overlap with the people around me in both Sendai and East Lansing, Michigan.

As for the bento that disappointed Mr. Kajigaya, *karaage* looks very *karaage* to me, and I would have love to eat it after three years of deprivation from eating *karaage* in East Lansing!

I learned a lot from Dr. Nakano’s commentary that situated myself in the power structure of Hawaiian society in the 1980s. Yes, I do remember Governor Ariyoshi. Dr. Nakano remarks that “Knowing how to spell Japanese-American names had become part of the cultural knowledge necessary for work among the (predominantly female) white-collar service classes of secretaries and clerks in Honolulu in the 1980s. Having one’s Japanese

American name spelled correctly without being asked was part of the privileges and rights of becoming a dominant social and political ethnic group.” I did not know THAT!

Dr. Nakano further remarks that “what he experienced was not the openness of Hawaiian society in general, but the willingness of Hawaii residents and the Japanese-American community to accept a person of his particular composition of features (male, standard English speaking, Asian physical features, Japanese surname, Japanese cultural fluency) as a member of a dominant professional class of Japanese-Americans.” No wonder a Japanese American woman once told me “Your family must be proud of you.” In her eyes, I was an achiever in the ascendant and increasingly powerful ethnic group. I did not know THAT either!

Dr. Nakano also reminds me that I was a transient passerby who had no intention of settling down in Hawaii. Had I chosen to live and work there, had I married someone from a Japanese American family in Hawaii, would “selfhood construction” (and perhaps deconstruction) have become more a “compulsory project” for me as for Dorinne Kondo or Takie Sugiyama Lebra? Dr. Nakano, a Japanese American from Hawaii, confirms my “belongability” to Hawaii’s Japanese American community, but had I chose to belong, would I have actually belonged? Too bad I got only one life to live.

Finally, I feel encouraged by Dr. Nakano’s suggestion that autoethnographic projects that focus on emotion and subjectivity could make theoretical contributions in anthropology if those projects are practiced in collective and collaborative fashion. We, anthropologists, should write more about ourselves—at least as much as we write about “others.”

Dr. Hansen calls me a globetrotter but he is far more a globetrotter than me. I know he has been to many places. Moreover, as his commentary indicates, he meets cosmopolitans and finds cosmopolitan spaces everywhere he goes as if he has the power to create cosmopolitan spots defying the gravitational force of dominant cultures—yes, even in Japan!

I totally agree with him that Japan has changed and is changing rapidly.

Sendai has about 10,000 registered alien residents or about one percent of the city's population. My otolaryngologist is a Taiwanese who graduated from a university here in Sendai. There are Korean and Bangladeshi restaurants in a walking distance from my house. My son had a Chinese classmate in high school. "Returnee kids" are not a rarity anymore. Even a regional city like Sendai is marginally cosmopolitan today—you can find some cosmopolitan spots where you can meet cosmopolitans. So, a graduate student of mine is studying them and writing about them (See Fabio Lee Perez on "culture-trotters" this volume).

Yet, I have to say that the degree of cosmopolitanism(s), forced or otherwise, in Sendai—or any other ordinary municipalities in Japan for that matter—is still very low. Most "Japanese" children in Sendai will not have the same multicultural encounters and experiences that a young Paul had in his Canadian hometown.

Can and will "Japanese" society become more cosmopolitan in any sense of the term? Forced cosmopolitanisms are everywhere. Global and national factors are generating cosmopolitan conditions in Beck's sense all over Japan. Can and will more "Japanese" people choose cosmopolitanism of any kind? I do not know. It remains to be seen.

Finally, a few words on Rapport's *Anyone* (Rapport 2012). Dr. Hansen writes that Rickey Hirsh, the main informant whose life history Rapport documents and analyzes, "has led a cosmopolitan life of contingent chance, mobility and agency," "like all humans, or 'anyone,' he also elected to take chances, make plans," and "for Rapport anyone is someone, a person creatively making and navigating a life." I agree, but my trouble is that Rapport's anyone in this sense seems too abstract and empty. In his attempt to deessentialize cultured beings, Rapport seems to end up finding a new essence that he calls anyone. Isn't his cosmopolitan subject just a new name for universal humanity, individuated or otherwise? If Boasian anthropology particularized human nature into diverse cultures, Rapport's (philosophical) anthropology further particularizes culture into diverse individuals who all share "anyone-ness" in them after all. If all humans are anyone, is it not some kind of human

universality? Cultural relativism comes full circle. Rapport's anyone reminds me of a Mahayana Buddhist teaching that "all living beings have 'Buddha Nature (potential to become a Buddha)' in them."

Dr. Hansen argues that "Importantly, anyone can never be everyone. Everyone is the imposition of expectation, the rooting out of creativity, individuality, and anomaly." I would argue that, equally importantly, anyone can never be "no one." No one is that free spirit, pure creativity, genuine individuality, and no commonality. If anyone therefore has to be someone, that someone necessarily shares something with other ones, and the point is that he/she shares that something more with some other ones than with other other ones. That something, forced or chosen, I would like to call "ethnicity" or simply "culture." The cosmopolitan subject I envision sees that each one more or less shares something with every other one. Certainly, I agree with Dr. Hansen that she/he is not everyone because everyone shares everything with everyone else.

References

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