

## “Culture-Trotting” as a Way of Life: An Anthropology of Cosmopolitans

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### 1. Introduction

The Purpose of this paper is to examine how “culture-trotters,” those individuals who moved around several different societies in their childhood and acquired habits from several different cultures, construct their own ways of life and make sense of their life experience.

“Culture-trotters” are those who are immersed in more than one culture for prolonged period of time since early age as they moved from one society to another. They are not rooted in any single culture but are attached to multiple cultures in their own unique ways. “culture-trotters” acquire unique visions of themselves and the world. They adapted to all the cultures they encountered to a great degree but they did not totally succumb to any of them; they adopted certain habits but rejected others and developed their own idiosyncratic “repertoire of culture” which enabled them to be a functioning member of any society in which they have lived. Yet they do not identify themselves with any particular culture.

I myself am a “Culture-trotter.” I was born in Seoul by a Korean father and a Mexican mother. After my parents separated, I followed the footsteps of my mother and moved to Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur, and Seoul again. Then, I moved to California and Wisconsin for college. After graduation, I moved to Mexico City, Tokyo, Ottawa, then Sendai. I was raised by a catholic, diplomatic mother from the family of *brujas* (witch). I believed in the existence of angels and the power of healing using witchcraft. I began my education in Japanese public school, and continued my Japanese education till middle school in Japanese School in Kuala Lumpur and then in Seoul. After attending international high school in Seoul, I

moved to California and then to Wisconsin for college and studies Human Geography. by the time I was 22, I was struggling to make sense of my life speaking Spanish, English, and Japanese, and having *arroz con leche* for breakfast, Cheeseburgers for lunch and *Shawarma* for dinner, and bust a move on the “Thriller” and “Beat it” by Michael Jackson. I was living in a mixed up world and having a mixed up self.

My existence is an evidence of an emergence of a new kind of people who construct their lives from idiosyncratic collection of cultures. We do not associate our identity with any particular place. We are not attached to any particular culture. We do not have a deep sense of belonging to any particular place or to any group of people. We are on a constant move. We are the product of complex mobility of people, things, and ideas (Urry 2010).

Why does “culture-trotter” keep on moving? How are they moving? And are those movement subjective? The concept of movement in this paper is not limited to geographical movement. This paper examines the movement of the use of multiple languages, the movement of one culture to another, the movement of acting according to the society, and the movement of identity.

Recently, cultural anthropology has come to understand the importance of movement through such perspectives as transnationalism and multiculturalism. However, we still have limited understanding of the relations between those people on the move, due to the conventional assumption that individuals are enculturated into a particular way of life of a single society in which they are born and raised. it is my contention that the perspective of cosmopolitanism frees us from this conventional assumption and challenges the still predominant view of the relationship between individual and culture.

In the era of globalization, culture flow and people move across borders on a massive scale. Consequently, individuals are exposed to multiple cultures even if they stay put in a single location. The notion of culture as coterminous with society no longer applies to the present era.

In order to understand how the “culture-trotters”—who are emancipated from any particular way of life of a given commonality—gives meaning and coherence to their lives of movement, I have to shift the emphasis of the theoretical framework from

societal or cultural to individual.

The theoretical framework of this paper is derived from the anthropology of cosmopolitanism (Hannerz 1990, 1992, 1996; Hiebert 2000; Rappport, 2010, 2012; Waldron 1995; Werbner 1999, 2008). Hannerz focuses on cosmopolitan individuals and argues that they construct their own unique personal perspectives out of idiosyncratic collection of experiences (Hannerz 1990) and that individuals acquire pieces of culture that suit themselves and develop competence in coping with different cultures (Hannerz 1996: 104). The pieces of culture they acquire, however, may not be in harmony (Waldron 1995: 10). Hiebert (2000: 6) insists that cosmopolitanism as a way of life is based on openness to all forms of otherness. Hannerz also argues that cosmopolitan individuals willingly engage cultural others (Hannerz 1992). Kromidas finds that cosmopolitans may be both tolerant and intolerant towards differences (Kromidas 2011). Cosmopolitans may not necessarily be "rootless." They may have firm roots in particular communities (Appiah 1997; Werbner 1999). Rappport argues that cosmopolitan individuals not only have an ability to "pass" as a member in a given society (Rappport 2012) but also have "the ongoing capacity to belong to, make, and remake cultures" (Rappport 2010: 97). The purpose of this paper is to examine to what extent "culture-trotters" are cosmopolitan in their ways of life.

To answer these questions, I present the life stories of three "culture-trotters," Yoshi, Ken, and Sara (all pseudonyms), in order to illuminate how they actually cope with movement across cultures and languages and how they work out their own ways of life out of their encounters with different cultures.

Yoshi was born in Korea by a Japanese father and a Korean mother. He spent 14 years in Seoul, and moved to Cape Town, South Africa for high school. Then, he moved to Saitama City, Japan, to Los Angeles, USA, then back to Japan. He first lived in Osaka, then Hamamatsu, and currently in Nagoya and works at a retailing store.

Ken was born in Sendai, Japan, but shortly after birth he moved to Yokohama for a brief period, and moved to New York where he spent 12 years.

At the age of 12, he moved back to Yokohama and attended a high school, a university, and worked at an IT company. Later he moved to Sweden to obtain his graduate degree, and now continues his doctorate studies back in Sendai.

Sara has spent her childhood in various countries including Switzerland, Kuwait, and Canada to follow the steps of her father. After returning to Japan, she attended university and worked in a studio as a designer. Later quit her job to pursue her graduate degree in London. And now she is a freelance designer in Tokyo.

I have conducted intensive interviews with them and collected their stories of life. According to Atkinson, telling a life story is an act of centering and integrating ourselves through gaining a clear understanding of experience, our feelings about them, and their meaning for us (Atkinson 1995). While responding to my interview, by sharing their own life stories with me, Yoshi, Ken, and Sara revisited their lives and were able to tell how the experience of movement from place to another affects their way of life. By listening to their life stories, then, we can understand how they constructed and changed their ways of life through movement across societies and cultures.

Let's take a listen.

## **2. Yoshi's Life Story**

### **The language at Home**

My mother tried to teach me and my younger brother Korean language. All the conversation, she would speak to us in Korean. Every time she spoke to us in Korean, we would reply in Japanese. I mean, I knew, I understood the words she was speaking to us, and we could speak Korean too. But still, we decided to speak back in Japanese to her. So increasingly, we spoke in Japanese. But my mother switched to Korean when she got mad. My mother shouts in Korean when she gets emotional.

So, at home, it was Japanese, all the time. With my brother, it was Japanese, and of course, with my father too. But my father spoke Korean to my

mother.

### **New Year**

We used to go to Japan to spend *Shogatsu* (Japanese New Year) with my father's family in Fukuoka. We spent the *Shogatsu* in Japan, and then did Chinese New Year in Korea. Every year, my father, my brother and I went to Japan, but my mother stayed in Korea.

So we had two *Shogatus* every year. But we only got *Otoshidama* (Japanese New Year Gift) from our Japanese family. If lucky, we would get up to 50,000 yen. How good is that? I spent it all for toys and comic books.

### **Sports**

The Korean Kids in the neighborhood, most of them didn't know I was half Japanese. When I played soccer with them in the park or somewhere, I called myself Chun-Il. When you pronounce the Chinese characters of my name, its pronounced Chun-Il in Korean. And I took used my mother's maiden family name. So, whenever kids ask my name I'd say "춘이야(I'm Chun-Il)." It sounds like Korean name, right? When I got better at playing soccer, they started to respect me for that. I then told them that I'm actually Japanese. When I did so, they were surprised and respected me more. You know what I'm sayin'?

### **Church**

Every Sundays we went to church and prayed. And one day, the minister tells my parents that studying in South Africa is less costly than sending me to Japan for high school. And more so, I get to learn English. My parents bought that advice and decided to send me to South Africa. They even got me an English tutor.

So, at the end of my middle school, I went to Cape Town with associates of the church and stayed at the missionary's house in Korean Community in Cape Town. He was Korean, so the house was Korean too. Everybody spoke Korean in the house. They spent hours praying in Korean. They read the bible in Korean. They even sang in Korean. In the end, I was praying, singing, and playing the hymn with guitar every Sunday morning. And of course, they also pray before they eat too. So, I was like, praying all the fucking time.

## **School in South Africa**

The extracurricular activities at boarding schools are all fancy. They have rugby, polo, cricket and other white rich people's stuff. I wanted to play Soccer, but Soccer was a sport for black people. Whites don't play. They played cricket, or rugby. I used to play cricket just to blend in. Rugby and Cricket are gentlemen's sports. It's played among rich white kids. It was most popular game in school. I had a bald, hairy homeroom teacher, and he told me that, because I ran fast, I should join the lacrosse team and play the goalie. Lacrosse was considered gentlemen's game too. In lacrosse, you had to wear plastic or metal armors on your shoulder and all around your body. I even I had to wear a cup for my dick. There was a school rumor that, a guy from the lacrosse team shared a dick cup with a guy who happened to have AIDS, and he got it too. I was in a situation where the risk of AIDS was face to face.

## **Plastic Surgery**

I hated when they did this<sup>1</sup>, and call me Chinese and shit. This double eyelid is because of that. That's when I began to realize I was Asian, and different from others. I became anxious about my eyelid. I was afraid I would be bullied.

After a year in Cape Town, during summer break, I went back to Seoul for Christmas and *Shogatsu*. I told my mother about this, and there she is, a typical Korean mother. You know, they take appearance as a priority. You gotta look good. That's why they have bunch of plastic surgery clinics in Korea. But, I just did my eyelids. Not a big deal.

I felt a lot of things living in South Africa. The first society I've lived was white rich kid's society, and the kids there, they are fucking racist. They don't give a shit about blacks or coloreds. They think we are shit. I was desperate to get accepted.

## **Life in L.A.**

Life in japan was alright. But it was all empty, you know what I'm sayin'? i was seeing Japan from far. The manga, the movies, the animes, and all the high

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<sup>1</sup> Thinning the eyes by spreading the eyelids with the fingers.

tech stuffs, you know. It makes you feel you longing to live there. But once I started living in Japan, it was all empty. Life in Japan was stable, but I wasn't happy. It was depressing everyday. Living the same routine going back and forth between work and house every single day.

I wanted to get to the States. Out applications were denied, but there was another way to get in. You enroll into a community college for two years, pick up a major, transfer the credits to a four year college and boom! In total of four years you graduate from UCLA. SMA (Santa Monica College) was easy to get in. Just fill the application, send it, and the acceptance letter come with I-20<sup>2</sup>. Everything is gonna be alright. It was a first step to our American Dream. We had high hopes. We were counting on scholarship that we never received. Eventually, we were working overtime just to pay the tuition and life expenses, and nothing on studies.

It's called the "American Dream" because you watch it while you are sleeping. My hopes betrayed me, but it was the most significant life time of my life. i guess, both the experience I had in Cape Town and the LA, made me who I am today. I'm still "in process" though.

### **Friends in LA**

You can meet lots of kind of people in LA. Serious. Masa (my brother) met this creepy fat guy from Computer Science class. And one day, on *Big Blue Bus*<sup>3</sup> on our way home, he offered to suck my dick. I was surprised, "oh Jesus, so you're really gay?" "Thanks, but no thanks." Afterwards, this creeped me out and I decided not to see him again. I have nothing against gays. Though he was exceptionally creepy, I shouldn't have pushed him away. But I learned a lot from him All the *Otaku* (nerds) culture that I've obtained, is all because of him. He taught me all these interesting *anime* and such. We used to hang out a lot. Moreover, he used to help me with the assignments from Computer Science class too.

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<sup>2</sup> Certificate of eligibility for nonimmigrants.

<sup>3</sup> Municipal bus operated in Santa Monica region of Los Angeles.

Caucasians and Japanese students were working in the dining area of the sushi restaurant, but the kitchen staff were all Mexicanos. They often told me their war stories of crossing the border. Stories like, how they dug a hole and crawled into, and how they jumped over the wall to cross into the States. The security dude, the dude from *Yakitori*, and everyone were sayin' stuffs in Spanish like, "Tengo que cuidar a mi familia (I got to feed my family)!" It seemed as if they were trying to engrave their proof of life on me by telling me those stories. Isn't it cool that I understood all this?

### **Kimchi**

The Kimchi you get in Korea Town is awesome. It's better than the Kimchin you buy in Japan. My mother came to LA with us, and the first place we went to was Korea Town, where we bought lots of kimchi and stored them in our fridge. It was a matter of course for a Korean mother, you know. Koreans have this idea that rice, seaweed and kimchi is an ideal combination of diet. They even think that nothing supersedes Korean food, and they can't even stand or accept other culture's food. I grew up eating Kimchi, but I could live without it. I have no particulars for food. I was eating whatever food it was available.

*Braai* is a South African Barbeque. It's a feast of meat. It was a recreation for white people. They often do *Braai* and have red wine at the beach. Black people don't do *Braai*. Maybe they do, but I've never seen it. I used to eat lamb wrapped with *Sangchu* (lettuce), like Korean barbeque. It was a mixture of both South African and Korean food.

I love Chilly Cheese Fries. Amazing, man. My favorite foods are burgers, pizza, and Chilly Cheese Fries. Fast food was the only crap I was eating in LA. I often ate Teriyaki bowl at a nearby mall, and Burger King whoppers near college.

### **No Home**

Ever since I was born, I knew that that's not the place I would go back. I'd say I go back to Korea but that's it. I could say the same with South Africa and the States. I don't belong anywhere. I was an outsider to begin with.

I'm not Japanese, nor Korean, nor African, nor American. I'm always an outsider. I am an outsider, but wherever I was living, people treated me like I

was one of them. Japanese, Korean, African, American, you feelin' me?

### **3. Ken's Life Story**

I started nursery school in the States. I observed my environment and listened to what people were saying. I didn't know what they were saying. But I would imitate what they were saying. And I remember the very first imitation I did. "I saw you yesterday." The white kid with blond hair sitting next to me was saying that. And I didn't know what it meant. But when he said it, it seemed to me he was accepted in this, you know, community, the nursery school. So I imitated him, because I wanted to be accepted in that community, too. As a kid, I said it, having no idea what it meant. I said it again and again. But nothing happened. And I was thinking like, "What am I doing it wrong." As a kid I thought that way. I remember trying really hard to listen to what they were saying, 'cause, I think, as a kid I was outside the circle.

#### **Lunch box**

I was bringing sandwiches my mother made with an apple and some candies inside a paper bag. No, hold on. I had a metal, steal, or aluminum lunch box. One with a handle to carry. You were measured by the picture painted on your lunch box, whether you were cool or not cool.

Carrying the right lunch box was the most important thing in school. Lunch box with a picture of "Transformers" was considered the coolest. If there is anything above that, it's the three dimensional Transformers lunch box. The surface of the lunch box bulged in the shape of a robot. So, it looks like it's coming out of the surface. If you bring that to school your "Cool-O-Meter" is high. The attention you get from people for being too cool, it's sensational. That's why the lunch box in school society is very important. I used to have GI JOE, Transformers, He-Man, Thundercats, and M.A.S.K. Any picture of what we called hero on a lunch box was considered cool. So, having Scooby Doo picture on your lunch box was not cool at all. That was lame.

## **Oppressed**

My Parents told me we were going back to Japan. They told me a year in advance about going back to Japan. I used to go back to Japan every once in a while, so, when I got the news that we're moving to Japan, I got excited. Because the confectionaries tasted good, there're lots of fun toys, and more over I get to see my grandmother.

When I went back to Japan, when I was 12, I faced a lot of problems. I wasn't able to speak Japanese. So, when I introduced myself in the class, I said "boku no namae wa Ken desu" with an accent. Then, in the class, there're 40 to 50 classmates. I thought it was huge. And what was terrifying was that everybody would do the same thing together, say the same thing, act the same way. It looked like they had no individuality and were all united.

## **I lost confidence**

I stood out since the first day of school in Japan. The rumor spreads quick. People were talking about the new guy from New York. "Oh, *Gaijin*, *Gaijin*." Typical Japanese reaction. I was popular among girls. And I always liked to get attention from people.

I was bragger too. I used to say things like "I'm the fastest runner in school," "I'm good at playing soccer," "I can run 50 meters in 7 seconds," and things like that. But then, everyone was actually better than me. Sports-wise, I mean. I couldn't beat anyone in running or in soccer. I was shocked. So, I lost my confidence.

Being a bragger only brought me troubles. The rumor spread all around the school and even to middle schools. So the guys from middle school would come to my elementary school and look up for me and started teasing and bullying me. At that time, I was called "*Amelikan*." They would beat the shit out of me for being a bragger.

## **Typical**

In middle school, I brought a Bento-box. Of course not a sandwich in a metal lunch box with transformer picture. My mother cooked Japanese lunch for me every day. Like, meatballs, *Tamagoyaki*, and so on. Completely Japanese

style.

I felt I was oppressed, specifically in middle school. Perhaps the situation of having a massive number of students in school, or the totalitarian education system was causing people to kill individuality. You know? The system made them a robot? Maybe my desire to be integrated into the Japanese society synchronized with the pressure of the system. When in Rome, do as the Romans do? I had to imitate what everybody else was doing in order to live like Japanese.

### **Mysterious**

I think I got the rhythm now, the Japanese cultural rhythm, superficially, at least. I mastered how to be integrated into a new society, superficially. Yet, I don't understand what Japanese consider as "*Futsuu* (normal)." 'Cause it's not normal for me. In many ways, what they consider *Futsuu* were far from my values. There are some habits that I acquired myself that I considered abnormal. For example, going home together with someone after school and going to the toilet together with someone. Doing everything together is considered important in this society. I couldn't understand. Why do I have to do all these things together? In the end, I acquired all those habits myself, because if you don't, you're a loser. I wanted to be accepted in this new environment. So, I acquired those habits, even though they were against my values and standards.

Why wear the same suit for "*Shushoku-Katsudo* (job hunting)?" But, nobody was questioning why. They all were doing the same thing like a soldier, as if they all read from the same text book. They all apply for job at the same place, say the same thing. Everybody applies to a company which everybody considered to be the "good company." Your friends would say, "Wow you got accepted by IBM !!" "Wow you got accepted by Hewlett Packard !!" Companies like NTT docomo was considered to be "wow." That's their standards of choosing a workplace, by popularity.

My friends were applying to those companies, too. That was the world I was living in. The world in front of me was the only world I had to live in. Though I was feeling a little sense of strangeness and resistance, that was the only world I knew, so I accepted it. I didn't know how to choose my way of life from the vast

ocean, but I was forced to settle with a way of life presented to me in a narrow stream.

### **Robot**

I was thinking about how to become a competent human resource. Since I was a small kid, I was trying to be integrated into Japan, so, unconsciously I was thinking about how I should behave, think, and talk in order to get accepted. I was always living with anxiety. I was always thinking about “what is normal in this society?” In order to answer these questions, I made a lot of observations. I observed what were the qualifications for being “*sugoi*” (great). But the qualifications had nothing to do with his personality. What mattered was how he functioned at the workplace. It doesn’t matter how much time a person spends in voluntary work or humanitarian work. It’s all about his achievements at work. If he increases the profits of the company, then he is qualified as “*sugoi*.” I used to look down on a person who wouldn’t commit himself to becoming a robot.

I wanted to be seen as qualified and acceptable. I observe the people living in that society. How they talk, how they act, how they think. I would imitate, and even adopt their standards of good and bad. Just to get accepted in that society.

## **4. Sara’s Life Story**

### **Friends**

We had a lot of family friends in Switzerland. Among Japanese, there was a girl named Hanako, who happened to be the only Japanese girl in my kindergarten. And her parents were friends of my parents too. There was a Swiss-Japanese family too. The father was Swiss and the mother was Japanese, and they had a son named Nicole and a daughter named Mariko, and we were about the same age. And we still keep in touch today.

There weren’t many Japanese families living in Switzerland back then. So, Japanese families helped each other. They helped each other by exchanging information about the neighborhoods, shops, schools and so forth. So, we still maintain contacts with them, I guess.

The Krahenbuhls were a German-Swiss family. They had two boys. Mr. Krahenbuhls and my father were co-workers. Their house was located in a suburb of Basel. We were invited to their house every seasonal holiday for a party. Santa Clause comes and visits the house. He asked us if we were good boys and girls. And of course I answered "yes." But then, Santa Clause asks for a talent show. So I sang. And the performance is the proof that I've been a good girl, and at the end of the show, I'd receive a gift. But when the boys failed to prove they were good boys, another Santa Clause dressed in a pitch black cloth would come. He had a huge bag. They say Black Santa put bad children into his bag. He was scary.

### **Kuwait**

We moved to Kuwait in July. It was in the middle of summer. It gets up to 50 degrees Celsius. We moved to Kuwait in July and I left to Japan in August a year later. Technically speaking, I lived in Kuwait for a year. Then, the Gulf War erupted.

There was an Iraqi family living across our house. I used to play with the kid. One day, we were playing with my toys, the building blocks. One block had a picture of a pig on its surface. Then, the kid said he couldn't play with it because he said it was filthy. Muslims don't eat pigs. They can't even touch it, even a picture of a pig.

I became aware of differences of religion. Outside the house, you could listen to Adhan, you could see women wearing Hijab to cover their skin, you find all these things around you, and you realize the difference. That was my first time being introduced to differences of religion.

I was surrounded by Japanese kids at the Japanese School of Kuwait for the first time in my life since I had been away from Japan and lived in foreign countries for years. Even so, I never felt surprised or shocked or estranged, because I had read Japanese fairy tales like "*Hanasaka Jiisan*" (Flower-blossoming Grandpa) which was taught at the school. But, I didn't fit in well. You know, before coming to Kuwait, I lived in Basel, which was a part of Switzerland where German or English was spoken as the first language. I don't mean I was

fluent in English, though I had an English tutor. I wouldn't have fitted in an International School either.

### **Nagata**

I enrolled in Nagata Elementary School in the second semester of the first grade. So, that's September, right? Wasn't it normal for Nagata to have new kids transferring in every semester? Anyway, I remember, my morning started early there. I woke up at around 6:10 and left the house before 7:00. I used to run around the school yard every morning before classes started. The first and the second graders ran inside the school yard, but third graders and above ran outside the school block. The boys took off their shirts and ran in their white underwear. I thought that was how we were supposed to do! So I took off my shirt and ran with all the boys just wearing my underclothing which had a tiny ribbon at the neck. But a teacher rushed to stop me. I was told to put on my cloth. Why couldn't I run in my underwear like the other boys?

### **Canada**

My father was transferred to Canada. I enrolled into junior high school, then move on to high school. I think I did pretty well in school as a foreign student. But my grades were not consistent. I was good at art classes. I was good at math and natural science as well. But I got barely passing grades in English and social studies. First of all, I wasn't good at English. Math and natural science are just symbols, right? I didn't have to understand the language in order to calculate or to follow logic. However, history and social science are different matters. To do well in these subjects, you needed not just good English but also basic understanding of society through your lived experience.

### **School in Canada**

Basically, I brought *Obento* (homemade lunch) to school. It was usually Japanese food. Often *Onigiri* (rice balls) or sandwiches in a plastic *Obento* box. Everyone else had sandwiches and apples and carrot sticks in a paper bag. Mother always gave me an *Obento* box, so I envied those who went to buy their lunch at the cafeteria.

When I was living in Canada, I was basically studying all the time. I even

had tutors. I went to a painting class, and a Japanese language school every Saturday. So, I didn't have time to make friends or to hang out with someone.

I knew I was leaving Canada in two years beforehand. Besides, it wasn't my decision to move to Canada. I had to go because my father had to. And when he left Canada I had to leave, too. I think that was one of the reasons why I didn't make friends. I didn't want to make any relationship that would bring me into tears when the goodbye comes. I hated to say goodbyes.

### **Sense of Comradeship**

The middle school I attended before going to Canada was attached to a high school, too. So, when I returned from Canada, my parents asked the principle to let me enroll in that high school. My former classmates were in there, so I recognized them all.

I used to write English in cursive, and it is slightly slanted, isn't it? I developed a habit of writing Japanese letters also in slanted style. My art teacher didn't like this at all. She said that I was trying to look cool, that I was a saucy returnee from Canada, or that I was westernized but it was only skin-deep.

There were some Japanese habits I didn't agree with. Anyone asking me to *Tsureshon*<sup>4</sup> with them, I'd say, "go by yourself." There's another thing that involves toilet. Girls in a class usually have the same menstruation cycle. So, two to three girls go to the toilet together and peel the napkin at the same time. By doing so, they were able not to reveal who made the sound of peeling the napkin off from the underwear. They felt ashamed if others noticed that they were in the period. Maybe, their sense of comradeship made them do such a thing.

### **Studying abroad**

I quit my job because I wanted to study abroad. If I didn't do it by then, it would have been late. I could not make up my mind if I should go to the Netherlands or to the UK. The postgraduate studies in the Netherlands were taught in English, but my financial capabilities didn't allow me to go there. I could do the same thing in London in a year, while it would take two years in

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<sup>4</sup> Going to the bathroom in a group.

Netherlands. Besides, I had to consider my living expenses too.

Both part-time and full-time students were in the major I took. Part-timers were British and full-timers were mostly foreign students. There were twenty full-timers and only one was British, and she became my friend.

She and I had a lot in common. We both had worked before enrolling there and we were both in late 20s. She likes to cook. She brought her own *obento*. And she likes “Totoro” (A character in a Japanese animated cartoon). I never spoke Japanese besides talking to my parents in Dubai over Skype.

### **Homesick**

My family never had a stable home. I mean we had a house that my parents bought in Japan but they were never there. When I was in college in Japan or when I was in London, I called my parents at home but they were in Kuwait or Dubai.

It would be weird to feel homesick. I was crying every day in Canada. But I never cried in London. Maybe because going to London was my own choice, while going to Canada was not.

## **5. Discussion**

What can we learn from these three life-stories? Now, I would like to discuss the relevance of their stories for the anthropology of cosmopolitanism.

Yoshi, Ken, and Sara moved to multiple countries following their parents. They’ve acquired their own sense of self as they grew older. The destinations they chose were both national and international. The common motives of their movement were to study abroad.

The first thing we notice from Yoshi, Ken, and Sara’s stories is that they all acquired multiple language skills and learned different cultural codes as they move from one society to another. They all show mastery of cultures that they encountered (Hannerz 1992). They all use different languages and apply different cultural codes as situations demand. Ken would conform to what he saw as the Japanese standard of excellence at workplace, and Yoshi would go as far as

having plastic surgery to reconstruct his physical appearance in conformity with the white standard of good look. They certainly have constructed their own unique personal perspectives out of idiosyncratic collection of experiences as Hannerz argues, and they all have demonstrated "competence" in coping with different cultures (Hannerz 1996:104). However, contrary to Hannerz, they not only acquired pieces of cultures that suit them but also internalized pieces of cultures that did not suit them personally in order to "pass" (Rapport 2012) as a member of society in which they happened to be. I therefore conclude first that "culture-trotters" show certain characteristics of cosmopolitan individuals.

With respect to attitude toward differences, however, Yoshi, Ken, and Sara show not only willingness to engage cultural others but also strong resistance to dominant cultural practices that they encountered in school and other places. Ken and Sara tell the story of this conflict in a conspicuous manner. Despite Ken's strong feeling of resistance and conflicts between his own and Japanese standards, he eventually adopted the Japanese one. Sara refused to make close friends and tried to create a living environment suitable to herself in Canada. Their decision to engage cultural others or not was greatly influenced by their subjective orientations. They may conform to the norm imposed upon them but their conformity definitely does not mean total acceptance. They therefore are both tolerant and intolerant towards cultural differences. The point is that their intolerance does not mean outright rejection. They may intolerantly comply with the dominant cultural practices of the society in which they happen to live. They may comply with the social norm without accepting it as genuinely good. The three "culture-trotters" seem to agree with Kromidas that they may be both tolerant and intolerant of certain cultural practices (Kromidas 2011). But their intolerance does not necessarily lead to rejection or resistance.

Finally, the question of "home" remains unsolved. None of the three "culture-trotters" I examined are cosmopolitan patriots in Appiah's sense (Appiah 1997). They do not belong to any particular community at least for the moment. Their stories often reveal their longing for "home." But, their stories also make it clear that they do not wish to be tied to any particular "home" at least at the

present stage of their life course. Can they live their lives without having a “home” somewhere? Should they desire to have a “home,” would it be a conventional one in certain fixed place or an unconventional one in an entirely different form? In short, can a cosmopolitan live his or her life without having a “home” somewhere? Moreover, what is “home” to a person living in contemporary world? Cosmopolitan life may be played out by “anyone.” According to Rapport “Anyone” is a human actor who has the capacity to ‘pass’ as member of any social grouping of any cultural tradition and has the capacity to create and recreate their identities (Rapport 2012). But, where does that anyone live? Can he or she live anywhere? Or, does he or she require somewhere to belong? I shall continue to explore if “culture-trotters” need some place to settle down.

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