<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>著者</th>
<th>佐藤一郎</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>発行機関</td>
<td>東北人類学論壇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>書籍名</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>巻数</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ページ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>年号</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10097/57280">http://hdl.handle.net/10097/57280</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Imagined Commonality: Rethinking “Ethnicity” through Personal Experience in Hawaii

Ichiro Numazaki

Introduction

This paper examines my own “ethnic experience” in Honolulu, Hawaii, and attempts to analyze the nature of connectedness that I felt in that experience. I was a “Japanese” intern at the East West Center for one year from October 1985 to September 1986: 27 when I arrived and turned 28 when I left. Hawaii was but one page in my youthful life history and the most significant script on that page was my “ethnic” awakening. I experienced many things that appeared “ethnic” to me.

As a student in anthropology, I knew the theories of ethnicity current at that time but I felt that none of them really helped me understand what I was experiencing. I tried to make sense of my “ethnic” experience but did not really think through it then: I had to leave Hawaii for my dissertation research in Taiwan, and the three years there would profoundly affect me. But I never forgot my experience in Hawaii, which remains a unique chapter in my life story. That is to say, one year in Hawaii was quite different from my life before or since. In this paper, I shall describe my experience and my interpretation of it back then, while rethinking these experiences today in light of my personal life and of more recent discussion of ethnicity. This paper is my second attempt at “auto-anthropology,” and is a sequel to my essay on ethnoperipheralism (Numazaki 2013).

Before coming to Hawaii, I spent three years in East Lansing, Michigan, as a graduate student in anthropology at Michigan State University, which was predominantly a “white” institution. I was a “foreigner” among mostly “white”

1 I shall write about my Taiwan experience more fully elsewhere.
Americans as I had been in Buffalo, New York, some twenty years before (Numazaki 2013). As I explained in the previous article (Numazaki 2013), my American experience in Buffalo instilled in me many American habits and made me “ethnoperipheral” back in Sendai, my home city. To many people around me, I was an “Americanized” kid who behaved differently from them. This made me think that I was American enough and fitted better to America than to Japan, but I discovered in Michigan that I was a “foreign” student after all, although Michigan was very much like the “America” that I had known in my early childhood.2

Honolulu, Hawaii, was totally different from the “America” I knew in that it was not so “white” but full of “Asians.” In particular, I encountered many “Japanese Americans” inside and outside the East West Center. They were “like me” in many ways, or so I thought. I felt strong sense of being connected to them. I had never felt such connectedness to Japanese students at Michigan State University. I had of course experienced a little bit of marginality and felt a certain sense of comradeship with minority students there. However, I had never felt that I was connected to any “ethnic” group. But, I found such a group of people in Hawaii, and I thought that I had personally experienced “ethnicity” for the first time in my life. Further, I have not had such an “ethnic experience” since then. It was only in Hawaii that I felt something “ethnic.” I therefore would like to revisit my experience and reexamine its nature.

My “Ethnic” Experience in Hawaii, 1985-86

(1) “My name is Ichiro Numazaki”

My “ethnic experience” started even before I moved to Honolulu. I had to make several phone calls to the East West Center in order to arrange various matters for my stay. I was astonished by the fact that nobody who received my

2 A brief description about my experience as a foreign student is offered in Numazaki (2012).
call ever said anything when I told them my name. In the three years I spent in East Lansing, I acquired a habit of spelling my name on the phone. When I said “my name is Ichiro Numazaki” on the phone, I always expected reactions like “Who?” or “What?” or “How do you spell it?” I always had to reply, “My last name is nu·ma·za·ki, n as in Nancy, u as in university, m as in mother, ....” And still the person on the phone often got my name wrong. But secretaries at the East West Center seemed to have no problem memorizing and writing down my name. What a surprise! It was a minor instance of culture shock. I guessed that all the secretaries might be “Japanese Americans” but once in Honolulu I found out that some were but that others were not.

It was the same wherever I went. Every secretary at the East West Center was able to spell my name regardless of their ethnic affiliations. Even the “whites” or “Haole”—as they were called in Hawaii—did not ask me “How do you spell it?” I did not have to spell my name at a local bank when I opened a new account. I did not have to spell my name when I made appointments on the phone. It was a very pleasant experience. In fact, it is no surprise that people in Honolulu are used to Japanese-style names, with such a large Japanese American population. Yet it was a big surprise to me that I, an alien, did not have to spell my alien name for the locals. I was still in “America.” I was still speaking in English. Yet, I did not have to spell my name. I was so happy to be freed from this cumbersome and frustrating necessity that I started to like Honolulu.

Numazaki is not a common surname even in Japan, and definitely rare in Hawaii. But people were used to four syllabled surnames like Matsunaga and Kaneshiro and Takahashi and so on and so forth, so my last name was no problem for them. And, Ichiro? How many Ichiros do you think were among the first and second generations Japanese Americans? My name was not “alien” to the people of Honolulu at all—not just to Japanese Americans but to all people in Hawaii. Finding out that my name did not mark me, I began to feel that I could belong there.
I realized then that the necessity and habit of spelling my full name was a constant reminder of my foreignness and thus my marginality in Michigan. Freed from this necessity and habit, I no longer was constantly reminded of my foreignness and was freed from feeling marginal. It was a pleasant surprise for me. I learned in Hawaii that there was a place in “America” where I did not have to assume foreignness.

On the other hand, I continued to request everyone around to call me “Ichy.” I was not used to being called “Ichiro” in English conversation and did not like the strange pronunciations of it by Americans. And in fact, no one in Japan called me “Ichiro” except perhaps my father—even he rarely addressed me as “Ichiro.” So, I simply did not want to be called “Ichiro” and insisted on being called “Ichy” in Hawaii as in Michigan.

I was happy being “Ichy” in “America.” I was happier in Hawaii than in Michigan, however, because I did not have to spell my full name on the phone or at the reception desk. I did not stand out as an alien and I was still in “America.”

(2) “Oh, you are from Sendai”

Back in Michigan, nobody knew Sendai, my home city, so I always had to explain that it was a city about 250 miles north of Tokyo—and I had to convert kilometers into miles. A non-cartographical explanation did not ring a bell for the average Middle American and conversation ended there, or worse it went astray. For instance, when I said “north of Tokyo,” someone might say “Hokkaido?” I then had to say “no, not that north!” Of course I knew that a fellow who said “Hokkaido?” was trying to be nice to me. He or she were mobilizing their knowledge of Japan trying their best to “connect” to me. But the very fact that their follow-up question betrayed such ignorance made it impossible for me to feel any instant affective connection to them. He or she could be trying to reach out as best as they could but this failed to touch me. Whenever this kind of situation happened, I always felt that we lived in two
separate worlds.

In Hawaii, I got different reactions from Japanese Americans: “Oh, you are from Sendai. My family is from Hiroshima.” “Oh, you are from Tohoku. My family is from Kyushu.” They often knew the geography. We shared a same map. Such conversations proved that they really knew where I was from. And, knowing that they knew instantly made the conversations we shared meaningful for me. We knew how our worlds were “placed” with respect to each other. But, Hiroshima and Kyushu were different worlds from mine. I did not feel an intimate connection to Hiroshima or Kyushu.

And then, I had a totally different experience at a clinic I visited for a chest X-ray. At that time, outsiders who were to spend a year or more in Hawaii were required to prove that they did not have tuberculosis. I had to take an X-ray test since I was inoculated for it in Japan. A tuberculin reaction test would have been positive even if I did not have tuberculosis. So, I went to a designated clinic for an X-ray.

An old Japanese American nurse received me and asked, “Where are you from?” I answered “I am from Sendai.” Then, she said, “Oh you are from Sendai. My family is from Shiogama.” She affectionately said “Sendai” and “Shiogama,” or so I felt. Her words touched my heart. I do not remember the rest of our conversation but I still remember the warmth I felt in my heart. It was a new sensation for me. I had never experienced such warmth with someone I met for the first time. And that sensation was triggered by the word “Shiogama.” Tears welled up in my eyes. Shiogama is a port city near Sendai. I had been there a number of times. The fish on my dish at home often came from Shiogama. Shiogama was part of my “home world.” The nurse in front of me was intimately tied to my “home world” through her parents and kinfolk. I strongly felt that she and I were connected.

I would not have felt the same sensation if this had happened in Japan. But meeting someone who not only knew Sendai but has ancestry in Shiogama was something I had not expected at all in Honolulu, Hawaii. It was a big
surprise and it moved me deeply. However, I do not think I would have felt the same if she had just been a tourist in Waikiki. She was a second generation Japanese American who lived and worked in Honolulu. I thought she was like me. Both of us “lived” there and were “tied” to a distant place of origin. That I was deeply moved also surprised me a lot. I wondered what it was that moved me so much.

The anthropologist part of me started to ask, “Is this ethnicity?” Two major theories of ethnicity current at that time were primordialism à la Clifford Geertz (1973[1963]) and instrumentalism or situationalism à la Fredrik Barth (1969). Neither explained my sense of connection to the nurse from Shiogama. I did not feel that she and I shared a common root, let alone anything primordial, although I did feel that we came from the same locality. And there was nothing instrumental about our interaction. My feeling was that her life and mine touched each other at two points: back in the Sendai-Shiogama area, which was my “home” as well as hers, and also in Honolulu. I thought then that our life worlds overlapped in concrete places that were dear to both of us and it was this overlap that provided the connection between us. We were “in touch” with each other.

At any rate, I was surprised by the fact that I was emotionally moved by the Sendai-Shiogama connection. I thought I was a cosmopolitan and was immune to such a locally or ethnically motivated sense of connection.3 I thought I was a rationalist of a Marxian bent and was immune to such “false consciousness” like localism or ethnicity. And yet, here I was, strongly shaken by the feeling of connection. False or not, I was now conscious of my “ethnic” tie to a person whose origin was located in my “home.” My “ethnic” consciousness was “real” indeed.

I thought I had discovered a new dimension of ethnicity, a personal sense of connectedness that was more immediate and intimate than primordial, more

---

3 At that time, I was not aware of the notion of “rooted cosmopolitanism” or “patriotic cosmopolitanism” (Appiah 2005, 2006). I shall return to the issue of cosmopolitanism later.
sentimental and sensorial than instrumental. I shall return to this problem later.

Occasionally, I did play with the question “Where are you from?” by answering “from Michigan.” The conversation went like this:

“Where are you from?”
“Michigan”
“Oh?”
“Well, I’m a student at Michigan State University.”
“Oh, you went to the mainland for study. Your family must be proud of you.”

So, I could “use” my Japanese look and fluent English to pass as a local boy who made it to the mainland. But it did not give me any advantage in Hawaii. Well, passing as a local sometimes allowed me to strike up a conversation about Japanese tourists with local Japanese Americans and share their complaints about “those Japanese” from Japan. These instances showed that I was able to manipulate my ethnicity to a certain extent, and doing so allowed me to gain some knowledge of the perspectives of Japanese Americans in Hawaii, for example, how they saw the US mainland or Japan. Was this an advantage I gained by my ability to “use” ethnicity? I did not think so. Besides, I did not have any serious disadvantage to begin with—as an academic at a research institute, I held a privileged position as opposed to, say, a Vietnamese refugee. I concluded—naively perhaps—that instrumentalism was secondary to the sense of connectedness in my experience of “things ethnic” in Hawaii.

(3) “Bento” for Lunch

On the very first day that I started to work at East West Center, I was amazed to find “bento” at a food stand in front of the entrance of the Center. “Bento” is a Japanese word for meal-in-a-box, and the word had entered Hawaiian English. I bought a “pork tonkatsu bento.” “Pork tonkatsu” or a Japanese-style breaded, deep fried pork cutlet, rice and some vegetables were
neatly packed in a clear plastic box. “Waribashi” or disposable half-split chopsticks came with it. I got a real “bento” for lunch for the first time in more than three years. Back at my office, I put it on my desk, opened it up, split the chopsticks, and started to eat. It was a real “tonkatsu,” by which I mean it looked and tasted like the ones that I was used to in Japan.

The “bento” stand opened every weekday. Several kinds of “bento” were sold, not just tonkatsu and tempura but also Korean barbeque beef. Not only Japanese Americans, but many others, bought them for lunch. Moreover, Americans of Japanese, Korean, or Chinese origin were not the only people who could eat with chopsticks easily. Everybody knew the word “bento.” Eating Japanese-style bento with chopsticks was part of everyday life in Hawaii.

The fact that I could get a “bento” for lunch whenever I wanted was of course a great surprise for someone like me from Michigan. Was I delighted? Yes, but only to a certain degree. I did not miss “bento” in Michigan. I used to bring a ham and cheese sandwich to my office. In fact, I was not a big fan of “bento” in Japan. So, I almost forgot about “bento.” I was therefore amazed to rediscover “bento” for lunch in Hawaii.

What I enjoyed most was mixing with the crowd in front of the “bento” stand at the entrance. People came, looked at different “bento” boxes, picked up one, talked with the shopkeeper, paid the money, and left for their offices. I would also line up, look around and talk with people. Needless to say, we were talking in English. But we were getting more or less authentic Japanese-style “bento.” Many people were dressed in Aloha shirts or Moo-moo dresses. It was this whole combination of things American, Japanese and Hawaiian that I truly enjoyed. I liked the mixture because I myself was a mixed product of Japan and America, and now Hawaii, too, as I also wore an Aloha shirt. My early childhood experience in Buffalo, New York, injected in me a heavy dose of the “American” way of life (Numazaki 2013), and my “American” way was reinforced by three years spent in East Lansing, Michigan. And yet, of course I was a “Japanese” in many ways. In Hawaii, I was able to have it both ways for
the first time in my life. Moreover, nobody questioned my doing so! Everyone around me was mixing American and Japanese ways. I was behaving just like everyone else, and that was unusual for me to do either in Japan or in the United States.

Back in Michigan, a fellow research assistant—a “white” American—once found me munching a doughnut with a coffee mug in my hand. He said, “Doughnut and coffee? You’re so American.” I took his remark as a sign of my foreignness. He said that only because he knew I was a foreign student and I looked alien in his eyes. I just smiled but I was not happy at all. I often had a doughnut and coffee in Japan, too. “Doughnut and coffee” was a habit of mine, part of my way of life regardless of where I was. I was not forced to follow an American way.

That kind of incident did not happen in Hawaii at all. I was not strange. I was not foreign. I could be me, and being me did not mark me as an alien or an aberrant.

(4) “Here comes Shamisenya!”

There was a small Japanese restaurant near East West Center. It looked more like a “shokudo 食堂” than a “resutoran レストラン” to me. An elderly Japanese American couple owned it. Grandpa was in the kitchen and grandma served customers in the small dining place. They served several set menus for supper. The first set I ate there was called “pork tofu.” The main dish was a stew of pork, tofu and vegetables. It was flavored with soy sauce and sweet Japanese rice wine. The dish came with a bowl of rice and miso soup. They had “beef tofu,” too, and it tasted like sukiyaki.

They had a TV set on the wall. One day, it was showing a Japanese drama called “hissatsu shigotonin 必殺仕事人” with English subtitles. I had watched that drama series in Japan before going to the United States. It was a drama about assassins in the Edo period who were paid to kill bad guys in power on behalf of their victims who were not able to seek revenge by themselves. The
female leader of the assassins was called “shamisenya” because she ostensibly was a player of shamisen, a traditional Japanese stringed instrument. She always appeared playing a shamisen and killed bad guys with a plectrum. Grandma brought me a plate just when the character appeared on TV. Grandma looked at it and said, “Oh, here comes shamisenya!”

Here again, I felt strong sense of connection to her. It was grandma’s English expression, “here comes shamisenya,” that triggered my feeling of connectedness. But, my feeling was generated by the whole situation in which I found her and myself: a Japanese restaurant in Honolulu that served more or less authentic Japanese food, a Japanese American grandma serving me and watching a Japanese TV drama, me eating Japanese food also watching the drama and speaking English with the grandma. As in the case of the “bento” stand, it was the combination of things Hawaiian, Japanese and American that made me feel connected to this grandma. We both “lived” in Hawaii now and yet we both could and did relate to a Japanese drama produced in Japan. The drama did not represent a primordial root. On the contrary, it represented the popular culture of contemporary Japan, which happened to be part of the popular culture of Japanese Americans in contemporary Hawaii. Here again, the grandma’s life world touched mine.

I frequented this Japanese restaurant not only to eat Japanese food but to watch this grandma and to enjoy the mixture of things Hawaiian, Japanese and American. I found the place and its atmosphere very cozy. And I increasingly found Honolulu a cozy place to live.

(5) “Hawaii’s own Hayami Yu”

There was a Japanese radio station in Honolulu, and the radio in my room was tuned to its frequency. Listening to both national news of the United States and local news of Hawaii in Japanese was an interesting experience. I continued to listen to NPR, too, as I had in Michigan. I was able to hear the same news in Japanese and English, and that was interesting. Occasionally,
the Japanese spoken on this Hawaiian radio station was archaic. For instance, lottery was called tomikuji not takarakuji. The word tomikuji was used only in historical dramas on TV in Japan. Such a minor difference reminded me that I was listening to the Japanese used in Hawaii.

The late night program was for the young, and the hosts of the show were also young Japanese Americans. They mostly spoke in English but were airing Japanese popular songs in Japanese and were talking about the music world of Japan. Listening to this program allowed me to catch up on what was hot in Japan then.

One young female singer popular at the time was Hayami Yu. She was born in Japan but raised in Guam and Hawaii before she moved alone to Japan to become a singer. So, a host of the late night programs introduced her as “Hawaii’s own Hayami Yu.” When I heard it, I realized the hosts had some sense of attachment to her. I felt close to her, too, as I was living in Hawaii at that time.

Listening to this late night show of Japanese popular songs presented in English was like watching a Japanese drama with the aforementioned grandma at her Japanese restaurant. Things Japanese were situated in American Hawaii. The hosts of the radio program were attached to both Japanese songs and Hawaii. That grandma was attached to both Japanese dramas and Hawaii. I felt connected to the radio hosts and that grandma because I too was attached to Japanese songs and dramas and Hawaii.

I also sympathized with a Hawaiian Sumo wrestler Konishiki. His parents were Samoan migrants, but he was Hawaii’s own Sumo wrestler after Takамиやま. He was struggling to get promoted to prestigious Ozeki status and if successful then he would become the first foreigner to attain that status. I knew that many Japanese Sumo fans in Japan both loved and hated him at the same time. Foreign Sumo wrestlers were still very few in those days and they were seen both as a welcome addition and a threat to the Japanese national sport.
One day, I found an interview with Konishiki in a local magazine. The interview was done in English and Konishiki was expressing his candid view of Sumo and Japan in a way he would never do in Japan. I remember him saying “That gaman shit!” Gaman (がまん) is a Japanese word for endurance, patience, and perseverance at all costs. Gamansuru means you put up with something that no one can put up with, endure the unendurable and tolerate the untolerable. It even meant that you must put up with harassment by your superiors and seniors. Konishiki was complaining that “gaman” was overemphasized in the Sumo world to the point of irrationality. I fully agreed with him. Gaman was emphasized and overemphasized not only in Sumo but also in school or home. I myself was always criticized for lacking gaman in elementary and secondary schools in Sendai. So, when I read Konishiki’s words, I said, “Yah, that gaman shit!” aloud.

That Konishiki was from Hawaii and that he was struggling in Japan made me feel connected to him. One of the reasons that I had wanted to go to the United States for graduate study was that I did not want to “gaman” in a tight “vertical society” of Japanese graduate school. Konishiki on the other hand jumped into the even tighter “vertical society” of the Sumo world. Konishiki reminded me of my “American” ways that annoyed so many people around me in Japan. Konnishiki was placed in an “ethnoperipheral” position just like me (Numazaki 2013). And he was not even Japanese as I was!

So I felt that Japanese Americans and I shared attachment to both Japan and Hawaii, while I also felt that Konishiki and I shared certain resentment of Japan. And, both made me feel connected to Hawaii and its people vis-à-vis America and Japan.

---

4 Paul Hansen argues that Hokkaido offers a similarly cosmopolitan space for domestic migrants “often tempered with escape, healing, and a distaste for what is viewed as typical Japoneseness” (Hansen 2012: 142).
It was the strangest Halloween I ever experienced. Literally all kinds of non-white people were dressed up in costumes and they outnumbered “whites.” A Japanese American witch for example was typing something, and a native Hawaiian fairy was at the reception desk. We all got together for Halloween lunch at a lounge, and we all were using chopsticks to eat Korean barbecue “bento.” The word “hybridity” was not yet in vogue, but had I known the word then, I would surely have used it to describe that Halloween I experienced.

I thought this was hilarious and I loved it! The weather, the people, and the food were “all wrong” for Halloween I thought, but precisely that wrongness was the source of fun. The wrongness made this Halloween “ours.”

I realized that I had regarded Halloween a “white” institution. They, the “white” people, dressed up in costumes of “American” comics and fairy tales. In Michigan I lived in a university apartment, so I always prepared candies for Halloween. Children knocked at my door, and surely some of them were Korean Batman or Chinese Superman, but these were clearly a minority. Their presence, or my participation for that matter, did not change the “whiteness” of Halloween in a predominantly “white” community. We, the non-whites, were marginal.

But in Hawaii, “we” were not marginal. The “whiteness” of Halloween was totally, well, “deconstructed” and “decentered” to use the now popular terms. It was Halloween, all right. Every element of Halloween was there. Yet, it looked completely different from the ones I had known as a child in Buffalo or as a student in East Lansing. Exchanging “Happy Halloween!” with a Japanese-looking witch or a Polynesian-looking fairy and many more characters donned by non-white people was a fresh, new, “ethnic” experience for me.

I would experience another “strange” Halloween in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 2000. It will be a topic for another essay.

I hasten to add that I have difficulty accepting, let alone identifying with, the recently introduced Halloween practices among the young urban Japanese. My “American-ness” seems to prevent me from being totally open to differences I find in the Japanized version of Halloween.
(7) So, they live as I do!

One thing I really missed in Michigan was the Japanese way of celebrating the New Year. Watching the count down on the New Year’s Eve and the Rose Bowl on the New Year’s Day was not my kind of New Year. Moreover, starting the winter term on the second day of January was outrageous in my mind. “Our” New Year holidays were not over till the fourth of January, and school usually started later.

I left Hawaii for Japan in late December 1985 in order to spend the New Year holidays in Sendai for the first time in four years and I returned in early January 1986. What surprised me was that the Japanese American staff at the East West Center greeted me by saying “omedeto gozaimasu” in Japanese. Of course I replied “Akemashite omedeto gozaimasu” in Japanese, too. It was about a week after New Year’s Day, and no one in Michigan would say to me “Happy New Year,” but the Japanese Americans in Hawaii did as we did in Japan. We say “Happy New Year” whenever we meet someone for the first time in the New Year at least for the first two weeks of January and sometimes even later. I found out that it was the same among Japanese Americans in Hawaii. They lived as I lived. We shared a way of life.

Another incident that I never forget happened at a dental clinic. I was finally getting research grants for fieldwork, so I decided that I should have a dental checkup before I left for Taiwan. I visited a clinic associated with the East West Center. The clinic looked very different from any dental clinic that I had ever visited in Japan. The room I was taken into had only one examination chair. The floor was carpeted. There was a decorative plant near the window. And, most of all, the room did not smell like Japanese hospitals. The dentist was a Japanese American and, unlike his counterparts in Japan, he explained every step to me—in English of course.

One day, he was mixing some material for making an impression of my teeth. He showed me a chunk of gray paste and started to explain, “Now, I am going to make an impression using this. Actually it’s made from seaweed, you
know, but it surely does not look like nori does it?” He smiled at me. Nori, of course, is a black sheet of dried seaweed that we Japanese eat. It’s typically used to wrap sushi rolls or norimaki. It’s also used to cover a rice bowl or an onigiri. The dentist was cracking a joke. But, the joke worked only if both of us knew and ate nori. So, he ate nori and he assumed correctly that I did so, too. Hearing the joke, I also found out that he ate nori as I did. I smiled back at him. He lived as I lived. We shared a way of life.

In the summer, many “Bon Dances” were held in Honolulu, and some young Japanese Americans were walking in yukata, a simple kimono. The “Bon Dances” I saw were somewhat different from the ones held in Sendai. The way Japanese Americans wore yukata often did not seem right to me. But I could see that they were engaged in a “traditional” Japanese summer festival. “Bon Dances” have changed in Japan as well, so what’s the big deal if Japanese Americans’ dances seemed rather different? The very fact that even the young people were joining “Bon Dances” made me feel connected to them (I was young, too). I occasionally joined the dances at home and maybe my way of wearing yukata was not right in the eyes of the elders. Japanese Americans in Hawaii and I were alike. They lived the summer here in Hawaii as I lived it in Sendai. We shared a way of life.

(8) The Okinawans

A large number of Okinawan Americans were also living in Hawaii. I had some knowledge of the history of Okinawa and Okinawan migration abroad prior to my arrival in Hawaii. I also visited Okinawa briefly in the spring of 1982 as a graduate assistant for a professor of social psychology at Tohoku University who was conducting a psychological and anthropological study of Okinawan shamans. So, I also had some personal experience in Okinawa. As a result, I was a little interested academically in the Okinawan Americans in Hawaii.

I occasionally listened to the Okinawan language program on a Japanese
radio station, and I sometimes saw posters and flyers about Okinawan meetings on the University of Hawaii campus. I bought and read a few books written by the Okinawan American authors in Hawaii. I was well aware that Okinawans were there and that they had a complicated history with Japanese migrants in Hawaii, but that remained just knowledge, there was no emotion attached.

I did not have personal encounter with the Okinawan Americans that impacted me emotionally while I was in Hawaii, and I did not develop any sense of connection to them in the way I did with the other Japanese Americans there. Perhaps I was preoccupied with my many surprising encounters with Japanese Americans and things Japanese in Honolulu. At any rate, my “ethnic” experience did not extend to Okinawa and Okinawans.

Reflections

(1) Was it ethnicity?

Now I would like to look back at young me in Hawaii from the vantage point of the 21st century. Earlier theories of ethnicity have been mostly deconstructed if not destroyed in the intervening years (Smith 1994; Maleševic 2004; Jenkins 2008; Eriksen 2010; Wimmer 2013). Primordialism would now be easily and casually criticized as a form of essentialism. Instrumentalism would be subdivided into micro processes of negotiation, resistance, strategizing, and so on, and “agency” of the actors involved as well as the indeterminacy of the outcome would be emphasized. “Routine references to the ‘constructed,’ ‘contested,’ and ‘contingent’ character of ethnicity in today’s literature testify to the hegemony of constructivism” (Winner 2013: 2).

No matter how it may be defined or how thoroughly it may be deconstructed, however, ethnicity refers to identification with a collectivity demarcated by a certain historical and geographical commonalities, real or imagined—imagined of course in the sense of Benedict Anderson (1991). I do not know of any study of ethnicity that completely ignores history or geography
with perhaps the sole exception of sociobiology. What recent deconstructionist / constructivist ethnographies of ethnicity have done, in my view, is to contribute to the ever-increasing particularization and differentiation of history and geography in the ethnic processes that they study.7

Do I still think what I experienced as something “ethnic” in Hawaii was indeed a matter of ethnicity? I do, and I do not. I do because I felt connected only to Japanese Americans and not others. I do not because my sense of connection was effectively and affectively one-sided.

The collectivity with which I identified myself was demarcated by the history of migration from a geographic territory called “Japan.” Family names were a marker of that history. My family name belonged to a group of names “inherited” in a particular collectivity in Hawaii. As a result, no Japanese American mispronounced my family name or misspelled it. The use of “American” first names separated that collectivity from Japanese of Japan. My insistence on the use of my “American” nickname “Ichy” for address and its acceptance by the members of that collectivity identified me, in my mind, with the Japanese Americans of Hawaii.

The shared sense of a geographic territory was particularly powerful in my identification with the Japanese Americans in Hawaii. We shared a similar mental map and could locate each other on that map by tracing our family histories. And when I found out that a nurse at a clinic located her family in Shiogama, which is very close to my family’s location, I suddenly felt an intimate connection to her, and through her to the collectivity of Japanese Americans in Hawaii. I would like to reiterate that I felt that proximity not in the past but “at present.” The nurse’s life world still included Shiogama and mine included Sendai even though we were both away at the moment. The horizons of our life worlds “touched” at the Shiogama-Sendai area.

Despite my academic skepticism about ethnicity, I could not help feel connected to a collectivity which was nothing but “ethnic” in its character. And,

7 In fact, I am doing the same here by particularizing myself and my experience!
“trivial habits in daily living” (Benedict 2005[1946]:10) like “bento” for lunch, watching Japanese drama on TV or listening to Japanese popular song on radio, “omedeto” in the New Year, eating nori, and “Bon Dance” in the summer, all reinforced my sense of connectedness to that “ethnic” collectivity.

But, the sense of connectedness was a sort of one-sided love affair on my part. I have no idea if the collectivity reciprocated my identification with it or my affection for it. I lived in Honolulu for only one year and did not participate in any communal events outside the East West Center. I was merely a transient observer of the everyday life of the people of Hawaii. I did not “belong” to any community there. I thought I was “belongable” but I do not know that sense was shared by any Japanese American I had interacted with. My feeling of connection was not socially tested. I have no proof that the feeling was mutual.

(2) Imagined commonality

So, I now realize that my sense of connection with the Japanese Americans in Hawaii was in fact “imagined.” By imagination, I do not mean illusion or fantasy. My sense of “commonality” was grounded in firm social reality that allowed me to “imagine” my connectedness to a particular group of people. In my case that group of people constituted a particular “ethnoscape” (Appadurai 1996: 33-34) that spatially and temporarily spanned across the Pacific. A shared “mediascape” (Appadurai 1996: 35-36) also allowed me to “imagine” commonality with the grandma at a Japanese restaurant and young hosts of Japanese radio program. Following Anderson (1991), I would like to call this “imagined commonality.”

Certain social and cultural conditions that existed in Hawaii enabled me to “imagine” that I shared certain commonality with the Japanese Americans there, and my sense of connection was predicated upon that imagination. For instance, the “bento” stand at the East West Center enabled me to imagine similar stands opening at other offices in Japan, people bringing “bento” to a
hanami picnic and so on. Bits and pieces of concrete experience in everyday life enabled me to imagine commonality in our ways of life. Finding real tonkatsu in a “bento” enabled me to imagine people cooking and eating tonkatsu for supper at home. A Japanese radio station enabled me to imagine young Japanese Americans listening to Japanese popular music, hanging big posters in their room, and their mothers complaining about loud sound, and so on. Hearing “omedeto gozaimasu” from a colleague, I was able to imagine her eating “toshikoshi soba” or “seeing-the-old-year-end-noodles” sometime before midnight on the New Year’s Eve,\(^8\) and her eating mochi in the morning of the New Year’s Day. Finding more and more “trivial habits in daily living” that were familiar to me, I was able to imagine that the Japanese Americans in Hawaii were living their lives in “America” like the way I was living mine.

I was also imagining that the Japanese Americans shared my “Americanized” habits as well. Their talking English, their gestures, their jokes, their attitudes toward Japanese tourists, their everyday behavior I saw, all formed a basis for my imagination that they took a shower the way I did, that they must have loved peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches as children, or that they had cereal and orange juice for breakfast. In short, they were different from the “ordinary Japanese” of Japan in the same way that I was different from them (Numazaki 2013).

“Imagined commonality” is the unseen whole of commonality extrapolated from a little commonality actually seen in daily life. To imagine commonality, you need concrete experience of sameness and similarity. The real commonality therefore underlies the imagined commonality. And yet, imagined commonality in the whole way of life is a quantum leap from the real, that is, experiential commonality in the “trivial habits in daily living.”

\(^8\) Any ordinary Japanese noodles can be “toshikoshi soba.” There is nothing special about them. The only point of significance is that they are served on the New Year’s Eve and must be eaten before midnight. When in Michigan, I once cooked a bowl of spaghetti in soy-taste soup to substitute for Japanese noodles, which only painfully reminded me of the impossibility of having a Japanese-style New Year celebration there.

55
So, this imagined commonality allowed me to believe that I finally found my kind of people concentrated in a single place in substantial number and that I could belong to them. My belief in my “belongability” was predicated on my imagined commonality. I now strongly suspect that imagined commonality is a basis for “ethnic” awareness or perhaps even for nationalistic sentiment. But imaginations vary from one person to another. When individually imagined commonality coalesce into a single imagination, or so it seems, when people can imagine the commonality in the imagined commonalities, perhaps something that can be called ethnicity is formed.

Finally, there is a limit to the scope of imagination. I liked Chinese food a lot and I frequently went to a small Chinese restaurant near the East West Center to have “saimin,” thin yellow Chinese noodles in soup topped with a variety of garnishes, for lunch. In fact, I preferred “saimin” to Japanese “ramen.” One day in summer, I found a young man at this restaurant. He seemed to be a member of the owner’s family. Written on the back of his sweatshirt was a logo, “University of Michigan, Law School.” Finding similarity with him, I quietly thought, “Oh, you went to the mainland for study. Your family must be proud!” So, I deeply empathized with this Chinese family and admired their achievements. Yet, I did not feel connected to them at all. I could not imagine sufficient commonality that would make me feel connected. This simple fact indicates the narrowly “ethnic” nature of my “imagined commonality.”

Similarly, I was not able to imagine commonality with the Okinawans in Hawaii. To be more accurate, I now think that I refrained from imagining commonality with them for the fear of imperialistic inclusion and colonialist intrusion, knowing a little bit about the history of Okinawa and Okinawan migration to Hawaii.9 In fact, I consciously or unconsciously tried to find differences with the Okinawan Americans, and I found one in the Okinawan

---

9 I would encounter the imagined commonality from the opposite direction in Taiwan, but that will be another story to tell.
language program on the Japanese station in Hawaii. But that seemed too instrumentalist to me even then.

The scope of imagined commonality is therefore problematic. Why my scope was limited in the way it was limited is also a question for which I do not have ready answer. It probably was the result of the scope of my life history—I had lived only in Sendai, Buffalo, Sendai again, Kumamoto, Sendai again, and then East Lansing, Sendai again, and East Lansing again before I went to Honolulu. At any rate, I was only able to imagine commonality in limited scope.

(3) Emancipation from ethnoperipheralism and foreignness

Finally, I would like to reexamine my “ethnic” experience in Hawaii from the perspective of “ethnoperipheralism” (Numazaki 2013). Ethnoperipheralism, as I conceive it, is a state of cultural awareness among cross-culturally raised children that some habits of thought and action acquired in an alien culture that are natural to them are strange and repugnant to the people around them at home, and the consequent sense of marginality and alienation they feel vis-à-vis a group to which they nonetheless belong through kinship and other ties. In sum, ethnoperipheralism is a peripheralism within the dominant majority.

For example, as a child with two-years of experience in Buffalo, New York, I strongly felt that I was different from the people around me in Sendai, Japan (Numazaki 2013). I liked the food they hated. I behaved in ways offensive to them. I said things nobody dared say. I could not feel at home in my home society. I always thought that I would be freed from this sense of uneasiness and discomfort once I “returned” to the United States. Living in East Lansing as a foreign student proved me wrong. I was a foreign and marginal being in East Lansing, too, even though the “American” way of life was not uncomfortable at all. Further, in East Lansing, I found myself missing certain things Japanese like the New Year. Uncomfortable as I was, I was part of the majority in Sendai, Japan, and I enjoyed many things that the majority took for granted.
Comfortable as I was, I was definitely not part of the majority in East Lansing, and suffered some consequences of being a foreigner.

What I experienced in Hawaii was emancipation from the ethnoperipheralism I felt in Japan and from the foreignness I felt in Michigan. For the first time in my life, I did not stand out. My “Americanized” habits were neither strange nor unique in the eyes of Japanese Americans around me. I could feel a sense of connection to the people around me without feeling pressure to conform. And, I found enough things Japanese in Hawaii for me to revive my “Japanese” habits. Thanks to my imagined commonality with the Japanese Americans in Hawaii, I was able to feel that I finally fit and be part of a sizable collectivity if not the majority. Japanese Americans are not the largest ethnic group in Hawaii but their presence is substantial and their status is not low. I could “imagine” that I could be part of the well-established “ethnic” collectivity whose way of life was congenial to my personal way of life.

It may well have been an illusion. Had I lived longer in Honolulu, I might have discovered a new sense of peripherality. Nevertheless, for that one year in Hawaii, I was emancipated from the ethnoperipheralism that had bothered me so much in Japan without giving up my “Japanese” habits and without enduring a sense of foreignness. The reason I was so happy living in Hawaii was not only that I was young and full of hope in a tropical “paradise” but also that I thought I could be part of a group that I wanted to be part of and did not have to feel peripheral in it. As it turned out, it was the first and the last time in my life that I genuinely felt such a possibility.10

---

10 As a professor of cultural anthropology at an ex-imperial university, I certainly occupy a privileged status in Sendai. How can I be peripheral in any sense of the term? A student of mine remarked to me that I was “the most culturally alien (一番の異文化)” that she had ever encountered in studying cultural anthropology as an undergraduate.
Concluding Remarks

My experience in Hawaii suggests that ethnoperipheralism is not an inevitable consequence of cross-cultural upbringing. Hawaii was a society open to a person like me who acquired “American” as well as “Japanese” habits, because Hawaii had a sizable community of Japanese Americans who retained certain “Japanese” habits along with standard “American” habits. And, because they had to deal with this sizable community of Japanese Americans, non-Japanese Hawaiians also got used to Japanese-style family names and certain Japanese habits like “bento” for lunch. If a society is sufficiently open to and accommodative to the differences in “trivial habits of daily living,” that is, if a society is sufficiently “cosmopolitan” (Hannerz 1990; Waldron 1995; Appiah 2005, 2006), or a society has institutionalized what Nigel Rapport calls politese, cross-culturally raised children who have acquired alien habits need not feel ethnoperipheralism.

The society of Sendai to which I returned from Buffalo, New York, in 1965 was not an open society like Hawaii in 1985. “Japanese” children who spoke English fluently and behaved differently were rare. The people around me were not ready for a person like me. “Cosmopolitan politese” was definitely lacking in the schools I went. I was not a foreigner. I was a native son of Sendai who spent just two years in the United States. I was still a native son. But I had changed and that annoyed the people around me. Sendai then was not a cosmopolitan place. Had I moved to Hawaii from Buffalo in 1965 instead of returning to Sendai, would I have been better off in terms of my psychological

---

11 I owe this insight to Dr. Joseph Bosco of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. His comment at the 2013 EAAA meeting at Xiamen University in November 15, 2013, forced me to rethink my thesis of ethnoperipheralism and also made me reexamine my experience in Hawaii. Needless to say, however, I have sole responsibility for the views expressed in this paper.

12 Rapport defines it as “cosmopolitan ‘good manners’, comprising both a polite style of general public exchange and an ethic of individual dignity and freedom” (Rapport 2012: 9).
and cultural adjustments? I strongly suspect I would have been. At least, I would not have felt the ethnoperipheralism that I felt in Sendai in the 1960s and later. Japan is a highly “discriminatory” society in that it draws a sharp line between those inside and those outside. By discriminatory, I do not necessarily mean discrimination and oppression. I simply mean drawing the lines to distinguish the insiders from the outsiders. Ethnoperipheral children, always at the fringe, are placed mostly inside but sometimes outside. And it is this possibility of being placed outside that annoys many cross-culturally raised children in Japan. The possibility of ostracism is always there and it does happen occasionally. Why this is so is another question. Yet I personally experienced the consequences of living in a “discriminatory,” that is, “uncosmopolitan” society and felt alienated from it. My coinage of the term “ethnoperipheralism” is among these consequences.

Is there or will there be a dream world in which nobody suffers from ethnoperipheralism? Can Japan become more cosmopolitan? I shall explore this question through the remainder of my life.

Another question that I will have to pursue is this: Do ethnoperipheral children become cosmopolitan adults? Am I an ethnoperipheral-child-tuned-cosmopolitan-adult? I am not ready to answer this question. I do not think I am an “Anyone” in Rapport’s sense (Rapport 2012); I think I am “someone” with partial loyalties to several places and a few cultures. Does that make me a “rooted cosmopolitan” or a “cosmopolitan patriot” in Appiah’s sense (Appiah 2005, 2006)? I am not sure. Anthropology of cosmopolitanism has just begun (Werbner 2008). I shall explore this new frontier of anthropology in

---

13 David Y. H. Wu, my mentor at the East West Center, recalls in his autobiography that he used to enjoy authentic Japanese food such “tendon” (tempura bowl) and “katsudon” (pork tonkatsu bowl) served at Japanese restaurants as well as Japanese sweets sold at local shops during his graduate student days in the late 1960s (Wu 2006: 142). But he also writes about the condescending attitude among some Chinese Americans toward a Taiwanese newcomer like him (Wu 2011: x-xi). His recollections make me wonder if Hawaii in the 1960s was as cosmopolitan a place as Hawaii in the 1980s.
the remainder of my academic career.\footnote{For a promising study of cosmopolitan individuals by a cosmopolitan individual, see Lee Perez (2014) in this issue.}

References


