Review of *Globalisation and Japanese Organisational Culture: An Ethnography of a Japanese Corporation in France*[†]

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Although an increasing number of scholars have sought to pin down "globalization," a term remains largely unspecified, many have met with limited success. *Globalisation and Japanese Organisational Culture: An Ethnography of a Japanese Corporation in France* examines globalization from an unique point of view. As the title of this book indicates, the author Mitchell Sedgwick uses the rubric of globalization as a main focus, and sees globalization as a process organized through social relations. Avoiding purposefully the specific explanation of globalization, he puts the emphasis on how persons caught up in it. Based on an ethnographic analysis of cross-cultural social interactions in everyday workplace practices at a "hybrid" subsidiary of elite, a French subsidiary of a Japanese consumer electronics multinational, which he calls it YamaMax, Sedgwick tries to intimately examine, and to theorize contemporary global dynamics. His rich ethnography in French plants has enabled him to challenge more general elements of organization theory, actor-network theory, and even general anthropology's approach to globalization. This book was about how the dynamics of globalization nowadays could be shown by local day-to-day experiences and the networks at the company.

Sedgwick details how Japanese organizational power does and does not adapt in overseas settings: how Japanese managers and engineers negotiate conflicts between their understandings of appropriate practices with those of local, non-Japanese staff who hold their own distinctive cultural and organizational inclinations in the workplace. It was quite exciting to read how non-Western people interact with Western managers from anthropological point of view. The uniqueness of this book is its choice to study high-level workers from the dynamic of their social relations and daily experiences rather than just explaining "classic" ethnocentric theory.

The book is divided into three parts, from the introductory part ("siting an organization," Chapter 1 to 2), core part of the book ("organizing persons in places," Chapter 3 to 5) and the final part ("incorporating cultures," Chapter 6 to 7). Sedgwick starts the Chapter 2 with the explanation of how YamaMax could be considered as a globalized company in terms of high percentage of the number of foreign employees, as high as 51%, and a high rate of its total sales in overseas markets, which was 75%. Sedgwick conducted in its plant in France where produced videotape.

In Chapter 3 Sedgwick examines the core part of the book where he puts the emphasis on the examination of how the company organizes its staff there. First section is about how information flows inside the organization. Sedgwick mainly revolves around Japanese and French engineers and examines how they share information during meetings and gatherings. He gives an example of how two Japanese staff who were ranked in the highest and in the lowest in the official hierarchy respectively behaved differently and the way French and other Japanese engineers reacted towards them was extremely opposite. While engineers listened carefully to the comment by the highest-ranking Japanese although they hardly understood what he said because of his poor language ability, they tended to ignore or to interact less with the male Japanese engineer with the lowest rank. Sedgwick also examines their daily interaction in the ground and finds that Japanese engineers inclined to project the meaning from their own points of view which made French engineers misunderstand their intentions, causing structural strains for the latter. Even if some French engineers have certain understanding of Japanese-like behavior, they were still worried with the result that frequent interactions with Japanese might hollow out authorities of French engineers over local subordinates who hardly infer their intentions. From these examination

and analysis, Sedgwick demonstrates that cross-cultural, cross-linguistic dynamics, hierarchy and technical knowledge are cooperative and conflictual in organizing staff at YamaMax.

In Chapter 4, Sedgwick examines cross-cultural and general organizational dynamics through detail description of nine-month tape test. Sedgwick uses actor-network theory to explain the interaction and communication between Japanese expatriates and French managers. This attempts to break down the macro and micro distinctions, which is necessary for analytically studying globalization. Moreover, he attempts to "mobilize analytically the ethnographic date to encourage re-examination of the premises of theories of communication and organization" (p. 139). In YamaMax's actor-network, Sedgwick considers French engineers as "passive agents" and based on his observation during the test, he finds that the authority of French engineers who were ranked highly among other local employees was altered when the Japanese side intervened the test and they were even cut out from the company's network in the end when Japanese made final decision without consulting local engineers.

The next chapter is about, as the title suggests, "timing" and "spacing" at YamaMax, based on the "data" from a group of French employees. In the first section, Sedgwick describes its changes of personnel and office relocation and examines how the company managerially controls local employees. With the expectation that a non-Japanese manager might cooperate with French engineers better, the mother company of YamaMax replaced the plant Japanese manager with an American. However, they did not cooperate well at all because of their different views towards management. While the American boss expected the debate, French engineers were reticent to challenge openly hierarchical authority and only concerned about their own poor language ability. With the failure of this replacement, the mother company had to relocate a male Japanese to manage the plant a year later. Although a French engineer was promoted to the position of the plant manager after? In the next section, Sedgwick discusses how French engineers view their own current situation through the analysis of the "data" they provided, and he found out that the status and the authority of the French manager who had worked from the very beginning at the plant was gradually declining. Sedgwick concludes the chapter with the comment that what he is doing is the examination of "the tension between continuity of practices and periods of change" (p. 160).

In the final part of this book, Sedgwick claims that Japanese corporation like YamaMax tries to circulate the image of "seamless social" through various strategies and he discusses the way how Japanese at YamaMax practice them in France. He stresses that the "Japanese shop floor model" might not be suitable in France and criticizes that YamaMax "reproduced the atomization of labor and strong centralization of decision-making authority -- the 'Fordism'-- that the company had learned to avoid in postwar industrialization in Japan" (p. 176). Thus, by detailing the specific circumstance of a Japanese multinational corporation, Sedgwick succeeded in placing ethnography within the anthropological literature on globalization.

Besides these characteristics and strengths, this study has some limitations. Firstly, the title of "Japanese organizational culture" seems too vague if we examine his fieldwork data. Although Sedgwick has claimed that he mainly focuses on French and Japanese managers, it seems that the number of informants is too small to be considered as an "organization" at YamaMax. Secondly, there was little discussion about whether French and Japanese engineers share any similarities or not, which would leave readers an impression that there was little possibility for westerners and non-westerners to understand each other. Finally, although it was quite refreshing to read stories of managers, there was few mentioning whether the author has the opportunity to interact with local employees in the production line and what their relations looked like on-the-spot, which might contribute to further understanding of the picture of YamaMax in France.

Despite these limitations, this book not only includes rich and interesting data but provides us a clear ethnography that describes the diversity and differentiation of the process of the transnational network. Moreover, the author focuses more on the dynamic of the social network inside the organization rather than concluding it as the differences of ethnicity. This study surely set a new approach for research in globalization and organizational studies.