Toward Hybrid and Liquid Indigeneity

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In 2003, Jeremy Waldron addressed the issue of indigeneity by taking up the concepts of justice, cultural right and sovereignty for indigenous peoples.[1] The Principle of First Occupancy and the Established Order are the two main political ideas in his treatment. From his argument, it is known that the issues of indigeneity and indigenous are highly political and legal, closely related to the serious issues of property and ownership. Waldron's article strongly points out that the notions of indigenous and indigeneity originate from the global political contexts. On the other hand, an unsatisfied voice regarding a contemporary application of the notion of "indigenous" in the study of religion is raised. Recently Bjørn Ola Tafjord critically examines the way the notion of an "indigenous religion(s)" is applied in the study of religion, and argues that it has been employed "uncritically in relationship to the indigenous peoples." The uncritical usage of the term would cause some intellectual problems and confusions. He proposes that the term of indingeous should be utilized as a relational concept, that is, as 'the opposite of foreign religion(s),' not restricted to indigenous peoples.[2] To illustrate the case, Tafjord refers to Shinto as one of indigenous Japanese religions.

These reflections address a general theoretical question such as "How can a student of religion employ the same category to designate both different but similar religions within a context of one cultural society and similar but different religions beyond cultural and social borders?" In addition, we cannot avoid discussing implied political dimensions in studying something "indigenous." In applying the term of "indigenous" to the study of Japanese religious history, quickly an issue arises since Shinto as the indigenous religion of Japan and the Ainu who is usually referred to the indigenous people in Japan are historically antagonistic toward each other.

In this paper, several different questions are asked while these old and new questions are dealt with in relationship to the category of "indigenous" by referring to one historical and cultural context of Japan with some references to North America and the Philippines. The reason why these two areas are referred to is that these foreign scholarly contexts provide a global context to locate the study of the notion of "indigenous" in the study of Japanese religion and a transnational framework to examine critically the way the term of indigenous is utilized in the study of Japanese religion. Then, the difficult predicament of applying a necessary term of indigenous to studying Japanese religious history as a part of general history of religion is examined.

Since the author of this paper does not belong to any "indigenous" group as a minority, a following argument is done from an etic and outsider's perspective.

First, the paper will begin with addressing the uneasiness in applying the same notion of "indigenous" to Japanese religious history, namely the Ainu people as an indigenous people in Japan, and Shinto as an indigenous religion of Japan. Then, in order to examine the implied problematics, the different cultural and social conditions of "indigenous" people from USA and Philippines will be brought in for the sake of comparison. Thirdly, by recognizing that there are diverse voices among an indigenous society, the article will try to bring in two notions of hybridity and liquidity to broaden the scope of the notion of indigeneity.

1. "Pure" and Untainted Indigenousness?

In the introductory textbook of world religion, Shinto is often referred to as a Japanese indigenous religion. Resonating such a sentiment, for example, in her paper on Shinto and Ecology, a contribution to the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale, Rosemarie Bernard begins her essay writing that "Shinto (or kan'nagara no michi, literary "the way of the deities") is Japan's indigenous religion." Her evaluation is common among scholars of Japanese religions both inside and outside of Japan. It is well-known that when Buddhism was introduced into Japan in the mid-6th century, there arose political and social conflicts between one group of aristocrats who were willing to introduce the new religion and the other who were protecting the local and "indigenous" Shinto deities. This is what Tajord means in his addressing Shinto as Japanese "indigenous" religion.

While admitting that there are some "indigenous" elements found in Shinto, there are serious debates as to the historical formation of what is later called Shinto in the historical process of incorporating the Buddhism into Japanese soil. Against a commonly held view that Shinto is an original and indigenous way of life (Jingi) prior to the coming of Buddhism and Chinese civilization, Takatori argues that Shinto was a social and political product of imperial and aristocrat society in the process of the social transformation with a developing "historical consciousness around the end of the eighth century."[3] In a similar manner, Kuroda argues that Shinto was a part of the medieval Ken-Mitsu Buddhism system.[4]

Furthermore, Shinto today is not the direct continuation of one ancient way of religion that was supposed to be constructed in the mid-6th century as a result of cultural interaction with the incoming Buddhism, but rather the modern product of the government policy of the separation of Buddhism and Shintoism in 1868, the first year of the Meiji Era, after many centuries of amalgamation of Shinto with Buddhism, and of the nationalization of the then independent Shinto system. It could be seen as a historical response to the threatening European colonialism approaching the East Asia. Therefore, in this sense, it is possible to say that the modern Shinto was constructed as an indigenous religion against the foreign Christianity by the political endeavor to invent the untainted and original form of the indigenous

and original Japanese religion along with the line of thought of Restored Shinto. As Hiroshi Inoue argues, Shinto was reformulated and reconstructed three times through the Japanese history, and Shinto today is the third historical form.[5]

Interestingly enough, it is rarely recognized that modern Shinto is a part of the secular and national polity of the Imperial Japan, projecting its invented image of ancientness. Until the end of WWII, the national ideology stated that the first mythic Emperor Jinmu whose historicity was denied later by historians ascended to the throne twenty-six hundred years ago. While introducing the Western notions of separation of religion and state and religious liberty, State Shino was referred to as non-religion notoriously before the end of WII. What is often missed is that the modern form of Shinto is a religion in a very secular form; that means that the secularity embodied in the politics provides a religious framework to Shinto.

In the meantime, the Ainu people in Hokkaido are regarded today as an indigenous people in Japan, being indigenous to the land called Ainu-Moshir. Seeing the Ainu as an indigenous people is a part of the global language especially since the discussion on the UN Declaration of the Indigenous People's Right was reported. The history of the Ainu people as an indigenous people is equivalent to these of many indigenous peoples around the world, that is, colonialism, assimilation, and discrimination. The Ainu people were called Kyu-Dojin (literally Old-Soil man), the derogatory term, which was even employed in the legal documents. It is only after World War II that the Ainu people began to raise their voices of protest and to demand social recognition by Japanese society and government. Since the 1970s, the Ainu people developed their global connection with other indigenous peoples, and they began to recognize that they are not just the ethnic minority in Japan, but also a part of the global indigenous communities. The year of 1993 was the International Year of the Indigenous People, when the Ainu people invited many indigenous peoples mainly from the North America and a few other places to attend an Indigenous Forum.[6] These indigenous people shared some kinds of a common features of being indigenous. In 1995, the New Ainu Law was passed by the Diet, abolishing the old law of "protecting the primitive people." In 1997, the Japanese government passed the law of the Promotion of the Ainu culture to disseminate the knowledge about the Ainu Tradition. Japanese government endorsed the UN Declaration of the Indigenous People's Right of 2007 but does not recognize the political sovereignty of the Ainu people.

We used to think that the Ainu are an "indigenous" people in Hokkaido, but as Mark K. Watson's recent book on the urban Ainu argues,[7] there are a significant number of the Ainu people living in the Metropolitan Tokyo area. Though they are not living in Hokkaido, they manage to maintain their Ainu identity or Ainu indigeneity. More precisely speaking, not only these urban Ainu people but also the Ainu people in Hokkaido feel it necessary to manage to maintain their Ainu indigeneity.

These brief descriptions of the modern formation of Shinto as an "indigenous" religion and the modern history of the Ainu people as an "indigenous" people shows that the political indigenous religion of modern Japan provided the social context of colonization, dispossession and assimilation of the indigenous Ainu society in Hokkaido with the incoming Buddhism and

Shinto into the Ainu-Moshir. Obviously, this statement shows that the term "indigenous" is problematic. It is possible to say that as religion, both some elements of Shinto and the Ainu religion share similar attitudes toward nature while there are many differences. Is the term indigenous too general and overarching?

2. "Indigenous" in the comparative contexts

In order to examine why the notion of indigenous causes difficult issues, it is useful to locate the above argument synchronically in a comparative perspective, that is, in comparison to a case of Indigenous People in the Philippines and some cases from Native North America that the author is familiar with. The author found difficulty in applying the same term of indigenous to different social condition of these geographically separated indigenous peoples. It would suffice to provide very rough pictures of these two different but similar "indigenous" peoples at this point for the sake of comparison.

In 2006, with the several Philippine and Japanese colleagues, there was an opportunity for the author to visit a few settlements of the Mamanwa (first forest dwellers),[8] who are part of the Lumad people, near the city of Surigao in the northern Mindanao.[9] Though their ancestors lived the life of hunter - gatherers, for 20,000 to 30,000 years, due to the encroachment of the lowlanders into the mountain areas and the depletion of the wild animals and the Philippine government's policy of settlement, recently some groups chose to form "barangays," sedentary settlements closer to an agricultural life. There are already many studies on the Mamanwa people from various perspectives.[10]

In visiting their settlements, educational teachers for these indigenous people accompanied us. One settlement was rather close to the city and located in a more widely open area. Their settlement was relatively well equipped with agricultural devices. The other settlement was a bit far into a forest area, covered with tall trees. The third settlement was located in the mountain area two or three hours away from the city. Their different social conditions asked questions regarding what sort of historical moment these present generations would now live in.

In the Philippine political context, the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 or Republic Act No. 8371 is quite important. It is "an act to recognize, protect and promote the rights of indigenous cultural communities/indigenous peoples, creating a national commission on indigenous peoples, establishing implementing mechanism, appropriating funds therefore, and for other purposes."[11] It suffices here to refer to section 2 which states "Declaration of State Policies. The State shall recognize and promote all the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs)." It is important that the Philippine government recognizes the rights of the "indigenous" people of the Philippines. Yet the law does not guarantee that indigenous peoples' rights are protected by the Government, either.

There are some contradicting evaluations of the term "indigenous" applied in the Philip-

pines. As Derek Inman argues, the indigenous people are struggling to maintain the traditional lands and territories on the basis of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).[12] He recognizes that the concept of indigenous became a contested notion through the process of defining the legal right to the land. Not only in the Philippines but also in many other places, UNDRIP is a strong tool to allow indigenous peoples' claim to ownership of their ancestral lands and to fight against illegal and unethical attempts to take their lands and territories away. On the other hand, Charles O. Frake discusses the problematic nature of the notion of "indigenous." The "indigenous" is an external categorization applied to local people, serving to justify their exploitation, oppression, and poverty.[13] The "indigenous" is an image embedded in notions of primitiveness, of backwardness, and of the "tribal."

These conflicting evaluations of the term "indigenous" in the social context of the Philippines indicate the difficulty and suffering these local indigenous peoples have experienced. Scholars of religion do not necessary pay an attention to these social problems, but as several other places in the Philippines, there are many multi-national mining companies operating to mine nickel in the territories of the northern Mindanao (Holden, Nadeau and Jacobson 2011).[14] A Japanese mining company is also a part of these multi-national companies, so it is not possible to ignore Japanese involvement.

The visits to the settlements of the Mamanwa were the real beginning to reflect on global applicability of the term "indigenous" since several places of the Native societies in North America show somewhat quite a different picture of the "indigeneity." Since one of my research areas in the 1990s was on the religious traditions of the Haudenosaunee people (the Iroquois), the author visited their reservations in New York States and Ontario.[15] Their societies are, at least physically speaking, incorporated into the American and Canadian societies. On surface, their material life styles are similar to those American and Canadians after many years of colonization, dispossession, and assimilation. They drive cars, shop at grocery stores, have bank accounts, speak English with some knowledge of their traditional language, and so on. Needless to say, some traditionalists maintain their oral and ritual traditions, but some progressive-minded people have sometimes different attitudes toward the tradition. Furthermore, their worldview is different from those Euro-American, especially their relationship to the land and nature.

In 2005, at the Central Office of Tlingit & Haida Tribes of Alaska in Juneau,[16] a staff member told me about his life as a native in the city and his job on a cruise ship. He added that it would be useful to go to the island of Haida Gwaii, where the people still live and work in the old manner, if someone would like to know more about the indigenous culture. He admitted that he himself did not carry on the traditional life style in comparison to these who lived in a more traditional way of life there. He still regarded himself as one of the Tlingit. After talking with him, there was a chance to see the chief of the tribal council, yet he was about to go to the airport to attend a Republican Party meeting in other state, adding that he had supported the Republican Party for a long time. It was a sort of surprising realization that a native chief was involved in the national politics of the USA.

How could it be possible to continue employing the same term "indigenous" for local minorities in the Philippines and the native people of North America while recognizing stark contrasts among different "indigenous peoples" among them? Within the context of each society, native Americans are indigenous against Euro-Americans, while the local minorities in the Philippines whose ancestors refused to accept Islam and Christianity and withdrew far back into the mountain areas are "indigenous" against the lowlanders. Most likely it makes a sense to recognize that within one political society, a very limited sense of "indigenous people" is applied.

Nevertheless, stark contrasts and material differences are noticeable in comparing them. In some cases, it could be possible to say that the material conditions of one of the "indigenous" peoples in the Philippines is almost far from certain "indigenous" peoples in North America. Their difference might be due to differences between North American society, and the Philippine society and if that is the case, each "indigenous"ness is a part of the non-indigenous society, against which the "indigenous" people are culturally separated.

Following the above argument, in some cases, indigenous societies have two socio-cultural backgrounds in forming, constructing and performing their indigeneity by deriving from their own cultural heritage and some other special and cultural elements from the outside non-indigenous societies. One of the most noticeable aspects of the contemporary indigeneity is the usage of the notion of rights and human rights originating in the Western society. Some rational notions embedded in modernity becomes an inseparable part in designing and performing the indigeneity.

3. Hybrid and Liquid Indigeneity

From 2009 to 2014, there was a team-based interdisciplinary initiative entitled "Indigeneity in the Contemporary World: Performance, Politics, Belonging" in UK, whose aim was "to determine what indigeneity has come to mean in particular places and at key moments in the past and what kind of cultural, political, ethical and aesthetic issues are negotiated within its framework."[17] Several indigenous performers were invited to participate in these creative performance projects. They addressed not only their cultural traditions but also contemporary political and social issues. While it is recognized that there are differences in terms of their contents of being "indigenous" and their social and political conditions, it is also noticeable that as an individual and as a group, the indigenous people are changing themselves constantly by attempting to reemerge from the loss of the traditions and by adapting themselves to the constantly changing global societies. Such a voice is expressed by Yin C. Paradies, who argues that when the aboriginal people found the notion of indigenous identity as a useful common denominator against the white majority, they turned out to be trapped in the image of an essentialized indigeneity that emphasizes collectiveness over individuality. To go beyond such a predicament of the indigenous movement, he argues that it is necessary to

recognize diversity among the aboriginal people, and even an Aboriginal person is a hybrid cultural person, for example, indigenous, European and Asian as he is. Therefore, it is also necessary to pay close attentions to individual differences, too.[18]

The contemporary global cultural conditions are characterized by terms such as hybridity by Peter Burke[19], and liquidity by Zygmunt Bauman.[20] Both notions address post-modern conditions, therefore in their arguments, indigenous people are not necessarily the primary concern. Yet, as the above argument shows, social and cultural conditions characterized by such terms as hybrid and liquid are also applicable to the indigenous societies and individuals. It would be useful include a notion of hybrid and fluid indigeneity here. There are so many varieties and different social and cultural modes of indigenous societies and individuals. It is necessary to recognize that through the process of life stages, an indigenous person would experience diverse cultural influences and develop his or her own perceptions of the indigenous traditions.

These arguments do not ignore the fact that there are many indigenous communities that try to isolate themselves from the influences from the outside world, and to minimize any impacts from outside brought into their traditional life. The notion of hybrid and fluid indigeneity is rather the scholarly concept to deal broadly with the cultural differences between the past when indigenous communities maintained relatively their intact cultural traditions and the contemporary cultural creativeness. They also help the author to grasp the significance and importance of the contemporary art works by young indigenous people, too.

After the Ainu society and people became colonized and assimilated into Japanese society but were still discriminated against by Japanese, they tried to maintain their culture and language in various ways. Yet, it is important to recognize respectfully that some Ainu people chose not to be recognized as an Ainu, but blended into Japanese society. Therefore, sometimes, a child whose parent is an Ainu is brought up without being told that he/she is an Ainu, and only later realizes that he/she is an Ainu.

At the Ainu Museum in Shiraoi, several cultural performances are scheduled. One day, at the beginning of one performance, an Ainu man introduced himself as an Ainu, explaining that though he is an Ainu, he lives like any other Japanese usually, and he wears these Ainu traditional costumes only for the cultural event like this at the museum. This was his personal response to questions asked by a Japanese visitor about how the Ainu people would live today. What he emphasized is that after many years of colonization, assimilation and discrimination, the Ainu people were forced to live like a Japanese. He implied that young Japanese should know such a history. Other Ainu people would have different attitudes toward such a question.

A few words would be useful on a relationship between the Ainu cultural performance and tourism. According to Choi, though a scholarly concern with the Ainu as an object of tourism began around the 1990s, the Japanese populace was interested in visiting and observing the Ainu cultural sites and performance in the 1950s and 60s.[21] There was already debate among the Ainu people regarding the exhibiting of traditional cultural performances for the tourists. There is a case which shows the Ainu people's cultural adaptability, that is,

the Marimo (Aegagropila linnaei) festival. As Irimoto argues, in 1950, the first Marimo festival was designed and performed as an Ainu ceremony to return marimo to the lake as a token of preserving and protecting marimo.[22] Its original intention was to preserve marimo yet it soon became a part of tourism. Several Ainu elders collaborated to "create" a new tradition. The Ainu people who were involved in the tourism industry those days in the post-WWII era, especially in the Lake Akan area, were criticized by their Ainu fellows for selling their traditions and performing twisted traditions.

Here, how to represent their cultural identity as an Ainu is an important issue. They say that there are still some Ainu people who continue to hide their Ainu identities. Those who are proud of being an Ainu and feel no hesitation about publicly representing themselves as Ainu people are often representing the voices of the Ainu people in Japanese society. Yet, it is important to note that there are other Ainu people who are not necessarily ready to go public talking about the Ainu issues. In a report concerning the 2008 survey on the Ainu population,[23] Ouchi says that only about 10 percent are always conscious of being an Ainu, and more than half are not aware of being an Ainu at all in daily life. And those who express their willingness to live as an Ainu are below 20 percent. Some of them express their dissatisfaction with those so-called Ainu activists. Researchers and scholars including the author are often drawn to listen to the voices of these rather socially active people, yet it is important to pay an attention to other Ainu people who are relatively quiet, too.

In comparing several indigenous communities and individuals in terms of the degree and extent of hybridity and lucidity of indigeneity, it should be recognized that there are always differences. With this argument, there is no intention to argue which indigenous communities and individuals maintain their inherited culture more fully or not. Rather, it should be pointed out that it is necessary to recognize some exterior and non-indigenous elements becoming part of their indigeneity already as the result of their conscious and unconscious choices.

Regarding the indigeneity of the contemporary Shinto, despite some claims that the contemporary mode is the continuation of the ancient "indigenous" mode of life, it is more useful not to separate the space and style found at Shinto shrines from the other secular-mundane life, and regard the former as a part of the later since their religious manner is the social product of the politics and society. This stance does not deny that there is its own independent religious ritual cycle, separated from the secular and mundane.

Conclusion

This paper takes up the issues regarding difficulties in applying the term indigenous to two different religions in Japan, namely, the religion of the Ainu people as an indigenous people of Japan and Shinto as an indigenous religion of Japan. Historically speaking, the modern Shinto is not a direct heir of the ancient "indigenous" religion, but rather the historical product of the modern Japanese society and functioned as an ideological base to colonize,

assimilate, and dispossess the Ainu people indigenous to the land originally called the Ainu-Moshir, but later called Hokkaido.

To make the Ainu's indigenousness clearer, the comparative framework with a few cases from Native North America and one case from the indigenous people of the Philippine is taken. Material conditions of these two different cases point out that indigenous people's conditions are often reflecting the social condition of the society to which they belong. These social and material conditions are also contributing to forming their indigeneity.

To understand related issues regarding indigeneity, two notions of hybridity and liquidity are introduced into the argument, forming the notion of hybrid and liquid indigeneity. It helps us grasp the broad range of indigeneity represented and performed by various indigenous peoples. The importance of indigenous peoples and their cultures will be more appreciated with the notion, too.

Note

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