The problem of Japanese identity has been the core object of study in the discourse of Japanese culture (Nihonbunkaron). This work investigates changes in the Japanese ethnonational identity, as an outcome of the interplay among different processes in the transnational cultural flow, through a case study of the kikokushiho or 'returnees' – Japanese youngsters, the children of expatriate parents, who spend a significant part of their life abroad, and are socialized in a different way to their Japanese counterparts. When abroad, kikokushiho mediate between their own and the host society: on returning to Japan, they enter into a negotiation process with other Japanese students in the reintegration process into the school environment in particular, and into Japanese society in general.

While previous studies have seen 'returnees' as disrupted from Japanese society and culture, which is characterized as homogenous and monolithic, this study reflects recent developments in the field, in which a more relational view of Japanese culture is emerging, in which difference is acknowledged and juxtaposed with uniformity and homogeneity as paradigmatic alternatives. Central to the study is the role of education in Japan, in order to understand why Japanese youngsters have to pass through a Japanese education establishment in order to 'reimmerse' and 'reintegrate' into mainstream Japanese society. This work describes how returnees, live, think, express themselves and construct their identity in the context of the tension between Japanese ethnonational identity and the overseas sojourn. Different discourses, including the historical dimension of Japanese ethnonational identity, culture as flow and postmodernism, carried out at the macro, median and micro levels, have been analyzed in order to gain a greater understanding of changing Japanese ethnonational identity in general, and the identity of returnees in particular, in the face of increasing mobility in a globalized world. By challenging many commonly held views concerning Japanese cultural uniqueness and by using dynamic new techniques of analysis, the author shows contemporary Japanese identity to be a discourse in which differences may exist in a complementary way, and supports the merging idea of a new type of cosmopolitan Japanese.

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NEGOTIATING IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

THE CASE OF KIKOKUSHIJO

Ching Lin Pang
For my late mother and grandmother
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This book aims to study the shifting identity of Japanese returnees (kikokushijo) within a migrational context. The core findings, based on literature and fieldwork in Brussels and Japan, are drawn from my Ph.D. dissertation. In this book I adopt the terminology and the research paradigm of the anthropology of ethnicity. Particular attention is devoted to the level of interaction of returnees with the different actors and institutions in the host society. In addition their negotiation process with ‘ordinary’ Japanese students (ippansei) in the reintegration process in the school environment in particular and the society in general are discussed. As an anthropologist I firmly believe that findings derived from fieldwork are meaningful because of their richness and immediacy. Of course these data are to a certain degree ‘messy’ since life at the micro level is informal and at times inconsistent. In order to transcend beyond mere anecdotes, these data are embedded in processes, which take place at the median level such as the school life. At the macro level I explore the discourse on Japanese ethnonational identity, international migration and the emergent discourse on ethnic minorities and multiculturalism in Japan.

The book is divided in three intertwined parts consisting of the micro, median and macro levels, following the recommendation of Barth (1994: 31) concerning the study of ethnicity and culture:
We can facilitate this by heuristically separating three levels of analysis – the micro, median, macro – and by describing some focal arenas within which crucial processes unfold. In these ways – and others, which others will identify – there is much work to be done and much insight to be gained.

The order of presentation – macro, median and micro – will be the reverse from Barth’s useful framework. First, there exists an extensive literature on kikokushijo. Moreover, because of my undergraduate background as a Japanologist, I was in many ways different from other anthropologists. Instead of going into the field with a pristine mind, void of almost any prior knowledge about the target group of study, I had already mastered the language. Furthermore, I had some basic knowledge about the Japanese culture and the issue of Japanese ethnonational identity. Yet I hasten to add that I do not regard the findings originating from the field as mere accessory details to back up what I already knew and to embellish and decorate a fixed and pre-existing framework and theory. On the contrary, fieldwork findings are crucial since they constitute the palpitating heart of this book.

Chapter 2, following this introduction, discusses theoretical and methodological issues. They include the discourse on ethnographic authority, the notion of culture in flux, the influence of postmodernism in social sciences, ethnicity, the link between anthropology and Japanese studies and finally the relationship between anthropology and international migration. These topics in conjunction with the postmodernist critique might seem very remote and perhaps disjointed from the realities and experiences of a Japanese returnee. Yet they are necessary tools to contextualize ethnography.

Part One covers major issues at stake at the macro level. The discourse of the Nihonbunkaron (the theory of Japanese culture) and the emergence of migrant workers in Japanese society are assessed. Chapter 3 traces the development of the
Japanese ethnonational identity. The discourse on Japanese culture and the Japanese people has been variably called *Nihonbunkaron* (the theory of Japanese culture), *Nihonjinron* (the theory of the Japanese) or *Nihonron* (the theory of Japan). Chapter 4 analyzes this discourse in the postwar period. As a holistic theory, underlining the homogeneity and the uniqueness of Japan and the Japanese people, it has already been subject to incisive critique (Miller 1982; Dale 1988; Mouer and Sugimoto 1990) and restructuring (Yoshino 1992; Aoki 1990). Although the fervor of stressing the uniqueness of Japan, at times humorously called ‘the national pastime’ (Befu 1993: 107) of self-reflection seems to have past its peak in the 1990s, it is a view, still shared by numerous Japanese and Westerners alike. It is this primordial view of a monolithic and distinctive Japanese ethnonational identity, which has created the ‘issue’ of *kikokushijo*. In this context, s/he is seen as a Japanese of a lesser degree or even worse as a non-Japanese as the result of having lived abroad and therefore disrupted from Japanese society and culture.

Yet to be fair it should be noted that in recent literature, dichotomous thinking in the representation of Japanese culture has given way to a more relational one, in which difference has emerged and juxtaposed with uniformity and homogeneity as paradigmatic issues of Japanese culture and society. In line with Aoki’s analysis of Japan’s search for identity, I propose to divide the current period of ‘universalism’ (1984–present) in terms of conscientization into two periods: 1) internationalization or the outward migratory movement of the Japanese (1984–90) and 2) migrant workers in Japan: the inward migratory movement towards Japan (1990–now). Chapter 5, covering the first period, tackles the semantics of ‘internationalization’ (*kokusaika*) in the Japanese context. Since the late 1970s, the internal cultural debate of Japan has shifted from the modernization paradigm (*kindaika*) to that of
internationalization (*kokusaika*) (Goodman 1990a: 221–6). The expansion of Japanese industry and business has generated the new and rapid-growing group of Japanese expatriates. They are officially labeled ‘the long-term residents abroad’ (*chookitaizaisha*) and their children, the ‘overseas youth’ (*kaigaishijo*) and after return to Japan, returnee children (*kikokushijo*). Chapter 6 deals with the second period of ‘universalism’, in which migrant workers emerge gradually but visibly in Japanese society. The internationalization of people (*hito no kokusaika*) has ignited a heated debate on the ‘desirability’ of foreign workers. In this polemic, opponents propagate a seclusionist (*sakoku*) policy, whereas supporters point to the humane aspect of migration and migrant workers. A third group aspires to analyze the issue by looking at the practical implications for public policy purposes of migrant workers in Japan and the long-term consequences of migration for Japanese society and culture.

At the median level, Part Two in chapter 6, I assess the centrality of education in Japanese society in the past and now. Given the importance of education for Japanese youngsters, it becomes clear why temporary overseas experiences of returnees might possibly jeopardize their chances to compete on an equal basis with ‘ordinary students.’ In other words, the international migratory movements of Japanese expatriates have generated problems concerning the education of their children in the host as well as in Japanese society. As explained in chapter 7, a system of tailored educational facilities has been set up for returnees including ‘overseas education’ (*kaigaikyooiku*) in the host society during their sojourn abroad and a ‘reception’ (*ukeire*) policy in returnee schools in Japan after return. Both are officially recognized and in part financed by the Ministry of Education (*Monbusho*). The main objective is to gain an insight why Japanese youngsters need to undergo this *rite de passage* through a Japanese edu-

4
cation establishment for the reintegration into mainstream Japanese society. Chapter 8 gives a critical overview of the literature on kikokushijo. A multitude of publications exists on the subject, mostly produced by Japanese educational experts and anthropologists. Particularly the classification of Ebuchi is discussed in detail. The view that the issue of returnees is a construction has been posited (Goodman 1990a). It is argued that returnees, instead of being victimized by their overseas experiences, constitute in fact the elite group in Japanese society. My analysis attempts to embed Ebuchi’s classification of the ‘non-, half and new Japanese’ in the discourses of the Japanese ethnonational identity, the Japanese educational system and ideology. Chapter 9 describes the general environment of the host society.

Part Three forms the kokoro (heart) of the book. It is the part in which the findings – both fieldnotes and filed notes – are integrated in a three-tier-ethnographic account. Chapter 10 contains the specific experiences of one returnee family. In chapter 11 I explore the field findings of 60 returnees who had lived in Belgium. Chapter 12 contains the voices and views of 20 returnees, studying at the International School of Nanzan, an exclusive returnee school. Some actors emerge in the three accounts and the three sites. This interconnectedness reflects the ‘messy’ and at the same time ‘dense’ – in the sense of rich – nature of the study of culture, ethnicity and human behavior.

I am fully aware of the postmodernist critique on (mis)representation and the power relation between the observer and the observed (Goodman 1990b). Generally I applaud and partially subscribe to postmodernist sensitivities. Still the final assessment drawing upon fieldwork – ‘fieldnotes’ and ‘filed notes’ – and literature remains my own interpretation from a person-specific point of view, nonetheless based on
the findings obtained in the field projected against larger frameworks.
2 Theoretical and Methodological Issues

Postmodernism

Postmodernism and social sciences

The methodology is in first instance ethnographic, drawing the core of the research from fieldwork. These field findings are then contextualized in the complex contemporary world through consulting the literature on Japanese modern history, returnees, ethnicity, internationalization, multiculturalism and the ‘postmodernist’ stance in social sciences and their insistence on the importance of the textual processes. From the postmodernist perspective, fieldnotes are categorized, interpreted and finally transformed into a neat ethnographic narrative during the writing process. Ethnicity is no longer seen as a purely scientific object in the positivistic sense. It is not a phenomenon, out there to be discovered and defined. On the contrary, there is now a consensus that it encompasses a highly elastic and negotiable dimension. Strictly speaking, the research began in 1990. Yet I started to study the Japanese language and culture some eighteen years ago mainly in Belgium and in Japan at the International Christian University of Tokyo during the summer of 1984. At that time, I also had the occasion to join a home stay program, allowing me to live with a Japanese
family with two daughters, who in retrospect would now qualify for returnees. At that time we were not explicitly conscious of their status as returnee and all the implications of being one. In addition, although not a Japanese returnee myself, in my personal life, due to a combination of circumstances and conscious choices, I have made more than one site my ‘home.’ Therefore I am not completely unfamiliar with the dilemmas and contradictions, confronting the modern ‘footloose’ in terms of identity, belonging and marginality. I feel compelled to make this point in the current times of self-reflexivity in the field of anthropology, urging for a fine-tuned sensitivity towards the power-relationship between the anthropologist and the ‘anthropologized’ and for methodological transparency and candor.

The sites of fieldwork in Belgium include the International School of Brussels and the private homes of Japanese families in Brussels; in Japan the International High School of Nanzan, the private homes of returnees in Tokyo and Nagoya and finally numerous coffee shops in Tokyo. The ethnographic data seek to reveal how these youngsters see themselves and how they are viewed by others. These findings are discussed in detail and at different levels in the chapters 10, 11 and 12. At the present one cannot – whether one likes it or not – completely avoid the debate of postmodernism and the multitude of postmodernist expressions and forms of life. Although I do not unconditionally subscribe to all postmodernist ideas and particularly the resulting effect of conducting ‘meta’ anthropology rather than studying actual cultures – which is the very essence and the whole point of anthropology – I do acknowledge that some points of critique deserve credit. They make us rethink and reassess old practices. Consequently we are urged to think about innovative and perhaps more adequate ways of grasping the contemporary complex reality instead of just adopting the exist-
ing models for convenience sake. Generally their critique is widely accepted but not their solution they offer to overcome the problems. For instance Wolf (1992: 1) voices the following opinion:

I do not intend by this comment to suggest disdain for the work of postmodernists like James Clifford, Michael M. J. Fisher, George E. Marcus and Stephen Tyler. On the contrary, I find their analyses of ethnographic frailties and failings useful on the whole...But, like most anthropologists, I remain more interested in...getting the news out. I see much in the postmodernist ruminations that helps me towards that goal but much also that does not seem to me in the best interests of anthropology at all.

One principal problem of postmodernism or the postmodernist mood is the ‘constellation of terms lacking in specificity’ (Featherstone in Smart 1992: 142). Before analyzing the idea of postmodernity/postmodernism, it might be useful to differentiate the related but not identical terms of postmodernity and postmodernism. Let us take a closer look at the preceding era, namely the era of modernity/modernism in terms of historical periodization, conceptualization and analysis. Although both terms are frequently used interchangeably in literature, they do not indicate the same phenomena. (Post) modernity in most instances refers to the political, economic and social structures of society, whereas (post) modernism represents the cultural realm of the same historical moment in human history.

There has been a general tendency to mark the turn of the eighteenth century, usually identified as the era of Enlightenment (Bell 1975) as the beginning of the modern age. Others, however, pinpointed the discovery of the New World, the Renaissance and the Reformation (Habermas 1987: 5 in Smart 1992: 145) as the onset of modernity. Kroker and Cook (1988) trace the first manifestations of modernity back to as early as the fourth century. Berman (1983), who distin-
Negotiating Identity in Contemporary Japan

guishes three distinctive historical stages in the development of modernity, offers a more comprehensive approach. The first stage covers the period from the beginning of the sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century coinciding with the discoveries of the New World. The second period begins with the French Revolution and the disruption of previous forms of political, social, economic and private life as a result of the different waves of revolutions at the closing of the eighteenth century. The third phase sets off with the modernization of the production processes and the proliferation of commodities. Modernization had a profound impact on the social life as it has transformed a large part of traditional and rural areas into modern cities in the West. Thus, Berman argues that the idea of a distinct modern age emerged around the sixteenth century and came to maturity during the eighteenth century.

Modernism can be best conceptualized as a state of mind or an artistic/cultural and intellectual mood, which emerged at a specific historical moment in Western history. As a state of mind, it penetrated all levels of life – material, mental and spiritual – and consequently manifested itself in a variety of forms. Modernism has been identified by Smart (1992: 148) as ‘a rebellion against normative standards, a radically different consciousness of time’ and by Bell (1979: 49) as ‘the glorification of the self as the self-infinitizing creature.’ Given these three characteristics, one can easily understand why the above-mentioned historical moments were singled out as starting points of modernity/modernism. The Age of Enlightenment in conjunction with the Industrial Revolution brought about a new consciousness of the self as a rational being. Moreover, significant transformations at the macro, median and micro level had taken place including patterns of organization at the state level, interaction at the social, economic and cultural realms, and values, beliefs and daily
practices at the personal level. In a similar vein, the era of the
great sea voyages and major discoveries of new lands broad­
ened the world and the worldview of the Westerner. In addi­
tion, increased communication and interaction with non-
Western people launched the West into a novel and irrevers­
ible stage in history. In the last case, Kroker and Cook (1988)
contend that Augustine introduced modernity in the fourth
century by departing from the classical conception of reason
as it was propagated by the philosophers of the Antiquity and
thereby creating a new discourse of Western metaphysics.
He established the philosophy that man is constituted of the
three dimensions of being, will and intelligence. He further­
more founded an ethical system based on ‘the will to truth’
as a historical and moral necessity.

Zygmunt Bauman (1992) offers a lucid and judicious anal­
ysis of modernity and postmodernity/postmodernism. He
identifies the Renaissance as the onset of modernity. This
movement celebrated the liberation of man from a preor­
dained order. Man basically usurped the former divine at­
tribute of freedom of creation and self-creation. This newly
gained freedom simultaneously prompted a crisis in the hu­
man spirit, the fear of nothingness. Henceforth, man had to
realize his divine-like capacities for perfection or ‘to confess
his kinship with worms’ (Bell 1979: 49). Perfection was in­
terpreted as the harmony of all parts fitted together in a per­
fected whole in such a way that nothing could be added, dimin­
ished or altered. This brief interlude of openness, diversity,
skepticism and tolerance or ‘the sweet fruits of the sudden
collapse of power-assisted certainties’ (Bauman 1992: xiii)
was very short-lived, due to the scarcity of intellectual and
material means. Not everyone is graced with the same intel­
lectual vigor and shrewdness to transcend human con­
straints.

Moreover, society proved incapable of providing a viable sys-
tem to support a large population of economically non-productive thinkers and artists. This period was followed by the epoch of the ‘cosmopolis’ (Toulmin in Bauman 1992: xiv), which lasted approximately three centuries until the age of the Industrial Revolution. In this system, the ruler embraced, institutionalized and reserved himself the exclusive right to the idea and execution of freedom of creation and self-creation. He thus busily engaged himself in legislating, defining, structuring, segregating and classifying his nation and subjects. In this cosmopolis, every element was in perfect harmony and balance. As a result, critique – in any form or shape – is seen and judged at best irrelevant and at worst noxious, deviant and cancerous to the established order.

Postmodernism emerged in the 1960s as a reaction against modernism in all its manifestations such as the great modernist poetry of Pound or Eliot in literature, the International Style of Le Corbusier or Bauhaus modernism in architecture, etc. These works, once shockingly modern, have over time become mainstream in society and academic circles. The generation of the 1960s (Jameson in Rabinow 1986: 248) thought the modernist works to be ‘the establishment and the enemy-dead, stifling, canonical, the reified monuments one has to destroy to do anything new.’ Ironically, this postmodernist movement, born in the 1960s, rejecting the canonization of modernist works in the academia, has entered numerous faculties in major universities during the decade of the 1980s. The postmodernist temper or state of mind seems to be preoccupied by processes of ‘deconstruction’, ‘decentering’, ‘disappearance’, ‘dissemination’, ‘demystification’, ‘discontinuity’, ‘dispersion’, etc. Postmodernists attack reason and its subject as preservers of ‘unity’ and ‘wholes’ or the *cogito*, the totalizing rationality. Instead, they display an epistemological penchant for fragments, fractures or pastiche in the sense of the jumbling of elements devoid of approving and disapprov-
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ing norms. Postmodernism, as the term manifestly indicates, is a further development of modernism. Modernists cathexically recreate structures and order at the social and personal level in their attempt to fill the void after the demolition of the old worldview. In contrast, postmodernists, who inherited the emptiness, abandon the effort to structure the world and the belief in an objective and normative man-made order. To paraphrase their message would be like the following: The world is empty and there is simply no officially approving agencies and sanction-supported norms to show one’s way out of the void.

In a way, this stance is a leap forward towards a more humane society because the collectivized struggle against emptiness has often degenerated into repressive dictatorships and missions of classes, nations or races to promote their own ‘superior’ cause in recent and more distant times. In the new context, the personal and social worlds become a market-place, which offers the individual a variety of ‘value-free’ choices to select from. One of the principal agencies of generating signals or messages is the mass media. This is not surprising given the fact that postmodernism is a product of the post-industrial information Western society. In this new age, one absorbs a multiplicity of perspectives and voices, which induces skepticism and irony rather than commitment and piety. Hannerz (1992: 34–5) gives the following description of the postmodern condition:

Juxtaposition becomes the prevalent experience as you zap your way around the television dial, or wander aimlessly through the shopping mall...In the media, everywhere is here, and transnational capitalism thrives on uprootedness, importing workers, exporting work, being simultaneously present in the time zones of New York, London, Frankfurt, Hong Kong and Tokyo.

Or as Clifford (1988: 46–7) comments on Bakhtin’s novel:
The polyphonic novel is not a tour de force of cultural and historical totalization...but rather a carnivalesque arena of diversity. Bakhtin discovers a utopian textual space when discursive complexity, the dialogical interplay of voices, can be accommodated.

Postmodernism and culture

The main point of critique on the concept of culture in classic anthropology centers on the perception and representation of a particular culture. To start with, postmodernists find the notion of culture as a monolithic, unchanging and essentialist phenomenon hard to accept. Reality is not simply a caged entity, out there to be discovered, described and analyzed by the ethnographer. In an increasingly interdependent world, it becomes difficult to perceive the world as a totality of autonomous and isolated communities or mono-ethnic nation states with a distinctive cultural inventory. Postmodernists seem to disagree with the essentialist representation of culture in classic anthropology. This aversion for the reification of culture results in the advocacy for discourse. The foremost spokesman of postmodernism in the field of anthropology is undoubtedly James Clifford. Embracing postmodernist ideals, he challenges anthropologists and the very raison d’être of the discipline of anthropology by ‘unmaking’ and deconstructing the notion of culture. He rejects the idea of culture as a consistent entity, which can be represented in a rational whole with a set of distinctive characteristics. It is now widely accepted that cultures are not mere static holistic systems but rather discursive processes (Hannerz 1992; Rosaldo 1993; Werbner and Modood 1998). Clifford also questions the representation of cultures in visual terms. Instead of describing certain visualist rituals or customs, he sets forth the proposal to direct one’s attention and energy towards the writing process and especially the textual approach of heteroglossia. In this approach, he rea-
sons that voices – similar, dissimilar, and identical or contradictory – should be regarded as equally significant and therefore incorporated in the ethnographic account.

The essentialist approach of culture has – among other things – generated convergence theories, which in the current context of polyvocality and diversity seems more like wishful thinking than a likely outcome of history. The concept of convergence, introduced by Jan Tinbergen in his article *On the Theory of the Optimum Regime* (Tinbergen 1969 in Kerr 1983) was elaborated by Clark Kerr, John T. Dunlop, Frederick H. Harbison and Charles A. Myers in *Industrialism and Industrial Man: The Problems of Labor and Management in Economic Growth* (1960). They forecasted a convergence towards industrialism on a global basis. Kerr (1983: 3) defined convergence ‘as the tendency of societies to grow more alike, to develop similarities in structures, processes, and performances.’ In explicit terms, the current convergence forces include the pursuit of modernization, military and economic competition, education and communication, common human needs and expectations. In his line of thinking, it is universal for each man and woman to strive for a higher standard of living, better working conditions, personal choice in private life and at work, production and a wide range of sales and service products.

Postmodernism and ethnography

In recent years, the debate between the scientific and humanistic school of ethnography has reached ‘a period of détente’ (Hammersley 1992:1). Ethnography, clearly belonging to the camp of qualitative research, is seen even by the staunchest quantitative researcher as a method having its own logic and research validity. Empirically, the number of social researchers including anthropologists, political scien-
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tists, philosophical scholars and opinion makers such as investigative journalists using the qualitative method including fieldwork and taking wide-ranging fieldnotes has increased. This is the view of Van Maanen (1988: 125).

There is, in fact, some reason to believe that fieldworkers are the leading edge of a movement to reorient and redirect theoretical, methodological, and empirical aims and practices in all the social sciences except, perhaps, the dismal one.

Yet the current criticism in anthropology appears to be an internal affair as the discourse on methodology is mainly generated from within the anthropological community. Criticism concerns the issue of representation or the postmodernist conditions of knowledge (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Clifford 1988) and the blurring relationship between theory and practice. It aims to transform anthropology into a valid form of cultural critique, which may be used as policy guidelines for government and non-governmental organizations.

Certain postmodernist anthropologists such as James Clifford and George Marcus have raised the issue of representation. The main points of their critique center on the source of agency in classic ethnography. Indeed, the self of the ethnographer was usually that of a transcending and universal individual studying other cultures, mostly a Westerner studying non-Westerners. At the present this view seems no longer valid since the anthropologist him- or herself is being decentered and therefore has become part of the reflection along with the ‘anthropologized.’ Clifford vehemently opposes the existence of one objective truth. Consequently, the narrative created by the ethnographer is not the truth of a given culture. Nor should one see that culture as a fixed phenomenon. Instead of one truth, there are many truths since an ethnographic narrative implies a contingent (yet meaningful) dimension. His/her task is not to paint a coherent picture of a
culture and to produce the authoritative account of that culture. S/he rather needs to allow the different voices solicited and overheard in the field to speak, including and especially the concerns, opinions, ruminations of the subjects of study into the final narrative. What one needs to disclose in the postmodernist era, among other things, is the multi-phased process from fieldnotes to the final monograph. In other words, the way in which ethnographic accounts come into being has been until now consciously or unconsciously obfuscated and thus the demand for candor and transparency of the painstaking writing process seems urgent. Clifford (1988: 25) thus alerts us to the following points.

If ethnography produces cultural interpretations through intense research experiences, how is unruly experience transformed into an authoritative written account? How, precisely, is a garrulous, overdetermined cross-cultural encounter shot through with power relations and personal cross-purposes circumscribed as an adequate version of a more or less discrete ‘other world’ composed by an individual author?

In his book The Predicament of Culture and especially the article On Ethnographic Authority he discusses the link between the subjective and the objective dimensions of anthropology. He reminds us of the indiscrepancy between the field and the desk by demonstrating how this link is fraught with problems. On the one hand, the ‘I was there’ element transforms the ethnographer into the unique authority on a group of natives. Ironically these tangible experiences, difficulties, constraints, ‘noises’ encountered in the field are usually excluded into the final draft in order to render the ethnographic account objective and scientific. The situational and interactional aspects – between the researcher and the people s/he studies – of fieldwork are generally not incorporated in the final account. These details are pushed to the realm of ‘corridor talk/gossip in faculty clubs’ (Rabinow 1990). To overcome this shortcoming, he sug-
suggests a dialogical and even better a polyphonic mode. These modes have in common that they do away with the singular voice and interpretation of the author/ethnographer. The dialogical mode is in first instance a discourse between two parties, in casu the researcher and the subjects of study. The representation of the interactive dealings, both verbal and non-verbal, between the researcher and the researched is definitely closer to reality than the cold and rational ethnographic narrative. Yet limitations can also be detected in this approach. The major shortcoming in this approach is that individuals albeit autonomous beings are living in a specific physical and human environment. The polyphonic mode or heteroglossia appears to offer the all-encompassing solution because it includes all members and forces in society including inconsistent and contradicting elements.

The rationale for a polyphonous discourse, which he advocates, is important in the process of the increasing interconnectedness of different cultures. In the era of overt imperialism, Western man studied the ‘Other’, ‘the savage’ from the Western viewpoint, and painted either a denigrating or a utopian view of foreign cultures. This practice of the Westerner studying and objectifying the other is in the postmodernist context seen and sensed as outdated and ethically non-justifiable in the post-colonial era.

Concerning the relationship between theory and practice, most ethnographers, influenced by social and cultural anthropology and Chicago sociology, see their work as a form of pure rather than applied research. Firth (1981 in Wright 1995) advances the idea that the strength of anthropology is mostly situated in description and analysis, through which it can unmask contradictions, paradoxes and vested interests. In order to guarantee this primary goal, the anthropologist has to be an outsider, keeping a great distance from policy-making organizations. The following (Firth in Wright
Theoretical and Methodological Issues

1995: 65) is his stance:

We need to focus our work more on social problems and on communication with those already engaged in such problems, as well as with the general public. But the very nature of anthropology as an inquisitive, challenging, uncomfortable discipline, questioning established positions and proclaimed values, peering into underlying interests, and if not destroying fictions and empty phrases...at least exposing them all this poses difficulty for its application to practical problems.

In the United States there has always existed a minority of ethnographers, who advocated more applied forms of research such as the well-established tradition of applied anthropology (Eddy and Partridge 1978; Van Willigen 1986 in Hammersley 1992: 132). In recent years, the call for a close link between ethnographic research and policy issues has increased because fieldwork is believed to be a more reliable and solid tool than the quantitative method to assess and direct policy issues. Anthropology as cultural critique, suggested by Marcus and Fisher (1986), is the direct outcome of the blurring between anthropological findings and the applied results of these findings in public policy issues. An extreme version of this penchant towards applied anthropology is the so-called ‘practitioner ethnography.’ In this respect, research is not only conducted to provide concrete guidelines for policy issues but practitioners also actively participate in the research process. A prominent example of this practitioner ethnography occurs in the form of the teacher-as-researcher movement (Stenhouse in Hammersley 1992: 135). In this project, teachers study their own practice and the results obtained prove to be more relevant and transformative vis-à-vis the own teaching methods. This kind of research has been referred to as case studies but de facto it is one kind of ethnography. Advocates of the practitioner ethnography refute conventional ethnography because of the irrelevance to practice, lack of insider’s perspective and exploit-
In Europe and more specifically in Great Britain, Wright (1995) in her article *Anthropology: Still the Uncomfortable Discipline* introduces Foucault’s concept of ‘governmentality’ in order to disprove the idea of the anthropologist as a non-political observer, functioning at the edge of society with no real impact on the policy decision-making process and thereby safeguarding objectivity. She discusses in detail the ideas and ideologies underlying the institutions of the state. She then concludes that concepts, formulated by so-called ‘pure’ scientists and scholars, constitute the backbone of the practices of government. She claims that they are derived from a system of thinking or more specifically a body of ideas about the nature and the control of the ‘population’ and the ‘economy.’ Since anthropological findings and knowledge are part of this body of ideas – shaping directly or indirectly the institutions of the state – they cannot work in a value-free area. Yet the involvement of anthropologists in power systems does not necessarily entail a completely uncritical stance of the anthropologist ‘collaborating’ with the establishment to the disregard of the weak and suppressed groups in society. Wright (1995: 88) thinks the contrary to be truer, namely that anthropologists through applied research are even more able to criticize and reveal injustice and contradictions in society.

If anthropologists are implicated in a pervasive system of governmentality, they also have the potential to contest the rationality from which government practices and institutions derive. All anthropologists, whether labelled ‘pure’, ‘applied’, or ‘no longer’, are, and always have been, implicated in power relations: the basis for these divisions is dissolved. For a committed stance within a system of governmentality a conception of ‘the discipline as a whole’ is required with better institutional links between its parts. This is so that as anthropologists working in policy and practice raise issues, which are of central theoretical concern to the discipline, they can be taken
up by anthropologists working in the universities.

The Study of Japan, Anthropology and Postmodernism

Japanology, Japanese Studies, Anthropology

Social research on Japan developed rapidly in the United States after World War II. This trend was also adopted by other Western European countries, where considerable advances were made in the field of ‘Japanology.’ Japanology, as Bownas (Bownas in Van Bremen 1990: 118) points out, covers multiple fields and meanings:

The word implies a sweep of studies, at times almost pretentious in its breath; it includes every aspect of Japan, its people, its history, its literature and language, its religions, thought, art and the rest... But at its best, based on a thorough knowledge of the language and original sources, Japanology has everything to teach us.

From the 1960s onwards when researchers studying Japan from a cultural and social perspective started to increase, there was a need for a ‘dual competence’ (Van Bremen 1990: 118). Henceforth one has to master the Japanese language and gain professional skills in other fields in order to be able to integrate the two competencies. The term of ‘Japanese Studies’ was coined in order to distinguish the new direction in the study of Japan from the traditional discipline of ‘Japanology.’ Japanese Studies generally covers the ‘Social Sciences’ (shakaigaku) including Sociology, Social and Cultural Anthropology, Social Psychology, Political Science and Economics. In addition, the need for more intense communication and if possible cooperation with other disciplines was encouraged in order to eschew isolationist and particularistic research confined to a few insiders. Simultaneously, the importance of Japanese scholarship was
stressed, implying the mastery of the Japanese language, the body of scholarship developed by the Japanese themselves such as the ‘national learning’ (kokugaku).

In the 1970s the same line of thinking was maintained: how to relate Japanology and Japanese Studies, two complementary but distinct disciplines. One strategy to cope with the precarious relationship between the two fields was to redefine Japanology in a more narrow sense as the study of the Japanese language and literature. A second one was to turn Japanology into an auxiliary scholarship, serving other disciplines. A final but perhaps too radical approach was to scrap Japanology altogether. One of the main preoccupations of the scholars studying Japan in this decade was the question whether Japanese Studies should conduct applied research. At the practical level, this concern was linked with funding purposes as applied research attracts financial support far more easily than ‘esoteric’ studies. This trend of fund-raising outside the academic institution is reinforced by the ever-decreasing funding situation of universities. However, some, like Van Bremen (1990: 121), think that applied research by its very nature threatens the freedom of expression and autonomy of the researcher.

...These forces and activities should not be allowed to dominate, let alone usurp, Japanese Studies at university level. The place and means must be kept for work other than that directed and dictated by immediate and short-term political, administrative and commercial interests, considerations and ends.

In the nexus Japanese Studies/Anthropology the same ‘dual competence’ is recommended by many Japan scholars. Knowledge of the language and communication with Japanese scholars are quintessential in the production of a meaningful ethnography. Recently, the extensive output of publications on Japanese studies represents an unprecedented dynamic moment of Japan-scholars. This eruption of publications on Japan
makes it also difficult to obtain a clear overview of all the current academic activities. Therefore, serious efforts have been made to classify the recently published works according to either paradigmatic approaches and/or certain prevalent themes of research.

One of the first publications is *The Study of Japan in the Behavior Sciences*, edited by Norbeck and Parman (1970). Neustupny (1980), in his attempt to formulate a paradigmatic approach towards the study of Japan, discerns a shift from the Japanology paradigm towards the Japanese Studies paradigm. Mouer and Sugimoto’s *Images of Japanese Society* (1990), analyzing the impact of *Nihonbunkaron* on the scholarship of Japan, has received much attention. It contains an extensive list of publications on the holistic view of Japan and a more modest bibliography on the conflict model. By exposing the shortcomings of the holistic approach, they propagate the conflict model in studying Japan. In another publication *Othernesses of Japan: Historical and Cultural Influences on Japanese Studies in Ten Countries*, Harumi Befu and Josef Kreiner (1992) analyze the content of Japanese studies in order to demonstrate the similarities and dissimilarities among the different national approaches of Japan scholars, depending on the particular national preoccupation and orientation. *An Introductory Bibliography for Japanese Studies* consists of nine volumes, covering the works of Japanese scholars in both humanities and social sciences during the period 1974–94. This book has been well received. Terasaki (1994: 27) contends that ‘there is virtually no tradition of categorizing and organizing the results of research originating in Japan and the various fields of social sciences and humanities.’ Sonoda (1990) divides studies on Japan into three broad categories: Japanology (*Nihongaku*), discipline-focused Japanese studies (*senmon shikooteki Nihonkenkyuu*) and problem-oriented research (*kadai*
In his classification of all post-war publications by Western social scientists, he includes specifically scholars working in the fields of Sociology, Social and Cultural Anthropology, and Social Psychology, and not Economics and Political Science. Linhart (1994) offers the following classification. He names the first approach ‘From the village to the City and the Company.’ The ‘Village Approach’, exemplified by Embree’s *Suye Mura* (1939), Beardsley, Hall and Ward’s *Village Japan* (1959) and others dominated the first two decades after World War II. This approach is directly linked with the general perception of Japan as an agrarian society by Westerners. The nature of these studies is holistic and essentialist. As the post-war recovery of Japan advanced in an unprecedented rapid pace, it became apparent that the Japanese society in the 1960s did no longer correspond with the general image of an agrarian society but rather with that of a highly urbanized and industrialized one. This prompted the nascence of the ‘urban’ approach, which emerged in the 1970s. In conjunction with this approach, as a result of the unexpected success of Japanese business, the ‘learn-from-Japan’s approach’ boomed, aptly labeled the ‘Companies’ study (Rohlen 1974; Dore 1986).

The second approach, which he calls the ‘the actors on the stage’ approach, is ‘biographical.’ These works aim to render the account or rather the main actors in the study more tangible and real. Whereas in the past, studies dealt with institutions, practices, and values, these new publications seek to recreate personal lives and life cycles of ordinary Japanese people by allowing them to speak for themselves from their own point of view. To illustrate, the life of ordinary school-children is portrayed by White in *The Japanese Educational Challenge* (1987). In this work she even goes as far as to recreate and evoke from historical data the daily life of Japanese
pupils in past centuries.

The third approach concerns the ‘actors of different sexes’, in which Japanese women, for a long time neglected in the academic world, are singled out as worthy subject for research. This is linked with the changing gender roles in society in general and in Japanese studies in particular (Slawik and Linhart 1981; Hielscher 1980). Women scholars in the field of Japanese studies also introduce new issues on the research agenda, such as gender studies in the Japanese context (Ochiai 1997; Goldstein-Godini 1997).

Finally, the approach ‘all is not harmony’ is a recent phenomenon of self-reflexivity and the ‘unwrapping’ of Japanese Studies. Scholars of this school oppose the general trend of emphasizing only the self-congratulatory and self-lauding elements within Japanese study. They vehemently criticize the hitherto ‘Japanophile’ approach vis-à-vis Japan for merely generating sufficient research funding (particularly from Japanese side) but not for contributing to scientific and objective understanding of Japanese society (Befu 1990, 1993; Moeran 1990; Mouer and Sugimoto 1990; Weiner 1997).

This classification is timely but provisional since many studies do not fit neatly into one of these categories. Given the fact that Japanese society has joined the ranks of contemporary complex societies and moreover given the increased number of researchers – with the own inclinations, academic training, interest areas and research agendas – a classification is very much welcomed and urgent. This is necessary not only to understand the historical dimension but also to envision what will and might come in the field of Japanese studies. Or simply said what does the future of Japanology/Japanese Studies entail?
Postmodernism and Japanese studies

At first sight postmodernism and Japanese studies seem strange bedfellows since the study of Japan has for a long time been situated at the margins of social sciences. Moreover, the holistic/functionalist approach of Japanese studies does not seem sympathetic towards postmodernist preference for fragmentation, multivocality and hybridity. Yet postmodernist influences, without being labeled thus, can be found in the works countering and criticizing the Japanese ethnonational identity thesis, variously called *Nihonjinron* (the theory of the Japanese), *Nihonbunkaron* (the theory of Japanese culture), *Nihonron* (The discourse on Japan). Miller (1982), Dale (1988), Mouer and Sugimoto (1990), Befu (1990, 1993) and others can be regarded as postmodernists in the sense of demonstrating sympathy with postmodernist sensitivities of deconstructing ‘conventional’ Japanese studies. Miller (1982) demystifies the inscrutable character of the Japanese language. Dale (1988) traces the roots of the debate on the uniqueness of Japanese ethnonational identity to Japanese fascism and militarism of the first half of the century. Mouer and Sugimoto (1990) in their relentless effort to unveil the holistic nature of most studies on the Japanese insist that the knowledge and information concerning Japan are processed and presented from a holistic perspective. Recently Weiner and the other contributors of his book *Japan’s Minorities. The Illusion of Homogeneity* (1997) provide interesting insights on the 6 principal minority groups in Japan.

Befu, a Japanese-American anthropologist, can perhaps also be seen as a postmodernist voice since he continues to unravel the inconsistencies of *Nihonbunkaron* publications. In addition, he also discerns national differences in approaching Japan and thereby decenters the objectivity of the
researcher. In the premise of the publication, *Othernesses of Japan*, which he edited with Josef Kreiner, Befu (1992: 15) notes:

Differences (in studying Japan) are due to disciplinary, historical, personal and other factors. If we are creatures of our culture, as cultural anthropology instructs us, then it follows that scholars of different cultural backgrounds, as much as anyone else, would manifest different interests, different ways of thinking, different outlooks, and different world views, which should cause them to interpret differently what they behold, be it Japan, China or any other country.

It seems safe to assume that Clifford and Marcus (1986) formally introduced postmodernism in anthropology. In my opinion, the same can be said of Brian Moeran (1990) and his group, who subject Japanologists and Japanese Studies scholars to a postmodernist critique. Not only are they applying postmodernist ideas in studying the Japanese, they also adopt postmodernist terminologies, thereby connecting Japanese studies with the larger community of social sciences. The publication *Unwrapping Japan* (1990) has been both lauded and loathed for the postmodernist approach. In this publication Moeran calls the discourse on Japanism a ‘wrapping’ endeavor, referring to a mystifying and exoticizing process. The studies on Japan instead of clarifying Japanese culture display a particularistic nature, which feeds the image of an enigmatic Japan. He proposes the term ‘Japanism’ in analogy with Said’s well-known definition of Orientalism. Based on the latter concept, Moeran (1990: 1) defines Japanism as

A way of coming to terms with Japan that is based on Japan’s place in Western European and American experience. Japanism is a mode of discourse, a body of knowledge, a political vision of reality that represents an integral part of Western material civilization both culturally and ideologically, with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery and doctrines.