Farewell to ICU: A Few Reflections

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To begin

I am honored indeed to have a special edition of the Journal created partly in commemoration of my official retirement from ICU. I do not deserve it. Compelled to write something for the edition myself, I choose not to write an academic paper but to reflect and comment selectively on my leaving home for America for college, my education and career as a sociologist in the U.S. and my 13 years and four months at ICU.

I was born in Kichijoji on November 23, 1930. Right across the street from my house was a Christian church with an American missionary. I played at and attended its kindergarten and Sunday school, hence Christianity was a part of my upbringing. I went to public elementary school, Musashino #3, totally unaffected by my having failed in the entrance examination to private Seikei Elementary School which was closer to home. Kichijoji was my home, my heimat, my kokyo. My father was a bureaucrat in the Home Ministry, having graduated from the First Higher School, the Law Faculty of the Tokyo Imperial University and passed the higher civil service examination. While his assignments outside of Tokyo were less frequent than for others in his cohort, we had a house in Kichijoji even while we did not live there. With the end of the war and arrival of the Allied Occupation my father was purged from public office, having been Prefectural Governor during the war and deemed a part of those who had contributed significantly to Japan's war efforts.

Occupation reforms began. My father's Home Ministry was abolished. What followed was land reform, dissolution of zaibatsu, education reform, and the enactment of a new Constitution. There was great social change. The USA was now a model nation, a democracy with a high standard of living where all people were equal. America for me was a dreamland far more advanced in science and technology than Japan and I wanted to study there. I was among the few to be given an opportunity to do so in 1950. I left home and my country to study science in America. I would come home with the newest knowledge and help my country develop. I was 19 years old.

Study in America

The years that ensued were difficult. I struggled. Even while I struggled, however, my life in America was exciting, full, and intense. I did my undergraduate work at Haverford College, a small liberal arts college in Pennsylvania founded by Quakers in 1833. It was indeed small with less than 500 students and all male at that. All students lived on campus. Nearby there was Bryn Mawr College, also founded by Quakers but all female, and there was much official and unofficial cooperation between the two colleges. The academic demands made on the students were at least to me enormous.

Some courses required a book a week plus a short paper. I had to find ways to adapt to the harsh reality. I had to learn to read fast and get the main points only. I stopped using the English-Japanese dictionary (too time-consuming) unless I felt I absolutely had to. Still there was no effective way to learn to write well. I'd spend all night writing the weekly two-page paper on the assigned book, but it would come back the following week marked all over in red and with a failing grade. "Practice and practice" was the only way to improve my English. It sure was not easy to compete with the Americans, and they were all very bright. On top of trying to keep up with all the assignments I had to work to eat. When I left home in 1950, Japan was a very poor country and I knew I could not expect any financial help from my parents. Haverford gave me a scholarship which covered a significant part of the tuition and I feel forever indebted to the college. I had to earn the rest of the tuition and my cost of living. So I waited on tables, did the dishes in the kitchen, baby-sat for the basketball coach, marked call numbers on the new books in the library, sold hot dogs at football games, had the evening paper concession on campus, etc. etc. No doubt, I was the poorest kid on campus, and I worked all summer long to earn money. I was always busy and had little time for sleep.

Perhaps because of my exposure to a new society and culture, very different from Japan, my interests shifted from natural to social science, and I pursued sociology as my major. Though attracted to anthropology, I chose sociology for its more rigorous methodology for my graduate work at Columbia University in New York City. One big surprise at Columbia was the English spoken by some members of the faculty, heavily accented and hardly understandable. Professor Lazarsfeld, a world famous sociologist, a native of Austria, for example, was a poor speaker of English. Still, he had a large following among students including myself who would come early and sit in front of class to listen intensely to his lecture. I realized that bad pronunciation and bad grammar did not really matter, and what is important is the content, the message. I stopped being ashamed of my English. In sharp contrast to my undergraduate studies, I did well in graduate work, or well enough to be awarded the coveted President's Fellowship, the largest fellowship Columbia had at the time. Encouraged, I decided to go for the PhD.

Trying to find employment

When my work was progressed enough to consider entering the job market to teach at the college level, it occurred to me that I would never be able to come home to be a professor, for Japan then had the system of gakubatsu which would exclude a person like me even from consideration. To teach at the Tokyo University one would have to be a Tokyo University graduate who has stayed at the Tokyo University for graduate work under the tutorage of an able mentor. And on top of that I would just happen to be around when a job opening comes about. For the PhD in sociology there was only one way to make a living, and that was to be a college professor. By then I had a family with a child and my wife was American. While I thought American society was very racist, it was far more tolerant of diversity than Japan. I did think of ICU as one university in Japan which might hire me, but the image I had of the Japanese academic world discouraged me. I felt I would be far freer to work as a sociologist in America

than in Japan. Still, professors in America were overwhelmingly white. I knew a few Americans of Asian descent who were professors but I knew no Japanese native obtaining a professorial appointment.

When I decided to see if any college in the United States would hire me, I was still on a student visa. I found that the market was open and a person like me, a foreigner with a linguistic handicap, could still compete in it. In the United States there was and still is an informal ranking of universities in which PhDs from "prominent" universities tended to find jobs in "prominent" universities. The ranking was flexible and changed from time to time depending on who was there. In sociology then my affiliation with Columbia no doubt helped. Columbia sociology, with prominent names such as Robert K. Merton and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, was one of the meccas of sociology along with Talcott Parsons in Harvard. I am grateful to Professor Robert K. Merton and Professor Herbert Passin for supervising my PhD dissertation and to other members of my dissertation committee, especially Professor Ivar Berg. The letters of recommendation they wrote on my behalf no doubt helped.

Becoming a professor

My first fulltime academic appointment was at Rutgers College in New Brunswick, N. J. Giving a lecture in front of a sea of a few hundred faces was almost frightening. Initially I'd write out every word of the lecture beforehand. Classroom performance was important and so was student evaluation in the university making personnel decisions. Unlike in Japan where a fulltime appointment is permanent, in the United States lecturers and assistant professors do not have tenure. Untenured faculty must compete for tenure with publications and classroom performance. Academic journals are refereed and journals, too, are ranked. To compete one must write books and papers and have them published by prominent publishers and in prominent journals. The standards for competition were more or less clear. "Publish or perish" was the system. I somehow managed to survive and obtain tenure. The competition, however, did not cease with tenure. There was another hurdle to be overcome and it was promotion to be a full professor. Here, too, there had to be an objective evaluation of the candidate and his work done by a dozen scholars in the field selected by the department chair, many of whom are not known to the candidate. This hurdle, too, I somehow managed to cross over. And then, strangely enough, I became more productive. University professors in America are poorly paid, especially when compared to other occupations that require similarly long and arduous training prior to acquiring fulltime employment. Social prestige accorded to college professors is high, but they struggle economically especially before attaining tenure. Even after tenure, most live modestly.

Coming home to Japan

In mid-1980s I received a call from a friend in Japan asking me if I'd consider coming home and if yes his university had a vacancy and if I said yes right there and then the job would be mine. It was at a national university. It was a big surprise for me. It showed that the professors' market in Japan had changed somewhat and if I wanted I could possibly find employment in a Japanese university, and I began to

think about returning to Japan. Important in my thinking were my parents. I have three siblings and all had left Tokyo for many years and had no prospect of returning there. While I could plan my own life to a considerable extent, I could not know how long my parents would live. Left alone without any children of their own around, my parents were still in good health and living happily in Kichijoji. There was no question, however, that they were growing older every year and their welfare was a major concern to all of us. Among the four of us I was the only one who could possibly move back to Tokyo. Beginning in 1980 I had a research project going in Japan with a grant from the National Science Foundation and I was making relatively frequent trips to Japan. I stayed with my parents whenever I returned and realized that everyone's anxiety about our parents welfare would be greatly lessened if I returned for good. In 1987 I saw an advertisement of a job in Japan in the Employment Bulletin published by the American Sociological Association. In fact, there were two advertisements, one from ICU and the other from Sophia University, and I applied to both.

Thanks to the ICU decision to offer me a job, I was able to come home and spend the last five-plus years of my father's life and ten-plus years of my mother's life near them. I am greatly comforted that I was able to do things for them during the final years of their lives.

When I arrived on campus early January, 1989 to begin my new job at ICU, the "academic world" I knew was all American, and I knew little about universities and the academic world in Japan. I had spent a year at the University of Tokyo in 1969-70 on a Fulbright, but the university was still under siege by student activists providing little opportunity to observe and learn university life under more normal circumstances.

Almighty Ministry of Education

Some people had told me that ICU is the most American university in Japan and I'd have little adjustment to make. This prediction did not turn out to be true. I had a great deal of adjusting to do. ICU is a Japanese university. It is in Japan and it must comply with many Japanese laws. ICU is in Japan where education is centralized in the Ministry of Education. The Japanese university has little autonomy. Structurally the Japanese university is virtually incapable of innovation and is destined to maintain the status quo, unless and until the Ministry of Education decides to provide more autonomy to all universities, or the laws governing education are greatly changed by the Diet. I was and am amazed at the extent to which ICU faculty and administrative personnel are oriented toward the Ministry of Education. I could hardly believe that universities in Japan had allowed the Ministry of Education to maintain as much power as it does. It can even decide who can supervise an MA thesis and who cannot, who can supervise a PhD dissertation and who cannot ! What and how do the bureaucrats know to be able make such judgments ? They entrust the task to a committee of scholars in the field. The committee members are never made public, nor are the ways in which they are selected. Further, the standards for judgment are never made public. This was and is tough to believe. To take my own field of sociology, it is impossible for anyone to keep up with all the frontiers of knowledge in

it. I gather the same is true in any field. Ever finer specialization is a fact of life in modern society and especially in academic fields. It is impossible for anyone to understand and appreciate and judge all new knowledge in the discipline. The Allied Occupation abolished the Home Ministry (Naimusho) as one of the foundations of Japanese authoritarianism and militarism. They should have abolished the Ministry of Education, too.

The "Daigaku Secchi Kijun" (Standards for University Founding--my own translation) legislated in 1956 is what the administration and the faculty refer to whenever any reform or structural change (e.g., adding a new division) is considered. To ask the Ministry of Education for approval of a new program the university must submit a massive set of multiple copies of documents covering the entire facets of the proposal and the university including physical facilities and complete and up-to-date curriculum vita of each faculty member. This would require a sizable truck to transport it to the Ministry. Any departure in any document from the rules of the Ministry will mean that the application is judged as incomplete and returned. No wonder that one would have second thought about planning any change that would involve the Ministry of Education.

Good students and immobile university

If ICU is Japanese, is it in any way different from other Japanese universities ? I am not really sure. One thing I am sure of is the high quality of the ICU students. Compared to the students I have had at universities in America and I have taught at Rutgers, New York University, the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and Columbia, the ICU students I have taught were on the average better than the average student in America. The top students are comparable to the best students I had in America. The big difference is in the lowest level. In America there was a huge difference between the top and the bottom. At ICU there was not. This is no doubt due to the entrance examination at ICU which ensures a considerably high level of literacy on the part of everyone who passes the exam. A majority of ICU students enter the university through this route and begin their studies in April. A smaller number enter in September. This latter group consists of returnees from overseas who are paper screened. And there is the group of those who are recommended by a set of Christian high schools who are usually the top of their classes. In America, no university holds its own entrance examination. Over the years universities have moved toward the ideology of equal opportunity, fairness, and pro-diversity.

I believe ICU had a unique niche in Japan's higher education and was a leader in innovation in higher education, but that niche has been eroded by other universities that came on the wagon of internationalization that became popular especially after 1980. The word, international, became very attractive and a number of universities bearing the word international (*kokusai*) in their names or divisions or programs increased rapidly, while ICU could not maintain its leadership it once had. In late 1980s ICU decided to create a new division called International Studies Division. Until this division was created the Division of Social Science was the most difficult division to enter, according to the applicants' division preferences. Once the new division was added, it became the first choice of more applicants than the social

science division. In substance, I could see little difference between the two except in name.

The world changes with time. People grow in age and retire, scholarship changes, new academic fields appear, societal needs change, but Japanese universities can hardly change. To take another example that is close to me, I belonged to the Graduate School of Public Administration. At one time in the history of ICU public administration was a thriving field with a number of well known scholars. This was the graduate school to which faculty in social sciences belonged. With the addition of the Division of International Studies the number of faculty increased while there was only one professor was in the field of public administration. The idea of changing the name of this graduate school was discussed almost every year but no change has yet been made. New faculty members' names were added to the list of faculty but their specializations were not. The list of specializations prepared years ago remained. I am a sociologist, but there is no sociology listed among the specializations, and my name came under "political culture". Over the years I said this was incorrect and I asked that sociology be listed as a specialization and my name be placed under it. It was not done. It was not done because we would need approval from the Ministry of Education which would require too much effort. What appears most important is superficial conformity to rules of the Ministry of Education and hence not the substance. Still, I taught my sociology courses and supervised PhD dissertations in graduate school.

Another surprise was the number of meetings I had to attend and the length of each. It was difficult to get accustomed to attending so many meetings and sit through each. In America no professor would tolerate it. In my memory, no meeting in the university I served lasted longer than two hours. Most took less than an hour. (I now recall one exception. It was at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and one faculty meeting lasted much longer than two hours and was finally adjourned at 2am. It was in 1969 and the university was in crisis over student activism against the war in Vietnam.) In any event, I was and am most impressed by the patience of ICU faculty.

The principle of rotation

One basic underlying principle of assigning organizational positions to specific persons at ICU (and I gather in Japan in general) is rotation. Even when the position is elective and perhaps inevitably pre-election informal discussion and sometimes canvassing takes place, the primary consideration seems to be the question: Whose turn is it this time ? Except for the election of the university president, no one seems to run for office. Often there seems to be a shared understanding who is to be the one to be elected. Doing some administrative work is a part of the job of being a professor, so I had been made to understand. I understood that I'd have to serve as something, and when a new Director of the Social Science Research Institute was to be elected I was willing to serve. At the election I was nominated and no one else. Still there was a formal election by ballot and I voted for myself. The results were announced that I was unanimously elected. Professor Uozumi was sitting next to me and he told me that this was the first time in the history of ICU that one was elected unanimously. He added, "there is usually at least one abstention." I was very surprised and

embarrassed. I also learned that at ICU if someone is nominated s/he cannot decline, and if elected s/he must serve.

In 1993 there was an election of the new Dean of the Graduate School. I was not involved in any discussion about who might be good. At the faculty meeting we were told that the top two persons in the first round voting would remain as the candidates for the second round, except when we voted there were two persons who were tied for the second place, and to my surprise my name was one of the two. If my memory is correct, we had to vote three times to elect the new Dean and I was elected. So stunned was I that I utterly forgot to observe the custom of standing up and bowing immediately after the result was announced. Thus I became the new Dean of the Graduate School totally unprepared. That did not matter, for the office staff knew the bureaucratic requirements of the office of the Dean and did all the work. Despite my wish to introduce a number of reforms to ICU, I discovered that the Dean has little power and authority of office. The duties of the office called for my attending an incredibly large number of meetings including the all important weekly Cabinet meeting, whose main function was to be a sounding board for the President. The Cabinet does not have decision-making authority.

The academic world in Japan and the US

There are many differences between American universities and ICU (and other universities in Japan, I gather.). The biggest surprise to me has been the differences in the academic world in Japan and the US. The biggest is that in Japanese academic world there is little competition. There is no competition, because there is no evaluation. There is no evaluation, because there are no standards for judgment. This is the case in sociology at least.

I was aware that the sociology being produced in America and that in Japan were somewhat different. Aside from the absence of referee system in screening papers to be published (in mid-1990's the Japanese Sociological Association and its official journal, Shakaigaku Hyouron — the Japanese Sociological Review — adopted it, but I am not certain how it is working), I've noticed that the papers published in the JSR or presented at annual meetings of the Association are mainly authored by graduate students. Further, there is little controversy, few debates within the discipline. If there occurs a controversy, it tends to become personal feuds.

Early in the 1970's I wrote a paper on American sociology and examined its trends. Five were identified: (1) From "arm-chair" to empiricism, (2) From lone to team work, (3) From case to comparative studies, or from case description to measurement of variables, (4) Quantification, and (5) Hypothesis testing.

In what respects and to what extent is Japanese sociology different from American sociology ? In order to answer this question I did a systematic study. Using a similar stance that I did in writing the paper on American sociology, I did a content analysis of the papers published in the ASR and the JSR during the most recent two year period. An academic paper is being prepared on this project, but to give the basic findings, American sociology is far more "scientific" than Japanese sociology. Papers in the ASR tend to be cumulative in the sense that they build upon past works in the discipline. Hypotheses are formulated on what has been done and known.

Hypotheses guide the empirical research strategy, and they are tested with the empirical data collected. The results show vast differences between American and Japanese sociology so much so that one would wonder if they are in the same field.

I am working on an academic paper on this subject and I will try to explain the phenomenon historically, namely, the discipline of sociology was placed within the Faculty of Literature at the Tokyo Imperial University, which has served as the model for all matters involving education. Dividing academic fields into three faculties of humanities, social science, and natural science which is far more prevalent in the US has not been adopted in Japan, except at ICU (and partially at that). Thus, sociology in Japan was housed with literature, arts, philosophy, and history as neighbors, and not with political science and economics as is the case in American universities I suspect that the main reason why Japanese sociology appears to have adopted the scientific method far less than American sociology lies in the ethos and content of training of sociology students. Teachers become the models for their students, and teachers impart their ethos and knowledge. When these do not include the ethos of science, and especially in the context of Japanese academic world and mode of graduate school training the student tends to be a reproduction of his/her mentor.

Concluding remarks

I have mumbled on. As I look back on the thirteen plus years at ICU, I cannot help but be reminded that I have had a full and happy life at ICU. I am grateful for that. I am indeed fortunate to have had the fine students. I have enjoyed the company of my colleagues.

There remains one item that needs to be said. I have made the point a number of times before in open, official sessions, but it is not in print and I'd like to say it here again. I believe ICU should abandon its so-called "Christian code," a rule that keeps all non-Christians from being considered for fulltime faculty position. As a Christian I believe ICU would not have such a rule, if it were truly Christian. A university that professes to promote liberal arts education is being highly illiberal in having such a rule. A university that aspires to be international is being inconsistent in having the Christian code. As long as ICU keeps its Christian code, it cannot be truly international. Only when the Christian code is eliminated, do the three letters of ICU become consistent with each other and the university liberates itself to be able to become the world-class university it aspires to be.