

〈男〉〈女〉〈その他：__〉

ポストコロニアルな日本をジェンダー・カテゴリー化する

〈Men〉〈Women〉〈Other (specify) __〉

Gender Categorization of Post-Colonial Japan

加藤恵津子(国際基督教大学教養学部・教授)

Etsuko Kato (International Christian University)



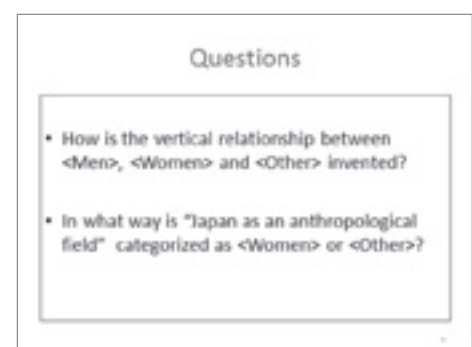
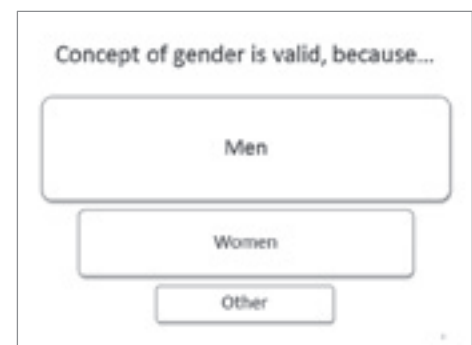
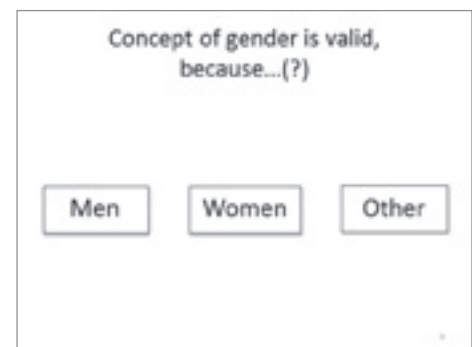
Is gender, or the concept of socially and culturally constructed differences between sexes, valid or not in anthropological studies of contemporary Japan? My answer is: Yes, it is valid, although I must quickly add some explanations.

First, I am not saying that the concept of gender is valid because it objectifies women as research subjects. Second, I am not saying that the concept is valid because it objectifies men as equally important research subjects as women are. Third, I am not saying that the concept of gender is valid because it objectifies sexual minority people, whom I tentatively call “other” (meaning “people other than heterosexual men and heterosexual women”). Rather, my questions are: Why do we dare to research women? Why do we dare to research “other” people? And above all, why do we not research men with the same enthusiasm as we do with women or “other”? In short, gender is valid not because it reveals several categories that exist in society, but it reveals a mechanism that produces these categories in relation to each other, hierarchically.

This argument is nothing new, nor is it important only for anthropological studies of Japan. However, I dare to raise these points because Japan as a research field is in the very positions of <women> or <other> when looked from outside Japan. In other words, Japan as an anthropological field is still, and will perpetually be in post-colonial situations, being viewed as <women> or <other> by the U.S. and Western European academia metaphorically and practically.

What mechanism produces hierarchy between <men>, <women> and <other>? And in what sense is Japan as a field <women> or <other>?

First to note is that, categories <men>, <women> and <other> are the products of mutual negation. The first to be negated are <women>,

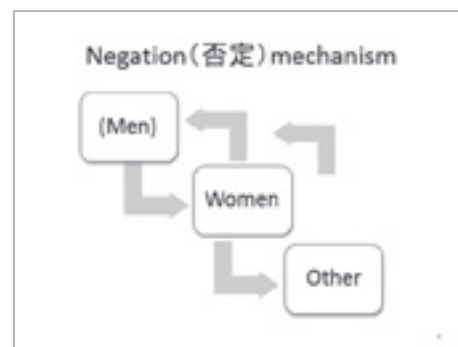


and their negation produces <men>. As Nancy Chodorow pointed out in 1970s, a boy's gender identification must replace his early identification with his mother, and it must take a negative form; In order to define his uncertain masculinity, a boy should not be feminine or involved with women (Chodorow 1974:49-50). Chodorow also points out that the boy does not only denigrate but also devalue women. On the other hand, a girl does not have to say that she is not a man in order to become a woman, because she can reach womanhood by identifying herself with familiar world that her mother provides her with. If she recognizes that she is not, and will never be, a man, it is when she is told so in prohibition: "Don't do such a boy-like thing." In short, a boy's saying "I am not a woman" means the negation of others and the formation of new self, while a girl's saying "I am not a man" means the negation by others and the restriction of self. Thus, the paired categories <men> and <women> are mutually negating, but the negation is asymmetrical. And <men> need <women> more than <women> need <men> as the object of negation, in order to define self.

Moreover, there exists another group(s) of people who are categorized in a negative form like <women>, often in a more derogative way. They are so-called sexual minorities or queer people, including homosexual, bisexual, transgender, trans-sexual or intersex. Heterosexual men, who compose the majority of men, negate sexual minorities more intensely than they negate (heterosexual) women, because sexual minorities, especially gay men, do not help heterosexual men's self-definition, but rather, they confuse it.

This two-layered negation mechanism explains the double-standards that current Japanese government presents. On the one hand, the government promotes women's participation in the labor market; it also promotes special care for GID children. On the other hand, the parliament members never cease to give harassing remarks against women; they are also reluctant to make laws and institutions that assure equality between heterosexual and homosexual couples. These seemingly contradictory attitudes of the government suggest that being a man and being heterosexual must be achieved at once in order to be a full-fledged citizen, and that people who lack either condition are "underqualified" citizens. Of course, Japan is not the only country where such standards exist.

The two-layered negation mechanism presented above enables



only heterosexual men to negate somebodies else. Now, what does this mechanism tell us about Japan as an anthropological field?

I argue that Japan's position in the world anthropology is the same as <women's> and <other's> positions within a society. In other words, the mechanism that produces gender categories and hierarchy is the same as the mechanism feminizing and othering a Far Eastern country in the post-colonial world.

For example, in American Anthropological Association, the world biggest anthropological circle, Japan is said to be a minor research field. Nevertheless, some especially popular ethnographic works on Japan after Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) focus on Japanese or Japanese women's sexuality, written by women anthropologists. *Geisha* (1983) by Lisa Dalby was a product of the researcher's participant observation as a geisha; *Nightwork* (1994) by Anne Allison was written based on the researcher's participant observation as a club hostess in Tokyo. Both works begin with a question and description of two contrastive groups of Japanese women: sexy professionals and sober wives [see the slides 7 and 8]. Allison also analyzes Japanese sexual desires with "mother" as a key concept. She claims that the "mother" figure absorbs two contradictory aspects of Japanese <women>, namely, being sexual and caring at the same time, to satisfy violent but immature men [see the slide 9].

Karen Kelsky's *Women on the Verge* (2001), another popular ethnography published later, explores young Japanese women who come overseas seeking for sexual relationship with White men. Both in Allison's and Kelsky's works, Japanese women are depicted as excessively <women>, being willing to become objects or subjects of sexual desires, while Japanese men are depicted as less than <men>, that is, not sexy or strong enough in women's eyes. For example, Kelsky traces the origin of Japanese women's sexual desires with Western men back to the postwar occupation period, visually presenting a masculine and strong American GI accompanied by Eros-seeking Japanese women, and an injured Japanese war veteran side by side in her book [see the slide 10].

In a sense, women's writing about women is nothing surprising as an outcome of the infiltration of feminism into academia from 1970s. However, the question is how Japanese women and men are depicted in these writings. Why do these women researchers choose



Sexy (Geisha) but Sober (Wives)

- Geisha are supposed to be sexy where wives are sober... Foreign women are frequently outraged by the idea of the geisha. "Playthings for men!" ... Although geisha can hardly be labeled feminists, ironically they are among the few Japanese women who have managed to attain economic self-sufficiency and positions of authority...

Geisha (Dalby 1983: xiv)

Sexy (Hostesses) but Sober (Wives)

- Probably the first question a Westerner will ask me when I describe the nightlife drinking of Japanese men is, "Why do Japanese wives put up with it? ... Usually Westerners also wonder how a wife could endure her husband's absence from home."

Nightwork (Allison 1994:102)

Mother-like but sexy Women & Violent but immature Men

- Common structure of many tales in Japanese literature or dramas: A man rapes a female, and the victim forgives her attacker just as a mother would forgive her child.

Nightwork (Allison 1994:171, Citing Bruma 1984)

'Eros-seeking Japanese women' & 'Less-than-a-man Japanese men'

The slide contains two side-by-side black and white photographs. The left photo shows a group of people, including a man in a military-style uniform and several women. The right photo shows a man in a white shirt and dark pants, possibly a soldier or a man in a uniform, standing next to a woman. Below the photos is the caption: "Women on the Verge (Kelsky 2001: 72-73)".

topics that emphasize Japanese “unusual” sexuality that is full of contradictions? Why do Japanese women have to be objects or subjects of sexual desires? Why do Japanese men have to be mother-complex, immature, impotent, violent and weak? Researchers’ emphasis on Japanese unusual sexuality is even more popular today as cultural studies flourish. At international conferences of Japan Studies or Asian Studies, I often see the U.S.-based researchers, mostly women, presenting on Lolita anime, underground adult manga and other Japanese erotic pop culture that depicts unusual sexuality.

Here I clearly see the intersection of colonialist gaze and <men’s> gaze based on negation and hierarchy. Regardless of researchers’ gender, the U.S. anthropology itself is structurally <men>, and Japan, which has been under the U.S. hegemony since its loss in World War II, is structurally <women>. There, Japanese women are depicted as excessively <women> who stimulate conquerors’ desires, and Japanese men are depicted as <less than a man> or <other> who do not fit into men-women dichotomy. And for the researchers, both Japanese women and men represent what they are *not*.

Conveniently enough, Japan is an industrialized country having never been a Western colony in the same sense as Africa or India were. Also its people are believed to be polite and quiet. Therefore, researchers can safely eroticize Japan without a fear of being criticized as colonialists. In other words, according to a student of mine, “Japan as a field is perhaps a semiotic dumping ground.” Indeed, as David Halperin said on homosexuality (Halperin 1995: 45-46; Murayama 1997: 69), Japan may be a quiet and convenient dumping ground where researchers can throw whatever representations, often mutually contradictory ones, which tell them what they are not.

Interestingly, ten years ago, I sometimes encountered (mostly women) researchers from North America who were studying or wanted to study sexual behavior of Japanese women. In recent years I sometimes receive inquiries from men researchers from overseas (not necessarily North America), saying that they want to study gay men in Japan. It seems that the “sexiest” topic of Japan has now shifted from <women> to <other>.

Then, how about the situations in Europe? Unfortunately, living in Japan, I have less chance to hear about the trends of anthropology or Japan studies in Europe than those in the U.S. But when I attended European Association for Japanese Studies conference in 2014, I did

Erotic, Contradictory & Unusual

- Women as subjects (active) or objects (passive) of sexual desire;
- Men as mother-complex, impotent, violent, the vanquished in the war;

Anthropology, Japan Studies, Cultural Studies (Media Studies)...

Japan as a Field

- Japanese Women and Men show “What we (researchers) are NOT”;
- Covert colonies, **but** industrialized first world, supposedly polite and quiet people

→ a safe field to explore sexy topics

Semiotic Dumping Ground

- “The homosexual”...is...a conceptual and semiotic dumping ground for all sorts of mutually incompatible, logically contradictory options. (Halperin 1995, 45-46)
- ...So is Japan as a field



In Europe?

- E.g. Has shunga surprised the world as art?

not see presentations that obviously eroticized Japan as much as I see in the U.S.-based conferences.

Still, one cannot say that Europe is totally different from the U.S. For example, from 2013 to 2014, British Museum in London hosted a three-month large-scale exhibition of Japanese *shunga*. Reports say that the exhibition was crowded by 90 thousand visitors in total, of which 60% were women. *Shunga* is now imported back to Japan and is exhibited at Eisei-bunko (as of November 14, 2015) with the catch copy: “It surprised the world first” (世界が先に驚いた).

Was *shunga* exhibited first in the U.K. because British people were more liberal, more enlightened, and more artistically knowledgeable than the Japanese? I do not think so, because the exhibition took place in a museum, not in an art gallery. Actually in a report, a professor of SOAS at the University of London says, “The exhibition would not have been possible if it was at National Gallery or Royal Academy of Arts, because it is too sexual.” Then why was it possible at the British Museum? My answer is: Because museums are the places to exhibit <other>. Mummies of ancient Egypt, masks from Africa, and other objects brought from historically and geographically distant places are exhibited in museums for visitors to confirm what they are not.

The women and men engaged in sexual intercourse in the illustrations from a Far Eastern country 200 years ago are <other> which has nothing to do with the viewers. Therefore, *shunga* is safe, strange, and intriguing. Suppose that colorful and detailed illustrations of sexual intercourse drawn by and distributed (secretly from Church) among British lay people 200 years ago are discovered. What would British people today do? Would the society regard the illustrations as works of art and exhibit for three months at National Gallery or British Museum? I do not think so because, even if the illustrations are from 200 year ago, the people depicted there are their own people; the genital organs depicted are theirs, and the public exposure of them is unbearable. And this is exactly the feeling that a Japanese woman whom I know felt, when she happened to be in British Museum during the *shunga* exhibition, surrounded by excited crowds.

Let me conclude. People do not feel a pain when researching or artistically appreciating <other>; they are free from pains because they believe themselves as purely academic or aesthetic. However, why did they choose specific <other> as the objects of their research or artistic

Conclusion:
Anthropology as studies of
<Women> and <Other> Forever

- Why did a researcher choose this specific Other?
- Why did s/he choose this specific sexy topic?

Post-Colonial Studies × Gender Studies
...Forever necessary

appreciation of eros? Or why did they choose a specific gender- or sexuality-related topic combined with specific <other>? When considering Japan or any other place on the globe as an anthropological field, every researcher should keep these questions in mind. They also have to be aware of their own colonial and gendering gaze. In order to keep shedding a light on power relationship between anthropologists and their subjects, the concept of gender, and gender studies as an academic discipline, will continue to be valid and necessary.

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