



Research Office Newsletter

Conversation With Professor Yufu Iguchi

This issue of the Research Office Newsletter presents a conversation between Professor Yufu Iguchi and Research Office staff Yuko Arai, who is also an APU graduate. Please enjoy!



Professor Yufu Iguchi (Asia Pacific Studies)

Research Fields : Area Studies, Gender, History of Thought

Publication Title: マレーシアにおける国民的「主体」形成

—地域研究批判序説—

(The Formation of National "Subjects" in Malaysia:

A Criticism of Area Studies)

Arai : I can still remember attending your lectures as an APU student. I have learned the importance of questioning the obvious through your lectures. I was always curious about the kind of research you have done, but never got the chance to ask. Could you please tell us about the research you are currently working on?

As an educator, I am extremely happy to hear that the core message of my lectures has left a lasting impression on a student who has taken my course. My classes are largely based on an analysis of perspectives on cultural phenomena related to gender, family, race and nationalism. This is somewhat related to my research, which focuses on national identity in multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Malaysia. In 2012, I studied gender in relation to national identity and conducted research on the representation of women in Malaysia by looking at Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) practices. Using this research theme as a base, I applied for and was awarded the Grant-in-Aid for Challenging Exploratory Research in 2012 and the Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C) in 2015.

Perhaps this is not a well-known fact, but Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) practices are extremely popular amongst Muslim Malay women in Malaysia. In Malaysia, unlike Africa, FGM rarely involves the partial or whole removal of female genitalia. In most cases, FGM is practiced on infants, therefore leaving no scarring. I was full of questions about such practices. What is the reasoning behind FGM practices? What is the significance of such practices? Are these practices, as posited by many, a result of attempts to gain control on female sexuality? There was little available academic research on FGM in Malaysia when I first started on this topic. In fact, there were only two published medical articles on the topic at that time. One of the two articles was penned and published by Professor Abdul Rashid, who specializes in Public Health in Malaysia. I have conducted collaborative research with him since 2015.

In 2016, we interviewed traditional practitioners of FGM and females living in rural areas who had undergone FGM. After that, I applied and was selected for the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) Fund for the Promotion of Joint International Research (Fostering Joint International Research). This gave me the opportunity to collaborate with Professor Rashid at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and University College Dublin Malaysia Campus for one year. Considering the increasing number of women who prefer FGM to be conducted by medical practitioners at clinics as opposed to traditional practitioners, we decided to conduct joint research on the medicalization of FGM. Through our research, we have found that FGM is widely practiced by Muslim communities in Southeast Asia. Going forward, my research, funded by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (B), will focus on the comparison of FGM practices in Southeast Asia and Africa.



Professor Iguchi with Professor Rashid (middle) and a research collaborator (far left)

Arai : I suppose most people may have heard about FGM in Africa, but I believe a lot of us would be shocked to hear that such practices also exist in Southeast Asia.

The concept of FGM spread to Southeast Asia in the 12th century alongside Islamic law and religion. In Africa however, such practices existed prior to Islam and even Pharaohs. Since then, the Jewish and Christian disciples in some communities in Africa have conducted FGM.

It might be surprising to many, but FGM practices also exist in Japan. Based on the definition by the World Health Organization (hereafter 'WHO'), the excision of female genitals for non-therapeutic purposes is defined as FGM. By that definition, cosmetic surgery involving female genitalia should be considered to be FGM but WHO has a double standard and does not categorize it as FGM. Some assert that females in developed countries undergo female genitalia cosmetic surgery out of their own choice and will, making such forms of FGM acceptable. However, we cannot deny the possibility that the personal decisions of some women are made in a male-dominated society. As such, is it accurate to say that such decisions are influenced solely by these women's self-will? This begs the question of why cosmetic surgery involving female genitalia in developed countries is deemed acceptable whereas FGM in third world countries isn't.

In Japan, it is common for women to undergo an episiotomy when giving birth. This is something we can think about in relation to FGM. Episiotomies are generally medically approved and yet are not recommended by WHO. One reason why episiotomies are so common in Japan could be the general perception that it is the ultimate 'test' a woman has to pass before she can officially become a mother. This is not unlike the FGM practices for initiation rites in Africa.

Arai : Oh wow.. FGM exists in Japan too? I definitely did not expect that. Indeed, it is difficult to put a finger on all the determinants in the decision-making process of women living in developed countries. I get the impression that only genital mutilation practices in regards to women are problematized. Why is that the case?

The problem of FGM concerns female genitals, which tend to be a sensational topic that incites moral panic. It is without doubt that FGM is a huge problem for women in Africa, where it is most prevalent. However, there are equally troubling issues for such women (such as poverty, exploitation and discrimination) that aren't being paid the same amount of attention as FGM by the international community.

Male circumcision or "male genital mutilation", on the other hand, does not appear to be as prominent an issue compared with FGM. This phenomenon is intertwined with issues related to gender and colonialism. Male circumcision is said to have medical significance, which may justify it to some extent, but does that mean all males should undergo it? Some researchers suggest that WHO makes less of an issue of male circumcision because it is not only an Islamic practice but also a Jewish and Christian practice.

Male circumcision practices in Malaysia and Indonesia require more time to heal as the extent of cutting is generally larger than the practices of FGM in Malaysia and Indonesia. In many villages, male circumcision is practiced on teenagers under unsanitary conditions, such as using unsterilized razors, etc.



Professor Iguchi conducting a Focus Group Discussion with the Malay women living in a village

This has led to multiple cases of infectious diseases such as HIV.

Arai : I can now understand how FGM is intertwined with a variety of issues related to gender and colonialism. What would you like to convey most through your research?

It is often argued that the contention caused by FGM has arisen because communities that practice it view it as a way of respecting tradition and culture, whereas those who oppose it perceive the practice as a violation of human rights of African women.

Rather than focus on FGM as a source of controversy in the context of Malaysia, **I wanted to examine the 'genderization' of the female body and sexuality from the perspective of this FGM controversy. For one, I questioned the role of colonialism in this controversy and its related impact(s) on FGM.** If genital mutilation in Africa is often perceived as immoral and patriarchal, why is genital cosmetic surgery deemed acceptable in developed countries? Some argue that the latter is agreeable as it is a result of choice by women in developed countries, but, as pointed out earlier, are the choices of such women truly independent of the beauty standards set by men in the very same countries? This FGM controversy is therefore arguably much closer to home than we think. Secondly, **I investigated the extent to which FGM sheds light on problems related to the female body and sexuality, and the tendency for similar problems related to males to be neglected.** The female body is often under scrutiny, but not the male body. This is because males often take on the role of the observer rather than the observed. In essence, **through my research on FGM in Malaysia, I have been able to bring to light the asymmetrical relationships between developing countries and developed countries and between the concepts of 'male' and 'female', which may be unapparent and therefore worthy of emphasis.**



Professor Iguchi presenting at a conference with Professor Rashid

Grants-In-Aid For Scientific Research (Kakenhi)

We hereby announce the newly selected recipients of the FY2019 JSPS Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research. Our heartiest congratulations to the following faculty members for their successful applications!

Research Category	Researcher	Research Topic
Scientific Research (B) General	<i>Professor Yufu Iguchi</i>	<i>The Female Body in post-colonial societies: Female Genital Mutilation in Southeast Asia and Africa</i>
Scientific Research (C) General	<i>Professor Hiroshi Todoroki</i>	<i>Basic research of "Sugyeong" in the geographical recognition of Joseon's Korea</i>
	<i>Professor Yoichiro Sato</i>	<i>Democratization and Geopolitics</i>
	<i>Professor Yasushi Suzuki</i>	<i>Comparative studies on the Islamic financial mode over Reverse-Murabaha: analyses of governance structure and the cost of Shariah-compliance</i>
	<i>Professor Kanichiro Suzuki</i>	<i>A Study of the Social Evaluation Model in ESG Investment</i>
	<i>Professor Takeshi Fujimoto</i>	<i>"Global Niche Top" innovation strategies of Startup Ventures and SMEs</i>
	<i>Professor Rikio Kimura</i>	<i>Toward advancing theoretical perspectives of hybrid organizations: Insights from faith-based social enterprises in developing countries</i>
Fund for the Promotion of Joint International Research (Fostering Joint International Research)	<i>Professor Takuro Kikkawa</i>	<i>Jordanian politics and tribal society: Fieldwork-based research on politics, society, and economies in the south</i>
Early-Career Scientists	<i>Associate Professor Yoshiaki Shinohara</i>	Research on social entrepreneurs' strategies
	<i>Assistant Professor Le Hoang Anh Thu</i>	Buddhist charitable practice, Old-age experience and personhood of Vietnamese elderly
Research Activity Start-up	<i>Assistant Professor Fan Pengda</i>	New Perspectives on Equity Carve-outs: Organizational Characteristics and Culture

What is Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (Kakenhi)?

The Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (Kakenhi) Program is aimed at all scientific research from basic to applied research in all fields, covering the humanities, the social sciences and the natural sciences. The program is jointly managed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS).

What is the Research Office's role pertaining to Kakenhi?

The Research Office supports all faculty members in their application for Kakenhi. Every year, we organize several events to help faculty members boost their applications and address any questions/concerns they may have. The Research Office also manages the funds of successful Grants-in-Aid projects and ensures that these funds are used according to the rules in a proper and upright manner.

Event Reports

Social Function to Celebrate External Research Grant Recipients and Faculty Members with Recent Publications (Research Office Party)



The AY2019 Research Office Party took place on June 19, 2019. Certificates were awarded to Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research recipients as well as faculty members who have published books in the past two years by Vice President Professor Kenji Yokoyama.

Approximately 30 faculty members showed up at the party and bonded over the appreciation of books published by our faculty members. We hope that this event has served as a platform for faculty members to promote their research/publications and enabled all participants to gain inspiration for their future research. We look forward to seeing you at the next party!



The Symposium for the Establishment of the Center for Inclusive Leadership (CIL)



On July 3, 2019, APU held the Symposium for the Establishment of the Center for Inclusive Leadership (CIL), a project selected for the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) Private University Research Branding Project. Approximately 80 students, faculty, and staff attended the Symposium.

At the start of the Symposium, CIL Director Lailani Laynesa Alcantara, Professor of the College of International Management, introduced the Center. She shared the CIL mission of "Explore and promote academic research, teaching methodology, and practical methods of inclusive leadership" and the CIL objective of constructing "a network of inclusive leaders who will boldly take on the challenge of creating a bright and sustainable future."



CIL webpage