



## Core presentation

# The Social Construction of an East Asian Community and Regional Culture

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### **Prologue: Between the Reality and the Ideal**

With the end of the Cold War and the subsequent tide of globalization, the East Asian region has undergone significant structural changes. A set of split bilateral relations in the area has gradually become more complicated and evolved into multilateral relations. Mutual interactions have deepened as economic interdependence and cultural exchanges increased between the East Asian countries, forming new social relations. But on the other hand, the East Asian nations are facing fierce economic competitions and experiencing the occasional burst of nationalist sentiments, often resulting in political frictions. They are both cooperating and competing with each other at an unprecedented level. As a result, East Asia is transforming from a reactive region, which is controlled by powers outside of the region and whose identity was designated by them, into a proactive region, in which the member states take an active part in the formation of their own regional identity.

Regionalism in East Asia denotes the reality of the regional structural change caused by the correlative

workings of globalism and nationalism. However, it also implies an ideal presumed in those theories and discourses on East Asia whose main concern is to transform the region into one with strong sociality and cohesion. Some actively seek regional cooperation to cope with globalization and global capitalism, while others put forward a number of solutions to overcome the nation-state paradigm. The former presupposes the ideas of a cooperative body aiming to adjust conflicting national interests and increase common interests between the member states in some fields, while the latter holds the ideas of a regional community, where common norms or institutions are shared in every level of the fields.

It may be possible to establish a cooperative body in the region, but building a regional community cannot be easily accomplished because of the persistent dominance of the nation-state paradigm and the principle of territorial sovereignty. There is a huge gap between the current system of nation-states and the ideal community. The theory of a regional community tends to propose normative prospects of the East Asian region, and sometimes it reflects the selfishness of states to increase their

national interests. If the states in the region maintain their selfish behaviors, they can do no more than build a cooperative body. But if they merely follow the normative propositions, they cannot achieve what they want because of the gap between their ideal and the reality. If one sees the establishment of an East Asian community as the final goal of East Asian regionalism, this gap must be filled or lessened.<sup>1</sup> The idea of East Asia from the strategic point of view will be of no use here. To fill the gap between the reality and the ideal, some reflection should be made epistemologically to project a vision into the region. That is to say, rational consideration should be made to understand the structural changes in the East Asian region and thereby to grasp its social construction focusing on regional culture from the viewpoint of *international society* and *culture*.

### East Asia Discourses and “Culture”

#### “Culture” in East Asia Discourses

There are a variety of ways to imagine East Asia. Some aim to redress the negative image of East Asia in the past; others are interested in explaining the economic development as well as the democratization of the East Asian countries; still others place emphasis on the necessity of constructing a regional community or “an East Asian civilization” as an alternative to Western civilization from a postmodern perspective. Understandably, the concept of “culture” bears different meanings for each of the groups.

As for those who study the economic development of the region from the viewpoint of “civilization,” “culture” tends to be disregarded or treated as a dependent

variable. Andre G. Frank argues that East Asia had been the center of the world economy until the end of the eighteenth century. Kaoru Sugihara has underlined the supremacy of the East Asian economy over that of Europe and the effectiveness of East Asian patterns by praising East Asian labor-intensive production and industriousness. Takeshi Hamashita has clarified East Asian economic dynamism by analyzing how trade networks worked in maritime Asia.<sup>2</sup> Since all these reassessments of East Asia are basically conducted on the presumption that equates any economic development with the capitalist “civilization,” there is little room for “culture”.

Such a viewpoint is adopted in the discourse of East Asian economic community or cooperative body that puts emphasis on economic rationality and efficiency. For instance, Yonosuke Hara’s theory of East Asian economy envisions the creation of a “New Asia” and “area study of East Asian civilization” by building an East Asian economic body of cooperation or economic community<sup>3</sup>. His theory is a response to global capitalism in economic rationality based on national economy. In trade network theory in general and the discourse of East Asian economy in particular, “culture” is forgotten and trapped in “national culture”. Put differently, when the formation of “an East Asian civilization” is seen as a reaction to capitalist civilization, “culture” is unavoidably reduced to “civilization”.

Meanwhile, in the discourses on Asian values, Confucian capitalism and Confucian democracy, East Asian political economies are discussed by employing the variable “culture.” Such terms as “Asian values,” “Confucianism”, and “traditional cultures,” all carry strong

<sup>1</sup> This article does not intend to prove that the construction of an East Asian community is a historical necessity, but rather argues for a logical process to be searched for when the historical necessity is assumed and wished for in the light of historical evolution.

<sup>2</sup> Jang In-Sung, “Remapping East Asia as an International Society: the Discourses on East Asia and Asian Identity in Contemporary Korea,” Kazuko Mori and Kenichiro Hirano eds., *A New East Asia: Toward a Regional Community* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Yonosyke Hara, *A New East Asia* (Tokyo: NTT Shuppan, 2002 in Japanese).

cultural connotations, and are used to explain the nature of economy or politics in the region. But there is no religion or value system that works as a prevailing ideology. “Culture,” however, is also considered as a dependent variable of East Asian “civilization” from the viewpoint of the capitalist political economy. “Culture” is regarded as the basis of regional identity, but the concept of “national culture” is not jettisoned. Underlying this viewpoint is the belief that “East Asian civilization” as a whole should take on the task of competing with Western civilization.

By contrast, the Korean reflective discourse on East Asia, which is interested in constructing an alternative civilization or proactive East Asia from a postmodern perspective, seeks to overcome the nation-state paradigm by employing the viewpoint of “East Asia as a method”, while responding to the transformation of nation-states triggered by depoliticization and territorial permeability as a result of the end of the Cold War and globalization. Their reflection, however, reveals their mentality to resist global capitalism as well as to do away with the insecurity of globalization and their concern about the possible rise of regional hegemons.<sup>4</sup> For them, “East Asia” is an alternative civilization to global capitalist civilization. Hence, it is impossible to envisage “East Asian culture” equivalent to “global culture” or “national culture.”

This critical review of the East Asia discourses holds a perspective that “culture” preserves the regional society by providing an identity for its members. Such conception of “culture” cannot be derived from the term “(regional) cultural community.” For the latter, even though it has become fashionable nowadays, is still confined to the idea of culture as a specific issue area. The

terms “(regional) norm community” and “epistemic community” are comprised of such issue areas as politics, security, economy, and culture, and convey the notion of “culture” at a regional level. In doing so, they provide room for broadening the range of “culture” that has been confined to “national culture.” Nonetheless, they do not represent “culture,” but can only appear upon the “culture” of the international realm as shown in the European community.

“International culture,” the culture of the international region, can be defined neither as an aggregation of national cultures nor as a counter-culture to global culture. Every community or society presupposes its own distinctive culture. Every national community operates on and is preserved by its own national culture. Evidently, international or regional community does not arise from national cultures; it needs international or regional culture. By the same token, the culture of an East Asian community cannot be expected to arise from the perspective of national culture. In a nutshell, East Asian community presupposes the existence of “East Asian culture.” Imaginary East Asian culture cannot but remain a fiction unless the regional community works. To construct a community, one needs to generate culture. Building an East Asian community is equivalent to creating East Asian culture. Any discourse on East Asian community will therefore be a discourse on East Asian culture. And regional culture is supposed to mediate global culture and national cultures.

#### **“East Asian World” and “East Asian Culture”**

Half a century ago, Sadao Nishijima coined the terms “the East Asian Cultural Sphere” and “the East Asian World” with a view of depicting the East Asian

<sup>4</sup> On the Korean reflexive discourses on East Asia, see Jang In-Sung, “Remapping East Asia as an International Society.”

region. The former represents an area in which Chinese characters, Confucian cultures and the Chinese legal system were shared, while the latter stands for a self-fulfilled world established by the Chinese cultural sphere by means of the tributary system.<sup>5</sup> Even though Nishijima's concept of "the East Asian World" garnered considerable attention for examining the Japanese history from the perspective of world history (regional history),<sup>6</sup> what is more notable is his view that the cultural sphere is inseparably connected with political order. "The East Asian World" was a self-sufficient regional world, wherein Chinese political order (tributary system) and civilization (Confucian texts) operated as did "the European world" or "the Islamic world" in their respective regions. The tributary trade system and trade networks were economic factors that constituted "the East Asian world." "The East Asian World" was later replaced by "the Greater-East Asian world" and "Oriental culture" under the auspices of the Japanese Empire. Under the Cold War system, the control the two regional hegemons, China and Japan, had over the area for a long time was destroyed by the two outer-regional hegemons, the United States and Russia. But the end of the Cold War and the process of globalization have encouraged the proactive formation of an East Asian regional world.

Here we can extract two useful perspectives for investigating contemporary East Asia. First, "East Asia" can be regarded as a regional world, and "East Asian culture" as a unit of analysis. Increasing public intra-regional interchanges beyond national cultures makes room for discussing the formation of a regional culture. There is a prospect that regional culture may emerge in

between globalism and nationalism. Secondly, regional culture should be conceived as in close relation to both regional politics and economy. "Culture" in the past was a substantive concept concerning politico-economic power within "the East Asian World". Not only the term "East Asian culture" or "oriental culture" formulated under and for the Japanese imperial system, but also the term "American culture" born during the Cold War, reflect the power relationships among the states. Likewise, the emerging East Asian culture may be considered in relation to the regional politico-economic phenomena.

Needless to say, however, both the terms "the East Asian cultural sphere" and "the East Asian world," as they are based on the politico-economic center-periphery relationships in the Chinese world order, are unsuitable for the present situation. The term "East Asian culture" necessarily has different meanings if "culture" is confined to national culture intertwined with national identity in the competitive system of nation-states, and if a regional culture overarching the national cultures arises under the wave of globalization. In short, "East Asian culture" is neither a mere aggregation of national cultures nor a revival of traditional cultures of the East Asian countries. Rather, it will emerge through the social construction of the East Asian region under the wave of globalization.

### The Social Construction of the East Asian Region

#### "East Asian International Society"

The perspective of "international society" can be useful in thinking about the "regional world" and "re-

<sup>5</sup> Nishijima, Sadao, "The Formation of East Asia," *History of the World*, Iwanami Koza, vol.4 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970 in Japanese); Nishijima, Sadao, *The Chinese Ancient State* (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1983 in Japanese).

<sup>6</sup> Sung-Si Yi, however, criticizes that Nishijima's theory of the East Asian world is confined to national (Japanese) history. Sung-Si Yi, *The Formation of East Asian Cultural Sphere* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Publishing Co., 2000 in Japanese); Sung-Si Yi, *The Ancient Created* (Seoul: Samin, 2001 in Korean), Part III "The Formation of East Asian Cultural Sphere."

gional culture” in East Asia. At the moment, the East Asians are facing threefold transformation: (1) global transformation toward global capitalism and global society, (2) national transformation rearranging nation-states and national economy in accordance with global change, and (3) regional transformation occurring in close connection with global and national transformations. The end of the Cold War, economic development, and globalization have instigated these transformations, and they in turn have transformed the East Asian area from a reactive region dependent on the design of outer powers to a proactive region constructed independently by its own members, and from a set of split bilateral relations to a complex network of multilateral relations, building an international society of states hitherto unseen in the area. Enlarging political sovereignty, deepening economic interdependency, and increasing state autonomy, all have stimulated the formation of an international society in East Asia.

For centuries, because of the enduring influences of regional as well as global powers, East Asia had no opportunity to construct an international society with equal sovereignty. Interventions in the region by global powers obstructed mutual interactions between the East Asian countries, and the intra-regional imbalance of power hampered the formation of sociality within the area. International society suitable for the international system hardly ever emerged partly because of *the inter-regional imbalance of power* between the Western powers and the East Asian countries having increased the vulnerability of the East Asian region, and in part because the intra-regional imbalance of power between the East Asian countries caused by different levels of sovereignty and development resulted in regional instability. A number of East Asian intellectuals who were concerned about foreign threats formulated an image of a united East Asian region (“the Orient”). They created

the concept of ideational regionalism (“Orientalism,” “Asianism”), but their efforts were overshadowed by the Japanese imperial power which imposed Japan-centered regional order in the course of its expansion. Exposed to world politics introduced by the U.S. and the Soviet Union, nationalism in East Asia had little opportunity to evoke regionalism. This was because the East Asian countries were unable to connect themselves to globalism under the Cold War. Put briefly, the empire system had influenced East Asian regional relations for a long time, and the nation-state system was incapable of forming a normal regional international society because sovereign inequality brought about the imbalance within the area. The only exception was an incomplete operation in the late nineteenth century.

“System” is a mechanism of structure, actor, and interaction, which conditions the nature of a “society.” International system is not international society, though it shapes the nature of it. The nation-state system has transformed the traditional international order in East Asia. Yet, the formation of a new kind of sociality was affected not only by the workings of the inherited social relationships, but also by the newly-organized power relationships or the implementation of distributive power in East Asia. Unlike Europe where the international system and international society evolved simultaneously and ultimately achieved the creation of the European Union, there has been an unbridgeable gulf between the acceptance of the international system and the formation of international society in East Asia. The kind of international society that Europe has established did not emerge in East Asia, despite the introduction of such principles as sovereignty, international law, and the balance of power that control social relations. International system and international society developed separately. What East Asia had experienced was not so much “the expansion of a European international society” as “the

expansion of a European international system.”<sup>7</sup> The gap between the modern international system and the East Asian international society cannot be bridged with the concept of *international socialization*, which means “entrance” or “entry” into the European international society, or “acceptance” of its norms, values, and practices.

During the transition from the China-centered system to the system of sovereign states and then to the Japanese imperial system, which exacerbated the intra-regional imbalance of power, the East Asians have carried their own notions of the region, while accepting the principles of the European states system. Here one can formulate the concept of international socialization, which means the social construction of an international region. This concept enables us to reflect on the creation of social relations without disregarding East Asian experiences and power relations, while taking the accepted principles of the international system into account. International socialization points to a process of social construction interconnected with the accepted principles of the international system and the sociality of the current East Asian region. It is also a process of creation by combining the actual “expansion” of the global system and the independent “transformation” of the regional society. It also encompasses a kind of acculturation whereby principles and institutions of the international system are reinterpreted and transformed by the practices (norms, values and ideas) of the recipients. In this theory, the East Asian countries are viewed as subjects of international transformation.

If the power structure generated by the correlative workings of globalism and nationalism under the sov-

ereign state system is an objective factor of international socialization, the perceptions or ideas of international society, that is, ways in which people conceive of global or regional relations, is its subjective factor. The Chinese had a China-centered notion of the region. They imagined a regional world with a concentric circular type of center-peripheral structure managed by Chinese norms. By contrast, the Japanese cherished a dichotomous image of Japan versus the West, begetting wavelike types of images with which they perceived East Asia as a target for Japan’s expansion to overcome the West. However, the Koreans envisaged a tripod-structured region consisted of Japan, China, and Korea in the hope that Korea would survive and develop further by keeping the balance of power between the three. For them, such a balance was a prerequisite for establishing global balance between the West and East Asia. These ideas of the region still persist despite the process of globalization, and add a new geo-political/economic dimension to the region. The Chinese notion of region is projected into the larger Asia, seeing East Asia or Northeast Asia as part of it. The Japanese conception of region is centered on East Asia, but also includes Southeast Asia as it was formulated with the intention of building a broader area of economic cooperation under the leadership of Japan. The Koreans tend to focus on Northeast Asia in their conception of region and their main concern resides in Korean security and development. These different geographical images of East Asia make it almost impossible to form a common regional identity or shared understanding needed to build a regional society or community and to envisage a regional world like “the

<sup>7</sup> On the expansion of European international society, see Hedley Bull and Adam Watson eds., *The expansion of international society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984). In his contribution to this work, Hidemi Suganami deals with the East Asian entrance into European international society. For recent studies on the East Asian entrance into European international society, see Yongjin Zhang, *China in international society since 1949: alienation and beyond* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998); Shogo Suzuki, *Civilization and empire: China and Japan’s encounter with European international society* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).

East Asian World.”

Yet, these different notions of region can stimulate the imagination for “one East Asia” and further invigorate the dynamism of international societalization. And the will to sovereign equality and economic/social development to overcome those differences can enable the regional actors to develop a vision for constructing a new sociality in the area. Indeed, the end of the Cold War, the economic development of the East Asian region, and globalization, all have encouraged the formation of an international society in the region. The end of the Cold War mitigated the regulations wielded by non-Asian powers over the area and accelerated structural changes within the area. Economic development has allowed the East Asian countries to become independent actors capable of forming their own regional community. It has enhanced their autonomy and improved the regional balance and mutual recognition among themselves. And globalization promotes various economic activities within the region. Loosened restrictions from the outer-regional powers have improved regional balance, while growing economic activities have made ample room for building an international society in East Asia. Economic and cultural interactions (trade and cultural exchanges) within the region are also increasing. As the societies strengthen their independence as a result of social development (i.e. democratization), and as the non-state actors expand their regional activities, state-centered and ethnocentric thinking appears to be in decline. Interstate co-operations and transnational activities of non-state actors have not only multiplied, but both the states and non-state actors have begun to join hands in the process of cooperation and exchange.

Of course, there still exist confrontations and con-

flicts between the East Asian countries, hindering the building of an international society and the progress toward an international community. In some respects, competing for national interests is becoming fiercer, disputes appear over territorial and historical issues, and nationalist sentiments are surfacing. These appear to have been caused by the diversification of intra-regional relations, the increase of economic capabilities, and the improvement of sovereign inequality, which in turn were triggered by the dismantling of the Cold War system that had functioned as a security umbrella over the region. Nonetheless, their rivalries are effectively placed under control and do not escalate into fatal collisions. This suggests that the regional actors have reached a stage where they start to form social relations by enhancing interactions and communication. The post-Cold War and globalization call for escaping from “the fetters of the system” and rediscovering modern rationality, not unshackling of “the fetters of modernity” in pursuit of post-modernity.

#### **The Social Construction of an East Asian Community**

International society, according to Hedley Bull, exists “when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions.”<sup>8</sup> International society appears when there are common interests and values, shared understanding of legal and moral rules, and when international law functions as norms. Also worth noting is Bull’s argument that a group of states must be conscious of these factors and conceive themselves to be bound by them, and share them. Inter-

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<sup>8</sup> Hedley Bull, *The anarchical society: a study of order in world politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p.13.



national society appears when the states share their interests, values and institutions with each other. Understanding is a kind of empathy with reality. The wider and the deeper it gets, the more comprehensive and cohesive international society becomes. One can equate the social construction of an international society with the building of an understanding system by sharing common interests and values and forming rules and institutions. Social construction presupposes sociality formation. By sociality, I mean the degree of understanding, cohesion, and communication conducted in a specific range of society, and the nature of social relations depending on the characteristics of the actors and the power relations among them. Thus, sociality emerges out of social relations, but it also conditions social relations. Changes in the international system bring about the transformation of sociality, but despite such changes sociality remains largely intact. This makes a *regional* international society more tangible and intimate than an abstract (world) international society.

The social construction of an international society in East Asia can be achieved by enhancing communication and strengthening sociality through forming norms that will keep a tight rein on self-destructive competitions between the selfish actors and making values to moderate them. Geographical proximity, economical interdependence and cultural similarities all contribute to the forging of suitable conditions to make efficient social relations and drawing the boundary of social interactions. Boundaries of a society depend on the degree to which its members *share* interests, values, and norms, and its membership is open to everyone. In the East Asian languages, however, the word “community” im-

plies more cohesive social relationships and holds more demarcated boundaries than the word “society”. The boundary of a community is delineated by closed membership and common interests. To become a member of a community one needs to share values and norms with other members. The term “East Asian community” is no different.

To build an East Asian community, we need to change the nature of the East Asian region from “society” to “community.” However, as the building of “international society” itself is still an on-going process in the region, any vision of an “East Asian community” must take the formation of an “East Asian international society” into consideration. Put otherwise, it requires serious thinking on the logical process of constructing an “East Asian community” from the view of “international society.” To comprehend this process, we need to think about not only the historical experience and the logical composition of the region, but more importantly the natural and artificial construction of the society.

Social relations in the international society depend on the *commitment* of the actors to their region and their activities within it.<sup>9</sup> Behaviors of the states in pursuit of national interests will necessitate regional cooperations. There will be more opportunities to sign agreements (contracts) and form institutions, as well as to produce practices, while swinging between competition and communication. The transnational commitment of non-state actors and their activities will also change sociality and enhance cooperative relationship in the area. Just as civil societies have emerged and prospered as a result of economic and social developments (modernization and democratization), and thereby changed the nature of the

<sup>9</sup> Both the concepts of “commitment” and “activity” are borrowed from Ross Poole. He argues that liberal and democratic culture is required for the formation of liberal and democratic institutions, and citizens’ “commitment” to and “activity” in a community is a condition for such a culture. Ross Poole, “Patriotism and nationalism,” Igor Primoratz and Aleksandar Pavkovic, eds., *Patriotism: philosophical and political perspectives* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2002), pp.134-135.



states, the institutionalization of cooperation can harness the egoism of the states and increase their commitments to the region as well as their activities within the region. An “East Asian community” may *naturally* be generated, when an international society exhibits a high level of institutionalization, and when the actors in the region share a strong sense of solidarity. Boundary is *naturally* determined by the range of interactions in the area. This regional community is an object of evolution. It is envisaged in the *temporal* context of the formation of the region. More importantly, it is based not on abstract reasoning but on historical rationality attained through historical experience.

The East Asian region, however, is not a complete, self-fulfilled “world” or “the regional world” as in “the East Asian World.” As far as “the globe” is accepted as “the world,” both East Asian states and non-state actors are involved in global capitalism, moving beyond their national boundaries. The East Asian region now holds multi-centered and multi-layered networks. But it is highly unlikely that the East Asian international society will evolve naturally toward an international community similar to a village community or the European community possessed with a demarcated boundary, shared norms, and cohesive social relations. The spontaneous formation of a regional community cannot be expected because overlapping networks and transnational behaviors of the actors make it difficult to draw a boundary. Besides, globalism has instigated regional transformations, and the states within the region continue to cherish their selfish interests. Some intentional decisions must be made to construct an East Asian community, if it should be a historical and logical consequence and a task of some urgency. Here an East Asian community is an object of deliberate *creation*. That is, it is imagined in the *spatial* context of creating the region employing abstract rationality by reason, while at the same time based

on historical rationality by experience.

### **The “Construction” or “Creation” of Regional Norms**

If because of the difficulties inherent in the region the evolutionary formation (historical generation) of an East Asian community is impossible, and if building a regional community is the only way to the future, we need to consider the possibility of deliberately constructing (teleological creation) of an East Asian community which will prevent the fragmentation of the region and enhance the cohesion of the region. This means that we need to create norms or institutions. Creating norms is an act of lessening the gap between the existing international society and the ideal of an international community. Created norms can harness interests and also function as a catalyst for creating ideas to encourage social construction in which interests, ideas and norms may work together.

If one accepts that common interests are shared by agreed norms, it is possible to adjust interests and control the egoistic desires of each actor which disturbs their own yearning for a regional community. If the East Asian community does not exist, the concept of it must be weak and remain only as an idea. Such a communalist perspective appears to be ineffective, and hence the discourse on East Asian identity remains idealistic. Ideas or identities can bear practical meanings only when norms are perceived as important for the regional life of the actors. By the mediation of norms, the conception of community can work as a regulatory idea harnessing the egoistic desire of the actors beyond merely being an ideal reference. Norms or institutions can be a catalyst for mediating the workings of egoism (interest) and communalism (idea). Regional norms can serve as a mechanism for regulating state egoism and guarding the region from excessive intrusions of globalism.

By deliberately creating norms it may be possible

to bridge the gap between policy and discourse, one of the greatest weaknesses lurking behind the idea of an East Asian community. There has always been a deep disparity between East Asian policies of decision makers and the regionalism of intellectuals. For the latter, the idea of an East Asian community often circulates as an item for sale. For the former, however, it works as a camouflage to conceal their intention of promoting the interests of their own nations. Norms can function as a mediator to project an idea of community into national policy, and the idea of community reflected in foreign policies can in turn serve as a regulatory idea, preventing political leaders from exploiting it as a strategy or rhetoric.

Such concepts as *Gesellschaft* and diffusion may be useful in discussing the creation of norms. Insofar as the egoistic states struggle for their own national interests, and there exists no community or *Gemeinschaft*, where the individual good may be realized through the common good, norms can be created by a rational construction based on contractual agreements between the actors. If there were no common culture for shared understanding, the creation of institutions invigorating the commitment of the actors and their activities within the region would give rise to the process of accommodating the individual interests toward the common good. When creating norms the role of states must not be disregarded since the non-state actors are not powerful enough to make norms.

The creation of international norms can be put into practice by its concentrative formation in a specific issue area and its “diffusion” to the other areas. Here, diffusion means “spread out,” and not “spillover” as functionalists would describe it. Neither cooperation nor institutionalization in low politics naturally spills over to high politics, for issue areas are fragmented, and power relations in politics and security areas control so-

cial relationships in the East Asian region. In other words, diffusion or to be spread out means “preponderance,” that is, preponderant influence a certain issue area has over other issue areas like an umbrella. Whereas under the Chinese and Japanese Empires the preponderant dominance of state power determined social relations within the system, imposing their own ideologies, the creation of norms controlling the individual states and societies in the twenty-first century East Asian region, where sovereign equality works, will be possible through the preponderance of a specific field as the institutionalization of it can be extended to cover the total issue areas.

### “East Asian Culture”

#### “Regional Culture”

Creating regional norms, as hinted above, is closely associated with forming “regional culture.” Under the situation that modern civilization acts as global civilization, the perspective of setting up East Asian civilization as a unit of analysis will be of no use. It is better to consider “international culture” or “regional culture” at a regional level where global civilization functions as an umbrella. In general, “culture” means either traditional culture or national culture. It is regarded as one of many issue areas such as politics, economy and security. This concept of culture is found in such expressions as “cultural exchange” and “cultural community”. While the goal of “cultural exchange” is mutual understanding between national cultures or intercultural conversations to ease the friction and seek symbiosis, that of “culture community” is to make a common cultural basis by extracting common cultural elements from East Asian national cultures.

Any reflection on East Asian “regional culture” must, therefore, start with distinguishing between “civ-

ilization” and “culture.” When dealing with East Asian “regional culture”, the viewpoint that sees civilization as a collection of culture or a common denominator is not very helpful. An anthropological perspective which regards culture as a way of life of social members can be useful in conceptualizing international or regional culture.<sup>10</sup> “Regional culture” is neither a total sum nor a common denominator of national or civil cultures. It is a culture that exists at a regional level, in which state and non-state actors are constructed through their regional life, and their regional life is shaped. Regional culture can be defined as “a set of devices for regional life.” It can be reduced neither to national culture nor to global culture, even though it is positioned between the two. Regional culture emerges when the actors within the region find some of their identities and lives in their regional life, that is, while sharing the universal values of global culture and keeping the values of national cultures. In other words, it emerges when the region acquires a practical meaning by their commitments to East Asia and their activities within the area.

Regional culture must be considered in relation to global civilization. Civilization is defined as material tools and institutions that facilitate human life, or that are useful to it. Culture means a particular way of life acquired through learning or socialization. It is a system of understanding that yields common identities among the members of the society. Thus, culture preserves the structural equilibrium between the elements of the social system and facilitates communications.<sup>11</sup> Civilization thus defines a way of life or culture as exemplified by

the Western intrusion into East Asia, imperial rule and hegemonic influence. Culture is interfered with by civilization as shown in East Asian traditional or modern cultures being delivered under the umbrella of civilization like Chinese and Japanese imperial civilizations or modern civilization. “East Asian Culture” was conveyed under the umbrella of Confucian civilization, “Oriental Culture” under Japanese imperial civilization, and modern cultures in the East Asian societies under emerging modern East Asian civilization, which took shape under the umbrella of Western modern civilization.<sup>12</sup> This implies that regional culture must be considered in relation to modern civilization.

Two implications can be drawn here for “regional culture.” First, regional culture in East Asia is considered as creating a common regional identity and promoting the formation of a regional community while preserving the structural balance among the East Asian societies or cultures and mediating communication. Second, East Asian regional culture, the emergence of which was influenced by global civilization, endows some universality to the individual national cultures. Regional culture can be a springboard to boost communication between the regional actors and cultivate public-mindedness without hampering the national identities within the region. The “regional life” in East Asia, which depends on the commitment of the regional actors and their activities, shows “East Asian international society” as it exists at the moment. In short, the “East Asian community” can act as a regulatory concept promoting the formation of regional life.

<sup>10</sup> Clyde Kluckhohn defines culture as “a set of devices for human life.” Kenichiro Hirano discusses international cultural relations employing Kluckhohn’s definition of culture. Kenichiro Hirano, *International Culture* (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 2000 in Japanese).

<sup>11</sup> Hirano Kenichiro, *International Culture*, pp.28-33.

<sup>12</sup> The term *umbrella* is borrowed from Masakazu Yamazaki. He argues that East Asian civilization was formed under the umbrella of Western modern civilization. Masakazu Yamazaki, *The Structure of Civilization* (Tokyo: Bungeishunjusha, 1997 in Japanese); Masakazu Yamazaki, “Asia, a Civilization in the Making,” *Foreign Affairs* 75:4 (1996).

### The Generative Concept of Culture

When studying regional culture in its infancy, it may be useful to employ both the perspective of generation and the proactive concept of culture. The conservative concept of culture, which holds the particularity and unchangeability of culture, seems unsuitable for explaining the formation of international culture or regional culture. Nor does it seem to explain the creation of a regional community. Regional culture may arise as a result of the natural evolvement of communication between the East Asian countries. However, the deliberate or artificial creation of regional norms can be a catalyst for generating regional culture - a culture which is above national cultures, but not reducible to global culture - more effectively.

Globalism can also promote the formation of regional culture. Generating dynamism can be acquired when global capitalism gives rise to changes in the political sphere as well as in the spheres of economy and culture, stimulating the international societalization of the East Asian region toward the creation of a regional community. In particular, East Asian regional culture can be said to have been generated by the workings of global capitalism and the region's reaction to it. It can also be created by the mutual workings of "culture as a way of life," "culture as an issue area," and "culture linked to global capitalism", on the other.

The East Asian region can have a practical meaning in the daily life of the people, if the actors in the region build their social relations and deepen their common sensibility by constructing regional norms through their commitments and activities. Regional common sensibility can be cultivated by enlarging universal human values such as human rights, freedom, peace, and justice

that global culture or society offers, on the one hand, and by breeding universal human sensibility found in popular culture like pop music, movies, and drama, on the other. Common sensibility will come into existence in the course of social relations, sharing and discussing issues concerning regional life, while oscillating between the centrifugal force expanding toward global universality (human rights and environmental issues), on the one hand, and the centripetal force contracting to national particularity (the pursuit of national interests and nationalism), on the other. What confines these two conflicting forces to the region is the way of being a region cannot but inevitably exist as a "security complex",<sup>13</sup> which comprises all issue areas between the world and the state, and which is founded in consideration of geographical proximity, economic efficiency and cultural similarity. When all the actors sense their common destiny in the region as a "security complex", we may be able to cultivate common sensibility or regional identity that is conducive to regional culture.

The generation of regional culture cultivating common sensibility of regional life presumes two kinds of autonomy, (1) the autonomy of the cultural sphere from other issue areas, and (2) the autonomy of society against the state. First, increasing the autonomy of the cultural sphere over the political sphere will make more room for respecting the differences between national cultures by mitigating "the fetters of national culture" that are likely to be bound to political power. By preserving the relative balance of power between the states, this will strengthen mutual equality and recognition. The concept of multiculturalism, that is, the idea of recognizing the differences of minority cultures and mitigating prejudices and discriminations against them by

<sup>13</sup> Barry Buzan, *People, states, and fear: the national security problem in international relations* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1983).

communicating with them, is applicable to the international realm. Second, elevating the independence of society vis-à-vis the state will make it possible to weaken the dependency of the former to the egoistic state and boost the commitment of the non-state actors to and their activity in international society. In consequence, the people in East Asia will cherish a vision that will help them to develop their regional life, while weakening the nation-state paradigm, a vision that will strengthen regional identity, while softening national identity.

### **Epilogue: “Fairness” in East Asian International Society**

In a multicultural society, justice embodies universal values such as human rights and equality. It aims at abolishing any existing cultural prejudice and discrimination by making the majority recognize minority cultures and communicate with them. If one views an international society as a multicultural society composed of different cultural systems, and if the need to create an international community is agreed upon, “justice” will act as a point of reference for realizing human values and achieving both sovereign and economic equality. The creation of rules and institutions wherein universal values are embedded will be the implementation of justice, and the reference of justice in turn would promote the creation of norms.

In short, society or community needs an order, and the formation or alteration of an order requires justice as a principle or logic for justification. The formation of an international society and the creation of a regional community are tantamount to the formation of a new

“order.” A new regional order not only requires a relative balance of power, but it needs regional norms as a device for ensuring such a balance. “Fairness” can be an ethical condition for creating norms to preserve order, making grounds for justice. When understanding “shared interests, values and norms” from the viewpoint of maintaining the order of international society, Hedley Bull supposed that justice can be achieved by maintaining the existing order, the basic objectives of which include survival, faith and rights of the states.<sup>14</sup> He refused to acknowledge that justice threatens the international order, and hence had no chance to argue fairness for realizing the societal common good. Unlike Bull, his student R. J. Vincent felt the need to discuss distributive justice as international fairness, recognizing the existence of a world international society, wherein the newly-born states have been allowed full membership and begun to ask for a new international order.<sup>15</sup> In creating an international and regional society fairness can be a reference (justice) for establishing a new order of international society.

In East Asia, where the community is not yet formed, justice can accelerate the formation of a regional order, and not threaten or hamper it. Fairness can work as a reference for justice when the regional actors attempt to improve the differences embedded in their similarities, and to redress the realities of political and economic inequality, and to make universal values and distributive justice function as regulatory ideas. In a nutshell, “East Asian community as fairness” or “East Asian community as justice” is a declaration of a point of reference and a catalyst for boosting the formation of order. An “East Asian community” can serve as a regulatory idea that enables the people in East Asia to reinforce

<sup>14</sup> Hedley Bull, *The anarchical society*, pp.82-86.

<sup>15</sup> R. J. Vincent, *Human rights and international relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

their will to the common good when harbored with real feelings for regional life. For an “East Asian community” to be a reference for fairness, it needs to be accompanied by a process of practice that aims at both interest and symbiosis at the same time. And this process oscillates between the realism of national interests, on the one extreme, and the idealism of the common good, on

the other. In so doing, it should reveal the Eastern regional life that exists between global civilization and the nation-states. The goal of creating a regional community will make the East Asian public be more sensitive to the common good and practice, and this will be achieved by creating regional norms.