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Nation-State and Immigration: A European Perspective

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Introduction

I have been studying the immigration problem in various European countries, especially France. Based on this experience, I will try to give a comparative perspective to reconsider the migration/immigration problem in East Asian countries.

To characterize immigration problems in Europe, it seems to me helpful to present three points. Firstly, European countries have a long history of immigration. To realize the industrial revolution and to perpetuate industrial development, Britain and France have taken in immigrant laborers from abroad during the past two centuries. These countries have a long experience of immigration problems and they have adopted measures to solve them. So, it is very useful, I think, for East Asian countries to learn from them, faced as they are with massive immigration/migration.

Secondly, immigration in Europe is related directly to the constitution of the Nation-State. European countries formed Nation-States in the first in world history, and spread the concept all over the world through colonization. The Nation-State proclaims cultural homogeneity as its base, that is, sameness of language, of customs and of memory of the past. This is different from immigrant countries such as the U.S., Canada and Australia. How can a nation based on cultural homogeneity integrate another population which has come from abroad and whose culture is completely different? That is the problem with which European countries have been confronted and East Asian countries will be confronted with in the near future.

Thirdly, it is impossible to forget the relationship between colonial past and immigration. Since the beginning of the 20th century, Britain and France have taken in many immigrant laborers from their ancient colonies. They undertook their colonizations under the name of a "civilizing mission" and have never apologized for their colonial past, the majority of these nations have a self-image as a "civilizing" subject (that is, they pretend to have civilized "savage" others). Thus, there is an antagonism of consciousness between the majority and the minorities who have come from the ancient colonies. What kind of memories do the minorities have? Do they have a self-image as civilized objects or resistant subjects? Is it possible that people with different memories build one nation, when the Nation is said to have been constructed through the sharing of memories (Anderson 1983)?

The above questions regarding immigration in European countries, the relationship between a nation and a culture, conflict of memories, and exclusion of minorities under the name of cultural difference, concern directly the focus of cultural anthropological

controversy. So, these questions worth being discussed by the socio/cultural anthropologists participating in this symposium.

History of Immigration in France

The industrial revolution needed a great quantity of laborers to settle in the industrialized cities. In Britain, it was realized by the "enclosures" that obliged the rural population to migrate to urban areas. In France, by contrast, the rural population who possessed the land due to the Revolution of 1789 would not leave their native villages. So French industries decided to introduce immigrant laborers from abroad: from Italy and Belgium in the 19th century, from Portugal and Poland in the first half of the 20th century. After the Second World War, the French government and industries caused a flux of immigrant laborers from the colonies and former colonies such as Algeria, Morocco and the sub-Saharan countries, because such labor was less expensive. This long history has made France a country of immigration. It is said that one fifth of the French have grandparents who emigrated from foreign countries (Tribalat 1995).

France has a special policy for the integration of foreigners, which can be called the French model (or the Republican model) of integration. As written in its Constitution, France is a Republic composed of individuals who are not specified by faith or origin. Based on this principle, France was the first country in Europe to liberate the Jews from the ghetto. The recent election of 2007 made M. Sarkozy President, whose father was an immigrant from Hungary. As this example shows, people integrated culturally into French society are considered French without any qualification. But this is not the case for people who want to keep their original culture.

This becomes a crucial problem for immigrants from the Islamic world. To discuss this large problem, it is useful, I think, to introduce two categories: the first generation of immigrants and the second or third. As for the former, they are generally strongly attached to their native society, so that they do not want to change their nationality or the religious and social customs with which they grew up. For sure they are confronted with many problems of life in an unknown society. But many of these are of a political/social order: permission for long-term residence, acquisition of political rights, receipt of welfare and social security benefits, and so on. A large part of these problems could be solved by changes in social policy.

This is not the case for the youth of the second or third generation of "immigrants." They were born in France and have French nationality (so, they are not "immigrants" in the strict sense of the word). As French citizens, they can enjoy full political and social rights. But, in reality, they are constantly targeted by the racial discrimination that takes place in education, employment, and housing.[1] Abandoned by French society, divided between the culture of their parents and the French culture with which they have grown up, they often have great difficulty in forming their identities.

In July 2005, three bombs were exploded in the London Underground and one in a bus, killing more than fifty people. Three of the perpetrators were British citizens of Pakistani origin. Two were university students. As they were considered perfectly integrated in British society, they were not placed under constant surveillance, even though they had been to Pakistan several times to receive military training there.

In November 2005, more than 20,000 vehicles were burnt and several dozen public buildings damaged or destroyed within three weeks in the suburbs of French cities. Afraid of this general disturbance, the French government declared a state of emergency for the first time in 50 years. When the "riot" or "revolt" calmed down, an official report confirmed that about half the people arrested were young citizens with parents of African origin. Thus, the French nation, as well as the British, was obliged to acknowledge the failure of an immigration policy that had failed to integrate the second/third generation of "immigrants."

Integration of the Cultural Minority

If a nation is based on cultural homogeneity, as mentioned above, one of its central problems is to construct a framework for the integration of, or coexistence with, the minorities whose cultures are different from that of the majority. To solve this problem, two programs have been carried out in politics and discussed in the scholarly world. The first is the multicultural program put into practice in the US, Canada, and Australia, as well as Britain and the Netherlands.

In Britain, for example, the national census asks citizens to specify their origin (one has to declare oneself as "White," "Indian," "Pakistani," "African," "West Indian," etc.). The people of each category are expected to constitute a special group according to origin and religion. A group can ask for so-called affirmative action to improve themselves socially and economically.

This multicultural program has proved to be effective in lowering the unemployment rate and in ameliorating the living standards of the minority population. But it has been fiercely attacked by nationalist/conservative parties, saying that it gives preferential treatment to minorities at the expense of the majority. Such attacks aggravate the situation, provoking verbal and physical violence on both sides. As a result, some European countries like the Netherlands have decided recently to modify their multicultural policy.

Moreover, this program has been criticized by many scholars. It is said that the multicultural policy tends to consolidate the boundaries between the majority and minorities, and between minorities; it is inclined to essentialize cultural identity and impose it on all the members of a group; it is likely to overestimate the importance of cultural differences, and undermine efforts for social equity (Young 1990, Frazer 1997). Furthermore, the multicultural program has turned out to be incompetent to realize com-

munication and mutual understanding between the groups constituting the Nation. Some say that it is just a measure to keep minority groups under control (Benhabib 2002).

Another program for the integration of the cultural minorities is the Republican program (or French model) of integration. It implies that, whatever their origin, each citizen has an equal right to demand a free education and minimum social welfare to realize his or her potential.[2] To understand why France has adopted this program, it is necessary to cast a glance at the country's history.

France is the only nation that has experienced four revolutions in a century. As power had already been centralized in France under the *ancien régime*, a violent struggle was necessary to establish a Republic against the many social groups claiming vested rights (the Church, the Aristocracy, Guilds, Freemasons, etc.). Through these struggles, France defined itself as a Republic composed of individuals who are not specified by origin or religion. In 1905, in declaring the secular Republic, the French Assembly ratified a law prohibiting citizens from manifesting their religious faith in public places. It is because of this law that Muslim girls covering their heads with religious scarves have been excluded from public schools, despite the great controversy on a national scale.

To realize the integration of the minorities in the Nation-State, this program seems to me to have some effectiveness. But, before developing its full potential, it has been damaged by abuse. People of the second or third generation of immigrants were born in French without any qualification. They have been educated in France and have grown up in French culture. But some, especially those whose parents are Muslim of African origin, have been the target of clear racial discrimination in their social and professional lives. There is thus an abyss between the ideal Republic and the real one. The French nation asks such people to cast off their former cultural clothes to become "truly French." But this is nothing but a kind of discrimination, because the majority does not need to do any such thing. Besides, to praise an ideal without correcting the implicit injustice behind it is just an old trick to impose a corrupt order.

Rejected by French society, many of the younger generation have turned to the culture of their parents. This is the case for the girls who are excluded from public schools because of their religious scarves.[3] It is also the case for young people who accept Islam in an individualistic and spiritualist manner (Khosrokhavar 1997). Many others protest against discrimination by taking violent action. Since 1982, France has not seen a summer without any youth riots. To change the situation, some immigrant youth have tried to organize social movements, but in vain.[4] So now it is the task of the majority to bridge over the rift between the ideal Republic and the real one.

Relationship between the Colonial Past and Immigration

After the Second World War, the French government decided to bring in immigrant

workers from colonies in North and West Africa, especially from Algeria and Morocco. It did not recruit them among the Arab people who constitute the majority there, but from the Kabyle people who are indigenous to those countries. During 150 years of colonization in North Africa, France had given preference to the latter over the former to keep its colonies divided. During the 1960s, the former colonies became independent from France, after a gruesome and prolonged struggle in the case of Algeria. When the war was over, these Kabyle immigrants chose to earn money in France, knowing that they would never become masters of the new state.

In 1974, the French government changed its immigration policy; the door was closed completely to new immigrants from foreign countries. Before that date, the young Kabyle workers had never left their dormitories and factories; after some years of work, they returned home to be replaced by younger people from the same village. But after the closure of the door, they began to bring over their wives or fiancées to live together in France. The number of foreigners living in France increased in such a way to about 10 percent of the total population; more than half are from the former colonies. Because of a shortage of housing, the French government constructed housing developments in the suburbs of the big cities for the poor population, including those immigrants.

As a result, France is now divided into two areas whose inhabitants do not have shared memories. City centers are inhabited by the majority who have the self-image of the ancient "masters" who colonized Africa and other areas to "civilize" the natives; the periphery and the suburbs by the minorities, the former colonized people and their descendants. France has thus transplanted the former division between the home country and the colonies into its own territory. Today, France has inner colonies allotted to "immigrants" whose memories are perpetually disturbed and exploited.[5] The French immigration problem is never free from past colonial policies and the memories of those past events.

As Benedict Anderson has said, the memory of past events is one of the main factors utilizable to construct the nation (Anderson 1983). Of course, memory is not the only factor. In 1807, in Berlin under the rule of the French National army that pretended to spread all over Europe the "civilization à la française," Fichte gave a series of lectures entitled "Discourse addressed to the German People," which could be considered the first nationalist manifesto.

To encourage the German people under a foreign army, Fichte enumerated the common language, the common customs, the common memory, the common religion, the common education, and literary masterpieces as the "spirit (Geist)" of a German Nation that was not yet constructed, but that would be in the future (Fichte 1923). To cover all these elements, Fichte used "Nation (Volk)" as a generic term. Later, "Nation" was replaced with "culture" as a generic term to cover all these elements.[6] Since that time, "nation" and "culture" became magical words to encourage oppressed people. It was those words that were used to mobilize colonized peoples to gain independence and

build new states. It was those words that involved some rootless persons in a new discipline which would later be called Cultural Anthropology.

Defined in German nationalist movements as the opposite of "civilization," which was conceptualized as something universal, modern, progressive, urban, and industrial, "culture" was regarded as something particular, traditional, retrogressive, rural, and spiritual. As such, it was considered a useful term to designate all aspects of traditional society. Anthropologists once thought that they could wipe away the political connotations from this word. But it has never become neutral in a political sense, as it is always coupled with the concept of the nation as a political unit.

In fact, the extreme right wing parties of every European country use this word "culture" to legitimize their discriminatory programs. Insisting on the impossibility of abandoning one's culture to embrace a new one due to its rootedness in the very existence of each person,[7] they aim to exclude all immigrants and their descendants from the mother country where their ancestors have inscribed their names. The memory of past events can never be shared by people whose origins are different, while hope and the future can be shared. So, memory can be used as an excellent means of exclusion.

By Way of Conclusion

Now, Japan and some other East Asian countries such as Korea, Taiwan and Singapore are confronted with immigration problems that are becoming more serious by the day. These countries can, I think, learn good lessons from West European countries that have accumulated much experiences of immigration and its problems over two centuries. To be sure, they have not succeeded in overcoming these problems, but we can learn much from failure as well as success.

What can we do to solve the immigration problems that are getting worse in all industrialized countries? There are lot to be done by cultural anthropologists, for immigration problems are becoming more cultural than social (Touraine 2005). It should be one of our tasks to demolish the discriminatory discourse indulged in today by many people, including populist politicians in Japan and other countries. It should be our task to deconstruct the notion of culture to remove its political and exclusive connotations. To find a foundation other than cultural homogeneity on which a nation can be constructed should also be our task; but a multidisciplinary project will be needed to realize that.

Notes

1) One journalist of Maghreb origin tried to make public such clandestine discrimination. He sent his real CV to a hundred enterprises that were recruiting workers. Only one accepted him. But when he sent his modified CV (he changed his name and his address to appear "truly" French), half the enterprises sent him a letter of acceptance. The unemployment rate is as high as 50 percent among those of Maghreb origin in their twenties, while the national

average is about 20 percent (Vidal 2005).

2) In the case of the multicultural model, each group is considered as having equal political and social rights.

3) This must not be interpreted as a return to an obstinate communalism, nor as due to pressure from old-fashioned parents. Some studies have demonstrated that the girls have chosen to wear scarves of their own will, to be free from hostile surroundings (Gaspard et Khosrokhavar 1995; Khosrokhavar 1997).

4) They have also tried to create new cultural forms: rap music, graffiti, theater, literature, cinema, etc. During the past two decades, the most vital cultural activities in France have been realized by the younger generation of "immigrants."

5) In 2005, a new ordinance was discussed and ratified in the French National Assembly. It recommended to teach the "positive role of the French presence abroad, especially in North Africa" in French schools. This ordinance was ratified in spite of the opposition of the socialist party as well as of many historians, and was finally rejected by the French President after the November 2005 riots.

6) It must be noted that the Grimm brothers, fathers of German folklore and ethnology, began to collect folk traditions and stories after being profoundly touched by Fichte's lectures.

7) Etienne Balibar, the famous French political scientist, calls this rootedness of culture in the very existence of a person "neo-racism" (Balibar et Wallerstein 1988).

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