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Preface to the Special Issue on the EAP Tokyo Workshop¹

Ken Tsutsumibayashi

I. Introduction

This special issue is dedicated to the EAP Tokyo workshop. EAP, which stands for “East Asian Perspectives on Politics”, is an internationally coordinated research project that aims to cultivate the field of comparative (or intercultural) political theory, and the Tokyo workshop is the fifth in a series of six workshops organized as part of this intellectual endeavor². (Previous workshops were held at Fudan University in Shanghai³, National University of Singapore, Seoul National University, and Hong Kong University. The final workshop will be held at University of Victoria in Canada.)

The project is headed by Professor Melissa Williams of Toronto University, and the collaborative research is conducted by scholars from around the world, most notably from universities in North America and East Asia. Keio University’s Center of Governance for Civil Society hosted the fifth workshop at Keio University on 17-19 December 2011, and the articles included in this special issue are those written by the contributors to this workshop.

The aims and approaches of the Tokyo workshop are outlined in the “workshop description” reproduced below. (This is the text to which the contributors were asked to respond or to take into consideration when preparing for their presentations.) But it is perhaps worth underlining the following points, which may not have been sufficiently articulated in the workshop description.

While the project aims to explore and expand the horizons of comparative political theory by engaging in the enterprise of “deparochializing political theory”, i.e. by fundamentally questioning the dominance of Western paradigms in understanding and thinking about politics, this is by no means to deny wholesale the efficacy of political ideas rooted in the Western intellectual traditions. On the contrary, many engaged in this project would readily admit that certain elements of Western political thought are not only

efficacious but have even become second nature to a great number of non-Western minds. And yet the ever-complex and diverse world in which we live, with all its impending problems and crises, is reaching to a point where existing Western paradigms alone could not provide sufficient and widely sharable visions and solutions. Hence the relevance of paying attention to non-Western cultures, and seeking ways to find possible points of contact that could lead to meaningful dialogue and concerted action (or inaction as the case may be).

In this respect, the project's approach is discursive in nature. As Melissa Williams and Mark Warren explain in their article "Intercultural Political Theory, Globalization, and Democratic Agency", one of the principal aims of comparative political theory is to facilitate "the mutual intelligibility of ideas across contexts and traditions, increasing the pool of ideational resources available to agents", and this through "a practice of communication—a form of conversation across boundaries of difference"⁴.

Needless to say, the project takes care not to see non-Western cultures simply through the lens of Western paradigms. That is to say, it tries to avoid taking Western paradigms as providing the foundational theoretical or conceptual framework upon which non-Western ideas could be analyzed—simply as, as it were, case studies of the former. The scope of the project is indeed more extensive and ambitious in that it seeks to draw out certain theoretical and conceptual implications for radically rethinking the ways in which we understand and theorize politics.

This is why, instead of beginning the inquiry with the received Western notions of "people" and "citizens" and subsequently searching for their equivalences in the East Asian traditions, the Tokyo workshop, in reversing the order of inquiry, employed the term 民 (*Min*)—a notion with various connotations that could in certain contexts be associated (though not coterminous) with Western notions of people and citizens—as a guiding term and concept for articulating what the traditional discourses fail to capture. Thus, in the first instance, various different ways in which *Min* signified various different things in various different settings were explored, that is, by trying to understand the variegated meanings in their own terms. But since the term *Min* may not be intelligible to those who are not familiar with Chinese language or characters, and since the "comparative" dimension is taken seriously, and also since English language is employed as a means of communication and explication, we have (for the sake of expedience) included the familiar English words in the title of the workshop. Hence the theme, "People and Citizens in History and Political Imaginations of East Asia: Changing Conceptions of 民 *Min*".

It ought also to be noted that the East-West distinction assumed in the workshop description is by no means to suggest that the two stand separately as independent categories or entities. They obviously do not, as any rudimentary observation will attest. Thus the method of distinguishing the two and then seeking to strike a dialogue—as suggested in the subtitles of the last two panels: "proposals from the East" and "responses from the West"—is simply an expedient means by which to articulate (and this within the

limited time-frame) some of the notable differences hitherto undiscerned or insufficiently acknowledged in the traditional literature on political theory. This approach seems justified (at least for the time being) given the dearth of reciprocal exchange of ideas between the Western and non-Western intellectual traditions, and also in view of the idea that comparative political theory should pay due attention to the “comparative” as well as the “political” and “theoretical” components.

Of course, in reality, it is not uncommon for scholars of comparative political theory to make use of Western concepts and theoretical frameworks. Readers will notice that some of the articles included in this issue do indeed resort to this method. However, there is a fine line between simply relying on Western paradigms and employing them with the view to understanding their strengths and weaknesses and seeking to establish a new paradigm. This latter approach, it ought to be reminded, is consistent with the discursive and pluralistic features that characterize the attempt to “deparochialize political theory”.

Now, no one would claim to have achieved all of the above in the workshop. We are still a long way away from constructing a new paradigm of comparative political theory. But as was repeatedly stressed during the workshop, it is meant to signify a beginning of a long and continuous dialogue for the attainment of such a goal. And arguably, the articles included in this issue constitute important steps towards it, and will serve to enrich the discussions that will take place at the sixth and last workshop of the EAP project to be held in Victoria, Canada in August 2012. To quote from the aforementioned article by Williams and Warren, “the final workshop will focus on the questions of methodology and pedagogy in the broad enterprise of ‘deparochializing political theory’”⁵.

As for the follow-ups to the Tokyo workshop, papers delivered at the occasion will be published in two ways. One is via this special issue. But since this issue appears only several months after the workshop, the contributors in most cases were only able to make minimal revisions to the initial papers. The other is to compile the revised articles into a book, with the time-frame of one to two years. This will allow the contributors to make extensive revisions, taking into consideration and perhaps synthesizing some of the findings that came out of the two-day discussions.

In closing this introductory note, mention ought to be made of the graduate workshop that followed the main workshop. Eight graduate students studying at universities in East Asia and North America and specializing in the field of comparative political theory (or in related fields) were invited to join the workshop and also to present their papers at the graduate workshop on day three. Many of the scholars who participated in the main workshop stayed on to attend the graduate workshop, giving friendly yet critical advice to the students. This is the educational component of the EAP project⁶, and since it is no less important, the program for the graduate workshop will be reproduced below, together with the program and the workshop description of the main workshop.

II. Program

**East Asian Perspectives on Politics (EAP)
Advancing Research in Comparative Political Theory
Workshop V, Keio University, Japan**

**People and Citizens in History and Political Imaginations of East Asia
Changing Conceptions of 民 *Min***

December 17-19, 2011

G-COE Center of Governance for Civil Society (CGCS), Keio University
In collaboration with Center for Ethics, University of Toronto
With support from Shibusawa Eiichi Memorial Foundation
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Day 1—17 December 2011

Opening Remarks

Yutaka Oishi, Dean, Faculty of Law, Keio University
Toshiro Tanaka, Program Leader, G-COE CGCS, Keio University
Masahide Shibusawa, President, Shibusawa Eiichi Memorial Foundation
Melissa Williams, EAP Project Leader, University of Toronto

Panel 1 Significance and historical trajectory of 民 *Min* in China

Chairperson, Ernest Caldwell, University of Chicago
Presenter, Tze-ki Hon, State University of New York at Geneseo
“From Tian Min 天民 to Si Min 四民: Social Changes in Late Imperial China”
Discussant, Youngmin Kim, Seoul National University

Panel 2 Significance and historical trajectory of 民 *Min* in Korea

Chairperson, Chikako Endo, Kwansai Gakuin University
Presenter, Koh Hee-Tak, Yonsei University
“How had the status of the people (民) been changed in Choseon (朝鮮) dynasty?”
Discussant, Leigh Jenco, National University of Singapore

Panel 3 Significance and historical trajectory of 民 *Min* in Japan

Chairperson, Mark Warren, University of British Columbia
Presenter, Eiko Ikegami, New School of Social Research

“Aesthetic Publics: Civility, Network and Switching”

Discussant, Teruhisa Se, Kyushu University

Panel 4 Emergence of citizens in Japan

Chairperson, Masamichi Ogawara, Keio University

Presenter, Michael Burtcher, Tokyo University

“Nation and corporation: Body politic, civil society, and the subject of sovereignty in Meiji Japan”

Discussant, Yuri Kono, Tokyo Metropolitan University

Day 2—18 December 2011

Panel 5 Emergence of citizens in Korea

Chairperson, Bumsoo Kim, Seoul National University

Presenter, Myoung-Kyu Park, Seoul National University

“Conceptual transformation, identity formation and political membership in modern Korea: *Kukmin* (國民), *Inmin* (人民), *Minjok* (民族) and *Simin* (市民)”

Discussant, Mon-Han Tsai, Chiba University

Panel 6 Emergence of citizens in China

Chairperson, Yohei Kawakami, Keio University

Presenter, Robert Culp, Bard College

“Theorizing citizenship in modern China”

Discussant, Joseph Chan, University of Hong Kong

Panel 7 East Asian contribution to the innovation of political discourses—proposals from the East

Chairperson, Masato Kimura, Shibusawa Eiichi Memorial Foundation

Presenter, Yoshihisa Hagiwara, Keio University

“Give peace a chance”

Presenter, Yong-Sung Jonathan Kang, University of Washington School of Law

“Law, morality and tradition in Korean jurisprudence”

Presenter, Baogang He, Deakin University

“Village citizenship in contemporary China”

Panel 8 East-Asian contribution to the innovation of political discourses—responses from the West

Chairperson, Shin Osawa, Keio University

Presenter, Rogers Smith, University of Pennsylvania

Presenter, Melissa Williams, University of Toronto

Presenter, Jeremy Webber, University of Victoria

Presenter, Jean-Marc Coicaud, Rutgers University

Day3—19 December 2011

Graduate Workshop 1

Chairperson, Yoshihiko Takahashi, Keio University

Presenter, Shino Sonoda, Keio University

“Japan’s post dual civil society: Members and discreet advocates”

Presenter, Lee Saebom, University of Tokyo

“Between *Shi* (士) and *Min* (民): The political careers of Sakatani Shiroshi and Shibusawa Eiichi in Late Tokugawa Japan”

Presenter, Douglas Irvin, Rutgers University

“Romantic citizenship: Raphael Lemkin and Indian nationalist thought in UN Genocide Convention”

Graduate Workshop 2

Chairperson, Takuya Furuta, Keio University

Presenter, Sunkyu Lee, Seoul National University

“Practicing filial piety in a state of *Gong* (impartiality): The extended domain of political activity in Zhu Xi's works”

Presenter, Yoon Ah Ko, Seoul National University

“Multicultural policy as diversity management in Korea”

Presenter, Shan Mei, University of Montreal

“The evolving concept of ‘nation’ in Japan and China from Meiji Japan through Hsinhai Revolution”

Graduate Workshop 3

Chairperson, Yoshiko Hayami, Keio University

Presenter, Joseph MacKay, University of Toronto

“Pirate citizenship: Political identity and maritime piracy in early modern China”

Presenter, Joshua Baxter, University of Toronto

“Space and subjectivity: A rethinking of the ‘problem of Yasukuni’ through the citizen”

III. Workshop Description

As part of preliminary research for realizing the ultimate end of the EAP project, i.e. to formulate a normative framework for comparative political theory, this workshop aims to explain and explore how certain notions of people, citizens and self-government in East Asia (particularly in China, Korea and Japan) have developed and transformed over the

course of history, and how subsequently these insights could serve to enrich and innovate the ways in which we think about citizenship and politics in both the Western and non-Western worlds.

Previous workshops have emphasized the need to distance ourselves from the assumption that East Asian intellectual traditions could be sufficiently and meaningfully analyzed and captured simply by applying ready-made concepts, frameworks and paradigms familiar to Western academic discourses. This West-centered assumption is thought to lead more often than not to the reproduction of stereotypes concerning the East-West distinction and is likely to deter us from attaining a more historically subtle as well as normatively reliable comparative perspective that would enable us to see true differences as well as possible points of contact.

To overcome these problems, it could be argued that we should simply refuse to use Western terminology, since many key political terms in East Asia are untranslatable, that even seemingly similar words (to mention one example from the previous workshop, the Chinese word “法 *Fa*” and the European word “law”) do not correspond exactly. Given that reliance on translation will almost invariably lead to interpretive missteps or errors, it might even be suggested that any serious study of an alien intellectual tradition requires proficiency in the indigenous language. Now while there is something to be said for this strict approach, it would not necessarily serve to facilitate the aim of generating a comparative perspective. Even within a narrowly confined geo-cultural milieu, words tend to be polysemous and mutable over time. It would certainly take generations of research to articulate with any degree of accuracy how certain terms meant certain things to certain people at any given time and place. And even with the knowledge of these, it would seem almost impossible to extrapolate meaningful criteria for comparative studies (if anything, it is likely to become more difficult), especially if the aim is to compare different intellectual traditions.

A better approach would aim between far-fetched anachronism and uncompromising historicity. We can utilize in the first instance certain Western concepts with the intention to delineate the scope and limits of their explanatory force (though with more emphasis on their limitations), but also try to identify distinctively non-Western concepts and modes of thought (if not translatable at least intelligible to Western minds) for the better understanding of East Asian traditions.

While it would be difficult to find non-Western words that correspond perfectly to “people” and “citizen”, it would perhaps be instructive to start by focusing on words and concepts such as 民 *Min* and 市民 *Shimin* (or any other related words and concepts) to analyze their similarities and differences. It is commonly assumed that, prior to the advent of modernity in East Asia, *Min* was not conceived as a positive component of the vocabulary of political legitimacy, let alone as a source of legitimate political authority. It was at best seen as a group of imperial subjects whose welfare must be cared for from above. *Shimin* and other related terms such as 公民 *Komin* on the other hand are politically

charged terms that came to gain currency after the Western impact. It would therefore seem legitimate and meaningful to focus on how politicization (and often invention) of these terms have occurred and affected the ways in which we think about and practice politics.

But here again, to avoid gross anachronism, we ought to be conscious of the fact that by setting the agenda in the above way, we are imposing on the subject matter the assumption that active citizenry matters (or should matter) in the East Asian context and that we are concerned about how such a political sphere has developed and evolved over time. Now, if we consciously accept this assumption, then it becomes also important to realize that focusing solely on *Min* would be insufficient for the understanding of why East Asian notions of citizens came to be what they are. If the focus is the role of non-ruling people in the political or public sphere and on the construction of communal ties from below (of course we ought to be careful in using such terms as “political” and “public” since they do not necessarily imply the same things as they do in the West and often their meanings vary even within East Asian countries) and seeing how the introduction of Western notions has transformed the ways in which they are understood, then it would be necessary not to confine oneself to the analysis of 民 in the period preceding the Western impact. For even in the “pre-modern” era, while 民 remained a relatively static and apolitical notion, there were such terms as 公論, 公理 and 公共 (Confucian in origin) which served to capture in part notions of public discussions and active public engagement (though not in the Western sense) by non-political actors. But once again we ought to be reminded that the aim of the study is not to find “precursors” to what would later become “Westernized” concepts of *Shimin*, *Komin* or any other terms denoting citizens but rather to shed light on the unique ways in which “people” or “citizens” or “scholars” or “intellectuals” or “townspeople” or “merchants” or “warriors” contributed to creating distinctive public space or ties, thereby giving rise to unique styles of political practice.

It has also been suggested in the previous workshops that, even when dealing with Asian ideas within the context of Asian politics (such as the political role of Confucianism), we should distinguish between their historical significance and their contemporary political use. It would be no less anachronistic to assume that the same text has continued to influence politics in the same way from the distant past to the present and that their interpretations remained relatively unchanged. All too often, Confucianism and other traditional ideas are reinterpreted or reinvented to suit the aims of various contemporary actors with various intentions, thereby giving rise to a host of anachronistic interpretations of Confucian thought within East Asia itself (one recent and notable example being the discussions surrounding “Confucian democracy”).

Moreover, in dealing with contemporary issues, we cannot avoid examining how Western ideas and systems have influenced the various political discourses and realities in East Asia, how it was that many Western ideas were localized and fused with Asian ideas, and how the performative forces of various Western terms themselves have changed over the course of this process.

The Tokyo workshop therefore separates, in the first instance, the sessions that deal with “pre-Westernized” East Asian ideas centered around *Min* 民 from the sessions that deal with how Western impact has generated the notion of citizenship and subsequently transformed political language and practice in East Asia. The first three sessions seek to explore how *Min* was construed in the political discourses prior to the advent of modernity, but as mentioned earlier look at the same time to traditional discursive (or even collective decision-making) cultures and practices. China will be examined first, then Korea and Japan, since during the period preceding modernization, political words, ideas and systems often tended to originate in China and then spread to Korea and Japan (as was the case with *Min* 民).

The following three sessions (4, 5, 6) will focus on how the Western impact influenced the transformation of the *Min* so as to give rise to terms that denote citizens. These sessions will attempt to see the continuities as well as discontinuities with traditional ideas, and how subsequently they have come to attain their distinctive features. Discussion will begin with Japan, followed by Korea and China, since in many cases Western concepts were first translated into Japanese words using Chinese characters, which were subsequently employed by the Koreans and the Chinese (as was the case with *Shimin*).

The last two sessions seek to build upon the previous sessions so as to initiate a dialogue that would hopefully lead to the articulation of comparative perspective and perhaps a new way of thinking about politics that is neither wholly Western nor Eastern. The speakers in session 7 will propose certain ideas (derived from traditions or experiences of East Asia) in the hope of demonstrating their values not only within their respective regions but also to the West or the rest of the world. The presenters should be free to develop their own ideas and not necessarily be tied to any justification of existing regimes or political realities.

In the final session the speakers (Western scholars) are expected to respond to the ideas and proposals of the previous session and then perhaps to introduce ideas and proposals of their own. It is hoped that through this dialogue (which should be open-ended) we would come to articulate the conditions and problematique for generating a novel and meaningful normative framework of comparative political theory, an imperative in the face of an increasingly globalized and uncertain future.

Notes

¹ I should like to express my gratitude to all the workshop participants and organizers, including the presenters, discussants, chairs, EAP steering committee members, graduate students, sponsors, and Tokyo workshop team members. And special thanks to Prof. Toshiro Tanaka, Prof. Yoshihisa Hagiwara, Dr. Shin Osawa and Ms. Naoko Kishi without whose intellectual, moral and administrative support the Tokyo workshop would not have been possible.

² EAP project website can be found at <http://www.comparativepoliticaltheory.net/>

³ For a brief and somewhat truncated account of what was discussed at the Shanghai workshop, see Ken Tsutsumibayashi, “Rethinking Political Theory in the Wake of China’s Rise”, *Journal of Political Science and Sociology*, no. 13, 2010, pp. 121-126.

http://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/listitem.php?index_id=30904

⁴ Melissa Williams and Mark Warren, “Intercultural Political Theory, Globalization, and Democratic Agency: A Pragmatic View”, paper presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Seattle, September 1-4, 2011, p. 9.

http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1901136

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.