

"Glocal" Japanese Self-Identity: A Missiological Perspective on Paradigmatic Shifts in Urban Tokyo

by Gary Fujino

The question of identity is fast becoming a missiological issue of global proportions. Fundamental questions such as “Who are *we*?” and “Who are *they*?” have become ever more complicated and intricate amidst the contemporary forces of globalization. A new “glocal” reality is impacting and shifting personal identities at the core, at the level of a person’s daily life, creating an intermingling of identities that could potentially affect our missional efforts to reach people in terms of who *they* are.

This complex mix of identities is quite apparent in the context of urban Tokyo dwellers where I live and minister. I’m convinced that if I fail to grasp the nature of identity amidst the modern mix of Tokyo, it will hinder my efforts to reach these urban Japanese. And I believe this is just as true for similar populations across the globe. Identity and the sense of self—and how they interact with globalization—affect how we answer the key question of how the Japanese can be reached in terms of who *they* are.

I’d like to focus this article on how multiple identities emerge in the lives of these urban dwellers. I first want to introduce a location in central Tokyo that affects identity beyond mere geography, then examine how multiple identities function within the Japanese context. Next we will consider globalization and glocalization in reference to urban Japanese self-identity, exploring missiological implications within each section.¹

A Tokyo-Based Case Study of Urban Japanese Identities

I live and work downtown. Twenty-three wards and twenty-seven towns make up the city of Tokyo proper; our home is in one of the eight central wards. The greater Tokyo/Yokohama megalopolis has a population of 35.7 million, according to the United Nations.² Tokyo is a part of the Kanto plain, the largest flat area in Japan, which accommodates around 44 million persons, more than one-third of the country’s population of 127 million souls. The cry of the Lord for that great Old Testament city, Nineveh, is mine as well for that great 21st-

Gary Fujino (Ph.D., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is an IMB strategist for the Japanese Diaspora. Gary has lived and worked in the Greater Tokyo area doing urban evangelism and church planting since 1995. He and his wife, Lynn, have four children, two in college and two at home. Gary can be contacted at FujiG@aol.com.

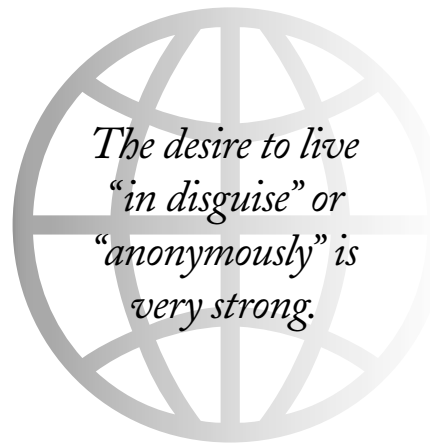
century megalopolis, Tokyo. "Should I not be concerned for that great city?" (Jonah 4:11, NIV)

In Shibuya Ward, where I live, there is an amazing variety of cultures and subcultures, each of which have a profound effect on urban Japanese identities. For example, one of the stations we frequent, Harajuku/Meiji-jingumae (hereafter, "Harajuku station") is where two subway lines and a train line meet and one can view in microcosm the cultures and sub-cultures representing urban Japan, any of which can mold urban Japanese identity, *creating multiple identities within the same person*. Here's a picture of one microcosm of globalization that creates this intermingling of identity:

- Immediately west of the station is one of the largest Shinto shrines in Japan. Meiji Jingu, or "Meiji Grand Shrine," that was named after the Emperor Meiji, who ruled when Japan was re-opened to the West in 1853. During the most important holiday of the year, New Year's, nearly four million worshippers visit between December 31st and January 2nd to observe a "two year pilgrimage" (*ninen maeri*) or to buy charms to ward off evil and give good luck for the coming year. Meiji Shrine is visited throughout the year but the New Year holiday is what it is known for. "Religious" and "spiritual" best describe the effect this part of Harajuku has on a Japanese urbanite's variegated identity.
- In front of the station, adjacent to the entry gate of Meiji Shrine, is a large open area which is home to street artisans, couples on dates and tourists. On weekends especially this space is frequented by fans of Gothic clothing and music, or by "CosPlay" ("Costume Play") advocates—men and women who dress as popular Japanese cartoon or comic characters. Fans descend on Harajuku station

from all over to see and meet these normal citizens turned faux idols, photographing them or having their pictures taken with them. Here, living "as another self" or having "a second life," as it is called in Japan, is prominent. The desire to live "in disguise" or "anonymously" is very strong.

- Going east from Harajuku station, taking a different exit, one comes onto Takeshita-dori. This short, narrow street extends only a few blocks eastward, yet it is a mecca for Japanese youth culture.



Youth from all over Tokyo, and even other parts of Japan, flock here to eat, shop, play, congregate, and hang out. Even the parents of 'tweens, teenagers and college students like to be in this trendy place, where those under age thirty feel right at home. Some mothers shop there with their daughters to buy designer "twin clothing." This part of Harajuku addresses the need of urban Japanese to belong—i.e., mothers trying to identify with their daughters' culture.

- To the south and paralleling Takeshita-dori is the larger Omotesando road. It has become a brand name equivalent to Park Avenue or Rodeo Drive in the USA, and is associated with designers such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci, GAP, Coach, etc. As with Takeshita-dori and Meiji Shrine, Japanese come from all over to be seen there or to buy from one of its

exclusive shops. Talent scouts and pimps alike haunt these trendy streets looking for rising stars, or victims. Buying or finding "another self," as well as consumerism and materialism best describe how this part of Harajuku influences the diversified, urban identity of Tokyo Japanese.

- Within the same 1.5 kilometer radius of Harajuku station that enfolds Omotesando, Meiji Shrine, and Takeshita-dori is Yoyogi Park to the west, and the former Olympic National Gymnasium and its park area to the southwest. These places are a stone's throw from the station and are visited by Tokyoites regularly for sporting events, concerts, picnicking and cultural festivals. The Canadian circus, Cirque du Soleil, has been a fixture here for years. For many urban dwellers Yoyogi Park means peace and open space, gardens, old trees, and nature in a city where everything else seems too crowded, narrow and made of concrete. Life seems slower there and you will often see people doing group exercises or sports.³ "Communal," "natural," "cultural" and "event-oriented" describe how these locales around Harajuku affect Japanese urban identities.

Japanese coming to this area of Tokyo may choose to be involved in only one of these locations, or all, or in parts of some. But their choices are intentional, flowing from who they are, how they perceive themselves *at that time*, and how they want to be perceived by the group *within each of these contexts*. These shifting identities are not dependent upon mere geography, but upon affinities like those listed above, as well as music, film, business, language, entertainment, religion, friendship, etc. Add on the hierarchies of age, gender, social standing and the backgrounds of people with whom they interact, and identities become quite multifaceted.

For example, the mother who shops along Takeshita-dori to identify with her teenage daughter may also go a few blocks over to Omotesando and buy herself a \$2,000 Gucci purse. Later in the week she may return to catch a show at the circus or visit Yoyogi Park with her family for a picnic. At the end of the year she may go to Meiji Shrine to pick up a charm or take part in a ritual. What is important for this paper is that *multiple and interdependent identities exist in the same person*, with much of the shift between identities being intentional and specific to context and relationships. Missiologically, we must engage such persons “where they are at,” complicated as that might be (cf. 1 Cor. 9: 19-23).

Multiple Japanese Self-Identities and Context

Sociologist Erving Goffman⁴ called this manifestation of identities “the presentation of self in everyday life,” the manner in which people take on different social roles for various aspects of their lives. This relates back to those missiologically questions of “Who are our people?” and “How can we best reach them?” But some Japanese social scientists have pushed these contextual understandings of self-presentation beyond Goffman.

Psychoanalyst Takeo Doi⁵ was one of the first to popularize *honme* and *tatema*, the idea that who Japanese really are on the inside (*honme*) is often at variance with what they present on the surface (*tatema*). This is important when speaking of multiple self-identities because while the *honme* remains a constant, the way in which the *tatema* is made manifest can vary from person to person, even within the same situation.⁶ While this may be true for other cultures as well, the idea of shifting and multiple identities is more than a concept to the Japanese; it is a way of life even at the unconscious level.

Later writers, such as Takeshi Ishida⁷, challenged Goffman’s “front region” and “back region” motif⁸ by saying

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that the Japanese “*omote-ura* (front-back) can be defined only in relative terms; hence the border between the two remains flexible”⁹ (Goffman proposed a more fixed front and back). What Ishida says is important missiologically because it shows that self-perception and identity can differ between cultures. Just a year earlier, Smith had foreshadowed Ishida’s idea of “a flexible border” between front and back when he stated, “There are no fixed points, either ‘self’ or ‘other’ . . . there is no fixed center from which, in effect, the individual asserts a noncontingent existence.”¹⁰ Thus, the Japanese self is depicted here as constantly changing.

Other Japanese researchers point out that the Japanese self is contextual or situational, even acting differently toward different persons within the same situation. Sociologist Eshun Hamaguchi calls this *kanjinshugi*, literally, “the principle of what is between persons” (in English, “contextualism”). His neologism is crafted against the Western idea of individualism, or *kojinshugi*. The similarities in spelling and phonetics between the words are intended. The word is fabricated from *kan*, meaning “space” or “between,” and *jin*, or “person.” So, one could literally interpret it as “the space between persons which ties them together” (*my translation*). Both the wording and the concept is an assault on the idea of humans existing in isolation from other humans. In Japanese self-theory, self is always seen in relation to others, never apart from them. Thus, identity becomes situational to a great extent and Japanese “individuals” are in some respects “multi-cultural” *within themselves*.¹¹ Identity, then, is about *where* one is, i.e., the situation, and *whom* one is with in that situation.

Globalization and Tokyo Urban Identity

The word “globalization” was coined by sociologist Roland Robertson in his 1992 book of the same name. He defines it this way:

Globalization as a concept refers to both the compression of the world and intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole...both concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole.¹²

While “globalization” is a new term, Japan has been influenced by global forces almost since its beginnings. What is different today is “the speed, the scale, the scope, and the complexity of global connections.”¹³

Japan and “That Which Is From Without”: Contextualization through *Wakon-Yosai*

Japan has long imported, adapted, and indigenized (or, “contextualized”!)¹⁴ what it receives—yet, always in a discriminating manner. Robertson calls this “Japan’s high degree of careful selectivity concerning what is to be accepted or rejected from without.”¹⁵ A traditional proverb offers further insight. *Wakon kansai* means “Japanese spirit, Chinese learning,” which shows a bent towards bringing in ideas, technology, and goods from outside Japan, but then making it Japanese. The proverb shifted to *wakon yosai*, literally, “Japanese spirit, *Western* learning,” after the opening of Japan to the West in the late nineteenth century. This proverb captures both Japan’s interactions with global forces—with China, then Europe, and later America—as well as the ideas of *honme-tatema* and *omote-ura*, where the surface or “front” might change but not the core of one’s self. William Dyrness affirms Pierce Beaver’s assertion that “in one sense... none of the generalities of Asia apply to Japan. It is ancient, medieval, and

modern; it is Eastern and Western. And all these characteristics exist in dynamic interrelationship."¹⁶ Thus, the Japanese deal with global forces by selectively taking what is foreign and indigenizing it so that its foreign origins are eradicated, synthesized, forgotten, or overlooked. So complete is this transformation that whatever "it" becomes a part of Japanese life and is no longer considered foreign. A clear example is that many Japanese think the McDonald's restaurant chain originated in Japan. The *wakon yosai* spirit allows for global interaction, yet, at the same time, protects the *sui generis* mystique of Japanese ethnicity and national identity.

The Advent of the Home Telephone: Keeping the Boundaries

The telephone is an example of a foreign technology that transformed not only communications but also influenced Japanese self-identity. According to social commentator Toru Takeda, home telephones only became commonplace in Japan after World War II, and were in just 3.6 million homes by 1960, when the country's population was at 93 million. That number swelled to 30 million by 1975, with 54 percent of the population using home telephones, and to 70 percent in the 1980s.¹⁷

In its early days, the telephone was generally placed in the *genkan*, the entryway of the traditional Japanese house. Thus, in order to answer the phone people would have to come from inside the house to the front door, near the *genkan*, to talk. British anthropologist David C. Lewis talks about the *genkan* as being

where one leaves behind one's shoes and the outside dirt carried on them.... In modern houses, these former "peripheral" areas have been brought within the confines of the house itself but the social boundaries are kept distinct. Spatial and footwear boundaries automatically keep the *genkan*, toilet, bath and *tokonoma* rooms distinct.¹⁸

In other words, the *genkan* serves as the transition point or boundary between the world outside (*soto*) and the world within (*uchi*). This entryway motif, both real and conceptual, links to Japanese sensibilities of pollution and purity. It functions to keep what is unclean *outside* the house in order to keep one's *insides* clean, both physically and spiritually. In individualism-collectivism studies, these are known as in-groups (*uchi*) and out-groups (*soto*). This *uchi-soto* combination relates directly to *honne-tatema*e and *omote-ura*, but *uchi-soto* is more vitally



connected to interaction of the self with others.¹⁹ *Uchi* is more like "self-identity toward others," and relates to a locality, a group—in this case, one's "inner circle." *Uchi* can include friends, fellow workers, and other close relationships. Conceptually *uchi-soto* can help us understand how Japanese relate to others in a group setting, and especially with social networking, as we will see below.²⁰

The Telephone as *Genkan* and Shifting Boundaries of the Self: Toward a Portable *Uchi*

The significance of the telephone was that it carried people outside of their houses, i.e., outside of themselves, even though one could be at home while conversing. A University of Tokyo researcher describes it this way:

[W]hen we are using the telephone, even though physically we are in the home, in our consciousness we have left the house and have to share a

phone line with our conversation partner. In other words, within the confines of our home, the telephone has become another (boundary) like the *genkan*... thus, there is no more appropriate location for the telephone to fulfill its role than to place it in the boundary area (*genkan*) where this community called the family makes contact with society.²¹

Like the *genkan* the home telephone in Japan served as a boundary marker between the outside world and the inside of the home and, by extension, of the Japanese self. So, the eventual movement, literally, of the telephone from the *genkan* to the inner parts of the house reflected not only a physical shift of the telephone but a mental shift in how the Japanese self interacted with the outside world.

At first "telephone space" was halfway between the public and private realms, in the border territory of the entryway (*genkan*), but with the emergence of cordless phones, extension phones, and cell phones, telephone space became increasingly personalized.²² The shift from the *genkan* to anywhere in the house created a malleable boundary between inside and outside worlds, similar to what Ishida argued against Goffman above. And the change from the cord telephone to cordless, and then to wireless, made the telephone portable, which caused a revolution in how Japanese related to others. Now, not only was the self movable, but a call home—to one's *uchi* (one's in-group)—could fit into a pocket or purse and be taken anywhere.

In the *genkan*, all phone conversations were *public*. One's voice could be clearly heard. But when moved inside the house, to one's own room, for example, inquisitive family members could be kept out of hearing range, which allowed for truly *private* conversations and a further inward (*uchi*) withdrawal of the self. This correlates with Naoko Odaka's observation that

earlier generations of Japanese have been very conscious of the eyes of others, while the post-bubble genera-

tion sets its own personal space and is unconcerned with those outside that space. They open the channel of communication with those they want to talk to or with those they judge to share their own way of thinking but coolly close off communication with those who don't get it.²³

Odaka references new cell phone-based, virtual communities, an intensified focus on an individual's phonemate community, to personal choice, and to how increased individualism all contribute to the increased variegation of Japanese urban self-identity. This returns us to the Harajuku case study above, where identity is selected and displayed in multiple ways, but only to those who "get it." Japan's post-bubble generation (born after 1970) tends to exclude or include others based on personal choice and displays an even more severe in-group (*uchi*) and out-group (*soto*) distinction than their parents' generation.

The transformation of this *uchi-soto* reality raises important missiological questions. Does the church function as the primary *uchi* or in-group for the individual? In most cases, the response would be negative, but metaphors of the Body (1 Cor. 12), or of Israel and God being the centerpiece of the nations (Ps. 67), might offer a different answer. Or how might this Japanese sense of self implicate how we share the gospel? While the urban Japanese self is increasingly portable and private, it is never alone, so, when sharing the gospel, one must take into account that a Japanese person is not simply an individual self. Each person represents a larger, unseen community, instantly available by technology, and consolidated into that person's identity, made manifest for that moment. Distinct *personas*, i.e., multiple identities, form in the same person because of that individual's interactions with numerous and often contiguous communities, virtual and otherwise. Individuals become their own bosses by their lifestyle choices and the networks in which they become involved. I call this "matrixed identity," where interaction with various groups—particularly

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virtual but not limited to that—creates different selves within the same person²⁴, all combining to make up a single individual. An additional problem is that not all of these selves are healthy. In Takeda's words, these virtual connections between persons can

form a community (*kyodotai*), but not a public society (*kokyoteki na shakai*). By shutting out any diverse opinion and contact with those outside their closed group, they are hindered in developing a healthy sense of self and interpersonal social skills through interaction with outsiders.²⁵

The influence of technology upon human existence, particularly self-identity, cannot be underestimated. Marshall McLuhan's pithy dictum still holds: "The message is the medium." Use of the telephone and the internet, too, creates non-neutral contexts which literally change identity. And as one of McLuhan's interpreters notes, "[e]very medium is an extension of our humanity... All forms of media (i.e., any human invention or technology) extend or amplify some part of ourselves."²⁶ So, for us as persons created in the image and likeness of God, the way in which the self (or selves) permits itself to become extended by technology is the missiological crux.

Self-Contextualizing through the Internet in Japan

If the telephone caused a national identity shift, then cell phones and the Internet initiated a sea change as Japan embraced online communities. There were more than 94 million Internet users in Japan at the end of 2009, with 78 percent of Japan's population of 127 million accessing the Internet regularly. As in other countries, the Internet allowed the creation of virtual communities where people interact without meeting face to face, but the difference in Japan is how these interactions take

place. One example is the challenge American behemoth Facebook is facing in the Japanese social networking market.

Social Networking, Facebook and Anonymity

Compared to 60 percent of US Internet users, only 2 percent of Japan's online population logs on to Facebook. Japanese prefer native-born internet service providers.²⁷ The three major Japanese-created social networking sites have more than 21 million members each. Facebook Japan, which arrived in mid-2008, is dwarfed in comparison, hovering at a paltry 2 million members.²⁸ Why the difference?

One reason is that Japanese social networking sites permit anonymity. A person does not have to share name, gender, or anything personal, to become a member. Anonymity relates to our discussion above about "disguise," "another self" and "a second life," as well as to multiple identities. Marketing research has borne out this Japanese penchant for privacy. "In a survey of 2,130 Japanese mobile web users by Tokyo-based MMD Laboratory, 89 percent of respondents said they were reluctant to disclose their real names on the Web."²⁹ One woman was adamant, "I don't want to give it my real name... what if strangers find out who you are? Or someone from your company?"³⁰

In contrast, the appeal of Facebook is its openness and the way it allows people to share with people they know and like. Whether it be finding old grade school acquaintances or chatting about the latest, Facebook thrives on people sharing who they are via their true identities. "She friended me" or "I un-friended him" have become common phrases for the English-speaking online population. We are able to "friend" or "unfriend" because

we know, at least to some degree, who is knocking at our cybernetic door, which allows us to decide whether that person becomes our newest "friend." Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg shared his thoughts on a "map" for networking people:

"We're trying to map out what exists in the world," he says. "In the world, there's trust. I think as humans we fundamentally parse the world through the people and relationships we have around us. So, at its core, what we're trying to do is map out all of those trust relationships, which you can call, colloquially, most of the time, 'friendships.' He calls this map the social graph, and it's a network of an entirely new kind."³¹

A natural outcome of Zuckerberg's map of friendship and being able to "friend" or "unfriend" is that Facebook Japan insists that people use their real names to join. How "friendship" is defined comes into question here, but, for our purposes, it is safe to say that Mr. Zuckerberg's logic does not necessarily follow when taken outside of the United States. A 2010 Microsoft survey asking about Asia-Pacific social networking sites found that of 3,000 people in 11 countries,

only about one-quarter of their friends on social networking sites were close friends. In Japan more than half of all respondents said that *Not one* of their acquaintances on social networks was a close friend.³²

Further,

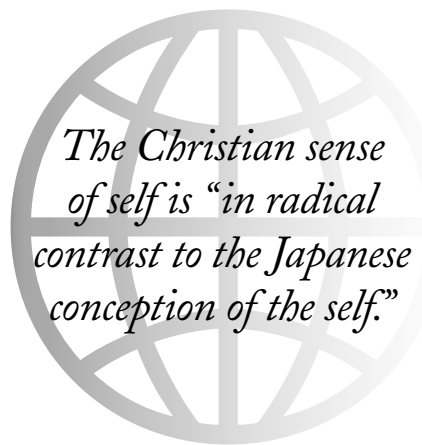
specialists say that while Facebook users in the United States tend to recreate real-life social relationships online, many Japanese use Web anonymity to express themselves, free from the pressure to fit into a conformist workplace.³³

What is at work is that intuitive, contextualizing forces *within* Japan are selectively resisting non-Japanese globalizing forces, such as Facebook, which require Japanese users to do it *their way*. The point of contention is whether a person's identity is conveyed openly or anonymously, i.e.,

whether to use Zuckerberg's map, or another map. In Japan, should "trust relationships" be the criterion for mapping, or anonymity?

Epistemological Maps and Japanese Understandings of the Self

Paul Hiebert gives us some direction at this juncture. Hiebert likened human perceptions of reality to viewing a map or a blueprint. Unlike a photograph, with its literal correspondence to reality, a map or blueprint gives an accurate outline, such as that of a house, yet not exact.



It is "'true', but in a certain way."³⁴

Thus, maps or blueprints of reality will differ from person to person and culture to culture. This challenges Zuckerberg's assumption that humans "fundamentally parse the world through the people and relationships we have around us." It raises the question: fundamental for whom? Does Zuckerberg's sense of "human" include the Japanese? This last question might seem strange, yet his map of trust relationships is in conflict with the Japanese map of multiple identities.

These differing maps of reality also come into play when discussing Christianity in Japan, particularly as it relates to self-identity. John Clammer notes the difficulty for Japanese in incorporating a religious identity that links individuality, autonomy and "the possession of an essence (a permanent core of being) into a seamless whole in a way very distinct from the images

of personhood found in many Asian societies, especially in India, China and Japan."³⁵ Clammer compares this "globalist, inclusive and democratic" image—which he sees as coming directly from Christianity—to a mainstream self-identity in Japan that is "shifting, other-directed, dependent, multiple and based ultimately on a dynamist epistemology in which the being is the expression or embodiment of universal energy or *ki*."³⁶ At its base, then, the Christian sense of selfhood is "in radical contrast to the Japanese conception of the self."³⁷

What this means for Facebook, and Christianity, is that epistemological maps must be taken into account and *acknowledged* as being *different* for a starting point, otherwise, friction and misunderstanding are sure to result.

The assumption that one idea or application or product or worldview applies to all peoples is one reason for the slow growth of both Facebook and Christianity in Japan. But in responding to the missiological questions of *Who are we?* and *Who are they?* we need to return to the topic of differing self-identities. Do we view urban Tokyo Japanese as being the same as us? Do they view us as being the same as them? Should the starting point be, *We are all the same?* How we answer this question will affect how we engage those we are trying to reach with the gospel. It will also inform how they respond to that message.

We can conclude, therefore, that Japanese urban dwellers should not be dealt with as if they were mere individuals, at least as Americans understand individuals. We must try to see the communities that exist behind and within them, and which vary depending upon the situation and who is else involved. We must allow for differences yet recognize that many urban Japanese are looking for better communities to which they can belong.

In our case, this would be a community of faith, the church, which might serve the needs of these com-

plex individuals in ways that non-religious groups cannot. Too often, though, we “clothe” our evangelism, disciple making and “doing church” in Western patterns. These urban Japanese can sense a deficiency when they fail to discover real belonging and identification in fellowship with the body of Christ. Healthy, culturally appropriate community can be as important as spiritual conversion.³⁸ We can provide this only by respecting the way they map their multiple identities.

Glocalization and Tokyo Urban Identity

Catholic missiologist Robert Schreiter was one of the first to discuss “glocalization” in a Christian context, though he credits Roland Robertson for coming up with the term in 1995.³⁹ Schreiter describes glocalization in this way:

Even as globalizing processes homogenize the world, they create at the same time a heightened sense of the particular. This attention to the particular and to the local takes on a considerable variety of forms which can range from accommodations of the global to an assertive resistance to it.⁴⁰

Schreiter’s sense of local accommodation and resistance to global forces is indicative of urban Tokyo identity, but he is quick to assert that “neither global, homogenizing forces nor the local forms of accommodation and resistance can of themselves provide an adequate explanation of the phenomenon.”⁴¹ We can see this in our case study—the urban Tokyo identity is globally influenced yet, in its essence, Japanese. For example, the trendsetting Omotesando area—where “\$1.2 million in handbags, watches, luggage and other accessories” were sold on the first day Louis Vuitton opened there in 2002⁴²—is less than half a kilometer from the respected and austere Meiji Shrine. Global and local can meld seamlessly in central Tokyo, yet, as with Facebook, often do so only selectively.

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Where global and the local touch, they become “glocal,” and at that point they affect culture and identity, which in turn is influenced by ethnicity.

Ethnicity and Its Relationship to Glocalization in Tokyo

I have not spoken of ethnicity until now, and have purposely subsumed it under glocalization because, in Tokyo, it is difficult to separate the two. Ethnicity and race are classifications that can be difficult to categorize,⁴³ yet are what we deal with every day. Here I follow the definition of Romanucci-Ross, who describes ethnicity as being more a “self-perceived group” than having a “common lineage.” Thus, ethnicity is always made and remade, especially by politicians.⁴⁴ “Being Japanese”⁴⁵ is so ingrained that it has even been called a religion, *Nihonkyo*, or the “religion of being Japanese.”⁴⁶ Harumi Befu compares how Japanese view their identity to buying ready-made clothing off the rack. Each person buys something that fits his or her personality, tastes, etc., but they are all off the same rack.⁴⁷ As with buying clothing, Japanese make choices in revealing their inward selves. As the clothes suit the person, so the identity suits the context—for that day or even that moment.

In his seminal work on ethnic boundaries, Fredrik Barth uses the idea of “border-crossing,”⁴⁸ a corollary to our discussion of global and local. Barth’s approach changed how anthropology viewed ethnic groups. The focus went from bounded, static communities to groups on the move. He studied those who crossed over rather than the group that was left behind. It was “the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses” (emphasis his). “Barth also allow(ed) for multivocality of meaning *within* an ethnic group through

a multiplicity of self-identities.”⁴⁹ “Border-crossing,” “on the move,” “multivocality,” where “a single symbol may stand for many things,”⁵⁰ are ideas reflective of glocalization, which was birthed in part from Barth’s pioneering thought.

So, is it possible to have a glocal identity? If so, what are the missiological implications? In answer to the first question, Schreiter, Hiebert and the Japanese themselves would give a resounding “yes.” Interestingly, Hiebert applied the concept of a glocal identity to *missionaries*, calling them “inbetweeners,” “transcultural persons” and “glocal mediators” because “the heart of missions has always been—and remains—the task of bridging the gulf between the gospel and the world.”⁵¹

Schreiter speaks more generally of what has happened with identity in the world as context has changed. He names three distinct shifts: First, “context as a concept has become increasingly *deterritorialized*”; second, “contexts are becoming *hyperdifferentiated*”; and third, “contexts are more clearly *hybridized*.”⁵² Essentially, he’s saying that the nature of context itself needs to be assessed. As Lamin Sanneh underlines,

context is not passive but comes preloaded with its own biases, ready to contest whatever claims it encounters. Contexts, after all, are constructed strategies. As such, a context sensitive approach should be responsive without being naïve.⁵³

Missiological Implications of Glocal Identities

In this final part of our discussion on glocalization I would like to address four issues on this matter of context: first, the effects of changes in context and contextualization; second, the non-neutrality of context; third,

the effects of the urban context on identity; and, finally—to answer the second question above—What are the missiological implications of a glocal identity among urban Tokyoites, both non-Christian and Christian?

First, let's begin with the effects of globalization on context outlined in Schreiter's *The New Catholicity*:

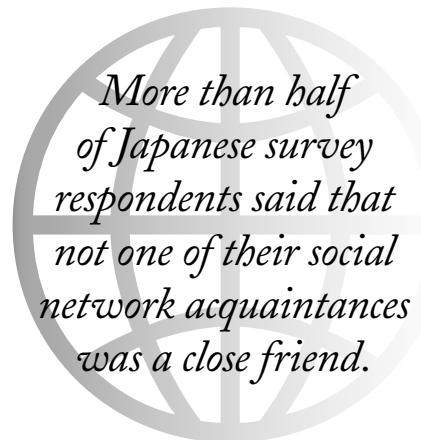
1. **Deterritorialization:** Fueled by immigration, diasporic movements and the Internet, deterritorialization has "ensur(ed) that our cultural experiences, identities, and practices are becoming separated from the places we inhabit."⁵⁴ Schreiter attributes deterritorialization to the compression of global space, and believes it as focused around boundaries of difference, not territory. "Because the space along boundaries is often a space of great semiotic activity, this has importance for understanding how cultures are being reshaped and what consequences this holds for theology."⁵⁵
2. **Hyperdifferentiation:** This is Schreiter's term for globalization and glocalization, which, he says, has humans "participating in different realities at the same time—there is multiple belonging. This has to be taken into account in any attempt to express identity where multiple cultures interact at the same time... occupying the same space."⁵⁶
3. **Hybridization:** On maintaining cultural purity, "in a globalized world it becomes increasingly untenable as a concept."⁵⁷ Kapchan says of ethnic identities, "hybridity is effected whenever two or more historically separate realms come together in any degree that challenges their socially constructed autonomy"⁵⁸ and Lewellen asserts that "all cultures are *already* hybrid, so what we are witnessing today is

one hybrid culture mixing with another."⁵⁹

We have discussed *hyperdifferentiation* and *hybridization* in the Japanese context, though we used the terms "matrixed identity," *tatemaehonno*, *omote-ura*, and *uchi-soto*; the idea of multiple belonging was depicted in the Harajuku case study. But what about deterritorialization? How does that relate to Japanese self-identity?

The Zuckerberg Facebook article also included this utopian scene:

You'll be working and living inside a network of people, and you'll never



have to be alone again. The Internet, and the whole world, will feel more like a family, or a college dorm, or an office where your co-workers are also your best friends.⁶⁰

Again, more than one half of Japanese survey respondents said that not one of their social network acquaintances was a close friend. So, the virtual intimacy predicted by Facebook doesn't work, at least, on Japanese social network sites. But there *is* a contextual manifestation of deterritorialized relationships, known as "tele-cocooning." This is practiced using mobile phones and is "the production of social identities through small, insular social groups."⁶¹ Research in Japan has found that while the average user may have one or two hundred contacts in their phone, they exchange a vast majority of their information with only 2-5 of those persons. On this level, Zuckerberg's vision of "living inside a network of people" has come

to pass in Japan, in its deterritorialized form. However, its realization was not through social networking sites like Facebook or Mixi, but *through portable cell phones* (perhaps because the overwhelming majority of the heaviest users, teenagers, access the Internet only from their mobile phone).⁶²

The second issue, the non-neutrality of context, means that from the outset, an agenda must be assumed. Beginning with Sanneh's analysis, identity comes "preloaded with its own biases, ready to contest whatever claims it encounters." Identity is shifting and variegated, but is neither neutral nor passive, since one's identity (or identities) always exist in context. In other words, Japanese make conscious choices based on how they want their identity to be manifested *in a particular context*.

Jonathan Ingleby argues in this way,

By definition, contextualization has to pay close attention to the context. The question is, are all contexts equal or are some more equal than others? When we enter a context with the gospel and attempt to identify with it, are we not usually confronted by a variety of cultures? What seems at a distance to be homogeneous is, the more we understand it, various and uneven... more confusingly, there may be more than one culture existing and indeed intermingling in the same locality. Furthermore, discovery leads to the need for decision. If we find we are dealing with a multiplicity of cultures within one locality, some sort of choice will have to be made among them. And how do we make this choice? Should the choice itself be based on some external criteria, and if so, what are they? What will be the reaction to the gospel be for those who belong to the culture or cultures that are not, at least for the time being, the chosen ones?⁶³

The missiological implication is that we should assume nothing, and while engaging the context—and the people in that context—one "should be responsive without being naïve," as Sanneh suggests. In this way,

when the global and local converge, the cross-cultural worker will not be tempted to say, “it’s just the way the Japanese do it,” or the Japanese to say, “this is from America, it must be good.” Rather, “that which is from without” must be evaluated at the point of convergence and be received or put aside.⁶⁴

A third issue for glocalization and contextualization in urban Tokyo is the city itself. Tokyo is one of three “global cities,”⁶⁵ according to urbanologist Saskia Sassen, who categorizes it with London and New York. This means that Tokyo is different not just from other cities in Japan but also from almost every other city in the world. This makes it difficult to generalize from Tokyo to the rest of Japan. As Manuel Castells observes, while cosmopolitans—or what I call glocal urban Japanese—do exist, they are in the minority. He documents that “barely 13 percent of people surveyed worldwide” consider themselves to be “citizens of the world.”⁶⁶ Tokyoites are among these barely 13 percent.

Life in the city is obviously different from life in the countryside, but what is not obvious is that standard techniques of evangelism, church planting and discipleship are often used with no attention to the realities of urban living. For example, the traditional pattern of mission in Japan has been to situate headquarters and churches in suburban Tokyo. This is cost-effective because downtown is exorbitantly expensive, but it also means that most missionaries cannot comprehend the city because they are not there. So, one of the most strategic changes that a number of mission organizations have initiated in the last decade is to gradually move personnel into the city, purchasing or renting apartments, establishing storefront churches, and meeting in *downtown* residences. This change is simple but profound because context, especially urban context, influences identity and practice.

When a Japanese believer is “crucified with Christ,” and the “I” no longer lives, many sincere Japanese believers struggle.

The city also provides opportunity for Japanese. The scale, anonymity, and depersonalization of urban living allows, paradoxically, free and open interactions which would not be possible in the countryside, where family and societal networks are tight.

Finally, what are the missiological implications for this urban context? Hiebert agrees with Sanneh, suggesting, “there is no such thing as passive response to globalization.”⁶⁷ As noted earlier, the Japanese, especially urban dwellers, are constantly changing their identities, not all of which are healthy. Thus, a key response is to act proactively rather than be repeatedly surprised by these changes.

A second implication is that missionaries must show respect and help Japanese believers “navigate” themselves. Clammer declares that modernity has left the Japanese as “privatized and atomistic individual(s).”⁶⁸ This does not bode well for people who have been brought up in an interdependent context. What this means missiologically is that ministry, whether sharing the gospel with not-yet-Christians or discipling believers, should be done in a group setting, with as little one-on-one as possible.

For followers of Jesus a third implication is that the foundation of identity must rest in Christ—yet this is no mean feat. How does a Christian Tokyoite consider all these influences on his/her self-identity and affirm with Paul that “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20a)? What part of the Japanese self is represented in that verse? Who is the “I”? This is not a glib question. It ties into the Japanese Christian’s identification with his or her faith and to believers being “in Christ,” yet is linked to the

social construct of multiple selves. Tadataka Maruyama, inaugural president of Tokyo Christian University, explains that the battle within a Japanese believer is whether to go by the designation “Christian Japanese” or “Japanese Christian.” The ordering of the two is the point.

[T]he term *Christian Japanese* assumes a prior allegiance to the universal religion of Christianity before any particular association with the nation of one’s birth. As Scripture says, “For he [God] chose us in him [Christ] before the creation of the world” (Eph 1:4), so the one who was chosen to be a Christian was born as a Japanese and now practices his or her faith as a Christian who happens to be Japanese. Although this concept may be biblical and correct, for the Japanese—even among Christians—it is unnatural and difficult to comprehend.⁶⁹

This struggle is common among Christians in Japan and is best exemplified by well-known Catholic novelist, Shusaku Endo, who grieved that his conversion to Christianity meant for him that he would become less Japanese. When a Japanese believer is “crucified with Christ,” and the “I” no longer lives, many sincere Japanese believers do struggle. So, the missiological imperative is to make sure that the gospel is properly conveyed, with faithfulness to its content, while at the same time ensuring that those who hear it do not sense an unnecessary contradiction with who they are in their *identity*.⁷⁰

Conclusion

I have led you down a long road of negotiated identities, globalized contexts and missiological considerations. Harajuku in the heart of Tokyo served as our contextual backdrop for variegated selves and multiple belongings. We pondered the intricacies of

Japanese multiple self-identities and their sensibilities on how the presentation of self differs from those in the West. We examined *wakon-yosai*, and how it lets Japan contextualize foreign things, such as the telephone, the cellphone, and social networking, especially as they relate to the flexible boundaries of the matrixed self. We considered epistemological differences in mapping and how they engage in border-crossing. Finally, we touched on glocalization and the effects of glocal identity on ethnicity in contexts that are inherently non-neutral.

Many will agree that human identity is humanly created, that it exists as a social construct but, from both a biblical and theological point of view, this is not enough. We must go beyond identity to the *imago dei*, which is not a social construct, nor of human derivation. It is the image and likeness of God imparted to all humans and is the *essential* part of our being, superseding any form of identity. All persons are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), marred though it may be by the Fall. To say it another way, the *imago dei* is the true foundation, identity is the conveyance. Personal identities can shift and be perceived as multiple or singular, and can impact how we proceed missiologically. But the *imago dei*, while difficult to define, is that mirror to God containing aspects of the divine that are common to every person on the planet. Identities are not common or universal; only the *imago dei* relates to all humankind. And it is here in the *imago dei* that we find our fundamental departure for all missiological studies of identity. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ My thanks to Jan B. Hansen, Jerry Vuncannon, How Chuang Chua and John Mehn for their input on an early draft of this paper. Whatever was helpful from them has been incorporated into this text and is to their credit. For any errors or problems with what is written above, the responsibility is all mine.

² 2007 statistics from *Urban Agglomerations 2007* chart, UN Department of

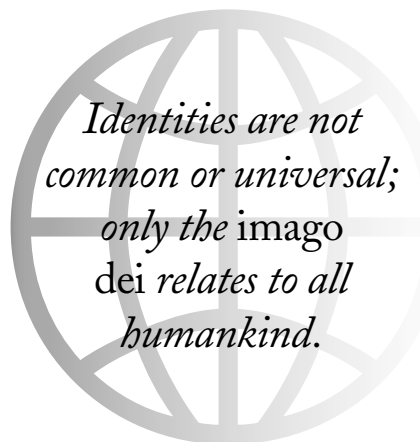
Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wup2007/2007_urban_agglomerations_chart.pdf

³ Thanks to Jan Hansen for this apt description of the Yoyogi Park area.

⁴ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1959).

⁵ Doi Takeo, *The Anatomy of Dependence*. Translated by John Bester (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1973).

⁶ See Yamazaki Masakazu, *Individualism and the Japanese: An Alternative Approach to Cultural Comparison*. Translated by Barbara Sugihara (Tokyo: Japan Echo, 1994).



⁷ Ishida Takeshi, "Conflict and Its Accommodation: *Omote-ura* and *Uchi-soto* Relations," in *Conflict in Japan*, eds. Ellis S. Krauss, Thomas P. Rohlen, and Patricia G. Steinhoff, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), 16-38.

⁸ This is similar to Doi's *honnetatemae* above.

⁹ Ishida, 20-21

¹⁰ Robert J. Smith, *Japanese Society: Tradition, Self and the Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) in Wetzel, Patricia J. "A Movable Self: The Linguistic Indexing of *Uchi* and *Soto*," in *Situated Meaning: Inside and Outside in Japanese Self, Society, and Language*, ed. Jane M. Bachnik and Charles J. Quinn, Jr., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 75.

¹¹ My thanks to Jerry Vuncannon for this innovative thought and turn of a phrase.

¹² Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1992).

¹³ Darrell Whiteman, "Anthropological Reflections on Contextualizing Theology in a Globalizing World," in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in*

an Era of World Christianity, eds. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 61.

¹⁴ My assumption here and throughout this article is that contextualization has already taken place and that it occurred at the initiative of the Japanese, making what is foreign "Japanese." How to contextualize from a Christian perspective is a separate topic.

¹⁵ Robertson, 90.

¹⁶ William A. Dyrness, *Learning about Theology from the Third World* (Grand Rapids: Academic Books/Zondervan, 1990), 141.

¹⁷ Toru Takeda, *Wakamono wa naze "tsunagari" tagaru no ka* [Why do young people want to be "connected"?], (Tokyo: PHP Interface, 2002), 15.

¹⁸ David C. Lewis, *The Unseen Face of Japan* (Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1993), 130.

¹⁹ In terms of identity, Bachnik sees this "as the locus of the 'self,' *uchi*, [and] is thus linked to the *organization of self*, which is defined within a collectivity." Jane M. Bachnik, "Uchi/soto: Challenging Our Conceptualizations of Self, Social Order, and Language," in *Situated Meaning: Inside and Outside in Japanese Self, Society, and Language*, ed. Jane M. Bachnik and Charles J. Quinn, Jr., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 28, her emphasis.

²⁰ Conrad Phillip Kottak shows how *uchi* and *soto* work on a macro level: "The (majority) Japanese define themselves by opposition to others, whether minority groups in their own nation or outsiders—anyone who is 'not us.' The 'not us' should stay that way; assimilation is generally discouraged" (*Mirror for Humanity*. 2d ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill College 1999), 44-45). Such xenophobia, though not unique to Japan, creates an "us-them" (or, "inside/outside") dynamic; see Charles J. Quinn, "The Terms *Uchi* and *Soto* as Windows on a World," in *Situated Meaning: Inside and Outside in Japanese Self, Society, and Language*, eds. Jane M. Bachnik and Charles J. Quinn, Jr., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 38-72; and Paul G. Hiebert, "Are We Our Others' Keepers?" (vol. 22, no. 5, 1995), 325-337). *Nihonkyo*, or *Nihonjinron*, as this ideology is more commonly called, is rooted in nationalism, informing the larger Japanese *uchi* identity.

²¹ Jun Yoshimi of the Societal Information Research Institute at the University of Tokyo in Takeda, 16, my translation.

²² Janet Ashby, "When in Doubt, Just Say 'wakarimasen'" (*Japan Times*, 5/12/2002)

²³ Ashby, "When in Doubt," quoting Naoko Odaka of the Dentsu Research Institute.

²⁴ Manuel Castells describes 3 major forms of identity: legitimizing, resistance, and project, relating them to the growth of the internet and globalization. "Resistance identity" is the closest to what is being described above because its focus is on "the formation of *communes*, or *communities*," in *The Power of Identity*, 2nd ed. (West Sussex, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 8ff.

²⁵ Janet Ashby, "When in Doubt".

²⁶ Shane Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture: How Media Shapes Faith, the Gospel, and Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 34.

²⁷ Mixi, founded in 2004 and now at 21.6 million members, is Japan's original and formerly largest social network site. Mixi was dethroned in early 2011 by upstart Gree, currently with 22.5 million members. Rival Mobage-town completes the triumvirate with 21.7 million members.

²⁸ The data for this paragraph is taken from an article in *The New York Times*, "Slow Growth in Japanese Facebook" (1/10/2011).

²⁹ *The New York Times*, "Slow Growth in Japanese Facebook" (1/10/2011)

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ TIME, 12/27/2010, pp. 57-58.

³² "Slow Growth in Japanese Facebook," emphases added.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Paul G. Hiebert, *Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 76.

³⁵ John Clammer, *Japan and Its Others* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2001), 169.

³⁶ Clammer, 169-170.

³⁷ Clammer, 171. He thus infers here that it is difficult for a Japanese to be a Christian and Japanese at the same time, but the missiological imperative is to find a way through that.

³⁸ Clammer speaks of the Japanese need for *shutaisei*, the "independence of spirit and the ability to define and manage the individual self autonomously," and of the conflict which often occurs inside Japanese Christians as they try to create a psychic bridge between this Western image of self "and cultural views inculcated through socialization." Clammer, 169, 171.

³⁹ Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997), 12.

⁴⁰ Schreiter, 21.

⁴¹ Schreiter, 12.

⁴² Michael Zielenziger writes that

National identity binds [Japan] into a cohesive whole; religion functions only on the periphery.

when Louis Vuitton first opened its doors to Japan in 2002 at Omotesando, four thousand consumers—some of whom had lined up for days—partook of a "frenetic seven-hour sales orgy" which broke "all of its own retail records." See *Shutting Out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 158.

⁴³ See the masterful and exhaustive survey of the literature on ethnicity and national identity from a missiological perspective, "A Review of the Literature on Ethnicity, National Identity and Related Missiological Studies," in *Global Missiology: A Review of the Literature on Ethnicity, National Identity and Related Missiological Studies*, by Enoch Wan and Mark Vanderwerf http://www.globalmissiology.org/portugues/docs_pdf/featured/wan_literature_ethnicity_april_2009.pdf; see also, the American Association of Anthropology's Statement on Race, <http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm>.

⁴⁴ Gary Fujino, "Continuing the Conversation: Starting Points—Crafting Reconciliation through Identity" (*Common Ground Journal* vol 1, no. 2, 2004). <http://www.commongroundjournal.org/volnum/v01n02.pdf>. The danger of "identity politics" should also be underlined here, where identity is used to pit one group against another.

⁴⁵ Nothing is more central to a Japanese person than "being Japanese." Naturally, such patriotism could be said to be as true for those other nations, but in Japan, belonging is everything (cf. Fukuda Mitsuo. *Developing a Contextualized Church as a Bridge to Christianity in Japan*. (D.Miss. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1992), 103; Lebra Takie Sugiyama, *Japanese Patterns of Behavior* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1976), 24ff). National identity binds the country into a cohesive whole; religion functions only on the periphery. Geertz says religion is important because of "its capacity to serve, for an individual or group, as a source of general, yet distinctive conceptions of the world, self, and the relations between them" (see Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *Language, Truth and Religious Belief: Studies in Twentieth-Century Theory and Method in Religion*, eds. Nancy K. Frankenberry and Hans H. Penner, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 212), but this description better describes

the presuppositions of identity generated by *Nihonkyo*, that is, of being a citizen of Japan.

⁴⁶ See Peter Lundell, "Behind Japan's Resistant Web: Understanding the Problem of *Nihonkyo*," (*Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXV, No. 2, April 1997), 183).

⁴⁷ Befu, Harumi. *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2001), 64.

⁴⁸ "[B]oundaries persist despite a flow of personnel across them," said Barth (1969, 9). Also, because "stable, persisting, and often vitally important social relations are maintained across such boundaries... frequently based precisely on the dichotomized ethnic statuses" (1969,10) in Fujino, <http://www.commongroundjournal.org/volnum/v01n02.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Fujino, <http://www.commongroundjournal.org/volnum/v01n02.pdf>.

⁵⁰ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 50.

⁵¹ Paul G. Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 120, 198, 179.

⁵² Schreiter, 26-27, emphases his.

⁵³ Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 5.

⁵⁴ Paul Hopper, *Understanding Cultural Globalization* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 48.

⁵⁵ Schreiter, 26.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Deborah A. Kapchan and Pauline Turner Strong, "Theorizing the Hybrid" (*Journal of American Folklore* 112 no. 445 Sum 1999), 242.

⁵⁹ Ted C. Lowell, *The Anthropology of Globalization: Cultural Anthropology Enters the 21st Century*, (Westport, CT; Bergin and Garvey, 2002), 102, emphasis his.

⁶⁰ TIME, 12/27/2010, 60.

⁶¹ Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe, and Misa Matsuda, eds. *Personal, Portable, Pedestrian: Mobile Phones in Japanese Life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 8.

⁶² "Teens in Japan almost exclusively access and download Internet content

through their handsets." http://www.dynamiclogic.com/na/research/whitepapers/docs/MB_POV_Advertiser_Forget_Pick_Phone.pdf

⁶³ Jonathan Ingleby, "Is Contextualization Neutral?" *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXV, No. 2, April 1997, 183.

⁶⁴ There is some harkening back to Hiebert's "Critical Contextualization" here, but my focus is more on the glocal, whereas Hiebert's is more on the local.

⁶⁵ Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, 2nd ed. (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1991).

⁶⁶ Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2nd ed. (West Sussex, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), xxiii.

⁶⁷ Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 248.

⁶⁸ Clammer, p. 169

⁶⁹ Tadataka Maruyama, "The Cross and the Cherry Blossom: The Gospel and Japanese Culture at a Crossroads" (*Trinity Journal*, vol. 21NS, no. 1), 59.

⁷⁰ See Priest, Robert J. "Missionary elenctics: Conscience and culture," *Missiology* 22, no. 3 (1994): 291-315.