



On Being Appointed President of the Toyota Foundation

Atsuko Toyama

President, The Toyota Foundation

"A Song of Early Spring," which begins with the words "A spring in name only as the cold winds blow," is a beautiful, nostalgic song that strikes a chord with the listener. In the pleasant season of early spring, this year I have experienced some nervousness. The strangest thing has happened: I have been appointed president of the Toyota Foundation, an institution steeped in tradition and history, having a major presence both in Japan and overseas. My predecessor, the late Shosaburo Kimura, was a person of shining intellect and urbane character, a rare man of culture who charmed a great many people. There is tremendous pressure in following someone like that. Nevertheless, now that I have taken the position I intend to do the very best I can, with the assistance of everyone concerned now and in the fu-



ture, to achieve the high ideals of this organization.

The Toyota Foundation is not merely one of Japan's leading grant-making foundations; its activities have also been characterized by three significant innovations. The first lies in the Foundation's stated goals. We clearly set forth the lofty ideal and goal of advancing the happiness of individuals, and thereby the future happiness of the society that they make up, with our pledge to contribute to "greater human happiness." This philosophy is one that actively guides our efforts to draw up concrete strategies for the Foundation as well as our selections of project proposals to receive grants. Furthermore, the Toyota Foundation has been flexible enough to revise its approach to grant making from time to time in accordance with the needs of the times and its ideals, which is just how a grant-making foundation should behave.

The second characteristic has been our willingness to look beyond specific academic fields to award grants to a truly broad range of research focusing on network formation with an eye on the Asian region, research on the revitalization of communities that have lost their vigor in the modern era of urbanization, and research that contributes to "the search for the richness of human life and activity." This research tends to be low-key in nature, aiming to make steady

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progress toward the improvement of human lives. This is a major distinction. We believe that these qualities make this sort of work absolutely essential for Japan as it moves into the future. Under the Toyota Foundation's Mid- and Long-Term Vision, crafted to mark the organization's thirtieth anniversary, we are just setting sail in a new vessel, so to speak. I feel as though I have landed on the deck of a huge ship that has just set sail, guided by new sea charts. I hope to see the Foundation continue to be the kind of vessel that contributes to the true happiness of people and society.

The third characteristic is the fact that our organization has never been tied directly to the profitability of Toyota Motor Corporation's worldwide business operation, but has enjoyed an independent existence from its very beginning. This is the form taken by numerous foundations in Japan that are supported by a corporate parent, but we believe that by contributing to society in this manner, Japanese corporations have created a special kind of private organization that they can be justifiably proud of on a global basis.

I am currently serving as president of the foundation that operates the New National Theatre. The New National Theatre is attracting international attention as a cultural base where we plan, produce, and stage world-class performing arts, such as operas and ballets, and help disseminate culture both in Japan and abroad. The artists who appear in our programs—singers, dancers, conductors, and directors—cross easily over national borders as they compete in the world of artistic talent. It is encouraging to see that Japanese artists are among those surviving the competition and achieving considerable success.

Witnessing and supporting contemporary performing arts, the work of first-class artists, is somewhat different from working for a grant-making foundation. Some aspects are difficult while others are highly interesting. This fall will mark the tenth anniversary of the opening of the New National Theatre. While the organization is still in its infancy, I believe it is helping to disseminate Japanese culture. The New National Theatre Foundation is a different type of organization from the Toyota Foundation, but the important thing is that all the people involved share the same goals and strategies and act in concert.

As it happens, I have also been involved directly or indirectly with a number of other foundations, and I have learned a great deal about foundations

and their activities. Every foundation has its own philosophy and history. I have been struck by the fact that both the steady administration of grants in a foundation's particular areas of interest and the skillful orchestration of the abilities of outside experts are beneficial in grant-making activities.

The work of foundations is to help create more happiness for this country's people and society, and for all humanity. With foundations pursuing the common ambition to help create a better society, the result will be to focus the energy of Japan's private sector and increase each organization's significance as a public interest corporation.

The significance of public interest corporations lies in their ability to use the power of the private sector to provide finely tuned, sometimes daring forms of assistance that national or local public agencies cannot provide. Here at the Toyota Foundation we will work to rejuvenate our own activities from a broad range of perspectives. As long as we can provide opportunities for harnessing the power of Japan's private sector to contribute to society, our efforts will be fruitful.

Public Symposium: "Ties Between People Will Unlock Asia's Potential"

On October 25, 2007, the Toyota Foundation hosted a public symposium on the theme "Ties Between People Will Unlock Asia's Potential: What Network Formation Generates."

Three recipients of Toyota Foundation grants under the Asian Neighbors Network Program gave presentations at the event, and Professor Haruo Miyamura of Seikei University's Faculty of Law provided commentary. The presentations are summarized below.

Basing his remarks on the ways in which societies and cultures have become more open as the countries of East Asia have experienced opening up to the world, Professor Miyamura spoke about discovering the mutual bonds between communities, linking projects through networking, and inter-organizational challenges.

The symposium concluded with a summary presented by Professor Kozo Hiramatsu of Kyoto University's Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies. Professor Hiramatsu noted that there are no

uniform standards for determining the results of network formation activities and reiterated the point that what is most important is the process by which a network is formed.

Creation of Regional and Personal Networks on the Legend of Xu Fu: The Possibilities of New Comparative Studies Based on Oral Literature

Shiho Tsuji

Part-time Lecturer, Faculty of Letters, Aichi Prefectural University

Researching the Xu Fu Legend

According to Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian*, after the unification of China the first Qin emperor sent Xu Fu on a quest for the "elixir of life." Accompanied by thousands of sailors he traveled to the "three sacred mountains" rising in the eastern seas, took over broad plains and wetlands, and set himself up as a king, without returning to China. Many legends have survived in Japan and Korea concerning the location of Xu Fu's kingdom, while in China Xu Fu's birthplace and place of departure have begun gaining attention. As a folklorist, I am attracted to the story of Xu Fu from the standpoint of research on oral literature (legends).

The most interesting aspect of the Xu Fu legends is the fact that they are connected across an ocean. Xu Fu legends have endured in dozens of locations in Japan, South Korea, and China. In the study of folklore it has been generally thought that once a legend is revealed to exist in multiple locations, the legend dies out. Nevertheless, competition for credibility has not caused divisiveness among the locations where the Xu Fu legends are preserved. Instead, the various stories complement one another and combine to make up the overall legend.

Let us visit the places in Japan where such legends are preserved. There is a tomb, said to be that of Xu Fu, in Hadasu in the city of Kumano, Mie Prefecture. Since the Kumano Kodo, a series of pilgrimage routes, were registered as a World Heritage site, a Xu Fu teahouse has been built along one of the routes.



There is another tomb reputed to contain Xu Fu's remains about 30 kilometers to the south, in the city of Shingu in Wakayama Prefecture. It was built at the command of Tokugawa Yorinobu, the founder of the Kishu clan. A park was also built there during the administration of Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita with funding from the "Hometown Revival" program. A professional reciter of the legend, 97 years old this year, is still active there as well.

An 80-year-old man in the town of Ine, Kyoto Prefecture, alarmed at the prospect of the oral tradition of the Tango Peninsula ending when he dies, had a stone monument inscribed with the oral tradition erected at Niizaki Shrine this year at his own expense. It has attracted many visitors. Thus, the Xu Fu legends are being preserved in various locations not through government involvement but through the efforts of local people. In addition, the legends are also being transmitted in schools, including in integrated learning classes. A junior high school in the town of Nakadomari in Aomori Prefecture and an elementary school in the city of Yame in Fukuoka Prefecture are among the schools that hold events related to Xu Fu's crossing.

Motivation for and Process of Network Formation

I wanted to inform the next generation about elderly keepers of the legends. Attempts have been made in the past to bring together the efforts in the various locations, but the people in each location cherish their own oral traditions, so it is difficult to form an organization positioned above them. For that reason I decided to take it upon myself to act as the liaison. I also thought that I would be able to incorporate books published in these locations into my research.

As a folklore researcher, I continually wondered whether it was acceptable for me to intervene in the communities, but through my role as liaison I came to see that it was necessary to place myself in a position where the local people would see me as a useful presence. This did not alter my perspective as a researcher. Since I had already stepped inside the communities, I decided to try to get closer to the local mindset. I do not speak Chinese or Korean, so I had to seek help, and this led to new friendships. Writing letters and making phone calls are essential for maintaining a communications network with older acquaintances.

In China, a Xu Fu celebration is held every October in the city of Lianyungang in Jiangsu Province. Other such events are held in May in the city of



A statue of Xu Fu in Ganyu County, Jiangsu Province, China

Longkou and in June at Langyatai in the city of Jiaonan, both in Shandong Province. Festivals inspired by Xu Fu's departure are held in the city of Qinhuangdao, Hebei Province, and on the island of Daishan, Zhejiang Province.

In South Korea, meanwhile, government-funded international seminars and similar events have been held. Just as exchanges related to Xu Fu between Japan and China began after the normalization of diplomatic relations, friendly exchanges concerning Xu Fu have occurred between China and Korea. China's Shandong Province presented the island of Jeju in Korea with a statue of Xu Fu, and an unveiling ceremony was held.

In Gyeong-Sang Nam-do, South Korea, there is a stone monument bearing an inscription that says Xu Fu set out for Yame in Fukuoka Prefecture, and people from Yame have begun traveling to South Korea to see the monument.

There have been other, more recent developments. In 2004 a large monument commemorating Xu Fu's arrival was built by a Taiwanese group of Xu family members in Saga Prefecture. In China, Japanese businessmen have built a memorial hall dedicated to Xu Fu in the city of Cixi, Zhejiang Province. The construction of the hall is both a contribution to international exchange and an effort to provide a venue for Japanese-language education, where young people from the surrounding area can improve their Japanese skills. In some places, such as Taiwan, there is a tendency to regard Xu Fu as a trailblazer for overseas Chinese and travelers to new shores.

Results and Future Prospects

By actually going to the locations where these events were held, I was able to view them from a local per-

spective. This year, when I happened to fall ill, I was delighted by the ingenuity that local people displayed in keeping the network going. There is no question that a bidirectional network is now operating.

This project has been highly rewarding for me, in that my desire to research the Xu Fu oral tradition has now gained understanding among Chinese folklorists.

I intend to continue to impress upon other scholars the fascinating nature of how the Xu Fu legends have been transmitted. I feel that my role is to convey the attractive aspects of the Xu Fu legends to those who are unaware of them. Knowing that legends are a part of daily life, are constantly shifting, and are sometimes used for political purposes, I intend to address legends and oral traditions within the context of globalization.

Construction of a Network and Archive on the History of Community Development in East Asian Countries

Shin Aiba

Associate Professor, Graduate School of Urban Environmental Sciences, Tokyo Metropolitan University

What Is Community Development?

Moves to make urban planning better suited to the residents of local communities began in the 1960s. Standing in contrast to the stuffy image of urban planning, these joint efforts by citizens, administrators, and experts to achieve *machizukuri* (community development) have yielded many techniques and methodologies over the past 40 years. One example is an initiative undertaken by municipalities across Japan in which citizens use models to take part in park design.



When I became a researcher in the late 1990s, people had noticed that there were similar community development movements in South Korea and Taiwan. More recently, researchers have fostered exchange by visiting neighboring countries to investigate community development there. That is where our project begins, in the building of a common foundation of knowledge with the aim of fostering deeper mutual understanding.

In short, the purpose of our project is to portray the shared history of community development in South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan through joint interviews of pioneers in this field. We began by gaining an understanding of the modern history of community development in each country as a springboard to the portrayal of our common history by listening to the stories of pioneers who were active in the early days of community development in each country. The key point is that everyone in the project should share in the process of discovery, with we on the Japanese side interviewing pioneers in other countries and researchers from South Korea and Taiwan interviewing Japanese pioneers.

Our ultimate vision for the project is that young researchers from the three countries will form an international network through collaborative works and will also develop, through the interviews, a network with the older generations who led the way in community development in their respective countries. We intend not only to build relationships but also to compile an archive of our results and place this at the center of our network.

Issues and Implementation

We initiated this project before applying for the grant from the Toyota Foundation. For about the first year of the project we solicited Taiwanese and South Korean participants while creating our organization in Japan. Then in the summer of 2006, we worked out and proposed a joint research methodology. We anticipated that language differences would make communication difficult, so instead of complex research we proposed a simple research methodology that all participating researchers would be able to share.

In June and July 2007 we held meetings in both South Korea and Taiwan, and in August we held our first international workshop attended by representatives from all three participating countries. Participants were able to interview community development pioneers, with researchers from all three countries able to ask questions through consecutive interpretation, and field tours were also held, allowing researchers from Taiwan and South Korea to observe examples of Japanese community building firsthand.

Problems and Solutions

The issue of greatest concern was who should take the initiative when forming the network. We knew that approaching people in South Korea and Taiwan without proper preparation would likely result in

the formation of connections with particular universities only. We also needed to take account of the different group culture found in each country. South Korea is said to be a society in which elders are respected and the participation of elders attracts that of others, while we had heard that Taiwanese society was like a collection of small islands, characterized by strong ties within the individual islands but each island isolated from the others. The methods of approaching people in each country would differ accordingly, therefore.

At first we considered using English, but English would not be understood in the localities that we visited to study community development. Since the study of community development requires that research take place in actual communities, it is critical that the people involved in the research be able to readily exchange information on the localities under study. We decided, therefore, to use interpreters among the three languages as a means of ensuring that the participants could communicate with each other properly.

We had also planned to use the Internet as a means of communication, but in the end we decided against this and opted to place priority on meeting in person. Given our goal of forming a network, we resolved to meet in groups so as to create as many nodes as possible between individuals.

Results, Impact, and Future Prospects

We intend for our network to produce results in the form of an archive. We are generating a wealth of new information on Japan, while our colleagues in South Korea and Taiwan are compiling their information using the same formats, which include lists of pioneers, case studies, and chronological tables.



Participants in the first international workshop walk around a Japanese community.

The modern history of East Asia has tended to be recounted using “big words.” The smaller history of the small-scale field of civil society has not yet been depicted. What we are describing in detail through this project is the history of community development, an even smaller field within civil society, but we believe that if the history of such other phenomena as community welfare, education, and environmental movements could also be described using the same methodologies, this might yield an intriguing collection of insights into modern history.

Three more workshops are planned during the term of the Toyota Foundation grant (November 1, 2007 to October 31, 2009). We hope to conduct numerous interviews with community development pioneers and to compile them into a format that makes them easy for citizens to read.

We have also launched a study group with foreign students in Japan. Moreover, we are now receiving more inquiries from citizen groups in Taiwan and South Korea that are interested in coming to Japan. We are currently focusing on exchange among researchers, but in the future we hope to also organize exchange between specialists involved in community development in the field.

The future direction of our network is now under discussion. Some have proposed that as we have so far concentrated on building a framework, we should now allow the network to become looser. Others have proposed that, rather than a network, we should create something like a research platform that can be sustained for the long term. I am sure that we will see further promising developments over the coming year.

The Role and Relationships of International NGOs and Local NGOs in the Global Community: The Example of South Asia

Tetsuo Tsutsui

Deputy Secretary General, Shapla Neer Citizens' Committee in Japan for Overseas Support

The Story So Far

The Shapla Neer Citizens' Committee in Japan for Overseas Support was founded in 1972 and is active in Bangladesh, Ne-



An international NGO symposium held in Nagoya as a Toyota Foundation grant project

pal, and India. Until 1999 we implemented all of our projects directly by posting Japanese to these countries and having them employ local staff.

During the 1970s and 1980s, amid the chaos following the independence of Bangladesh, our activities centered on poverty relief in farming villages. Later, as the poverty problem gradually subsided, new problems surfaced. Circumstances including the problem of urbanization led Shapla Neer to wonder what its role as an overseas NGO should be. At the same time, we have expanded our activities to other countries and are considering how we can apply the experience we have accumulated over the years.

Shapla Neer began working in Nepal in 1996. Overseas NGOs have an agreement with the Nepalese government that they will operate in cooperation with local NGOs rather than providing assistance directly, so we began our activities in Nepal in partnership with local NGOs.

We began addressing urban problems in Nepal and Bangladesh in 1999. We handed the activities we had been undertaking in rural villages over to local staff, and these have now developed into three independent NGOs. We shifted to an indirect approach over a period of 10 years and now conduct all of our activities in partnership with NGOs in the localities in which we operate, but this poses different challenges. We have therefore been holding meetings with NGO leaders to find out how Western NGOs think and how local NGOs view their foreign counterparts.

Aims of Network Formation

The first point to be aware of is the distinction between partnership and funds provision. We place

importance on evaluating projects as we propose, plan, and implement them jointly with our partners, an approach we view as different from the mere provision of funds. Our partners on the receiving end of the financial support appear to feel differently, however. Thus, one goal of our networking is to discover what form a partnership should take, how the developed-country party should contribute, and how to build an equitable relationship.

The second point we need to consider is what role international NGOs with a foothold in recipient localities can play. We wanted to know if the role of NGOs from developed countries is to roll up their sleeves and work alongside local people or to support local movements and activities that are already underway.

On the one hand, many NGO partnerships are, in reality, partnerships in name only, consisting of donor-driven relationships in which the NGO partner in the developed country delegates the work it wants done to the NGO in the recipient country. On the other hand, a relationship in which the developed-country NGO simply dispenses money is not the right approach. The question is where Shapla Neer should position itself between these two methods.

Implementation and Results of Networking

In our Toyota Foundation grant project we have hosted five discussion forums in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal, and we continue to share information with local NGOs as we carry out our work. We have also published *Shinka Suru Kokusai Kyoryoku NPO* (Evolving International Cooperative NPOs) (Akashi Shoten Co., Ltd.), an account of our activities thus far.

As a result of our work we have realized that the relationship between an overseas NGO and a local NGO in a recipient country has no fixed ideal; instead it is a process of changing mutual ties.

People overseas have asked us what we want to do. We aspire to build relationships that we feel are desirable, and the first step is to clarify what Shapla Neer aims to do. We have come to believe that what is needed is a partnership characterized by mutual stimulation between two partners, a local NGO on the ground and an overseas NGO on the outside.

In 2005 Shapla Neer conducted emergency relief efforts in India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan in the wake of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2005 Kashmir earthquake. We first contacted people in our network in the areas affected by the disasters, where there are no Shapla Neer offices, and they provided us with information on reliable NGOs in these areas

and on NGOs that were active in areas that had not received assistance or that were focusing on aiding disaster victims. As a result, we were able to begin providing whatever assistance we could in a relatively short time. In the case of the tsunami, moreover, we did not dispatch a tsunami expert from Japan but instead sent an experienced Bangladeshi expert to the devastated area to provide advice to local NGOs in the affected region.

Developments After Project Completion

Although we had been selecting partners with a view to achieving tangible project results, we then decided that we should take on the role of fostering groups and NGOs. Fostering a group is far more difficult than implementing a project, however, and we have come up against new challenges.

In this regard, one issue that we currently face is how to interact with groups conducting activities in farming villages that have become independent of Shapla Neer. We have found that fostering groups and implementing projects simultaneously is a difficult task. The extent to which we should involve ourselves in the governance of our partner organizations is another important issue.

For a long time we conducted our activities in the hope of becoming a full-fledged local NGO in Bangladesh. We then noticed, however, that other local NGOs had become larger and were performing valuable activities. We are continuing our day-to-day efforts as we consider what kinds of activities we should conduct in South Asia as an international NGO from Japan.

Website Redesigned

On October 15, 2007, the Toyota Foundation website was relaunched with a new design. To publicize Foundation activities more widely, we have added an "Updates" section. This section is updated frequently with information not only on programs currently accepting applications but also on Foundation activities and grant projects. We have also launched an e-mail news-



letter to keep people informed of these updates. In the future we hope that the website will serve as a means of disseminating the results of grant projects and as a forum for exchange. We welcome users' opinions and impressions of our new-look website: <http://www.toyotafound.or.jp/english/>

The Toyota Foundation's Activities in Fiscal 2008

The Toyota Foundation's founding philosophy is "to contribute to the realization of a human-oriented society for the sake of greater human happiness." To broadcast this philosophy to society through its grant programs as a more practical message, in fiscal 2008 the Foundation set "realizing a sustainable society" and "community revitalization and coexistence" as common goals of its three publicly solicited grant programs.

"Realizing a sustainable society" is an important theme for the international community as it addresses such issues as the finite nature of resources and environmental problems. It will help to promote partnership (collaboration/cooperation) with other foundations in Japan and with overseas and international organizations.

With society facing a variety of issues, the aim of "community revitalization and coexistence" is to create richly dynamic, living communities by focusing on people's efforts to support one another.

In fiscal 2008 the Foundation will implement the following three publicly solicited programs in line with these two common goals:

Grant Program for Community Activities (limited to groups in Japan)

With the basic theme "Restructuring Local Communities: Supporting One Another in Life and Living," it promotes efforts to build a society based on networks of coexistence in which people living in communities support one another by sharing the richness and security of living.

Asian Neighbors Network Program

With the basic theme "Ties Between People Will Unlock Asia's Potential," it supports projects that aim to resolve issues in Asia through the formation of transregional networks.

Research Grant Program

In fiscal 2008 the program will focus on "Revitalizing Local Communities Under Globalization," based on the basic theme of "The Search for the Richness of Human Life and Activity." Special priority is given to practical projects that harness the dynamism of communities.

In addition to the above, the Foundation also operates the following two programs for which applications are not publicly solicited:

Communication with Society Program

This is a program that transmits and disseminates the results of grant projects to society. The Foundation selects candidate projects through monitoring and other means and cooperates with grant recipients to ensure that results are transmitted and disseminated to society in an effective manner.

Initiative Program

This program supports projects that are likely to contribute to the development of new grant programs, such as projects undertaken in partnership with the Foundation's own survey activities or study groups, current grant projects judged to have the potential to produce greater results, and joint projects to create broad networks with other organizations. It also includes the Southeast Asian Studies Regional Exchange Program (SEASREP). SEASREP is jointly funded by the Toyota Foundation and the Japan Foundation and is planned and administered by the SEASREP Foundation.

Please see the Foundation website for detailed information on the programs:

<http://www.toyotafound.or.jp/english/>

The Toyota Foundation welcomes responses from readers of the *Occasional Report*. Comments and questions should be addressed to the International Division, The Toyota Foundation, Shinjuku Mitsui Building 37F, 2-1-1 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 163-0437, Japan. The articles in the *Occasional Report* reflect the authors' opinions and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Foundation.

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