The Trust of East Asia --- Cultural Manifold of Attitudes and Values of Japanese, Chinese, South Korean, Taiwanese, and Singaporean---

Ryozo Yoshino
The Institute of Statistical Mathematics (ISM), Tokyo, Japan
e-mail address: yoshino@ism.ac.jp

1. Some History and Background
We have carried out a cross-national comparative survey of the East Asia during the past 4 years: Japan and China (Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong) in 2002, Taiwan and South Korea in 2003, and Singapore in 2004. This survey is closely related to our longitudinal survey on the Japanese National Character since 1953 and a series of cross-national surveys since 1971. The survey covered general aspects of peoples’ attitudes and social values, but focused on peoples’ sense of trust among others.

Our cross-national survey started by comparing the Japanese in Japan and the Japanese immigrants in Hawaii, because the cross-national study becomes more meaningful by comparing a pair of social groups which has similar aspects and dissimilar features. Then our task is to investigate what aspects and how much those aspects are similar or dissimilar to each other. Extending this link of comparison, we may be able to eventually obtain a global comparative chain of comparison (rather than a single global scale).

Our survey methodology was called Cultural Linkage Analysis (CLA), which consists of temporal linkage (time series), cross-national linkage, and item-structure linkage. Now we have collected a set of cross-national data that covers Japan, Europe, and Asia. The response patterns of items show attitudes and values of peoples, where the survey areas of those countries or regions make a sort of cultural manifold that consists of hierarchical and overlapping local charts. Therefore the methodology is now called CUMA (Cultural Manifold Analysis).

2. The East Asia Value Survey (2002-2005)
Generally it is unlikely that there is a single global questionnaire (items) to measure social values of all the nations; therefore we need to invent a questionnaire to cover each region under investigation. We have noticed several important issues on translation of a questionnaire and the quality of statistical sampling survey on a past survey in China by some group where main investigator was not familiar with the country. This motivated us to survey the East Asia by ourselves as the resident in the region.

The focuses of our study are
a) the investigation of cross-national comparability, mainly problems of different sampling techniques and the effects of different languages in the East Asia, and
b) the comparison of peoples’ senses of trust cf. Fukuyama, 1996; Uslaner, 2002), among others, in order to investigate possibilities of “trust scales or indices (GSS, WVS, our new items, etc)”.

Our questionnaire includes the 3 items of GSS on interpersonal trust. Our past survey on the seven nations (Hayashi et al., 1998) showed that demographics such as family income and educational levels might be closely related to the sense of trust in USA, but not necessarily in the other countries. Also our past study confirmed that any scale on a single item may not be reliable, a set of items make much stable scale or measure beyond slight differences of
Furthermore, more recent data of our survey show that the time-series trend of USA may be consistent with the change of economic index (Uslaner, 2002, “Moral Foundations of Trust”), whereas the trend of Japan seems more stable, irrespective of its economic conditions.

Our data analyses cover also the sense of trust on social institutions or system such as studied in the world value survey (Inglehart et al.), and the result show some distinctive features of those East Asian countries or regions.

I hope that our survey data and the analyses will be useful for the understanding of those countries under the ongoing cooperation or unification as the “EAST ASIA COMMUNITY.”

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