# The Japanese Welcome-Nonwelcome Ambivalence Syndrome toward Marebito Ijinl Gaijin Strangers: Its Implications for Intercultural Communication Research

ISHII Satoshi

Dokkyo University, Saitama, Japan

The recent rapid expansion of worldwide communication and transportation networks has made it both possible and inevitable for the Japanese to encounter strangers from different racial, ethnic, and sociocultural backgrounds not only overseas but also in Japan. Simply encountering them without appropriate preparation, however, does not guarantee expected intercultural understanding; it often causes mutual fear, misunderstanding, and suspicion within people placed in such intercultural communication situations. The study of intercultural communication, which describes and explains such daily occurrences and possibly solves problems related to them, has been, through most of its academic history, a predominantly U.S.-centered enterprise in Japan. These days, therefore, Japanese scholars in the field are growingly expected to contribute non-Western thoughts and frames of reference from their Japanese sociocultural background. In this scholarly context, the present study attempts to analyze the conventional sociofolkloric marebitolijinlgaijin ambivalent predispositions and attitudes toward strangers from different racial, ethnic, and sociocultural backgrounds. It will contribute from non-Euro-American perspectives to the revision or improvement of Western intercultural communication theories and research methods by analyzing the long-standing Japanese welcome-nonwelcome and inclusion-exclusion ambivalence frequently manifested in their encounters with strange people whose racial, ethnic, and sociocultural backgrounds are different from the average Japanese.

*Keywords*: ANXIETY/UNCERTAINTY MANAGEMENT, *GAIJIN*, *IJIN*, IN-WORLD, *MAREBITO*, MARGINAL ZONE, OUT-WORLD, SOCIOFOLKLORIC, STRANGER, UNCERTAINTY REDUCTION, WELCOME-NONWELCOME AMBIVALENCE.

With the recent speedy but steady globalization and "informationalization" of nations and societies of the world, the Japanese have come to encounter people from diverse racial, ethnic, and sociocultural backgrounds as daily experiences.

Tremendous numbers of people cross national and sociocultural boundaries for a variety of purposes such as to have pleasure, to engage in business, or to conduct study. In such intercultural encounters with strangers, people as either new visitors or indigenous members of host communities commonly experience excitement and happiness in initial stages because they are mutually different, but in later stages these positive feelings and attitudes toward each other can turn suddenly or gradually, usually through unhappy incidents, to negative ones such as fear, frustration, and even hostility. These daily sociocultural and sociopsychological phenomena are not limited to the Japanese but are worldwidely recognized today. Thus it is now increasingly essential for scholars and educators of Japanese culture and intercultural communication to develop systematic research of these phenomena from new perspectives, specifically in Japan, the people of which have long been internationally criticized for their not only politicoeconomic but also sociocultural closedness and exclusiveness.

The German sociologist Simmel (1908/1950) was perhaps the first to introduce the academia of sociology to the Western notion of the stranger. He views a stranger or a newcomer to a host community as holding the contradictory qualities or being simultaneously near to the native residents and remote from them. Simmel's proposition of the stranger as an academic subject has since attracted the scholarly attention and interest of not simply sociologists (Park, 1928; Parrillo, 1980; Wood, 1934) but also social psychologists (Herman & Schield, 1960; Schuetz, 1944; Smith & Bond, 1993; Stephan & Stephan, 1985) and intercultural communication scholars (Gudykunst, 1995; Gudykunst & Kim, 1992, 1997; Rogers, 1999). As the present international and intercultural mobility of people across the world continues to progress more extensively, studying the subject of strangers from such interdisciplinary perspectives is to be growingly crucial in the 21st century.

While the Western approach to the study of strangers has centered around the social sciences, Japanese scholars have traditionally studied the subject from folkloric, historical, literary, and religious points of view. The Japanese folkloric and literary scholar Orikuchi (1929/1975) academically resurrected the ancient term marebitolmarōdo as "a rare guest, a god, or a goddess" from a place remote from rural hamlets and communities. His revival of the term has continually stirred the interest of numerous scholars of Japanese history, literature, religion, cultural anthropology, and folklore above all. More recently, cultural anthropologists and folklorists (Akasaka, 1985; Hirokawa, 1986; Komatsu, 1985; Oka, 1994; Yamaguchi, 1975) have proposed the welcome-alienation or hospitality-hostility ambivalent concept of the ijin as a psychosemantic extension of the marebito lmarōdo. Along the same line, Miyata (1986) has historically analyzed the conceptual interconnections among the marebitolmarōdo, the ijin, and the gaijin. These interdisciplinary efforts to investigate and clarify the Japanese version of

the Western stranger will contribute new insights and frames of reference to the further research of interracial, interethnic, and intercultural issues in various parts of the world as well as in Japan.

Under such academic circumstances, the present study has three major purposes. First, it attempts to review and pigeonhole, semantically and conceptually, the ready-proposed concepts of the Western stranger, the *marebitol marōdo*, the *ijin*, and the *gaijin*. Second, it critically reviews and discusses Western-based uncertainty reduction theory and anxiety/uncertainty management theory, referring to the three stranger-equivalent Japanese terms. Third and finally, this article proposes a Sociofolkloric Model of the Japanese Welcome-Nonwelcome Ambivalence Syndrome as a hypothetical signpost for describing, explaining, predicting, and controlling possible problems in intercultural encounters, especially in Japan, in this age of unprecedented globalization.

## THE SEMANTICOCONCEPTUAL ISSUES OF THE STRANGER, THE MAREBITO/MARŌDO, THE IJIN, AND THE GAIJIN

Prior to discussions of Western uncertainty reduction theory, anxiety/uncertainty management theory, and the conventional welcome-nonwelcome amibivalence syndrome, it will be essential to examine how and to what extent the stranger, the marebito/marodo (literally, rare person), the ijin (different person), and the gaijin (outside person) are semantically and conceptually interrelated. The term stranger is ambiguous in the sense that it often refers to an alien, a foreigner, a newcomer, an outsider, or a person who is new, unfamiliar, and unknown. Sociologically, the influential sociologist Simmel (1908/1950), who introduced the stranger as an important academic research subject, views him or her as "an element of the group itself. His [or her] position as a full-fledged member involves being both outside it and confronting it" (p. 402). Wood (1934), who appears to view the stranger more broadly than does Simmel, defines the stranger as "one who has come into face-to-face contact with the group for the first time. . . [Moreover], the stranger may be, as with Simmel, a potential wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow, or he [or she] may come today and stay with us permanently" (pp. 43-44). Fairchild (1972) defines the stranger more concisely as "A person living within a community and, therefore, affecting to some degree the life of the place, but not given status as one of the in-group by the natives" (p. 309). The important point derived from these definitions is that the stranger may be a wandering visitor to a group or a community, or a new and unfamiliar member of it, and therefore a marginal and insecure being not yet fully accepted by its indigenous members. In social psychology, Schuetz (1944), referring to new immigrants as a symbolic example, states that "... the term 'stranger' shall

mean an adult individual of our times and civilization who tries to be permanently accepted or at least tolerated by the group which he [or she] approaches" (p. 499). More recently, Smith and Bond (1993), who stress the marginality and alienation of the stranger, argue that ". . . a stranger is a person simultaneously 'within' and 'without'. Although physically present and sharing the same environment, the newcomer is not acquainted with the others present. . ." (p. 164). Thus social psychologists pay their first attention to the stranger's marginality-related insecure and unstable social position between his or her old and new groups, or to his or her alienation within the new group or community to which he or she attempts to adapt and belong.

In the field of intercultural communication studies, Lustig and Koester (1996) briefly and inclusively define the stranger as "... someone whom you do not know and who is therefore unfamiliar to you" (p. 242). Gudykunst and Kim (1997) contend that strangers are "... those people in relationships where there is a relatively high degree of strangeness and a relatively low degree of familiarity" (p. 26). From the perspective of communication studies, Gudykunst and Kim further refer, in terms of degrees of strangeness and unfamiliarity, to interactions and relationships in intercultural encounters, arguing:

Since our interactions with people from other cultures tend to involve the highest degree of strangeness and the lowest degree of familiarity, we focus on these interactions, but we also examine other interactions involving a relatively high degree of strangeness (e.g. those with members of different ethnic groups, social classes, ages) (p. 26).

These scholars of intercultural communication focus on the matters of relative strangeness or unfamiliarity in interpersonal interactions between newcomers to a group or a community and its native members. Such views and approaches regarding the conceptualization of the stranger, which are somewhat multidisciplinary in nature, are to be regarded as advantageous rather than disadvantageous in analyzing various issues of strangers in intercultural communication research. Sorrells (1997) stresses this advantage, saying, "Each approach, the mythological, the psychological, the sociological, the feminist, and the communication approach, shed a different but interconnected light upon the subject" (p. 25).

According to Orikuchi (1929/1975), the pronunciation of the term *marebito*, which was in common use in ancient Japan, phonologically changed to *marōdo*, and these two terms were used interchangeably. His contention has been professionally supported by present-day folklorists and lexicographers (Nakamura, 1983; Nippon Daijiten Kankokai, 1987c; Okano, 1960; Takeuchi, 1988). Hence this paper will employ only the term *marebito* hereafter, omitting the term *marōdo*.

Orikuchi (1929/1975) asserts that the term *marebito* mentioned in the Nara Period (710-784) writings meant "a rare person or an important guest" from a remote place, namely, "a god, a goddess, or a divine visitor" believed to bring happiness and blessings. He further contends that later in history the *marebito* came to mean an "ancestral spirit" who regularly appeared in this secular world from the *tokoyo* (after-death eternal world) then believed to exist beyond the sea to bless or punish his or her descendants. Still later, the *marebito* was personified as an elderly person, a monk, a faith healer, a fortune-teller, and a *hokaibito* (blessing entertainer) wandering from one village to another. The people of each closed self-sustaining village would welcome such living *marebito* strangers, believing them to possess supernatural abilities and bring them good luck, happiness, new information, and new technology from the outside. Nakamura (1983) illustrates Orikuchi's observations as follows:

Orikuchi noted that the belief in supernatural beings who bring favors was closely linked to the idea that hospitality should be extended to a visitor from afar who might be the bearer of new technical knowledge. Such a notion would be especially strong in a remote self-closed community (p. 113).

During the Japanese Chusei (Middle Ages, 1185-1602), the marebito came to be regarded as a divine-secular and fortunate-unfortunate ambivalent being whom local residents would treat with ambivalent hospitality and hostility. For they expected marebito strangers from an unknown out-world to bring fortunes and prosperity but at the same time feared that such strange visitors might be dreadful oni (ogres or ogresses) or yōkai (monsters) who would cause unhappy incidents such as epidemic diseases, famines, and natural disasters (Ishigami, 1983; Orikuchi, 1929/1975). These welcome-nonwelcome and inclusion-exclusion ambivalent attitudes of the indigenenous residents toward the marebito could be extensively applied to later Japanese people's general attitudes toward the ijin and the gaijin from overseas (Miyata, 1986). Orikuchi's (1929/1975) resurrection, proposition, and postulate of the marebito as one of the most ancient and deepseated layers of Japanese culture have thus continued to exert strong impacts on historical approaches to the study of Japanese cultural anthropology, history, literature, psychology, and religion as well as folklore (Ito, 1987; Komatsu, 1985; Kubota, 1997; Oimatsu, 1997; Okano, 1960).

The term *ijin*, which has often been used by academics interchangeably with the term *marebito* (Komatsu, 1985; Miyata, 1986; Nomura, 1988), was in extensive use during the Japanese Kinsei (Early Modern Ages, 1603-1867) and frequently appeared in the popular writings (Nippon Daijiten Kankokai, 1987a). The term has since expanded its lexicographical meanings and concepts; Nippon

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Daijiten Kankokai (p. 750), for example, categorizes and lists them as follows:

- 1. An extraordinary person: (1) a person of excellent talent or personality;
  - (2) an unearthly or strange-looking person; (3) an eccentric person; and
  - (4) a person who performs strange magic.
- 2. Another person or a different person.
- 3. A person from another country, a gaijin, or a gaikokujin (literally, person from an outside country).

Folklorically and anthropologically, Akasaka (1985), Fukuda (1984), and Komatsu (1988) view the itinerant *ijin* as a real or imaginary being who is insecure and unstable in a marginal or peripheral area outside an established group or community. Komatsu further contends that the *ijin* exists only as a relative concept, not as a fixed real being, and that every person can be an *ijin* as his or her situation changes. In a similar vein, Imazu (1993) criticizes the conventionally set concept that views the wandering *ijin* as an outsider from the standpoint of established, dominant in-group members. This critical review of the term *ijin* apparently indicates that it is interrelated, semantically and conceptually, to both the ancient *marebito* and the modern *gaijin*, as a bridge connecting the two.

During the Kinsei, secular itinerant *ijin* strangers grew greatly in population and diversified their occupations. Most of them were placed as marginal outcasts below the rigid system of four social classes (samurai, farmers, craftspersons, and merchants) which the Tokugawa Shogunate politically established. Consequently, *ijin* strangers were forced to sojourn or live in secluded, marginal, peripheral areas near rivers or mountain passes which served as boundaries among communities, villages, and towns (Miyamoto, 1969; Yoshida, 1971). According to Imazu (1993), *burakumin* (secluded hamlet people), who are socially viewed with prejudices and discriminated against in contemporary Japan, are descendants of such Edo Period outcast strangers. A large majority of wandering *ijin* people engaged in a variety of occupations toward which people of the established classes held the conventional welcome-nonwelcome and relief-fear ambivalent attitudes. Miyamoto (1969), who has analyzed the Edo Period popular literature, lists and describes itinerant *ijin*'s forty-seven occupations represented by Shinto prayers, Buddhist monks, fortune-tellers, entertainers, and beggars, to mention but a few.

As in the case of the *marebito* in ancient times, indigenous members of an established group or community during the Kinsei would usually treat *ijin* strangers with the complex attitudes of welcome-nonwelcome and approach-avoidance ambivalence (Akasaka, 1985; Amino, 1988; Hirokawa, 1986; Imazu, 1993; Komatsu, 1985; Miyamoto, 1969; Yoshida, 1971). Among others, Hirokawa and Komatsu, who have collected numerous folktales and historical stories about itinerant *ijin*, illustrate various episodes of such wandering strangers

who were initially welcomed and treated by host villagers with hospitality and respect, but who were later regarded as causes of mysterious unhappy incidents such as epidemic diseases, fires, and storms, and were finally banished or killed to be offered as sacrifices to please angry monsters. In this respect, it is likely that a systematic study of these latent ambivalent attitudes toward *ijin* strangers will help explain, from sociopsychological cause-effect perspectives, Oda Nobunaga's (1534-1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi's (1536-1598), and the Tokugawa Shogunate's common policy of treating *nanbanjin* or Westerners, Christian missionaries, and Japanese Christian converts.

The term *gaijin*, which is frequently mentioned by contemporary Japanese in their daily lives, has been treated, both semantically and conceptually, interchangeably with the term *ijin* (Kato, 1988; Nippon Daijiten Kankokai, 1987a; Oka,1994; Thompson, 1988). Thompson, for instance, focuses on *gaijin*-Japanese differences and observes that "In a word, *gaijin* are so different from average Japanese that communication between the two usually fails to function. *Gaijin* are *ijin*" (p. 117). In Japanese society today, however, the term *ijin* has been linguistically replaced by the term *gaijin*, especially on the media and on the street, although it is still professionally used by cultural anthropologists, folklorists, and sociologists.

The term *gaijin* is also often regarded as the shortened form of the official and legal term *gaikokujin*, and the two terms are commonly thought to be synonymous. Perkins (1991), for example, illustrates the two terms:

The term *gaijin* (short for *gaikokujin*), "outsider," is applied to all foreginers in Japan, including some ethnic minorities who are permanent residents in Japan, such as Koreans. Legally, the term *gaikokujin* (foreigner or alien) applies to all persons who do not have Japanese citizenship (p. 100).

In terms of their denotative meaning, the two terms gaijin and gaikokujin may be used synonymously in many cases and safely applied to all persons who do not possess Japanese citizenship, including Chinese and Korean residents in Japan. Connotatively and sociopsychologically, however, the gaijin in contemporary usage is to be differentiated from the gaikokujin; the former means those rare "gaikokujin, especially from Europe and America" (Nippon Daijiten Kankokai, 1987b, p. 969). From a similar point of view, Ishii (1990), who focuses on psychosemantic differences between the two terms, argues that Chinese and Koreans in Japan are not generally regarded as gaijin, although they are gaikokujin. He further asserts that only whites and blacks are socially categorized as gaijin, regardless of their citizenship, length of stay, and degrees of adaptation to Japanese culture, simply because they are physically different from native Japanese. In this sense, white and black residents in Japan are likely to be viewed

and treated by Japanese as *gaijin* all their lives in this country. In addition, their children born, raised, and educated in Japan, having Japanese citizenship, may have the same experience of being regarded as *gaijin*, if not *gaikokujin*, by their Japanese peers, neighbors, and colleagues.

As in-group and in-community people in ancient Japan viewed *marebito* visitors with welcome-nonwelcome ambivalence, and as those in the Chusei and Kinsei ages treated wandering *ijin* with a hospitality-hostility complex, present-day Japanese meet *gaijin* strangers in Japan and overseas with the identical type of approach-avoidance and respect-contempt ambivalence (Ishii, 1990; Kato, 1988; Takeuchi, 1995; Wagatsuma, 1983). Katō, for instance, explains the conventional ambivalent psychology still functioning in Japanese society today, stating that the Japanese have long continued to view themselves as indigenous members of the extended *mura* (village) of Japan and always distinguish *gaijin* from Japanese in terms of the superiority-inferiority complex which may be reversed dynamically as their situations change. Wagatsuma, a cross-cultural psychologist, further analyzes this Japanese ambivalent complex:

The ambivalence felt by the Japanese toward the West concerning cultural borrowing is mirrored in their attitudes toward Caucasian physical features. . . . [That is], the historical inferiority-superiority complex of the Japanese seems today reflected in their mixed attitudes toward Caucasian bodily features (p. 312).

Through this series of semantic and conceptual analyses of the terms stranger, marebito, ijin, and gaijin, at least two important points have become clear. First, the four terms commonly have the connotation of prejudice and exclusiveness held by indigenous members of host in-groups or in-communities against new and therefore strange visitors or comers from out-groups or marginal areas. Second, since ancient times the Japanese have consistently held not positive-negative dichotomous feelings but the conventional welcome-nonwelcome and inclusion-exclusion ambivalence in encountering and treating marebito, ijin, and gaijin strangers. These findings will lead to a critical review and discussion of Western uncertainty reduction theory and anxiety/uncertainty management theory to invesitigate how and to what extent they help clarify conceptually the long-standing latent ambivalence and improve Japanese intercultural communication events and activities.

## A CRITICAL REVIEW OF UNCERTAINTY REDUCTION THEORY AND ANXIETY/UNCERTAINTY MANAGEMENT THEORY

It is natural for a person to feel anxious and nervous to meet a stranger because he or she can not predict the stranger's intentions and behaviors. This feeling of uncertainty and anxiety usually grows stronger, particularly in the beginning of a relationship, if the stranger is racially, ethnically, and socioculturally different from him or her. To promote successful relational communication by reducing uncertainty and anxiety in such a context, collecting and exchanging useful information efficiently about each other will be essential. This is the common fundamental purpose of uncertainty reduction theory and anxiety/uncertainty management theory in relational communication studies.

Uncertainty reduction theory, which has recently attracted the attention of social psychologists and communication scholars, may be simply defined as "An approach to interpersonal relationships that posits that relationships progress and develop as the individuals reduce their uncertainty (gain information) about each other" (DeVito, 1986, p. 329). This theory is apparently the brainchild of Berger and Bradac (1982), and Berger (1987) has later proposed the following point of uncertainy reduction:

To interact in a relatively smooth, co-ordinated, and understandable manner, one must be able both to predict how one's interaction partner is likely to behave, and, based on these predictions, to select from one's own repertoire those responses that will optimize outcomes in the encounter. (p. 41)

Berger stresses that uncertainty is one of the most fundamental variables of relationships, especially in initial interactions, and that the level of intimacy naturally increases if uncertainty is reduced. The essential features of uncertainty reduction theory thus concern both the degree of interpersonal closeness or intimacy which persons have to one another and the likelihood that they will attempt to gather additional relevant information from one another to reduce uncertainty. Conditions of uncertainty reduction behaviors may be categorized into three: First, a person's expectations about future interactions with the other person—a knowledge-related condition; second, the degree of the other person's deviance from a person's expectation—a motivation-related condition; and third, the incentive value of a person's relationships with the other person—a condition related to both the knowledge and motivation conditions.

First, the knowledge-related condition is a person's expectations or predictions about future interactions with the other person, that is, the degree to which a person can tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity about the other person in interpersonal encounters. According to the degrees of a person's knowledge-seeking

attempts and consequent relationships, the other person may remain a stranger, become an acquaintance, or further grow to be a friend. Uncertainty reduction theory suggests that as people gain knowledge and thereby reduce uncertainty with one another, their communication and relationships naturally develop.

Second, the motivation-related condition is the degree of deviance to which a person perceives the other person exhibiting. In interpersonal encounters and relationships, behaviors are perceived deviant if they are not expected and inconsistent with the common established norms and rules which govern particular sociocultural contexts. A person's uncertainty increases when the other person's behaviors are deviant, that is, against the common norms and rules. Conversely, a person's uncertainty decreases when the other person behaves in expected ways, following the norms and rules. In encountering strangers, specifically those from different and unfamiliar backgrounds, a person is quite likely to perceive them deviant, and thus his or her uncertainty about them is high.

The third condition of uncertainty reduction, incentive value, is related to both knowledge and motivation. This condition refers to the perceived potential reward that a person may receive from the other person and satisfy his or her various cognitive and affective needs. In interpersonal interactions, a person's incentive value grows high if the other person is perceived to be potentially rewarding, meeting his or her needs. Further, if the other person is perceived to be rewarding, a person becomes motivated to seek more knowledge and information about him or her. In practical settings, a person's incentive value may refer to the other person's ability to provide him or her with not only useful information but also affection, services, money, goods, and other resources.

Uncertainty reduction theory suggests three general types of strategies used to gather information, reduce uncertainty, and increase certainty in interpersonal encounters: Passive strategies, active strategies, and interactive strategies. Passive strategies are strategies by which a person observes the other person to learn how he or she behaves. Active strategies include a person's efforts to obtain information about the other person by asking others and manipulating the environment suitable for him or her to provide the necessary information. Interactive strategies involve actual interactions by which a person exchanges information with the other person, which requires mutual self-disclosure. The basic hypothesis about interactive strategies is that if a person discloses information about himself or herself, the other person also will be likely to disclose in return.

Critically viewed, uncertaintly reduction theory, like many other theories in Western social psychology and communication studies, looks one-sidely at positive dimensions of initial, developmental stages of interpersonal relationships. It fails to view negative dimensions of deterioration and termination stages of relationships. Most people are more likely to have feelings of uncertainty in their post-success relationship stages when deterioration and termination

are serious but unavoidable in most cases. This "optimistic" theory does not help improve such grave issues of interpersonal violence, relationship collapses, divorces, and family dissolutions. An interpersonal relational theory should be more holistic and inclusive, covering not only positive, rising stages but also negative, failing stages of relationships.

In actual interpersonal encounters, people do not always need nor want to gather information about strangers to reduce uncertainty and build relationships. On many occasions, people encounter various strangers for various purposes, but do not anticipate nor need to promote further interactions with them. It is more likely that people meet one another for a certain period of time and part never to get together again. Furthermore, in collectivistic cultures where most people believe in the natural emergence and changes of human relationships, holding negative images of artificially and technically manipulated relationship development, this theory based on the vital necessity of mastering artificial and goal-centered information-collecting skills would be accepted by West-oriented researchers but not widely by common people

Another important point is that uncertainty reduction theory focuses one-sidedly on predictions and explanations of interpersonal behaviors. In daily interpersonal encounters, people do not necessarily seek useful information about other people present to predict and explain their behaviors, because they know from their everyday experiences that novelty and mysteriousness are essential factors of interpersonal attractiveness and relationships. Communication theorist Trenholm (1991) ciriticizes this weakness of the theory, stating:

The model also fails to explain when individuals will act to achieve certainty and when they will seek novelty. Berger and colleagues admit that we are often attracted to people or situations because they increase our uncertainty. Without an explication of the conditions leading to novelty, a full theoretical explanation of uncertainty is incomplete. (p. 164)

Intercultural communication theorist Gudykunst's (1988, 1993, 1995) anxiety/ uncertainty theory is an extended application of uncertainty reduction theory from the perspectives of high-context, collectivistic cultures and low-context, individualistic cultures. In high-context, collectivistic cultures represented by Japanese culture, people prefer to communicate, indirectly and nonverbally, messages whose information is mutually internalized in communicating people or in their physical contexts. Conversely, in low-conext, individualistic cultures represented by U. S. culture, people like to vest their information in explicit codes, therefore, communicating directly and verbally. Gudykunst has found, through his empirical cross-cultural research on uncertainty reduction theory, that the theory can be pancultural at least in initial stages of relationships,

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although people's manners of reducing uncertainty vary according to cultures.

Gudykunst (1988, 1993, 1995) has added anxiety as an important cultural variable to the process of uncertainty reduction between persons from different sociocultural backgrounds. The key point is that when a person who identifies strongly with his or her in-group meets a person from an unfamiliar out-group, both persons are likely to feel a certain amount of anxiety in addition to uncertainty. Gudykunst (1993), whose contention centers around how to manage such anxiety and uncertainty in intercultural encounters with strangers, argues that anxiety is affective rather than cognitive, and defines it as ". . . the feeling of being uneasy, tense, worried, or apprehensive about what may happen (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). It is an affective (e.g. emotional) response, not a cognitive response like uncertainty" (p. 39). Uncertainty, in contrast, is:

. . . our inability to predict and explain our own and others' behavior (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). *Predictive uncertainty* involves the degree to which we can predict strangers' attitudes, beliefs, feelings, values, and behavior. *Explanatory uncertainty*, in contrast, involves the degree to which we can accurately explain why they behave the way they do. (p. 39)

These definitions of the two key terms propose the general argument that there tends to be stronger anxiety and uncertainty in encounters and subsequent relationships with strangers than in those with acqaintances and friends. Gudykunst stresses that people in such encounters attempt, as a natural matter of course, to manage their anxiety and uncertainty.

Along this line of discussion, Gudykunst (1993) suggests that there be maximum and minimum thresholds for anxiety and uncertainty management in encountering strangers. If a person's anxiety and uncertainty are above his or her maximum thresholds, he or she becomes too anxious and uncertainty are below his or her minimum thresholds, he or she may become bored, without being motivated to communicate. Gudykunst maintains that to communicate effectively, a person's anxiety and uncertainty must be below his or her maximum thresholds and above his or her minimum thresholds.

Along the traditional line of communication competence, Gudykunst (1993) describes three essential qualities needed to communicate effectively in intercultural encounters: Motivation, knowledge, and skills. "Motivation," which is fundamentally an affective quality, "refers to our desire to communicate appropriately and effectively" (p. 44). "Knowledge," as a cognitive quality, "refers to our awareness and understanding of what needs to be done to communicate effectively" (p. 51). Finally, ". . . skills involve our abilities to engage in the behaviors necessary to communicate appropriately and effectively" (p. 59). Analyzing each

of these three qualities of effective communication, Gudykunst lists numerous separate axioms to explain cause-effect variables related to anxiety and uncertainty. These axioms apparently draw heavily on ideas and viewpoints advanced by other theorists of communication.

Most of the criticisms proposed about uncertainty reduction theory can be safely applied to anxiety/uncertainty management theory, which is a direct descendant of uncertainty reduction theory. First, like uncertainty reduction theory and many other theories of relationship development and interpersonal communication, anxiety/uncertainty management theory focuses mostly on initial, developmental stages of relationships. Second, it fails to analyze various situations in which people do not need to initiate and develop relationships by venturing to manage anxiety and uncertainty. Third, it makes light of the importance of being novel and mysterious in interpersonal relationships.

The most vital problem inherent in anxiety/uncertainty management theory is the numerous axioms and theorems. Intercultural communication scholars Martin and Nakayama (1997) criticize this weakness, saying, "This model assumes that to communicate effectively we will gather information to help us reduce uncertainty and anxiety. How do we do this? The theory is complicated" (p. 169). Communication theorist Griffin (1994) further criticizes this problem:

Hypothetically, the 49 axioms could spawn 1,176 theorems. Although Gudykunst notes that it would be inappropriate to link every possible pair, he doesn't offer clear guidance on which axioms shouldn't be combined. Even if he had only a few hundred theorems, they would still violate the scientific criterion of relative simplicity. (p. 412)

Reviewed critically from Japanese marebitolijin/gaijin pespectives, uncertainty reduction theory and anxiety/uncertainty management theory need to be revised or improved regarding at least four points. First, the concept of the stranger should be relative, that is, while a visitor, a sojourner, or an immigrant from a different racial, ethnic, or sociocultural group is a stranger to native residents of the majority community, the same native residents are simultaneously strangers to the newcomer. Gudykunst and Kim (1997) do refer to the relative view of strangers, stating that ". . . strangerhood is a figure-ground phenomenon. . . A person from the United States visiting another country and a person from another country visiting the United States are both strangers" (p. 25), but their view is majority-centered, and not relative in its true sense. U. S. scholars of intercultural communication and social psychology, in particular, tend to be interested exclusively in the adaptation process of new immigrants and international students to U. S. society and the mainstream culture; they neglect the logical essentiality of viewing members of the mainstream culture as strangers to immigrants and

international students as well as to native Americans and members of other cocultural groups. Furthermore, they have conducted little scholarly research on U.S. visitors and sojourners as *marebitolijinlgaijin* strangers in sociocultural systems different from their own.

Second, uncertainty reduction theory and anxiety/uncertainty management theory deal with anxiety and uncertainty in intercultural encounters simply as sociopsychological barriers to be removed, although Gudykunst (1993) states, "If uncertainty and anxiety are too low we may not be motivated to communicate" (p. 40). In actual intercultural encounters, not all people present want nor need to reduce their anxiety and uncertainty to communicate effectively and initiate new relationships with strangers. In real social life, many of them prefer to avoid such stressful troubles because they know that doing so is physically and mentally advantageous to them. This criticism may be evidentially supported by the fact that North America's "melting pot" ideology has been replaced by the "mosaic society" reality. Such being the case, both theories with complicated axioms and theorems would appear to them as unnecessary U.S. mainstream-centered academic power rather than helpful research guidance.

Third, the proposers of uncertainty reduction theory and anxiety/uncertainty management theory make no mention of historical events and phenomena in conceptualizing the term *stranger* and building the theories. Present-day U.S. researchers of intercultural communication and social psychology, in general, are likely to look predominantly at contemporary sociocultural events and phenomena, paying little attention to their historical backgrounds. Taking historical or diachronic approaches to the research on sociopsychological relationships between strangers or newcomers and members of ready-established communities would help the theorists revise their theories from new frames of reference.

Fourth and finally, uncertainty reduction theory and anxiety/uncertainty management theory should view and deal with strangers in a host community not simply as pathetic newcomers in need of help but also conflicting-valued persons. Although Gudykunst and Kim (1997) refer, in discussing the concept of the stranger, to Levine's (1979) proposition of the dialectic between closeness and remoteness, anxiety/uncertainty management theory fails to regard the newcomer as conflicting-valued. On the one hand, the stranger may be a welcome fortune-bringer from a different group or community; on the other hand, he or she may turn out to be a nonwelcome misfortune-bringer. This concept of the dynamic conflicting-valued stranger, like that of the *marebitolijin/gaijin*, would provide both theories with new theoretical insights and research methods related to them.

Anxiety/uncertainty management theory, which is a direct offspring of uncertainty reduction theory, is one of the most popular and influential theories in the study of intercultural communication today. This theory, however, apparently

has several weaknesses. First, the theory focuses, like uncertainty reduction theory, only on initial stages of relationship develoment, fails to analyze the psychology of those who do not want nor need to build relationships with strangers, and practically ignores the vital importance of people's being novel and mysterious in intercultural encounters. Second, it is too complicated a theory with the numerous axioms and theorems to be generalized and applied to the actual prediction and explanation of various communication behaviors.

Viewed from the perspectives of *marebitolijin/gaijin* strangers, first, both uncertainty reduction theory and anxiety/uncertainty management theory fail to view strangers from relativistic points of view. Second, both theories regard anxiety and uncertainty predominantly negatively as troublesome barriers to be reduced, if not completely removed. Third, the two theories need to be critically reviewed from their historical backgrounds. Finally, uncertainty reduction theory and anxiety/uncertainty management theory would be revised or improved by regarding strangers as not only problematic but also conflicting-valued newcomers. With these theoretical and critical remarks, the conventional Japanese welcome-nonwelcome ambivalence syndrome toward *marebirolijin/gaijin* strangers is now to be analyzed and examined.

## CONSTRUCTING A SOCIOFOLKLORIC MODEL OF THE JAPANESE WELCOME-NONWELCOME AMBIVALENCE SYNDROME

Historically viewed, the Japanese have consistently retained for centuries the conventional welcome-nonwelcome and inclusion-exclusion ambivalence toward strangers from outside worlds. The marebito as "a god, a goddess, or a rare guest from afar" in ancient Japan was warmly welcomed on some occasions and coldly alienated on other occasions by people of closed, exclusive farming communities (Ishigami, 1983; Miyata, 1986; Orikuchi, 1929/1975). The ijin as "a messenger of happiness or a symbol of ill luck" during the Japanese Chūsei and Kinsei was, like the *marebito*, treated by villagers and townspeople with both warm hospitality and cold hostility (Akasaka, 1985; Amino, 1988; Hirokawa, 1986; Imazu, 1993; Komatsu, 1985; Miyamoto, 1969; Yoshida, 1971). Similarly, the gaijin as "a delegate of advanced Western civilization" after World War II is generally approached by the contemporary Japanese with mixed attitudes of both superiority and inferiority, inclusion and exclusion (Ishii, 1990; Kato, 1988; Takeuchi, 1995; Wagatsuma, 1983). This Japanese sociocultural phenomenon is becoming increasingly serious as a kind of syndrome in the present age of people's ever-growing global mobility and intercultural encounters.

In this academic context, in order to examine and clarify the dynamic mechanisms of the sociopsychological ambivalence long latent in Japanese culture, this

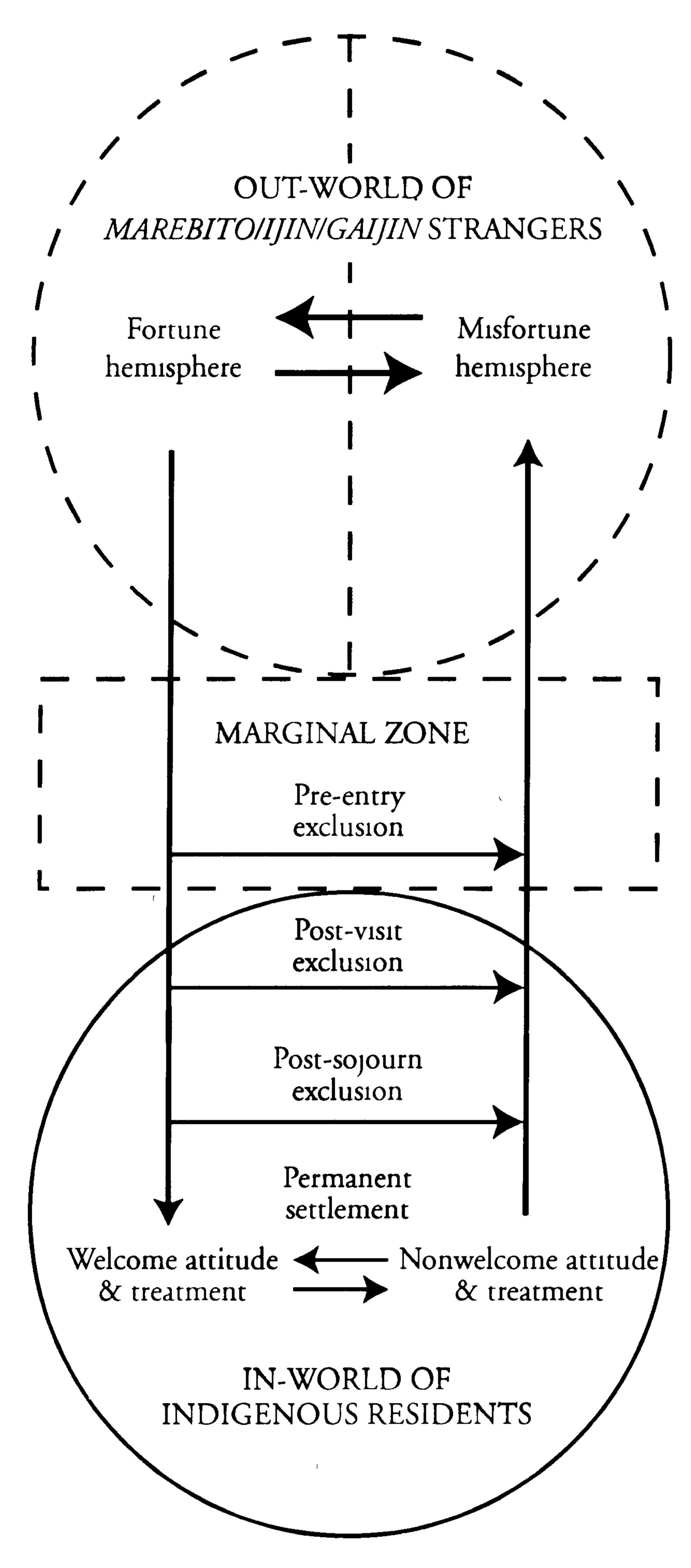


Figure 1: A Sociofolkloric Model of the Japanese Welcome-Nonwelcome Ambivalence Syndrome

Sociofolkloric Model of the Japanese Welcome-Nonwelcome Ambivalence Syndrome for theorists and practioners in this field of research. It is expected to serve as a general framework for conceptualizing and understanding the conventional Japanese problem and provide interested scholars with new insights and frames of reference, although it may still be in its hypothetical stage in need of future empirical research and revision.

The Model consists of three major parts: First, the upper broken circle or the out-world of marebitol ijin/gaijin strangers; second, the lower solid circle or the in-world of indigenous residents; and third, the broken rectangle or the marginal zone between the two circles. While approaching the proposed problem from the dynamic stranger-resident reversible view of relativisim is essential, this study takes, for the purpose of illustrating and explaining it concisely, the commonly observed position of fixing the two worlds and viewing marebito/ijin/gaijin strangers from indigenous host residents' standpoint.

The out-world in the upper broken circle refers to the indefinite, real or imaginary, world or society in which real or imaginary marebito/ijin/gaijin strangers are believed by members of the in-world to live. The brokenness of the circle implies that the out-world may be not only real but also imaginary, especially in the case of marebito and ijin strangers, and that the area and boundaries of the out-world is indefinite and unclear. In olden times, the out-world was commonly thought by residents of the in-world, a village or a town, to be possibly divided into the fortune hemisphere and the misfortune hemisphere. Marebitolijin strangers from the fortune hemisphere were generally expected by people of the in-world to be

good gods or rare guests who brought them fortunes, new information, new technology, prosperity, and happiness. Those from the misfortune hemisphere, in contrast, were viewed by in-world residents as ominous symbols of punishment, destruction, and unhappiness. The broken dividing line between the two hemipheres implies that the areas are dynamic and ambiguous, and that marebito/ijin/gaijin strangers can reciprocally cross the line and change themselves to achieve their given goals as fortune-bringers or misfortune-bringers, as is illustrated by the pair of arrows. In the present-day world of increasing globalization, foreign countries and societies can be regarded as the out-worlds from which gaijin strangers come to visit the target in-world.

The in-world of indigenous residents in the lower solid circle refers to the definite, externally closed, and internally cohesive world or society in which native residents born, raised, and socialized there live. The solidness of the circle suggests that its area and boundaries are definite and clear, and that its residents are well conscious of them. In this study, the in-world often implies Japanese society in which indigenous Japanese live and to which they believe themselves originally to belong. Indigenous residents of the in-world commonly tend to hold welcomenonwelcome and inclusion-exclusion ambivalent attitudes toward marebito/ijin/gaijin strangers from the out-world, which may often turn from positive to negative and vice versa, as is shown by the two arrows. Sociologist Levine (1979) illustrates this kind of ambivalence, arguing that the appearance of a stranger nearby may arouse apprehension and hostility and that positive feelings generate compulsive friendliness, negative ones causing antagonism. The important point here is that the host residents may commonly harbor these dichotomous feelings and that they may change easily according to situational needs, even though negative ones are kept internally hidden on most occasions.

The marginal zone in the broken rectangle between the out-world and the inworld means the indefinite bondary area which divides one world or society from the other and at the same time combines the two. In Japan, from ancient times through the Modern Ages, when farming villages developed into trade-based towns, marginal zones surrounding such villages and towns were important places for both their indigenous residents and marebito/ijin strangers to encounter each other by attending annual and seasonal trade fairs, Buddhist ceremonies, Shinto festivals, entertaining shows, and other folkloric events held regularly near mountain passes, crossroads, and rivers (Amino, 1985a; Ichikawa, 1985). Most of the marebito/ijin strangers who attended such annual and seasonal events in those olden times were sanmin (literally, mountain people) and kaimin (sea people), who were both strangers from geographically and socioculturally faraway out-worlds (Amino, 1985b). In the present age of people's ceaseless worldwide mobility, the notion of fomer marginal zones needs to be extensively applied to state border areas. In such contemporary marginal zones,

international airports and seaports serve as vital places for both *gaijin* strangers and indigenous citizens to meet and experience intercultural encounters.

In ancient, Chusei, and Kinsei Japan, real or imaginary itinerant marebitol ijin strangers from the out-world were thought to experience, in being admitted to the target in-world, such as a village or a town, three stages of welcome-nonwelcome and inclusion-exclusion treatment by its indigenous residents: First, the pre-entry stage; second, the post-visit stage; and third, the post-sojourn stage. In the pre-entry stage, still in the marginal zone, namely, before the entrance to the in-world, marebitolijin strangers were routinely examined by its representative residents or by some mysterious magical power to judge whether they were safe fortune-bringers or dangerous misfortune-bringers. Only those strangers judged safe and fortunate were welcomed and allowed to pass through the gate which was usually guarded by religious symbols such as shimenawa (sacred straw ropes), stone dosojin (travelers' guardian gods), and stone jizō (children's guardian bodhisattvas), many of which are commonly seen throughout the land of Japan today. Those judged evil, dangerous, and misfortunate, however, were instantly excluded from possible entrance and expelled back to their original out-world, as is shown by the "pre-entry exclusion" arrow in the Model.

Contemporary gaijin strangers from various overseas out-worlds have to receive similar treatment by indigenous citizens, though not religious and folk-loric but practical and legal, in the first stage of entering the target in-world. At international airports and seaports, after being received kindly by port attendants and "welcome" signs, they are to proceed to take examinations by customs, immigration, and quarantine officers, and only those judged safe and suspicion-free are admitted to the in-world. Those gaijin judged dangerous and/or suspicious get instantly detained for additional examinations or sent back to their original out-worlds. This kind of treatment at airport and seaport gates is not limited to the in-world of Japan but practiced universally today.

In the post-visit exclusion stage, former wandering *marebitolijin* visitors from afar, if they were successfully admitted to their target in-world, were customarily welcomed and treated by its indigenous residents with warm hospitality. The itinerant travelers, represented by Buddhist monks, pilgrims, and entertainers, were kindly invited to visit some of the residents' homes and stay with the host families who expected them to bring good luck, peace, and prosperity not only to the individual families but also to the whole community. During their stays, the visitors were secretly examined in terms of their ability to meet the community residents' expectations. As long as they were perceived by the suspicious residents as capable and powerful strangers, the rare guests were treated with growingly warm hospitality in the host in-world. Once they turned out, usually through tragic incidents such as epidemic diseases and famines, to be incapable and powerless, the *marebitolijin* were killed or expelled from the community, which

process is illustrated by the "post-visit exclusion" arrow.

This kind of welcome-nonwelcome and inclusion-exclusion ambivalence may be safely applied to contemporary Japanese attitudes toward rare gaijin strangers from Western out-worlds beyond the sea. Numerous gaijin strangers visiting Japan as businesspersons, teachers, missionaries, athletes, and entertainers are expected by host Japanese citizens to be fortune-bringers who bring to Japan new information, new skills, happiness, and prosperity. As long as they prove their ability and power to meet such Japanese expectations, they successfully continue to be welcomed and treated by host citizens, specifically by West-oriented ones, with warm hospitality and high respect. Conversely, should they fail to be capable of meeting the Japanese expectations, they usually end up being treated as estranged gaijin, if not killed or expelled. In most cases, however, they enjoy so-called honeymoon-stage excitement superficially and leave the host in-world without experiencing the complicated Japanese welcome-nonwelcome ambivalence.

The conventional welcome-nonwelcome ambivalence syndrome becomes most serious in the post-sojourn exclusion stage. Formerly, *marebitolijin* wanderers who successfully passed the pre-entry and post-visit exclusion examinations were allowed by indigenous residents to sojourn in the target in-world, doing routine jobs and leading peaceful everyday life. They were not, however, suspicion-free to expected degrees; indigenous residents' welcome-nonwelcome and respect-contempt ambivalent attitudes toward them still continued to remain latent and dormant. Japanese folktales, old stories, and traditional dramas have long dealt by preference with various tragic episodes of *marebitolijin* newcomers, who were happily married to the host in-world's native residents, were not fully accepted by them, and were the first to be made scapegoats for the community's unhappy incidents such as fires, murders, and thefts. Popular kabuki and noh plots are predominantly based on these tragic folktales and old stories. This stage of the welcome-nonwelcome and inclusion-exclusion ambivalent psychology is shown by the "post-sojourn exclusion" arrow in the Model.

It may be likely that gaijin strangers in present-day Japan are experiencing likewise this post-sojourn exclusion in their daily lives. Even strangers from Western out-worlds who have successfully adjusted to the host culture, by speaking fluent Japanese, eating Japanese food, having Japanese friends, marrying Japanese citizens, and even obtaining Japanese citizenship, are still socioculturally treated as alienated gaijin strangers simply because they are physically different and stand out. The psychological problem can be easily evidenced by the everyday social phenomenon that gaijin strangers, regardless of their sociocultural backgrounds, proficiency in Japanese, and length of life in Japan, are approached by various English-speaking Japanese people. This kind of common behavior apparently manifests the latent inclusion-exclusion ambivalence that indigenous

citizens of Japan welcome and treat gaijin strangers with kindness by speaking English but simultaneously expect them to retain their original gaijinrashisa (literally, gaijinhood) without getting fully accepted or becoming henna gaijin (wacky gaijin) who speak Japanese, eat Japanese food, and wear kimono.

Another deep-seated psychological problem related to the welcome-nonwelcome ambivalence is the general perception that successful intercultural communication with gaijin strangers is impossible for Japanese to develop, not simply linguistically but also socioculturally. Yoshino (1997), for example, reports the results of his interview survey into Japanese adults' general perception of intercultural communication with Western gaijin and Oriental gaikokujin, deriving at least five conclusive points. First, Western gaijin have difficulty understanding the subtleties of Japanese ways of thinking and nonverbal behavior. Second, even if they manage to overcome such difficulties, there still exist hurdles they cannot clear socioculturally. Third, Japanese Americans can come to understand subtle aspects of Japanese culture as native Japanese do, although they may take some trial-and-error time for readjustment. Fourth, Oriental gaikokujin represented by Chinese and Koreans can "become Japanese" if they do not disclose their original cultural backgrounds. Fifth, there are interwoven relationships between culture and race. Gaijin strangers in Japan are thus "politely" excluded from indigenous Japanese citizens and remain gaijin strangers, without being fully accepted and included, even after they have settled permanently into their target in-world of Japan.

Thus, the proposed Sociofolkloric Model of the Japanese Welcome-Nonwelcome Ambivalence Syndrome based on the achievements of preceding studies concerned has proved that the Japanese have consistently retained for centuries their conventional ambivalent attitudes toward *marebito/ijin/gaijin* strangers. The Model has also clarified the systematic structure and interrelated components of the Japanese welcome-nonwelcome ambivalent psychology.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present study has pursued three major purposes. First, it has reviewed and further examined, historically or diachronically, the psychosemantic concepts of the terms stranger, marebito/marōdo, ijin, and gaijin, identifying some consistent relationships among the four. Second, it has critically reviewed, referring to the four concepts, two influential Western theories concerned with this study, that is, uncertainty reduction theory and anxiety/uncertainty management theory. Third and finally, the present article has hypothetically proposed a Sociofolkloric Model of the Japanese Welcome-Nonwelcome Ambivalence Syndrome in order to illustratively describe, explain, predict, and possibly control the long-seated Japanese

ambivalent attitudes toward *marebito*, *ijin*, and *gaijin* strangers which frequently manifest themselves and get criticized as a sign of Japanese hidden xenophobia in intercultural encounters.

Over the past few decades, Japanese theorists, practioners, and educators not only in the natural sciences but also in the social sciences and the humanities have consistently attempted to import and diffuse Western theories, research methods, and related practical skills. However, in the present age of fast-advancing "glocalization" (globalization plus localization) when traditionally dominant Western-imposed *etic* or universalism is questioned and newly rising non-Western relativism is positively assessed (Dissanayake, 1988; Hamaguchi, 1993; Ishii, 1998; Pandey, Sinha, & Bhawuk, 1996), Japanese scholars and educators are increasingly expected and required to contribute theories, research methods, and frames of reference based on their Japanese sociocultural background. In this paradigm-shifting scholarly context, the present study, which may be still premature and need to be empirically examined and revised, will hopefully serve as a new innovative signpost for future research in intercultural communication. Menon (1988), an Asian communication theorist, asserts:

Communication theory is understandably perceived to be culture bound. It follows therefore, . . . that if Asian communication scholars are to come up with models of communication which bear the imprint of their own cultures they need to find how best they can draw upon the cumulative wisdom of Asian human sciences to formulate theories and models of communication that reflect the cultural ethos of their people (p. x).

The first few decades of the 21th century are to be a testing period for Asian researchers, educators, and practitioners of intercultural communication to search for new philosophical, theoretical, and methodological paradigms based on their Asian cultures and contribute their findings to the international academy.

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#### 要旨

まれびと・異人・外人に対する日本人の 歓迎・非歓迎アンビヴァレンス症候群 ~異文化間コミュニケーション研究への提言~

#### 石井敏

地球規模で進展する各国家と各社会の相互依存化の現代において、 異文化間コミュニケーションの研究及び教育はますます重要視され るようになった。このような研究と教育の条件下で、本研究は日本 人が異文化の人達に対して長年因習的に抱いてきた歓迎・非歓迎と 受容・排除のアンビヴァレンス意識の問題を社会民俗学的に分析し、 この分野の研究と教育の発展に新しい視点と思考枠組から学術的貢 献をすることを目的とする。第1節では、欧米の「異人(stranger)」と の比較・対照のために、古代日本の「まれびと」、中世と近世の「異 人」、そして現代の「外人」の意味概念とそれらの背景に一貫して存 在するアンビヴァレンス意識を通時的に明らかにする。第2節では、 異人との異文化間コミュニケーション問題に関する欧米の不確実性 減少理論とその応用といえる不安・不確実性操作理論を概観し、日 本の社会民俗学的視点から批判を加える。そして第3節では、日本 人の歓迎・非歓迎アンビヴァレンス症候群の社会民俗学的モデルの 構築を試み、異文化の人達に対する現代日本人の潜在的態度の問題 を分析し、加えて今後の関連事態改善策を講ずる。本モデルの構築 は、いわば仮説提示の段階にあり、妥当性に関する今後の実証的研 究による検証を必要とする。しかし本研究は、従来の欧米中心の異 文化間コミュニケーションの研究及び教育に新しい視点と思考枠組 を提供すると信ずる。