



Vol.8 Nestor Castro Professor at The University of The Philippines
**To become a bridge of intercultural relationship
 by learning about cultures**

Pioneers of Education
 for Intercultural Understanding

After the World War II education and research meant for understanding of different cultures and building of mutual understanding started growing around the world. One example is the major academic field of cultural anthropology, a basis of the intercultural communication. In it appears Nestor Castro, Chairman of the University of the Philippines Department of Anthropology, and the person who serves as President of the International Federation of Social Science Organizations. While passionately devoted to anthropology education at the university, Castro works on practicing the theory as a "culture mediator" that becomes a bridge between different cultures. This article will explore the importance of intercultural understanding education through Castro's works and initiatives of Kanda Gaigo Group. (Text: Takeshi Yamaguchi, Photo:Yutaro Yamaguchi, titles omitted)

Cultural anthropology is a discipline of fieldwork. While living in the community you are studying, you have to keep clarifying the mechanisms of its culture. As you live in the field, you learn the language, and then still the real research begins from there. Though you are supposed to be able to understand the language, there are many things which meaning you can't understand. Castro points out that "to understand the people of different cultures, it is necessary to learn both the culture and how to communicate".



Castro, while teaching anthropology at The University of the Philippines, has also been active as a "cultural mediator" through the practical application of the cultural anthropology method. In response to requests from international organizations and companies, while mediating between those corporations and indigenous people of the Philippines to promote the mutual understanding of the both cultures, he played the role of a bridge between cultures.

The Philippines is one of the largest producers of geothermal energy in the world. In 1971, an American capital company, the Philippine Geothermal, Inc. (PGI) was established to operate a geothermal power plant in the Philippines. PGI was fully-owned subsidiary of the Union Oil Company of California (UNOCAL). In 1995, PGI conducted exploration activities in Kalinga Province of Luzon, an area of extinct volcanoes. And in 2005, UNOCAL was bought by Chevron Corporation, an America based major oil company. Chevron started to manage UNOCAL's geothermal plants in the Philippines. Castro had been involved as a Consultant of PGI since 1996 for the Kalinga geothermal exploration project and was re-hired by Chevron as Consultant when it took over the ownership of PGI.

"I signed a direct contract with Chevron. I pledged to convey the contents of the work to my university, and not to hinder the teaching work done in the university. Then, we gathered the local anthropologists and formed the team, and began the project with Chevron."

What Chevron was aiming at was to get approval for the development of geothermal power plant from the indigenous people living in the mountainous Kalinga Province. Castro defined that his role was to educate both the people of Chevron Corporation and Kalinga Province. Castro thought that if only one side was being educated this won't be an appropriate way to convince them, but rather what was necessary was appealing for cultural understanding to both sides, and he believed this would lead to better results.

Castro gave advice to the geology scholars of Chevron, "Once you enter the field, visit first the local seniors and ask, 'Can I have a glass of water?'" The geologists were puzzled, because they would bring water with them so they were thinking there was no need to ask for water in the field, but Castro had a cultural explanation for reason.(1/4)



What you need to become a bridge between the different cultures is to respect other people's culture and listen to their words

"The mountain people had the belief that in case a battle between tribes occurs the first thing to do was to put poison in the water source of the other village. Therefore, the act of drinking the local water has become a gesture meaning, 'I completely trust you.' No matter what words are used, a trustworthy relationship is born only by seeking this one glass of water."

On the other hand, for Castro there are also conventional means to win one's trust. When Castro enters local area for the first time, he tells that he is a university professor. Then, the local people ask, "Are you going to teach us something?" he replies, "No. As a cultural anthropologist, I came to learn your side of the culture. You have a deep knowledge of your culture." and he begs, "Please teach me instead". People are shocked when a university professor coming from Manila wishes to study their own culture no one has cared about until now, and so immediately relationship of trust is built.



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Castro did not appeal only on Chevron's side; he appealed for the cultural understanding of the indigenous people in the Kalinga Province. He put his efforts to urge their understanding that outside of the village there existed different cultures, of course the American culture as a whole, but also the company culture of Chevron itself. What was difficult to explain was the technical language. That was why Castro sometimes made explanations using the metaphors of the indigenous people. We can say that exactly being cultural anthropologist helps being mediator between cultures.

"In the end the indigenous peoples of Kalinga Province did not accept the development of geothermal power plant by the Chevron Corporation. After the people understood the story of Chevron explained, they decided that the construction of a power plant would disturb the harmony of the community. As a result, Chevron told the indigenous people 'Thank you for hearing our story. We will look for another place to build our project', and withdrew gracefully. It was unfortunate, because the project would have become source of income even for the indigenous people; however it ended with both sides respecting each other's culture, and as a result they were able to reach to this conclusion. In the past, it was common for companies to advance with the project without asking for the opinion of the indigenous people.

To respected the other people's culture, without pressing your own opinions and methodology, to patiently listen to the story of the other side. To leave any preconceptions aside, open your heart, become transparent, and listen to the story of the other party. This is a very important attitude which helps you to become a bridge between different cultures. Now, there exist diverse cultures even within the same culture. Young people and old people, heterosexual and homosexual, intellectual workers and manual workers. However, the basics of intercultural understanding are all the same. Respect your opponent's culture, and if you patiently listen to them, then you can build mutual trust."(2/4)

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**Learning environment that reproduces different culture and the exchange with foreign teachers
Boosts the intercultural understanding of students from both environment and people side**

Kanda Gaigo Group which has been working in foreign language education for Japanese from 1957, has made since its founding an emphasis that "to be able to equally communicate with foreigners, it is necessary to learn not just the language, but also their culture".



In the Kanda Institute of Foreign Languages teaching of practical English, the employment of many foreign teachers has started since the 1970s, and the students were provided with the opportunity to talk with foreigners and have contact to their values. It also conducted overseas language training in Canada and the United States to provide the opportunity of experiencing different cultures through exchanges with local people, in addition to learning the foreign language. On the other hand, the institute also urged the foreign teachers to learn about Japanese culture such as through theater and calligraphy, and prepared the environment to learn the culture for both students and faculty.

We must note that from that time was launched the education policy "culture is the key to open the communication with foreigners". Subjects such as "Literature and Arts" were included in the curriculum of Kanda Institute of Foreign Languages, and it became compulsory for the Japanese students to learn Japanese culture. Also in the mentioned overseas training students were encouraged to bring things like Yukata (Japanese summer kimono) and Judogi (Judo uniform), and to communicate with the local people by introducing the Japanese culture.

In order to pursue the field of education for intercultural understanding, Kanda Gaigo Group established The Kanda University of International Studies in 1987. While including major foreign languages such as English, Spanish, Korean, and Chinese, the University incorporated into its curriculum subjects related to intercultural understanding as specialized mandatory credits. In addition, as a research institution it established "Intercultural Communication Institute" and "The Research Institute for Japanese Studies" with its own budget, and performed research activities and exchanges beyond the framework of a university.

In 1989 Kanda University of International Studies founded ELI (English Language Institute). Currently, about 63 native English teachers belong to ELI as of May 1, 2015, and if the students go to the established SACLA (Self-Access, Communication, Learner Autonomy) lounge in ELI, they can interact with the resident foreign teachers.

Kanda Gaigo Group founded the international training facility "British Hills" in Fukushima Prefecture in 1994. In an environment reproducing a medieval village in Britain, the facility offered services and language training by native English speaking staff. Moreover, in 2008 was established the MULC (Multilingual Communication Center) in Kanda University of International Studies, providing the students with facilities that reproduce buildings in Asia and Latin America. Kanda Gaigo Group has improved environments in which to be able to interact with foreigners and experience different cultures, and has challenged the promotion of intercultural understanding education in Japan.(3/4)



To learn both about culture and communication is the clue to solve the problems that have arisen in the world

When Castro returns to university from the fieldwork, he reflects the experience gained in the field to the education of students. Although majoring in anthropology, there are many students who are convinced that there is no other way for them but to become teachers or curators after graduation. Castro tells the students a story about how the cultural understanding plays important role in the overseas expansion of multinational companies and this brightens their eyes. Anthropology and intercultural communication can be practical academic subjects to come in handy in the real world.

"Intercultural communication is a learning across a number of disciplines. Mass communication, anthropology, sociology. Because sometimes a collision occurs between one culture and another culture, political science is also related. Intercultural communication is exactly a discipline connecting specialized areas, and that is why I think it has a future.

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The human race really needs a lot of communication. We talk a lot, and we also use body language. However, the message is not necessarily understood by the other party. This is because we do not understand each other's cultural context. Culture and communication are inseparable. Many of the problems that are happening in society are due to lack of communication. To understand different cultures, and to establish communication with intercultural dialogue, is what can be effective means to solve the world's problems."

With the development of the Internet, we got the means to be able to do exchange in real time with people around the world. However, there still exist cultural differences among different countries and regions, and ethnic groups and sects. And exactly because now we are able to easily interact, learn what culture is, problems will occur unless we don't increase our sensitivity to different cultures.

As Castro points out, even if we understand what the other person says, if we do not know his or her cultural background, it is the same as if we haven't understood at all. We can say that the education for intercultural understanding promoted by the Kanda Gaigo Group is increasingly important exactly now when the globalization of the society is advancing rapidly. (4/4)

Nestor Castro

Born in 1959 in Pasig City, the Philippines. Began his interest in culture when he received an 18th century coin from a friend in the elementary school, and continued on the road towards cultural anthropology. Received his PhD from the University of the Philippines Department of Anthropology. Then continued to teach in the same faculty, and was appointed Chairman in August 2010. Specializes in cultural anthropology and carries out research on themes such as ethnic relations and indigenous issues, also conducts research in the northern mountainous area of the Philippines, Southeast Asia and Micronesia. Currently he also serves as President of the International Federation of Social Science Organizations (IFSSO).