

The Asiacentric Idea in Communication: Understanding the Significance of a Paradigm

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Abstract

The Asiacentric paradigm has been subjected to deconstructive and destructive criticisms in recent years. Critics of Asiacentricity have generated problematic and misleading discourse about the nature, content, and goal of the Asiacentric project. The Asiacentric idea is discredited on the grounds that the word *Asia* is not of Asian origin. Asiacentricity is mistakenly equated with Asian ethnocentrism, essentialism, and exceptionalism. It is also falsely projected as an Asian version of Eurocentrism even when the ideological ascendancy of Westernness still prevails. Furthermore, Asiacentric studies of Asian cultures and communication are treated as culture-specific research endeavors that completely ignore the perspectives of cultural outsiders. The purpose of the present article is to correct these misconceptions and misunderstandings of the Asiacentric metatheory while clarifying what Asiacentricity is and what it is not.

Keywords: Afrocentricity, agency, Asia, Asiacentricity, centering, communication, culture, dialogue, essentialism, ethnocentrism, Eurocentrism, exceptionalism, *Kawaida*, location, tradition

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I contend that it is necessary for radically new intellectuals to speak of centeredness as a way people own or assume agency within their own contexts. Such an idea is fundamentally more about humanity than materialism, winning, and domination. It is more about a culture's own sense of centering, that is, not marginalizing one's own culture, but claiming it as a valuable part of humanity. Only in the sharing of cultures can we have multicultural discourses... As creators of our own societies we have valuable experiences to share, not to impose, which might be examined and adapted in a spirit of sharing and dialogue. This is the real meaning of multicultural interaction.

—Molefi Kete Asante (2017, p. 185)

There have been seemingly biased and prejudiced attempts to paint a tainted picture of Asiaticity as a new paradigmatic and pragmatic idea. Whether they are Asian or non-Asian, some critics appear to be hidden perpetrators of White supremacy and European superiority in that they are never brave and bold enough to challenge White authorities and their established Eurocentric research traditions and yet eagerly attack and assault non-White thinkers and their emerging non-Eurocentric theoretical approaches in order to be more accepted and recognized in Western Europe and European America. Consequently, in their ill-intended criticisms, Asiaticists are reportedly engaging in so-called "culture wars," and Asiaticity is misconceived of as a doctrine of radical ethnocentrism, a cult of hegemonic fundamentalism, and an ideology of global domination. Those fault-finding critics talk as if Western and non-Western paradigms were equally powerful and privileged in the contemporary academic landscape. Their troubling critiques are also irresponsible scholarship given that they think they can easily trivialize and trash Asiaticity without carefully reading its paradigmatic principles from Afrocentricity and *Kawaida* (see

Asante, 2013, 2015a, 2015b, 2018; Asante & Miike, 2013; Karenga, 2008a, 2008b, 2012, 2014; Miike & Yin, 2015) and its paradigmatic exemplars in the field of Asian communication theory (e.g., Dissanayake, 1988; Gunaratne, 1991; Ishii, 1984, 1992, 2001, 2004, 2009; Kincaid, 1987; Miike, 2015, 2017b, 2019; Miyahara, 1986, 1992, 1996, 2001; Nordstrom, 1983; Oliver, 1971, 1989; Yin, 2009, 2018). In effect, they demonstrated a rather shallow understanding of the Asiacentric idea in communication.

It is my intention in this article to correct the misconceptions and misunderstandings of Asiacentricity as an overarching metatheoretical framework. *Asiacentricity* is the self-conscious act of placing Asian ideas and ideals at the center of any inquiry into Asian peoples and phenomena. Asiacentricity is not ethnocentric because it does not impose an Asian worldview as the only and best frame of reference on non-Asians and take an Asian-centered standpoint to look at non-Asian cultures and communication. It is not essentialist because what constitutes Asianness is still debatable and negotiable within the Asiacentric paradigm. Nevertheless, Asiacentricity is against the marginalization and peripherization of Asian views and values within Asian cultural contexts. It is against the ignorance and invisibility of Asian peoples from all walks of life and their enduring legacies in Asian cross-cultural comparisons and intercultural encounters. Asiacentricity insists on centering Asian communicators as subjects and actors instead of objects and spectators and Asian cultures as resources for theoretical insight and ethical reflection rather than targets of data analysis and rhetorical criticism (see Miike, 2010b, 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2017a, 2018; Miike & Yin, 2015; Yin, 2009).

The Origin of *Asia* and Asia in the Making

It goes without saying that Asia is diverse and dynamic. It is a region of cultural complexity, continuity, and change. I have defined *Asia*

geographically, politically, and culturally since 2003. That is, the term signifies a certain geographical location in the world, designates a common historical and political struggle against Western imperialism and colonialism, and implies shared religious-philosophical foundations and cultural systems. A few sarcastic opponents, who had neglected my operational definition, tried to disparage the idea of Asiaticity for the reason that the term *Asia* was not of Asian origin. Perhaps they were so Eurocentric that they could jump to the conclusion that the word was of Greek origin. As a matter of fact, however, its origin is unclear and unknown, though it was derived most likely from the Assyrian word *asu* (see Korhonen, 2000). In the 11th edition of *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, Thomas Hungerford Holdich (1910) wrote:

Much doubt attaches to the origin of the name. Some of the earliest Greek geographers divided their known world into two positions only, Europe and Asia, in which last Libya (the Greek name for Africa) was included. Herodotus, who ranks Libya as one of the chief divisions of the world, separating it from Asia, repudiates as fables the ordinary explanations assigned to the names Europe and Asia, but confesses his inability to say whence they came. It would appear probable, however, that the former of these words was derived from an Assyrian or Hebrew root, which signifies the west or setting sun, and the latter from a corresponding root meaning the east or rising sun, and that they were used at one time to imply the west and the east. There is ground also for supposing that they may at first have been used with a specific or restricted local application, a more extended signification having eventually been given to them. After the word Asia has acquired its larger sense, it was still specially used by the Greeks to designate the country around Ephesus. The idea of Asia as originally formed was necessarily indefinite, and long continued to be so; and the area to which

the name was finally applied, as geographical knowledge increased, was to a great extent determined by arbitrary and not very precise conceptions, rather than on the basis of natural relations and differences subsisting between it and the surrounding regions. (p. 734)

Whether or not the term *Asia* is of Asian origin, negative connotations and Orientalist images attached to Asia as a concept have been manufactured, for the most part, in the West and then imported to the East (Ogura, 1993). The positive Western self is, more often than not, juxtaposed to the negative Asian Other (see Kato, 1989, 1999; Kong, 2016; Shi-xu, 2006; Yin, 2008, 2014a, 2014b). Besides, Eurocentric (non-)Asian players in the game of globalization conveniently use their rhetoric for and against the idea of Asia. When they want to defend the West against Asia, they have no problem with lumping Asian nations and cultures together. When they want to disrupt the unity of Asia, they stress the diversity and dynamics of Asia and deny Asian continuities and commonalities as cultural essentialism. This convenient rhetoric is just like that of theirs regarding language choice and use in Asiacentric scholarship. When we use an Asian language, we are not authentic Asiacentrists who are culturally grounded and informed, but closed-minded separatists and isolationists. When we use English, we are not open-minded intercultural Asiacentrists, but pseudo-cultural experts and specialists who are not deeply rooted and well versed enough on Asian soil.

To Asiacentrists, the term *Asia* serves as a common language with shared and significant meanings for intercultural interactions. Any label such as *Eastern* and *Western* is inherently ambiguous, but it is still an important intellectual marker for consciousness-raising and consciousness-making. It also opens up a pathway to more subtle and nuanced understanding especially across Asian cultures. All Asian communities, of course, named themselves in their own indigenous terms before occupation and colonization. Moreover, I

agree with Kazuo Ogura (1993, 1999, 2007, 2015) who has maintained for decades that it is in the best interest of Asians to create a new concept of Asia for themselves in the contemporary milieu of global communication and world politics. As he cogently argued, “*Asia* did not have to be limited to the Asia of the past or present—it could also signify a future Asia, yet to be built” (Ogura, 2015, p. 45). Suffice it to say here that we wish to imagine many converging and diverging Asias, not one ultimate Asia, in such a soul-searching process when different Asias (e.g., political Asia and economic Asia) are already cooperating and competing to navigate the turbulent waters.

All these semantic complications surrounding the word *Asia* do not suggest the impossibility of applying the fundamental paradigmatic principles of Asiaticity in intracultural and intercultural contexts. Its underlying thrust is the idea of actively centering, not decentering, Asian languages, religions/philosophies, histories, and aesthetics in theorizing and narrating Asian communication in its many and varied forms. For Asians, Asiaticity can encourage their careful and critical engagements in their own cultural traditions for self-understanding, self-expression, communal development, and cross-cultural dialogue (see Kaminaga, 2001). Intraculturally, it helps Asians embrace the positive elements of their cultural heritage and transform negative practices according to their ethical ideals. Interculturally, it helps Asians find “a place to stand,” so to speak, and provides the basis of equality and mutuality in the global community. For non-Asians, Asiaticity can stimulate their cross-cultural reflections on human ways of life through their non-ethnocentric exposure to Asian versions and visions of humanity. Asiaticity can lead non-Asians to (1) see the Asian phenomenal world from the perspective of Asians, (2) locate Asians who are acting, instead of being merely acted upon, in the context of their own history and heritage, and (3) have a better understanding and deeper appreciation of Asian worldviews and ways of communication (Miike, 2018).

Cultural Traditions and Cultural Hybridity

From the perspective of an African communitarian philosophy, Maulana Karenga (2014) defined a tradition as “a cultural core that forms the central locus of our self-understanding and self-assertion in the world and which is mediated by constantly changing historical circumstances and an ongoing internal dialogue of reassessment and continuous development” (p. 213). As the metatheory of Afrocentricity does, the Asiatic paradigm adopts this *Kawaida* (“tradition” in Swahili) vantage point (see Karenga, 2008b). In other words, by *tradition*, Asiaticists do not mean the cultural essence in an ancient, pure, and stagnant sense, but they refer to a “living tradition” that is always invented and reinvented and proactively blending the old and the new. To be exact, the Asiatic initiative recasts Asian cultural traditions in their full complexity as the lived and the living (continuity and change), the indigenous and the interactive (unity and diversity), and the liberating and the oppressive (pros and cons). Hence, Asiaticity is not past-oriented in that it does not strive to bring Asian cultures back to the pristine past. Rather, Asiaticity is about mapping and mining Asian cultural traditions as open and transformative systems for theorizing and narrating the subtlety and plurality of Asian communication (Miike, 2010a).

All cultures use language as a common code of communication and a symbolic vehicle of indigenous epistemologies. Cultural values and communication ethics have been largely shaped by religious-philosophical underpinnings. No culture exists without its own history, from which its members learn important lessons about relational communication, environmental communication, and spiritual communication. Every culture performs communication in rituals and ceremonies that gives a sense of bonding and belonging to its members and appeals to their ethos and aesthetics. For the purpose of elucidating the psychology of Asian

communicators and enunciating the dynamics of Asian communication, therefore, Asiacentrists ought to revivify, revalorize, and revitalize (1) Asian words as key concepts and their etymologies as cultural outlooks and instructive insights, (2) Asian religious-philosophical teachings as behavioral principles and codes of ethics, (3) Asian histories as multiple layers of contextualization and recurrent patterns of continuity and change, and (4) Asian aesthetics as analytical frameworks for space-time arrangement, nonverbal performance, and emotional pleasure (Miike, 2010b, 2016b; Miike & Yin, 2015).

It is Mahatma Gandhi (1954) who quipped that “no culture can live, if it attempts to be exclusive” (p. 144) when he commented on the non-existence of pure Aryan culture and the future culture of India. In truth, any culture is hybrid. The presence of cultural hybridity, however, should not be mistaken as the absence of cultural distinctiveness. For example, the “local culture” of Hawai‘i is immensely hybrid. Many “locals” have multiple “nationalities.” Nevertheless, there are locally distinctive ways of thinking and doing. Similarly, the fact that Asian cultures are hybrid does not diminish the development of Asiannesses. It is precisely because the local is in more and more exchange with the global that the importance of centrality must be stressed. Such ceaseless contact actually makes it all the more important for Asiacentrists to scrutinize the trajectories, forms, functions, and consequences of hybridity in cultural Asia toward the healthy and balanced centering of the Asian heritage. Thus, Asiacentricity is not Asianness itself (Miike, 2017a). It is a way of seeing and shaping the Asian world. Asiacentricity is not merely descriptive and interpretive. Asiacentrists as cultural and ethical agents are committed to generating self-defining ideas and taking self-determined actions that underscore ethical visions for human freedom and flourishing and communal solidarity for cultural preservation and integration in Asian societies (see Miike [2014] for a discussion on Asiacentricity and the question

of criticality). Asiacentrists are not imagining a “flat world” of cultural evenness through global hybridization.

Cultural Grounding and Centering Cultures

It should not be misunderstood that the concept of centering in the Asiacentric metatheory alludes to one cultural center diametrically opposed to another. It also should not be confused with the meaning of center in the center-peripheral model of Johan Galtung’s (1971) structural imperialism theory and Immanuel Wallerstein’s (1974) world systems theory. The notion of centrality should be taken as ground, location, and orientation rather than reaction, opposition, and isolation. The act of centering is not fixed and frozen but dynamic and dialogical. Asian Australians, for instance, can have Asiacentric and Australia-centric standpoints by centering cultural Asia in Australia and cultural Australia in Asia. It is the contention of the Asiacentric paradigm that our own culture must be allowed to become central, not peripheral, in our story *without completely ignoring other cultural viewpoints on our culture* (Miike, 2014). If we can see ourselves only through someone else’s eyes, we will not have any agency. If we always speak in the voices of others, no one will hear our voices. There are many ways of centering any Asian language, religion/philosophy, history, and aesthetics. Asian cultures can be centered so as to highlight similarities at one time and differences at another. It is, therefore, farfetched to claim that Asiacentricity is based on the presumption of the incommensurability of Asianness and non-Asianness. The question of Asianness is central to the Asiacentric terrain of inquiry, but Asianness is not necessarily defined in polarity with non-Asianness. Asante (2015a) illustrated the perspectivist nature of the Afrocentric idea:

On some commuter trains half of the seats face forward and half face in the opposite direction. Although you are moving in one direction,

depending upon which way you are faced you get a different view of reality. In the face forward position you see things going. On some trains they have seats against the sides of the wall—in those cases you see things coming and going. (p. 8)

Cultural grounding in theory and practice has nothing to do with going against other cultures. Europeans have never marginalized their own cultural traditions in addressing *European* thought and action. And yet, no one has chastised them for perpetuating ethnocentrism, divisiveness, and separatism. As Asante (2013) aptly opined, “Afrocentricity was not the counterpoint to Eurocentricity, but a particular perspective for analysis that did not seek to occupy all space and time as Eurocentrism has often done. All human cultures must be centered, in fact, subject[s] of their own realities” (p. 54). It is important to note here that *Eurocentrism* as a universalist ideology is an ethnocentric approach to non-Western worlds and people of non-Western heritage, while *Eurocentricity* as a particularist position is a legitimate culture-centric approach to cultural Europe and people of European decent (Miike, 2010a). In an Afrocentric-Asiacentric dialogue with me (Asante & Miike, 2013), Asante further elaborated on Afrocentricity as a critique of European universalism:

The Afrocentric moment was not a critique of European thoughts, philosophies, myths, and cultures as European but a critique of European ideas as a part of cultural domination. The abrasive character of domination operates in communication as metaphor, argument, context, and process. Afrocentricity seeks to pursue what has been shoved to the side in the movement of Europe’s particularism as universal. Thus, Afrocentricity is a corrective, but it is not the only corrective to Europe’s overreach. (p. 4)

According to Karenga (2010), predicated on the supremacy and exceptionalism of European values and ideals, Eurocentrism is “an ideology and practice of domination and exclusion based on the fundamental assumption that all relevance and value are centered in European culture[s] and peoples and that all other cultures and peoples are at best marginal and at worse irrelevant” (p. 41). He thus made the assertion that “Afrocentricity must never be conceived of or employed as a reaction to or an African version of Eurocentrism, with its racist and structured denial and deformation of the history and humanity of peoples of color” (Karenga, 2008a, p. 245). Those carping critics who are bickering only about the dangers of Afrocentricity and Asiacentricity as reverse versions of Eurocentrism are caught up in the hegemonic dogma that, whatever we talk about wherever and whenever, we must always engage in Eurocentric local knowledge as *the* global standard (see Kato, 1989, 1999). In their minds, the supposedly spaceless and timeless world of cultural Europe must be present in any conversation, and it should be at the center stage anywhere and anytime and the measure of all things in the universe. Asante (2017) explicates this the-West-is-the-global mindset of Eurocentric individuals including non-Western elites as follows:

Europe reacts to this notion of centering by eschewing it because what is seen in the European’s mind when one discusses cultural centers and concepts other than Europe is the displacement of Europe. We accept that there can be, and must be, in a radically democratic society, pluralism without hierarchy. Thus, the Eurocentric center will have a place in a normal world but it cannot promote itself as an abnormality where others are victimized by an intellectual aggression that seeks to dislodge the legitimate ideas and concepts of other people. (pp. 185-186)

Insider-Outsider Perspectives and Dialogue

Several “objective” opponents of Asiacentricity excoriated culture-centric inquires as culture-specific investigations with what was once called “pro-native bias.” They castigated Asiacentric scholarship for completely ignoring the perspectives of cultural outsiders and blindly privileging those of cultural insiders in a level-playing field. Unfortunately, those “fair-minded” critics who dichotomize the insider and the outsider and separate emic and etic studies can apprehend and appraise culture-centric approaches, only for the advantage of cultural insiders, with limited local applications in the presumably apolitical and ahistorical micro-level context. They do not care to comprehend the paradigmatic dictum that what matters is not data themselves but an orientation to data (Asante, 2013, Karenga, 2012). Needless to say, all intracultural, cross-cultural, and intercultural research, whether culture-general or culture-specific, entails the interpretation of culture. And cultural interpretation comes from somewhere.

First, the ability to center any culture is not an innate privilege reserved solely for cultural insiders. Second, prioritizing the standpoints of cultural insiders is not the same as rejecting those of cultural outsiders. Third, cultural outsiders may notice interesting or taken-for-granted aspects of another culture and pose intriguing or critical questions, but, without their ability to locate cultural insiders as subjects and agents and center their history and heritage, those observations and questions do not lead to any edifying and enlightening conversation for both cultural insiders and cultural outsiders. As is often the case, they end up with de-contextualized understanding and one-sided interrogations, not deep appreciation and insightful answers, in the ideological climate of international and intercultural hierarchies (see de la Garza, 2014; Jandt & Tanno, 2004; Kong, 2016; Martin & Butler, 2001; Miyahara, 1986, 1996, 2001; Smith, 2012; Tanno, 2007; Tanno & Jandt, 2002;

Tsuruta, 1987, 1998; Yin, 2008, 2014a, 2014b). Shi-xu (2006) problematized such hierarchical discourse:

It is now a common occurrence in the field that the Western standard frameworks are applied to discourses from non-Western cultures. But applying such a culturally exclusive theory to other cultural contexts is like using the European concept of opera to analyze a Peking opera. It may perhaps reveal some interesting features, but it will fail to see many other important properties at the same time, and very likely arrive at a negative evaluation. (p. 387)

In passing, Lee O-Young (1982, 1984), who is well known for his book, *Chijimi-Shiko no Nihonjin [The Shrinking-Oriented Japanese]*, is a case in point as a cultural outsider who has the gifted ability to center another culture and locate people and phenomena in their own history and context. He is an eminent South Korean literary critic who can offer exceptional insights into Japanese society and culture. In a thought-provoking essay, “The Culture of *Wa*,” Lee (1983) addressed togetherness as a precondition of the Japanese art of harmony, where even heterogeneous elements can form a harmonious unity. In order to make the case, he aptly used various examples from the fairy-tale of *Momotaro*, Yosa Buson’s poem, the chef cooking before the guests and the guest eating before the chef, the *hanamichi* [flower path] of *kabuki*, business management and quality control, and the personification of tools. According to his observation, however, harmony exists only in the realm of togetherness. Thus, harmony within becomes disharmony without. In his opinion, then, the challenge of Japanese people and society in the age of intercultural contacts and encounters is to find a way to enlarge their sense of togetherness to encompass the rest of the world and live in peace with the spirit of greater harmony.

Dialogical and reciprocal centering involves the understanding of our own culture and the cultures of others (Miike, 2014, 2017a, 2019). There are three steps to reflective cross-cultural dialogue. The first step is to understand the mental layer of our own culture and its impact on the behavioral and material layers. The second step is to understand the mental layer of other cultures and its impact on the behavioral and material layers. The third step is to listen to others' perspectives on our culture and share our perspectives on other cultures in order to reflect on what it means to be human in local and global contexts and how humans should relate to one another, nature, and the divine (Miike, 2015). Dynamic centering and decentering are essential in the final stage. Without centering, intercultural interactions become imposition-imitation encounters in the uneven world. Without decentering, they become intracultural, and sometimes imperialistic, monologues in the "alone-together" world. In this regard, Afrocentric and Asiacentric inquiries are more than culture-specific interpretive approaches. From an Asiacentric perspective on intercultural communication ethics, I recently advocated the following position:

Without a shadow of doubt, we need more and more broad and depthful intracultural studies not for intracultural communication but for intercultural communication, so that we can explain to the global community our cultural systems in the local context from our own linguistic, religious-philosophical, historical, and aesthetic perspectives. At the same time, we need more and more careful and critical intercultural studies not for intercultural communication but for intracultural communication, so that we can broaden and deepen the understanding of ourselves and our society in the global context for a sustainable future. (Miike, 2017a, p. 57)

Cultural Particularity and Human Commonality

It is neither fair nor accurate to say that Asiacentricity is exclusively and strictly for Asian peoples and Asian phenomena. Karenga (2008a, 2010) asseverated that Afrocentricity contains both culture-general and culture-specific dimensions. The Afrocentric enterprise “self-consciously contributes a valuable particular cultural insight and discourse to the multicultural project and in the process, finds common ground with other cultures which can be cultivated and developed for mutual benefit” (Karenga, 2010, p. 42). He tersely stated that “as there are lessons for humanity in African particularity, there are lessons for Africans in human commonality” (Karenga, 2010, p. 43). Afrocentrists concurrently reflect on what it means to be African and human in the fullest sense (see Karenga [2008a] for a detailed account of Afrocentricity and multiculturalism).

By the same token, Asiacentricity does not subscribe to the view that cultural particulars are in opposition to human universals. Asiacentrists are firm believers in the existence of “globally significant local knowledge.” Nonetheless, they do not support the backward and outdated argument that *every* communication theory must be constructed with the implicit assumption that it should purport to explain universal phenomena across space and time. Such an assumption is indeed the longstanding problem of Eurocentric essentialism and exceptionalism. There is nothing wrong with the fact that some theories are meant to interpret Akan or Yoruba speaking practices, whereas others are intended to observe Korean or Japanese nonverbal behaviors.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (2012) reminded us of the original meaning of theory in Greek, *theoria*, which signifies a view and a contemplation: “View assumes a viewer, a ground on which to stand, and what is viewed from that standpoint. A view is also a framework for organizing what is seen and a

thinking about the viewed” (p. 15). This original meaning of theory is in accord with Afrocentricity and Asiaticity, which call attention to cultural location, that is, where the mind of a person is culturally located. In Sarah Amira de la Garza’s (2014) *Four Seasons of Ethnography*, “[h]istory and tradition are fundamental to our current understanding. Theory is not to be refuted or disproven, but contextualized and amplified. Things get bigger, not smaller and tighter, as we understand them” (p. 155).

Manulani Aluli Meyer (2014) delimited universality as “a fundamental spiritual truth exemplified in harmony, peace, and awareness. This can only occur through respect and honoring of distinctness, thus the idea that ‘specificity leads to universality’” (p. 149). Hence, she averred, universality is not uniformity. Masanori Higa (1978) was once told that the peoples and communities of Hawai‘i have developed “respectful prejudice” toward different cultural particulars. We may not be able to eliminate our preferences and biases for certain cultural particulars, and yet we can live together and learn about human universals with “respectful prejudice.” We can accept and appreciate the interconnected and intersected human ocean by recognizing and honoring the distinct cultural rivers with their own shapes and shades (see Asante, Miike, & Yin [2014], Baldwin [2017], Dai & Weng [2016], Dutta & Martin [2017], Inuzuka, [2013], Korzenny [2015], Martin [1994], Martin & Flores [1998], Miike & Yin [2015], and Tanno [2007] for the historical development and current status of the intercultural communication field).

There is a way to embrace the best of our own cultural heritage without suppressing others. In the spirit of valuing positive aspects of all cultures for intercultural equality and mutuality and for the true appreciation of multicultural contributions to the human civilization, it is possible for us to be Latino/a-centric, Hawaiian-centric as well as Eurocentric. We can be China-centric, Filipino/a-centric, and Nepali-centric. The Asiatic initiative

partakes in this multicultural enterprise of celebrating human commonality in the global society and cherishing cultural particularity in the local community. It is only through culturally rooted thinking and culturally grounded theorizing that we will be able to advance the multicultural turn in communication research.

Toward the Multicultural Turn in Communication

Robert T. Craig (2008) explored how “communication in the conversation of disciplines” has emerged and evolved in its intellectual, institutional, and sociocultural contexts (see Borisoff & McMahan [2017], Dervin & Reinhard [2010], McQuail [2005], Mowlana & Wang, [2018], Nordenstreng [2011], Rogers [1997], and Simpson [1994] for the emergence and evolution of communication studies). He explained that the rapid institutionalization of communication as an academic discipline at least in the United States owes more to sociocultural forces (i.e., the development of mass media and communication technology and the perceived demand for communication skills) than to intellectual contributions (i.e., original theoretical ideas and practical insights about human communication). In Craig’s (2008) opinion, it behooves the discipline of communication to “theorize practice from a disciplinary point of view” and participate simultaneously in the conversations of other disciplines and wider societies in order to survive and thrive in the changing world.

In a similar vein, I submit that Asian communication studies should join more conversations of world communication studies, other Asian disciplines, and continental and diasporic Asian communities. In my submission, furthermore, the discipline of communication in Asia ought to establish itself more with its own theoretical lenses from and to Asian communication practices and problems (Miike, 2016b). It must be backed up more by its distinct theoretical formulations than by its administrative infrastructures, globalization forces, and technological imperatives. Otherwise, Asian

communication professionals would be “always behind” Western communication forerunners. Asiaticity addresses the crux of this ontological issue. As I have outlined elsewhere (Miike, 2010a), the agenda of Asiatic communication scholarship is five-fold: (1) to construct theoretical knowledge that corresponds to Asian communication discourse, (2) to focus on the multiplicity and complexity of Asian communicative experience, (3) to reflexively constitute, and critically transform, Asian communication discourse, (4) to theorize how common aspects of humanity are expressed and understood in Asian cultural particularities, and (5) to critique Eurocentric biases in theory and research and helps Asian researchers overcome academic dependency.

The Asiatic paradigm has been subjected to deconstructive and destructive criticisms in recent years. Critics of Asiaticity have generated problematic and misleading discourse about the nature, content, and goal of the Asiatic project. The purpose of this article was to clarify what Asiaticity is and what it is not. The present article is offered with the hope that it will forestall further unnecessary confusion. Despite the antagonistic and hysteric reactions to the Asiatic metatheory, there are also intellectual fire and imagination from many parts of Asia (e.g., Howlana, 2018, 2019). We stand now at a very critical juncture in our history where the heart and soul of our own culture will be liberated or suppressed in our academic pursuits. I concur with Hamid Mowlana (1996) who passionately concluded:

We should not be deceived by an illusion of the diversity of the subject matter and the vastness of the literature. We need to concentrate on promoting the diversity of cultural views and our ability to make the field more interesting and challenging by exploring new avenues and voices of knowledge. If we do not watch for these potential sources, we

may go on for another long generation or decades without really making any effort that may account for a true shift in our thinking and our research paradigms. (p. 213)

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