

The University of Tokyo, Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology
Programme for Evolving Humanities and Sociology
Research Visit Report

22nd December 2011

1. Academic profile

Name: Tomohiro KURITA

Department of Sociology, 6th year on the PhD programme

2. Theme of research

Qualitative research on the concept of 'Asian' in the British Asian music industry

3. Research activities

(1) Institution

The Martin Harris Centre for Music and Drama, Faculty of Humanities, The University of Manchester, United Kingdom (supervisor: Dr. Rajinder Dudrah)

(2) Period of stay

From 2nd September to 2nd December 2011 (92 days)

4. Research

(1) The proposal

The aim of the research is to examine what meanings are given to the musical category of 'Asian' which includes various practices of South Asian popular music in the United Kingdom (i.e. British Asian music). To do so, I wish to argue how South Asian immigrants' collective identity of 'British Asian' as an ethnic minority group is maintained. I plan to collect the information about Mela, South Asian festivals in summer, to interview those who are involved with the event, and to carry out observation and interviews at the London Mela on 4th September at Gunnersbury Park in West London. Further, I hope to interview more people in the British Asian music industry and finally to write my PhD dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Rajinder Dudrah at The University of Manchester. I have been enrolled here since September 2011 as part of the exchange programme from the Faculty of Letters, The University of Tokyo.

(2) Fruits of research

Popular Indian (Punjabi) R&B singer Jay Sean, an important subject for my PhD

dissertation, performed on stage at the London Mela. He was interviewed for the BBC 'In Conversation With' on 4th September. It was a meaningful interview in which he, as a singer who is nowadays mainly active in the United States, enunciated his identity as British Asian. My most recent paper, 'British Asian Music and Asian Identities: The Case of Jay Sean's Musical Practice and Its Interpretations', which I wrote in March 2011 for the next issue of *Imin Kenkyu Nenpou (The Annual Review of Migration Studies)*, had passed the first peer review and I was about to revise it based on comments from the reviewers. I added part of Sean's interview and referred to his other interviews in the British newspaper *The Independent*, as well as to his album reviews on the BBC website. The revised paper passed the second peer review and is to be published in March 2012.

I also attended Brit Asia TV Music Awards (hosted by Brit Asia TV, a satellite TV station catering for British Asian youth) held on 1st October in London as a press person. I was able to observe the huge proportion of Panjabi artists (especially Bhangra singers) in the British Asian music industry. I wrote an article on this event and submitted it to Dr. Dudrah. The contents of which will be included in my PhD dissertation.

Apart from this, I went to many British Asian music events and collected as much information as possible in order to expand my network of people involved in the Asian music industry. In addition, I wrote two assignments for Dr. Dudrah, one of which a paper about an Asian music event held on 11th October in Manchester, and a subsequent review on popular music genres and ethnic identities.

(3) Prospects for future research

I will be enrolled on The University of Manchester until August 2012 to complete my field research and write my PhD dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Dudrah. The people I have come to know in the industry will continue to be a great resource for my research. On the basis of the qualitative data I have collected so far, the main part of my PhD dissertation will be to analyse how the collective cultural identity of 'Asian' is maintained by people in the phases of production, circulation and consumption of Asian music respectively, and to explore the effects of promotional strategies.