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(Interviewer: 菊井・古郡)

『It's not what you normally imagine when thinking about economics!』

**What is your research specialty?**

My lectures are on industrial economics, but my basic research focuses on the strategies and organizations of companies and how such strategies affect the industrialization of emerging economies. It is mostly business based.

『The difference between economics and business』

**I have an impression that you are a little different from other professors in that you focus on your studies on the business side?**

Economics has the precision of a social science. Of course, business has some of that as well. But I think there is a difference between economics and business in that business does not necessarily assume of human rationality. In addition, I think it is interesting to see and hear what is going on in the actual business field, but some people may get an impression that it's a muddy field.

『How did you discover the interest in research? 』

**I get the impression that you are close to the Faculty of Commerce?**

My degree is in economics, and I also studied Macroeconomics and Microeconomics until my Master studies. However, I was also interested in the JICA, Japanese university researchers, and Vietnamese university students who were working together to make policy proposals based on the actual conditions of Vietnamese industry. I learned how interesting market research is when I conducted a survey on motorcycles as part of a joint research project them. After I entered the doctorate, I was just going around the field using business as a framework. But I personally think that students should properly study economics...(laughs).

『Reasons why you started your research in emerging economies 』

**Why did you start your research in emerging economies?**

Speaking from experience, I often traveled to Asia as an undergraduate and wondered how people sleeping on the streets made a living, and became interested in poverty in developing countries. There I decided that I wanted to work for the United Nations, but I knew that I needed a master's degree to do so, so I went on to graduate school. However, I gradually became more and more interested in organizations, from individuals to companies, and at the same time, I enjoyed doing research. I enjoyed researching and ended up studying doctorate. ....(laugh). On the contrary, I don't know any developed countries. The only places I have been to are Hawaii, where I went to a friend's wedding, and Houston, where I was in transit to Brazil. I am very biased, so in that sense, my challenge is to get to know developed countries. The first foreign country I went to was Thailand when I was 20 years old, and from there I enjoyed visiting Asian countries, but perhaps if my first visit had been to Europe, I would have felt that Europe was fun, and I might have studied something about Europe.

『Developed and Developing Countries, Tokyo and Rural Areas』

**What is the biggest difference between the industrial economies of developed and developing countries? Please tell us!**

In the factory example, developing countries have youth and momentum. Although the presence or absence of momentum does not necessarily lead to a difference in productivity, they have an attitude of wanting to improve their productivity. In terms of management, when I visit factories in developing countries, the workers look at me. This means that there is room for improvement in management. On the other hand, people working in Japanese factories do not stop and look at visitors. Thus, by looking at factories and organizations, we can say that Japan has a very high productivity, but workers have no time to rest. On the other hand, in developing countries, I think the difference can be said to be that management is loose, but there is momentum. Also, when it comes to relationships with people, Japan is very kind, but people in developing countries are more closely involved with others, whether they know each other or not. Even if you visit suddenly without an appointment, you can still manage to meet in a developing country.

Also, although Tokyo is probably what people imagine when they hear the word "developed Japan," I sense a difference in the awareness and working styles between the rural areas and Tokyo. In the rural areas, there is a sense of doing something for the community, as in the popular phrase "*Dogennkasenntoikann*" ("Do something"). In Tokyo, on the other hand, there is an awareness of how to work within a large corporation. While I feel this difference in Tokyo, a developed country in Japan, I have been in the countryside for a long time, so perhaps I don't really understand what a developed country is like in that sense.

『The most important "philosophy" in an organization』

**Please tell us about your educational philosophy!**

After employment, students will probably work under the direction of their supervisors, so ideally, they should be able to discover issues on their own in the seminar, set their own schedule, and act independently. Theoretical economics, such as macroeconomics and microeconomics, should also be good training for logical skills. However, while case-based research such as the one I am doing is easy to understand, it is difficult to convey its significance. So, on the contrary, I hope that students will try to think about unique countries and industries or their own interests by connecting them to major places in the world.

『Theory and Practice』

**Do you emphasize practice rather than theory?**

In a seminar, you can go to various places to listen to talks because the group is small, but it is difficult to do so in a large group like a lecture. That is why we take the stance of trying to establish a certain viewpoint while visiting the field in seminars, where we can take advantage of the small-group opportunity. In the papers we usually write, we generalize by bringing abstraction and by stating different cases together. Even though we're generalizing, we can't set down our assumptions rigorously. Instead, we apply the inductive method. Not everything can be derived by induction, so maybe that's where the weakness of the practice lies. That is what we are struggling with in our fieldwork theory at Hiyoshi. Four of us are in charge of it with Dr.

Ueda, Dr. Komagata, and Dr. Ito (University of Tokyo). For my part, I hope that conducting fieldwork will lead to the discovery of problems. For example, as Professor Ito once said, "Adam Smith's division of labor is explained by the example that it is more efficient to share the process of making needles, but that is an observation!" It is not that we do not emphasize theory at all, but just like digging a tunnel from both ends, I think it is better to revisit the theory you learned at Hiyoshi to see how it actually works in practice at Mita, so that you can get closer to the truth.

『Looking back on my student days』

### **Please tell us about your student days!**

I attended the Faculty of Economics at Tohoku University. It was a relaxed university in the countryside, near hot springs and the sea. I also studied economics, but it also included business administration and what Keio would call the commerce department. ...But it's not like I attended all the classes though (laugh).

I was a member of the Wonder Vogel Club and climbed mountains during my first and second year. I would come in every Friday night, spend Saturdays and Sundays at the river or in the mountains, and be dead on Mondays. I was a bad student who did not attend classes (laughs). I wish I had attended. However, I began to think that even a cheap \$2/night accommodation in a developing country was better than staying in a tent in the mountains. Then in my 3rd and 4th year, I enjoyed my first trip abroad so much that I began to do part-time jobs to save money to go to more trips. I did a variety of part-time jobs, such as guiding fishing in a stream, or taking people to Shirakami Sanchi (Mt. Shirakami). My travel destinations were mainly developing countries, and I went there during long vacations and university festivals.

What I think now is that there are many things to study not only in graduate school but also after entering a company. I wish I had visited more companies when I was an undergraduate student, because I didn't do it on my own initiative. But looking back on my own activities, I see that I liked to go to various places. When I went to developing countries as an undergraduate student, I would think about the transition from primary to secondary industry, or from rural to urban areas, or I would wonder where this country was at the moment.

I may not have understood anything at the time (and maybe I still don't .....), but at the time I was more interested in the economy as a whole than in business administration or organization. Employing people from developing countries who are lying on the street should play a major role in the industrialization of those countries, but maybe that is actually something that local companies should do, not foreign companies, and it is not a matter for me, a foreigner, to take part of. After all, I think they will be able to survive on their own. So I am still thinking about what the actual situation is, not about whether the situation is good or bad.

『Looking back on your own employment』

### **Have you thought about your path to employment?**

I thought about it. But I was rejected in the final round of one bank that I had applied to. The reason why I applied to that bank was very simple: I wondered if there is any relationship to any developing countries in terms of loans or ODA. I was not sure how I would find a job, but I

guess I had the idea of making a living with my skills. But I never had the idea of starting a business, which is strange. I got my first full-time job when I was 30, and I think it is better for my mental health to continue my studies after I get a job. There weren't so many internships back then, so I think it's hard for third-year students to go to internships now and start job hunting in their fourth year.

『Future Predictions』

**Off topic, which industry do you think will grow in the next 20 years?**

Twenty years is a difficult time. I think it is good to have a company that cares about its people, but if it protects its full-time employees too much, the competitive relationship will disappear and the organization itself will be ruined, so I think it is good to have a place where each person working there can work with their own goals.

In terms of what fields are interesting in the future, I believe that measures to deal with the declining birthrate and aging society will definitely be needed in the future, because the aging society will surely become an issue in East and Southeast Asia, and Japan will be a leading case study. Therefore, if you have a strong overseas orientation, I think it would be interesting to train in the field of Japan's declining birthrate and aging population and then go abroad.

『As a seminar with short history』

**What are you looking for in a second-year student who wants to join your seminar?**

My seminar conducts fieldwork surveys, so there is a lot of complicated work involved, such as deciding which companies to visit, making appointments, going to interviews, and writing reports. So, I think it is necessary to be able to handle such tasks without being bothered by them. And I would like to make it an organization where both third- and fourth-year students write papers. The most important thing is to attend the main seminar on Tuesdays! This year, we are doing it in a way that we don't divide the seminar by time, and if we decide to do something, we don't leave until it is done. But we are also looking for ways to proceed with the seminar. In terms of the overseas training camp, we are also struggling with the balance between risk management and the degree to which autonomy is respected. We have not yet decided whether we will hold another overseas training camp next year. If there are any second-year students who would like to do it in a certain way, I would welcome their opinions.

『Be interested, the importance of logic.』

**☆Finally, what is your message to sophomores? ☆**

You have plenty of time in college, so you should work on what you want to do and what interests you. When you are unsure of what you want to do, you can pay a little more attention to your surroundings and try to think about it from a different aspect. For example, how can we make the work of part-time workers more efficient, or what is the work style of employees? I feel that many students have very varied experiences, but it is by no means the case that those who go abroad are always good students, and I think it is more important to be able to explain the experience well.

**{Editorial Postscript}**

I enjoyed talking with him throughout the entire interview. I attribute this to Dr. Mishima's personality, tone of voice, and his field of expertise. However, as this was his second year at the seminar, he seemed to be struggling a lot with the management methods and risk management. Given that the future 2nd year seminar students will have an impact on seminar management, it might be a good idea for students who are interested in seminar management and organizational management to join. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Mishima for taking time out of his busy schedule to conduct this interview. Thank you very much.

Written by 古郡 みか