

The definition of ‘native anthropologists’ is more complex than that of natives. At the most fundamental level, these are anthropologists who belong to the research community by birth. However, professionally trained researchers are seldom found in the small communities anthropologists have traditionally studied. They ordinarily live outside the immediate research community, and many of them work at educational institutions in the cities. Local anthropologists are, therefore, native only in a secondary sense of the word. Yet they are part of the larger society under observation, and have common interests with the people being studied. This distinguishes them from nonnative researchers, who may maintain a distance or even write about them from detached viewpoints in the name of science.

I must hasten to add that native is a relational concept. Like the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’, the category of people defined by this term is not fixed: rather, it shifts according to the situation in which researchers find themselves. For example, Japanese anthropologists from the cities studying rural communities in Japan are outsiders and non-native to the community they research. They may, however, be considered insiders and native in relation to foreign anthropologists studying Japan. Native is therefore a fluid category whose meaning is dependent on the social context. For a detailed discussion on this point, see Kuwayama (2000a).