

Although it is possible to substitute local for indigenous, local is a neutral word that merely points to a particular place. It therefore conceals important power differences. I have decided to use the term native for three reasons. First, it is a testimony to the colonial roots of anthropology. Second, it draws attention to the ‘intrusion’ into the academic space of former colonial powers by their subjects. And third, this intrusion signals a radical change taking place in the structure of anthropological knowledge.

Who, then, are natives? By definition, natives are members of the community under study. Since, however, anthropology developed mainly as the study of primitive society, the term tends to be used to refer to people in peripheral places far removed from the metropolitan centres of the West. For the purposes of this article, however, natives are broadly understood to be people who are objects of anthropological research, regardless of the technological level of their country, especially in the non- Western world. Thus, the Japanese can be ‘natives’, despite their own colonial past, for they have been, and continue to be, studied and described by Western anthropologists.