

Contemporary *Ch'i/Ki* Research in East Asian Countries: Implications to Communication Research

CHUNG Jensen, HARA Kazuya,
YANG Chungli and RYU Ji-Myung

Although the concept of *ch'i (ki)* has been molded and applied to all aspects of lives and disciplines in East Asian cultures for thousands of years, it has been recently introduced to communication studies in the West. This essay compares *ch'i/ki* concepts and their studies in the cultures of China, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. This study finds surprising similarities across the cultures although there are stark differences in definitions across disciplines. Illustrated with recent theories and new directions in *ch'i/ki* research, this essay argues a promising potential for theorizing human communication based on *ch'i/ki*.

Keywords: *Ch'i, ki, qi*, communication, Asiacentric, communication theory

Communication behaviors, like other human behaviors, are influenced by philosophical roots of cultures in a particular communication context. Communication research, therefore, is naturally expected to yield culture-specific theories, methodologies, or at least, perspectives. However, the field of contemporary communication studies, as pointed out by Ishii (2001), has been dominated by U.S. Eurocentric scholarship, which shows reluctance to accept Eastern thought, philosophy, and assumptions concerning communication studies. In addition, Ishii (2001) points out that the U.S. Eurocentric communication scholarship has been dominated by the Cartesian philosophy based on mind-matter dualism, mechanistic views of human beings and natural beings, and the linear progressivism of science and technology. Methodologically, this bias has resulted in the selection of trivial topics,

repetitive research, and a heavy reliance on quantitative measures and statistical tests (Chu, 1988). Communication scholars in the East also tend to unknowingly accept the “value-free” research methods in the name of scientism (Chen, 2002).

To deal with the problem of dominance by the Western perspective, Dissanayake (1986) calls for the exploration of indigenous theoretical concepts formulated in non-Western societies. Chan (2000) urges the development of indigenous theories because they are pivotal to the indigenous communication research. Miike (2002) takes up the calls and proposes a conceptual framework to lay the foundation for establishing an Asiatic paradigm of communication theories. He formulates ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions, which are featured by three central themes: relationality, circularity, and harmony. Furthermore, Miike (2002) suggests three core communicative assumptions for an Asiatic paradigm: 1) Communication takes place in contexts of multiple relationships across space and time; 2) Communication is perceptually and behaviorally both active and passive in a variety of contexts; and 3) Mutual adaptation is of central importance in harmonious communication processes.

The pioneering nature of Miike’s attempt to lay a cornerstone for the Asiatic communication paradigm may eventually be celebrated as a milestone. His assumptions, however, have left some room for augmentation. “Asia” is a broad and vague geographical concept. In addition to Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, there are other cultural roots in this continent to account for the common grounds or idiosyncrasies in Asiatic communication paradigms. Many concepts will need to be introduced to make more inclusive theoretical paradigms. Among them, *ch’i* is a prominent one.

Ch’i, 氣, (or *ki*, as spelled in Korea and Japan, and *qi* as spelled in communist China) is one of the communication-relevant concepts unique to East Asian cultures. In all East Asian cultures it is com-

monly understood and referred to as energy flow, either in human bodies, art works, natural environments, dwelling designs, furniture arrangements, or gravesite locations.

Ch'i/ki is a two-thousand-year-old concept and has been studied by many scholars in East Asia, including China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Over the years it has been studied as part of cosmology and ontology. In recent years, *ch'i/ki* has been studied in connection with natural sciences, including physics and electronics. In the 1990's, scholars in Japan and the United States started applying *ch'i/ki* study to understanding psychology and communication process. They have been making encouraging efforts to bridge the Eastern mystiques and the Western sciences. This study compares the *ch'i/ki* concept as understood in East Asian countries and to find some commonalities and implications to the studies of human communication. It is hoped that findings from this study will provide clues to rendering Asiacentric communication paradigms more solid and complete.

1. Philosophical Roots of *Ch'i* Studies

Although *ch'i/ki* has been studied in various fields such as calligraphy, martial arts, *fengshui*, medicine and literary criticism, it is in philosophy that *ch'i/ki* established its roots and scholarly foundation.

Ch'i is an influential and complex concept in Chinese philosophy. It is studied in ontology, cosmology, and the mind-nature theory. The word “*ch'i*” first appeared in the writings on oracles in the Sang dynasty, referring to the *ch'i* of cloud, a kind of *ch'i* of the nature. It wasn't until the era of Spring and Autumn (春秋) and the era of Warrior States (戰國) that scholars started to investigate the relationships between *ch'i* and human beings, the material world, and human personalities.

Some scholars argued that the concept of *ch'i* should be regarded as a philosophical concept since it is a principle or rule of the operation in the realm of phenomena, and it relates to human beings. The follow-

ing are delineations of *ch'i* as a philosophical concept.

As Cheng (1981) points out, understanding *ch'i* based on the original definition in *I-Ching* (易經) can more accurately redefine the concepts and relations between “*ch'i*” and “*li* (reason).” Interpreting *I-Ching*, Cheng states that *ch'i* apparently refers to the order forming the natural phenomenon and the substance of shaping the form. In addition, the features of *ch'i* include an endless creativity and changeability. Regardless of how complex its diversification and hierarchy are, the activity of *ch'i* constantly remains as an integral unit. It starts as an entity with the content of formless creativity and ends as an entity with the content of order and harmony. Its beginning and ending constitute another entity with more order, harmony, and dynamic for potential change. “*Yin* (陰)” and “*yang* (陽)” are the two fundamental states of activity of *ch'i*. Lo (1979) infers from *I-Ching* passages to define *ch'i* as the fundamental element of the universe.

Yi (2001) argues that although Lao Tzu (老子) contributed only three sentences to the discussion of *ch'i*, the passages confer the status of philosophy to *ch'i* study. These sentences affirm the existence of *ch'i* as being materialistic and as the minimum unit of all things in the world. The three sentences are: “Focus *ch'i* to be as soft as babies,” “Benefiting the living things is considered auspicious, and operating the *ch'i* with the mind renders strength,” and “All things in the world carry *yin* and embrace *yang*, and can reach harmony when coordinated with *ch'i*.” Chung (1993) considers *ch'i* in *Lao Tzu* as baby-like, containing lively and active vigor of life. Cheng (1993) defines *ch'i* in modern terms as a compound state of strength and energy. Chu (1986) made a very important comment on Lao Tzu’s pivotal role in defining *ch'i*: “Lao Tzu inherited *I-Ching* of the Chou dynasty and other classical literature to comprehend the process of transformation of all things in the universe. He inherited the old symbols of “—” and “— —” and conceptualized them into “*yin*” and “*yang*.” With the mutual action-reactions of *yin* and *yang*, *ch'i* is produced” (p. 18).

Chuang Tzu (莊子, 369–286 BC) conferred philosophical status to the concept of *ch'i*. Based on Chuang Tzu's thoughts, *ch'i* is a ubiquitous material, the arch-spore of human life and ever-changing of all things in the universe.

Mencius (孟子, 372–279 BC), a prominent Confucian scholar during the era of Warrior States, made two major contributions to the evolution of the concept of *ch'i*. First was the delineation of the relationship between *jih* (志) and *ch'i*. *Jih* is a will power and an intellectual state of the mind, while *ch'i* is the expression of the physical content and vitality of our body. *Jih* leads *ch'i*; the will power can influence vitality. Second, Mencius stressed the moral aspect of the *ch'i* and regarded righteousness as an essential component of nurturing the “righteous *ch'i*.”

Ting-shiang Wang (王廷相, 1472–1544), an experientialist, integrated the Taoist concepts of nature and *ch'i* and pioneered the naturalism of *ch'i*. Zhai Zhang (張載 or 張橫渠, 960–1126) is known as the first person that theorized *ch'i* in depth. He asserted “all those can be described exist, all those exist can be recognized, and all those recognizable have *ch'i*” (Liu, 2000, p. 6). Being recognizable is not necessarily being visible. “All those healthy, fluent, active, idle, and splendid are recognizable” (Liu, 2000, p. 12).

2. *Ch'i/Qi* Studies in Contemporary China

Ch'i/qi studies in contemporary China are mainly in two realms: philosophy and qigong (氣功, the function of *ch'i* on supernatural abilities). The *ch'i* study in philosophy was motivated by the communist ideology of materialism. One of the primary philosophical foundations of communism is materialism, which argues for the sole existence of materials and physical attributes and the non-existence of non-material entities like minds or their attributes. Materialism stresses the externally observable scientific methods to study human beings, playing down the relationships between humans, and their minds or

egos. In this view, minds and psychological attributes will eventually bog down to complicated physical systems. Thus Dai-nien Zhang, in the 1930's, argued that since *ch'i* is the fundamental unit of all things, all things are materials. In other words, the claim of the sole existence of *ch'i* can be equated to the claim of the sole existence of materials.

With the equation of *ch'i* to materials and materialism, *ch'i* study became one of the most "politically correct" fields of philosophy study after the Communist takeover of China. Due to this political connection, *ch'i* study received a great support in the field of philosophy. Dai-nien Zhang's argument was refuted by Taiwanese *ch'i* scholars in recent years. This will be discussed in the later section of this essay when reporting *ch'i* research in Taiwan.

Ch'i study also received unusual support in Chinese *qigong* (氣功, *ch'i* technique) research. Xieh-seng Chien, a Chinese American physicist who defected to China during the Cold War era, was fascinated by the mystique of Chinese *ch'i* practice. With his political clout, he urged the government to encourage the *qigong* research in the context of supernature study.

3. The *Ki* (氣) Concept: *Ki* Research in Japan

Since introduced from China, the concept of *ch'i*, known as *ki* in Japan, has played an important role in the discussion and study of health, emotions, intentions, public opinions, human relationships, and even martial arts. Japanese dictionaries contain many definitions of *ki*, such as spirit, temperament, awareness, or atmosphere. Many of them are closely related to human communication. In this section we will report the evolution of the meanings of *ki*, its perceived functions, and studies of *ki* related to communication research.

Historical Review of the *Ki* Concept in Japan

In the Nara (710–784 A.D.) and Heian (794–1185 A.D.) periods

(including the Yamato period), the word *ki* was read as *iki* or *kokoro* (Maebashi, Sato, and Kobayashi, 2000). In *Nihonshoki* (“Historical Record of Japan” written in 720 A.D.), *ki* (気) was read as *iki*, *kokorobae*, *shirushi*, or *ka*, and referred to breath, force, symptom, or smelling, respectively (see Sakamoto, 1974). In the Heian period, *ki*’s pronunciation evolved to *ke* or *ki* and was commonly used. In the book, *The Tale of Heike* (1219 to 1222 A.D.), *ke* appears frequently and refers to one’s psychological and emotional state, illness, or symptoms of childbirth (see Takagi, 1959).

In modern times (from the Meiji era to the end of the Pacific War), *ki* became a concept the Japanese commonly embraced as a function of the mind and body or interpersonal relationships. Maebashi, Sato, & Kobayashi (2000) classify *ki* in terms of the relationships between the mind and the body and between two persons. The first type of *ki* in his typology features the nature of inseparability of mind and body. For example, the expression *genki* (元気: healthy), *byoki* (病気: illness), *kibun* (気分: one’s feelings) include both psychological and physiological states. The second type of *ki* showcases the nature of occasional mind-will incompatibility, indicating that *ki* does not always work as the mind expects. Such expressions include *ki ga tsuyoi*, *kiga yowai* (気が強い or 弱い: brave or timid), or *kisho* (気性: temperament). The third type of *ki* indicates the nature of presentness. *Ki* sometimes does not show its independent subjectivity in a person. Expressions standing for the psychological state of *ki* not being related to one’s will include *kimagure* (気まぐれ: a whim), *ki no mukumama* (気の向くまま: as one feels inclined to do), and *ki ga noranai* (気が乗らない: be reluctant to do). The fourth kind of *ki* shows the nature of relationships between-subjects. The expressions *ki ga au* or *ki ga awanai* (気が合う or 気合わない: whether one can get along well with the other or not) shows that this type of *ki* cannot exist without the other person.

Defining and Conceptualizing *Ki* in Contemporary Japan

Obviously it is not an easy task to exhaust the definitions of *ki*. Scholars have been trying to define it with some functional foci. Shinmura (1991) defines *ki* from five aspects: 1) *Ki* as the basic component that fills the space between heaven and earth. *Ki* of this concept covers the occurrences of natural phenomena such as wind and rain, or heat and cold. 2) *Ki* as the energy of an impelling force of the life. 3) *Ki* as the state and work of the mind. This definition includes the spirit, motivation, energy, and emotion. 4) *Ki* as the atmosphere with which people feel surrounded. This *ki* serves as an unspoken assumption that people share a context when communicating. 5) *Ki* as a specific taste and conspicuous characteristics which symbolizes a thing or an issue. As Hamano (1987 b) points out, Japanese people perceive *ki* as something ethereal rather than something physical. Essentially, it can be concluded that the main idea of *ki* for Japanese people stands for their sensitivity to other's feelings, and also refers to an altruistic feeling of pleasure.

Idiomatic Expressions Using *Ki*

Hara (2002) selects 57 idiomatic expressions with which “*ki*” is used as a main concept in a Japanese language dictionary. Based on his categories, a simple preliminary analysis shows that 37 definitions are related to one's emotions, feelings and opinions (65%), 15 stand for the human relationship maintenance (26%), 2 cover health (4%), and 3 (5%) are used to express an atmosphere in a context. This result indicates that, in Japanese relational communication, *ki* mainly works as an element to evoke sensitivity to others and to smooth communicative atmosphere in a context where people share a passage of time.

***Ki* Related to Present-Day Japanese Communication Research**

As reviewed above, the word *ki* delineates Japanese people's feelings, thoughts, and personality. Hamano (1987 a) analyzes how *ki* is

used to describe personality traits and found four factors. First, *ki* is a changeable material, which implies that our personality metaphorically has *ki* within it. Such expressions as *kimamana* (気ままな: fickle) and *kizewashii* (気ぜわしい: restless, fidgety) stand for one's changeable emotion. Second, *ki* is attention to others. For example, *ki wo tsukau* (気を使う, be sensitive to other's feelings) is required for harmonious communication, and one's personality is evaluated by the extent to which we pay attention to others. Third, *ki* is "radio waves" between people, a capacity of tuning into others is a measure to evaluate an individual's. This implies one's feeling of getting along with others (気が合う: *ki ga au or not*) is the premise for successful communication. Fourth, *ki* is the quantity of psychic energy. Here, *ki* metaphorically stands for one's willingness and motivation. The person who is mentally tough is said to be *ki ga tsuyoi* (気が強い: strong *ki*), and the one who is timid is said to be *ki ga yowai* (気が弱い: weak *ki*).

Subsequently, Hamano (1987 b) presents three types of *ki* in interpersonal relationship: 1) Japanese people feel that *ki* appears as something alien to their egos and without their conscious awareness. This indicates that Japanese people accept *ki* as something that is uncontrollable and cannot be rejected. For example, *Ki* is seen in such idiomatic expressions as *ki ga sumu* (to be satisfied; to be calm) or *ki ni suru* (to worry about; to be anxious about). These expressions show that *ki* is regarded as something that exists in itself and comes from somewhere other than the psychological field of the person. 2) *Ki* in interpersonal relationships is the *ki* recognized in the presence of another person. For example, *ki ga au* (to get on well with each other) or *ki-gane suru* (to feel uneasy; to be shy) cannot be felt without the existence of others. This type of *ki* is changeable depending on the relationship with the other. 3) *Ki* is that which is ego-syntonic and interchangeable with the word *kokoro* (personal psyche; mind; or spirit). This type of *ki* is mostly found in *ki* as personality-trait

names.

In addition to *ki* studies at the interpersonal communication level, *ki* also is studied at the mass communication level. Ito (2002), for example, studies *kuuki*, defined as “social, political, and psychological pressures demanding compliance to a certain specific opinion, policy, or group decision and usually accompanied by threats and social sanction”. He specifies five conditions to be met in order for *kuuki* to be strong enough to exert influences. The five conditions are: 1) The majority opinion accounts for the majority in more than two of the three sectors: government, mass media, and the public. 2) The majority opinion accounts for the majority across the three sectors. 3) The majority opinion increases over time. 4) The intensity of the majority opinion is escalating. 5) The subject matter tends to stir up the “spirits” inherent in individuals such as basic values, norms, prejudices, antagonism, and loyalty to the collective or patriotism (Ito, 2002).

Brought together with the “interpersonal communication *ki*” reviewed in this section, the “mass communication *ki*” introduced by Ito adds to the possibility of reaching a common principle, if not theory, of “*ki* communication.”

4. *Ki* (氣) Research in Korea

A common understanding of *ki* (氣) in Korea is reflected in the Korean language. The term *ki* in the Korean language is used to represent mental states, disease, emotions, natural phenomenon, personalities, characteristics of body types, etc. (Kim, K., 1997). Many Korean idioms and expressions contain the term “*ki*.” For example, the Korean word for air is *kyungki* (空氣), meaning “like empty but full of *ki*.” *Daeki* (大氣) means “great *ki*” and refers to the atmosphere, implying that *ki* is ubiquitous. A person’s disposition, *kigil* (氣質) refers to the unique character each person possesses.

Ki in Korean also refers to tangible objects, such as common cold,

kamki (感氣). It is also described as a moving force that invigorates a person. When someone is full of energy in professional or personal settings, it is commonly said that he or she has good *kisae* (氣勢). Many *ki*-building practitioners and trainees in Korea believe that *ki* trainings can enhance one's health and even the fate of one's life (Kim, 1994).

The next section provides an overview of the Korean research on *ki* that has expanded its philosophical conceptualization to scientific explanations of *ki*. The review of literature on *ki* is mostly based on Kyu-Bin Kim's (1997) comprehensive overview of current discussions on Korean *ki* concept. In the following, we offer a brief history of *ki* research. We will then review Kyu-Bin Kim's discussion of research on *ki* in Korea.

A History of *Ki* Research in Korea

Korean interest in philosophical and scientific research on *ki* has increased since *ki*-training programs became popular nationally in the 1980s. During that period, a "*ki* boom" swept the country. Scholars attributed this boom to the public's attention to Chinese artifacts and concepts as a result of Jung-Bin Kim's famous novel, "*Dahn* (丹)" and the establishment of diplomatic relations with China (Kim, K. 1997). *Ki*-training centers were established, and articles and instructions written in Chinese or Japanese became available. The study on "*ki* philosophy" and "*ki* science" thus became popular (Kim, K. 1997).

Ki, however, is not new to Koreans. When Chinese Taoism was introduced to Korea at the end of the Koguryo dynasty (B.C. 624), it included the concept of *ki* in relation to spiritual training. Yet it was understood more as a religion than a subject of scholarship and was not as widely accepted as in the 1980s. Later in the Chosôn dynasty (B.C. 1392–1910), Neung-Hwa Lee (historian, B.C. 1868–1945) introduced the term *Dahnhak* (丹學) in relation to *ki* in his book, *The History of Cho-sun Taoism* (Kim, K. 1997). According to Ill-chi Lee,

president of the Korean Research Institute for New Human Science, *Dahnhak* refers to a study of *ki* for the purposes of mastering the balancing of mind and body. Thus, studies of *Dahnhak* in Korea are usually related to mind/body harmony training programs designed to promote the harmonious growth of individuals (Retrieved May 3, 2002 from <http://www.healingsociety.org>).

Public and academic interests in *ki* flourished in the 1990s. In the early 2000s, discussions on *ki* in the areas of philosophy, psychology, and mental science are more actively debated than ever before. Won-Kwang University, for example, announced the establishment of a new graduate school of *ki*. In addition, countless *ki*-related groups and training centers (providing *ki* training, breathing techniques, *ki* exercise, etc) train people to increase personal levels of *ki*. Among philosophical discussions on *ki*, academic efforts to interpret or reinterpret the conceptualization of *ki* are noteworthy because they offer logical explanations of *ki* phenomena, which will be discussed in the following section.

Current Discussions on *Ki* in Korea

Kyo-Bin Kim (1994) identifies several areas of *ki* research that hold diverse but interdependent theoretical perspectives: first is the new science movement. Influential in this movement is Fritjof Capra, who placed modern biology and ecology under revisionist scrutiny in his well-known books, *The Tao of Physics* and *The Web of Life*. Capra (1990) argues for the need to view the universe as a unified system by incorporating Eastern philosophy into physics. Capra's contention is based on the premise that the spirit-body and nature-human dichotomies that dominate Western philosophy for so long constrain the understanding of Western civilization. Scientists who support the "new science" movement believe that as physics develops, a new way of thinking is specially needed to deal with crises of contemporary civilization. The philosophy of *ki*, as an element in the "new sci-

ence” movement, is mainly based on *ki* theories of Chang Hwoen-Gu (張橫渠, or 張載 Zhang Zhai, using the Chinese pronunciation of his original name, 1020–1077), a Chinese philosopher of Taoism and Oriental medicine.

The main idea of *ki* in the “new science” movement is that *ki* is an attribute not of only material substance but also of human beings. This idea is used for studying physics, medicine, and neuroscience. For example, *ki* is incorporated into physics to bring a new understanding of relationships between protons and the structure of the universe. It is also used to explain the field theory that focuses on the interdependence of substance and space. In medicine, studies were conducted to find effects of *ki* on human bodies. The Korea Research Institute of Jungshin Science is one of the major research organizations attempting to establish “*ki* science” by measuring auras of *ki*, investigating life cycles of all living beings, and assessing the impact of *ki* trainings on brain functions.

These studies were not free, however, from traditional paradigms of Western science. According to Kim (1994), the “new science” movement has been criticized for viewing the universe holistically and has resulted in reinforcing traditional scientific theories, instead of reaching a new understanding of humanity and nature. Furthermore, the “new science” movement emphasizes only selective aspects of Eastern and Western philosophies to prove the similarities between contemporary physics and Eastern philosophies. Their research disregards fundamental differences between the Eastern philosophy of *ki* and contemporary physics. In other words, their intent was merely to use *ki* to collaborate existing understandings rather than produce new ones.

The second approach to studying *ki* is to re-conceptualize traditional notions of *ki* through scientific and rational language relevant to contemporary contexts. This effort is most common in the field of philosophy and oriental medicine. In this approach, *ki* is pivotal in

describing nature and humanity. In fact, this approach resists the view of nature and human as separate. Scholars who support this approach recognize the limitations of studying *ki* in separate fields. That is, *ki* studies in the philosophy discipline have focused only on developing abstract arguments while medical studies have lost the philosophical roots of *ki* in demonstrating experiences of *ki* in relation to treatments (Kim, 1994). Scholars who take this approach argue that the fields of philosophy and medicine should collaborate to find commonalities in the two disciplines and develop a theoretical framework and methodologies more appropriate in the contemporary settings.

Much remains undone in order to meet these challenges. The common assumption, even among scientists doing research on *ki*, is that medical research related to *ki* is not “science” due to its lack of theories that guide research or lack of scientific methods. Furthermore, medical research on *ki* has tended to focus more on miraculous effects of *ki* trainings rather than trying to develop a valid instrument to measure *ki*. Studies that attempt to incorporate philosophy and medical science into *ki* have been minimal. Research on *ki* in this approach needs many more discussions to understand how traditional Korean philosophers have changed their perspectives on *ki*, and its implications in current times.

The third approach to studying *ki* is to develop new paradigms from traditional theories of ethics related to *ki*. Dong-Il Jo, professor of Korean literature at Seoul National University, for example, conducted historical analyses of Korean literature and used the notion of *ki* to evaluate Korean literature. Specifically, he argues that the notion of *ki* can be used to assess what literature accomplishes in terms of ethics. In addition, he argues that literature resembles sounds, and sounds are generated by *ki*. Good literature in his terms is something that makes good and right sounds, which represent stored *ki* (Jo, 2000). One of the strengths of this approach is its attempts to

resist Western world views and develop a theory that includes indigenous Korean philosophies. One of its limitations, according to Kim, is that it neglects the differences among Korean philosophers such as Dae-Young Hong, Kyung-Duck Sue, and Han-Ki Choi in their views of *ki*. For example, Kyung-Duck Sue approaches *ki* ontologically, focusing on the existence of *ki*. Han-Ki Choi holds that every natural phenomenon, including birth, death or natural evolution, happens because of forces of *ki*. This approach is at the stage of questioning and challenging existing theories rather than developing a new way of thinking about *ki*.

The fourth approach to studying *ki* rejects logical explanations of the *ki* phenomenon. The major focus of this approach is on improving personal health and spiritual peace. In this viewing of *ki*, the main goals of *ki* include personal experiences of *ki* in relation to achieving liberation and empowerment. Kim attributes this school of thought to Korea's social changes since the 1980s. Desire for freedom and real democracy ran high in the late 1980s because the corrupted Korean government employed constant violence and coercion to maintain its power. Anger and anxiety, caused by the political situations, diverted people's interests from what was happening in real life to achieving a sense of freedom from the study and practice of *ki*.

Kim's review is not the only synthesis available on *ki* research in Korea. As discussed above, *ki* has been used to explain literally every phenomenon of Korean life, making it challenging to exhaust research on *ki* in various fields.

5. *Ch'i* Studies in Taiwan

Ch'i not only plays a key role in the daily lives of people in Taiwan as it does in mainland China, but also in the history of traditional scholarship. *Ch'i* studies in this country can be categorized into the following areas: 1) *ch'i* of nature, 2) *ch'i* of Chinese medicine, 3) *ch'i* in

religion, 4) *ch'i* of literary works, 5) *ch'i* in philosophy, 6) *ch'i* with regard to kinesiology, and 7) *ch'i* in supernatural power. Scholarly works on *ch'i* in Taiwan are mostly in philosophy, followed by literary criticism, physics and neuroscience similar to the “new science” studied in Korea reported in the previous section.

“Literary *ch'i* (文氣)” studies can be categorized according to elements of the communication process: communicator *ch'i* and the messaging *ch'i*. Chang’s works (1976, 1994) provide the best examples for the study of communicator *ch'i*. A major theme in Chang’s studies on literary *ch'i* (wen *ch'i*) is suitably summarized by him in a Chinese idiom of four characters: “文如其人 (*wen lu chi ren*, articles are like their authors).” Worded differently, the extent or the kind of *ch'i* in the message reflects the *ch'i* of those of the author’s. Studying *ch'i* in certain written works, thus, can be conducted by studying the writer (communicator). Such studies would focus on how authors cultivate *ch'i*, and how authors’ academic backgrounds or life styles impact their literary *ch'i*. “Wen lu chi ren” appears to be a fundamental assumption of literary *ch'i*.

Methods of cultivating *ch'i* include extensive reading, frequent scholarly discussion, broad travel, methodical health maintenance, and morally-based self-nurturing. According to major *ch'i* scholars, reading sages’ writing or other works with abundant *ch'i* would enhance one’s *ch'i*. Visiting and discussing with learned scholars would broaden one’s vision and thus boost one’s *ch'i*. Touring vista points such as magnificent mountains and rivers would inspire one to develop grand *ch'i*. A strong or healthy physical body would provide a stamina base to generate powerful *ch'i*.

The second model of literary or written communication *ch'i* is the message model, which represents the method of designing ideal *ch'i* in writings. Strategies of fostering message *ch'i* essentially arrange messages to make the writing radiate with *ch'i*. Chu (1988) lists a smorgasbord of messaging techniques, including wording, phrase and

sentence making, structuring or organizing of an article, etc.

The notion of studying *ch'i* from the perspective of communication was introduced to Taiwan early this century when a scholar from the United States spearheaded the study of literary *ch'i* as a study of written communication (Chung, 2002). According to his theory, literary *ch'i* is generated by pairing the *yin* and *yang* elements in a message. For example, antithesis creates *ch'i* by contrasting two opposites (represented by *yin* and *yang*) that give readers senses of excitement, amazement, or sentiment (Chung, 2002).

Communication study on *ch'i* in Taiwan is still in its budding stage. Nevertheless, the prolific *ch'i* study in philosophy over the past fifty years and the communication study boom in the late 1990's provide a fertile ground for the future growth of "*ch'i* communication studies" in Taiwan.

6. Implications to Communication Research

The review of *ch'i/ki* studies yields some interesting comparisons among the different cultures in East Asia. It also provides implications to studies of "*ch'i/ki* communication." They are discussed as follows:

Comparisons of *Ch'i/Ki* Research in East Asia

A comparison of *ch'i* (*ki*) studies in China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan reveals that these cultures share approximately the same conceptions about *ch'i/ki*, even though each culture developed its own *ch'i/ki* folk expressions. Except in Japan, political environment or ideologies have left imprints on the study of *ch'i/ki*. The identification of *ch'i/ki* with materialism in China fostered its *ch'i/ki* research, which made Taiwanese scholars cautious and reluctant to engage in it before Taiwan and Communist China initiated rapprochement in the 1990's. In Korea it is argued that political oppression drove people to seek a mental refuge in *ch'i/ki* exercise and thus enhanced *ch'i/ki* research.

Although it was in China that the concept of *ch'i/ki* originated, Japan, Korea, China, and Taiwan respectively developed their own localized research both in themes and methods. Although *ch'i/ki* scholars in these countries dutifully study *ch'i/ki* as a sphere of philosophy, all but Japan have spent noteworthy efforts in studying *ch'i/ki* as a field of qigong. The Chinese government once encouraged qigong, and Korea has had organizations promoting it. Korean scholars seem to have created a bandwagon effect toward scientific research of *ch'i/ki*, and there have been critical self-reviews on their scientific orientation.

Etymological methods seem to be uniquely favored by Japanese researchers on *ch'i/ki* (Hamano, 1987). Japan, the most advanced among these four countries in terms of tying *ch'i/ki* research to psychological and even interpersonal communication studies, creatively connects *ch'i/ki* functions to intrapersonal and interpersonal communication. When we treat literary criticism or rhetorical study as written communication, Taiwan has pioneered “*ch'i/ki* communication” study. In summary, the *ch'i/ki*-based communication research has been budding in these countries and has laid solid cornerstones for the future *ch'i/ki* studies.

The definitions of *ch'i/ki* as previously described indicate similarities among cultures or countries although there are stark differences among scholarly fields. Shinmura's (1991) five aspects of *ki* definition cited in the Japanese *ki* section above point out the polysemy of the term as applied to different fields. The term refers to concepts ranging from being physical, physiological, psychological, kinesiological, mythical, to metaphorical. From the Western or scientific point of view, which tends to demand more exact definition of concepts, *ch'i/ki* in these fields may refer to completely different concepts. For example, *ch'i/ki* in medicine refers to an invisible energy flow through meridian points in the human body as identified in acupuncture crafts, while *ch'i/ki* in human relations can mean atmosphere or climate of

opinion. Nevertheless, the definitions for *ch'i/ki* terms in any one culture can be applied to others. Even across fields, *ch'i/ki* is commonly regarded a result of the interaction of *yin* and *yang*. The comparison in this study presents a promising possibility for future developments of a united theory explaining all *ch'i/ki* phenomena. For the purpose of this study, we employ communication studies applying the *ch'i/ki* concept as examples.

Constructing Models of *Ch'i/Ki*-Based Communication

One of the earliest and basic principles of *ch'i* theories is that *ch'i/ki* is generated by the interaction of *yin* and *yang* forces. This interaction serves as a logical starting point for establishing *ch'i/ki*-based theories. Some recent works by scholars in the U.S. illustrate the promising potential of such a direction. Chung & Busby (2002), for example, theorize the organizing process as consisting of at least three sets of *yin* and *yang* forces: management (the powerful *yang* force) vs. employees (the relatively powerless *yin* force), superior vs. subordinate, and organization (the active *yang*) vs. its environment (the passive *yin*). The interplays of the opposing, yet complementary, forces produce *ch'i/ki* by means of communication. Chung & Busby (2002) employ this basic assumption to analyze organizational communication with naming strategies.

The *yin-yang* paradigm can also be applied to written communication. In traditional China, most writings were broadly considered literary (文) works. *Ch'i* studies on literary works are *ch'i* studies on written communication. Literary criticism with respect to *ch'i* thus constitutes a major component of *ch'i* literature relevant to written communication. Several messaging methods for generating literary *ch'i* demonstrate the interaction of the *yin* and *yang* forces. For example, generating and enhancing *ch'i* in the Chinese spoken language involves the interplay of vowels vs. consonants, “solid words (實字)” vs. “empty words (虛字),” and throaty sounds vs. nasal sounds

(Chu, 1988). Here, vowels, the basic sounds, can be considered *yin*, and the consonants, the mobile sounds, the *yang*. The solid words, the primary words, are the *yang*, and the “empty words,” the auxiliary words, the *yin*. The throaty sounds or the compound sounds, are called *yin* sounds by Chinese literary scholars and nasal sounds or the clear sounds, the *yang* sounds. *Yin* and *yang* interact to generate *ch'i*.

Another *ch'i*-based communication model does not specify the *yin-yang* interaction, but instead focuses on the interaction of *ch'i* and its sibling concept *shih* (勢, or the strategic advantage in exercising *ch'i*, See Figure 1). Isaacson & Chung (2001) categorize four *shih* strategies that can boost *ch'i*: suck *shih* (借勢, driving or riding *shih*), buck *shih* (逆勢, going against the overwhelming *shih*), duck *shih* (避勢, avoiding the unconquerable *shih*), and construct *shih* (造勢, creating *shih*). Isaacson & Chung (2001) employ this model to analyze communication strategies during Bush and Gore’s 2000 election standoff over the Florida ballot counts.

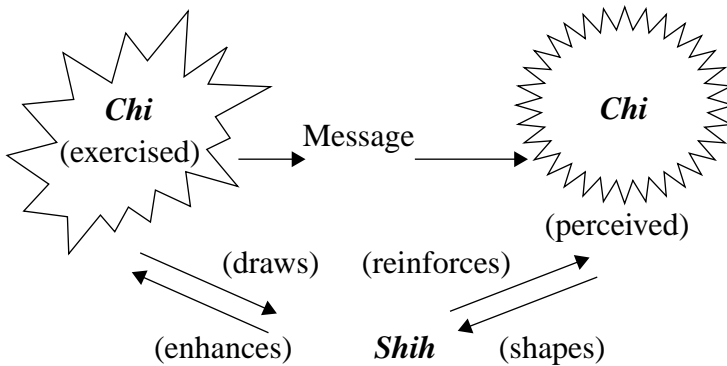


Fig. 1. Process of *Ch'i* Communication

Another *ki*-based communication model shows the potential of taking advantage of a certain existing Western theory. As is argued above, *ki* functions as a smoother in Japanese relational com-

munication. Therefore, an interpersonal communication model can be constructed by describing how *ki* works in its contexts. This model analyzes the process that how *ki* emerges in one's mind will create successful relational communication. The model is explained with the diagram as follows (Hara, 2002):

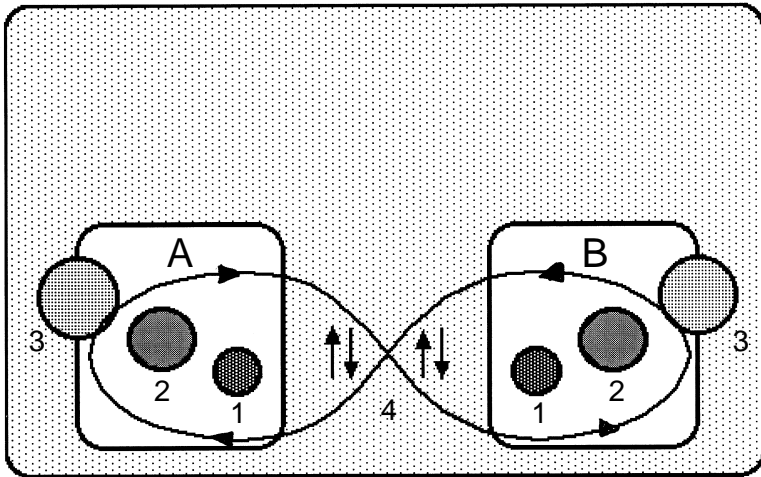


Fig. 2. *Ki*-Based Interpersonal Communication Model

First, *ki*, the energy flow directed toward maintaining an atmosphere between two persons, emerges in both person A and person B's minds (indicated by the smallest and darkest circles 1). These cores of *ki* may grow to be more concrete (shown by each circle 2) because of considering the communication partner and the context. *Ki* will be seen as sensitive to the partner and the context with verbal usage or behavior (shown in each circle 3). *Ki* grows through the process (circles 1, 2, and 3) and will become the "aura" by which the context is filled with *ki*. The interaction process between both person A and person B (described with the two-way infinitive symbol 4) is in a state of "identity-in-unity." This is based on Yoshikawa's (1987) theory of

the double-swing model of dialogical mode encounter and communication. Yoshikawa's theory posits a model indicating that both persons A and B are simultaneously independent and interdependent. He refers to the concept of dialogical relationship in Buber's (1958) I and Thou model. In I-Thou relationship, each communicator treats the other as a whole, living and responding to subject or a Thou, and the relationship between I and Thou are not exclusively separated but are in essence related.

Based on the Buber's philosophy of dialogue and Buddhist logic of *soku*, Yoshikawa (1987) develops the "double-swing model." Yoshikawa states that when *ki*, the life energy, "flows out of each other" (p. 327), the infinite model works dynamically. In Hara's *ki*-based interaction model, the degree of two communicators' *ki*-based sensitivity (indicated by the up and down arrows close to the infinite mark 4) indicates how much *ki* should be appropriately expressed depending on the situation.

Risking the criticism that we are confined by the Western framework of conceptualizing, we would suggest that, as evidenced by the Japanese studies on *ki*, employing the Western models of human behavior theories may be an efficient approach to developing the East-West understanding and collaboration of the *ki* scholarship.

7. Conclusion

Okabe (1991) points out that the East-Asian study of communication and rhetoric "should profitably explicate the communicational and rhetorical functions, potentialities, and mechanisms of the concept *ki* from cultural perspectives so that they can further enrich the theories of communication and rhetoric in the East" (p. 87). A conclusion from explorations presented in this essay should echo this thought. As one of the pioneering endeavors, this study compared the conceptualization process, research orientation, and research method of *ch'i/ki* in various East-Asian countries. The *ch'i/ki* concept appar-

ently has an unlimited potential for contributing to communication research as an alternative conceptualization of the communication process. Since the late 1980's in East Asia and in the United States, there have been discussions about localizing communication research or developing Asiacentric paradigms of communication theories. The indigenous field of *ch'i/ki* reviewed in this article should provide a more realistic example for envisioning the future of the Asian paradigm of communication research.

On the other hand, the accomplishments of Japanese scholars in bridging the interpersonal communication concepts with *ki* concepts demonstrate that the number of stumbling blocks in establishing the East-Asian model of communication would be reduced if we remain mindful of research results in the Western communication community and even in other disciplines. For example, the Western concept of "sublimity," including mathematic sublimity and dynamic sublimity, is not only similar but also complementary to the Eastern theory of *ch'i/ki* (Roberts, 1970). Siu's (1980) unusually in-depth exploration of *ch'i* within the context of Western science should also provide some helpful insight for the Korean debate on whether *ki* study should be free from traditional paradigms of Western science. In addition, Chung's (1995, 1996, 2002) *ch'i* studies or discussions within the context of leadership communication, nonverbal communication, and organizational communication, may converge with Japanese studies of interpersonal communication (Hamano, 1987; Hara, 2002) and Taiwanese accomplishments in the *ch'i* perspective of written communication.

Above all, it is imperative to theorize *ch'i/ki* concepts and studies in order to build a respectable discipline and to provide useful applications to other fields. Toward this end, we need more intensive efforts in reviewing the philosophical roots of *ch'i/ki* study. For example, since *ch'i/ki* is generated with the interaction between *yin* and *yang*, a question that would naturally arise is: how is *ch'i/ki* in

certain communication activities generated in terms of *yin* and *yang*? Or, worded differently, what are the *yin* and *yang* in certain communication or communication contexts? We also need more interactions between the communication discipline and *ch'i/ki* studies. Obviously, *ch'i/ki* scholars in East-Asian countries can better shoulder the responsibility of spearheading these drives.

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