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Change and Continuity in East Asian 1800-2000: Dynamism and Transformation of Geo-Political China Region

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Introduction

It has long been the practice to analyze modern Asia from the viewpoint of nations and international relationships. Through this bipartite framework, much historiographical labor has been expended examining the degree of so-called "nation-building" and the acceptance of "international" law (萬國公法) in the respective Asian countries.

This approach has also been understood to reveal the degree of "modernization" of Asian countries. After much controversy concerning the adaptability of this Western-oriented modernization model to Asia, however, it has also been argued that "areas" or "regions" - an intermediate category between the nation and the world generally - should be analyzed in their full historical meaning. In fact, the region is an historical reality which encompasses a variety of social ties not adequately dealt with under the nation-international framework.

In studies of economic history, the regional economies which mediate national and international economies should indeed be given much more weight. At the same time, those carrying out regional studies should avoid limiting themselves to local matters which constitute only a part of the overall picture.¹⁾

Using the regional studies approach, it is necessary to reconstruct the whole historical process of modern Asia. That is, the history of modern Asia needs to be clarified, not in terms of the "stages of development" of the Western modernization model, but in terms of the complex of interrelationships within the region itself, in the light of Asian self-conceptions.

Generally speaking, Asian history is the history of a unified system characterized by internal tribute/tribute-trade relations, with China at the center. This tribute system is the premise of the "modern" Asia which has emerged in the Asia region and is reflected in several aspects of

contemporary Asian history.2)

This framework of analysis of modern Asia requires a reinterpretation of the following four issues:

- 1 Chinese ideals of control and their institutional manifestations;
- 2 The historical role of the tribute system and the relationships within it;
- 3 The relationship between "East" and "West;"
- 4 The modern history of Japan and China.

Among the conclusions likely to be drawn from such a reinterpretation, several are of particular interest:

Firstly, the prevalent understanding has been that China has been a centralized despotism with a huge bureaucratic institution. The reinterpretation will delineate a center-local relationship involving a division of powers, with the center itself as an economic subject alongside other local ones.3)

As for the tribute system, it has been understood that the recognition and investiture of a king in each tribute country (册封) was central to the maintenance of the Sinocentric system. But, in fact, the system was an external expression of basic domestic relations of control which saw a hierarchical division of power - from the provinces downward and outward. Thus, the tribute system was an organic entity with center-periphery relations extending from the central government to the provinces and dependencies of the Empire, including the native tribes and administrators of native districts, tribute countries and even trading partners. As a part of this continuum, areas of southeast, northeast, central and northwest Asia functioned as a tribute trade area with east Asia as its center, the whole being connected with the adjacent Indian trade area.4)

Next, this new systemic understanding of tribute trade relations bears major implications for the history of East-West relations.

Westerners newly arrived in Asia, particularly the Portuguese and Spanish, had to participate in an intra-Asian trade network that already existed in order to obtain what they wanted. This also means that there was little direct exchange of commodities between East and West. Eastern countries could obtain necessities either by payment in silver or through exchange within the intra-Asian trade system. Nor did things change much when Holland and England entered the picture. They, too, had to come to

terms with the existing Asian tribute trade system, adapt to it, and learn to utilize it. Consequently, the nature of Western "expansion" in and "impact" on Asia was conditioned by the existence of this Asian trade zone based on the tribute trade system, even after the advent of the "modern" period. China and the Asian tribute trade system responded to Western countries and the imposed treaties from within the system. Hence it is difficult to define modern Asia clearly according to the change from the tribute system to the treaty system.⁵⁾

Finally, on the basis of the foregoing, it might again be asked what "modern" Asia is and how it may be interpreted within the framework of the tribute system and tribute trade area.

In examining post-19th-century Asian economic history, the capitalism-industrialization framework has generally been used, with the degree of "modernization" being determined according to the degree of industrialization. Moreover, the modernization process is examined in terms of two sets of stimuli: - internal and external. Judged from the viewpoint of the tribute system, however, Asian modernization cannot be grasped by merely presenting stages in the formation of national economies in each country, but must be defined on the basis of the relationships between Asian countries and the tribute trade system, and the transformation of those relationships. The Asian modernization process will then be examined, not in terms of the degree of impact of the West, but of the degree of change in the relationship between each country and area of Asia towards the regional tribute trade system. In such a perspective, the new relations with the West only offered a certain motivation for changes in the system, and did not replace it. The case of Japan, however, is exceptional. Japan did consciously undertake to industrialize and Westernize itself, so the process may usefully be viewed as one of "modernization." But if we look into the historical motivation for Japanese industrialization, we will find that Japan, too, chose its particular course in order to cope with the tribute trade system. Thus, it may still be said that even Japan was strongly affected by this system that bound the various countries of the region into a single entity or zone.

2. Sino-Japanese Relations in the Modern Asian World

If we view the tribute trade zone, composed of an East Asian economic

zone and a Southeast Asia-South China economic zone, as an historical system functioning with its own integrating rationale, what implications does this have for our understanding of the relationship between East and West ? And how should we view the long history of the Sino-Japanese relationship within this zone ? Finally, how might we reinterpret the "modernization" of Asia ?

As was mentioned at the outset, generally speaking, the Western countries did not constitute their own category outside the tribute system. They were all included under the logic of tribute relations, and even geographically speaking were seen as being situated at some indeterminate distance beyond the frontiers of China. In Kuang-tung, for example, Great Britain was not even identified by Chinese officials as the same country that had sent a diplomatic representation to Tibet.⁶) Accordingly, when Western countries first dealt with Asia, they had little choice but to deal with the tribute relations which were the basis of all relations in the region. They could enter Asia only by participating in the tribute trade network and managed to modify it only after they had established a working base within it. From the viewpoint of Asian history, Asian countries never responded individually or separately to Western countries coming to Asia, but rather through the tribute trade system to which all of them belonged as integral parts.

The history of relations between China and Siam provides an interesting example of how Asian countries viewed Western countries and utilized them for Asian purposes. In 1884, during the Sino-French war over Indo-China, the Governor-General of Kuang-tung and Kuang-hsi, P'eng Yu-lin (兩廣總督彭玉麟), sent the self-strengthening movement entrepreneur Cheng Kuan-yin (鄭觀應) on a mission to Siam. His personal records contain the following section, which at first glance seems to contradict the image of an enlightened intellectual of the time.

"On the 26th of May, 1884, when Cheng Kuan-yin met the 'consul' of Siam in Singapore, Ch'en Chin-chung (駐星加坡暹羅領事陳金鐘), he said that (a) it was a "crime" for Siam to have stopped its tribute embassies to China and (b) that such a decision by Siam was not justified even, under inter-national law (公法)." ⁷) Although Cheng was supposedly an enlightened, Western educated Chinese referring to international law and borrowing it as a standard of judgment, he did not in fact apply the Western

concept of international relations to Siam, but argued for maintaining the historical 'tribute relationship, a superior-subordinate relationship. In other words, he utilized international law only, as a means of argument, not as a basis for equal relations. On the other hand, Ch'en Chin-chung counterattacked by saying that if China wanted to arrange a treaty with Siam, it should welcome Ch'en in Kuang-tung or T'ien-chin (天津) for 'negotiations' (交涉).⁸ Ch'en thus utilized the concepts of Western 'international law' and treaty negotiations between equals to back his argument. Both of them, however, clearly saw the relationship between the two countries as a tribute relationship, making only partial use of Western ideas.

In general, we may say that the entrance of Western countries into the Asian tribute trade zone started with their participation in intra-Asian trade. Portugal and Holland, for example, conducted an intermediate trade within the Asian area to earn funds to purchase necessities in Europe. Great Britain's penetration of Asia began in the 17th century on the strength of its superiority in shipping. British ships carried Asian products like rice to China, products which had previously been imported by China through the tribute trade relations, and they bought Chinese products like tea and silk with proceeds from the sale of these other Asian products. In the 19th century, Western countries started to directly cultivate raw materials like rubber in Asia to meet their own industrial needs, and to sell their industrial products to Asia. For this purpose they had to link the intra-Asian trade with the international market by establishing spots where the settlement of trade balances might be conducted. Such places played an intermediary role between two quite distinct markets. Thus, Hong Kong and Singapore took on the role of junctures between the two markets and absorbed huge amounts of funds from overseas Chinese.⁹ In consequence, the Southeast Asian and southern Chinese economies were linked much more closely, and their ties extended to the Indian Ocean trade zone. Despite this geographic extension of the trading zone, however, the marketing structure in European colonies in Asia continued to display the characteristics of the traditional intra-Asian trade associated with the tribute system. Elements of domestic, intermediate and international markets were all to be found in Singapore and Hong Kong.¹⁰

With this brief description of the relationship between the Asian

tribute trade system and the West behind us, we may now turn to the problem of the modern relations between Japan and China. How did they start? Former studies on the subject have concentrated on comparative analyses of the differences in speed or direction of "modernization" under "Western impact."¹¹) Studies of the relationship between the two countries focused on the Japanese adoption of a national strengthening policy and Japan's expansion into China from the time of the Sino-Japanese war in 1894. In general, such studies traced the history of modern Japan only from the viewpoint of "Westernization" - the emergence of a "small West" (小西洋) in Asia. In my view, however, Japanese modernization should be traced mainly from the perspective of its generation from within the tribute system centered on China. To put it in its starkest form, Japanese modernization was the process of relocating the center of the tribute trade structure in Japan. Put another way, the main issue in Japanese modernization was how to cope with the Chinese dominance over commercial relations in Asia, a dominance which had functioned as a Sino-centric economic integration through the tribute trade system. As for the international political relations of modern Japan, the important question was how to reorganize relations among Japan, China, Korea and Liu-ch'iu or Ryukyu, with Japan relocated at the center.

First, let us consider these questions from the economic angle. Former studies have described Japanese modernization in terms of recovery of autonomy in tariff matters and of industrialization, that is, as matters of national sovereignty and the formation of a national economy. Analysis of these issues started from an interest in clarifying the process of realization of "national wealth and power" (富國強兵). But if we ask why Japan chose to industrialize in the first place, past studies do not prove very convincing. In other words, although there are many discussions of the processes of Japanese industrialization, investigations of the motivation for Japanese industrialization are rare. Because the course of Japanese modernization was studied from the standpoint of recovery from subordination to Western countries, or independence from the West, the importance of the historical relationship between Japan and China in the tribute system was lost sight of. But to understand the direction and nature of Japanese modernization more deeply, it is most important to recognize that the motivation for Japan's industrialization after the opening of Japan's ports was generated

from within a web of commercial relations with China.

The main reason why Japan chose the direction of industrialization was its defeat in attempts to expand commercial relations with China. Japanese merchants faced the well-established power of overseas Chinese merchants built through the Dejima trade (出島貿易) in Nagasaki (長崎) during the Edo (江戸) period. Chinese merchants monopolized the export business for sea-foods and native commodities and Japanese merchants simply could not break their hold.

When the Japanese consul in Hong Kong, Suzuki (鈴木領事) emphasized the importance of the Hong Kong market in 1890 in a report he sent to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs commenting on the low spirits of Japanese merchants in Hong Kong, among other things, he pointed to the following:

- 1) The Chinese merchants were united and had a long-term strategy which went beyond short-term profit;
- 2) Japanese merchants lacked funds and when they suffered even a single loss, had to withdraw;
- 3) There were indications that Japanese products of which Chinese people were fond were sold to Chinese merchants much cheaper than to Japanese merchants by Japanese producers.¹²⁾

According to the consul's report, the influence of Chinese merchants not only held the local market in its grip but even extended to Japanese producers, and he was very pessimistic about Japanese merchants entering the Hong Kong market. It was under such circumstances-the commercial power of the Chinese merchants and their influence in Japan-that new possibilities for cultivating the Chinese market presented themselves. And it was Chinese merchants in Japan who introduced the information necessary to produce the cotton textiles which could substitute for the Western cotton textiles which already had secured a significant share in the Chinese market.

In the 19th year of Meiji (明治 ; 1887), Chinese merchants in Yokohama (横濱) started to buy cotton cloth produced in Saitama (埼玉) prefecture. The parties concerned pushed the authorities to promote exports to the Chinese market and asked the Japanese consul in Hong Kong about

future possibilities. The advice given by prominent Chinese merchants in Hong Kong was: 1) wide cloth, the same as Western textiles, was required, 2) plain, striped cloth should be supplied, and 3) the price should be appropriate. Based on this advice, production and export to China got underway.¹³⁾ This example is symbolic of the general course of Japanese industrialization, which started with the production of substitutes for Western textiles in Asia. Competition among Japan, China and India in the production of cotton textiles also started at about this time.

Thirdly, increased foreign trade with Western countries through foreign firms also provided a motivation for industrialization. The development of new exports like silk and coal, alongside such traditional items as seafoods, accelerated the building of industrial infrastructure.¹⁴⁾ Although this tendency was the result of the commercial activities of Western firms, the main aim of such firms was not to export the industrial products of their own countries but to import Asian products. Hence trade relations in east Asia were not significantly changed by the opening of the Japanese market.

Political relations between Japan and China in the early Meiji period can now also be reinterpreted. Most previous studies of the Sino-Japanese treaty signed on the 13th May, 1871 (日清修好條規〔中日辛未條約〕) conclude that the treaty gave expression to the equality of the two nations, as demonstrated by the approval of mutual consular jurisdictions. In general, it is pointed out that the treaty embodied the idea of the equality of nations common to modern international intercourse, and that it marked the opening of the modern era in international relations in East Asia.¹⁵⁾ It is doubtful, however, whether the equality supposedly secured by the Japanese side was recognized as such by its Chinese counterpart. Underlying Chinese recognition of other states was the long-established idea of a hierarchy of dignity with the Emperor at the top—just as in the domestic sphere. It was virtually impossible for the Chinese to conceive of "equality" with the Emperor. The Kiakhta Treaty of 1727 with Russia can serve as an example of the problem.

The Kiakhta Treaty also embodies a stipulation of "equality" in its sixth article, dealing with exchange of official letters. The article provides that such letters should be exchanged between the Russian Senate (元老院) and the Ch'ing Colonial Office (理藩院).¹⁶⁾ Compared to the one-sided

nature of the tribute system in which China was clearly dominant, the exchange of letters under the Kiakhta arrangement appears evenhanded. But China did not really see Russia in equal terms because the mandate of the Colonial Office was to control the affairs of the Mongols. The treaty also provided for the opening of mutual trade (互市) on the frontier in place of trade in the Assembly Hall in Peking. Although this regulation also may seem to imply equality between the two countries, the trade in question was originally conducted as a part of the tribute trade relationship. We can also find a good deal of evidence to show that knowledgeable Chinese believed the Emperor was merely doing Russia a favor.

Taking these economic and political factors as among the motivations for Japanese modernization - factors which were implicit in the tribute system and not a part of the so called "Western impact" - allows us to see that the modernization process was initiated within a fairly unstable international environment. After Japan emerged from the closed-door isolation policy of the Edo period it adopted the two-fold policy of repudiating the tribute system of which it had previously been a part and of re-entering into East Asian relations on a new basis. Japan had to confront the tribute system when it tried to reconstruct its relationship with Korea and the Ryukyus. Historically speaking, it ultimately proved fatal for Japan to confront in all its aspects a system which was still largely functioning in East Asia.

3. Five Generations of Okinawa Studies in a hundred and fifty years : Literature Review

Okinawa studies since the time of the Meiji(1868-1912) spans 5 generations over 150 years including five different perspectives covering more than 500 years of Okinawa history.

First generation Okinawa Studies is represented by Iha Fuyu who studied Okinawa under *kokugaku* (Japan Studies). Under the perspective from *kokugaku*, Okinawa, had on the one hand, become a part of the new Meiji Japan, while at the same time, continued to display unique characteristics which defy categorization under Japanese *kokugaku*. Thus, issues on how to include Okinawa under *kokugaku* remain unresolved. Yanagi Soetsu and Yanagida Kunio attempted to study Okinawa from

socio-anthropological perspectives but remained largely within the framework of *kokugaku*. Issues which could not be categorized under *kokugaku* were picked up under anthropology.

Iha Fuyu was the first generation Okinawa Studies scholar who attempted to place Okinawa in history noting two opposing extremities: Okinawa which became a constituent part of Japan's nation building while at the same time, continued to display its own deep-rooted historical characteristics. Iha Fuyu entered the College of Literature, Tokyo Imperial University in 1903. He examined Okinawa under Asian Studies which developed from Sinology to Oriental history. He was the first to examine Okinawa from the methods of Japanese History which was then being developed to be Japan's *national* history. Iha Fuyu placed the identity of Okinawans not under a specific nationality(*kokka*) nor ethnic group(*minzoku*) but rather, called them "people of the sea." In "Okinawans of the Sea" (*Umi no Okinawa-jin*) (Iha Fuyu collection, tenth volume, p. 16), he writes:

"Pushed by the necessity of this period/environment, I am now going to establish Okinawa Steamship company. It is very useful to remember the maritime kingdom which was established four to five hundred years ago."

Here, he recalls Okinawa's struggle in the maritime world even as it had become a part of the Japanese nation.

Second generation Okinawa Studies refers to publications and research (by Okinawan scholars) related to the conversion, after the Meiji Restoration in 1879, from Ryukyu Kingdom to Okinawa Prefecture. The main topics covered by this stream of research include: Okinawa falls under the Meiji Government; Ryukyu, which had belonged to the East Asian tributary system is now under the Japanese nation; a new Okinawa prefecture was established, a governor was sent from Tokyo; thus began the assimilation (*hondoka*) of Okinawa into Japan.

Meiji policy towards Okinawa was to sever the legitimacy of the Ryukyu Kingdom which was loyal to the Qing government by sending a mission to China once every two years. With regard to its relationship with Japan, since the Satsuma invasion in 1609, Okinawa served as a quasi-tributary state of Japan. In her relationship with Japan, instead of legitimizing the Ryukyu Kingdom, Okinawa was made to serve as a conduit for trade between China and Japan. Therefore, to allow Japan to envelop

Okinawa, making it a Japanese prefecture was, for some within the Ryukyu Kingdom, unnecessary, if not illegal. As a result, there was a movement to return to the Qing government (*dassei undo*). A feature of second generation Okinawa Studies is thus, their criticisms of the Meiji government's policies towards the Ryukyu Kingdom.

First generation Okinawa Studies represented by Iha Fuyu and second generation studies, on Meiji Japan, particularly, those on *Okinawa shobun* ("disposition/disposal of Okinawa") reflect historical knowledge of their times, while at the same time, also differences between them. Iha Fuyu lived from the 19th century through 20th century, reflecting on Ryukyu surrounded by the seas five hundred years ago, while both Kinjo Seitoku and Nishizato Kiko (both native Okinawans) lived in the same 20th century, reflected on the Meiji restoration a hundred and fifty years ago. These scholars compared the Okinawa and Japan relations of their time. In the case of Kinjo and Nishizato, they also studied issues relating to Okinawa's *Nihon fukki* (reversion to the mainland Japan) in the 1970s.

Third generation Okinawa Studies focused on the American occupation after the second world-war. Work by Gabe Masaaki on Okinawa after the war touched on issues concerning the legitimacy of the US occupation bases; problems within Okinawa due to the presence of those bases; American influence on Okinawa, or Okinawa's role to America in the context of the Vietnam and Gulf wars. This third generation Okinawa Studies also compares the Ryukyu Kingdom's foreign relations during Perry's expedition a hundred and fifty years ago.

Okinawa history was studied in the first three generations at spans of fifty, a hundred and fifty, and five hundred years. Fourth generation Okinawa Studies revisits history from the time of the Ryukyu Kingdom. Rather than focusing on changes in sovereignties by foreign powers, from American to Japanese, this fourth generation studies took pride in the Ryukyu Kingdom's place in the sea, emphasizing the spread of the Ryukyu/Okinawa identity to Southeast Asia .

This fourth generation Okinawa Studies raised issues not on relations with Japan, but on relations with China and focused on Asia. Takara Kurayoshi takes note of the fact that Okinawa, as a Chinese tributary state for 500 years, built relations not just with China, but also multiple networks with East and Southeast Asia. The Ryukyu Kingdom and

Ryukyuan traders conducted long distance trade under these networks.

From there it was pointed out that, Okinawa was a regional world, a network world by itself. Okinawa was China's tributary state, sending from Shuri, seat of Ryukyu Kingdom, envoys to China, while at the same time, it was also regional power who received tribute goods from Miyako and Yaeyama. This perspective from the Ryukyu Kingdom, as represented by work by Tomiyama Kazuyuki is not limited to the history of Okinawa. It emphasizes Okinawa's networks, maritime connections and foreign relations with the outside world while at the same time, systematically sheds light on the internal workings of Okinawa.

Fourth generation scholars are motivated to unveil an independent maritime model of Okinawa on its own due to an inability to divide Okinawa/Ryukyu history solely according to changes in sovereignty e.g. from Qing government to Japan, or from the US back to Japan again. Thus, Okinawa Studies that studies the Ryukyu Kingdom will methodically contribute new topics to East Asian maritime history and also form the subject of study.

Fifth generation Okinawa studies is the current generation. It differs from the first, second or third generation Okinawa studies which tried to have Okinawa fit under standards determined under a certain "nation" or "ethnic group". It also differs from fourth generation studies which regard Ryukyu Kingdom as a regional world by itself. The fifth generation describes the emigrating, networking Okinawans: the emigrants, Okinawan identity, emigration networks, world of *uchinanchuu* (Okinawans vs. "*yamatonchu*" Japanese). This fifth generation, responding to the effects of globalization, criticizes Okinawan modernization from a post-modern perspective and attempts to create a new Okinawan model while acknowledging Okinawa's scattered nature. Tomiyama Ichiro does not attempt to look for unity within Okinawa, rather, he focused on Okinawan societies in mainland Japan. This fifth generation re-examines the development and perspectives of hitherto Okinawa/Ryukyu studies while also focusing discussions on global *uchinanchuu* networks.

As such, Okinawa Studies spanning five generations, in five different themes or directions, provided a variety themes not limited to *Okinawa Studies* per se including historical studies, regional studies and network studies.

4. Perry's opening of Ryukyu

Most notably, Naha's importance as an international port was immediately supplanted by Nagasaki. Gradually, Kobe and Yokohama were made the main ports to deal with the outside world. While the physical shift in the windows that maintain direct contact with the outside world is obvious, it in effect entails the demise of Ryukyu's traditional maritime expansion/extension into the international world; such a role being overtaken by Japan. In other words, it was necessary to *nationalize* maritime expansion/influence. The "opening" of Japan effectively meant the "closing" of Okinawa. This marks the beginning of *nanyou mondai* (South seas problem/issue). *Nanyou mondai* began with the nationalization of Ryukyu, followed by the occupation of Taiwan and continued further down to South-east Asia. Debates revolving *nanyou mondai* used to be limited to Southeast Asia. Neither Ryukyu nor Taiwan were included. This was due to the fact that the maritime roles/functions of Ryukyu and Taiwan have been absorbed under the Japanese "nation."

Another consequence of the "nationalization" of Ryukyu was the displacement of Ryukyu's position in the Sinocentric world order. The Americans sent Perry, while the French sent Rev. Focault to approach Japan via Okinawa, making use of the *kai-i* order (Chinese world order (huayi)). However, Japan did not succumb to this. Instead, it took over Okinawa's position in the tributary system, subjugated it under the Japanese "nation"; thus enabling Japan's nationalization against the outside world.

We can say that Okinawa made Japan's nation building possible by replacing traditional logic in East Asian history. In other words, the southwest stronghold (*seinan yuhan*)(Satsuma domain) with its experience in East Asian *ka-i* order rose to lead the country. It *nationalized* the East Asian trade order which it had traditionally made use of.

When that happened, Okinawa fell out of the radar of East Asian history. Today, by reviving the Asian perspective of Okinawa we can re-think the relationship between Japan and East Asia, Japan and Southeast Asia or the relationship between East and Southeast Asia. In contrast to this, scholars in Japan were either "sympathetic" towards

Okinawa or criticized modern Japan. Or, in the process of discovering Okinawan society, they were limited by looking at Okinawa through the framework of “nation.”

When viewed from “nation” framework, most discussions focused on the gap between Okinawa and Japan; whether Okinawa is homogeneous like Japan, whether its citizens enjoy the same rights and obligations as the Japanese? Thus, most discussions tended to focus on differences with Japan. Ryukyu’s traditional elements which do not fit into Japan are treated as issues of folklore or customs beyond the Japanese context.

Rather than to view Okinawa as detached from Japan, if we take a view from Okinawa’s historical world which includes Japan, we would be able to observe Ryukyu’s multi-layered administrative structure when it belonged to the Chinese-centred *ka-i order*, its negotiation skills with China and Japan, its co-existence with Li dynasty Korea, and its negotiation processes with America. These were accumulated experiences amidst its own specific pre-conditions and environment which cannot be enclosed within a single prefecture.

In this way, attempts by native Japanese scholars who continue to ask “Does Okinawa fit into Japan?” while at the same time trying to Japanize Okinawa (*hondoka*; to make it more like the mainland) continue to be overturned by Okinawa’s strong regionalism. In the context of today’s globalization, that regionalism is not so much region vs. central, but rather, a region on the global stage. This makes it necessary to re-consider Okinawa’s multi-layered, multi-faceted regional order or co-existence (negotiation) relations.

As seen in Ryukyu/Okinawa history, there are as many regional models corresponding to many varied regions, and there are also many methodologies. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that there are as many methodologies as there are regions and, there are as many regional models as there are methodologies. Therefore, it is quite impossible to discover one particular direction/trend for topics and methods of regional studies. Regions cross-fertilize, trading each other’s positions, mutually permeating each other, thus making it extremely difficult to discuss regions.

However, if seen from a different perspective, this multiplicity reflects Okinawa’s multiplicity. Thus to study Okinawa, we need multiple approaches.

As a result of fluctuations in our changing world, the study of history in the past ten or more years is undergoing some major changes. Firstly, what may be referred to as “grand theories,” or theoretical frameworks which described historical societies have disappeared/vanished. Along with nation-building and the development of capitalism, what used to attract popular interest has changed: It is no longer appropriate to use one single model to apply to the vast array of societies. Given such a scenario, on the one hand is the demise of “grand theories” and gradually replacing these are ecology and demographic studies which emphasize the importance of environmental factors. It is thus perhaps a natural consequence for regional/area studies to be added. Why is this so? By increasing the focus on the environment (a constant) while reducing the role of theory (variable) probably allows easier access to our object of study..... However, although it is necessary to take into consideration these new variables in the “grand designs” of long term changes in history, these variables alone will not be sufficient to replace traditional theory.

A second notable trend in historical studies in recent years is the increased interest in social history. Historical studies which take into consideration topics of the complex modern society are attracting more attention. In that respect the number of individual studies that greatly contribute to our understanding has accumulated. However, if the basic assumption in social history is the multiplicity/complexity of society, it seems necessary to re-examine the disparity of research..

A third feature of modern historical studies concerns research which deal with psychology of time (*jidai shinri*), or affiliation (*kizoku ishiki*). In other words, the rise in identity studies. Due to the variety of histories, the “eyes” (*me*) which study history are also varied. These identity studies face the challenge of having to distinguish between “analysis” and “self-awareness” emphasizing the importance of the need to listen to the many voices of historical protagonists. Receiving input from such research, debates/discussions on the diversity of regional identities of various regional models will form a major part of modern historical research.

Conclusion: Warning messages from Okinawa: against “Economic development” and “Consumer society”

"Modernization" in Asia was generated as a negative reaction to the all-inclusive superior-subordinate relations of the traditional tribute system. Mercantilist control over tribute by the Ch'ing dynasty led overseas Chinese merchants to oppose the trade policy and expand their own private trade. As a result, the Ch'ing dynasty was in turn compelled to shift from the role of monopolistic trader-merchant to that of tax collector. European countries expanded their influence in Asia by first utilizing the tribute trade system and heavily investing in it. Japan, using Westernization as a means of modernization, tried to reconstruct the Asian system, but found itself trapped between a strong Sinocentrism and an equally strong West. Our approach has been to try to grasp Asia as an integrated historical system. What is required now to understand 'modern Asia is an effort to trace how each country and area within Asia attempted to cope with the transformation of the tribute system. Modern Asia can no longer be fruitfully measured by such yardsticks as the degree of Western "impact" and Asian "response," but must be examined by delineating the region's fundamental traditional characteristics, and then analyzing how the traditional system turned even the Western "impact" to its own purposes.

Today, mankind is faced with problems which had not historically been encountered before. Along with rapid advances in technology and economies, material comforts have increased on the one hand, while, on the other, due to the uneven distribution of populations and goods, some regions suffer from severe poverty.

It used to be that the higher the level of industrialization the better it was. However, we are now confronted with pressing issues like the environment and resources. We are being forced to re-examine the unconditional pursuit for higher productivity and consumption. Perhaps a common goal achievable for all mankind does not exist. What was widely perceived as the common goal for all: higher productivity and consumption, in reality required some special pre-conditions. Wasn't it just the self-assertion of certain specific, small regions? It has come to be recognized that this was the egocentrism of modern Europe. Consequently, it became realized that our understanding of the world or of world history had in fact, been borrowed from European or American regionalisms.

Historical studies currently confronted with major changes: faced with problems of modern society. The assumption that the world as a whole

develops through the building of individual nations and by mutual competition among them is now being criticized.

National identity, a hallmark of nation-building delineating self against others may not apply universally in the fast-changing world. Therefore, the new focus for historical research will come from an overall re-examination of the governance of human society and lessons learnt from modern national histories whose ultimate targets were to “develop” and to “move forward.”

In recent years, the many efforts to re-organize regional relationships offers much food for thought (for historical research). While there are many instances of detaching from existing framework of “nation,” at the same time, it is also popular to group several nations or regions into regional blocs. Examples include the European Union, Pan-Pacific community or South China economic zone (*Da hua-nan*). Such a situation calls to question the limited use of the “nation state” which was characteristic of 19th to 20th century Europe. Considering the fact that Ryukyu/Okinawa had accumulated experience in regional or distant maritime activities or long distance trade networks, it is an important object of study for modern and future history.

Of course in this process, non-European regions also had their own egocentrism. Despite assertions of racialism or regionalism, European self-knowledge ultimately remains confined within the “nation-state.”

In response to such changes, historical studies need to focus on “region” and re-examine history in various ways. We need also to consider the fact that some regional problems are presented and taken as problems of the “nation.” Thus, through (1) various studies of the Okinawa regional world, (2) re-examination of the bigger regions like Europe, East Asia, South Asia, West Asia and America and (3) by logically and theoretically examining what constitutes a “region” would we be guided to new regional relations and how to maintain regional stability.

Notes

1) This article grows out of the fundamental interest of the author in the internal ties of the Asian area in the modern period. See also Takeshi Hamashita, "Tribute and emigration: China's foreign relations and Japan," in T. Umesao and M. Matsubara, eds. *Control Systems and Culture*, Osaka,

National Museum of Ethnology, 1989.

2) Although discussions of the world economic system stress the importance of the role of nations in the Western world, the Asian tribute system will be described here as a complex of areas. See John W. Meyer, "World policy and the authority of the nation-state," in Albert Bergeson, ed., *Studies of the Modern World-System*, New York, Academic Press, 1980.

3) To investigate center and local issues does not mean to distinguish centralization and decentralization of power separately, but to analyze center-local relations from the view-point of the strengths of local society. See Ch'u T'ung-tsu (瞿同祖), *Local Government in China under the Ch'ing*, Cambridge, Mass., 1962.

4) See J. K. Fairbank and S. Y. Teng, "On the Ch'ing tributary system," in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* No. 6, 1941; J. K. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports. 1842-1854*, Cambridge, Mass., 1953; J. K. Fairbank ed., *The Chinese World Order. Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, Cambridge, Mass., 1968; Morris Rossabi, ed., *China*

among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and its Neighbors. 10th-14 Centuries, Los Angeles, 1983.

5) H. B. Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China, 1635-1843*, 5 vols. Oxford Univ. Press, 1926, 1929; John K. Fairbank, "The early treaty system in the Chinese world order" (*ibid.*), Key-Hiuk Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order; Korea, Japan, and the Chinese Empire. 1860-1882*, Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1980.

6) Chusei Suzuki, *Chibetto wo meguru Chuin-kankei shi*, 鈴木中正 『チベットをめぐる中印係史』 (一橋書房, 1962) Chap. 8.

7) Cheng K'uan-ying, *Nan-yu Jih-chi* 鄭觀應 『南遊日記』 (學生書局, 1967 版) p. 26.

8) *Ibid.*, p. 33.

9) Chiang Hai Ding, *A History of Straits Settlements Foreign Trade 1870-1915*. Singapore, National Museum, 1978.

10) K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985. Wong Lin Ken, *The Trade of Singapore, 1819-69*, *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 33. pt. 4, Dec. 1960.

11) Frances V. Moulder, *Japan. China and the Modern World Economy*,

Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977, chap. 1.

12) Otojiro Okuda, *Meiji Shonen ni okeru Honkon Nihon-jin*, 奥田乙治郎『明治初年に於ける香港日本人』(臺灣總督府熱帶産業調査會, 1937), pp. 275-281.

13) *Ibid.*, pp.244-247.

14) Kanji Ishii, *Kindai Nihon to Ijirisu-shihon-Jadin=Maseson Shokai wo Chushin ni*-石井寛治『近代日本とイギリス資本—ジャーディン=マセソン商會を中心に—』東京大学出版會, 1984), Chap. 2.

15) Michio Fujimura, *Meiji shoki ni okeru Nisshin-kosho no ichi danmen-Ryu-kyu bunto joyaku wo megutte-(1)*, 藤村道生「明治初期における日清交渉の一断面—琉球分島條約をめぐる—(上)」(Nagoya Daigaku Bungakubu Kenkyu Ronshu-Shigaku-)『名古屋大學文學部研究論集(史學)』16, 1968.

M. Fujimura, *Meiji-ishin-gaiko no kyu-kokusai kankei e no taio-Nisshin shukojoki no seiritu wo megutte-*, 藤村道生「明治維新外交の舊國際係への對應—日清修好條規をめぐる—」(*Ibid.*, Vol. 14, 1966).

16) Kin-ichi Yoshida, *Kindai Roshin Kankei Shi*, 吉田金一『近代露清係史』(近藤出版社, 1974), Chap. 3.

Eric Widmer, *The Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Peking During the 18th Century*, Cambridge, Mass., 1976.