

Maritime Asia as the Pivot of Globalization in Historical Perspective

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The globalization process is generally understood in a context of the great transformation from an agricultural to an industrialized society. The Industrial Revolution in Britain played a decisive role in that transformation, followed by other European nations and North America. Japan caught up with the West and became the first industrial nation in Asia in the late nineteenth century, other East Asian economies (NIES and ASEAN) followed suit, and BRICs (Brazil, India, and China) have joined recently. A purpose of my talk is to look at this process from Maritime Asia, so as to see the globalization process was not necessarily initiated by the West. There were other ways, one of which was the way Japan has experienced. I would take Japan as a special reference in comparison with the West. The main argument is that the rise of the Modern West was possible by their relationship with Maritime Asia dating back to the sixteenth century.

Industrial Revolution vs. Industrious Revolution

During the sixteenth century, which is often called the Age of Discovery, the Europeans were embarking on the sea voyages, while Japanese were also involved in overseas ventures. Both Europeans and Japanese were present on the seas around Asia. I called that region 'Maritime Asia' which consists of Indian Ocean, Southeast Asian Seas, and China Seas.

Seen from the old Asian civilizations, Europe and Japan were located on the periphery of the huge Eurasian continent where the Asian civilizations flourished. Both Europe and Japan were underdeveloped for a long time until, say, the eighteenth century, and introduced culture and goods from these old civilizations through the trade in Maritime Asia, which resulted in large trade deficits.

These trade deficits turned into surpluses around 1800. The dramatic transformation from the deficit to the surplus in trade, or importer from to exporter to the Maritime Asia, occurred not only in Europe but in Japan. This was realized by a revolution in production which took place not only at Britain, but also at Japan almost simultaneously in the eighteenth century. In Britain this became known as the Industrial Revolution, while Japan underwent the Industrious Revolution.

Let me explain briefly about the production revolution. Production needs the three factors: capital, labor, and land. In the West, as the American continents were discovered, land was plentiful for Europeans, but labor was scarce. It was logical for them to economize on labor while raising its productivity. As a logical outcome of this process, technological innovation took place and capital intensive industry was born. That was the Industrial Revolution.

In contrast, Japan had a relatively large population (already thirty million around

1700) but a shortage of land, because it is a mountainous country. The logical choice was to raise the productivity of land. By spending a large amount of labor on a limited area of land, Japan increased per acre productivity to the highest in the world. This was a production revolution which we call the Industrious Revolution. Typical examples of this could be observed in the rice and cotton crops.

As a result of these production revolutions in Britain and Japan, Britain formed the Atlantic economy, linking Europe, Africa, and America in a self-sustaining, oceanic triangular trade system, while Japan adopted a policy of seclusion (*sakoku*). Both experienced the production revolution, but in a different ways attained economic self-sufficiency and cultural independence from the old Asian civilizations.

Britain is an island nation, and so is Japan. Ancient civilization was a land-based, continental civilization, while modern civilization is maritime in nature.

If one were to say that the modern West and the Japanese *sakoku* (national seclusion) arose at the same time yet were not linked at all, one would be mistaken.

Seventeenth-century Netherlands and Japan

It is said that the seventeenth century was the Dutch century. Holland was the strongest nation in the West. A trip to the Rijksmuseum (Dutch National Museum) in Amsterdam is instructive in this regard. Most of the treasures on display there date to the seventeenth century, reflective of the fact that this was when Dutch power was at its peak. The Netherlands declared independence from Spain in 1581. The destruction of Spanish Invincible Armada in 1588 by the British fleet gave a big boost to the Dutch in their war of independence, and they achieved de facto independence in 1609, long before the independence was formally recognized by a number of nations in 1648 under the Treaty of Westphalia. The year 1609 also marked the founding of the Bank of Amsterdam, which served as the major Europe's trade settlement center until the eighteenth century.

What was the foundation of Dutch prosperity? It was trade with Asia. To be more precise, it was trade with "Maritime Asia," centered in Southeast Asia. To be even more specific, it was a "South China Sea trading world" that encompassed Southeast Asia, China and Japan. Japan was the lynchpin of this maritime world, as it was far and away the leading supplier of the gold, silver and copper used for trade settlements in Maritime Asia. Japan was then among the world's leading producers of gold, silver and copper.

Many different European nations joined the South China Sea trading world. Portugal and Spain arrived first, followed by Britain and the Netherlands, which established the British East India Company and Dutch East India Company in 1600 and 1602, respectively. The Dutch were based in Batavia (present-day Jakarta). After the Amboina Massacre of 1623, the British lost out in their competition with the Dutch and withdrew from the South China Sea trading world. Japanese wanted such goods as deerskins, medicines, perfumes and others which the Dutch merchant acquired in Southeast Asia. The Dutch also invited Chinese to Batavia to buy silk, silk fabrics and other goods from Chinese merchants. These they shipped to Japan at enormous profit.

It is interesting to compare the power of the Netherlands and Japan at that time. The

Dutch people on Dejima Island at Nagasaki wore nothing on their persons that would identify them as Christians. And every year they were required to visit Edo (now Tokyo) at their own cost to report to the Shogunate about what was going on in Europe, which they obediently did. It will be apparent to you about which party enjoyed the stronger position.

People tend to have the distorted view that Japan was somehow isolated from the rest of the world during the period of national seclusion. Japanese themselves have had that sort of view influenced especially by the book *Sakoku* (National Seclusion), in which Watsuji Tetsurō champions the idea that “as a result of national seclusion, Japan was left behind by the West.” In reality, however, the Japanese economy was linked to the world economy through the Dutch monopoly on trade with Japan. I would go so far as to say that it was Japan’s policy of national seclusion that kept the Dutch prosperous.

The nineteenth century was the British century. Britain alone controlled the seven seas, a quarter of the world’s population and a quarter of the world’s landmass. It was the time of the British Empire. The period from 1870 to World War I was the era of classical imperialism.

The biggest market for Britain during the age of classical imperialism was Maritime Asia. Japan was forced at this time to open its ports. Some 40 years later, in 1902, Japan and Britain entered into the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Japan came to be called “the Britain of the Far East.” The alliance was renewed in 1905 and 1911, expanding the territory of its coverage to include the region from the Far East to South Asia (Maritime Asia), and developed into an equal military alliance. But as Britain ferociously battled away against its European enemies in World War I, Japan was busy entering Maritime Asian markets and undermining the economic foundation of the British Empire.

How did Japan become so powerful in such a short period?

One common feature shared by all global power states in the modern West is their possession of both economic and military power. Yes, Meiji Japan strove after these two strengths, as is evident from the government slogan, “*fukoku kyōhei*” (enrich the country and strengthen the military power).

May I remind you that, at the end of the sixteenth century, Japan was manufacturing and using more guns than any other country in the world, and militarily speaking, Japan was very strong. The power of Japanese guns made it possible for the army of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) to invade the Korean Peninsula and penetrate as far as the area of Pyongyang.

But in Japan, where the society had experienced more musket-fired revolution than anything seen in the West, guns lost their place on the battlefield in the early seventeenth century. Strangely enough, guns were practically abandoned ever since to the end of the Edo period. The idea that a country’s enrichment must be based on a strong military is a Western assumption, an assumption Japan did not share until around the time of the Meiji period.

So, let me examine some peculiarities to Japan.

Two Social Revolutions: The Bourgeois and the Gentlemen Samurai. The ruling stratum during the Edo period (1603–1867) was the *bushi* (samurai) class. In this period,

society was divided into four classes: shi, no, ko and sho (samurai, farmers, artisans and merchants). Today, the word “samurai” is known around the world, even appearing in the titles of movies made in other countries. In Japanese dictionaries, the kanji (Chinese) character given for “samurai” is always 侍, the main meaning of which is “to serve,” and this is what the samurai originally did - they served the aristocracy by protecting them with their weapons. The original meaning of “samurai” was men with weapons, military men.

But in the Edo period, samurai became 士 (“shi,” which means a “man of learning and virtue,” or a “civilized gentleman”). Historians today consider some of the Tokugawa Shoguns and lords of feudal domains like Uesugi Yōzan (1751–1822) to have been benevolent leaders. Uesugi was called a “man typifying the best of the Japanese,” by an eminent opinion leader, Uchimura Kanzō (1861–1930) in his *Japan and Japanese* (or *The Representatives of Japan*). These shoguns and lords should be characterized more as literary gentlemen than as military men. But this was not the case before the Edo period. For example, as late as the end of the sixteenth century, the warlord Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) publicly declared that his goal was *tenka fubu* (place all of Japan under military control). Beginning with the military government in Kamakura (1192–1333) and continuing through to the end of the sixteenth century, samurai did exercise military power. This dramatically changed under the Edo shogunate, when samurai were expected to set aside the military side of their occupation and cultivate their civilized side.

Before then, the violence included samurai of inferior status rising up against their superiors. This type of revolt, known as *gekokujiō* (inferiors overpowering superiors), changed during the Edo period to what Prof. Kasaya Kazuhiko calls *shukun oshikome no kanko* (detention of a lord by retainers). In the seventeenth century, before this practice developed fully, any retainer who rebelled against a lord, no matter how tyrannical, could be punished for the crime of treason. But a system developed in the eighteenth century to deal with tyranny—a group of higher ranked retainers was permitted to present their case to the *karō* (the highest ranking official in the feudal lord’s government), who would investigate the matter and have the tyrannical lord detained in a room for that purpose. This practice, which removed the need for assassination, was based on the moral code studied by all samurai, *bushidō* (the way of the samurai).

Thus, between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the cornerstone of the ruling class’s ethical system was formed; *bushidō* changed the samurai from “military-oriented” to “learning and virtue-oriented.” This change was so dramatic I would call it the “gentlemanly samurai revolution.”

The modern Western society was grounded on the middle class. In seventeenth century Britain, a bourgeois social revolution introduced a modern capitalist society, with bourgeois citizens owning land and other assets. Their assets were converted into capital, making them capitalists. In Edo Japan, on the other hand, gentlemanly samurai did not own land, which they lost by the heino bunri reforms that separated the samurai from peasants. Gentlemanly samurai did not depend on possession of land and capital—their professional role (*shokubun*) was to manage their lord’s domain and look after the people’s needs (*keisei saimin*). In Europe, the bourgeois social revolution gave rise to gentlemanly

capitalists, but in Japan the gentlemanly samurai revolution led to the rise of managers.

The Early “Managerial Revolution.” In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber asserts that modern capitalist society embodies an entirely new type of people who engaged not so much in commerce but in production. Weber’s admirable thesis is that production only became paramount in society after the appearance of this new class of people who, instead of consuming whatever they had, saved and invested it.

In the Modern West, the capitalist class sprang from the middle class after the bourgeois revolution. Working class’ roots go back to the cruel enclosure system, under which lands were taken from peasants, forcing them to migrate to cities. The enclosures of the latter part of the sixteenth century were criticized by a contemporary, Thomas More: “sheep . . . may be said now to devour men.” The enclosure system was applied intermittently from around More’s time until the rise of capitalism. This process, called the first condition of accumulation, is roundly criticized as inhumane by Karl Marx in *Das Kapital*, in a passage that perhaps represents his most masterly prose. Marx considered the enclosure system to be so brutal that he named it “primitive accumulation.”

Around the time of the primitive accumulation, the gentlemanly samurai social revolution removed samurai from the means of production (land) and transformed them into managers. Land-based peasants became the producers. In the Edo period, land was an asset to be used by producer (farmers and peasants), not by gentlemen samurai. The land tax reforms of 1873–1881 confirmed the owners of lands—it proved that it was the farmers and peasants who owned the means of production.

British society was typical of its division into two classes: people with capital assets and workers with no assets. Japanese society was also divided, but quite differently, into managers who had no assets and workers who had them. The European modern society sprang from the “primitive accumulation,” while so did the Japanese modern society from the “primary accumulation.”

In the West, economic historians became aware in the early twentieth century of the importance signified by the separation of capital (ownership) and management. In *The Theory of Economic Development* (1912), Joseph A. Schumpeter posited that economic development is promoted not so much by capitalists, as by entrepreneurs. The importance of entrepreneurs and managers has been widely recognized since James Burnham’s *The Managerial Revolution* (1941).

Japanese economy has always been propelled, right up to the present day, by managers more than by capitalists. As an example, Shibusawa Eiichi (1840–1931), the “father of Japanese capitalism,” was a masterless samurai when the Shogunate fell, not a man with capital. Yet in his lifetime he founded more than 500 enterprises, and is remembered today as a manager of businesses. In Japan, managerial revolution following the primary accumulation occurred long before it did in the West.

In the West, a “bourgeois revolution” created the capitalists who owned land and other assets, while in Japan, gentlemanly samurai promoted economic development not through ownership of land and capital but by managing them. In the West, asset ownership and management were not separated until capitalism reached its prime in the twentieth century. In Japan the separation occurred much earlier in the Edo period.

Intra-Asian Competition. We have glimpsed the historical processes that began in the sixteenth century, in which Japan emerged as Asia's first modern civilization.

Were Edo Japan's demilitarization, gentleman samurai (managerial) revolution and Industrious Revolution influenced by models from other countries? Yes, they were derived from ideas originating in China of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). The European model is based in good part on the world of Islamic Asia—for example, Europe's industrial revolutions were influenced by the "Arab Agricultural Revolution" (described by Andrew Watson), and its concepts on international law sprang from the Arab view of "House of Islam and House of War."

Firearms were used in China at the time of the Yuan (Mongols), but Ming China and Yi Korea did not develop into strong military powers, even though they remained aware of gun manufacturing methods. Instead, governments there fostered the study of Confucianism and the rule of virtue. This stands in contrast to the Western cult of power supremacy. Japan's gentlemen samurai based their moral outlook on the Confucian Four Books studied throughout East Asia: *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Analects* and *Mencius*. Many other attributes of civilization were also introduced to Japan from China. Japan's labor-intensive Industrious Revolution was inspired partly by agricultural methods practiced in Jiangnan (the Yangtze Delta), according to Prof. Shiba Yoshinobu. Edo Japan's policies of national seclusion reflected Ming China and Yi Korea policies prohibiting maritime trade. The alternate attendance requirement system of the Edo period may have been a variation of a similar tribute custom on the continent.

These various ancient models demonstrate that East Asian systems developed quite independently from the West. They also imply the existence of regional rivalry. The outcome of this intra-Asian competition was that Japan assumed top place in the Edo period, a status exploited to the full after the Meiji Restoration. Against this backdrop of intra-Asian competition, the two biggest rivals have been Japan and China. China has launched its own campaign to "enrich the country and strengthen the military." Now that American hegemony has already peaked, Japan and China could enter a new phase of rivalry. Will this rivalry promote world peace? The answer depends on whether the two countries once again reduce military capacity by embracing their common heritage of cultivating knowledge and virtue.

To conclude, let me come back to the future possibility of creating a new civilization in the region of Maritime Asia.

The term 'East Asia' evokes the idea of a continental landmass, because this is what China is. But the areas in East Asia where economic ties are growing are not in the interior of the continent, but on or near the coast. I have called this region Maritime East Asia. And Indian Ocean rim sphere can be called Maritime South Asia. Southeast Asia, which is located between them, can be called the Central Maritime Asia, (if we choose one place among others as the center of Central Maritime Asia, it can be Singapore.)

As I mentioned it was the Maritime Asia which created as the pivot of the emergence the Modern Civilization both at the Western edge of Eurasia and at its Eastern edge: Japan. Maritime Asia influenced both westward and eastward.

Now, it is high time to change the view and the direction from horizontal to vertical, viz. from East-West dimension to North-South dimension.

To the south of Central Maritime Asia is Western Oceania, the center of which is Australia. Australia is presently strengthening economic ties with Maritime Asia, and the entire West Pacific coastal zone is integrating economically. To the north of Central Maritime Asia is Japan. The thousands of islands, from Japan in the north to Australia and New Zealand in the south, extend in the shape of a crescent. The archipelago along the Western Pacific has numerous islands and indeed the greatest in size in the world, the countries there being so diversified—whether racial, religious, ethnic or cultural—, still they have one thing in common: the ocean. With rich potential in the arc, we can call it ‘the Fertile Crescent of the Sea.’

The Maritime Asia today is a base for commercial activities and has great economic significance. From the viewpoint of both environmental conservation and economic development, it would be worthwhile to establish a network of harbors and coastal waters, from the Bering Sea through Maritime East Asia to Western Oceania. Ancient Mesopotamia, the home of an ancient land-based civilization has been called as ‘the Fertile Crescent’, which is now beset by tension and war. There is all the more reason, therefore, for us to promote the vision of Pax Marina, or a maritime civilization of peace in the Fertile Crescent of the Sea.

If we are to transcend the issues produced by a civilization base on power, we need to switch to a civilization based on beauty. Why do I say so? This is not a romantic idea. The preservation of the global environment includes not polluting the earth, and not polluting is based on beauty as a value.

To exemplify a new civilization of beauty, Singapore’s dramatic transformation from a colonial island to an independent and attractive Garden Island is something that we can seriously learn from. The garden islands will be an ideal vision for Maritime Asia. Japanese archipelago, too, should follow suit and be made into garden islands, with a wider vision of the Fertile Crescent of the Sea in the Western Pacific to be the garden islands on the Earth.