【China Group】

From the China Group, Mr. Takeshi Hamashita, Mr. Yoshinori Kigoshi, and Mr. Ei Murakami presented their work.

The theme of Mr. Hamashita's presentation was "the hydrosphere in the Chinese Maritime Customs reports." He analyzed Mr. Murakami's document. First, he reported that preceding studies concentrated on trade recorded in the Chinese Maritime Customs documents, and not many documents dealt with domestic issues. Then, he explained the organizational structure of the Chinese Maritime Customs. Lastly, he showed the diversity in reports contained in the Chinese Maritime Customs documents and presented a method for describing modern history through the documents. He offered as an example the analysis regarding the influence of climate and sea level on agriculture in Hankou.

Mr. Kigoshi's presentation was entitled "Reconstitution of the Asia-Pacific nexus based on ship information reported in the newspapers in open ports." Mr. Kigoshi discussed the ship information database under construction and reported on findings thus far. The database contains ship information from 19 ports throughout the world; five baseline years (1851, 1873, 1903, 1913, and 1933) have been chosen for the examination of the impacts of revolutions in transportation and the Industrial Revolution. Drawing from the examples of Shanghai, Hong Kong, Mumbai, and Sydney, he presented graphics that visualized trade routes (based on figures from the database).

Mr. Murakami spoke on the theme, "Trade in the Xi River and the 'pirate' at the end of Qing." He discussed the pirates who appeared on the Xi River and part of the Pearl River at the end of the Qing era. First, he reviewed the history of trade and shipping on the Xi River from the second half of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. Then, he described how problems with pirates emerged with the rapid expansion of trade and shipping until 1903; pirate groups ranged in size from five to 150. Damage caused by each incident involving pirates was small, with a financial loss of a few hundred dollars. Incidents happened mainly in summer and autumn. The case of the pirate attack on the S.S. Sainum, a ship owned by a British company, and the post-incident negotiations between Britain and China were presented. Lastly, Mr. Murakami pointed out that while interest in pirates declined as the West's influence in the Xi River declined, attacks by pirates continued to take place.

What was most impressive in the three presentations and the question and answer session that followed was the discussion on the possibilities and limitations of research using historical data. For example, there was a question addressed to Mr. Hamashita as to why Maritime Customs in Hankou recorded rainfall; another question directed to Mr. Kigoshi was how to distinguish final destination ports and transit ports in ship information and if a distinction was even possible. These discussions

were instructive; since historical data are collected, sorted, and recorded by someone with a particular purpose, we—as contemporary researchers—need to understand the background of data fully before using them.

【Dr. Ka-chai Tam】

Dr. Ka-chai Tam spoke on the theme, "Historical GIS on judicial cases by coastal provinces in Ming-Qing China, 1550–1850." Dr. Tam reported on the historical GIS database, which was under construction, and other related projects. The database was used for the analysis of approximately 10,000 judicial cases collected from casebooks from Ming and Qing China, and its benefits included enabling researchers to carry out spatial/social analyses by converting qualitative information for each judicial case into quantitative information. Dr. Tam argued that the casebook was a trustworthy treasure trove of records regarding social problems and conflicts among ordinary people and that through its analysis, our understanding of Ming/Qing society would deepen. The database was constructed by extracting information under a number of headings from each judicial case that had been input into Microsoft Office Access. About 20 items covering the name of the case, timing, details of criminals, victims, and punishment were contained in the database. As of now, works on three casebooks have been completed. It will take much longer to process all 10,000 cases.

In addition to introducing the aforementioned database, Dr. Tam also introduced three related projects. The first one was the "Legalizing Chinese space" project supported by the French National Center for Scientific Research. This project involved the translation of all legal documents from the Ming and Qing eras into English and French to construct a historical GIS. The second was a historical GIS project of Songjiang, which focused on local history. Dr. Tam estimated the populations of Songjiang from 1392 to 1816 based on records of manmade and natural disasters; his findings were published as an article. The third project was an investigation of the export of Chinese medicine by Chinese merchants to Southeast Asia. It was pointed out that an analysis using a historical GIS was particularly useful in determining how merchants of Hong Kong and Guangdong procured diverse ingredients of Chinese medicine.

What was most suggestive in the presentation, including the question and answer session, was the importance of defining the problem to be considered in constructing a database. Questions included why 1550—a midpoint in the Ming era—was chosen as the starting point, why coastal provinces were studied, and which period/region constituted the core of the database. Dr. Tam replied that 1550 was chosen as the starting point because it heralded the beginning of regional development and the expansion of trade. Because of significant economic development in the coastal provinces, data were abundant. The session impressed upon us that what was important in producing new research was not only methodological novelty, such as constructing a database using a large quantity of historical data or carrying out an analysis using a historical GIS, but also presenting a clear problem and developing

working hypotheses.

【Dr. Shiroyama and comments】

Mr. Shiroyama spoke on the theme, "The hydrosphere and society/economy in modern Asia: An exploration of new regional history by means of databases and spatial analyses," and introduced the outline of the project. The aim of research—the necessity of constructing regional history based on intrinsic characteristics of the Asian region to overcome conventional regional history as a sum of the histories of various countries or an Asian history defined by the "the West versus the non-West" binary—was discussed. More concretely, two characteristics of the environmental conditions of Asia—the monsoon/rainy season and the hydrosphere—were pointed out. In his presentation, Mr. Shiroyama examined ideas in preceding studies such as "intra-Asian trade," the "hydraulic power society," "micro regions," and "three layers of history" to confirm the project's novelty. The research method adopted included three problem systems: "the natural environment and phenomena," "production and lifecycle[s]," and "movement and distribution." Then, a spatial information database was constructed for the spatial analysis of data. This type of analysis enables a construction of integrated regional history and an exploration of diversity in the region, and it is expected to produce a complete history of the environment, production, and commerce.

Following Mr. Shiroyama's problem setting and other presentations by participants, Mr. Kohei Wakimura and Mr. Bin Wong commented on them.

Having first made the point that it was important to collect and sort data and that the project was heuristic research (with no a priori theory), Mr. Wakimura made four proposals. The first was to make use of population data. Although it was not easy to collect population data prior to the 18th century, such data were important given that the population rapidly expanded in East Asia in the 19th century. The second point was to take into account the influence of epidemics. Though the project was focused on food usability, Mr. Wakimura suggested that people's health, which was related to it, was also an important aspect. The third suggestion was to place an emphasis on the impact of rice cultivation, and a comparison to Europe was made. It was the spread of rice cultivation that facilitated the high population density in Asia. The fourth point was to examine factors other than rainfall. Mr. Wakimura suggested, as examples, analyses of prices, the economic cycle, and El Nino.

Mr. Wong, having praised the tradition of Japanese researchers to explore regional history, which transcends the study of each area, raised a question about the project's framework. Though many individual presentations analyzed the relationship between the climate (agricultural production) and trade, much related research had already been accumulated since the Annales school. Therefore, what novelty would this project have for researchers of global history? Mr. Wong also pointed out that while

industrialization and the hydrosphere were closely related (in that economic development and industrialization cause environmental destruction and pollution), industrialization in 19th century Asia appeared to be missing from the project. Mr. Wong suggested the importance of examining the issue of the hydrosphere from the perspective of environmental history. The 19th and 20th centuries were remarkable times, as economic history was liberated from environmental problems. Fundamentally, social economic history is defined by environmental history. Consequently, the project has the potential to link environmental history and economic history in regard to the hydrosphere.

These questions and comments left a particularly strong impression because of their clarity in examining previous studies and the broadness of the scope for problem setting. Prof. Shiroyama's identification of problems and comments was drawn from diverse preceding studies and individual presentations given at the conference. I found that Professors Shiroyama, Wong, and Wakimura examined various factors to produce as inclusive a discussion as possible. When writing an article, we follow the following process: examination of preceding studies -> critique of them -> presentation of novelty. I came to an understanding that the overall argument was built through similar processes, even in a project with multiple participants. In this regard, the workshop reinforced for me the importance of attending to the basics in research by combining problem setting, individual presentations, and comments.