

THE MARITIME VIEW OF THE JAPANESE ARCHIPELAGO

Was Japan an Isolated Island Country?

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how the deeply-held conviction among Japanese that *hyakushô* were farmers was mistaken. As I suggested, a very high percentage of those classed within the category of *hyakushô* were engaged in industries other than agriculture. The task for this chapter is to indicate the significance of this new insight in macro-historical terms. When we reexamine the history of the society of the Japanese archipelago in light of this new understanding, all of our commonsensical images become subject to revision.

According to the prevailing view, rice cultivation was introduced into the Japanese islands at some point between the late Jômon period and the early Yayoi period. From that time, society became essentially agricultural, with rice production at its core. Believed to be isolated from the Asian continent by the ocean, this rice cultivating society was held to have been self-sufficient. But I argue that this view is completely biased and presents a false image of early society in the islands.

First of all, the idea that the islands were separated from the Asian continent is strictly one-sided. Without a doubt, the ocean can function as an obstacle that can separate people from one another. But that is only one way of looking at the ocean. The ocean can also have the opposite, and extremely important, function of being a pliable transportation route that links peoples.

The Japanese archipelago is composed of over 3700 islands, each of

which is linked by the ocean. We know that from early on people and things circulated across the waters between the islands, the Asian continent, the islands of southeast Asia and even islands further south. Within the archipelago itself, lakes, rivers and even mountains had important roles as transportation routes. Each of these features also generated a wealth of commodities. Thus, these environmental features all possessed great meaning for peoples' lives. Our inquiry into how society in the archipelago has changed over time must examine not just the paddies and fields of the plains but also the functions of the ocean, lakes, rivers and mountains.

We have recently obtained clear evidence that people were living throughout the archipelago during the period when the islands were connected to the continent in the early stone age. Until this recent information came to light, the culture of the people of the Jōmon period was considered unique to the Japanese islands. It is true that the culture of the Jōmon period constituted the most basic level of "Japanese island culture." But we are often presented with maps that depict the Jōmon cultural sphere as restricted to the territory of the present-day Japanese nation. As a result of these assumptions, we find lines drawn on the maps (or more commonly, shading) separating the island of Tsushima from the Korean peninsula or Hokkaidō from Sakhalin. Okinawa, particularly the outer islands of Miyako and Yaeyama, is also placed in a different cultural sphere. But this does not make any sense.

Sometime ago I had the opportunity to travel to Tsushima by boat. The trip from Kyūshū to Tsushima was particularly difficult for me. I did not get seasick, but I had to endure several hours of the boat rolling from side to side before we reached the island. In contrast, the Korean peninsula is close

enough to be visible from Tsushima on a clear day. According to the maps we commonly see today, Jōmon culture is supposed to have crossed the rough channel between Kyūshū and Tsushima, but the same maps would have us believe that Jōmon culture was unable to cross the far shorter distance between Tsushima and Korea. How is it possible that the Jōmon people could not cross the short distance between Tsushima and Korea but could cross the rough waters of the Genkai Sea? Is it not rather unnatural to think that Jōmon culture was an isolated “island country” culture restricted solely to the Japanese islands? Nevertheless, this was the common sense of archaeologists until quite recently.

However, the research of Watanabe Makoto of Nagoya University has swept this “common sense” away. Watanabe has shown conclusively that a common culture characterized a region that included the east and south coast of Korea, the islands of Tsushima and Iki and northern Kyūshū, a fisherman’s culture that used conjoined fish hooks, stone anchors and Sobata-style earthenware.¹ According to Watanabe, the culture of this region was also related to the cultures whose remains are found in areas from Okinawa to the San’in region of Honshū and the Inland Sea. With this evidence, we know that people have traveled across the Korean peninsula and among the Japanese islands since the Jōmon period. In no sense was Jōmon culture limited to the territory of present day “Japan,” nor was it limited to the Japanese islands. In fact, it is clear that it had deep ties to the Asian continent.

Similar discoveries have been made time and again since Watanabe’s work first appeared in the early 1970s. According to Mori Kōichi, for example, obsidian from Oki Island has been recovered in archaeological digs

¹See Watanabe Makoto, Jomon jidai no gyogyō, Yuzankaku Shuppan, 1973.

at sites all along the Sea of Japan, and obsidian from Kôzu Island near Izu has been found all over the eastern part of Honshû. Thus, obsidian was transported across a wide area, which can only be attributed to ocean-borne trade. Likewise, stone tools closely resembling those of the early Jômon period have recently been discovered in sites along the Japan Sea coasts. Thus it appears certain that culture from northeastern Asia crossed the northern seas into the Japanese archipelago from early on.

In the field of linguistics, Ono Susumu has argued along similar lines, claiming that the Japanese language has its origins in Polynesian languages. He has also recently noted a relation to Tamil. I do not have the expertise to argue on the merits of his theories, but we must give due consideration to the movement of people from the south as well.

Jômon Culture

As I mentioned earlier, the ocean was an important means of transport within the archipelago as well, as can be demonstrated by countless examples. During the construction to expand the Chitose airport in Hokkaidô, a large amount of jade was discovered at a Jômon period site that has come to be known as the Bibi remains. This jade came from the Itoigawa area of Niigata, on the Japan Sea coast; over time, a huge volume of goods were carried over the ocean from Niigata to Hokkaidô. Moreover, the remains of what appears to have been an obsidian mine have been found in Nagano. There was a very active trade in obsidian in the Japanese islands, the widespread distribution of obsidian being not at all incidental in nature. Thus even in the Jômon period, obsidian was produced on the presumption

that it would be traded. The standard line has it that the beginnings of commerce dated from a later period. But it is clear from the case of obsidian that commerce was already taking place in the Jōmon period.

Obsidian was not the only commercial product of the time; salt presents us with a similar case. Since there is no rock salt in the Japanese islands, it had to be processed from seawater. The excavation of large vats on the coast near Kasumigaura suggests that salt was produced in large stoneware vessels from the late Jōmon period. Salt was manufactured by extracting salty water from boiled down seaweed. When salt is produced in such stoneware vats, it can be made in substantial quantities. I believe, therefore, that it is likely that this salt was produced for trade. This salt also made it possible to preserve, and thus trade, fish and shellfish. Trade in salt and preserved seafood was therefore probably among the earliest forms of commerce in the Japanese islands. Consequently, salt traders and fishmongers were probably the earliest merchants.

Our prevailing image of the people of the Jōmon period has been of nearly naked people—lightly covered in fur and skins, running about barefoot—hunting animals with bow and arrows or stones. However, this image must be completely revised. For clothing, they had textiles woven from the fibers of plants like wisteria and vines, as well as woven bags for carrying nuts. Jōmon people also wore shoes. Moreover, their tools were not limited to bows, arrows and stones; they also used fairly highly developed wooden tools. A neatly lacquered woman's hairpin was discovered at the famous Jōmon period Torihama Remains at Lake Sanpōgo in Wakasa. The Sannai Maruyama remains in Aomori City also yielded a large number of magnificent lacquerware items, along with a surprising number of stoneware

items. The Sannai Maruyama site also contains the remains of a number of huge, evenly-spaced pillars, suggesting that the people of this era had some type of measuring tools.

Thus, life and culture in the Jōmon period was rich and complex. Although primarily a fishing and hunting society, it also exhibited sophistication in gathering and processing nuts, such as in evidence archaeologists have recovered of the cultivation of plants and trees. Gourds have been discovered at the Torihama site along with sesame and bitter cucumber seeds. Gourds, in particular, are not native to the Japanese islands, so one can only conclude that they were imported and cultivated. Millet has also been discovered at Jōmon sites, leading to the hypothesis that dry field agriculture began in the late Jōmon period. Thus, while we tend to think of Jōmon people as strictly hunter-gatherers, I believe that planting and cultivation technologies were already established in the Japanese archipelago, at least by the latter part of the Jōmon period. Since rice cultivation was also introduced at this time, it is clear that Jōmon people had a diverse culture.

As I mentioned earlier, we have found pillars constructed from huge trees at sites all along the Japan Sea coastline—from the Mawaki remains in Noto to the Sannai Maruyama remains. So archaeologists have also called this a “gigantic pillar culture.” We are not sure whether these pillars were parts of buildings or sites of worship. Either way, these enormous pillars could not have been raised in the first place without a fairly high level of social organization. Thus it appears that, along with a series of wide-ranging trade relationships, each local society was considerably complex in and of itself. Of course, this does not necessarily imply a hierarchical structure of power with rulers and ruled, but one must consider the possibility that there

existed leaders of some kind.

I began my discussion with the Jōmon period because we have had a tendency to view the Yayoi period as the beginning of rice cultivation. Fixation on this idea has led to an obsession with rice cultivation. As a result, we believed that society in the Japanese archipelago had been uniformly centered around rice. This leads us to ignore the development throughout the Jōmon period of a variety of industries with their consequent technologies and cultures. If we do not recognize the fact that the people of the Jōmon period engaged in a variety of forms of production and were linked across a wide area, then we cannot accurately understand the cultures and societies that came afterward.

Yayoi Culture

Rice cultivation in the Japanese islands is usually believed to have begun in the Yayoi period. However, rice cultivation had already begun in parts of the Inland Sea region and northern Kyūshū prior to the Yayoi era, so rice cultivation and Yayoi tools do not always come as a set. Nevertheless, technology for rice cultivation, by and large, arrived as part of a technological system, brought in by a group that emigrated to the islands.

Rice cultivation was not the only new technology. A variety of cultural elements began to enter the western portion of the archipelago from China and the Korean peninsula from around 300 B.C. We believe that new dry field crops, bronze and iron tools, sericulture and new weaving technologies, as well as improvements in salt vat production, were also introduced at that time. Cormorant fishing also entered the western portion of the islands

around this time, spreading to the entire archipelago by the medieval period. In other words, as a fishing method it was sufficient to support a lifestyle.

There are various debates over the sources of Yayoi culture, but it seems likely that for the most part it came from southern China and the Korean peninsula. On the one hand, the know-how to make metal tools and gigantic stone dolmens came from the Korean peninsula into northern Kyûshû. On the other, cormorant fishing and the recently excavated remains at Yoshinogari have drawn attention to connections with southern China.

Yayoi-style rice cultivation quickly spread throughout western Japan from around 300 B.C., covering the entire territory west of a line from Ise Bay to Wakasa Bay. It is true that remains of rice paddies have recently been uncovered in the northern prefecture of Aomori, so we know that rice spread even that far north. But this appears to have been only a temporary phenomenon; rice cultivation only became permanently established in the north much later.

Yayoi culture originally crossed the ocean and spread along the coasts and up the rivers; therefore, the people who brought Yayoi culture originally had a deep connection with the ocean, possessing advanced sailing technologies. There are also many shell mounds from the Yayoi period, so we know that fishing, salt production, hunting and gathering continued as from before. Thus I believe that Yayoi culture cannot be understood with reference to rice, as is so common today. Instead, we must also take into consideration its relation to the ocean.

Exchanges with the Asian continent and Korean peninsula were also more frequent and intimate than we had supposed. Yayoi stoneware produced in Japan has been unearthed in the southern portion of the Korean

peninsula. Although this is a topic of debate, I believe that a group with a strong connection to the sea, known as “wajin,” came into being through trade within the western portion of Japan, the southern portion of Korea and the Chinese continent. Under no circumstances should the “wajin” be considered the “ancient Japanese.” They were the bearers of Yayoi culture in the western portion of the Japanese islands, but they were also a people whose lives centered on the sea, moving among the regions of southern Korea and parts of the Chinese continent.

This is well documented in Wei zhi wei ren chuan, a Chinese text produced in the latter part of the Yayoi period. The text states that there was no agriculture in Tsushima and that its people lived by trading to the north and south. The text records a similar situation for Iki island, another island residing in the ocean between the Korean peninsula and the Japanese islands, where the few fields that did exist were not enough to support the population. On Iki as well, trade was an important element of local life. In this regard, the text records a similar state for a place it called “Matsura”—now known as the Matsuura region. Composed as it is of islands this observation can be applied to the Japanese archipelago as a whole,.

Since Yayoi society came into being initially through trade, it is hard to believe that there ever was a “self-sufficient” society in the archipelago, as the history textbooks I mentioned in the previous chapter assert. The assumption that a certain level of population in a given area requires a commensurate amount of paddy and dry field cultivation is based on the premise that a sustainable lifestyle must depend primarily on agriculture. It ignores other forms of production such as fishing, hunting and gathering, and is thus quite

misleading.

The Wei zhi wei ren chuan also states, “There are markets where exchange is conducted in every province.” The “province” referred to in the text was approximately the size of a present-day county, or perhaps even a little smaller. Nevertheless, the importance of exchange in this society is demonstrated by the fact that each “province” had a market. Society could not have been established without these marketplaces.

The people of the plains produced grains as well as such crops as mulberry, sumac (for lacquer), hemp (for flax) and ramie, not to mention the various products processed from these materials. Horses and cows were raised in pasture lands at higher altitudes. Coastal peoples brought in foodstuffs from the sea, while mountain peoples gathered fruits and nuts and lumber to produce charcoal, wooden tools, lacquerware and, with wood as fuel, pottery. Iron and copper, mined and refined in the mountains, were processed into iron and bronze implements. Once we take all of this into consideration, we can see that this society was founded on the basis of a wide variety of products that were exchanged over a broad area.

While a division of labor between mountain and coastal peoples emerged during the Jōmon period, it appears that specialization on the part of the plains people emerged in the Yayoi period. Thus, the primitive commercial activity of the Jōmon period—in which such materials as salt, seafood and stone tools were exchanged—became even more widespread in the Yayoi period. Specialized merchants probably did not yet exist; instead the producers themselves travelled widely to conduct their trade.

We can tell from the distribution of remains and artifacts from this period—generally located along waterways—that rivers and the ocean served

as the primary means of transportation supporting this trade. It seems likely that these waterways were more active than previously imagined, and that there were a number of transportation routes established from very early on across the entire archipelago. For example, it appears that there was at the time a heavily traveled route from the Inland Sea into Osaka Bay, up the Yodo river and further up the Uji river where, after a brief interlude on land, Lake Biwa could be crossed. After another short trip across land, the Japan Sea and points north were fully accessible. Moreover, curved jewels called “*magatama*” from the Hokuriku region on the Japan Sea have been uncovered in large amounts in Chiba Prefecture, on the Pacific Ocean coast. This suggests that there were well traveled river and land routes spanning the central mountains and the Kantô plains, linking the Japan Sea and Pacific Ocean coasts of Honshû. River travel, in particular, was carried out on a scale unimaginable today.

Cultural Differences Between Western and Eastern Japan

Nevertheless, despite the connecting trade routes, there remained stark differences between the eastern and western portions of the archipelago in this period. Although this disparity had existed from the Stone Age and Jômon periods, a major contributing factor to this regional disparity was the rapid spread of Yayoi culture across the west up to Ise and Wakasa. However, for two hundred years thereafter, the Yayoi cultural sphere did not expand further because it encountered the stiff resistance of Jômon culture. As a result, a clear distinction between the Jômon culture of the east and the Yayoi culture of the west continued for a relatively long time. When

considering later social developments, we must keep this deep division between the eastern and western regions of Japan in mind.

For example, Aoba Takashi's 1981 study, Vegetables, draws on research in turnip genes to show that Siberian/European type turnips were found in Kantô, Tôhoku and Hokuriku while Chinese/Korean type turnips were distributed throughout the western portion of the islands.² Through the precise research of botanists such as Aoba, we can conclude that a number of cultural attributes entered eastern Japan from the north. There was probably a route from Hokkaidô to northern Honshû, while goods also crossed the northern Japan Sea. In any case, this shows that the routes from China and Korea to the western portion of the archipelago were not the only routes into the Japanese islands. Therefore, the difference between western Yayoi culture and eastern Jômon culture cannot be understood in reference to the Japanese islands alone.

Most theories of Japanese culture and society have operated on the following premise: advanced culture and technology from China and the Korean peninsula first entered northern Kyûshû and from there moved into the Inland Sea and the Kinki region. In other words, advanced culture moved from the west into the backward regions of the east. This cultural migration was believed to have constituted a definitive influence on later social development in the Japanese islands.

However, I believe this view must be thoroughly revised. We must also look at the influx of a different culture from northeast Asia, entering through Sakhalin and Hokkaidô into northern Honshû and the Kantô plain, or across the Japan Sea into Hokuriku and the San'in coast. We must

²Aoba Takashi, Yasai, Hôsei daigaku shuppanyoku, 1981.

construct a more synthetic and comprehensive understanding of the state of culture and society at the time in light of such exchanges between the cultures of east and west.

The same thing can be said for rice cultivation. Traces of Yayoi culture appear in the eastern portion of the islands from around 100 B.C., with rice cultivation spreading to the southern portion of Tōhoku. But we must remember that equating rice cultivation with social progress reflects the perspective of western Japan. The culture of the east cannot be accurately grasped from that perspective.

Even as the peoples of the eastern portion of the archipelago absorbed and adopted the technologies of rice cultivation, they also continued to develop their own independent culture. Recognition of independent eastern cultural development reminds us that one cannot simply say that the west was “advanced” and the east “backward.” There were many progressive elements in the east, as is clearly reflected in the history of the islands after the establishment of a State in the sixth and seventh centuries. Mulberry, for example, was widely grown in the eastern portion of the islands and sericulture was widely practiced there from the Yayoi period. Moreover, the modes of rice cultivation in the west and in the east were also quite different. Rice cultivation in the east was developed alongside dry field production of hemp, ramie and mulberry. The significance of this will become clear when we consider what happened after the establishment of the first State.

The Tomb Period

The third to the fifth centuries are usually called the early Tomb

Period. This period was marked by early political activities around the Inland sea, from the Kinki region of Osaka, Kyôto and Nara to northern Kyûshû and the Izumo and Kibi areas to the west. Among the various “kings” of these regions, one, known as “Great King” (*Ookimi*), came to occupy a position of primacy amongst the group. Another well-known sovereign, Himiko of the kingdom of Yamatai, was known as “Wao” (The Queen of Wa). As I mentioned earlier, there is a great deal of debate among historians today over whether Yamatai was in the Kinki region (Osaka-Nara) or northern Kyûshû.

Movement of people and goods between the archipelago and China and Korea became even more active during this period, a variety of technologies entering Kyûshû, the Inland Sea and the Kinki region from the west. Horses and iron were among the most significant items to be introduced at this time, raising the hotly debated question of the arrival of a “horse-riding people.”³ While I am not a specialist in this area, even if we do not think of their arrival as an “invasion” of a different race, it is clear that riding technology came as a discrete culture in a series of waves. Moreover, the number of people who moved into the western portion of the archipelago from the continent during the Yayoi and Tomb periods was not merely on a scale of ten or twenty thousand, but approached several hundred thousand to a million people over the course of about a thousand years. Hanihara Kazurô insists that there are too many puzzles that cannot be solved unless the

³Amino is referring to a debate begun by Egami Namio in 1948. For a good English-language overview of the debate see William Wayne Farris, Sacred Texts and Buried Treasures: Issues in the Historical Archaeology of Japan, University of Hawai'i Press, 62-63. In brief, Egami postulated that the Japanese islands were invaded by a “horse-riding people” from the continent who then went on to establish the archaic Japanese State.

migration of this period is recognized as having been on such a large scale.⁴ I will not go into the details of his genetic research here, but, according to Hanihara, there is a very close physical resemblance between the peoples of western Japan and Korea today. In fact, discrepancies between the people of western and eastern Japan are far greater than the differences between the people of western Japan and Korea. The people of eastern Japan, on the other hand, are closer to the Ainu, who themselves are also quite similar to the Okinawans. Hanihara argues that these latter groups represent remnants of an old Mongoloid strain. People of a new Mongoloid type came into the islands from the west from the Yayoi period. While the issue of migration into the archipelago continues to be debated, there is no question that a relatively large number of people moved into the western portion of the Japanese islands from the Asian continent. Attendant with this long-term migration was the introduction of a variety of cultures and technologies. However, we must also remember that the influx of overseas culture during this period did not occur only from the west.

The prevailing wisdom is that the spread of large tombs was itself equivalent to the spread of the influence of the Yamato clans. As the Yamato federation of clans with its Queen of Wa/Great King enlarged its sphere of influence, leaders of other regions adopted the keyhole-shaped tombs of the Yamato.⁵ There were, of course, relations between Yamato and other regions.

⁴See, for example, Hanihara Kazurô, "The Origin of the Japanese in Relation to Other Ethnic Groups in East Asia," Richard J. Pearson, ed., Gina Lee Barnes and Karl L. Hutterer, co-editors, Windows on the Japanese Past: Studies in Archaeology and Prehistory, Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1986; and "Estimation of the Number of Early Immigrants to Japan: A Simultative Study," Journal of the Anthropological Society of Nippon, 95 (July 1987).

⁵For a nice visual illustration of this process, see the outline of regional tomb development in Joan R. Piggot's The Emergence of Japanese Kingship, Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 32-33.

But even in the case of ancient tombs, we must recognize that there were cultural differences between Yamato, the northern Kyûshû regions, and other regions in the archipelago. Each region, in other words, had its own tomb style.

For example, on Noto Island in Ishikawa Prefecture, there is a very peculiarly shaped tomb called the “Ezoana Tomb.” This tomb has drawn a great deal of attention for how it differs from the keyhole-shaped tombs most Japanese are familiar with. One theory suggests that it was constructed under the influence of the ancient Korean State, Koguryo, which controlled the northern portion of the Korean peninsula and parts of north eastern China. At a recent international symposium hosted by the Japanese archaeologist Mori Kôichi, there was a great deal of debate about whether or not the person buried in this tomb had come directly from Koguryo. While there was no resolution of this particular point, there was a general consensus regarding the distinctive character of the tomb. The participants at the symposium also agreed that the possibility of culture being carried across the Japan Sea from the north required greater attention, since in the eighth century emissaries came across the Japan Sea from the Bo Hai Sea region near present-day Tianjin.

Variation in tomb shape was not the only indication of regional differences. Recent studies have suggested that horses and “horse culture” did not come into the islands solely from the west. This has not yet been proven irrefutably; nevertheless, horse riding gear recovered from fifth and sixth century tombs in northern Honshû and the Kantô plain have provided supporting evidence. In addition, Kantô and the Kôshin region just to its west, as well as the “Emishi” region of northern Honshû, were known as

horse breeding areas in the eighth and ninth centuries. So it appears likely that the introduction of horses could not have been only from the west. We must also give thought to the likelihood of movement of a number of cultural elements from the north.

The same goes for iron production technologies. The prevailing wisdom has been that materials for iron production entered the islands from Korea, passing through northern Kyûshû, disseminating throughout the islands and eventually gravitating to the western Honshû mountain range and the Omi plain. The technology for minting is also said to have been transmitted from west to east. But lately there has been growing interest in the suggestion that there was another independent route from the north by which these technologies entered. Early kilns of a structure different from those in the west have been found in northern Honshû and Kantô. Moreover, the raw material for iron production in the west was “iron sand,” while in the east it was probably produced from mined ore. In the case of minting, the remains of a ninth century mint have been discovered in southern Tôhoku. We also know there was a mint in Noto from the Heian period. It has been suggested that both of these cases were developed with northern technology. Thus, the influx of culture to the archipelago was not only from the west.

The same is true for the south. A tribe known as the “Hayato” in southern Kyûshû clearly shared a common culture with Amami and Okinawa islands to the south. Likewise, the tombs of the Hayato are of a different character from the keyhole tombs associated with the Yamato clans. For these reasons, I believe that the attempt to examine Japanese culture as solely deriving from a cultural influx from the west—based on the spread of Yamato rice paddy culture—must be completely revised.

Trade Relations with Surrounding Regions

With the advent of the Tomb period, the flow of goods and peoples along the ocean and rivers became even more active, and the federation of leaders in the Kinki region known as “the Yamato court” came to have an increasingly close-knit relationship with the leaders of the eastern portion of the islands. These relations were conducted in the mode of tribute. Tribute would be offered to the Yamato court, which would grant return gifts in acknowledgment. The movement of goods and peoples as well as the transmission of information that went along with a tribute economy picked up pace yet again during the transition from the Yayoi to the Tomb period. This was true not only in the case of relations between the Yamato court and other regions; each of these regions engaged in independent and wide-ranging trade among themselves as well. A particularly well-traveled route cut across the archipelago from northern Kyûshû through the Inland Sea and into Osaka Bay, over Lake Biwa and up into the northern Japan Sea coast (Hokuriku).

At the beginning of the sixth century, the royal line that had ruled in Yamato produced no heir. In place of a direct heir, a man known as Keitai (ruled 507?-531) moved south from the Echizen region into Yamato to become the new “Ookimi.” The traces of Keitai’s movements can be found in Echizen, Omi, Owari, Mino, Kawachi and Settsu. After moving across a wide area, visiting consorts in several places—such as a consort in Owari named Menoko-hime—he finally settled in Yamato. It is also recorded that at one

time all of the consorts gathered together in the place where the new Ookimi resided.⁶

In any case, it is clear that the routes from Echizen into Lake Biwa, passing through Omi to Kawachi—or again going upstream along the rivers from Echizen, crossing over the mountains into Mino and passing out into Owari—were important arteries for the circulation of goods and people. Thus, pan-archipelago routes for the exchange of people, goods and information had become firmly established by the Tomb period. Only on this basis could a royal succession spanning several regions—such as that of Keitai—take place. Furthermore, given the existence of water routes through the Inland Sea and along the Japan Sea coast that connected Yamato and the Echizen region to the Korean peninsula and the Asian continent, it does not make sense for historians to restrict Keitai’s sphere of activity to the islands alone.

In fact, a war that historians call the “Iwai Rebellion” took place shortly after Keitai’s succession. Although it is generally called a “rebellion,” the concept of a rebellion presumes a single center (against which the rebellion is launched) which in this case was presumed to be Yamato. But Yamato was not the only center during this period. Therefore, this disturbance should not be considered a “rebellion,” but rather a war between the Yamato kingdom and the Iwai kingdom of northern Kyûshû. At the same time, we cannot limit our view of the war to a struggle confined to the Iwai and the Yamato kingdoms, for the Yamato kingdom had allied itself with the Kaya principality of the Korean peninsula while the Iwai allied with the kingdom of Silla, also of Korea. Therefore the Iwai war was not limited to the

⁶See Mawaki Teiji, Mori Kôichi and Amino Yoshihiko, eds. Keitai Ookimi to Owari no Menokohime, Shôgakkan, 1994.

Japanese islands alone. Rather, these alliances linked the struggle between two kingdoms in Japan to the struggle between two kingdoms on the Korean peninsula. We cannot understand this kind of war unless we recognize the existence of tightly-knit transportation routes along the Inland Sea, northern Kyûshû and across the Japan Sea to the peninsula and the continent.

Shifting our focus to the Japan Sea, we note that there was at this time an extremely active route running along the coast from San'in north to Hokkaidô. Jewelry produced by craftsmen in Sado and Echigo was exported in huge quantities to Yamato, and many pieces have also been found along the San'in coast all the way to Izumo. This, too, would be inexplicable without reference to the Japan Sea routes.

Until quite recently, the waters in the Enshû Sea (off the coast of present-day Shizuoka Prefecture) were very rough and crossing them was quite difficult, so it was commonly believed that the Pacific coast route was not stably functioning until the Edo period. However, ocean trade routes were surprisingly active even in those seas from early on. For example, we have accurate evidence that Sue stoneware, produced on the shores of Lake Hamana⁷, was imported into the Kantô region in great numbers as early as the Tomb period. When editing the town history for Miwa in Ibaraki Prefecture a few years ago, the editorial collective took all the pottery fragments unearthed from tombs and other sites in the town and carefully analyzed them. We found that the majority were from the Sue ware kiln. This pottery had to cross the rough Enshû Sea to reach Miwa. Transportation of large quantities of pottery along land routes was impossible, so it was

⁷Lake Hamana is on the western edge of Shizuoka Prefecture and drains into the Enshû Sea. Amino is stating that the pottery produced there would have to be carried across the rough Enshû Sea and around the Izu peninsula to be distributed in the Kantô region.

usually carried along water routes. Therefore, the discovery of Sue fragments in Miwa reveals that the Pacific ocean routes were already relatively stable by the Tomb period.

We also believe there was considerable movement of people and goods between the Okinawan islands and the Japanese archipelago. Gohoura shells used for making bracelets in the southern islands were transported into northern Kyûshû around the Yayoi period. The custom of wearing such bracelets even reached as far as Yamato. Thus, we must always think of the Japanese islands as opened up on four sides (rather than closed in) by the ocean.

I mentioned earlier that trade had been conducted from the Jômon period and that by the Yayoi period there were marketplaces in every region. By the Tomb period a certain critical mass had been reached that made possible what might be called a cash economy. We find clear examples of primitive currency in archaeological digs dating to this era. A wide variety of commodity currencies were used as means of payment in exchange and measures of value. Thus it is not unreasonable to call this a cash economy. Although there are a number of debates concerning the origins of currency, in this period it appears that the main commodity serving as a means of exchange in the western portion of the islands was rice. In the east, however, it was cloth or silk. Rice was a sacred grain—offered to the gods and received from the gods in return. The same perspective applied to textiles. They became a kind of currency by being offered to the gods and then received back in turn.⁸ When similar exchanges were conducted in the profane world between human beings in the form of tribute and reward, cloth served to

⁸See “Commerce, Finance and Currency.”

make the relationship particularly tight. I believe that rice and silk became general means of exchange, taking on the function of currency through their functions as offerings to the gods. In addition, salt, iron and livestock also functioned as currency.

As I described earlier, by the Tomb period, a primitive form of finance known as *suiko*—a process in which the first harvest, once offered to the gods, was used as capital, loaned out as seed and recovered with interest as rice at the next harvest—was already being practiced. Management of the storehouses containing this first harvest rice was probably originally the task of local leaders, and through this practice “wealthy” people first began to appear. I believe it is reasonable to surmise that this primitive form of finance was conducted with capital in the form of rice and saké in the west and silk and cloth in the east.

Again, as I mentioned above, the topography of the Japanese islands was quite different during the Tomb period from the way it is now. The ocean penetrated far into what is now dry land. The town of Miwa that I mentioned above is now an inland town with little water. But, in ancient times, it was on a large river and swamp, and, during the Warring States period of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a naval battle was even fought there. Only those places where we have unearthed Yayoi remains were not underwater. Along the Japan Sea coast, there was always a large inlet wherever a river flowed into the ocean. This is hard to imagine from today’s landscape. The Noto peninsula, for example, was almost cut in half by the Ouchi Inlets. If we do not acknowledge the importance of the natural features of the Japanese archipelago—the scarcity of plains and the vast preponderance of mountains, rivers and coastline—there is no way to

understand the development of its societies.

The Birth of “Japan”

The first true government to rule Honshû, Shikoku and Kyûshû—excepting northern Honshû and southern Kyûshû—was established with its center in the Yamato/Kinai region around the end of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth. It was with the emergence of this State that the name of the country changed from “Wa” to “Nihon” (Japan). This State also changed the name of its ruler from “Ookimi” to “tennô” (emperor). Thus, as I stated earlier, it is simply anachronistic to use the name “Japan” or the title “Emperor” to refer to any period or ruler before the founding of this State. Such phrases as “Stone Age Japan” or “Yayoi period Japanese” are misleading.

In fact, once the State of “Japan” was established, society in the islands underwent a dramatic transformation. The ruling class systematically introduced the first genuine “civilization” into the Japanese archipelago through exchanges with the Asian continent from the sixth century. At the core of this civilizational influx was the Tang dynasty’s governing system. Society in the Japanese islands at the time was still comparatively undeveloped; one might call it an “elastic” society. Onto this elastic society, the sixth century ruling class grafted the extremely rigid civilization of the Chinese mainland.

First, a family registration system was established in which all people living in territory controlled by the State were given *uji* and family names to be recorded, along with their ages, into registries. Then, everyone over six

years of age, including slaves, was allotted a certain amount of rice paddy land. This paddy land formed the basis of the new taxation system in which taxes were collected in rice (*so*), labor (*yô*), crafts (*chô*) and sundries (*zôyô*). A system of land administration— from the basic unit, a settlement composed of fifty registered households (*gô*), to a county (*gun*) and then province (*kuni*)—was then established to disseminate imperial rule. All administration was to be conducted in writing, making the administration of the State thoroughly founded on the principle of “documentism” (*monjoshugi*). It was through this system that Chinese characters spread throughout the Japanese islands.

The primitive financial system of *suiko* was incorporated into the paddy-based taxation system. At the same time, the prior development of transportation routes made possible the collection of craft and labor taxes in the form of tribute (*mitsugi*). In other words, the new State drew upon developments prior to its establishment, but it also exerted a strong pull on products from every region toward its capital in the Kinai region. Artisans and performers, as those who possessed the accumulated technological knowledge of that society, were attached to central government agencies as well as regional administrative centers.

One other area where the new State made a significant departure from prior conditions was in its emphasis on a land-based transportation system; paved roads, ten or more meters wide and as straight as possible, were built radiating out from the capital. The Tôkai, Tôsân and Hokuriku roads went out to the east (and north), the San'in and San'yô roads to the west, and the Nankai road to the south, forming the axes of a broad regional system of roads. The lone exception to the capital-centered roads was the Seikai road

running south from the city of Dazaifu. Since the reader will recall that most transportation prior to this had been on the ocean or along rivers, the State's powerful determination to create a transportation system based on land reveals itself as a clear departure. Post stations were established along the government roads at ten mile intervals; despite the predominance of rivers in the islands, we find almost no evidence of river post stations. Only on the Mogami river, in the distant and isolated Dewa province, do we find evidence of a river post. Thus, we must conclude that, at least at the administrative level, no consideration was given to river travel.

There are a number of reasons why such an odd system was established. Recent defeats at the hands of the Tang (China) and Silla (Korea) forces presented this early State with pressing military concerns. At a more fundamental level, it also appears that, despite its small size, this State had imperial ambitions common to archaic dynasties. A common characteristic of archaic States was the desire to expand their power in all directions, and roadbuilding was a principle physical expression of that desire. The roads of the Roman, Persian and Incan empires, for example, were all built as straight as possible. On the basis of such common characteristics, we can see that the Ritsuryô State also aspired to the status of an archaic imperial civilization.

Furthermore, as I stated in the previous chapter, the Ritsuryô State's governing system was based on an ideology of agrarian fundamentalism. Along with the important step of designating the rice paddy as the basis of its taxation system, the State's agrarian fundamentalism, supported by Confucianism, came to have a strong impact on the entire archipelago, well beyond its main base areas.

Only at this point did the Tsushima Straits come to be seen as a

national border, the island of Tsushima fortified in defense against kingdoms on the Korean peninsula. However, the Tsugaru Straits in northern Japan did not constitute a national border. The rulers of the Ritsuryō State saw the “Eastern Country,” stretching from the center of Honshū to the Kantō plain, as a distinctly different region. This area was brought under control only through a dual policy of invasion and confederation. Although the Yamato State was actually very concerned with the “Eastern Country” from the very beginning, its control only extended to the Kantō plain.

The Territory of “Japan”

From the perspective of the ruling class of the Ritsuryō State (centered as it was in Yamato), all of northern Honshū and the northern part of Niigata—then known as Koshi—was an area known as Emishi, inhabited by a people the Ritsuryō rulers considered different. The same is true, of course, for Hokkaidō. Southern Kyūshū, home of the Hayato, was also outside the territory of Ritsuryō “Japan.” For nearly one hundred years after its founding, the Ritsuryō State fought to bring these territories under its control. In the strictest sense, then, the history of “Japanese” invasions has not been limited to Hideyoshi’s sixteenth century invasion of Korea or the modern invasions of Korea and China. The ancient “Japanese State” invaded the peoples of northern Honshū and southern Kyūshū as well.

This clearly reveals the archaic imperial will of the first State in Japan. In order to extend its own power, the Japanese State invaded surrounding areas and attempted to bring them under its control. Nevertheless, the people of northern Honshū resisted the invasion so stubbornly that the most

northern areas remained outside the State's control for centuries to come.

The province/county/hamlet administrative system was implemented throughout the State's territories. But the two northernmost peninsula on Honshû—the Tsugaru and Shimokita peninsula—were not subject to this system until the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Until that time, these areas were composed of territorial units, “villages” (*mura*), deemed outside the official sphere. Therefore, the areas of northernmost Honshû could not in the strictest sense be considered part of the Japanese State. This is why the Tsugaru Straits did not constitute a “national boundary.”

Jōmon culture survived in Hokkaidō even after most of Honshû had come under the sway of Yayoi culture. To be more precise, northern Jōmon culture was transformed into what has been known as Satsumon Culture in response to developments in the south.⁹ Satsumon Culture possessed its own particular kind of stoneware and iron tools, and while it showed some signs of agricultural development, it brought fishing to an extremely advanced level. Most archaeologists believe that Satsumon Culture was not yet Ainu culture. It appears that Satsumon Culture extended as far south as the northernmost sections of Honshû.

At about the same time, it appears that a branch of the Amur River-based Tungus people, either the Joshin or the Gilyak, had settled in eastern Hokkaidō, bearing with them Ohkutsuk culture. This culture was completely different from previous societies in the Japanese archipelago. Its people were so skilled at sailing and ocean hunting (of whales, and so on) that they have been called the Northeast Asian Vikings. The bear worship of the Ainu, who came later, is also said to have been influenced by this culture. In any case,

⁹The term “Satsumon Culture” derives from the particular scraping patterns found on the pottery it produced.

the Satsumon people were active traders, traveling frequently across northeast Asia. Through their movements, northern culture influenced the peoples living in northern Honshû and the Kantô plain.

For example, recent excavations have uncovered the remains of a large scale foundry in southern Tôhoku. As I mentioned earlier, it was assumed that casting technology moved from west to east. Of course, if one only examines documentary evidence, then it would appear that it was with the move of blacksmiths from the west to the east in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that the technology was transmitted.¹⁰ But when the Tôhoku foundry remains are compared with those found in the west, the Tôhoku remains are found to be much bigger. Traces of iron works have also frequently been discovered in northern Tôhoku. In addition, the “inner ear” style pots of the northeast Asian hunting peoples can be found in Tôhoku, Kantô and the central Alps region. Ritsuryô aristocrats and officials who were stationed in the Kantô area also engaged in trade with the Emishi people. From about the eighth or ninth century, the frequency with which they bought horses from the Emishi became a problem for the central government, since horses were a major military resource. This means that horses were being raised in large numbers in the Tôhoku region, with a culture of horse-breeding and training already well developed. There is a strong possibility that this culture came in from the north.

We also have clear evidence in Okinawa of exchanges with the Asian continent around the same time. There is still much archaeological work to be done, but so far we see no evidence of agriculture practiced in Okinawa around the time the Yamato State was established. Rather, Okinawan

¹⁰This move corresponds with the movement of the center of power from Kyôto to Kamakura with the founding of the Kamakura shogunate.

remains from the time are characterized by a Shell Mound culture¹¹, centered around fishing. With the recovery of pottery from the eighth and ninth centuries, we now also have evidence of exchanges with the Asian mainland. Subsequent scholarship in this area shows great promise of many new discoveries.

The various administrative systems implemented by the Ritsuryô State in the areas under its control began to deteriorate in the early eighth century. Given that the Ritsuryô State's system was governed by a land-based principle, all official transportation had to take place on land. At first, commoners had to transport their taxes—even craft and labor tax equivalents—over land to the capital at their own expense, while state officials such as regional governors had to use land routes when traveling to and from the capital. But the land-based transportation system proved rather quickly to be impractical, so permission was granted in the first half of the eighth century to transport heavy items on the sea or rivers. Archaeological excavations show that by the end of the eighth century the main highways began to deteriorate, with roads becoming more narrow and even unused in parts. By the ninth century, ocean and river routes once again served as the main axes of the transportation system.

At the time of the Ritsuryô State's founding, there was a lively official exchange with the Asian continent. However, these exchanges became less frequent in the ninth century while extra-official exchanges between the islands and the continent took the lead once again. For example, in the ninth century, Silla (Korea) and Hizen (present-day Nagasaki prefecture) aristocrats

¹¹“Shell Mound Culture” refers to a characteristic of many Jômon period finds in which evidence of the Jômon period hunter-gatherer lifestyle is found in large deposits of sea shells.

cooperated in the production of weaponry in an attempt to bring Tsushima island under their joint control. The Korean peninsula and northern Kyūshū had long been closely linked as the territory of the “Wajin,” and it appears that the relationship continued outside the framework of the State, resurfacing again in the ninth century.

The Ritsuryō State also tried to bring commerce and distribution under its control, officially licensing markets in the east and west sections of the capital and in each of the regional administrative centers. Yet, the commercial and financial activity that emerged before the founding of the State continued to grow and exceed State control. What is perhaps most interesting about this unofficial trade is that many of its practitioners were women and monks. I wrote in earlier chapters about the prominent roles for women and monks in commerce. It is difficult to say for certain why this was the case. One reason might stem from the fact that the State held adult men over the age of twenty responsible for the various official taxes. In other words, while adult males were officially recognized as members of the State, women and monks were essentially outside the State’s purview.

This became one of the enduring characteristics of commerce and finance in the Japanese archipelago according to documentary evidence from this time. However, I believe that women, particularly women from coastal and mountain areas, were centrally involved in commerce even in the earlier Yayoi and Tomb periods. Therefore, this role may not so much have originated with the State’s taxation system as it reflects a particular construction of women’s sexual identity and its relation to commercial activity.¹² Whatever the case may be, there is no doubt that women and

¹²See “Concerning Women” for a more detailed discussion of this issue.

monks were responsible for much of the movement of people and goods along rivers and ocean routes during this time. Moreover, this was not simply a radial movement between each region and the capital, but also a complex web of transactions between the various regions themselves. Indeed, demand from the capital did not lead to a drain on the peripheries; rather, commerce in every region prospered due to the demands of the capital.

When we examine the products brought to the capital as payment of “craft” taxes in this period, we see that the technological level of regional handicraft was very high. As I shall discuss later, crafts such as salt, silk, textiles, and iron as well as horses served as a means of exchange. Ocean products such as bonito, abalone, sea weed and salmon were also frequently used to pay “craft” taxes. These products were all considered “*shinsen*” (divine offerings), and were often given as gifts. Even today attaching *noshiawabi* (dried abalone) to a package signifies that it is a gift, while *nori* (sea weed) and dried bonito are often given as gifts. These gifts that we still give today have ancient origins.

Ocean Transport and Tax Contracts

Things changed even more dramatically from the ninth to the tenth century when the State system became a mere shell of its former self. During the first half of the tenth century, it underwent a complete transformation. First, there was the birth of the short-lived kingdom of Taira no Masakado in the early tenth century, a kingdom that contained the eight provinces of Kantô and the Izu peninsula and was based on naval power along the Pacific

coast. At the same time Fujiwara no Sumitomo exercised increasing independence in the western Inland Sea in conjunction with the increasing activity of local coastal leaders labeled “pirates” (*kaizoku*).¹³ “Pirates” were also active in the area of Silla, and it is believed that Sumitomo’s grasp at power was based on an alliance with these groups. In other words, a serious political challenge to the Ritsuryō State arose on the basis of ocean transportation which linked the Inland Sea, northern Kyūshū and the Korean peninsula.

As I mentioned earlier, maritime routes along the Pacific coast had become stable and active from early on. Therefore it is possible to believe that there was communication between Masakado and Sumitomo. Sumitomo extended his power to the Yodo river, making his threat felt in the capital, while Masakado attempted to conquer the Tōhoku region. With these two challenges, the Imperial Court found itself in unprecedented danger. Had Masakado not prematurely provoked war and died young, the Imperial court in Kyōto might have been wiped out. However, Masakado’s kingdom lasted a mere two or three months, and the Yamato State managed to maintain itself as an Imperial State.

However, these two events marked major transformations in the State’s tax and regional systems. First was the emergence of the tax contract system whereby governors and local officials contracted with local leaders to collect taxes in their territories, taxes that had previously been submitted

¹³Amino uses the term *umi no ryōshu* instead of the more common *kaizoku* (pirates) in order to avoid blindly adopting the perspective of the central government of the time. The term “*ryōshu*” itself means the ruler of a territory and is most often associated with control of land. As the discussion in “Pirates, Bandits, Merchants and Financiers” shows, however, the restricted use of “*ryōshu*” to designate only the ruler of agricultural land tends to reduce the historical importance of power over the sea and mountains.

directly to the State. The former bureaucratic system of regional governance lost all practical effect, although provincial governors were still sent to their assigned territories. Meanwhile, storehouses for taxes were established in strategic places around the capital—in places like Yodo and Otsu on Lake Biwa—to which the products collected in each province were brought independently along river and ocean transport routes. Products from each province travelled to the storehouses near the capital via independent waterways, carried by transporters—known as rowers (*kandori*) and “pullers” (*gôtei*)— who had contracts with local officials. The products brought to the official storehouses were commodities that could be exchanged at the markets surrounding the capital for a wide variety of goods—in other words, storehouse commodities were those such as rice, silk, textiles, salt, iron and horses that functioned as currency. The difficulties faced by commoners when bringing payment of their craft and labor taxes to the capital via land routes had undermined the imperial system. Hence the reversion to a mode of transportation more suited to the natural features of the archipelago. Provincial governors entrusted the actual management of these tax storehouses to specialized financiers and merchants possessed of the requisite expertise in such matters. In this way, the provincial governors provided for the needs of the Imperial Court by trading at the marketplace.

Second, the artisans and performers who had formerly been attached to the central bureaucracy began to form independent “professional” organizations. This was due, in part, to the fact that the central bureaucracies had fallen into arrears, so the artisans and performers were forced to provide for their own costs. For example, iron casters had been attached to the Ironworking Agency and the Bureau of Crafts. By the eleventh century,

while they were still attached to the Office of Storehouses for the provision of lanterns to the palace, they had also formed their own independent organization. Known as Lantern Purveyors, they possessed a special grant to travel freely throughout the provinces. With this special dispensation, they roamed the islands casting and trading in the iron works they produced. The same was true for other craftsmen, such as cypress craftsmen and blacksmiths. The activities of such groups were again only possible after the development of an archipelago-wide system of transport. In turn, offices of the central bureaucracy were created on the premise of these artisanal groups' existence.

Therefore, after the tenth century, the State system came to rely upon the independent development of industry, commerce, distribution and water routes, despite the land-centered principles of the ruling class. The same held for trade with the Asian continent and the Korean peninsula. By this time, there were no official delegations exchanged between States in Asia; however, exchanges among common people became more frequent than ever.

China at the time was ruled by the Song dynasty, while Korea was unified under the Koguryo dynasty. Trading ships from both kingdoms arrived continuously in the Japanese islands during this period. Ships also traveled from the islands back to the continent, and through this trade a huge amount of Chinese goods entered the archipelago. It was only through such non-official trade that Chinese goods eventually came into the hands of the rulers.

The layout of Kyôto also changed drastically in accordance with these changes in the governing system. Until then, Kyôto had been crisscrossed with straight roads like a chess board, administratively divided into left and

right quarters, a city of aristocrats and officials. However, the original plans for the construction of the city were only partially completed. The eastern half was largely left as open fields. After the tenth century, the rivers bordering the city came to be indispensable. It was only through trade conducted on these rivers—the Kamo, Yodo, Oi, Katsura and Uji, as well as Lake Biwa just across the mountains to the east—that the capital began to function as a true city. That is, Kyôto was transformed into a “water capital” built upon a waterway transportation system.

Financier Networks

As I mentioned above, the management and operation of provincial storehouses was contracted out to specialists, many of whom operated in financial enterprises. We have a relatively clear picture of their activities when we reach the twelfth century. In 1136, a group of legal scholars attested in a signed document that a group of people attached to Hie Shrine and known as Otsu shrine purveyors (*Otsu jinin*) were officially recognized as financial lenders. The document records a system in which local officials borrowed rice from these shrine purveyors, who are also believed to have managed tax storehouses for the local officials. Local officials were thereby able to gather and submit the required goods when ordered by the Imperial court. The tax contract was issued in the name of provincial officials and governors; however, the financiers who managed the storehouses were actually responsible for the release. In this way, a multi-layered network supported the State.

In the case of the Hie Otsu shrine purveyors, they used the shrine’s

“first harvest rice” as capital for their financial enterprises. In other words, they used the rice that had been offered to the gods worshipped at the shrine for loans they made to provincial governors and bureaucrats. As security for such loans, provincial governors would offer an official promissory note called a *kirifu*, provincial tax collection orders called *kokufu*, or imperial tax collection orders called *kirikudashibumi*. The Hie Otsu shrine purveyors had an extremely wide-ranging network that extended from the provinces of Hokuriku, through the Inland Sea to northern Kyûshû. Their ability to collect taxes on their own authority was backed up by their relationship to the Hie Otsu deities. But it was with the provincial administrations’ tax collection orders in hand that the shrine purveyors went from province to province withdrawing goods from local storehouses. Moreover, the provincial officials’ tax collection orders—and this is true for the provincial governors’ contracts and receipts as well—were exchanged among financiers themselves, with these documents functioning as primitive bills of exchange (*tegata*). It was this network of financiers that guaranteed the payment of these bills. This much is quite clear in the above document from 1136.

Prior development of water transport made possible the financial and commercial networks that actually collected the State’s taxes. This system also depended on the exchange of primitive bills. These conditions suggest that the economy of that time had already developed to a high degree of sophistication. We believe that the *kaisen* system of regular ocean shipping was also established around this time. Its first appearance in historical documents is in the twelfth century, but I believe that regular ocean routes and sailors’ organizations were formed throughout the archipelago in the eleventh century. Ocean transport on the Japan Sea was particularly active.

After entering the harbor at Tsuruga (to the north of Kyôto), merchants from the north would make the short land crossing to Lake Biwa, then sail across to the town of Otsu, after which there would be just another short trip on land to Kyôto. Likewise, boats from the San'in region would put into shore at Obama in Wakasa, from which point their cargo would also be carried across Lake Biwa to Otsu and Kyôto. These routes then connected up with the main arteries intersecting the archipelago from the Inland Sea to northern Kyûshû.

The harbors of northern Kyûshû in those days welcomed many Chinese boats, known as *karabune*. These boats were also sailing into Hokuriku harbors at Tsuruga, Obama and on the Noto peninsula. The pottery and other Chinese goods shipped into the harbors of Noto were also conveyed across the Lake Biwa route to the capital. While there is little doubt that the route from northern Kyûshû through the Inland Sea was the most heavily-traveled of these ocean arteries, we must always remember that there were a variety of ocean routes from China.

Recent excavations have shown that the settlement at Tosa Harbor on the far northern Tsugaru Peninsula functioned as a city from quite early on. Archaeologists in the area have unearthed Chinese porcelains as well as pottery from every region of the Japanese islands. The remains near Tosa Harbor contain an especially large amount of pottery from the twelfth century, so it appears that Chinese porcelains were transported into Tosa Harbor from the end of the Heian period. From the thirteenth century Suzu stoneware from the Noto peninsula was also transported to Tosa Harbor as well as to Kaminokuni and Yoichi in Hokkaidô. Thus, Tosa Harbor functioned as one of the major bases of the early Japan Sea trade routes.

Recent excavations at the Yanagi no gosho palace remains in

Hiraizumi (in present-day Iwate prefecture) show that the Pacific coast routes were also established far earlier than previously thought. The Yanagi Palace was the base of Fujiwara no Hidehira and Fujiwara no Yasuhira at a time when the influence of the Fujiwara in the capital was on the wane. Excavation of this site has revealed a great deal of Chinese porcelains. Since the nearby town of Hiraizumi fell into decline from the end of the twelfth century, it appears that the porcelains uncovered there made their way from China along the Pacific coast to Hiraizumi before the twelfth century. A huge amount of pottery from the ancient Japanese pottery towns of Tokoname and Atsumi have also been unearthed at the Yanagi Palace. Some of the pieces recovered were enormous Atsumi jars, which must have arrived via the Pacific coast and the Kitakami River. Regular shipping routes on the Pacific had to be well established in order for this amount of pottery, manufactured on the distant Chita and Atsumi peninsula, to be transported up to Hiraizumi. In particular, boats had to be able to safely pass the dangerous seas of the Izu peninsula, the Bôsô peninsula and Cape Inubô.

Tokoname pottery was also transported around the Kii peninsula and into the Inland Sea, as well as passing around the Tosa Sea and the island of Shikoku for delivery to Kyûshû. We are certain that the ocean route around the Kii peninsula west toward Kyûshû was already in operation in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but it is likely that it was opened even earlier. The shippers probably did not make the entire trip in one boat. Instead, it appears that shorter routes going from port to port around the entire archipelago were established by the eleventh century.

Okinawa also imported a great deal of Chinese porcelain from the twelfth century. In fact, Okinawa probably had the largest amount of

Chinese pottery in the entire Japanese archipelago, going back to the Tang dynasty. However, the intensity of this trade actually seemed to rise from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. During the same period people from Honshû and Kyûshû also exerted a great deal of cultural influence on Okinawa. For example, we see at this time the beginnings of agriculture and the construction of fortresses (*gusuku*) at all the sacred sites that functioned as the religious, political and military centers of the Okinawan islands. In this way, Okinawa took its own steps toward becoming an independent State.

The Establishment of Regional Cities

Around this time, various cities began to form at regional centers or at important points in regional transport.¹⁴ That Kyôto was among these goes without saying. However, Hiraizumi in the Tôhoku region was also undoubtedly one such city, as were Tosa Harbor, Akita, Tagashiro and the administrative centers of the Mutsu region. Kamakura, the capital of the “Eastern Country,” was already a city even before Minamoto no Yoritomo established his base there. Mutsuranotsu, closely linked to Kamakura, became an important port town. Likewise, many of the inlets in the Kasumigaura and Kitaura areas, such as Ofunatsu in Kashima, had settlements which were urban in character. Mikuni Harbor, Tsuruga and Obama in Hokuriku, as well as Otsu, Sakamoto, Umitsu, Katada and Funaki on the shores of Lake Biwa were all cities. The Uji and Yodo rivers had urban

¹⁴The non-Japanese reader faced with the following list of unfamiliar place names should remember that the significance of Amino’s claim is that these places were not villages, a concept that his Japanese audience is likely to associate strictly with agriculture. By stressing their urban character, he is calling attention, among other things, to the centrality of commerce to these settlements.

settlements in Uji, Yamazaki, Yodo, Suita, Eguchi and Kanzaki. Countless other regional cities existed everywhere, such as the towns of Kurashiki, Onomichi and Kamado, or Hakata and Munakata in northern Kyûshû, Kanzaki on the Ariake Bay and Bônotsu in southern Kyûshû.

The ruling class during this period naturally took the true state of commerce and distribution into consideration when constructing their governing system. From the later half of the eleventh century, leading families, such as the Imperial family and the Fujiwara Imperial Regents, as well as large temples and shrines—such as Tôdaiji, Kôfukuji, Enryakuji, Shimogamo and Kamigamo, Ise, Hie, Kasuga and Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrines—each possessed *shôen* estates and fiefs in every province. Taxes were collected by each estate owner's independent administrative organization from specially designated fields, estates and public lands to pay for the costs of the Buddhist services and festivals that had become regularized ceremonies.

In the course of these developments, the difference between a *shôen* estate and State lands (*kokugaryô*) gradually became more distinct. The estate-public land system was firmly grounded by the first half of the thirteenth century, and on this basis aristocrats and religious organizations constructed their own, independent economic orders. An examination of the process by which aristocrats and religious orders established estates and public lands shows that, in fact, the system was quite well thought out. Consider, for example, the case of the family of the Fujiwara Imperial Regents (the Sekkan family). In Fujiwara no Yorimichi's day (990-1074), they had a villa in Uji, the famous Byôdôin, but they also had two mansions at Lake Ogura. The Uji river and Lake Ogura were strategic points in the water

routes to Kyôto. Having laid claim to these points of access, the Regents established further bases along the Yodo River in Yamazaki, Kuzuha and Yodo, as well as at several important points along the Inland Sea.

The Imperial family's bases during the Insei period¹⁵ included the east bank of the Kamo river and Shirakawa. The latter was a key point in the Lake Biwa transport route, situated at the intersection of the mountain roads crossing into the Kyôto plain and an entry to the Lake. Here the Imperial family built the Shirakawa Palace as well as two temples, Hôshôji and Rokushôji. In the twelfth century, the Imperial family built another villa, the Toba Palace, at the confluence of the Kamo and Katsura rivers. Meanwhile, they not only built a palace in the flood plains between the Uji and Yodo rivers, they also had a number of craftsmen assigned to the palace. Thanks to the presence of these craftsmen, the Imperial family was able to establish Toba Palace as a vital political and economic base. Thus we see that the Imperial family accurately read the state of river transport around Kyôto. The Office of the Retired Emperor (*in*) further claimed land in northern Kyûshû at Munakata and Kanzaki, important sites for trade with the Asian continent.

The same was true for temples and shrines. Shingoji temple held the estate of Nishizunoshô in Wakasa Province while also claiming the harbors of Tagarasu and Tsurube, some distance from Nishizu. While Shinhie Shrine's Kuraminoshô estate was an inland territory, the shrine also claimed the harbor of Mikao at the tip of Tsunekami peninsula. One thus occasionally finds examples of estate owners possessing harbors geographically separated from their estates. This fact simply shows how much consideration the ruling

¹⁵The period during which actual ruling power was divided between the Office of the Regent and the Office of the Retired Emperor (*insei*), roughly 1087 to 1221.

class of the time put into obtaining possessions related to ocean shipping.

Similar considerations are evident in the rise to power of the Taira *uji* in the latter half of the Heian period. First, the Taira became manager of the imperial stables at Toba Palace. With that position, they were in control of the oxen and horses in the stable as well as the people who worked there—the cattleherds, cart drivers, stable hands, trainers and horsemen. Many of the retired emperor's stables were allotted pasture land along river banks. One such stable, called Mizunomaki, near Lake Ogura to the south of Kyôto, was both a pasture and a port. There were many such pasture/port lands along the Yodo river, and once the Taira obtained control of the stables, the lands attached to the stables also came under their control. The Taira also possessed a number of strategic estates along the Inland Sea, including one at Itsukushima (near Hiroshima). In Kyûshû, they controlled Munakata Shrine and, by monopolizing the position of Vice-governor of Dazaifu, they brought that city, together with the major port of Hakata, under their control. Furthermore, by becoming the managers of the retired emperor's estate in Kanzaki on the Ariake Bay on Kyûshû, the Taira gained control of trade with Song China.

Until recently, historians have spoken of *shôen* estates and State lands only in agricultural terms. But the ruling class of the time, who struggled desperately to preserve their positions, did not think of their holdings solely in terms of fields. Although there was concern for the annual tribute taxes that were levied on estate fields, as well as for the unique products of various estates, this was not their only preoccupation. They also took account of the wealth generated in ports and water-borne traffic and the production of mountains in their calculations. That is, they took a comprehensive approach

to the establishment of their *shôen* estates.

As I also touched on briefly in “Commerce, Finance and Currency,” shrines, temples, the Imperial family and the Fujiwara Regents independently organized the shipping, mercantile and artisanal groups in their domains, designating them “shrine purveyors” (*jinin*), imperial purveyors (*kugonin*) or temple purveyors (*yoriodo*). Thus, the rulers of this period sought to control both land and the largely water-based transportation system. Through these means, the medieval governments (both the Imperial government and the shogunate in the Kamakura) came into being around the end of the Heian period.

Most historians have described medieval society as a feudal society based entirely on agriculture. But the society I have just described cannot be understood on that limited notion. Moreover, the standard view of the *shôen* estate as representing a self-sufficient economic order is clearly mistaken. Rice, silk and textiles—the products of these estates—fulfilled the functions of currency; that is, as a means of exchange, means of payment and measure of value. Though still linked to the divinities as offerings, these goods also became irrevocably linked to trade. This economic order first emerged in the twelfth century and represented the transformation of the State from the disintegrated Ritsuryô model to the new medieval model.