

Medium Civilization Theory

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A civilization grows in relation with other civilizations, and it exists only in connection with others. Civilizations make self-development by affecting each other. To understand the development of human civilizations, it is important to observe their connections and particularly to focus on the civilizations that worked to mediate other civilizations. The civilizations held by nomads, traders or marine people played such role. The aim of this writing is to give a fresh perspective into the civilization study by introducing a concept of 'Medium Civilization'. What is human civilization? In order to explain it clear, we need to see 'medium civilization' that enabled civilizations to form and develop.

Meeting and Movement of Civilizations

Oswald Spengler in *The Downfall of the Occident (Der Untergang des Abendlandes)* took up eight civilizations (high culture): Egypt, Babylonia, India, China, Greece/Rome, Arabia, Mexico and Europe, and compared their movement to a human life or seasonal changes. He considered that a civilization is a single organic entity with unique quality and it follows the process of birth, growth, decline and disintegration, just like human being: infancy, adolescence and old stage, or four seasons of a year. Also taking up Egypt, Greece/Rome, Arabia and Europe, he concluded that these four civilizations grew parallel taking the same development processes.¹ It was a remarkable thought that introduced the plural perspective in this subject, at the same time, getting out of the conventional Europe-centered historical view.

But Spengler saw a civilization as a self-contained entity and ignored influences and interaction between civilizations, making it practically impossible for a civilization to communicate with others. With this view, it would be impossible to fully understand any of basic civilizations he took up, because all of civilizations develop under strong influence from others.

Arnold Toynbee discovered philosophical contemporaneity of civilizations from the similar state of Europe of his time with the last stage of ancient Greece. He met Spengler's writing that had the same idea and succeeded the historical study on civilizations and the idea of contemporaneousness and concurrency of civilizations. In *A Study of History*, Toynbee emphasized the theory on the movement of a civilization that, he insists as Spengler did, a civilization is an independent organic entity and it follows the process: genesis, growth, time of troubles, universal state and disintegration. However, not like Spengler, Toynbee admitted the parent-child relationship of civilization. And explaining the inheritance in the course of time, he introduced the generation theory of civilization in which he argued that a civilization develop in three generations. Also, giving a thought to an aspect of mutual communication and influence that civilizations have to each other, he noted civilization's temporal (Renaissance) and spatial (interaction or conflict) encounter.²

But Toynbee's view was based on "Greece/Rome –Europe model", and he tended to force other civilizations into this model and ended up changing the facts. The model of a civilization that follows the course of 'genesis, growth, time of troubles, universal state and disintegration' also derived from the parallel relationship and contemporaneousness between Greece/Rome and Western civilization. But it doesn't work with Chinese civilization. Because Chinese civilization and Indian civilization never had death. There are civilizations that cannot be explained with 'Greece/Rome' model. Given the fact that some civilizations don't die, it can be seen that civilizations don't necessarily follow the course of 'genesis, growth, time of troubles, universal state and disintegration'.

To fit Chinese or Indian civilization into this model, it needs to cut them up. Because of this, in *A Study of History* Toynbee divided Chinese civilization into three generations: the first, Shang (Yin), the second, Sinic, and the third, Far Eastern, and in the case of Indian civilization: Indus, Indic and Hindu.³ But these two civilizations have been growing seamlessly throughout history, and there is no point in dividing them in generations. Nevertheless Toynbee included China and India in his generation model, being rigid on his principle that all civilizations follow 'Greece/Rome and Europe model'.

However, later Toynbee accepted criticisms, and in the book 12 of *A Study of History (new edition)*, he made some changes on his generation theory.⁴ And in *A Study of History (Abridged and Illustrated)* which he published in his late life he introduced China model and Jew model along with 'Greece/Rome model'. But the original movement process, 'genesis, growth, time of troubles, universal state and disintegration', was kept. In this respect, it cannot be said that he has revised his theory to the bottom. A civilization doesn't move with regularity nor be clearly divided into generations. Civilizations don't always have contemporaneous quality and do not exist in complete parallel. Setting up a simple, hasty formula could cause a mistake.

The notion that there are civilizations, each of them automatically follows the process of 'genesis, growth, time of troubles, universal state and disintegration', and they meet sometimes, is wrong. It is rather that they meet and, as a result, a movement occurs. Generation and disintegration of a civilization is caused by meeting with other civilizations. A civilization can live or die by meeting with others.

For example, Europe, the Western civilization, has never developed all by itself, rather their development was caused by the flux of other culture. Particularly the Islamic civilization played a significant role in the development of Europe. Renaissance in the 12th century was the result of studying Greek philosophy and science brought through Arabic countries, and the growth of commerce around Mediterranean Sea was also

prompted by the interaction with Muslim traders. The rise and progress of humanism, science and capitalism in Europe in the early modern period was based on this. The European's vigorous activity in the ocean in later times was also enabled by the information and technologies brought by Muslims through Mediterranean. Renaissance in the 15 and 16 century was not caused simply by the European's discovery of their ancient roots, the Greek civilization, but largely by the geographical connection with contemporary Muslims who had well conserved the ancient Greek philosophy and science knowledge. Here, the spatial encounter that was made through Islam was more important than a temporal encounter with the past.

Furthermore, behind the Islam was the influence from Chinese civilization. Without the Chinese oriented technologies neither such as paper making, printing and compass navigation, which were brought by Muslims, never Renaissance nor the Age of Discovery were realized. In the late medieval time, the commercial development in Europe was linked to that in the far Song dynasty by Muslim traders. The growth of the Western civilization was also caused by influx of new things from other civilizations such as Islam and China.

In the same way, Chinese civilization was not a self-contained but was formed under heavy influence from other civilizations. In fact, it kept changing its quality over years in effect of the foreign culture coming through the trading routes that run in the northern step, the oasis area in the west and the ocean in the south. Chinese civilization was connected crisscrossed by land and ocean route to other civilizations, too. From the beginning, Chinese civilization developed on the mixed culture held by nomads in the north and the maritime people in the south. The main population of China, The Han, itself was a mixed race, so their civilization was naturally culturally multi-layered. In China there were often dynasties established by nomad conquerors or intruders. Certainly they caused fundamental changes to the civilization and caused movement. Chinese civilization was also formed after many times of cultural crush and recovery.

Neither Chinese nor the Western civilization stood by itself. They developed as a result of receiving constant cultural impact from outside. Therefore any civilizations don't necessarily follow the clear process of 'genesis, growth, time of troubles, universal state and disintegration'.

Civilization as process

Rushton Coulborn pointed out inconsistency in Toynbee's generation theory and suggested the cycle theory. Toynbee constructed his theory based on parent-child relationship of civilizations, using Aegean, Greece-Rome and Europe as an example of cultural succession. However, when he applied the same model to explain the relation of China and Far East civilization and India and Hindu civilization, it does not sound quite appropriate. Actually they cannot be divided. Because, though these civilizations experienced radical changes over years, they have never been replaced to completely new civilizations.

Seeing this problem himself, Toynbee in *Reconsiderations* gave up the idea to divide Indian and Chinese civilization in generations, all together Mesopotamia into Sumer and Babylonia.⁶ And in *A Study of History (Abridged and Illustrated)*, he added 'China model'.⁷ However, as long as he insisted generation based theory, the contradiction will never be resolved.

Coulborn's idea was put up to solve this problem, where he argued to give up the generation theory, and, instead, to read civilizations' parent-child relationships as a cycle change. He thought long-lasting civilizations take 2~3 rounds of cycles during its life, and he described civilizations of China, India, Mesopotamia and Egypt with this idea.⁸ Both the generation theory and the cycle theory are ideas to have a comprehensive description of division and succession of a civilization. Coulborn's theory inclines more to its succession.

But, why did the civilization cycle occur? The Civilizations in Eurasia almost always had invasions by different ethnic groups, especially nomads, between those cycles in most case. For instance, in China, establishment of Yin (the Yellow river

civilization) and Qin and Han dynasty attributed to metalwork technology brought by northern nomads. The Confusion during Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties had its cause in the large scale influx of nomadic horsemen from the northern step area that led the destruction of Han dynasty. Also, in India, Aryan from the north played a crucial role to end Indus civilization, and the Kushan tribe who also lived originally in the north caused confusion over the 1st to the 3rd century AD.

It is often the case that after the 2nd cycle, a new religion is born/comes in and becomes the base of forming the 3rd cycle. In India, from the 1st to the 3rd century, when the Kushan came, Buddhism was mixed with Hellenistic culture to give a birth to Mahayana Buddhism, which again got mixed with local Hindu culture to form Gupta culture. Mahayana Buddhism was first brought to China during the Southern and Northern Dynasties period through the oasis route and the southern ocean route, and eventually it flourished the colorful Buddhist culture in Sui and Tang dynasty. In the transition period from Greece/Rome civilization to Europe civilization there was a destruction of the Empire caused by racial migration, and a new religion (Christianity) had a role in forming a new civilization. In the east and the west of Eurasia, civilizations seem to have taken the same step, although generational change didn't occur in China and India, not like Greece/ Rome and Europe, just almost same civilization with the same character in the same place were recreated. In this case the cycle theory can better explain what happened. In any case, horizontal connections of civilizations played an important role whether it was generational or cycle change.

So far when we think about civilizations that human beings have created over the long history, we picked up only some great influential ones with the notion that they exist and grow all by themselves. Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece/ Rome, Europe, Arabia, India and China are typical examples. We took them as central civilizations and observed their movement and compared the common patterns.

But none of them develop nor make progress without having related with other civilizations. Civilizations keep changing its quality in relation with others. It is not that two independent civilizations meet and start communication. The fact is that mutual influence enables them to form and make movement. No civilization grows by itself. It is through connection with others that make them move. A civilization moves when it meets with others.

A civilization develops with influx of other civilization. It doesn't matter if it is 'partial propagation': introduction of only some cultural elements, 'total propagation': the cases like migration or physical/cultural invasion where the whole components of a civilization flows in, or 'indirect propagation': introduction of ideas only. In any case, new culture will be translated to fit in the local context, making cultural modification, and eventually get absorbed. Any civilization, even central civilizations, cannot avoid cultural propagation or influence from other civilizations. Therefore all of civilizations are hybrid consisting of many cultural layers. Chinese civilization, being connected to India, Persia, Rome and Islam by the step route and the southern ocean route has been developing under heavy influence from them. India, Islam and Europe also took the same course.

A civilization cannot be taken as a fixed individual entity. It is not an object. It is rather a process, and exists only in relation with others. Toynbee in *A Study of History (Abridged and Illustrated)* called great civilizations or central civilizations 'independent civilization'.⁹ But truth is there is no civilization which is completely independent. It is true that Toynbee, too, thought about the meets of civilizations. But he never deepened this idea. If he had done, he might have found that his own theory on the movement of a civilization, and Spengler's, would become useless.

Peripheral Civilization Theory

Picking up some major civilizations individually and, calling

them central or basic civilizations, study their movement or relationship with others is not enough to get a comprehensive view of the human history and civilization. Around a central civilization are to be found other civilizations that grow under influence from it: peripheral civilizations. It borrows various cultural aspects from the central one and develops a unique character.

Philip Bagby was critical about Toynbee's theory. He insisted that these peripheral civilizations must be included in consideration. Toynbee, taking up 21 or 23 civilizations, treating them equal, studied mainly their movement patterns. But, Bagby argued in *Culture and History* that 'major civilization' and 'peripheral civilization', or 'primary civilization' and 'secondary civilization' should be separated. Bagby said a peripheral civilization lives shorter than a major civilization. It establishes itself by borrowing cultural aspects such as art, technology, governing system, value and ideas from the major civilization, and moves always passively and extrinsically. Because of this tendency, it lacks creativity and seldom becomes influence for other civilizations, and hardly produces universal art or thought system. However, a peripheral civilization still contain indigenous idea, value and system, thus it must be treated differently from major civilization. He lined up Babylonia, Egypt, Ancient Greece/Rome, India, China, the Middle East, Europe, Central America and Peru as major civilizations and adduced 30 regions as their peripheral civilizations. This means that Korea and Japan are peripheral civilizations of China, and Southeast Asia, Ceylon and Tibet of India.¹⁰

Yet Bagby's theory has some defects, too. In the first place, major civilization (central civilization) doesn't stand alone nor grows intrinsically. We should not miss the fact that even major civilizations get affected by other civilizations and move extrinsically. Also there are peripheral civilizations that showed high creativity such as Indus, Syro-Phoenicia (Syria), Russian and Japanese civilization. Moreover, in Tibet, Southeast Asia, Korea, Japan and Russia, the civilization last pretty long. Further,

some civilizations played an important role in creation and move of a major civilization, by transferring culture they had adapted from other civilization and preserved or improved. Such civilizations are Syro-Phoenicia, Greco-Bactria, Turkey (Tatar), the Southeast Asia and Tibet. Without the notion that a peripheral civilization often works as a medium, the entire movement of a civilization cannot be explained. In Bagby's peripheral civilization theory the dynamism of civilization is not fully captured.

Toynbee accepted the criticism from Bagby, and in *Reconsiderations* he rearranged his list of civilizations, renaming great civilizations as independent civilizations, peripheral civilizations as satellite civilizations. As a result, 15 civilizations became satellite civilizations, Japan, Korea, Russia, Iran, Hittite and others being downgraded, and Southeast Asia, Tibet and others upgraded.¹¹ But his analysis on mutual relation between independent civilization and satellite civilization still is not enough.

Centralization of peripheral civilization and marginalization of central civilization

Only by making a new classification of central civilization and peripheral civilization, or independent civilization and satellite civilization, comparing them with petal and flower head, the movement of civilization history cannot be fully grasped. To understand the dynamism of civilization, it is necessary to have the thought that, through communication or mutual influence between civilizations, often centralization and marginalization occur to inverse or alternate their position in the relationship.

There are many central civilizations or basic civilizations that were peripheral civilization in the beginning. Aegean civilization and Greece are also found its origin in Orient (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia). Europe civilization was also born and grew under Rome, Syria, Byzantine and Arabia (Arabic/Islam) civilization, being a mere peripheral civilization in Mediterranean region until the 12th century. But it rapidly

developed itself by adopting and absorbing Christianity, regal systems, philosophy, science and language from civilizations around it, and took a leap to become a central civilization in the 16th century.

Russian civilization started as a peripheral civilization too. It developed under influence of Byzantine civilization and adopted Greek Orthodox, regal systems, architecture and art. The title of the emperor, 'Tsar', was also taken from Byzantine word. It was probably around the middle of the 15th to the 16th century when Russia got out of Tataro-Mongol Yoke and became a central civilization.

Japanese civilization took a similar step as Europe and Russia. Japanese civilization is generally considered to have established as a peripheral civilization of China. It was around the 6th or 7th century when Japan got civilized by adopting such new things mainly from China, as Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, regal systems and Chinese characters. And it was around the 9th century when, digesting Chinese civilization, Japan gradually got away from Chinese influence and proceeded to become a central civilization. In the course of it Japan took several steps: stopping the official interaction with Tang dynasty, start of regent politics, indigenization of Buddhism and born of domestic Buddhist sects, invention of domestic letters, Kana, and flourishing of noble literature, establishment of domestic high culture in architecture and art, and establishment of Japanese style sculpture and calligraphy.¹² Through the establishment of feudal system in the medieval time and the secularization in the pre-modern period, Japan took a different way from China. And in this respect Japanese civilization developed parallel to Europe. Japan continued to be influenced by China through trade or communication even after obtaining cultural independence, but it was done more proactively as a central civilization rather than as a peripheral civilization.

When it is observed the genesis and growth of those civilizations in Europe, Russia and Japan, a common process is seen. All of them started as a peripheral civilization and

developed by borrowing and digesting ideas and technologies such as sophisticated religion, political systems, law, philosophy, art, techniques and language from neighboring central civilizations. Eventually they acquired independence to become a central civilization themselves.

Centralization of peripheral civilization is an important aspect to understand the movement of a civilization, but the contrary move, marginalization of central civilization, must be observed at the same time. An established central civilization sometimes gets culturally taken over by a civilization that came later and became powerful, and eventually assumes the peripheral status. This is a phenomenon that a younger and stronger civilization expands into the domain of other civilizations to take over with its military, economic or cultural power. The cultural pressure from the prosperous civilization is so powerful that neighboring civilizations, no matter how influential they used to be, like or not, end up being penetrated and having to accept it.

Although there are different attitudes toward the acceptance: by force or by will, or positive or negative, in any case, it sometimes happens that a central civilization suddenly marginalize.

‘Assimilation to Greece’ or ‘Westernization’ of civilization that Toynbee argued in his theory about the meeting of civilizations, especially in the spatial meeting, is a best example of marginalization. Although Greek civilization first came as a peripheral civilization in Orient, it grew its influence during the Hellenic period and later became a central civilization in Mediterranean, marginalizing other civilizations in the area. In the same way, Europe civilization originally being peripheral in Mediterranean grew powerful through such events as Renaissance and science and industrial revolutions after the 16th century, making itself a central civilization, and with its universal influence, marginalized most of civilizations on earth. Great central civilizations such as Arabic, India, China, Russia and Japan were all marginalized to Europe civilization. Some were colonized by force and some by will, but none of them had a

chance to get away from it.

In *A Study of History* Toynbee mentions this 'Westernization' into details comparing it to Greek's cultural assimilating process. It is known that Toynbee describes this process as 'Challenge' and 'Response'. He studied how a strong civilization wields its influence to force into other civilizations and how responded.¹³

Either centralization or marginalization, the reverse is caused by their mutual influence. Two civilizations get connected and develop together, by influencing to each other. A civilization is not a static entity but something always transforming working with other civilizations. It is not that an already developed civilization meets other such established civilization, but they develop by meeting others. Civilizations exist only within relation, and it's a process that changes by meeting.

A peripheral civilization is born and grows around a central civilization but it doesn't mean it completely relies on it. Although peripheral civilization is under strong influence of central civilization, it selectively borrows foreign ideas, localize it and develop its own culture. Thus, the peripheral civilization comes to have a unique quality that cannot be derived only to the central civilization from which the original idea came.

Also, a peripheral civilization is not necessarily influenced by only one central civilization. In many case, around a peripheral civilization there are more than two central civilizations. Because of this, it often creates a mixed culture of some different civilizations. And being close to more than two central civilizations, it often works as a cultural medium. The peripheral civilization which works as a medium redistributes ideas in the region and prompts the change of central civilizations. It means that the relationship between civilizations cannot be explained by the simple 'central and peripheral' model. Here, we need a new concept: 'medium civilization'.

Medium civilization (NEW!)

It is not enough to understand what is happening with civilization only seeing the relationship between a central

civilization and a peripheral civilization: a peripheral civilization becoming independent, centralization of a peripheral civilization, marginalization of a central civilization and so on, with the model of 'central civilization and peripheral civilization. There are peripheral civilizations that play a role of a cultural medium, so the 'medium civilization' should be taken into consideration separately from peripheral civilization as a different concept from central civilization or peripheral civilization centered view to grasp the dynamism of civilizations. There are civilizations that have never been properly explained in conventional civilization theories: ones held by nomads, in oasis region, trading ports, islands and peninsulas. In order to include them into the core of a civilization theory, the concept 'medium civilization' is a necessary element.

For a civilization grows through interaction with other civilizations, the role of medium civilization that enables it must be evaluate correctly and should be placed in the center of a theory to explain the whole movement. To understand the communication between civilizations, there must be a civilization that connects them as a media. A medium civilization enables civilizations to form and develop with its intermediary nature. In this case, it is more logically appropriate to think that civilizations develop because a medium civilization is working in between, than a medium civilization forms among already established civilizations. Something that tie others prompt them to work. Without the tie, they would not work. Civilizations grow and sophisticate by meeting with others. Medium civilizations help to make their first encounter.

Medium civilization can be called 'meson civilization'. Just like meson connects proton and neutron, to connect two civilizations there must be a meson civilization. Moreover, as proton and neutron interact to develop by exchanging meson, civilizations develop by exchanging various elements through medium civilization.

Typical medium civilizations are the ones formed by nomads or land and maritime traders in local trading center. Nomads,

traders and marine people play the role of a cultural transmitter with their mobility and commercial nature. Nomads who based in the Central Eurasia, traders who worked in oasis region and marine people who could move around freely in the ocean were the medium and communicators that made the transformation of central civilizations and peripheral civilizations on earth. They were not mere outsiders who took advantage of civilizations.

Generally speaking, a medium civilization grows in the boundary. And between civilizations is an area which belongs to both side and neither side. But the boundary still connects the two civilizations. In such a culturally partial area provides opportunities for different cultures to meet and communicate. This is the place where a medium civilization grows. Nomads, traders and marine people cross over the border to enable civilizations to communicate.

Medium civilization is characterized by containing many different cultures within it or those who have different cultural background live together. It is a place where people, goods and information come and go, and elements from different civilizations get mixed up. This is the environment that gives a birth to a medium civilization. It is kind of a cultural market, and often become the starting point of a new culture. Cultural elements from different civilizations get mixed together in a melting pot, a medium civilization, to make an amalgam which gets fermented creatively to produce something new. Then the new culture is eventually introduced to other civilization to contribute for it to development. Kushan civilization where Mahayana Buddhism was born and Syria civilization where Christianity started are typical examples. Medium civilization has a huge role in helping meeting and infusing of civilizations and creation and transportation of a new culture.

Medium civilizations on land

The medium civilization that maintained its influence for long time and affected civilization history particularly in Eurasia would be the one created by nomads who lived in the central part

of the continent. Nomad people in the central Eurasia have been playing an important role in the cultural transformation of Eurasia continent.

It began with the growth and spread of Aryan, which led a huge movement of civilizations in the Mediterranean, Orient and India. They invaded regions bringing new technologies such as iron weapons, battle carriages and horse riding skill, and destroyed local civilizations where consequently new civilizations were born. Nomads who appeared in later time caused civilization movement by spreading iron craft technology and horse riding skill. One of the biggest cultural revolutions in history that occurred across Eurasia after the 6th century BC, were the psychological change of human beings and the birth of great empires. It was also in big part due to those technologies introduced by nomads. Nomads also had a critical role in the downfall of those empires. From the 3rd to the 6th century AD, many ancient empires disappeared one after another, and most of them were caused by intrusion of horse riding nomads. A civilization doesn't end its life by itself, but, in many case, it is caused by intrusion from outside. The end of civilizations during the 9th to the 11th century in China, Arab/Islam, Byzantine and Europe was also mostly the result of the intrusion of Turkish nomads like Turkic or Uighur whose active range covered the entire continent.

The establishment of Mongolian empire in the 13th century signifies the completion of nomad civilization. The medium civilization formed by nomads has finally upgraded to a central civilization in this period. The civilization made by Mongolia can't be seen as a mere peripheral civilization. Because Mongolia marginalized other civilizations in the continent, it is more accurate to say their peripheral civilization centralized. A peripheral civilization which conveys culture between civilizations, at the summit of its development, having taken over a central civilization, was what happened for Mongolia. During this period, the trans-continent traffic established by Mongolia caused commercial revolution in Eurasia. Japan and the Western

Europe were also affected. Both east and west of Eurasia, movement occurred mediated by Mongolia.

Those Eurasian step-based nomad tribes such as Aryan, Scythian, Xiongnu, German, Xianbei, Turkic, Uighur and Mongolia, have been influential in the region for over 3,000 years. Nevertheless their civilization has never been treated in civilization study properly, probably because of the biased view of observing civilizations only with the central/peripheral relationship. Civilizations in Eurasia didn't develop by itself. At any point of genesis, growth, decline, decomposition and extinction, it received some external stimulation or impact. And as an external effect, the activity of nomads should not be ignored. In the east, west and south of Eurasia, it was nomads in the central Asia who destroyed an old civilization and reconstructed a new civilization.

It is true that nomads had neither the same ethnical background nor a common culture. They were tribes with broad cultural diversity both spatially and temporally. Also they hardly had structures in their home town and it was much later that they built a decent city and adopted writing. For this their culture doesn't seem to fulfill the conditions of civilization. However their contribution to history is too big to simply ignore. Toynbee treated nomad's civilization as inferior and called it an 'abortive civilization' in *A Study of History*, which shows the limitation of the central civilization oriented view.¹⁴ The great work of Nomad's civilization should be properly evaluated as a medium civilization.

Nomads didn't cause only destruction, but they also did a creative work. In agricultural cities they intruded, they learned local culture and added it to their own practical culture and value, and, by combining many cultures they made cultural revolutions. Their ability to reconstruct civilization must be highly evaluated. It had a significant impact on the creation of civilization. Also the role of nomads in interaction and transferring cultures between the East and the West should be counted. Their trading activity and migration played an important role to connect civilizations in

Eurasia and pushed them to step forward. The remarkable meditating ability that nomads showed should not be ignored.

A civilization theory must include those grown among oasis towns to become medium civilizations. Spanning widely from east to west of Eurasia they look like simple peripheral civilizations around Persia, Hellenic, Arabic (Arab/Islam) civilization and China and India. But developing in border area, with highly effective meditating ability, they also should be treated as medium civilizations, then, to set a new perspective into civilization study.

Oasis civilizations grow in the transportation center which is a crossroad of culture where people, goods and information come together. It is based on transit trading, offering a place for cultures to meet and communicate, and forms a cultural superconductive spot. Business flourish, and many different culture brought from different region such as religion, language, art, philosophy all get mixed up. Oasis civilization is also characterized by its cultural complexity, and within this cultural mix, sometimes a new culture rises up. A creative culture is formed by meeting and mixing of civilizations.

Mahayana Buddhism that rose in Kushan civilization is one of the creations of oasis civilization. Kushan Empire combined India-born Buddhism with cultures of Greece/Rome and Persia to consequently produce Mahayana Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism was later spread eastward, through the central Asia and the East Turkestan, to China, Korea and Japan to cause a great cultural transformation in those countries. The impact dropped on almost everything in the countries in education, art, national governing system and lifestyle. The influence and significance of Mahayana Buddhism and the role it played in history was far beyond the conventional notion of being mere cultural exchange between the east and the west. It was a great cultural achievement produced by medium civilizations in oasis region.

As the spread of Mahayana Buddhism shows, the civilizations in the eastern Asia: China, Korea and Japan were firmly

connected and got influence from India, Persia, Byzantine or Rome through oasis civilizations. On the contrary, civilizations in the west, including Persia, Arabic, Rome, Byzantine and Western were under influence from Chinese civilization.

Also, when oasis civilizations are seen as one integrated civilization, it can be seen that it runs through some civilizations deep to the east and the south like a wedge. Hexi corridor in north-west China, north-west India and Iranian Plateau are boundaries where oasis civilizations and China, India and western Asian civilizations are connected. Great civilizations in Eurasia were connected to each other and exchanged culture to develop itself at such area.

Oasis civilizations grow in a cultural connection point. They connect civilizations in Eurasia and give stimulation. They have been playing an important role as a bridge between civilizations to let them step forward. Thus, oasis civilization is not just a peripheral civilization nor one grows in the remoted region, but a medium civilization which meditates culture.

Medium civilization in the ocean

In marine region civilizations grow in port towns to meditate culture. A port town which is well connected to other towns by ocean trade gathers various ethnicity, goods and information to develop a cultural layer, just like an oasis town. It was a connecting point of different culture and works as an information center, linking regions and contributing for them to communicate, and ultimately connecting civilizations. There are many examples of marine nations in history that made the international trading center, a port town, a core city. Port civilization was formed by these marine nations. The first medium civilization in history was developed along the gulf of Persian which connected Mesopotamia and Indus civilization. The civilization mediated Mesopotamia and India by ocean trading. Southeast Asian civilization and South-Indian civilization were developed form of such port civilizations.

Like oasis civilization, port civilization is not just a

peripheral civilization, but a medium civilization which brings new cultural elements to central and peripheral civilizations. The ocean network formed by a connection among port cities went beyond not to mention regional, cultural borders and enabled civilizations have interaction. Also, port cities had an important for civilizations in the east and the west of Eurasia as inlets for new cultures.

As well as port civilization, ones formed in islands should be also counted, as a counter part of oasis civilization on land. Civilizations formed on islands are generally seen as inferior locating in remote region, or, at best, a peripheral civilization. But island is neither remote nor peripheral. An island is a connecting point of ocean trade networks and always new culture flowed in the port. Island tends to have an independent and indigenous character, but always open to outside. It is strongly connected to the rest of the world, locating on the ocean trading route. Being a small trading center, an island is a kind of a concentration of broad outside world. Like a port, an island is a cultural center where new civilizations come and go. An island works like a power substation of culture.

Crete Island in Aegean passed ancient civilizations in Egypt and Orient to Greece. Arabia learnt Western culture through Sicily Island. Arabia and Egypt imported culture of Southeast Asia and the South India through Socotra Island. Sri Lanka was a relay point of spreading Buddhism. Island in Southeast Asia connected Indian civilization and Chinese civilization. Spanish controlled Luzon Island connected Europe to China (Ming and Qing dynasty). Dutch era Taiwan was a connection point of Southeast Asia, China and Japan. Ryukyu was also a connection of Southeast Asia, China and Japan, and Tsushima Island for Korea and Japan. The role played by these islands in transferring culture should not be ignored. Islands civilizations, forming relation to each other, connecting central civilizations and peripheral civilizations, worked as medium civilization.

Civilizations which grew on peninsula which lies between sea and land, too, played the role to connect and transfer cultures.

Peninsulas contributed in propagating civilization by being an inlet of new cultures from the sea and passing it to the land, and taking new cultures from the land to pass it to another continent or islands. The Iberian Peninsula and Italy peninsula passed Arabic civilization to Europe. The Arabian Peninsula passed technology and goods of China and India to Byzantium and Europe. Indochina peninsula mediated Indian civilization and Chinese civilization. Civilizations on these peninsulas also worked as medium.

Southeast Asian civilization, having port cities, islands and peninsulas, was a great medium civilization on the ocean. In the first millennium, peninsulas and islands in Southeast Asia saw rises of numerous port towns busy with seaborne traffic and trade, many of which became nations. Southeast Asian civilization was born among these marine nations and developed to become an important connection in the South ocean route network, which links seas in East Asia and Indian Ocean to connect Eastern, Southern and Western Asia. Because of this, various religious groups such as Hindu, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Confucianism and Taoism, were brought into Southeast Asia, as well as goods, technology and people. Getting them all mixed up, a multiple layered culture was created. The fusion culture was then passed to other part of Asia and also to the Western Europe.

Southeast Asian civilization has been treated as a peripheral belonging to India, China and Islam. However, with the networking ocean, it has been a medium among civilizations in Eurasia. Its importance must be reviewed. Toynbee called Southeast Asia a fossil civilization or a satellite civilization.¹⁵ But, in fact, it is a decent civilization in the ocean with the role of connecting civilizations in Eurasia. Civilizations of Japan, Korea and the Western Europe were also mediated by Southeast Asian civilization, as well as China, India and Islam. In Southeast Asia after the 15th century, there were people from Ryukyu, Japan and Europe to show it was connected to East Asia and Indian Ocean. Japan and Western Europe were also connected through Southeast Asian civilization. Further, it even connected India and

the New World. Like oasis civilization, Southeast Asian civilization was an important player in human history.

Peripheral civilizations to become a medium civilization

Although Southeast Asian civilization that was considered as peripheral, now it is a world important medium civilization, then there could be other low-profiled civilizations which have a same quality.

For instance, both Bagby and Toynbee saw Tibet as a peripheral or satellite civilization of Indian civilization, but it actually mediated India to China and nomads. India-born Esoteric Buddhism became Tibetan Buddhism which influenced Chinese Esoteric Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhism (Lamaism) was in turn adopted by Mongolia and Jurchen tribe. Similarly, Korean peninsula, too, supported cultural exchange between China and Japan. Korea adopted Chinese culture which came by land, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, fortune telling, calendar system and medical science, and as well as preserved them, passed them to Japan. It was the same process as the Iberian Peninsula conducted to transfer Arabic civilization to Europe.

Then, Japan which is often described a cultural drift, is also to be found as medium. Japan sophisticated China-originated crafts such as fan and ceramic, which were exported to Europe to cause Japan boom, Japonism. In modern period, it was from Japan that Zen Buddhism was introduced widely in Western countries. Japan was among the earliest in Asia to adopt modern Western culture and influenced China. After Meiji Restoration, Japan keenly translated Western materials and Chinese students brought back home those newly translated modern technological terms. Japan has amassed such information from India, China and the West over years, and it still has ability to mediate between the West and non-West.

Syro-Phoenicia civilization (Syria) was defined by Bagby as a peripheral civilization to Babylonia and Egypt, but it was a highly creative civilization. Syria civilization was developed by Semitic people in Syria/Palestine region. First the Phoenician and

then the Hebrew came to take over the civilization. Syria was another crossroads of civilization, a connecting point on a cultural network where many land and marine trading routes cross. It was on the border of two great civilizations, Egypt in the south-west and Mesopotamia in the north-east and created a new civilization from their encounter.

Alphabet was one of Phoenician creation which was introduced to many civilizations like Greek/Rome, Western, Byzantine, Russia and America. Also, 'the Phoenician style' which was formed by combining Egyptian and Akkadian was adopted by Greece.

Syria is also a birthplace of sophisticated religions. Historically, Syria has always been a subject of ruling by foreign empires. Sophisticated religions generated in this environment. Judaism was born amongst the conflict between the Agricultural civilization in Babylonia and the nomad culture in Syria. From Judaism, Christianity and Islam were formed to play a decisive role in human history. As Mahayana Buddhism was formed by the encounter of civilizations of Greek/Rome and India, Christianity was brought by the meet and conflict between Greek/Rome and Syria. It was an anguish of Syrian civilization caused by the defeat against Greece that sublimated in the higher level than a physical battle in the form of religion. It was handed down to the late Roman civilization, Byzantine and Europe. About 100 years after Jesus Christ was born, Syrian civilization was absorbed by Rome and went extinction. But its production, Christianity, conquered the Roman Empire and other civilizations. Of course, Syria was a great medium civilization too.

Central civilizations to become a medium civilization

Persia started as a peripheral civilization of Mesopotamia and eventually developed itself into a central civilization to dominate the Middle East. It also had a high mediating ability by nature. The consequence of ancient dynasties established in Persia: Achaemenid, Parthian and Sassanian, ruled the region which had major trading routes including the step route and the

oasis route, connected to Indian Ocean and Mediterranean, and made a civilization with high cultural capacity. Persia, on top of its basic nomad tradition, adopted culture brought from Orient, and accepting civilizations such as Hellenic, Rome, Byzantine and India, to create sophisticated hybrid civilization.

Persian civilization was then transferred to other civilizations. Manichaeism was formed in Persia by mixing Buddhism which came from India in the Sassanian era and Nestorian Christianity from Byzantine with Zoroastrianism. Persian civilization mediated the East and the West to contribute transferring culture as well as offering opportunity to meet for civilizations of Greece, Rome, China and India.

Arab/Islam (Arabic) civilization was also a huge medium civilization. It was first a peripheral civilization to Byzantine and Persia. It developed in the connection point of the step route, the ocean route, Indian Ocean and Mediterranean, the border of cultural influence of China, India, Europe and Africa. The network supported by trades and cities in the region was the base of this civilization, and thorough the network it passed technologies from China such as paper making, gun powder, compass, printing to Europe. With these technologies, later the Europeans realized Renaissance and the great discovery era. It was also Arab/Islam who preserved Indian mathematical and scientific knowledge and, after localizing it, transferred to Europe. Arab/Islam civilization, in the sense of both space and time, played the role of medium civilization. It stayed prosperous by connection civilizations of China, India, Byzantine and Europe. Including Turkey which came later, Islamic civilizations had been influential for centuries and controlled the history in Eurasia as a huge medium civilization.

Like this, a central civilization sometimes works as a medium civilization. A central civilization in East Asia, China, too, had the same role. During Tang dynasty which is characterized by its colorful international atmosphere, various foreign culture flew in and out of China, from India, Persia, Arabia, Byzantine and so on, by land and ocean. Mahayana Buddhism was one of the biggest

things that passed through China in this period. Chinese civilization passed the culture to Korea and Japan, as well as adopting. China and Arabia are central civilizations but at the same time play the role of medium civilization.

The concept of 'Central civilization', 'peripheral civilization' and 'medium civilization' should be understood not as an entity but a function. Even a central civilization does not exist as a fixed object lasting forever. In many case, they starts as a peripheral civilization and sometimes become marginalized. Moreover, a central civilization often works as a medium civilization. A peripheral civilization, too, can grow into a central or a medium civilization. A medium civilization can centralize itself to influence the world history, marginalize other civilizations. Medium civilizations by nature always belong to more than two central civilizations. In the concept that a civilization can freely change its functional status: a cultural center, a peripheral position and a medium, can be seen the actual movement of civilizations.

Civilizational Communication Zone

Civilizations cover the world in the pattern of Buddhist mandala. They are connected to each other and develop by getting influenced each other. In human history, there is neither in space nor time an absolute center.

Mandala pattern of civilizations can be understood as a networking system of civilizations. The network spreading on land and sea through traffic and commercial routes, linked to other networks, connecting civilizations, promoted cultural transaction and enabled a civilization to grow. Through the civilization network, various cultural elements were carried like a wave to cause movement of civilizations. Medium civilizations grow in the border of civilizations. It creates a civilization network and also be formed by the network. The movement of a medium civilization is that of the network and vice versa. It is this movement of medium civilization and civilization network that cause civilization movement.

The network on land and sea can be called 'civilizational communication zone'. Shuntaro Ito suggested a concept of civilizational communication zone, feeling that the view only with basic civilization (central civilization) and peripheral civilization is not enough. He thought that the conventional model captures civilizations only statically, and to understand the development of civilizations more dynamically in their mutual interaction this civilizational communication zone concept helps. It is a place for constant communication in a certain area of the certain period, where civilizations meet. He is suggesting some examples: Central Asia civilizational communication zone, Mediterranean civilizational communication zone, Sahara civilizational communication zone, Indian Ocean civilizational communication zone, Southeast Asia civilizational communication zone, East Asia civilizational communication zone, the Pacific Ocean civilizational communication zone, the Atlantic Ocean civilizational communication zone, America civilizational communication zone.¹⁶

Whether it is on land or sea, civilizational communication zone mediates civilizations to prompt their development. But in this case, it must be a civilizational communication zone, not a civilization, that comes first, which enables a civilization to form. Without communication, no civilization is born. Civilizational communication is the core part of a civilization and the reason for it to exist.

Civilizational communication zone is a place where civilizations clash, contact, and unite, or communicate and combine. It enables civilizations to interact. But at the same time, this kind of environment is formed naturally by relation of civilizations. A civilization can't be cut from where it grows. A civilization can't exist alone. Within a civilization naturally generates the place, and in the place naturally generates a civilization. And in the interaction of the place and the civilization both of them make change. Medium civilization is one that mediates this place and quantum of civilizational communication zone. Medium civilization is like a swirl in a stream-like

civilizational communication.

It is necessary to see what is between civilizations. A civilization doesn't stand by itself but exists only between things. Civilizations live relating closely to each other. Medium civilization intermediates the relationship and connects them. But it is this medium that changes those connected. All civilizations are intermediated and, at the same time, have an ability to intermediate others. Civilizations are medium of all of other civilizations.

Notes

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