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Osaka University

Panel 3. Yokohama Chinatown in World History

1. Report of practice of my class

It is known that entrance examinations for Japanese universities are very severe. History teachers in Japanese high schools make efforts to cope with them. So, we are apt to put important points in learning many terms.

History teachers in Japanese schools must overcome this problem. Generally speaking, Japanese university entrance exams have bad reputation. They demand too much knowledge from students.

However, there are often good entrance exam questions. I want to introduce a question set by the University of Tokyo UNIVs questions. Students are highly interested in the issue of entrance examinations. The question is as follows.

An Entrance Exam Question for the University of Tokyo (2002)

When we visit places in different parts of the world we find Chinatowns in various many places. Chinese people migrated abroad for a long time. However, what a Chinese emigrant did in earnest is after it is the 19th century. Chinese emigrants were abused in each place and faced anti-Chinese campaigns. Why and how the number of Chinese migrants increased rapidly in North and South American and Southeast Asian countries? Furthermore, how did overseas Chinese have influenced over political movements in mainland China? Explain in up to 15 lines. In your answer make sure that you use all the words listed below at least once.

Slavery Abolition Act 1833 (UK), sugarcane plantations, California Gold Rush, Maritime Ban (China), Sun Yat-sen (孫文), the Opium War, the Straits Settlements, the Movement of Recovery Concessions (China),

This exam question suggests that we cannot understand World History only through a perspective of one country. I want to move beyond history as a collection of facts by tackling this entrance exam question.

The flows of my class are as follows.

- 1) At first, I ask a student to answer a question. In this case, we use the examination question of the University of Tokyo mentioned above.
- 2) Secondly, I distribute a handout of the cloze to students and study about this theme together.
- 3) Lastly, I distribute a handout of long essay, and we deepen their understanding of this theme.

2. Long Essay

- 1) Overview: a History of Yokohama

In 1859, Yokohama became an open port for trade as a result of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce

between the United States and Japan. Originally, the treaty specified Kanagawa as an open port for foreign trade. Kanagawa is *shukuba*(宿場) or a post town along the Tokaido(東海道), a strategic trunk route linked the eastern part to the western part of Japan. The Tokugawa Shogunate considered it harmful if many foreigners arrived in sequence at a big post town. Therefore, the Shogunate built a port in the small fishing village of Yokohama which was not far from Kanagawa. The U.S. and European governments strongly protested this decision. However, because Yokohama was a superior port, merchants moved to Yokohama one after another and settled there.

Many foreign merchants visited Yokohama and they settled down in a foreign settlement and set up business. This was the birth of Yokohama which later became the biggest foreign settlement in Japan. This trapezoidal plot of land, which covered an area of approximately one square kilometer, was isolated from surrounding areas by a moat and a river.

One half of the town was a foreign settlement, and the other was assigned to Japanese merchants. By a barrier movement of Japanese traders was limited. Jardine Matheson & Co., which was often said to have played a leading role in the Opium War, traded at Yokohama. Fortunately, the company did not trade opium in Japan because trade in opium was strictly forbidden by the Ansei(安政) Five-Power Treaties (1858). In 1888, the main exports of Yokohama were raw silk and tea. The main import goods were cotton yarn and sugar.

Nagasaki is known as the only port for foreign trade during the *Sakoku*(鎖国) period. The Chinatown existed at Nagasaki. There was a difference between Nagasaki and Yokohama. Many Chinese living in Yokohama Chinatown came from Guangdong. The people who worked for British trading companies which were active in Guangdong migrated to Japan. On the other hand, Nagasaki received merchants from Zhejiang province.

2) The Development of Yokohama Chinatown

European and American merchants almost always traveled with Chinese guides. The Qing dynasty opened its door to the outside world approximately ten years earlier than Japan. Therefore some Chinese became familiar with languages and commercial customs of European countries and America. The Chinese and the Japanese were also able to communicate each other through writing. The Chinese often worked as managers and as interpreters. Many historians call such a position “a comprador”.

It is said that the first foreign trade in raw silk at Yokohama took place when a British merchant called Thomas Eskrigge purchased silk from a Japanese merchant Shibaya Seigoro(芝屋清五郎) on July 1, 1859. A Chinese called “Achiu” mediated negotiations between the two. In addition, the American merchant Raphael Schoyer, who became the chairperson of the municipal council of the foreign settlement in Yokohama, visited Japan in February 1859. He was accompanied by a comprador called “Areh”. Many Chinese came to Japan and worked as comprador.

In 1867, the Kanagawa City Magistrate’s Office recorded about 660 Chinese people living in Yokohama. The population almost doubled ten years later. Of course, not all Chinese visitors in Japan were compradores. There were people with various other occupations including cooks, accountants, and warehousemen. Westerners built their offices along the main street and the shore. The Chinese people lived in places a little way from the main road and settled down in an area just away from the town center. This was the birth of the Yokohama Chinatown.

When we examine examples of migrants, push and pull factors are classic and effective frameworks.

In Yokohama, Chinese comparators enjoyed more freedom in acting as compradors as compared to those in mainland China. Therefore, pull factors seem to be than push factors in this case.

3) Living Conditions and Hardship in Yokohama Chinatown.

The Sino-Japanese Friendship and Trade Treaty was signed in 1871. From then on, Chinese people were allowed to own houses and rent land in Japan.

Nevertheless social standing of Chinese people in Japan gradually declined in the 1860s.

For an important information magazine related to opening of the port at Yokohama, many *Ukiyo-e*(浮世絵) artists including Utagawa Sadahide (歌川貞秀; 1807-1873) drew realistic depictions of the port at that time. In his work, a Chinese person depicted was busy in working. It seems that he portrayed in a friendly way rather than with hostility and contempt. Relationships between the Chinese and the Japanese look very good in Sadahide's work. It becomes clearer when we compare paintings drawn in the early years of the port of Yokohama with paintings made during the Sino-Japanese War.

However, from the late 1860s, Japanese people gradually began to look down Chinese people due to the following reasons. Japanese people who engaged in commerce in Yokohama regarded the Chinese as subordinates or servants of the Westerners. They predicted the end of the Qing dynasty as a large empire. The numbers of poor Chinese people arriving from mainland China increased. They often could not find regular work and remained jobless. The image of Chinese as commercial professionals collapsed. Deteriorating diplomatic relations between Qing and Japan triggered problems in Taiwan in 1870s.

At the same time, the Japanese merchants were also increasingly gaining power. They criticized the Chinese compradors for taking a brokerage fee and protested against this practice. Japanese merchants strengthened criticism and the offensive to a Chinese comprador. This movement was investigated eagerly, and the solidarity and power of Japanese merchants was strengthened.

Negative feelings towards Chinese people were considerably increased by the Sino-Japanese War. During the Sino-Japanese War, Japanese nationalism also increased. Japanese hostility towards the Chinese increased from this time on. The Chinese people acted as compradors in Yokohama until the 1920s. The year of trial brought many changes for Yokohama Chinatown.

In addition, the biggest change took place in 1899 when the settlement was abolished. The trade within the original settlement at Yokohama was over. The Japanese who they found a job in the Western trading company increased. The direct trade between Japanese merchant and American and European countries increased, too. In many ways, the place of the activity of Chinese compradors got narrow. Chinese people in Japan looked for new strategies to survive.

One such Strategy was foundation of Yokohama Chinese Merchant Association. This group represented Yokohama Chinatown and made an effort to construct a collaborative relationship with the Japanese economic world. In addition, the special area known as the settlement disappeared, but many Chinese people gathered in the corner of the former settlement of Yokohama, and their lives did not change. The economic activities of this Chinatown were investigated.

Not only acting as a compradors, but also any other occupation where Chinese people had direct dealings with Japanese people began to come into the limelight. Originally, there were the three occupations that overseas Chinese people living overseas were renowned for doing well.

Three occupations are occupations to use all the knife for. These occupations were tailors, cooks, and

barbers. If one thinks present day Yokohama Chinatown, it is clear that cooks have taken a particularly big role. The food service industry in the Chinatown originally consisted of several cheap restaurants for Chinese residents in Japan. Gradually, the numbers of Chinese restaurants for Japanese visitors increased. For example, a famous Chinese restaurant “Heichinrou(聘珍樓)” opened in 1887.

The Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923 was a major disaster for Chinese people living in Yokohama. The Korean slaughter case is well known, but it is said that a Chinese slaughter occurred (as well). As background to this case, there was a scramble for work between Japanese and Chinese workers. In the revival from a disaster, several more Chinese restaurants opened. Yokohama China town kept changing. Now, 1,800,000 Japanese tourists visit the Chinatown in Yokohama every year. This town is certainly an eminent sightseeing spot in.

The Sino-Japanese War was the biggest trial. The people of Yokohama Chinatown thanked for Wang Zhaoming(汪兆銘), also known as Wang Jingwei(汪精衛), who investigated the possibility of peace move. When he set up the Nanjing Nationalist Government on March 30, 1940, it is said that feelings of celebration spread over the Chinatown in Yokohama.

The establishment of the People's Republic of China (1949) and its conflicts with the Republic of China (Taiwan) was also a shock to the residents of the Chinatown. When the Cultural Revolution was carried out in mainland China, conflicts increased in Yokohama. After this turbulence, the Yokohama Chinatown continues to prosper today. The China-Taiwan dispute is yet to be solved, but as far as the residents of the Yokohama Chinatown are concerned, they have found a way of reconciliation. Although residents of Yokohama Chinatown still consider the People's Republic of China and Taiwan as their home where tensions continue, there has been a feeling since the 1980s that people have become reconciled with each other, community spirit is strong. “Kuang Di Miao Temple(關帝廟)” which was the symbol of Chinatown, was burnt down by a fire in 1986. However, the whole of Yokohama Chinatown cooperated and, in the face of this tragedy, dealt with the rebuilding. This was a big change for this settlement.

Since the 1960s, the rapid economic growth in Japan led to a major trend amongst Japanese consumer of enjoying exotic meal. Official diplomatic relations between Japan and the People's Republic of China were restored in 1972. After the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and the People's Republic of China was signed in 1978, Japanese people began to take more favorable interest in Chinese culture, which worked in favor of Yokohama Chinatown. The Yokohama Chinatown Development Association was founded in 1972 to take advantage of this trend. During the Cultural Revolution, October was most marked by political conflicts due to the fact that the National Day of the Republic of China is October 10 and that the National Day of the People's Republic of China is October 1. October strengthen the character of festival days. Referring to October, the name of " Food Festival (美食節)" came into use.

For Chinese people, the time when the power of the Chinese people (in particular those acting as compradors) was required was over, and their lives often faced difficulties when “pull factor” no longer existed any. There were some strategies to deal with these adverse circumstances. The Chinatown has become a sightseeing spot, specializing in "the food," which is one of the strengths of Chinese culture. However, much more time was needed, and the success of the postwar period of economic growth, before the tendency for Japanese people to enjoy a foreign meal was strengthened.

4) A summary

Migrants sometimes experience unreasonable pressure in a foreign land. It was a tragedy. However, it is possible for them to demonstrate a unique sense of internationality.

3. Students' Observations

Student 1: Even though there is still disputes between China and Taiwan, these two groups are reconciled in the Yokohama Chinatown. Likewise, although Japan and China still have uneasy relations, many Japanese tourists now visit the Chinatown again. I have a hope that we can create friendly relationships.

Student 2: I read this story and remembered relationships between the people of Okinawa and the United States Armed Forces soldiers in Okinawa, which I sometimes heard during school excursions. It does not matter to a local whether “they are Chinese” or “they are in the United States Armed Forces”: The imagination of the person is more important.

Student 3: It was surprising that there seemed to exist no discrimination against the Chinese people in the early years and that the area, which is beautiful now, used to be like a ghetto.

Student 4: I recognize Chinese "the nation with the grit". I read this sentence, and I was convinced that this was right. Chinese people opened the restaurant by "grit" in a foreign country. I was impressed.

4. Notes from teacher

Migrants have various reasons for moving to a foreign country. As social conditions change in host countries, sometimes “pull factors” disappear. Under the circumstances, they may face increasing difficulties. Yokohama has overcome this crisis well. Political conflicts between mainland China and Taiwan manifested itself in Yokohama. There have been confrontations between the Japanese and the Chinese as well. In recent years, however, Chinese, Taiwanese, and Japanese people in Yokohama have begun to look for reconciliation. I want my students to learn about not only conflicts and wars but also friendly relationships. Their ability to show originality and effort is a hope for many people. Students also seem to have absorbed my ideas, and they enjoy this example.

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