

Socio-economic Change of Islands and Development Policies in the Seto Inland Sea of Japan

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Abstract

In this article the socio-economic change of Islands and development policies in the Seto Inland Sea of Japan will be discussed. In the former half of this article, various problems particular to the islands will be sorted out. In order to examine the problems, it will be clarified that socio-economic changes in various relations between the mainland and the islands are generating many different problems today. In the latter half, a framework for the development of the islands is suggested, especially from the viewpoints of sustainable tourism development including a case of the Miyajima Island, and important measures to cope with those problems are discussed. Especially, the relationship between community and tourism is focussed here. In today's economy with its highly developed service sector the tourism industry has come to occupy an important position and is now an inseparable part of the fabric of many communities especially in the islands.

Key words : Socio-economic Change, Island, Sustainable Tourism Development, the Seto Inland Sea, Miyajima

1. Introduction

From the 1950s to the 1960s, the Seto Inland Sea coastal areas of Honshu Main Island, Shikoku and Kyushu (hereafter called "the mainland") were heavily developed for iron and steel, petrochemical, shipbuilding and other industries. During this period, islands in the Seto Inland Sea supplied workforce for the mainland, and the living of the islanders was supported by remittances from those who had gone to the mainland to work. This means that the living of the islanders was heavily dependent on the economy of the mainland. More than half a century has passed since then, and as the sustainability of the local communities of the islands is worried, now is the time we should review their problems and the direction for future development in a fresh light. This review would not only envision the future of the islands, but also to look at their culture and environment from the perspective of the islands in the Seto Inland Sea.

At first, various problems particular to the islands will be sorted out. In order to examine the problems, it will be clarified that changes in various relations between the mainland and the islands are generating many different problems today. Then, a framework for the development of the islands is suggested, especially from the viewpoints of sustainable tourism development including a case of the Miyajima Island, and important measures to cope with those problems are examined.

2. Conditions particular to the islands, and their socio-economic changes

2.1 Natural conditions particular to islands, and their utilization

Ethnologist Miyamoto(1965) who was born in Suo-Ohshima Island lists four natural conditions particular to islands: (i) being surrounded by the sea, (ii) the transportation means to reach outside areas is mostly by ships, (iii) the land is small and the living territory is small, and (iv)

production activities on land is largely restricted because of only little flat land. In this article, I will call condition (i) “sea surroundedness”, condition (ii) “isolation”, conditions (iii) and (iv) “smallness”. These conditions are generally unfavorable for residents’ socio-economic activities. Still people have inhabited these islands since the old days. Miyamoto (1965) explains the reason for this as follows:

“First, because of “sea surroundedness”, the islands were inhabited by “sea people” who engaged in catching fish and gathering seaweed and salt, and were skilled in shipbuilding and navigation. Islands were also used for places of refugee/rest, landmark and military purposes. Some inhabitants aimed to transport large quantities of islands’ products to larger markets. Due to their “isolation”, islands were at times used as places of exile located outside the political sphere. Taking advantage of their “smallness”, some small islands were specialized in a single use such as ranches, gathering grounds of firewood/grass. In larger islands such as Awajishima, Shodoshima, Suo-Ohshima, the usages were varied --- beaches were used by “sea people”, and inland areas by farmers.”

2.2 Changes in conditions of “sea surroundedness”

In former days islanders made a living taking advantage of “sea surroundedness,” but the modernization of fishing, the appearance of larger ships made the lives there --- which were only centering around islands --- difficult. Miyamoto (1969) explains this change as follows:

“The biggest cause that drove the lives of islanders into an impasse was the fishing boats that came from other areas and ravaged the islands’ fishing grounds. Before, most of the islanders owned small boats and fished around the islands to make a living. The income from this fishing supported their lives. --- But when powered and bigger fishing boats started to come

from the mainland and caught fish en masse. Islanders did not know what to do for this change. They could not afford to have bigger boats. They did not have the money nor a port for bigger boats. Thus, though surrounded by the sea, they had to turn their back to the sea.”

The fishermen went on land, and were forced to live away from the sea.

Before, islands were used for refugee in case of bad weather and rest for the ships’ crew, but the situation underwent drastic changes when navigation techniques advanced, ships became bigger and powered, and above all, mainland transportation was modernized from ships to railroads and automobiles. Miyamoto(1969) says,

“Over the last 50 years, the biggest factor that outdated the living and industries in the islands was the changes in transportation. Up until 50 years ago, there still were many sailing boats, and steamers ferrying between mainland and islands. --- However the development of land transportation changed the scene dramatically, making the islands dead-ends connected to the terminals of railroads. --- In other words, the establishment of new transportation systems pushed forward a shift from feudal society to capitalist society. The islands could not keep up with this trend, and their full-fledged participation in the change was delayed.”

2.3 Food shortages due to “smallness”

Thus, there are many constraints for islanders in the means of earning a living. Among them, the biggest constraint was food shortages stemming from the “smallness.” (Note 1) If food production fails to meet the islanders’ demand due to natural disasters or unfavorable weather, remedies was either reducing mouths or increasing food production.

To reduce mouths to be fed, islanders migrated to other areas in Japan or emigrated to other countries. Through these measures, both

reduction of mouths and receiving remittances could be expected. (Note 2) Actually Seto Inland Sea islands are close in distance to the mainland. After WW II when rapid industrial development took place along the coast of the mainland around the Seto Inland Sea, there were more than enough employment opportunities for the migrant islanders.

To increase the supply of food, food can be either imported from outside or food production can be increased in the islands. Money is necessary to import food. Money is brought in the form of pensions and remittances mentioned above, but what's more important is to produce commercial products in the islands and sell them in outside markets. It is not easy to increase food production in the islands, but there is an successful example in the 18th and 19th centuries of sweet potato growing contributing to the increase in the population. (Note 3)

3. Relations between mainland and Seto Inland Sea islands

3.1 Islands' openness

Due to the rigorous living conditions of the Seto Inland Sea islands as mentioned above, it is said that the lives of the islanders were maintained through certain relations formed with the mainland. (Note 4) Miyamoto (1969) explains about this as follows:

"The reason for the relatively stable lives in these islands compared to those in islands in the outer seas can be explained this way; unlike the outer sea islands where the residents tend to solve problems by themselves in the islands alone, Seto Inland Sea islanders started to find solutions in relations to the surrounding areas in the latter modern age when currency and transportation systems began to develop. I find something common between these islands and the present-day Japan."

3.2 Closer ties between islands and mainland after WW II

In the 1950s-1960s, (i) in the Seto Inland Sea coastal areas, the Sanyo Shinkansen Line and Sanyo Expressway were constructed, which strengthened the east-west mainland transportation routes, (ii) iron and steel, petrochemical and shipbuilding and other heavy industries came to be concentrated in the Seto Inland Sea coast, and the Inland Sea became a major canal as an important east-west sea route connecting these production bases, and (iii) as the concentration of industries and urbanization proceeded quickly, large-scale land reclamations were carried out, and environmental pollution emerged due to waste discharges from factories, bringing harm to the islands. In this industrial development, many male adults and youths removed to the mainland to occupy working opportunities.

There were two factors in population migration; "push factor" on the islands' side, and "pull factor" on the mainland' side. The push factor consists of food/water shortages, hard labor, vulnerability to natural disasters. Moves for receiving education was not negligible as well as moves seeking for employment. Influenced by the standardization of education and an education-oriented society, youths went to the mainland for secondary and higher education.

On the other hand, the mainland's pull factor relates to islands' proximity to the mainland (Note 4), influx of information from the mainland, abundant employment opportunities, education, higher wages, and attraction of big cities. Thus, many of the adult and young men went out, and only the elderly and women remained in the islands. This type of emigration well explains the islanders' characteristic that community bonding is stronger than blood relations in the Seto Inland Sea islands.

4. Direction of development in the islands

4.1 “Vision for Promotion of Sanuki Seto Area”

“Vision for Promotion of Sanuki Seto Area” compiled by Kagawa Prefecture (2002) lists issues related to the islands, “Dwindling and aging population”, “Slowing economic activities in the islands”. The former refers to social issues stemming from aging of community leaders for improving lives in the islands, and youths going out for education, while the latter local economic problems caused by a doldrums in agriculture/forestry/fisheries, declining local industries, and the decreasing number of tourists

For a sustainable development of the islands, it is important to preserve the islands’ environment, and promote local industries to secure stable and peaceful lives for the islanders. To this end, various issues have to be solved, (i) not only administering the issues by islanders alone, (ii) but trying to solve them in the context of relations with the Seto Inland Sea and the mainland, and (iii) securing and training of personnel to take charge of the efforts.

4.2 Important points in each aspect

In Vision compiled by Kagawa Prefecture (2002), a comprehensive framework proposes measures to be taken under six pillars. In this article the measures suggested by this Vision will be reorganized into the (1)~(3) aspects, and important points in each aspect will be discussed.

(1) Efforts on the side of islanders

Improving living conditions in a way as islanders can live comfortable and peaceful lives, and preserving islands’ natural environment are essential. Easy-to-use healthcare/welfare services, shopping and education, waste disposal and other basic living functions are required.

“The environment of the islands are generally vulnerable. The land is small, and covered with poor soil which does not hold water well.

The environment is easily affected by human activities.” (Seto Inland Sea Environment Preservation Association (2009))

(2) Interaction/collaboration with areas outside islands

The economy and environment of the islands can never be sustained without considering the relations with the Seto Inland Sea and the mainland. The economic basics here should be to produce high-value-added goods and services in the islands, and sell them in the outside markets to gain income. To do so, increasing the value in existing local products, developing new local products, finding sales routes to urban markets and coordinating function are important.

And to prevent an outflow of money, goods and services which are being bought from other areas should be switched to locally -produced ones (import substitution). Specifically recommended are utilization of local resources, procurement of locally produced marine/agricultural/mineral products, and local consumption of locally produced products. In the service area, mutual aid and use of local currency could be encouraged.

Hori (2002) and Miyamoto (1970) have made important suggestions regarding industrial development in islands. (Note 6) Remittances from outside, pensions, public works projects in civil engineering, construction, agriculture/forestry/fisheries, financial funds appropriated by the central government to local governments such as tax grants and subsidies for social security of healthcare/welfare are sources of revenue, but due to the financial straits, governmental funds are on the decline.

As for environmental issues, *“garbage washed up on the beaches, garbage brought in from the mainland, pollutants coming from the mainland, these are the problems to be tackled by the entire Seto Inland Sea region.”* (Seto Inland Sea Environment Preservation Association

(2009))

(3) Securing/training of human resources

To create lives where residents take the initiative, maintaining the size of population is essential, especially the presence of the youth is crucial. For this, the importance of recruitment of public employees for town halls and post-offices, and school education is needless to say. Miyamoto(1965) says,

“Secondary living conditions (new living environment: commented by the author) are at times discovered or created by islanders themselves, but often brought about by new comers or through the influence from outside.”

Hori (2002) also says,

“When islands prospered in the past, people moved in to live from outside, and there were various forms of interaction with outside communities. Island communities should be originally open to I-turn residents, and have a capacity to incorporate them in their development. In the islands which have various possibilities, people are not judgmental about which is better or worse, but all the residents, whether long-time, I-turn, or U-turn, function making good use of their own strengths, being united, inspiring each other, and giving a try to new possibilities”.

It has to be kept in mind, however, that the results of accepting U-turn and I-turn residents are not necessarily the same to all islands.

5. Tourism and Community Development

5.1 Community and local culture

Local culture is an element that simply cannot be left out when considering community. In each community a locally unique culture is created that can be said to constitute the intrinsic value of the locality.

One might say that the local culture in a community, or in other words the locality's intrinsic value, is created in accordance with the code of values of the residents living in the community. This is because local cultures are

formed from the integration of large numbers of value judgments held by the people living in them, and having been created are sustained or disappear according as such integration is or is not sustained.

5.2 Community and tourism

As outsiders come to recognize the local culture of islands that is created by a local community, together with the intrinsic value – different from those of other communities – that inheres in the community, the local culture will in time become an object for island development as a tourist resource.

Tourism exerts many beneficial economic effects on a community, among which are:

- (i) securing of new employment and business opportunities,
- (ii) additional income,
- (iii) new markets for local products,
- (iv) improved social base and community facilities/services,
- (v) new technologies,
- (vi) heightened consciousness for environmental preservation and protection of the local culture, and
- (vii) improved land utilization.

But besides these economic effects tourism will exert diverse other effects that will enhance the quality of the local residents' lives.

However if modern forms of mass tourism involving droves of people invading a locality are allowed free rein, there will ensue problems such as disorderly development, air pollution, noise and increased volumes of garbage, resulting in (i) destruction of nature and ecosystems, and (ii) destruction of the local community, culture and traditional townscapes.

It is because of this that the tourism has arrived at a turning point where it is now being required to assume new shapes that will replace mass tourism. One likely concept for such new style tourism is “sustainable tourism”; the importance of tourism development premised on

preservation of tourism resources and their surrounding environments is now being pointed out.

6. A case of tourism development in Miyajima Island

6.1 Overview of Miyajima Island

The island of Miyajima, which is a tourist spot renowned both in Japan and all over the world, being a World Heritage Site as well as one of the Three Scenic Beauties of Japan, is selected as a case to examine the relationship between community and tourism. It is blessed with tourism resources of both the natural-ecological and socio-historical varieties, of which the Itsukushima Shrine is but one among many.

Miyajima has been an object of religious veneration since the earliest times as an island with a shrine. From the founding of the Itsukushima Shrine in the year 593 through its rebuilding by Kiyomori Taira (1168) and beyond, the island flourished continually. The community formed by the single island called “Miyajima” can be said to have developed in step with the Itsukushima Shrine. And today to the residents of Miyajima can be said to lead lives closely connected with the Itsukushima Shrine, in view of the fact that tourism is the island’s major industry.

Miyajima is an island situated in Hiroshima Bay off the western coast of Hiroshima Prefecture. It is 500 meters from the mainland shore (Ono Town), has a circumference of approximately 30 km and is 30.39 km² in area. One of its features is that the only means of crossing to it from the mainland is by ferry or high-speed boat.

The population is 1,760 (as of year 2010) and has been on a decreasing trend in the postwar period. Moreover the phenomenon of the low-birth, aging society is advanced here.

6.2 Consciousness of the local residents

The registration of the Itsukushima Shrine

and other of the island’s tourism resources as items of World Heritage has brought about a heightening of consciousness for protection of culture and heritage within the island, and study activities to promote such consciousness are being organized.

Some of the residents are involved in tourism – the island’s basic industry – and even those who do not come into direct contact with tourists wish for the vitalization of the locality. Fortunately perhaps, the island’s small size renders the residents’ opinions easily reflected via gossip grapevines. This means that their views flow by a natural process to the members of the Tourism Association, making consensus not so difficult to form among the residents.

Some point out that the islands being a tourist spot brings certain benefits as regards living convenience, including the long service hours of the ferries and fuller water supply and sewerage services compared to other localities.

The residents can be said to receive ample benefits from the service provision that accompanies tourism development. In these respects also it can be appreciated that Miyajima’s tourism is closely interwoven with the lives of its residents. Miyajima’s history, culture, traditional rituals and festivals have been conserved and passed on by generations of local population, especially, those residing in the area.

6.3 Successful Promotion of Sustainable Tourism

Tourism promotion is a means and its objective is to make local people’s life more affluent and pleasant. Generally, the tourism promotion generates positive and negative effects on the local population.

Positive effects on the local community generated through tourism promotion are shown as follows:

- (i) Recognition of local resources and enhanced pride in their local community with a feeling of attachment, which brings conservation and

utilization of local resources, local residents' participation in promotion of their community via communication and kind attention to visitors with hospitality.

- (ii) Income and employment generation in the tourism-related business sector including service businesses such as restaurants, shops and hotels, production of food and other commodities. These business sector usually become strong promoters for tourism development.
- (iii) Tax revenue of the local government is increased, and support for tourism promotion, improvement of infrastructure, improvement of public services such as dissemination of information, crime prevention are expected for public bodies.

On the other hand, the tourism promotion causes negative impacts on the local community. Traffic congestion, noise, increase of garbage, destruction of natural ecology or increased burden to it (i.e., bringing of species new to the locality), tourists' entry to disturb local people's living environment, crimes, bullying, crimes to trouble weaker people like children and aged persons are listed as an example.

The relation between local people and tourism-related activities can be considered as shown in Table 1. The people of Type A and

Type B receive benefit through tourism development and collaborate together for tourism promotion. However, the people of Tape C will receive negative impacts without benefit. It is most important issue how to distribute benefit fairly among local people, where sometime weaker people like children and aged persons will be excluded from positive effects. The role of public bodies as well as NPO/NGO, professionals is not small.

The method to set limits to tourists' entry to local people's living environment below is sometimes effective.

- (i) "*Michi no Eki*", "*Machi no Eki*"

Establish a base facility to offer local products, such as vegetables and fruits, for sale and other services for visitors, while also providing a space where they can communicate with local people to obtain information about the area.

- (ii) "*Antenna Shop*" (pilot shops to promote local products of particular area)

Yume-terrace Shop on the Hondori Street in Hiroshima city, Kakinoki Village Shop in Hatusukaichi city, etc.

- (iii) Buses which loop around the town.

Services for both tourists and local residents

Table 1 Relation between local people and tourism-related activities

	Benefit from positive effects	Not benefit from positive effects
Affected by negative effects	Type B Those who reside in the area and are engaged in tourism-related businesses. (Local tourism-related business operators)	Type C Those who reside in the area who do not benefit from positive effects of the tourism-related activities but are affected negatively.
Not affected by negative effects	Type A Those who commute to the area from outside and are engaged in tourism-related businesses. (Non-local tourism-related business operators)	Type D Those who do not neither benefit from nor be affected by tourism promotion.

7. Conclusions

For the formation of communities with tourism at their center, the exchange of goods, money, information and of course people is indispensable. It can probably be said that the creation of communities will come about through environmental preservation style civic creation by public administration, enterprises (local industries) and the local residents acting in unison, along with the consciousness of the tourists.

It is to be hoped that the “national trust,” “civic trust” and similar movements focused on environmental preservation that are now enjoying a vogue in many places will continue to spread even further. Moreover it will be indispensable to examine future community formation encompassing municipality and village merger, together with interregional exchange.

Finally, turning back to the subject of islands, stated in the Sanuki Seto Juku Program(2002) are: this program was set up in September 2001 with the aim of training “Island Life Creating” leaders, and network-building of the people involved; every year participants are recruited from the islanders, and from those who are willing to work for the islands; there were 44 people (in total 84 people) from 11 islands participated so far; conducted workshops and held product fairs moving venues in different islands. This is an example of wide-area collaboration. If such collaboration takes place among many Seto Inland Sea islands, and between islands and mainland in many forms, then the future of the islands will be a bright one.

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Notes

(Note 1) Though only food is mentioned here, it is possible to expand our consideration to areas of goods and services such as education, healthcare, welfare and amusement.

(Note 2) Miyamoto writes (1967, p.65) on Suo Ohshima Island,
“Food alone would not be sufficient to support a life. Money is necessary. To earn money, people migrated. --- It can be said this migration enabled sons other than the eldest to have their own households away from their parents’ and eldest brother’s home. Therefore, at the time the island’s population reached 70,000, not all the people permanently lived in the island, but many lived away in other areas, and came back for summer Bon Festival and New Year’s Holiday.”

(Note 3) Miyamoto (1967, p.63) writes on Suo Ohshima Island,
“From 1732 to 1751, it is supposed that a great deal of sweet potato was grown in the island. They were mainly grown in the eastern part of the island where there was more farming land. As the food production increased, people’s lives stabilized and the population increased rapidly. It increased three folds over 100 years or so. In Mizuta

Village in the western part of the island saw a two-fold population increase, while the eastern part population increased three to four times."

(Note 4) To study the relations between islands and mainland, the following two points are noteworthy.

1. Miyamoto (1969, pp.32-33),

"There are great differences in situation between depopulated areas in islands and the mainland. In islands due to their rigorous living conditions, the population problem is even more difficult. --- The biggest difference is related to motorization. Roads alone are not enough to reach islands. First of all, islands are not connected to outside with roads. Except for in-the-island transportation, islands does not benefit from motorization. They are cut off from other areas. Therefore, people tend to regard constructing bridges as the best possible solution. Residents living in islands where construction of bridges is possible strongly desire for bridges."

2. Hori (2002) speculates as follows about the reason why population decreases more in the islands which are located closer to the mainland, and look more convenient than other islands.

"(i) They daily look at urban lives in the mainland which is just across the channel and constantly compare urban and island lives. As the mainland's urban functions are incorporated in their living territories, their perception of inconvenience in the island is even more intensified.

(ii) Even if they move to the mainland, their home islands are not distant, and they would be able to look on their islands just in front of them, look after their island houses, and visit their family graves with ease. Thus they would have little reservation about leaving their islands."

He explains comparing two different cases;

an island which is close to the mainland but the sea still stands in-between, and an island which is directly connected to the mainland with a bridge.

(Note 5) As for changes brought about by the introduction of secondary living conditions, Miyamoto (1965) classified changes in life and culture into three patterns:

1. Older culture is retained by primary residents, and does not merge with secondary residents' culture,
2. When primary residents create living conditions for secondary residents, the two types of cultures merge in the primary residents,
3. When primary residents move out or are extinct, their culture is rarely succeeded by secondary residents.

(Note 6) Hori and Miyamoto suggest important points related to industrial promotion in the islands.

First, Hori (2002) says about agriculture/forestry/fisheries, *"Especially in islands, the flow of activities in these industries --- producing, catching, selling --- should be reviewed in order to find and use various methods and ideas for adding values to their products. That can provide a key to new tourist attractions. Fresh products of these industries can inspire the development of new markets, and consumers' feedback will be obtained directly, which will lead to finding various methods which can benefit both producers and consumers."*

Miyamoto (1970) says about the tourist industry, *"Traditional group tours which take large groups of tourists to scenic or historical places would not be possible in islands, because most islands have no such places. Still islands have their own charm to attract tourists. That is because it is a secluded world. They can be used for different purposes such as places for relaxation, marine sports, recreation, and islanders too will be able to participate in those enjoyments."*