10-1-1998

On Cross-Civilizational Spheres

Shuntaro Ito
Reitaku University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol39/iss39/3

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Comparative Civilizations Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
On Cross-Civilizational Spheres

Presidential Address given at the 27th Annual Meeting of the ISCSC, at Reitaku University, Japan

SHUNTARŌ ITŌ

It was more pertinent than the Eurocentric ideas of unilineal developments of civilization (Orient → Greek → Roman→ Western → Expansion of the West) held by Hegel, Ranke, and Marx that Danilevsky, Spengler and Toynbee set out the plural number of civilizations and their multilineal developments on the globe.

As a matter of fact, they gave the conceptual basis of comparative civilizations; N. Y. Danilevsky presented ten such culture-historical types (die kultur- historischen Typen) in his work Russia and Europe (1871) as Egyptian, Chinese, Old Semitic (Babylonian), Indian, Iranian, Hebrew, Greek, Roman, New Semitic (Arabic), and European civilization, while O. Spengler maintained in his book Decline of the West (1918) the existence of eight unique high-cultures (Hochkulturen) like Egyptian, Babylonian, Indian, Chinese, Greek-Roman, Arabic, Mexican and European civilizations.

A. Toynbee, on the other hand, recognized twenty-three civilized societies in his monumental work, A Study of History (1934-58), but revised them as thirteen independent civilizations and fifteen satellite civilizations in A Study of History Illustrated (1972). I, myself, identified twenty-one major civilizations and elucidated their interrelationship in Hikaku Bunmei (Comparative Civilizations, 1985) and Comparative Civilizations Review, No. 36 (1997).

As regards to how many major civilizations existed and now exist on the globe and which are or are not major civilizations, there still remain problems. However, the plurality of civilizations and their developments are essential for the comparative study of civilizations.

Nevertheless, establishment of plural major civilizations alone is not enough for adequate study of civilizations on a glob-
al scale. Namely, around major civilizations there existed many peripheral civilizations which were influenced by major civilizations at their formation and, at the same time, sometimes had influence on major civilizations. Major global civilizations are all influenced by these peripheral civilizations. This concept of peripheral civilization is the second indispensable apparatus for substantializing the comparative study of civilization. In this respect, the contribution of Philip Bagby who introduced this concept in criticism of Toynbee's theory of civilization in his small gen of a work, *Culture and History* (1958) is also very significant and, I think, should be worthy of appreciation.

But note that the distinction between major (or central) and peripheral civilization is neither absolute nor permanent. Actually it often occurred that a civilization which started as peripheral to other major civilizations became itself a major civilization, having been independent in the process of their development. European and Japanese civilizations are two examples. An inverse case is Egyptian civilization which started as a major civilization and later became peripheral to Greek (Hellenistic) civilization. Although the relation between major (or central) and peripheral civilizations should be considered relatively, it is still clear that both categories are necessary conceptual apparatus in the comparative analysis of civilizations.

My main point at this presidential address is, however, that these dual conceptual apparatuses hitherto acknowledged in the comparative study of civilization are not enough yet for due clarification of civilizational developments. We have to go further by adding one more important conceptual category for sufficient understanding of real dynamics of the civilizational process. That is the concept of Cross-Civilizational Spheres which I think the indispensable third conceptual apparatus of comparative civilization necessary to arrive at the true situation of civilizational transformation.

Pair concepts central-peripheral are still static and not adequate for dynamic transformations of civilization. Transformations of civilization do derive neither from such immanent spontaneity of civilization as genesis, growth, breakdown, and disintegration in Toynbee's framework of civilizational process, nor as spring, summer, autumn and winter of
Spengler’s season-like changes in cultural soul (Kulturseele), but mainly take place at the interface of cross-civilizational spheres. In fact, an encounter of different civilizational spheres brings out a civilizational transformation.

Therefore, I think, the concept of cross-civilizational spheres (CCS) is conditio sine qua non for elucidating civilizational transformations. I came to this concept in the process of investigating the feature of so-called “Mediterranean Civilization.” We often talk of the Mediterranean civilization as if it is a single civilization. In fact, for example, Ralph Linton treated it as a single civilization, and sometimes it was identified as the same as Greek or Roman civilizations. However, it proved to be not one simple civilization but a cross-civilizational sphere where different civilizations made intercourse in the same area of the Mediterranean Sea. The Mediterranean civilization can be divided into six phases with five intermediate periods as the following table shows:

I. Egypto-Aegean Phase (3000 B.C. - 1100 B.C.)
   - The rise of Egyptian civilization to the decline of Aegean civilization
   1st intermediate: Phoenician Period (1100 B.C. - 900 B.C.)

II. Greco-Phoenician Phase (900 B.C. - 332 B.C.)
   - The beginning of Greek civilization to the fall of East Phoenicia
   2nd intermediate: Carthagino-Roman Period (332 B.C. - 146 B.C.)

III. Roman Phase (146 B.C. - 476 A.D.)
   - The close of the Poeni War to the fall of the West Roman Empire
   3rd intermediate: Byzantine Period (476 - 661)

IV. Arabo-Byzantine Phase (661 - 1096)
   - The appearance of the Umayyad dynasty to the first crusade
   4th intermediate: Crusades Period (1096 - 1270)

V. Turco-European Phase (1270 - 1798)
   - The end of the crusades to Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt
   5th intermediate: European Period (1798 - 1947)

VI. Europeo-Arabic Phase (1947 -)
   - The end of the Second World War to the present
It is now clear that there exists a lineage of Indo-European civilizations on the northern side of the Mediterranean Sea like Aegean → Greek → Byzantine → European while on the southern and eastern side on the other hand, there contains a lineage of Hamitic and Semitic civilizations as Egyptian → Phoenician → Syriac → Arabic. The Mediterranean Civilization consists of two different lineages of civilizations which contributed to the dynamic creation and development of a new civilization in the same area of the Mediterranean Sea by mutual contacts and influences accompanied sometimes by mutual conflicts. These cross-civilizational transactions produced and supported the dynamic development and transformations of the Mediterranean civilization. Therefore the Mediterranean civilization is not only the source of European civilization but also of the Ham-Semitic civilizations. Modern European civilization, including modern science, emerged also from this cross-civilizational sphere. After having ascertained this fact, we can find many other important cross-civilizational spheres in the history of civilizations on the globe.

Now I define Cross-Civilizational Sphere (CCS) as a field of constant and durable intercourse of civilizations in a certain area at a certain time which contributed civilizational transformations. First of all, there was the Silk Road CCS which connected Taklamakan during the second through the thirteenth centuries A.D. Second, there existed the Indian Ocean CCS which connected Indian civilization with Roman civilization on one hand and with South-East civilization during the second through fourth centuries A.D., then, with Arabic civilization and Chinese civilization through the eighth through the fourteenth centuries. This CCS allowed European civilization to have contact with Indian and South-East civilization during the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries. Third, we can mention the East Asian Sea CCS which occurred between Chinese civilization and Japanese civilization, and later between Chinese civilization and Arabic civilization during the ninth through fourteenth centuries. This CCS made it possible for European civilization to have contacts with Chinese, Korean and Japanese civilization from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries. Fourth, the Atlantic Ocean CCS through which European civilization had contacts with Meso-
American and Andean civilization in the sixteenth century, then with newly established American civilization since the sixteenth century (which was channeled with African civilization around the same time). Fifth, the Saharan CCS connected Arabic civilization with (Black) African civilization through the Saharan Desert during the seventh through the fifteenth centuries. Sixth, there was the Nuclear American CCS, which seemed to take place between Meso-American (Mexican) civilization and Andean civilization during the seventh through third centuries B.C.

Now I come to the main topic of this annual meeting of ISCSC: the problem of the emergence of Pacific Rim civilizations. If Pacific Rim civilizations do emerge in the next century, it will be nothing but a new Cross-Civilizational Sphere comprising Chinese, South-East, Japanese, American and Latin American civilization. I am not sure about the emergence of this new kind of civilizational sphere in the future. But if it emerges in the twenty-first century, it would be the greatest Cross-Civilizational Sphere ever formed in history and change radically the civilizational map on a global scale.