

January 25, 2007

Cultural and Human Exchanges in East Asia Are Expanding

Shigesaburo Kabe
Senior Economist

Regional cooperation and integration for the creation of an East Asian Community were discussed at the East Asian Summit held in Malaysia in December 2005. Without doubt, closer political and economic ties are important in order to deepen intra-regional relations. However, relations from the perspective of the society and life of ordinary people also merit attention. This is because mutual understanding is bound to deepen more between countries with deep trade relations, for example, than between those which do not know anything about each other. Moreover, even though relations may be under stress to some extent on the political front, they are unlikely to deteriorate into one of extreme tension, if there are people-to-people exchanges.

What, then, are the occasions when ordinary people in their daily life feel there is contact with other countries? The first such occasion would be when a person makes an overseas trip and directly comes into contact with the culture and other aspects of another country. Another occasion would be the importation of items of a highly cultural nature, such as movies, music, books and games.

Unlike data on the macro-economy, data on cultural exchanges and the movement of people are difficult to obtain. This study attempts to obtain as much information of this kind as possible in order to draw a picture of international relations as perceived by ordinary people. The definition of the East Asian region here is the “10 countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) + Japan, China, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan,” for which data can be obtained with relative ease. The following are the results of analysis for the period going back to the 1990s.

Doubling of Intra-regional Cultural Property Exports in a Decade

In order to see the major trend of cultural exchanges, we have examined the trade situation of cultural properties, including films, books, art works and music. Trade data from the United Nations show that mutual exports between Japan, China, the newly industrializing economies (NIES) and the ASEAN* have increased sharply. According to the Trade White Paper (2006 edition), the total amount of transactions between the above four parties more than doubled from 1.476 billion dollars in 1994 to 4.114 billion dollars in 2004. Thus, exports and imports of cultural properties within Asia have become very active.

* The figures for the ASEAN are based on those for Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. Singapore is included among the NIES.

An examination of individual items shows that in the 1990s, Hong Kong movies accounted for the largest number of Asian films released in Japan with 10 to 20 Hong Kong films introduced here annually. Since 2000, however, South Korean films have increased sharply and in 2005 as many as 60 such films were released in Japan. This number far exceeded that for Hong Kong (12), Thailand (7), China (5) and Taiwan (5). South Korean movies are also very popular in other countries. In 2004, 25 such films were released in Thailand. Though this figure was smaller than that for films made in Hong Kong (36), it was bigger than that for Japanese films (12).

In the area of exports of TV dramas, those made in South Korea have increased conspicuously. In 2003, exports of South Korean TV dramas to Taiwan totaled 8.1 million dollars, a figure which was larger than that for any other destination. Exports to China and those to Japan also exceeded 6 million dollars, respectively. Even today, one can see books on South Korean TV dramas and stars piled up high in Japanese bookstores. It appears that books on Japanese and South Korean films and TV dramas are also selling briskly in Taiwan.

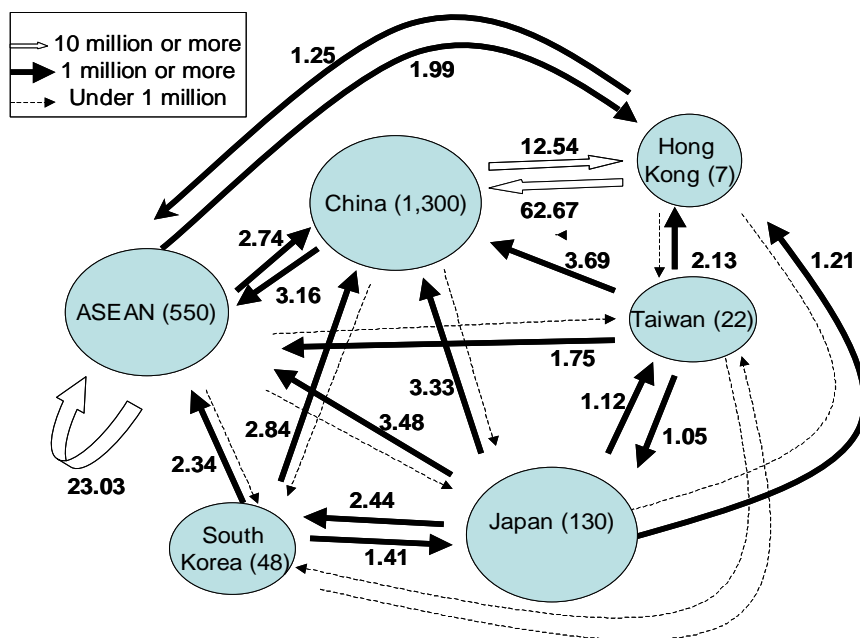
Let us now examine the movement of people. Although the objectives of going abroad are numerous, including tourism, commerce, work and studies, we have elected to use the total numbers of entries and exits. This is because the declaration that one is a

tourist does not always accurately reflect the actual objective of entry and also because even if one's objective is other than tourism, since a person entering a foreign country is bound to come into contact with the life and culture there, it is possible to define all entries into a foreign country as "cultural exchange" in a broad sense.

Since 1995, the total number of people entering into and exiting from countries has steadily increased in East Asia. Between some pairs of countries, more than one million travelers are counted annually in each direction, and their

Movement of People in East Asia (2004)

(Unit: million persons. Figures in parentheses under the names of the countries denote population)



Sources: National statistics and *World Tourism Statistics: Outbound Statistics by Destination*, [Asia-Pacific Tourism Exchange Center (APTEC)].

numbers are growing steadily. The increased exchanges with Japan can be attributed to the strengthening of economic and other relations, as well as to an institutional change, which has simplified the procedures for Visa applications.

Close Ties between Japan and South Korea in Terms of the Movement of People

By country, it can be seen that of South Korean travelers, the largest number used to come to Japan, but since 2000, China has replaced Japan as the most popular destination. In 2004, the number of South Korean visitors to China stood at almost 3 million vis-à-vis 1.41 million for visitors to Japan. However, at approximately 2.4 million, Japanese still accounted for the largest number of visitors to South Korea. In fact, Japanese accounted for nearly half of all the foreigners who entered South Korea in that year, underscoring the fact that in terms of people-to-people exchange, relations between Japan and South Korea are very close.

The number of inbound passengers to China from other countries in East Asia plunged in 2003 due to the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) epidemic, but it has since recovered. Because of the close economic relations between Hong Kong and China, and the fact that the border between the two can easily be crossed by train or other means of transportation, the number of people who cross the border in either direction is in the order of tens of millions annually. Aside from Hong Kong, out of the East Asian countries and regions, Japan and Taiwan account for the largest numbers of visitors to China (each with more than three million in 2004).

Meanwhile, traveling within the ASEAN region has nearly doubled in the past decade. At the same time, reflecting a steady deepening of economic relations between China and the ASEAN region, travelers between China and the ASEAN region have been increasing sharply. A recent, conspicuous trend is growing interest in Vietnam. In 2004, the number of East Asians who entered Vietnam stood at 1.86 million, far exceeding the 1.25 million who entered the Philippines.

Shigesaburo Kabe

Deputy Director and Senior Economist, Asian Research Department. Themes of his research include economic and industrial trends in East Asia and the global movement of people.

(Contact : 81-3-3639-2443)

※ Copying of this report is prohibited. Please contact JCER for further details.

Copyright © 2007 JCER

Japan Center for Economic Research (JCER)

Nikkei Kayabacho Bldg. 2-6-1 Nihombashi Kayabacho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 103-0025, Japan
Phone:81-3-3639-2810 / FAX:81-3-3639-2839 / E-mail:jcernet@jcer.or.jp