end of postwar historiography," in reference to the Marxist history writing that had occupied so prominent an academic place since the end of the war. Marxist categories of analysis now seemed less useful, and debates about the Meiji Restoration seemed more tedious than in earlier years. At the same time, recent trends in social and cultural history directed scholarly attention away from socioeconomic structures like state monopoly capitalism to the lived experiences of everyday life. In part an outgrowth of people's history, these interests combined with contemporary social concerns to focus history writing on questions of gender, ethnic minorities, and people on the social margins at home and in the colonial empire abroad.

Second, ideas of modernity, which determined the way that historians viewed the past, also had changed as Japanese grappled with the unfamiliar notion of living in postmodern times. Ever since the Meiji period, the modern had been conceived in comparison with Western exemplars as a condition that Japanese were striving to achieve in accordance with the imperatives of some universal scheme. Now they confronted less a failed modernity than a completed one, and like that modernity or not, it forced them to think about history differently. The assumptions of universal progress, whether linear or dialectical, no longer seemed so sturdy a guide to a future for which there were "no more models" to establish a ready-made comparative frame. In conservative circles, this development was taken as proof of Japan's having "overtaken the West" by virtue of a superior civilization. A new wave of popular civilizational histories appeared in the 1990s that echoed their Meiji counterparts of a century earlier, except that the West was now omitted in a story that attributed the achievement of Japanese modernity entirely to indigenous cultural factors. Meanwhile, many historians were critical both of this sort of growing nationalism and of the nature of Japan's "completed" modernity. Criticism of modernity was, of course, nothing new for progressive historians, as they wrote against the main narratives of national history in ways that reflected the changing times.

The changing relations between Japan and Asia particularly affected their views, constituting the third determinant of the shift in historical thinking in the last years of the century. With the end of the Cold War, the long laserlike focus on U.S.–Japanese relations gave way to a wider and more complicated view of the world. After four decades of relative neglect—or, in the case of war memory, repression—Asia finally reappeared on Japan's political and economic agenda. Historians turned to the study of empire, bringing the experience of the peoples of Manchuria, Taiwan, Korea, and the South Seas into the purview of a national history that had been almost entirely "Japanese" since 1945. They explored ancient connections and commonalities between Japan and Asia, writing about "Japanese history as seen from the seas" to show the close economic and cultural links that had existed since earliest times. As a counterpart to this stress on regional over national history, they de-nationalized the past internally as well, emphasizing regional differences within Japan that the modern narrative of the nation-state had all but entirely erased.

Yet even this writing against received views of national history bore the unmistakable marks of history written under the sign of the nation-state. "Japan," however expanded and inclusive, still remained the subject of the historical sentence, and the imperial institution, however historicized and de-mythologized, remained the touchstone of Japanese identity even for its strongest critics. However linked to its regional past, the nation still remained rhetorically separated, a question of Japan *and* Asia rather than of a common transnational history. Thus at the end of the twentieth century, history writing and popular consciousness in Japan, as in nearly every place else, were still national and, in this sense, still modern: a continuation of the Meiji project to rethink the nation's future through rewriting its past.

AMINO YOSHIHIKO

Amino Yoshihiko (1928–2004) was the scholar most closely associated with the new trends in social and cultural history in the 1980s and 1990s. Certainly he was the most famous, with more than 140 books, countless television appearances, and a noticeable influence on popular culture, including the huge animated-film (*anime*) success, *Princess Mononoke*. The 1997 feature incorporated Amino's unorthodox views of the importance of ethnic minorities into the history of a country relentlessly described as homogeneously "Japanese."

A medieval historian, Amino traversed the central terrain of postwar history writing during his long career. He joined the Association of Historical Studies as an activist Marxist historian after the war and worked as an ethnographic researcher for an institute inspired by Yanagita Kunio's interest in the lives of ordinary people. Like the people's historians, he considered such inquiry both a truer account of the past and a means to combat the power of the modern state and its emperor system. Writing against the national grain, Amino contested the ideological link among rice, the emperor, and "Japan" by focusing on "nonagriculturists" who had been extruded to the social margins by the Tokugawa political and taxation system. These included the people who made their living in the mountains and from the sea, as well as itinerant artists, artisans, and outcasts, who, in Amino's view, occupied a spatial and social zone of freedom in the borders between the rice-growing villages—a freedom that was lost with the establishment of the modern state, which wrote them, and women, out of its history.

Amino also sought to disaggregate "Japan," the unitary historical subject, into its distinctive regional histories, especially the division between eastern and western Japan, only part of which, he argued, had belonged to "Japan" proper

in early times. At the same time, he linked these regions to areas in Asia both across nearby seas and at farther-flung ports of maritime trade. As the following excerpt shows, Amino contested even the most hallowed myths and institutions, from rice and race to the emperor and the folk.

"DECONSTRUCTING 'JAPAN'"

One Country, One Name

It is self-evident that neither Japan nor the Japanese people existed prior to the use of the name "Japan" (*Nihon*), and needless to say, the name of the country is a central problem in "the discourse on Japaneseness" (*Nihonron*). Yet it is a problem that has not been squarely confronted in previous discussions about "Japan." . . . There are few states like Japan, whose name is neither a place name, a dynastic title, nor the family or clan name of a royal line. . . .

The generally accepted view among ancient historians today . . . emphasizes the usage of Nihon by the envoy sent to Tang China in the first year of Taihō [701] . . . however, it is important to note the close correlation between the time when the name "Japan" was adopted and when the appellation *tennō* (emperor) came into systematic use. . . . This would suggest that "Japan" and *tennō* have been inseparably linked from earliest times.

There are also all sorts of theories, and no consensus, as to the meaning of "Japan." Most widely held is the view that emerged in the Heian period, which identified the "prince of the place where the sun rises" mentioned in the *Suishū* with the Eastern *tennō* (emperor) of the *Nihon-shoki*, holding that Japan was so named because, looking eastward from the Tang Court, it was where the sun rose. If one adopts this view, it means that the name "Japan" has a Tang or at least a Chinese continental perspective. . . . [One scholar] has also noted the working of a deep-rooted tendency on the part of the society of the archipelago to "see its essence in terms of the sun and the direction from which it rises," a tendency also evident in "the creation of the mythology of imperial authority."

Thus the name Nihon signifies a natural phenomenon or orientation and is neither the name of the place of origin of the dynastic founders nor that of a dynasty or tribe. . . . Probably nowhere else, at least in East Asia or Europe, is there to be found a royal or imperial house without a clan or family name, while, as we have noted above, the name of the country itself, Nihon, is inextricably linked to the *tennō* institution. . . .

Nihon itself is a purely historical construct, and for that reason we should firmly reject historical images rooted in the "In the beginning were the Japanese" sort of framework that is still widely adhered to. . . .

"One Race," "One Nation"?

The "island-country theory" and the "rice monoculture theory" stem from a view of "Japan" as having been from ancient times a "unified state" peopled by one highly homogeneous race.

The "original Japanese," who are different in character from neighboring peoples and have been living in the Japanese archipelago since the Jōmon period, are our ancestors. The culture and way of life centering on rice-cultivation spread from Western Japan during the Yayoi period and was widely adopted by these people. From this emerged the state with the name "Japan," headed by the emperor. Despite various vicissitudes, this country Japan (*Nihonkoku*) has continued to the present, and the Japanese people (*Nihonjin*) who comprise it have undergone a distinct historical development without suffering any major invasion or conquest by neighboring peoples. . . .

Yet this "common knowledge" is no more than a fantasy based to a considerable degree on distortions. In particular, it is a historical fabrication which has almost entirely purged the unique society—including the Ainu—which existed in Hokkaido and northern Tōhoku; it also ignores the formation and development of the Ryūkyū kingdom in the Okinawan islands. Furthermore, it embodies a perspective that entirely overlooks the numerous attempts to establish a state separate from that of Kinai (Yamato), attempts that were made not only on the main islands of the archipelago—Honshū, Shikoku, Kyūshū—territories which constituted the main reach of Nihonkoku ("Japan")—but also in regions like northern Kyūshū and the Tōhoku–Kantō region in the Northeast of the country. Indeed, the situation that obtained in these regions indicates the coexistence of several separate states. . . .

. . . These considerations, however, cannot, I believe, alter the fact that a difference between East and West Japan (taking the division along the central structural line [the geological fold that runs down the center of Japan's main island]) has existed throughout history, perhaps from as early as Neolithic times. . . . This means that even in the early Yayoi period in Western Japan and the Jōmon period in Eastern Japan, two discrete societies existed side by side. . . .

In Western Japan there were [areas], which although differing among themselves maintained links with the Korean peninsula and the Chinese mainland, but may be regarded as a distinct region . . . and "Okinawa," which was an independent region maintaining its own communications beyond the Japanese archipelago. At the same time, a network of sea communications grew up between the people living along the Japan Sea, the Seto Inland Sea, and the Pacific coast. They maintained links with the regions listed above, and probably also expanded their networks beyond the Japanese archipelago. . . .

Suffice it to say that the argument that from Jōmon times there has been in Japan a "single race" and a "single state" is a baseless fabrication. An appreciation of this makes any simplistic linear periodization of the Japanese

archipelago problematic, to say the least. It is also obvious that, historically, views of the emperor and likewise of "Japan" have been far from homogeneous throughout the Japanese archipelago.

[Amino, "Deconstructing 'Japan,'" trans. McCormack, pp. 122–25, 132–34]

ARANO YASUNORI AND COLLEAGUES

The project of rethinking Japanese history in the context of Asia generated considerable dynamism and revision of received notions of national history. Scholars breached the lines drawn in universities since the 1890s among Japanese, Asian, and Western history and proposed regional and transnational approaches. They intervened in the once sacrosanct ideological precincts surrounding the origin of the emperor and the Japanese people to connect them to Korea. They showed that definitions of Asia changed over time and that conventional periodizations of Japanese history had to be revised to include larger regional developments like the decline of the China-centered tribute system. They also challenged the idea of the closed-off country (*sakoku*) so long associated with Tokugawa Japan. Arano Yasunori (b. 1946) proposed instead the dual concept of, first, a "Japan-centered order of civilized and barbarian," which replaced the earlier Sinocentric order and had four gates open to the world (Ezo, Satsuma, Tsushima, and Nagasaki), and, second, the "ban on going abroad," which placed trade and travel in the control of the shogunal state. Neither, he argued, was designed to close off the country, but to keep its commerce with Asia and the world under state control.[6]

As coeditors of the series *The History of Japan in Asia* (*Ajia no naka no Nihonshi*), Arano and his colleagues introduced the imperatives of replacing Japan in Asia in terms of the political context and scholarly approaches typical of the 1990s.

THE HISTORY OF JAPAN IN ASIA (AJIA NO NAKA NO NIHONSHI)

Japanese behavior seems always to return to the pattern of "Escape from Asia, Enter Europe" [in Fukuzawa Yukichi's famous formulation]. On the other hand, the tendency to concentrate Japanese identity in the singular Emperor remains strong. One cannot underestimate the potential of the combination of these two tendencies to lead Japanese once again into nationalism and discrimination against [the rest of] Asia.

Now that we realize that even the firmest of national boundaries are not immutable, it is essential to break free of the mode of thinking that puts national

6. Arano, *Kinsei Nihon to higashi Ajia*.

interest above all else and to envision instead a free and multidimensional exchange among different peoples (*minzoku*) and regions (*chiiki*). In this we must not regard Asia with condescension or single out one or two countries as models but move toward proper relations based on dispassionate and independent views. Toward this end we must trace the historical development of Japan's relations with Asia in both directions: "Japan in Asia" (e.g., the characteristics and roles of Japan in Asia, Japanese who advanced into Asia) and "Asia in Japan" (e.g., Asian characteristics within Japanese society and Asians who became part of Japanese society). This history is necessary if we are to ascertain the legacies that still affect Japanese views of Asia. In this series of volumes, we concentrate on the premodern period. With contemporary historiographical concerns in mind, we situate our basic point of view in three contexts:

I. Ethnos

Japanese must now overcome their tendency to assume that "nation equals emperor" and instead establish themselves first as an ethnic subject and then engage in independent and equal interchange with other ethnicities (*minzoku*). We have to apply a different logic to rethink those peoples who were forced as subordinates to collude with the state on the basis of the illusion of the homogeneous nation-state. Then we must reconstruct the aspects of exchange, fusion, and opposition between Japanese and other ethnicities. Rather than use the concept of ethnicity (*minzoku*) that is premised on the existence of the "nation-state," we take the term "ethnos" from cultural anthropology because it is relatively free of the framework of the state and the limitations of a particular historical period.

II. Region

We do not regard the connections between Japan and Asia solely in terms of international relations. Instead we use the framework of a regional space that transcended national borders, which allows for a concrete grasp of the diverse exchanges carried out by such people as monks, pirates, and merchants. We approach the "region" in terms of national subregions with distinctive characteristics (e.g., Kyūshū and its relations with the China Sea rim region). We also examine how moments of interethnic exchange and fusion existed beyond the control of the state and what kinds of conflict such exchanges engendered within states.

III. Comparison

Conventional methods of "comparative history" have tended either to attribute Japan's backwardness to some abstract "Asian characteristics" or to emphasize the inevitability of Japan's "modernization" in terms of its resemblance to