for an authoritarian regime like China to communicate its resolve to other countries, anti-foreign demonstrations could also become costly once their momentum accumulates beyond government control. In the end, there is no way to tell when the Chinese government would opt to suppress or escalate them.

All in all, the author builds a convincing argument based on her 14-month field research with over 170 interviewees. Applying rational choice concepts, particularly audience cost, to the analysis of an authoritarian regime – China, Weiss also provides a novel angle in this research forefront.

However, there are a few difficult tasks left out from her study. Most importantly, the main concept in the book “audience cost” is one that has normally been applied to the analysis of demonstrations in democratic countries. Since leaders in democratic countries would have to answer to their peoples, they could use domestic pressure as a communicative tool to show that their hands are tied and draw concessions from other countries.

However, it is still unclear to what extent audience cost exists in an authoritarian state, and how it is perceived by other countries. Foreign countries tend to understand that both anti-Japan and anti-U.S. demonstrations in China are manipulated by the Beijing government. If this is how other countries perceive, then the argument of audience cost in China does not stand. As Weiss also admits in Chapter 2, Washington pointed out Beijing government’s involvement in the anti-U.S. demonstration following the Chinese Embassy bombing in Belgrade.

Also, Weiss essentially treated international factors as independent variable in this work, though she claimed them to be only intervening variables at the beginning of the book. Many factors are related to the government’s behavior regarding anti-foreign demonstrations. These could include the strength of power base of the then leadership, and Chinese perception of other states, just to name a few. However, the author appears to be somewhat overly enthusiastic in building her own argument, leaving competitive theories and alternative perspectives to the margin.

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**Ajia no Seitaikiki to Jizokukanosei: Firudo kara no Sasuteinabiruti-ron**
[Ecological crisis and sustainability in Asia: a synthesis of field studies], by Kenji Otsuka et al., Chiba, IDE-JETRO Institute of Developing Economies, 2015, 294 pp., ¥3700JPY (hardback), ISBN: 978-4-258-04616-4

1. **From environmental governance theory to sustainability theory**

The concept of “sustainability” has been in the center of the debate on environmental issues for quite a long time. However, following recent large-scale natural disasters (such as the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, which is said to be a once-in-a-thousand-year event) and the extreme weather conditions (such as torrential rainfalls, which are believed to result
from global climate change), the focus of the sustainability discourse has shifted to “crisis management,” both at micro- and macro-levels. Examples, such as the 2004 Sumatra Earthquake and the subsequent tsunami, the 2011 Chao Phraya and Mekong Rivers monsoon floods, and the 2013 Philippines typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda), illustrate clearly the Pacific Rim developing countries’ susceptibility to earthquakes, typhoons, and other natural disasters. In addition, as can be seen from the effects of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans (2005), the developed countries are not immune to the crisis, either. Further, as illustrated by the example of the 2011 Thai flood, the damage was not only to the local residents, but the flood also disrupted production and supply chains in the automotive industry, so that its effects reverberated globally. As the society has become increasingly aware of the need for the “crisis management,” the concept of “resilience” entered the sustainability discourse. Originally, “resilience” in ecology referred to the ability to recover from an external shock. In the course of time, however, the concept of “resilience” has become strongly associated with the sustainability of communities and the society.

Further, as illustrated by the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant Accident (caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake), a long-lasting radioactive contamination that cannot be even measured on the human life-span scale is a kind of a shock (or a crisis) from which the local communities cannot recover swiftly. Moreover, given the fact that in the 1990s the environmental problems were recognized as a universal global threat, the issue of environmental pollution has been steadily incorporated into the “sustainability” and/or “resilience” discourse, and constant efforts have been made to offer a solution to the problem. To date, however, few environmental problems have been solved, with the environmental issues being perceived as long-term ecological crises.

The editor of the book (and the author of the Introduction, Chapter 6 and the Conclusion), Mr Kenji Otsuka, has researched the problem of China’s water pollution (with a particular focus on the Huai River case) for many years, advocating the implementation of the “watershed governance.” Through further refinement of the above concept, the book sets out to develop a full-fledged “sustainability theory.” Unlike mainstream researchers (which tend to center on China’s economic development), the multi-disciplinary group of scholars engaged in this project focus instead on socio-economically disadvantageous China’s periphery, assessing long-term “ecological crisis” to its ecosystem and calling for a new “sustainable governance” model.

2. From center to periphery

Since a shift from “center” to “periphery” constitutes the main narrative of the book, I would like to introduce the contents of the publication through the lens of the “center–periphery” discourse.

As mentioned in the Introduction, there exists a plethora of theories that tend to portray China’s environmental problems as a result of the country’s rapid development. Japan’s postwar economic growth is often given as an example, with its speedy economic recovery in the 1950s and the subsequent environmental pollution crisis of the 1960–70s. Those theories put economic growth and the “development–environment” nexus at the center of the debate, focusing on the analysis of the state environmental governance and social movements that oppose it. The above approach is often labeled as “environmental democracy” model. This book, however, shifts perspective to China’s/Asia’s inland periphery in attempt to develop the “sustainable governance” model based on the field surveys. Specifically, the argument is developed along three axes: (1) the spatial axis of center–periphery, (2) the temporal axis of the ecosystem long-term transformation, and (3) the interactions between social and ecological systems.

Following the analytical framework set out in the Introduction, a set of six case studies is presented by the authors (Chapters 1–6) encompassing not only China but also its neighbors.
(Mongolia, Japan, and Kazakhstan). Chapter 1 (by Tomoko Nakamura, a social anthropologist) discusses pastoral groups in the desert area of Mongolia, while Chapter 2 (by Shuhei Ueda, an ecological anthropologist) deals with the subsistence adaptation of the Evenki tribe, the reindeer breeders of the Daxingangling 大興安嶺 Forest Area. Next, in Chapter 3, Nanae Yamada (an agricultural economist) examines the development strategy of the Chinese villages in semi-arid region, while Chapter 4 (by Kaori Fujita, an environmental economist) focuses on the sustainability of the mountain villages taking Niyodogawa Town in Japan as an example. Finally, in Chapter 5, Tetsuro Chida discusses the extinction of the Aral Sea and the “Little Aral” fishing industry, while Chapter 6 (by Kenji Otsuka, a watershed governance expert) examines the water pollution in the Huai River Basin.

Regions featured in the book face various environmental crises, such as meteorological disasters (e.g., snow disaster in Chapter 1, and drought damage in Chapter 3), long-term environmental damages (e.g., water scarcity due to agricultural development in Chapter 5, and water pollution due to industrial development in Chapter 6), and socio-environmental transformations (e.g., the Evanki tribe’s adaptation due to changes in China’s environmental policy in Chapter 2, and the changes in rural areas due to gentrification in Chapter 4). Further, in terms of factors contributing to those crises, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 focus on the processes of “adaptation,” whereas Chapters 4, 5, and 6 discuss the processes of “recovery” from the crises.

The above set of case studies examine not only the impact of natural disasters and environmental crises on the nature but also show a wide range of the local communities’ responses to the “socio-environmental” transformations which occurred as a result of the above crises. Further, while the local communities’ traditional knowledge-based “endogenous adaptation” plays an important role in sustainable governance, the “intermediary” role of various institutions (e.g., local administration, NGOs, etc.) cannot be overlooked. The editor describes the above set of relations as a “basic and higher level social systems interconnectivity” drawing our attention to its importance.

Overall, the significance of this book lies as much in the analysis of each case study and the participation of the multidisciplinary group of scholars, as in its successful attempt to analyze the given set of case studies from the multi-dimensional point of view.

3. Responses to socio-environmental crises

As explained above, the book, thanks to the participation of the multidisciplinary group of researchers, has succeeded in highlighting individual and group responses to various socio-environmental crises while focusing on the “periphery,” that is, areas largely overlooked by the mainstream environmental governance studies. In Conclusion, the editor groups those responses under four headings: (1) “endogenous responses” such as Mongolian herders’ practice of “otoru” (the mobility patterns on the grasslands) or Evenki herders’ reindeer feeding practices, (2) “coordinated responses” which link together members of the local communities with institutions such as NGOs (e.g., the case of migrant workers), (3) “creative responses” such as the local communities’ efforts to tackle the shrinking population or environmental pollution, and (4) “exogenous responses” such as responding to socio-environmental crises through the use of technology or social institutions. Further, the editor emphasizes the fact that such a variety of responses reflects the complexity of modern socio-ecological systems.

In general, I agree with the editor that such a wide range of socio-environmental crises requires diversified responses. To this end, a set of case studies offered in this book makes a stimulating reading providing the readers with a lot of useful information. However, I would like to learn more about the range of choices available to the local communities when faced with a given crisis. Also, it would be advisable to explain how the local communities
proceed while confronting multiple crises (to this regard, it would be interesting to listen to the opinions of researchers from different fields). Doubtless, local communities, when faced with a crisis, have no choice but to accept it. However, it might help the readers (as well as the reviewer) if the authors explain the range of choices available while responding to a given crisis, how “creative responses” may become an option, and what type of society the local community is aiming at while dealing with a given crisis.

4. On the possibility of multidisciplinary collaboration

The most important feature of this book is that it is a fruit of the joint project attended by researchers from different fields. With regard to this, the editor makes clear that he has striven to construct “a common language and a set of concepts” which would (1) help to map out different case studies as components of the one (sustainability) discourse, (2) make it possible to discuss links between those case studies while refraining from a uniformed conclusion, (3) facilitate communication between different field of studies, and (4) help to achieve practical implementation of sustainable development. Solutions to environmental problems and responses to socio-environmental crises are often difficult to agree on, also due to different attitudes of the parties concerned. As argued by the editor, to find the best solution to a given problem, we need first to untangle the complexity of the socio-environmental crises. With that in mind, I am looking forward to Mr Otsuka’s next publication hoping that it will address a fundamental question about the real nature of the sustainable society.

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