

Reflections on island research

KAKINUMA Taro

NATSUME Soseki talks about people with various personalities in a lively manner in “Botchan.” “Botchan” is the nickname of the main character, meaning a good boy, sometimes a greenhorn. Early in the posting, the main character from Tokyo criticized the land and people in comparison with his own experience. Matsuyama in Shikoku was the countryside as seen from Tokyo. Incidentally, Tokyo was the countryside as seen from the Western nations. Islands far away from the mainland are referred to as remote islands. Japan in the Meiji period was a remote island. Can we say that modern Japan is not a remote island from the perspective of the international community? The policy of remote islands is a microcosm of the policy of the island that is Japan.

The results of the promotion of remote islands by the national and prefectural governments can be seen in tangible developments such as the improvement of water supply penetration rates, and securing medical facilities, although the number of midwives is still insufficient. However, it is not easy to distribute the promotion efforts to all remote islands evenly. If we try to close the gap, these efforts will run short because of factors unique to the remote island, such as their distance to the mainland. Promotion is reminiscent of the inferiority complex that begins with the recognition of being behind relative to others.

The perception of inferiority was established by bringing in certain norms. Such norms include population, economy, industrial power, and convenience, all of which are disadvantageous for remote islands. The reason is that these are norms for searching for weaknesses in remote islands. What happens if a completely different norm was introduced? Bring in a natural environment, which, once destroyed, requires a daunting amount of time to repair. Bring in unique cultures such as festivals.

Furthermore, remote islands are bases at the forefront when seeking resources in economic zones, such as oil, natural gas, methane hydrates, and submarine hydrothermal deposits. When these indicators are raised, the disparity between remote islands and the mainland transforms into a superiority complex. People go to remote islands to enjoy what would be extraordinary in the city. Regional disparities are widening not only in the negative direction but also in the positive direction. This means that the difference is not only an indicator of superiority or inferiority, but also an indicator of characteristics.

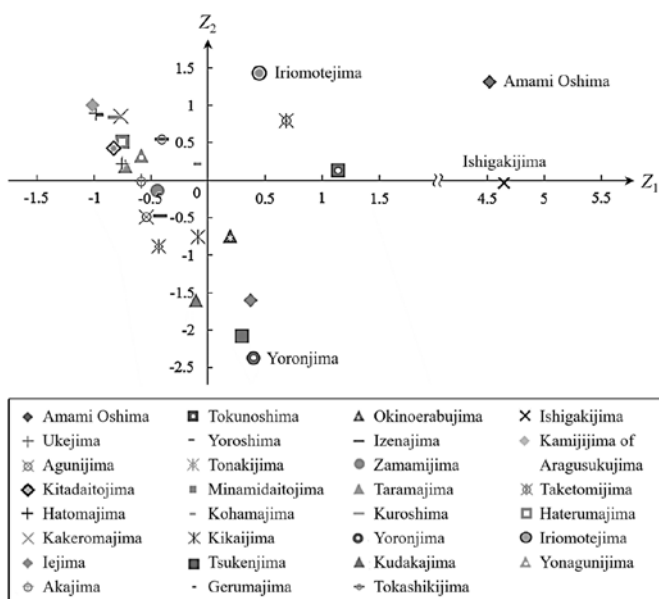
Promotion and development are necessary to ensure a comfortable and secure life while ensuring that the existing wonderful elements are maintained for both the remote island and the mainland. In our laboratory, we are analyzing a variety of data to extract the properties of the islands. For example, to consider the strength of the economic power of tourism, we conducted a principal component analysis that focused on population density, the population of workers in the tertiary industry, and the number of tourists.

The subjects are the remote islands designated in the Amami and Okinawa Promotion Special Measures Act. The data were announced from the Japan Remote Island Center,

Kagoshima Prefecture Planning Department Statistics Division, and Okinawa Prefecture Planning Department Statistics Division in 2013. In the figure, Ishigakijima and Amami Oshima have high scores on the Z_1 axis and exhibit strong tourism power. Moreover, Iriomotejima, which has a high score on the Z_2 axis, has a high number of tourists relative to its population density, and there is a possibility that tourism can be strengthened and profits may improve. Yoronjima, which has a Z_1 axis score similar to that of Iriomotejima, has a low Z_2 axis score and does not have as many tourists relative to its population density as Iriomotejima, so one of its best measures can be said to focus on public dissemination while combining with other industries.

Other examples include identifying similarities between Amami Oshima and Sadogashima, which are far removed from one another, in classifications of economics and medical care for all inhabited islands nationwide. Cooperation between islands is necessary for the exchange of such information. A nationwide integrated specialized agency, including resident representatives, should discuss and promote plans with local public organizations and corporations that are advisors and businesses. Local government belongs to the residents themselves. Local newspapers are effective in both listening to the opinions of residents and monitoring by residents for promotion. It is only by organically linking updatable and flexible tangible and intangible infrastructure and developing in close connection with the lives of the inhabitants that the islands can become comfortable living spaces for residents.

Promotion may create an environment in which the air that naturally exudes from life creates an island-specific culture. In this way, the island is freed from the two complexes mentioned above, as if the rebellious spirit of “Botchan” blew away the complexes along with his comrade, nicknamed “Mountain Strom.”



Principal component analysis results on the economy based on Amami and Okinawa promotion of tourism on the islands