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Industrious Revolution and Disaster Management in Japan.

What has energized my studies has been the discovery that, in contrast to the platitudes I learned in school, Japanese society abounds with fascinating regional diversity. From a distance, Japan looks like a homogeneous society, but if you look at Japanese society and nature up close, its regional diversity can be seen. Driving that diversity is the diverse geography of Japan, from the cold northern areas to the warm southern areas, and from the mountainous to the coastal regions. Historical demographic family studies have clarified such regional diversity using demographic criteria. However, the cultural details of traditional societies in the southwestern part of Japan, in particular, have not been sufficiently explored. The regional diversity of the family and household systems in Japan should be studied in combination with local and regional environmental histories for insight into the interaction between man and the diversity of nature.

My current research project focuses on a comparison of those southwestern Japanese regions with European early modern societies; in particular, I am examining the history of interaction between nature and society in a supposedly more “ecological” age. I use family-demography analysis and institutional-cultural understanding. The latter is my original approach to historical sources. Historical sources can give us historical evidence; however, there is great regional diversity in historical records such as church registers, court protocols, inventories, nominative population registers, diaries, and others. For example, early modern Japanese society had no inventories or protocols for civil court. The administrative context, such as the *shoya* system, a regional administrative and information system that could produce unique historical sources, is clearly differentiated from the recording systems of early modern Europe. Such a comparative study of historical sources will be especially noteworthy in making global comparisons and can make contributions to environmental history.

