

Summary of Comments on Professor Kagami's paper

By Eric Harwit

This paper is an excellent and thorough review of the course of research on Asia in both the United States and in Japan during the wartime and post-war period. Professor Kagami takes on an ambitious task, to propose a new paradigm for researching Asia, and for looking in particular at China.

Overall, I found the most fascinating parts of the paper to be the historical discussions of the two nations' approaches to the study of Asia. Professor Kagami puts this in the context of research streams that are either sponsored and essentially directed by the state, or those that avoid state sponsorship and therefore give the researcher more freedom of analysis. My only thought here is that Professor Kagami could make this connection somewhat more explicit, and extend the argument to consider that those researchers (either in the US or Japan) who do not receive government funding may, at least in theory, have more ability to conduct work that is independent of their nation's policy interests.

I agree with Professor Kagami's larger argument, that it is possible to categorize a significant portion of the American research of the post-war era as state-policy driven in nature. I understand this is part of the basis for his advocating a new approach to the study of Asia and China. His paper also makes a striking point that, somewhat ironically, a form of "orientalism" can also be found in Japanese area studies of the Asian region and China. I am less familiar with the Japanese case, but find his analysis compelling.

To me, it seems that there has been a recent trend in American academia to move away from the policy-oriented approaches that Professor Kagami indicates prevailed in the post-war decades. I find this to be the case in at least in some parts of my own discipline of political science, though I concur that other social sciences, such as economics and business administration, have kept to more traditional methodologies as the scholars in those fields have developed greater interest in Asia and China in recent years.

My main suggestion, should the paper be further revised, is that the last few pages of the essay go into greater depth, and provide a more comprehensive roadmap for the "co-behavioralist" approach. On pages 26-27 (in the English version of the text), Professor Kagami gives three main points to emphasize in the new approach, and on page 28 a detailed example from the case of pollution in China to illustrate the way the methodology may work in practice. However, I believe it would be useful to include more discussion of how current researchers can, in a practical way, change their methodologies and ways of thinking to accomplish more of this kind of work.

In the last paragraph, Professor Kagami cites a few more examples for possible future co-behavioralist work, with particular reference to the Fukuchiyama line railway disaster in Japan, and nuclear power safety. An expanded discussion on these cases would be of great value to help show scholars how they can use the new approach to both revise their traditional approaches, and to achieve useful and notable results with Professor Kagami's "co-behavioralist" method.