

CHAPTER 10

The Significance of the Research Institute of World History (NPO-IF) in Japan

Shingo Minamizuka

The institution called Research Institute for World History (RIWH) was founded in July 2004 in Tokyo. It is an independent institution, and does not belong to any universities, governmental organizations, or companies. It belongs to NPO–International Forum for Culture and History, a non-profit organization founded in 2000.¹ Its financial base is made up of contributions from individuals and organizations. The concrete purposes of the Institute are:

1. To promote interest in research and education on world history in Japan
2. To collect and provide information on research and education in world history
3. To popularize the necessity for study of world history in Japan
4. To maintain contact with other institutions and groups concerned with world history

We have only limited resources and manpower. We have no permanent researchers but have several casual researchers who are quite talented. We have excellent advisers: Professor Ivan T. Berend of UCLA; Masao Nishikawa, Professor Emeritus of Tokyo University; Yuichi Shimomura, Professor Emeritus of Chiba University; and Hiroshi Momose, Professor Emeritus of Tsuda College.²

The Background of RIWH

In order to explain the reasons for the initiation of the RIWH, I must briefly look back over the Japanese experience in world-historical writing. Japanese historiography has produced major achievements in the writing of world history. These achievements have been divided into two spheres. One is the history textbook for the junior high and high schools, while the other is the compilation of book series in world history. Since we already have several important works done by Prof. Masao Nishikawa and others concerning the history textbook problem,³ I should like to introduce briefly the latter achievement—the compilation of book series in world history—which has not been introduced outside of Japan.

But before that, I should like to survey the process of introducing and formulating world history in Japan since the Meiji Era. In the 1870s and in the first half of 1880s we tried to develop such concepts of world history as “Bankokushi,” meaning “history of all nations on earth.” This introduced two trends of foreign endeavor for world history: one trend was to compose the world history as a collection of histories of individual countries with some histories of special topics (S. G. Goodrich’s book was translated into Japanese beginning in 1876), while the other was to follow the development of the whole world, considering it as a large society or community on the earth (as was the case with E. A. Freeman’s general history).⁴ From the late 1880s the Japanese concept of world history became increasingly Euro-centric and white-centric, despising Asia, relying on William Swinton’s book and others.⁵ From the 1890s, however, Japanese world-historical writing insisted that Japan was as great as Europe and was to be the leader of Asian peoples.⁶ It was in the beginning of the twentieth century that we introduced the term “world history”—it was, of course, characterized by Eurocentrism and Japan-centrism. This kind of world history could not prevent the Japanese invasion into Asia in the 1930s.

Compilation of series of world history started in the 1940s, at the initiative of several famous historians and the publishers. Since the end of World War II, we have had more than 20 series of books in world history. The first important world history that appeared in Japan was produced at the end of the 1940s under the editorship of the late Professors Namio Egami, Kentaro Murakawa, Noboru Niida, Shigeki Toyama, Bokuro Eguchi and Senroku Uehara. This was the *History of the World* in 6 volumes (published by

Mainichi Shinbun Publishing House, 1949–1954). This was the expression of our belief after the war that we had to live together with other peoples in the world. In the following years, there appeared seven series on world history in the 1960s, four in the 1970s, four in the 1980s, and nine in the 1990s.

One of the most important series on world history was the *Iwanami Course on World History* in 31 volumes (Iwanami Shoten Publishing House, 1969–71). This was the best achievement of world history in the 1960s. It is divided into ancient times, medieval times, modern times, and contemporary times, and each time period includes several volumes, with a “general view” and then follow-up articles on European and Asian (non-European) history. This is a collection of specialized articles on each given topic and many of the articles were of the highest standard for their time. It tried to place Japanese history in the perspective first of Asian and then Euro-American history, showing that we have to advance hand in hand with Asian people. It was also the best product of Japanese Marxist historians.

Although we did not have exciting series on world history in the 1970s, after the students’ revolts in 1968–1969, in the 1980s there again appeared stimulating works. For example, *Visual History of the World* in 20 volumes (Kodansha Publishing House, 1984–89), *The New World History* in 12 volumes (University of Tokyo Press, 1986–89), and *Inquiries into World History* in 10 volumes (Iwanami Shoten Publishing House, 1989–91). Especially the second series tried to find new frontiers of researching and narrating world history through widening the perspective of individual historical studies. Some typical topics are the world of “untouchables,” “traditional transformation,” “individuals and communities,” “common people’s society,” “identities of national minorities,” and “modernization.” The third series was a sincere amalgam of Marxist history and social history. It was not intended to describe world history but to investigate important methodological or individual topics in world history such as history and nature, technology, human movement (including migration), social association, discipline and integration, popular culture, authority and power, structuring the world, religion in history, and state and revolution.

After the collapse of socialist regimes in Russia and Eastern Europe, there has been chaos among historians in Japan too. The *Course on World History* in 12 volumes (University of Tokyo Press, 1995–96) and *World History Viewed from the “South”* in 6 volumes (Otsuki Shoten Publishing

House, 1999) are the Marxist effort to explain world history from a new perspective, though they are still not successful. Beside these works there appeared more “positivist” series, which are represented by *World History* in 30 volumes (Chuokoronsha Publishing House, 1996–99), and *New Iwanami Course on World History* in 29 volumes (Iwanami Shoten Publishing House, 1997–2000). Meanwhile, *World History Seen from Regions* in 12 volumes (Yamakawa Shuppansha Publishing House, 1997–2000) is an ambitious experiment in composing world history from the viewpoint of regions. It is a series of volumes dealing with various themes on regional history—defining a region, images of regions, formation of regions, regional history of ecology, human movement, time, belief, living, market, and domination.

After reflection on the whole experience of world history in Japan, one can easily see that although there have been interesting efforts to conceptualize world history in Japan, the main characteristics are that these were the mixture of the two trends of the Meiji Era. There is no world history that is written from a consistent point of view or consistent method.

Why is the RIWH necessary?

Is it a world history if a series covers the whole of the national or regional histories on the earth? Our Institute tries to pursue the missing link. The purpose of the Institute is thus to find the possibilities for searching out viewpoints or methods for building world history beyond the terms of collections of national (or regional) histories on the earth.

We have developed many detailed and specialized histories in these several decades, but we have lost long-term and comprehensive perspective of the world where we live. Every historian believes that, if he/she produces a high-standard achievement in his/her special field, it will contribute to enriching world history, or someone will make use of it to produce world history. The separated, subdivided situation of historical sciences that has advanced since the 1980s has proved not only to be weak in the face of “globalization” but to be an obstacle to forming a grand-scale perspective, by reducing historical studies to detailed and specialized or even “hobby-like” works.

Although there were quite a lot of series on world history published in Japan, and though some of them seriously tried to conceptualize world

history, it cannot be denied that the series were mainly collections of individual works; the effort to form world history was only sporadic.

Possibilities of World History

So far we, historians of the world, have found several possibilities as to the method of constructing world history. The most important achievement in overcoming national histories was comparative economic history, but the fact is that the national economic histories are not connected to each other by mere comparison. We have no economic history of the world yet. The civilizational approach is another traditional one: it has revived recently in the face of the rise of Islamic power. Mega-regional historical studies such as the history of the Indian Ocean, pan-Atlantic history, Eurasian history, and others are emerging as important approaches to world history. World history of particular themes such as the history of tea, coffee, environment, and gender is also gaining importance. History of the movements of human beings, including migration across the earth, may also create a powerful drive to world history. History of the philosophy of world history going back to the period of the Enlightenment, though important, has to be developed to include Asian philosophy too. And the world-system approach is also promising, though it tends to be static and should be reviewed from the viewpoint of Asia. Lastly, history of international relations, which is a rather traditional approach, is developing a new outlook including more historical method.

Although each has some limitations itself, as we have seen, these approaches seem to be promising. But I wonder what kind of viewpoint we should adopt in using these approaches. Is it possible to constitute a world history that all the people can accept? Or will we have several world histories? We think that we will have plural world histories for the time being or even longer. As a result, our point is that, since world history from the fifteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century was one where the “North” subjugated the “South,” world history “from below” should be one of the most important versions, if we are to refrain from being “European-oriented.”

In this sense, our guiding figure for considering world history is the late Professor Bokuro Eguchi (Tokyo University). As a specialist on the age

of imperialism, he left many suggestions for world history. According to him, “comparison” must lead to “relation.” If a certain part of the world was “backward,” it was so because there was an “advanced” part at its side. The “advanced” part stands in the way of the “backward.” And the “advanced” part makes use of the “backward” factors within its own region too. We have to think of a world where every part of the globe is connected to each other in one sense or another. Thus if there is a relaxation of conflict between powers in one part of the world, there must be an increase of tension in another part of the world.

As a historian of the age of imperialism, Eguchi did not consider the world as a world made of nation states but as a holistic imperial power confronting the whole people in Asia and Africa, though there were mutual conflicts among the Powers. He also emphasized the limitation of our recognition of the facts. Looking at things from the “North”—that is, developed countries—it is easy to make mistakes even though it may seem highly sophisticated, while the viewpoint of the “South”—that is underdeveloped countries—does not easily lead to mistakes, however unsophisticated and instinctive it may seem. It is like the saying in the Bible that it is more difficult for the rich to get to the Promised Land than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Thus he taught us to see the world always from the “South.”

Activities of RIWH

Following the purposes of our Institute listed above, we are organizing discussion meetings on the method of world history, introducing global achievements of world history including translation and review of important works, examining the achievements of world history in Japan, including the works of the late Professor Bokuro Eguchi, and organizing our “world history caravans.”

Introduction to Foreign Achievements in World History. We have organized several discussion meeting on the possibilities of world history, with Professor Patrick Manning (U.S.), Professor Ivan T. Berend (U.S.), Dr. Erzsebet Szalai (Hungary), Dr. Francisco Zapata (Mexico), and Dr. Tha Thi Thuy (Vietnam) as our guests. Through these discussions we have learned that our project for world history is not an isolated movement, and that we had better present the Japanese achievements to the world more explicitly. World

historians elsewhere are pondering the same possibilities of constituting world history, and we have to pay attention to their point of view when we try to formulate world history.

We are trying to introduce recent major works on world history. We are now undertaking the translation of P. Manning, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) into Japanese. We have also reviewed important books and articles on world history such as A. G. Hopkins, ed., *Globalization and World History* (Pimlico, 2002), and Hanna Schissler and Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal, eds., *The Nation, Europe, and the World* (Berghahn Books, 2005). We are introducing to our members important website information that is useful for following the newest trends of research and education in world history.

Examination of the Japanese achievements in world history. We have found it important to examine the Japanese achievements in world history after World War II in order to communicate with world historians abroad. First, we started to examine the works by Professor Eguchi, as already mentioned, and we are planning to translate his main works into English and to put them on our web site. Secondly, we have reviewed the series of world history published in Japan since the end of the war, some part of which is introduced above. The complete presentation is to be found in our website.

Thirdly, we are dealing with the problems of the textbook of world history. We discussed the problems of the *New History Textbook* for the junior high schools, published by the ultra-nationalists, from the viewpoint of world history. Critique of the *New History Textbook* is written by myself and can be seen on our website.⁷ The essential characteristics of *New History Textbook* are as follows. The Emperor (Tenno) system is the pillar of Japanese history. The *New History Textbook* emphasizes the unbroken line of emperors starting from Jinmu Tenno, though Jinmu was a legendary person. The Tenno is argued to have been behind the *bushi* (samurai, warrior) power since the twelfth century. The Meiji Restoration of 1868 is interpreted as the product of those bushis who were loyal to Tenno; the Second World War, it is argued, was also ended by the decision of Tenno. There is no mention of the responsibility of Tenno for the beginning and prolonging of the war: Japan was and is a peaceful nation which lives comfortably around the Tenno. Thus the general argument is that the Western powers always wanted to invade Asia, from the sixteenth century (the age of Columbus), and it was

Japan who resisted and tried to expel them from Asia—with World War II (the Great East-Asian War) being another case. It is difficult for the world to accept these interpretations.

At the same time, we are trying to translate into English a typical history textbook for junior high school to show how world history has traditionally been intertwined into the context of Japanese history. The recent *New History Textbook* is a complete reaction to this “tradition” by cutting world history off from Japanese history, distorting the context of world history in such a way as to argue that the foreign powers were always threatening Japan.

Constructing World history

RIHW is ambitiously trying to construct world history in a positive way. We are engaged in the study of two periods.

1890–1905. We are trying to construct cross-regional world history covering the period of from 1890 to 1905—that is, the period of the Sino-Japanese war and the Russo-Japanese war. Our method is double. On the one hand we make much of the economic, social and cultural history of imperialism; on the other hand we use the history of cross-regional international relations with local history in mind. In this case we see history not from the viewpoint of the powers but from the viewpoint of Asia and Africa, trying to place the ideas and movements of native resistance into a broad perspective. More concretely;

1. With the Russo-French Alliance (1891–1894), the balance of power within Europe was thought to have been established; any further conflict in Europe was expected to lead to war in Europe.
2. Due to the Korean problem caused by peasant revolt, the Sino-Japanese War occurred in 1894–1895, resulting in the loss of the war by China, which led to the penetration of western powers into China.
3. This gave rise to the Boxer Rising, which was indigenous but anti-imperialist. Japan in turn started to become a Power, but its rise was prevented by the Triple Intervention (by Russia, France and Germany), leading to increased nationalism in Japan.
4. Japan concluded an Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902. The UK was greatly occupied with the Boer War which (though it began after British detente with France following the Fashoda confrontation in 1898) met with resistance not only from the Boers but also indigenous people.

5. The penetration of western Powers into the Far East caused a conflict between Russia and Japan, which led to the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905. It was actually not just a war between Russia and Japan but also between France and Germany (who supported Russia) on one hand and the UK and the U.S. (who were on Japan's side) on the other. So the war had to be ended before either of the rival Powers was beaten completely.
6. The Russo-Japanese War signified that a balance of power in the Far East was thought to have been reached. While the possible conflicts among Japan, Russia, and the U.S. were covered by “pacts,” the main contradiction of imperialism shifted to Africa and the Middle East: to Moroccan incidents involving Germany, Italian ambition in Africa, and the Persian Revolution.
7. No sooner had these crises been settled than a serious crisis arose from the Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908, which caused local resistance and finally led to the First World War.

Thus, though the story is rather complicated, we want to see world history from the viewpoint of cross-regional history using international relations and local development.

The “long 1980s.” We are trying to construct cross-regional world history of the “long 1980s” from the same point of view. The “9/11” terrorism was the product of the history of at least the previous decade, that is, the 1990s. What were the characteristics of the 1990s? First, U.S. monocentric rule became possible after the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Secondly, the U.S. military commitment to the Middle East escalated after the Gulf War of 1990, especially in that the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia was expanded and strengthened. Thirdly, the Islamic extreme fundamentalists were encouraged and they directed their energies against U.S. policy. These considerations lead us to the question of why such significant events occurred in 1990–1991. This is what we are researching now. In our opinion, the 1980s had begun already in 1979 and ended in 1991. So we had better label the period as the “long 1980s.”

1. By the end of the 1970s, socialist regimes in Africa and Latin America had been forced to collapse as a result of the Cold War. On the Eurasian continent, however, socialist regimes kept enough vitality,

- except in the USSR, Eastern Europe, and China. The U.S. was driven out of Vietnam and North and South Vietnam were united under socialist initiative. Afghanistan was coming under socialist influence, while Iraq was still under socialist influence.
2. In 1979, however, there occurred three important events that threatened the socialist regimes in Eurasia: the Iranian Revolution (February 1979), the Sino-Vietnamese War (February-March 1979), and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (December 1979). These marked the beginning of the “long 1980s.” These three elements worked toward the collapse of the “Soviet Empire” and the direct confrontation of Islam and Israel.
 3. Here two directions developed. The three factors mentioned above had a negative impact upon the Soviet Empire in addition to the economic and budgetary crisis owing to the military burden since the 1970s under the “Cold War.” These provided the background for Gorbachev’s *perestroika*, which began in 1985. Perestroika, in turn, was one of the important factors in the collapse of socialism in East Central Europe in 1989, though it was only one factor among several reasons for the collapse. Though there were many factors concerning the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe, the decisive one was the economic weakness of USSR, which made it impossible for the USSR to support East Central Europe and other countries belonging to the Soviet Empire. And the collapse of socialism in East Central Europe and the Baltic as well as the independence movements of the Caucasian and Middle Asia led to the collapse of the USSR itself in 1991.
 4. On the other hand, the Iranian Revolution had several effects on the international scene that would finally lead to the Gulf War. These included conflict with Iraq that led to the Iran-Iraq War, stimulation of the Lebanese struggle against Israel, prolongation of the Soviet military invasion in Afghanistan, and the growing U.S. military presence. The Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988) occurred under the direct influence of the Iranian Revolution. It was important that the USSR, the West, and Arab states supported Iraq for fear of the expansion of the Iranian Revolution: this foreign support strengthened Saddam Hussein’s regime during the war. Under his rule the national-socialist regime of the Baath party was transformed

into mere one-party domination. It is important to pay attention to the Lebanese problem, which became more complicated due to the influence of the Iranian Revolution. Through the Shi'a Muslim movements in Lebanon the Iranian Revolution became connected with the Israel-Palestine problem.

5. The Gulf War (August 1990–February 1991) was the result of the accumulated factors of international relations in the Middle East during the “long 1980s.” Although many reasons are listed as the cause of the war, the most important factor was the changed character of the Saddam Hussein regime that was supported by the foreign powers during the Iran-Iraq War. And the important international consequences of that war were: Shi'a Muslim movements from Iran (through Iraq and Syria) to Lebanon becoming involved in the Palestine problems and facing Israel; almost complete withdrawal of the USSR from the Middle East; and strengthened U.S. military and political presence in the Middle East, especially in Saudi Arabia. Thus, monolithic rule by the U.S. took form in the Middle East, against which Arab and Islamic protest increased, resulting in the expansion of terrorism.

The above discussion shows the close relationships in the history of the regions of the world and shows how the events in 1989–1991 were the result of the global development of the “long 1980s.”

But these events should be considered against the more structural background that distinguishes the “long 1980s” from the previous period. The previous period, the 1970s, provided the historical stage that was characterized by the beginning of “globalization.” This globalization was made possible by the rapid advance of communication and information technology and realized by economic and financial transformation on the international scene. And it was promoted by the new ideology, neo-liberalism, which advocated the so-called “Structural Adjustment Policy” (SAP) and believed in “civil society.” The U.S. was able to take advantage of this process of globalization, while the socialist states failed to catch up with it in the “long 1980s.” The “South” (the developing countries) was almost the victim of the process.

Although this interpretation is still a hypothesis, we are trying, in our analysis, to construct world history from double approaches. On the one

hand we make much of the economic, social, and cultural history of the “long 1980s,” the age of globalization. On the other hand we use the history of cross-regional international relations with local history in mind.

Popularizing World History: “World History Caravan”

For popularizing the understanding of world history we are organizing “world history caravans,” which are intended to organize talks with local people in the countryside on world history and the relationship of local history to large-scale world history. We have been to Yamato City in Niigata Prefecture, and to Matsumoto City, Iida City, and Nagiso Town, all in Nagano Prefecture. Participants are teachers of history in the local junior high schools and high schools, as well as students, housewives, pensioners, businessmen, local publishers, and newspaper writers.

Topics so far have included the cross-regional history of the world in the period of the Sino-Japanese War and Russo-Japanese War and the cross-regional history of the world before the First World War. The RIWH presented an image of the grand history of the given period and the local historians did the detailed history of the local society in the given period. We present world history from a double approach: a structural approach and cross-regional international relations with local history in mind.

Further, we are trying one more, much more interesting experiment in constructing world history. We are trying to describe the world history of 1890–1905 through following the movement and experiences of a group of Japanese traveling as a drama troupe including a famous geisha, Sadayakko. They traveled all over the U.S. and Europe within a few years, and were faced with many problems and delights. Their history serves a very interesting introduction into imaging world history.

Happily, we found unexpected relations of local history with grand history. These surprises made the people who participated feel the importance of thinking about history at a world scale.

Notes

1. The institute's website is at www.npo-if.jp/riwh/index.html. "NPO" refers to "non-profit organization."
2. In addition, the late Mr. Kazuo Tanaka, a distinguished Balkanist, served as an advisor.
3. As for the history textbook problems in Japan, see Kazuhiko Kimijima, "Rekishikyōuiku to Kyōkasho-mondai [History Teaching and the History Textbook Problem]," in *Rekishigaku Kenkyūkai* ed., *Historical Studies in Japan 1980–2000: Trends and Perspectives* (Tokyo: Aoki Publishing House, 2002); Hikakushi-Hikakurekishikyōuiku Kenkyūukai, ed., *Jikokushi to Sekaisi [History of Our Own Country and World History]* (Tokyo: Miraisha Publishing House, 1985); *Rekishigaku Kenkyūkai*, ed., *Rekishikenkyū no Genzai to Kyōkasho Mondai [Present Situation of Historical Studies and the History Textbook Problem]* (Tokyo, 2005); and Masao Nishikawa, "Convenor's Overview" for the session on "Textbooks: From the Narrative of the Nation to the Narrative of Citizens," *Twentieth International Congress of Historical Sciences: Programme* (Sydney, 2005), 183–186.
4. We have several Japanese translations of Samuel. G. Goodrich, *Peter Parley's Universal History, on the Basis of Geography* (New York: Ivison, Phinney, Blakeman, 1869), as follows: *Bankokushi*, trans. Kouhei Makiyama, 2 vols. (1876); *Bankokushi-tyōkuyaku*, trans. Taki Kimura (1887); *Bankokushi-tyōkuyaku*, trans. Haruaki Fujita, 2 vols. (1887); *Bankokushi-tyōkuyaku*, trans. Einosuke Nakao, (1888); and others.
Edward A. Freeman's book, *General Sketch of History* (New York: H. Holt and Co., 1874), has only one translation: *Bankokushiyō*, trans. Shigeo Sekifuji, 12 vols. (1888).
5. We have also several translations of William Swinton, *Outlines of the World's History* (New York: Ivison, Blakeman, Taylor, and Co., 1874): *Bankokushi-tyōkuyaku*, trans. Yoshiyuki Nishiyama, (1885); *Bankokushi*, trans. Sakae Ueda (1886); *Bankokushi-tyōkuyaku*, trans. Tadao Kurino, 2 vols. (1887); and others.
6. Matsumoto Michitaka, "Meijikini okeru kokuminno taigaikanno ikusei—bankokushi kyōkashono bunsekiwo toosite [On the education of outward perspective of the nation in the Meiji Era—Through the analysis of bankokushi textbooks]," in H. Masutani and S. Ito, eds., *Ekkyōsuru bunka to kokumintougou [Borderless Culture and National Integration]* (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1998), 185–203.
7. www.npo-if.jp/riwh/index.html.