

Reconsidering the Notion of "Public Citizenship" from the Viewpoint of Emerging East Asian Community: Through Our Writing Transnational East Asian History Project

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Abstract

This paper has focused on intellectual movement in which I engaged for four years together with multinational students and citizens for writing transnational East Asian modern history project. In the era of globalization, interdependence through exchanging materials such as trade and capital flow has become so remarkable in East Asian region. The countries of the region such as Japan, South Korea and China have strong tendency to form economic integration and mutual relationships among them are becoming very close. However, emerging economic integration does not necessarily bring the people in the region to foster their common or integrated feelings as East Asian citizens. In spite of growing interdependence, spiritual or mental feelings of the nations are so different that the gaps on recognitions often cause conflicts and hostilities among them. One of the hot spots is the differential perceptions on modern history by East Asian nations. This issue is very troublesome in the meaning that it often misleads people to be ultra-nationalists or exclusivists in East Asian nations. The existing alienation between economic, material situation and spiritual, mental feelings of the nations seems to be very big sociopolitical bother in contemporary emerging East Asian Community. Our project in the field of international studies may be one of the small contributions to overcome the difficulties and to have "our common history" as East Asian citizenship.

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การศึกษาความเข้าใจเรื่อง "พลเมืองโลก" จากตัวอย่างกรณีประชุม อาเซียนตะวันออก: โครงการเขียนประวัติศาสตร์ประชุมนานาชาติใน กลุ่มอาเซียนตะวันออก

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มุ่งศึกษาโดยเน้นที่กลุ่มปัญญาชนได้แก่นักศึกษา และประชากรนานาชาติซึ่งเป็นกลุ่มที่ผู้วิจัยได้เข้าไปเกี่ยวข้องอยู่ด้วยเป็นเวลา 4 ปี เพื่อที่จะเขียนประวัติศาสตร์ประชุมนานาชาติในกลุ่มอาเซียนตะวันออก ในยุคโลกาภิวัตน์ ประชุมนานาชาติต่างต้องพึงพิงอาศัยกันด้วยวิธีการต่าง ๆ เช่นการค้า การลงทุนข้ามชาติเป็นต้น ซึ่งเห็นได้ชัดในกลุ่มประชุมนานาชาติอาเซียนตะวันออก ประเทศในภูมิภาคนี้ เช่น ญี่ปุ่น เกาหลีใต้ และ จีน เป็นต้น มีแนวโน้มที่จะบูรณาการระบบเศรษฐกิจโดยมีข้อตกลงความร่วมมืออย่างใกล้ชิด ซึ่งทำให้ได้ประโยชน์ร่วมกัน แต่อย่างไรก็ตาม การที่มีความร่วมมือทางเศรษฐกิจไม่ได้หมายความว่า ประชุมนานาภูมิภาคจะมีความรู้สึกเป็นอันหนึ่งอันเดียวกันในฐานะพลเมืองของประชุมนานาชาติ กลุ่มอาเซียนตะวันออกแต่อย่างใด แม้ว่าความร่วมมือซึ่งกันและกันจะมีมากขึ้น แต่ในเชิงจิตวิญญาณ ของแต่ละชาติกลับมีความแปรลักษณะแตกต่างจนกระทั้งเป็นสาเหตุทำให้เกิดความขัดแย้ง และความไม่เข้าใจซึ่งกันและกันอยู่เสมอ ประเด็นที่สำคัญอีกอย่างหนึ่งก็คือการรับรู้และความเข้าใจ ที่แตกต่างกันในประวัติศาสตร์สมัยใหม่ของอาเซียนตะวันออก ซึ่งก่อให้เกิดความยุ่งยากอย่างยิ่ง เพราะเป็น ประเด็นที่ซักนำให้เกิดความรู้สึกชาตินิยม และความต้องการที่จะแบ่งแยกอย่างรุนแรงในอาเซียนตะวันออก ความรู้สึกแปรลักษณะนี้เป็นปัญหาทางสังคมและการเมืองของกลุ่มอาเซียนตะวันออก โครงการศึกษาวิจัย นี้จึงเป็นส่วนหนึ่งที่จะช่วยแก้ปัญหานี้เพื่อที่เราจะได้มี "ประวัติศาสตร์ร่วมกัน" ในฐานะพลเมือง แห่งอาเซียนตะวันออก

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I

Though this might be so small step and immature movement, our task for describing transnational modern history of East Asia in which we had been engaged for four years with the multinational students and civilians of Shonan Campus of Bunkyo University was very meaningful and significant effort for making our consciousness for identifying ourselves as citizens living in East Asian community in the era of globalization.

From May 2005 to March 2009, we had persisted in comparative studies of multinational textbooks on modern history such as those of Japan, China, South Korea and Southeast Asian nations. Analyzing them not only from the viewpoint of each nationality but also from common civilian's one belonging to East Asian community, we had been seeking into efforts for overcoming the conflicted issues in the time of contemporary deepening interdependence among the nations. The most important work for it was to review each nation's modern history which was surely described by the viewpoint of nation-oriented concept and thus, to re-describe it more synthetically from that of East Asian citizenship, getting over the "wall" of each nationality. We defined this hard-task as "rehistorization" or "rehistorizing" of East Asian community. Through 28 times meetings for four years, more than 600 people in sum up consisting of Japanese, Chinese, Korean students of the university and elderly citizens from outside had joined in, tried to re-describe transnational modern history of East Asia, and fostered the consciousness identifying them as citizens belonging to East Asian community. This tremendous but significant task was, at the same time, to establish a new notion of publicity for intra-peoples' community through reorganizing national histories of East Asia by means of applying intellectual imaginations of the civilians' way of thinking.

In the happenings of so-called "anti-Japanese" movements at Seoul, Beijing or Shanghai and other East Asian cities in 2005, we had to be aware of the burdensome problem on the contemporary East Asia. In spite of deepening its economic interdependence through increasing trade volume, capital flow, transnational shift of workers as well as cross-cultural influence, there were still so many troublesome issues among the nations, especially the problem of nations' differences of perceptions on modern history was so sensitive that could disturb us from fostering common values in East Asian society under the principles of their coexistence and cooperation. For example, memories on colonial rule and invasion caused by imperialist powers in past were so different, especially between Japanese and Chinese or Koreans. Lack of

concerns and misunderstandings among them that might be misled by nationalistic education or occasionally by intentional operations of the authorities were doubtlessly one of the main reasons causing severe conflicts between Japan that was imperialist power and China and Korean peninsula once invaded or colonized by Japan's imperialism. For example, for many Japanese unconcerned on the painful experiences of other Asian nations in past, it was recognized for them as mysterious or unpleasant matter that Chinese and South Korean governments often accused Japan for the behavior of the conservative politicians visiting Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo where the offenders of the Asia-Pacific War prosecuted in the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in 1945 were enshrined. Their accusations were perceptible as their arrogant interventions to Japanese spiritual or religious freedom. In contrast, Chinese and Korean people were so frustrated with the selfish attitude of Japan's government dodging its responsibility of invasion and exploitations in the former half of the 20th century. Typically, Japan's government had been often forced the companies of history textbooks to modify their contents by using more ambiguous phrases on invasion or colonial rule at that time and didn't express any sincere apology for the war crimes though it sometimes said to admit "crimes" by weak dispatch. Thus, the big difference of perceptions among East Asian nations on modern history was nothing but one of the main causes of their conflicts and hostilities.

In any modern society framed by each sovereign nation, it might be axiomatic that every nation had its own history. National history was written to create a "story" which enables the people under the sovereignty of nation to foster sympathetic unification or feeling of assimilation to their country. In this process, the differences of their "stories" in each nation state might be born and possibly lead its people to be more self-centered or exclusive nationalists in absence of critical and plural viewpoints. This was the main reason we needed to do comparative historical studies and to establish commonsense of East Asian community. Fortunately, there were so many Chinese and South Korean students concerned on this issue at the Shonan Campus of Bunkyo University. Our campus was nothing but a small "East Asian community" and we could continue to our comparative studies for rehistorizing modern East Asia

II

In this paper, we could define the notion of East Asian "nation" as one of peoples' identities strongly integrated in and fostered by each nation state which had been

organized in form of encountering against the Western Powers in the process of their modernization, I mean, nation should be distinguished from simple peoples' groups or communities? For, Asian modernization is in a sense very troublesome "burden" for the people. Present international order had its origin in the formation by the Western Powers that had generated the notion of nation or nation state and they had enforced it with their violent pressures to non-Western worlds during the 18-20th century. Even in the era of present globalization, the restraint of nation state was still so powerful that we could not easily escape from its influence. Education of nation-centered history which would make the people to have a kind of national identity in each country prescribing their values and way of thinking, and it had tendency to get the nations to see historical matters from their nation-own viewpoints. In this circumstance, we had to admit the fact that the task for freeing from their native values was surprisingly difficult.

Wisdom needed for freeing from nation-oriented consciousness was to make use of our imagination to convert the established standpoint to that of the others, viz. changing way of thinking from the people those who were victims or sacrificed in accordance with the efforts of widening our views as possible for overcoming our prejudices or stereotyped ideas. For example, we imagined if we had been suppressed people of Korean peninsula in 1919 when the March 1st Banzai Independent Movement happened, how we faced up to the cruel oppressions by Japanese militaries, or if we had been innocent Chinese living in Nanjing on December in 1937, how we could endure that atrocities caused by Japanese militants etc. Effort for having common understanding for the painful experiences or "memories of sadness" of Asian people was essential and vital approach for establishing objective perception of history through relative and synthetic assessments.

The study meetings were proceeded in form of arguing among the participants on the specified historical themes happened in East Asia for about 200 years in past. Through our studying, we were gradually freeing from the framework of the belonged each nation state and looking for the possibility of making new conceptualized public citizenship in emerging East Asian community. This task was kept accompanied with the process of scrap-and-built which firstly meant destruction of established values and next reorganization of the concept of public citizenship strongly attached by any modern nation state. This new conception of "public" was primitively interpreted into "open space" or "open forum" which enables ones to discuss and exchange their opinions freely. By means of developing this public space, we were making intellectual

network among participants belonging to several nationalities and several generations. Thus, the developed public consciousness as citizens of East Asian community was surely aiming at describing "our history" not each nation's one, that was, transnational East Asian modern history in coping with emerging East Asian socioeconomic integration in the beginning of the 21st century. In this context, we could learn and understand the essence of the meaningful message paneled at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum as below:

"Internationalization could not been achieved without mutual understanding the history of each nation. It is important for us how we can put its peoples' painful experiences befallen in past to use for the purpose of establishing better future."

III

In the first phase of the meetings held in the year 2005, we discussed about several issues on peoples' movements and wars happened from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century in East Asia. The first several meetings were focused on the nationwide peoples' movements for independence and anti-imperialism in 1919. Also, we investigated in the massacre of more than 6,400 Korean people living in Japan just after the big earthquake around Kanto areas including Tokyo Metropolitan City in 1923. These events showed us growing Japanese imperialist power created sociopolitical structure in East Asia in hostilities and discrimination against other Asian nations. The turning point for dividing East Asian nations including Japan into invade / invaded or rule/ruled ones was the period of the end of the 19th century when Japan began its "westernization" and established imperial resume. On the other, Chinese and Korean people made efforts to achieve their own "modernization" by resisting, fighting against tyranny and Western Powers' pressures and orienting to succeed in their revolution. Our description on the Sino-Japan, Russia-Japan wars and China's revolution in 1911 were covered over this process of metamorphosis of East Asian nations.

Our arguments became more serious and fierce in the second phase in the year 2006. The themes picked up were colonial rule by the Great Japan Empire over Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945 and Japan-China War that started at the incident of blast of Japan's controlled railway in Manchuria or northeast region of China and ended by surrender of Japan. Needless to say, these occupied the most important psychological portions on the issue of differences of historical perceptions of East Asian nations. It was

quite natural that our meetings were filled with? sentiment of antagonism and the arguments were often confused, especially, hostile feelings caused between Korean, Chinese students hearing of the cruelty of invasion or exploitation from their ancestors and Japanese elder citizens those who were once educated "glory" of Imperial Japan's hegemony from the authorities. We could clearly recognize the difficulties for reconstructing our historical sense and perspectives in consideration of the peoples' memories of pain and sadness ruled or invaded by the imperialist power. From this year, the participant students began to join positively in history descriptions with their own viewpoints and thinking. Through the involvement of younger generations, our study developed and deepened more with the arguments of radical criticism.

The third phase of discussions in the year 2007 was focused on the issues of the period of so-called Pacific War and Cold War in the middle of the 20th century. The former war was nothing but a result of exhausting Japan-China War in which Japanese armies were stuck mud by the liberation struggles of Chinese peoples. Imperial Japan had to grasp natural resources for continuing the war by occupying Southeast Asian region endowing oil, bauxite or rubber etc. Japan's expansion inevitably caused increased hostilities and frictions with Great Britain, Dutch and the United States that had ruled over that region. However, we tried to describe the history on Pacific War in 1941-45 not only in terms of the conflicts among imperialist powers but also of the confrontation between the imperialist powers and peoples' movements for independence and liberation in Asia. And the latter war was interpreted into power struggle between the two, i.e. the US and Soviet Union in spite of ideological confrontation superficially. The hegemonic domination by two superpowers in the resume of "Pax Russo-American" occupied the central part of international order at the latter half of the 20th century, and then, many peoples' movements in the Third World could not break through easily for achieving their liberation and independence under that circumstance. We mentioned to their difficulties and complicated processes, though they had huge influence to convert Cold War's international order to collapse by describing manifold aspects on Vietnam War, for example.

The fourth year's study meetings in 2008 came to discuss on the issues of contemporary world's situations. Frankly, our task became more tremendous and though not only by the reason there were so many materials we could utilize but also by that we had to reconsider our livelihood or standpoints in the world we were contemporarily involved. It meant that our relationships or qualities of life within East Asian community

should be also criticized through the efforts for making convergence on historical perceptions. So, we could realize that the intellectual "mountain" we climbed up for the years was surprisingly rugged but, at the same time, we could get so wonderful views from it.

IV

We sometimes experienced unforgettable moments of the arguments under whole study meetings. For example, at the time of discussion on Japan's annexation and colonial rule over Korean Peninsula, one elder Japanese citizen said, "Japan's rule provided there with railway networks and developed their industries as well as prevented Koreans from Russian domination." To the contrary, a Korean young student argued against him, "Your opinion seems me to be very chauvinistic and selfish. Koreans' future should be depended on the people themselves living there not on any outsiders. Even though Korea had been under the control of Russian Empire not of Japan, it must not justify colonial control by Japan's imperialism." In the dominant Confucian culture of Korea in which the younger should pay respect to the elder, her protest was very courageous. Or at the time of discussion on the atrocities in Nanjing in 1937, some Japanese angrily persisted in the vague numbers of killing citizens from Chinese release. But another Japanese citizen did not agree to them, saying that the discussion on "exact numbers" was very nonsense in the context of the doubtless fact that Japanese Imperial armies had invaded China and had caused mass destruction or massacres, it was more important for us to discuss on how we could achieve to share anti-war feelings together and did not cause that cruel war any more in the contemporary East Asian community. Similar situation was seen at the meeting on the theme of the terror of the September 11, 2001 and "anti-terrorism wars" to Afghanistan and Iraq afterwards. While some civilians justified the US's military actions for the reason that they had just revenged on the attack to New York City by the terrorists, the student coming from Hiroshima did not agree with them, saying that any revenge had no justice as well as no way of solution and they had only brought endless vicious cycle of hostilities among human beings. He emphasized on the importance of social actions for the efforts of reconciliation among the people, just as the Hibakusha or victims of Atomic bomb in Hiroshima desired and did with great perseverance for establishing nuclear-free world. These were so refreshing moments for the participants those who wished to find out more constructive way of thinking for promising tomorrow. Our task

of writing transnational East Asian modern history with many difficulties was nothing but intellectual trial to foster its public citizenship on the principle of creating open space for living close together and cooperation in emerging East Asian community.

The study meetings for four years were not regular of curriculum of the university, so they were opened at night. It meant they had no contribution to the successes of participants materially. Here, however, we could understand the significance of Manabi in Japanese or intellectual activities on genuine quest for truth, i.e. international study as "purpose" for itself not as "means" for any career. Passion for the study might belong to a part of identity of human beings, because studying could lead us to have better understanding and better understanding was nothing but the first step for achieving better life. At present, I think intellectual wandering for itself is better than any hard study for his career up. It might be concluded that our activity in the field of international studies must be a small challenge to the other civilians, especially to the younger generations those who tended not to find out true significances of Manabi in Japan.

V

Finally, the project writing transnational east Asian history was a trial to stick out ourselves of the frame of nation state in which confined our perceptions or recognitions, and to create new concept of transnational citizens' public consciousness on the basis of peaceful, cooperative East Asian community. Through this task, I could be convinced that the prospect of East Asian civil society will be far from negative, as far as one can continue to make efforts for "rehistorizing" the community he participated in. Comments and opinions of the participants as bellow must be proof of it.

- Through the meetings, I could experience useful comparative studies in reading the textbooks of modern history of Japan, South Korea and China. And hearing from many participants' opinions, I could realize the importance of mutual understandings and efforts for overcoming differences of each standpoint. This task was nothing but establishing better communications in East Asian civil society by our hands. (Chinese student)

- In the meetings, I was not confident and hesitated to express my opinions. For, I had little knowledge about modern history of East Asia. The opinions of the participants were sometimes so fresh and surprised me. I could be aware of cruelties of invasion or colonial rule by Japan's imperialism. As Japanese, I must not forget the past and try to study from now on for having better understandings among East Asian nations. (Japanese student)

• As a Korean, I was so sensitive how to evaluate historical issues such as Japan's annexation to Korean Empire in 1910 or Korean War in 1950-53. I could admit most Koreans had strong consciousness as victims and had antipathy against Japanese. I, however, had changed my mind through the meetings because most Japanese students and civilians were so sincere and tried to find out historical truths for the purpose of establishing cooperation and friendship among East Asian nations. They were my happy opportunities for making close relationship with many Japanese friends. (Korean student)

• I think the significance of writing transnational East Asian history project must be great. The role of education is quite a lot, so this cooperative task was very useful especially for the younger generation of East Asian. Many meaningful opinions in the meetings from the young multinational students impressed me. Thanks for their joining and hope to establish better East Asian community together! (Japanese elderly citizen)

***Note:**

This paper is originally written as introduction of English edition titled, On the road to East Asian Community which is to be published in 2012 as translation of Japanese edition titled Higashi Asia Kyodotai Eno Michi edited by Okuda and Editorials of the Study Group, Bunkyo University Press, 2010. Through the project of describing transnational East Asian modern history, we can emphasize on the realities of contradictions and difficulties in the contemporary East Asia, as well as considering what lessons and wisdom we need for making better citizenship in it. As one editorial staff, I sincerely appreciate more than 600 participants of the project and many people those who have concerned.

Reference

Okuda & Editorials of the Study Group (2010). Higashi Asia Kyodotai Eno Michi, Bunkyo University Press (Japanese edition).

