

# The 20th Century: How Do We Get Over It?

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The International Institute of Language and Culture Studies was established in 1989. Nineteen ninety-eight marks the 10th anniversary of its founding. For a research institute, 10 years is by no means a long time. Our institution is still in its youth. The first five years, more or less, was a time of trial and error. We established a direction and basic theme as a research institute, organized research projects and other joint research societies, and through lectures, symposia, and publications, we have finally begun to have some social say in these past 5 or 6 years.

The best way to trace the ten year history of this research institute, I believe, is by looking over the journal, *Ritsumeikan Studies in Language and Culture*, which is published six times annually (accordingly, more than 50 editions have been released so far). Contained within this publication are a variety of special features, separate papers, and transcripts of such events as lecture series sponsored by this institute, lecture meetings, and symposia. These are printed in a variety of languages, including English, French, and Chinese, in addition to Japanese. Currently among other departments and research institutes of universities, virtually none have maintained such a voluminous output of journals.

To characterize the activity of this research department are a series of lectures held annually in the spring and fall, and comprehensive research projects conducted on themes that are changed every three years. Lecture series are held successively over a four to five week period on the general theme of "The Nation State and Multicultural Society," with the region under consideration changed for each particular series. Three volumes arising from these have already

been published (by Jinbun Shoin): *The European Integration and Issues of Culture and Ethnicity — Inquiries on the Possibility of a Post Nation-State Age* (1995), *Multiculturalism and Multilingualism Now — Canada, Australia, and Japan* (1997), and *Asian Multicultural Society and the Nation State* (1998).

Research projects, as you can guess, have centered around the nation-state and questions of ethnicity and culture. The first fruits of these efforts have been published in the 750-page magnum opus, *The Formation of the Nation State and Cultural Change During the Bakumatsu and Meiji Periods* (Shin-Yosha, 1995). Presently, the sequel to this work, *World Order and National Culture at the Turn of the Century* is being edited and scheduled for publication at the end of December of this year. Other publications include the two-volume *Understanding the Global Era: 75 Keys to Comparative Culture* (The Simul Press Inc., 1994).

These publications have all gone into additional printings — some entering a fourth printing — and as works that come from a research institute have garnered a rather sizable readership. I believe this is momentous. Why? Simply because I think that it is necessary for this institute not to merely "lob volleys" at specialists and academic societies, but to engage students and general readers as well, and, through the consideration of their criticism and judgment, adopt a position of thinking together about the serious questions of our current age. In so doing a fresh intellectual sensitivity is maintained, and I hope that in this sense the institute remains accessible to all.

As I have referred to our institute so far, you all may imagine a rather large, splendid institution. Guess again. Actually, this institute has only one director,

two full-time researchers, and two office staff. It has a budget of approximately 20 million yen, equipped with the minimum in operating conditions for a private university, making it possible to just barely refer to ourselves as a research institute. Registered within our institute are five research project societies and 10 separate issue-centered research societies, and the various activities mentioned previously are also conducted. This is similar to other humanities and social science research institutes, such as Ritsumeikan University's Institute of Humanities, Human and Social Sciences and the Institute of International Relations and Area Studies. Consequently, to continue the activity that allows our research institute to maintain a certain standard, it goes without saying that we can only hope for the hard work of our institute's small staff, in addition to the support of the teaching staff and personnel of Ritsumeikan University, as well as graduate students and undergraduates.

My image of this research institute is that of an institute with a weak institutional foundation that somehow gets by, supported by various types of self-sacrifice and volunteer efforts. As the person responsible for this institute, I am always grumbling to our university's central administration and demanding for improvements. However, to be quite honest, in a corner of my mind, there is a voice telling me that this current situation may be for the best, too. In larger research institutes of state universities, for instance, which have established a strong institutional foundation, it is not always the case that superior research is being conducted, and it is not unusual to hear of or witness the authoritarianism and the intellectual, psychological torpor that can be symptomatic of such places. True, our budget and capabilities are limited, but by making the most of our spontaneity and freedom, and if we are able to devise new ways of getting things done, we just might be able to create a rather interesting experiment in transcending the framework of the so-called research institute. And I hope that this 10th anniversary

symposium proves to be one such experiment.

I said at the beginning of my address that our research institute was created in 1989. This is a total coincidence. But as we were fumbling to find out what this research institute should become, this year of 1989 gradually came to possess a monumental significance. Needless to say, 1989 was the year of Tiananmen Square and the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the year linked to the eventual break-up of the Eastern European socialist bloc and the Soviet Union. This year of 1989 was also the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution. It was a year in which the Cold War order came to an end, the world-system of the 20th century was obliged to change, an historic turning point became evident, and our values were shaken by their very roots. The shockwaves ought to have been considerably greater for those who believed in the ideals of socialism. Why and how did the collapse of the 20th century system occur? What meaning does it hold? Moreover, what change has it brought upon us? These questions, I think, along with plunging us into considerable confusion, have also provided a more sober viewpoint toward history and current "realities."

For the objective of this symposium, after first stipulating the 20th century as the age of the nation-state, we write, "Regarding the question of how [a] new society, successor to the nation-state, should be, the Ritsumeikan University, International Institute of Language and Culture Studies has conducted project studies, lecture series, and public lectures." The reason in doing such is that we strongly believe the inquiry "What is a way of life that transcends the nation-state?" is the starting point for present thinking on language and culture. This is one (albeit temporary) conclusion our research institute reached at the end of 10 years of exploration. From this sort of viewpoint, for us to appreciate the actual conditions and mechanisms of the nation state in which we ourselves are entrapped, we have designed research projects and reconsidered the formative processes of Japan's nation-state and national culture among the

relations of other countries in the world and within the world-system. In Japan, this inquiry falls under the so-called "kokumin kokka-ron" — critical consideration of the nation-state — and the two books to which I previously referred (*The Formation of the Nation State and Cultural Change During the Bakumatsu and Meiji Periods* and *World Order and National Culture at the Turn of the Century*) represent the course of our work. "Kokumin kokka-ron" is an attempt to freshly reconsider our own bodies, sensitivities, language, and modes of thought, all of which have been formed within the age of the nation-state.

Other problems central to our research institute have been those concerning multiculturalism and multilingualism. These were pursued as a set of problems which involve our main inquiry regarding "a new society, successor to the nation-state." The symposium objective, which I quoted beforehand, continues thus:

...[W]e have been made to understand that to know the world's future direction(s), the overlooked perspectives from the periphery, rather than those from the world's ["core"], the viewpoints of Multilingualism/Multiculturalism, such a contrast to the unitary principles of the nation-state, are what is important.

We have invited numerous specialists to our institute to tackle mainly these problems throughout lecture series. Further projects, as the three publications to which I have previously referred show, include symposiums and courses on the European integration, Canada and Australia, and, finally, Southeast Asia, in that order — along with others concerning Taiwan and South Africa.

The multicultural policies of the United States, Canada, and Australia, when viewed from a country like Japan wherein a heterogenous mind-set is strong, make us think that an especially humanitarian, brand-new age is dawning. However, considering these policies within their respective contexts, it is clear that such policies suggest a new form of nationalization,

originating from the actualities of immigrant states. Yet probably the more essential problem, I believe, in these English-speaking countries (the former British Empire) is in what manner the relationship with indigenous peoples is redressed. Recently in these countries, centering around their indigenous populations, apologies have been made and certain rights (the rights of indigenous peoples) have been restored. But at present when the dogmas of "civilization" and "ownerless lands" that justified colonial domination at one time have been denied, how can the logic for the legitimation of inhabitants who comprise the former colonial "majority" of the immigrant state and the logic that substantiates their continued presence on that land still be deemed credible? I believe the rapid spread of multiculturalism and multilingualism in the 1970s can also be positioned and considered in this context. Furthermore, incorporating indigenous peoples within national integration enables the history of the immigrant state to start from the history of the state of the indigenous people, and this signifies a fundamental rewriting of the Eurocentric history which has dominated this past 500 years.

For us, the EU is an intriguing experiment that provokes thinking about the possibilities of a "post nation-state" age; however, when European cultural and linguistic pluralism is reexamined from the standpoint of the multiculturalism and multilingualism mentioned above, the divergence between these two becomes clear. The 15 countries of the EU cannot be discussed together as a single entity, but judging from EU policies and the activity of the two countries of Germany and France which form the EU center, the cultural and linguistic pluralism of these countries focus mainly on problems related to diversity within their own boundaries, and give an impression of a kind of "members only" form of cultural and linguistic pluralism. I define this tendency as one of "European nativism." European residents now behave as if they themselves are indigenous people, and as such attempt

to exclude from European citizenship those immigrants coming from the third world and former colonies. Herein, I believe, lies a distortion of the principles of multiculturalism and multilingualism. In opposition to the multiculturalism of Canada and Australia that holds the prospects for the true intermingling of peoples and outreach toward Asia (in the case of the latter), European cultural pluralism has its eye solely on the Europeanization of Europe.

This leads me to another gnawing question, why is Asia so seldom discussed within the discourse of multiculturalism and multilingualism? In terms of ethnicity and language, as well as cultural diversity, and even when viewed from the standpoint of its movement of inhabitants and cultural exchange, in spite of Asian diversity boasting an overwhelming richness, why is Asia ignored? This type of question, along with calling the ideology of the discourse of multiculturalism and multilingualism into question, makes us once again think of the problem of the "periphery." Our institute, in the recently published *Asian Multicultural Society and the Nation State*, proposes that the problems of cultural "hybridization" and the "creole concept" need to be reconsidered within the diversity of Asia: To consider the problem of forming a new identity for the 21st century which transcends the nation-state and current "boundaries," doesn't the living culture of Southeast Asia perhaps offer an enticing model? Or does such thinking yet again indicate one more type of Orientalism?

How can we overcome the oppositional relationship of advanced countries advocating globalization and the third world's adherence to ethnicity, or the majority advocating multiculturalism and the minority adhering to its own culture? What role does the concept of the creole play in this? Furthermore, in a country like Japan, a country that has linked America and Europe to Asia in the 20th century world-system, what is the significance of

thinking of these sorts of problems?

I intended to have explained the context how the topic of "The 21st Century World and Multilingualism/Multiculturalism — Perspectives from the Periphery" came to be selected for this symposium marking the 10th anniversary of our institute. Finally, I would like to say that this symposium was put together by an organization committee headed by Professor Watanabe Kozo, and with the cooperation of numerous university staff and graduate students, as well as people outside the university, quite a lot of time and toil were spent to realize the symposium as it is today. The organization committee convened weekly over these past several months. In addition to this, workshops divided into various fields were frequently held. Furthermore, over the three days of October 15, 16, and 17, an introductory symposium was held, wherein four movies from Asia were screened — two movies from South Korea, one from the Philippines, and a work of Trinh T. Minh-ha (Surname Viet Given Name Nam), who is happily here with us today. In addition, transcripts of this symposium will be printed in Volume 11, No. 1, of the *Ritsumeikan Studies in Language and Culture*, and is scheduled to subsequently be compiled into a book and published later next year. We hope to conduct this 10th anniversary symposium as not a simple ceremony, but as a substantial, intellectual festival to provide one springboard for transcending the 20th century. Taking this opportunity, I would like to thank the panelists and commentators, as well as all other participants, who have taken time out of their busy schedules and have travelled so far to attend this symposium, in addition to the numerous individuals who have offered their cooperation. And I offer my heartfelt prayers for the success of this symposium over these three days. Thank you.

(Translation: James W. Hove)