Introduction

The Asian Association of World Historians (AAWH) held its Fourth Congress at Osaka University, Japan, on 5th–6th January 2019. The theme of the Osaka Congress was “*Creating World Histories from Asian Perspectives*.” Since its establishment in Tianjin eleven years ago in May 2008, the AAWH has continued to explore new interpretations of world/global histories from Asian perspectives. At present “the concepts and methods of world/global history differ considerably from country to country in this region (*AAWH Charter*).” The AAWH needs more time to present an alternative vision or interpretation of world/global history from Asian perspectives. However, we have decided to explore and present new interpretations based on transregional and transnational frameworks. We aimed to accomplish this by combining a vertical historical perspective of the *longue durée* from the ancient to the contemporary period with a horizontal analysis encompassing a range of specific regional studies, such as “*Creating World Histories from Asian Perspectives*”, which are beyond the purview of national histories.

The congress featured three plenary lectures by distinguished Asian historians who presented distinctive interpretations of world/global history from Asian perspectives. The following three essays are the revised versions of these plenary lectures.

The first keynote speaker was Prof. Li Bozhong, a well-known global and Chinese economic historian. He presented to us his analysis of Central and Eastern Eurasian history in “1524: The End of the Silk Road?—a Critical Reaction to the Hot Discussion of the Concept throughout China,” based on global economic history studies. In 1524, the Ming Dynasty of China made a decision to relocate the Guanxi Seven Garrisons from their original stations outside the Jiayu Pass, the western end of the Great Wall, to new stations within the pass. His lecture showed this decision as the turning point for the “Silk Road,” a trade and communication route between East and West with economic, military (strategic) and environmental aspects. The factor of climate change, in light of the increasing importance of environmental history, is worth mentioning in the context of global/world history studies. The 1524 action by the Ming Dynasty revealed the inevitable fall of traditional trans-Eurasian overland trade in the early modern world. The lecture is presented in this issue as “The Termination of the Silk Road: a Study of the History of the Silk Road from a New Perspective.”

The second plenary was delivered by Prof. Aditya Mukherjee, a key economic historian at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. His lecture was titled “The Transformation of the Indian Economy in the Contemporary Period: From the Colonial to the Post-Colonial,” and he examined modern/contemporary developments in the world economy and globalisation from the perspectives of the “Global South.” He criticised both the neo-colonial interpretation that colonialism led to economic development and prepared the ground for the rapid post-colonial development, as seen in India in recent years, and the orthodox Left view, which denies the possibility of any transition to independent development in a colony even after independence. Mukherjee’s lecture offered us the opportunity to rethink the academic premises of Asian historians, who normally take for granted the validity of European ideas and concepts of “development” and “capitalism.”

The third plenary lecture, “Japan’s Meiji Revolution in Global History: Searching for Some Generalizations out of History,” was made by Emeritus Professor Hiroshi Mitani, of the University of Tokyo, Japan, and one of the leading scholars of Japan’s modern history. Based on his empirical research on the Meiji Revolution and his efforts to locate modern Japanese history in the context of nineteenth-century world history, he reconsidered the historical significance of the Meiji Revolution on its 150th anniversary. His analyses involve a typical “bilateral comparison” of global history studies proposed by leading “California School” historians such as Roy Bin Wong and Kenneth Pomeranz. Through such bilateral comparisons we can relativize the core concept of “revolutions” in a global context and reconsider the historical significance, impact and legacies in world history of other revolutions such as the French Revolution.

All three plenary lectures offered us new and original insights into world/global histories from Asian perspectives; these are different from the usual interpretations of world/global histories based on Eurocentric views. Following these keynote lectures, seventeen panels on a wide range of topics and thirty individual papers were presented at the Congress;¹ they explored alternate perspectives over a long historical period from ancient to contemporary times from *trans-regional perspectives*. I highly appreciate the strong cooperation for and commitment to the AAWH Osaka Congress, in particular by the three keynote speakers, and also by the other participants.

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1 https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/ob4eoc_97f26b435e614f558d45051c713dd53f.pdf.