Introduction

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This issue focuses on the works of Japanese historians. Japan has a long and rich tradition of historical studies in Japanese, dealing with Japanese national history alongside foreign and world histories. Recently, books, journal articles, and book chapters written in English by Japanese historians have become widely available. However, thousands of excellent empirical studies written in Japanese or non-English languages have yet to reach a wider international audience. Among the many subfields of historical studies, all five articles in this issue were chosen from economic history, one of Japan's fortes in the field. The Socio-Economic History Society of Japan, the largest academic association of the field in Japan, has about 1,400 members. In 2015, for the first time in Asia, Japan hosted the 17th World Economic History Congress, attracting over 1,000 participants worldwide. Against the background of the advancement and popularity of this research field, many Japanese economic historians have also started to enthusiastically participate in and lead research on global (economic) history. The Asian Association of World Historians, the issuing body of this journal, was set up in Japan as part of the organization of global networks of scholars conducting research on world/Asian history, beyond national history.

Of the five articles, two were written independently and are not associated with the conference described below. The first one examines how cotton textiles – particularly those in red and brought from Central Asia – attracted the interest of Russians, and how this fascination stimulated the development of the domestic modern cotton industry in Russia in the eighteenth century. The author, Masachika Shiotani, conducts research on Russian economic and business history and has published several articles in Russian and Japanese, as well as a book in Japanese. In the second independent article, Chizuru Namba explores how the forest in French Indochina began to be managed and exploited under colonial control. She has published articles in French and Japanese, in addition to a book in French dealing with the diverse aspects of social and political problems in colonial Indochina, such as labor issues. Her

works also highlight the social and political influence of the Japanese invasion of French territory. Both articles address issues in an extremely popular and well-discussed field of research in recent decades. While Shiotani attaches considerable importance to the consumer's perspective and preference when examining industrial development, Namba's work includes environmental aspects to understand the formation and transformation of the French Empire.

The rest of the articles, by Kensuke Hirai, Asuka Yamaguchi, and Tomoki Shimanishi, explore energy issues in the economic development of twentieth-century East Asia, particularly Taiwan and Japan. These articles are the outcomes of a panel session organized at the fourth conference of the Asian Association of World Historians, held in Osaka in January 2019.¹ The theme of the panel session was "energy diverse societies" in modern East Asia. According to Sayako Kanda, the session's organizer, an energy diverse society uses diverse energy sources (Kanda 2019). This tendency toward diversity emerged in connection with the rise of the "fossil-fuel-based world economy" from the late nineteenth century onward. The fossil-fuel-based world economy, as Kaoru Sugihara argued, vigorously promoted industrialization and economic growth and has influenced every aspect of our lives (Sugihara 2012). Based on her study of India's diverse energy use in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Kanda insisted that India switched over from a society in which diverse energy resources existed to an energy diverse society (Kanda 2015). Fossil energy shortages in the industrial and transportation sectors in colonial India increased the use of wood in these sectors. Consequently, indigenous industries started depending more on diverse varieties of non-fossil fuels. Therefore, an energy diverse society is not merely a society that uses different resources for its energy. Previous research shows that when faced with energy constraints due to a growing demand during industrialization and economic growth, energy-poor countries and regions started importing energy resources from other regions, foreign countries, or colonies and/or developing energy-saving technologies. In addition to such economic and technological responses to energy constraints, the emergence of an energy diverse society can be viewed as an alternative or supplemental way of easing such constraints and as a sociocultural reaction to the growing fossil-fuel-based world economy. Such a society plays a role not only in economic development (albeit gradual) by mitigating energy constraints, but also in the long-term maintenance of livelihood for its people and sustenance for a growing population.

1 I am grateful to Professor Chaisung Lim of Rikkyo University for valuable comments at the conference.

In this issue, the three articles originally presented at the conference take up the cases of the sugar industry in colonial Taiwan, the copper mines in modern Japan, and the household sector in postwar Japan. The articles examine whether Kanda's argument, based on the case of India, applies to more advanced industrial economies, such as Taiwan and Japan. Certainly, the fossil-fuel-based world economy has prospered, and present-day Taiwan and Japan have been well integrated into it. However, until the 1960s, the forms of fossil energy use differed from one region/country to another, and energy use witnessed diversification and intensification (Sugihara 2012). Thus, diverse paths were taken even in advanced industrial countries, and they achieved their current position through several trial-and-error attempts and setbacks. The three articles explore the historical significance of energy diversity in modern East Asia, rather than a teleological and linear understanding of energy conversion from non-fossil to fossil energy sources, which views the emergence of industrialized societies as the consequence of this conversion.

References

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