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Research Forum

Report on the Opening Forum of the Euro-Japan Academic Networking for Humanities Project held at Bonn University on 4th and 5th November 2011

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**Report on the Opening Forum of the
Euro-Japan Academic Networking for Humanities Project
held at Bonn University on 4th and 5th November 2011**

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Abstract

This paper reports on the proceedings of the Opening Forum of the Euro-Japan Academic Networking for Humanities Project held at Bonn University on November 4th and 5th, 2011.

Keywords: Euro-Japan Academic Networking for Humanities, international joint research program, collaboration between disciplines

要旨

本稿は2011年11月4日、5日にボン大学で開催された「人文系ユーロ・ジャパンアカデミックネットワーキング」ラウンド・テーブルの議事報告である。

キーワード：人文系ユーロ・ジャパンアカデミックネットワーキング、国際共同研究プログラム、領域間の協働

The Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences (currently the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences) of the University of Tsukuba organised the opening forum of the Euro-Japan Academic Networking for Humanities Project at the University of Bonn, in order to create a venue for international joint research and discussion of a new role for the humanities between researchers of the partner universities and Tsukuba University and students from Tsukuba sent to partner universities. Sponsored by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (Young Researcher Overseas Visits Program for Vitalising Brain Circulation 2010-12), the forum is under the framework of an international joint research programme with European universities, The New Role of the Humanities at a Turning Point, which was begun in 2011. Participating universities are

Free University of Berlin, University of Hamburg, University of Munich (Germany), University of Franche-Comté (France), University of Helsinki (Finland), where nine students dispatched by the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Tsukuba are now respectively carrying out research.

Saburo AOKI (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Tsukuba, Head of the Program for Vitalizing Brain Circulation) gave an opening address in which he explained the rationale for the present project and its objective of repositioning the role of the humanities as new Human Studies in order to more effectively respond to the evolving issues and needs of both the individual and the social group confronted with the changing environment of a global society.

The Forum was composed of three parts: 1) a round table on Innovation of the Education of the Humanities, to discuss the institutional framework of education and methodology specific to a given research field at the universities of each participant (four papers given by: Andrej BEKEŠ, Craig SMITH, Keiichi AIZAWA, Saburo AOKI and a disciplinary positioning paper by Jun IKEDA); 2) a workshop, entitled Towards a New Approach of the Research for the Humanities, in which researchers from the University of Tsukuba as well as from the participating European Universities presented and debated their research (Assyriology: Raija MATILLA, Walter SALLABERGER, Shigeo YAMADA; Linguistics: Salah MEJRI, Daniel LEBAUD; Buddhist studies: Martin DELHEY, Hidenori SAKUMA); 3) presentations and poster sessions of current research carried out by doctoral students of the Brain Circulation Program currently based at a host university in Europe.

Part 1 - Round table: Innovation of the education of the humanities

Andrej BEKEŠ (University of Tsukuba / University of Ljubljana) gave the paper “Double major as a possibility of interdisciplinarity: the case of the University of Ljubljana Faculty of Arts” in which he discussed some advantages and problems experienced by the University of Ljubljana with the double major system. Currently, about half of the undergraduate and master-course students make use of the system. After outlining the history of the double major programme and its adaptation to the Bologna system in Ljubljana, the example of Japanese Studies and Chinese Studies was explained. Instead

of traditional style study with focus on language and literature, it turns out that combining a major in human and social sciences such as sociology, anthropology, history, geography, political science, or even a relevant major such as general and applied linguistics, gave interesting results in more profound academic achievement. Since certain faculty members insist on keeping to the traditional academic system, good coordination and collaboration between departments constitutes a key to success in the double major system. In answer to a question by Martin DELHEY (University of Hamburg), Andrej BEKEŠ underlined the fact that academics should, albeit tough and demanding much work, understand the importance of an inter- and multi-disciplinary outcome. However, as pointed out by Walter SALLABERGER (University of Munich), solid disciplinarity is a condition for success in an interdisciplinary challenge. Daniel LEBAUD (University of Franche-Comté) and Tsuyoshi KIDA (University of Tsukuba) gave information on experience of the pre- and post- Bologna systems in France, explaining that the underlying philosophy is based on different concerns such as employability and humanity.

Craig SMITH (Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, Department of Global Affairs), in his paper “New perspectives on global affairs education and research” reported on his experience of the undergraduate level in Kyoto and his resulting pedagogical position. Students of the Global Affairs program at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies must undertake a series of extracurricular experiential learning projects. These projects provide students with practical experience in conceiving, planning, and carrying out projects which are small-scale simulations of activities of the organisations that the students learn about in the Global Affairs course. These activities are, for instance, assistance to developing countries by NGOs, or United Nations-related activities through the management of local public events and the implementation of symposia. Craig SMITH cited UH Habitat projects in collaboration with an architects’ NGO as the Chiang Mai community building project, or the Children’s Rights project with UNESCO week. Mediated by faculty members, these project-based activities are basically independent student-led and student-run activities and can be combined with classroom learning, literature-review research and a field-research approach to experiential learning. The positive results are numerous: enhancing critical thinking skills, understanding the role of ‘intellectual humility’ in suspending judgement, the value of intellectual perseverance,

refining generalisations to avoid oversimplification, evaluation of credibility of sources, distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant and exploration of implications and consequences, self-regulated learning skills, etc. Such a pedagogical programme is only possible where there is strong institutional and financial support, without which, as pointed out by Tsuyoshi KIDA (University of Tsukuba), it is difficult to constitute a student delegation with enough consistency to conduct international projects, even though undergraduate and graduate education are fundamentally different.

Then two programmes of the University of Tsukuba were introduced.

Keiichi AIZAWA (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Tsukuba) explained TEACH, Transnational European and East Asian Culture and History. TEACH is a joint Japanese-Korean-German dual-degree masters programme set up with the purpose of providing students with the opportunity of gaining a deeper understanding of the diversity of culture, history and identity in East-Asia and Europe. The University of Tsukuba, University of Bonn, and Korea University all participate in the programme. The plan is to send, every year, six master-level students from the Human and Social Sciences to learn the language and the area studies of each country or region. For the moment, there are problems of difference in timing and start of the academic year to be overcome. However, it is expected that once initiated, the programme will foster a spirit of international cooperation and work towards solving problems faced by the international community from a European and East-Asian perspective.

Saburo AOKI (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Tsukuba) continued with a presentation of the TRANS Europe-East Asia Education Program. TRANS is a generic term for a dual degree and a five-year certificate programme (including TEACH) at bachelor, master and doctorate levels. It was set up in collaboration with Korea, Japan and Europe with the aim of contributing to stability in East Asia in accordance with the Japanese government's pro-East-Asia policy. The educational ideal is to provide students with the opportunity of acquiring a pluralistic perspective, a transdisciplinary methodology of research and training in international vision and initiative action. The courses offered are: Japanese language and culture communicator training to establish a basis for global negotiation skills at undergraduate

level, in collaboration with European universities; TEACH, which proposes institutionalising a dual degree at master level with the aim of cultivating diversity of values, Europe and Asia; Contemporary Japanese international comparative studies to foster global leadership, Europe and East Asia. It is also expected that Japan, Korea and Europe will establish a mutually cooperative education programme that will be able to overcome institutional differences and geographical barriers thanks to the possibilities of e-learning technology. As many as sixty programmes will be established under TRANS.

The paper by Jun IKEDA (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Tsukuba) entitled “Digital Humanities project and its perspectives” was related to educational content rather than to a specific programme, so the discussion was common to all papers. Jun IKEDA discussed how computer technology has been applied to the different fields of the humanities making visible the invisible structure of human activity, as for example with certain tools like Praat or EEG (Electroencephalography) applied to phonetic science which make sound or brain waves visible, or XML-based GIS (Graphic Information System) which makes it possible to visualize geographic locations. Pointing out that there are many examples where the humanities could take advantage of science and technology, Jun IKEDA reminded everyone that writing systems played a similar role in the development of the humanities. Raija MATILLA (University of Helsinki) saw great potential for such digital technology in comparative culture study. Nevertheless, the limitations of computer technology in recognizing natural facts (for example Praat, which, as a renowned phonetician remarked, had problems of inexact measuring) do not seem to have been discussed enough. Walter SALLABERGER (Munich) wanted to know how computer technology was taught.

Part 2 – workshop: Towards a new approach of the research for the humanities

Even though the papers are presented as distinct parts here, Jun IKEDA’s paper is possibly closely associated with that of Hidenori SAKUMA (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Tsukuba) “Buddhist study and brain science”, which, as can be seen from the title, reported on a computer-assisted applied science. During training in yoga meditation according to the Yogacara Buddhist school, changes in the cognitive system and in other functions of the human body appear. From this, it would

seem that religion can be open to phenomenological interpretation, as Husserl and Merleau-Ponty applied to philosophy. At present, an interdisciplinary study of Buddhism is on-going in collaboration with researchers in brain science and cognitive psychology to identify the relationship between meditation and brain function. As computer or technological methodology is not always accessible to researchers of the humanities, such collaboration is, according to Hidenori SAKUMA, indispensable. The current goal is to develop Buddhist study in collaboration with natural science, going beyond the realm of the humanities classical studies towards an area useful to contemporary society.

Martin DELHEY's (University of Hamburg) presentation "Some remarks on the present and perspectives of Indian Buddhist studies" discussed Buddhism from a philological perspective. Study in Classical Indology, in particular Indian Buddhist Studies, faces problems in its limited number of researchers because the academic field is so young. In addition, researchers are split up into even smaller groups according to language of the original source materials as well as language of work on secondary materials. A progressive loss of primary materials due to natural weathering over time is another preoccupation. Now, the use of computer technology and international collaboration in transdisciplinary research is trying to overcome these problems. A cooperative project at the University of Hamburg with the International Institute for Digital Humanities (University of Tokyo) and the recent establishment of the interdisciplinary Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures are some examples. In fact, there are many ways in which different disciplines can collaborate with each other and thanks to present collaboration with computer science, the monolithic image of classical studies is changing.

Three speakers in Assyriology presented their field from differing perspectives: philological, multidisciplinary and international co-operation.

Raija MATILLA (University of Helsinki) in her paper "Assyrian corpus and philology" noted that the University of Helsinki is the sole institution where Assyriology can be studied in Finland. A Neo-Assyrian corpus containing more than 200 million words is being compiled, giving rise to the publication of numerous research papers and articles. Under the MELAMMU (Intellectual Heritage of Assyria and Babylonia in East and West) project, a database of Babylonian archives of the Mesopotamian civilisation,

which can be considered the intellectual heritage of the whole of mankind, is being compiled and will be published on the internet. As for the SAA (State Archives of Assyria) project, the decryption of a collection of administrative documents is currently underway and will soon be published online.

From a multi-disciplinary perspective, Walter SALLABERGER's paper "Methodology in Ancient Near Eastern study" explained how the study of ancient Mesopotamia consists in deciphering a vast corpus written in Sumerian and Akkadian with the cuneiform writing system, and of trying to understand across a wide range of domains, the various aspects of the lives and cultures of people in one of humanity's oldest civilisations. The interdisciplinary research covers linguistics, literary theory, history, social and economic history, religious studies and anthropology. Walter SALLABERGER was somewhat pessimistic about the current situation of the field of research, as although such studies lead to new insights into culture and civilisation, it has always been difficult for this field of humanities, having less economic usefulness in modern society, to justify its existence. Nevertheless, as claimed by Shigeo YAMADA in his paper "Ancient Near East Study and Research Centre for West Asian Civilisation", such problems could be overcome with international cooperation. In West Asia, the cradle of the Mesopotamian civilisation, decoding cuneiform tablets, as Raija MATILLA found, revealed political, economic and social aspects of the society from various perspectives (political system, administration, law, diplomacy, civic life, religion, trade, and so on). In the Research Center for West Asian Civilization of the University of Tsukuba, deciphering administrative documents written in Akkadian from the Old Babylonian and Middle Assyrian periods is ongoing. This project of Assyriology in Ancient Near Eastern Studies is being carried out in conjunction with researchers at the University of Helsinki and the University of Munich. The Research Center has an extensive international research network, such as the RINAP (The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period) project of the University of Pennsylvania, or the French SAKURA project. Such international collaboration is essential to carrying out research activities.

From the field of linguistics, two papers presented in French were quite different.

In his “L'unité de recherche Lexiques, Dictionnaires, Informatique (LDI)”, Salah MEJRI (University of Paris 13) explained about his LDI Laboratory (CNRS). The laboratory was created in 2007 by merging two existing laboratories from the University of Cergy-Pontoise and the University of Paris 13 into a single research centre. Its scientific mission is to compile dictionaries based on a lexicological description of language around the concept of ‘phrase’ and to conduct fundamental and applied research in transdisciplinary fields integrating the humanities and computer science in a way that computer science can be used in linguistic analysis. The main applied research concerns the creation of multilingual (including creoles and dialects) technical dictionaries, the development of electronic dictionaries, automatic translation and human-machine interactive systems, and so on. The laboratory has a distance learning programme with the University of Krakow (Poland), and is keen to tie up with private companies. Therefore, like Shigeo YAMADA’s domain in Assyriology, Salah MEJRI’s DLI Laboratory is internationalising.

In his paper “La linguistique, Science du langage et des langues”, Daniel LEBAUD (University of Franche-Comté) discussed the fundamental and existential question of what is the meaning of linguistic study. In religion or in politics, any transformation and movement in history, for good or for bad, is a direct product of discourse and ideology. Therefore, recognising the power of words is an important field of work, and linguistics, in collaboration with other humanities as well as all academic fields, must critically examine the discourses that circulate in contemporary society. To respond to such a social requirement, a new theoretical framework based on the linguistics of enunciation represented by Culioli and Benveniste is being developed at the University of Franche-Comté. This perspective joins the view taken by Salah MEJRI’s laboratory, where linguistic research should have a *raison d’être* in contemporary society.

Part 3: Student presentations and poster sessions

Part three of the conference was held on November 5th, with presentations and poster sessions by graduate students from the Brain Circulation Program. The following gives a brief review.

Sayaka KISHI (Indology), studying Mahayana Buddhism at the University of Hamburg, explained the importance of Chapter 18 of the *Mahayanasutralamkara-bhasya* and some difficulties currently encountered in preparing a critical edition. Ai KIJIMA (French linguistics), carrying out a Japanese-French contrastive analysis of verbs of visual perception at the University of Franche-Comté, pointed out that the relationship a speaker has regarding subject and object in phrases is culturally different. Sanae ITO (Assyriology) gave a presentation on conflict in the city of Nippur in ancient Mesopotamia studied within the framework of the SAA project at the University of Helsinki. The difficulty of these three presentations lay in the way in which a study, needing precise knowledge to be understood, can be presented to a non-expert audience. Keiko SAIGUSA's (German literature) presentation was easier to understand because of the visual nature (painting) of her study. She gave a critical and historical analysis of representation of fragmentary bodies painted during the interwar period, undertaken in art history at the Free University of Berlin. Nevertheless, it was a stressful presentation because of lack of confidence, sometimes giving rise to difficulty in understanding.

In addition, a study of characteristics of vocabulary of French origin in Tunisia (Motoyuki MIYAGAWA), a report on the sociolinguistic situation in New Caledonia (Yusuke YATABE), an analysis of representations of violence in the films of Michael Haneke (Yusuke IGUCHI), religion in post-socialist Europe and Japan (Tinka DELAKORDA), a bibliography of psychiatrist Eugene Minkowski (Ai SATO) were presented in the poster session. However, due to lack of time, these presentations were not discussed enough with the participants. Hopefully, in preparing the presentations and participating in the conference the students gained positive experience.

All papers, at first glance, were very different and unrelated, giving rise to meta-scientific discussion, which is indeed necessary in an over-specialised society. As Saburo AOKI said in his concluding remarks:

what is important is, instead of taking issues specific to a given domain and constricting them to that domain, to consider these issues in the context of the common situation which touches on the future of humanity. This is why now, we are asking for a new approach to research in the humanities.

Conclusion

In light of the various discussions it would seem that this forum gave researchers and students alike the much sought opportunity of coming together to discuss issues of research and education across and beyond the boundaries of a single discipline or institution. The presentations on the activities and perspectives of the various institutions and research domains also clarified the situation of each, making collaboration and exchange possibilities more apparent and dynamic.

In so far as the objectives of the forum regarding response to change in the social environment and a corresponding new approach to research were concerned, one point became clearly transparent; research can no longer be restricted to the narrow confines of a single discipline. With the development of new technologies, with new domains covering every aspect of human activity, with new paradigms demanding research outcomes be shared with and actualised for society, networking in the sense of real collaboration between the disciplines and the institutions is the key to a dynamic way forward.

Strong in the positive results of this initial stage, the Euro-Japan Academic Networking Project is now preparing for the next such forum, to be held in the autumn of 2012.