

Comment : What Is History in the Age of Globalization?

ODANAKA, Naoki (odanaka@econ.tohoku.ac.jp)

Jap. Soc. Western History (Kyoto, May 2013)

I am very glad to again welcome Professor Lim here in Kyoto as a the keynote speaker for the annual meeting of the Japan Society for Western History. I remember very well that, when I met him for the first time in Seoul last December during the Framework of Kaken-seminar at RICH, Hanyang University, in preparation for this symposium, he welcomed us warmly and demonstrated very insightful ideas about western history in East Asia.

My comments will: (1) summarize his talk and look at its social and actual background, (2) analyze the characteristics of its main topic, i.e., Global History, and (3) evaluate its potential from my personal viewpoint.

(1) What is happening now?

Professor Lim suggests that, in age when history and memory are necessarily intermingled with each other (as is clear in the case of Takeshima/Dokdo), if we would like to resist the fiction of State/Nation/nation-state, it is necessary to grasp history totally and globally in order to be effective. This approach, which is normally called Global History, makes it possible to have discussions on a larger scale than just individual countries. Global History could function as an antipode to National History which could easily turn into Official History serving the State/Nation/nation-state.

However, Professor Lim points out that Global History has the possibility/risk of becoming “patriotic world history” (in his words), which is complicity with National History. In my opinion, pointing out this possibility/risk very concretely, i.e., by following the historiography of Japan and Korea, is the most important contribution of today’s talk. He concludes that Global History must turn into the “worlding and decentered history” in order to completely overcome National History.

It is important to look beyond Professor Lim’s proposition, at the present situation of historical studies. Since the 1980s/1990s, many historians and others have talked about the Crisis of History. I will discuss some examples here.

In the United States, the end of the Cold War brought about the declaration of “the end of History” in itself.¹ In Japan, the so-called “comfort women” controversy broke

out, where specialists in political science or education research i.e., non-specialists of history, took part as the main actors, criticizing and denying what historians had found and argued about.² In France, the *Annales* School who led post-war historical research all over the world claimed that at the end of 1980s the *tournant critique* (critical turn) was necessary, but what we have seen since then could be called the dismantlement or the decline of that School.³

At the level of historical theory or methodology, so-called post-modernism became fashionable, advocating the necessity of changing the course in the field of historical research towards now the famous “linguistic turn.” This term was introduced in Japan as a sarcastic criticism of stubborn historians, who cling to the “Paradigms Lost” of positivistic history.⁴ On the other hand, the post-colonialist trend has made it clear critically and corroboratively that this positivistic history did and still does contribute to the birth of National History which strengthens the State and Nation and the nation-state in particular.⁵

If we see (with anxiety) what is going on in the labor market for young historians, we find that the presence of historical studies in society, particularly in Japanese society, is on the acute decline.

Of course, the age of Crisis is, at the same time, a chance for the New to come, and for the Innovation to happen. In the field of history, many new approaches or trends have been developed and advocated. As an example, for the response to the challenge from the linguistic turn, we could cite numerous analytical historical studies taking into consideration the theoretical implication of that turn, and (new) cultural history which are trying to overcome it.⁶ There is also a new trend consistent with post-colonialism that claims to stand against and to overcome the temptation of National History : Global /World History, about which Professor Lim talked today (we call it Global History).

We have to take his argument and proposition very seriously, but many problems still remain : How could and should we evaluate Global History? Is it possible to make this trend “worlding and decentered history” ? If the answer is “Yes,” then what should we do? If the answer is “No,” would there be any other strategies for developing a history opposite of Official National History? My comments will focus on these questions.

(2) What is Global History?

It is difficult to define Global History correctly and precisely.⁷ Here we roughly define it, for convenience's sake, as a trend in historical research which adopts an approach for analyzing the history of a spatial unit larger than a State and of the world as a whole, if possible. With this definition in mind, we can find a conscious or unconscious characteristic of this trend. We will analyze it in three steps.

(a) Stance against the desire for classifying

This characteristic could be understood when it is compared with National History.

The latter normally sets up the spatial research object by the classification, i.e., by reckoning it backward from the existing States. An important part of this process is determining where the artificial border is, was, or should be drawn (by historians), i.e., that of classifying each space as *intra-muros* (territory, the inside) or *extra-muros* (non-territory, the outside). The former is usually regarded as superior to the latter, by some mysterious reason. It could reflect the fact that the research subject, i.e., the historian, is deeply prejudiced by her/his national identity. National History is possessed with the desire for classifying, and, beyond that, with the desire for hierarchizing.

It is necessary to keep in mind that any kind of classifying is a subjective and arbitrary/intentional act. National History selects the State/Nation/nation-state as its research object, with no objective and neutral ground.

By contrast, Global History does not pay much attention to artificial borders. This is clearly shown by the fact that it generally attaches importance to networks of all kinds, as Professor Lim emphasized today : Networks of merchants and commodities, religious organizations, money, ideas, etc.⁸ Global History intends to depict the development of these networks across artificial borders, internationally/globally in some cases.

There is no classification of spatial research objects by distinguishing between *intra-muros* and *extra-muros*. In fact, there is an intentional refusal to make a classification. This stance is a product of the criticism of subjective and arbitrary/intentional Official National History which, with the desire for classifying, serves the State/Nation/nation-state by classifying and hierarchizing. We should respect this critical stance of Global History.

(b) Desire for non-classifying

We have to pay attention to the fact that criticism of one desire could easily lead to accepting another one. In our case, it is a desire for non-classifying. With this desire,

Global History aims to ultimately be a *histoire à part entière* (total history), a famous phrase of Lucien Febvre, one of the founders of the *Annales* School.⁹

Does Global History, contrary to National History, choose research objects objectively and neutrally? I think that IT DOESN'T.

An interesting perspective about this issue is an argument of the French geologist, Christian Grataloup, that the use of adjective "Global" is influenced by the *zeitgeist*.¹⁰ Grataloup, heavily influenced by Fernand Braudel, a well known proponent of *géo-histoire* (geo-history), highly estimating the will of Global History to grasp the object *à part entière*, calls our attention to the fact that defining and describing the research object as something "Global" has a social (in his words "occidental") background. He says that today's historical studies *à part entière* is usually not called World History, International History, or Transnational History, but Global History, because we are living in the age of globalization led by the Occident. Professor Lim used the terms "World History" and "Global History" interchangeably, but strictly speaking they have different implications for each other.

Global History is a component of the viewpoint peculiar to the age when persons, goods, money, or ideas were circulating from anywhere to anywhere else with no obstacle (no borders), but in the framework mainly made by the Occident (American companies, European States, Japanese or Korean NPOs, etc.), i.e., that of globalization. That is why it could not be purely objective or neutral.

(c) Hidden desire for classifying

What is more, we should ask another question : Is Global History truly oriented toward non-classifying? I think IT ISN'T.

As for the spatial level of the research object, we could determine the desire for non-classifying in Global History, for it sets up the whole world as a *champs* (field, in Bourdieuan sense) and depicts how various things move across and over artificial borders. However, what we have today is that we find Global Histories of certain goods (coffee, money, tea, cotton cloth, precious metals, etc.) or of such and such time/age/period.¹¹ Even though they (especially the latter) are very challenging acts, these Global Histories only shift the level of classification from the space to the object or to the time. The desire for classifying lies is still there.

By saying that there is a desire for classifying lies in Global History, I do not mean that it is a meaningless act. This judgment is based on two reasons.

First, what is important is not denying the classification but avoiding the hierarchization. National History becomes Official History serving the State by

hierarchizing rather than classifying.

Second, the non-classifying that is desired by Global History has a serious theoretical problem. It will result in the selecting, as its research object, the history of time-space as the unity. But what does it mean to analyze time-space as the unity or the whole time-space? Do we have an approach, methodology, or theory that is necessary and adequate for carrying it out?

An approach for thinking about these issues is the criticism of Sato, Toshiki, against the World System theory advocated by Emmanuel Wallerstein.^{1 2} According to Sato, the main purpose of analyzing an object is to find out its characteristic by comparing it with some other objects, as was clearly shown by John Stewart Mill. We will call this act “science”. Wallerstein, who regards all the space of the earth at a point in time as a unity of World System, could not do the spatial comparison. As a result, how could he clarify the characteristics of the World System? He did this by comparing it with the world before its emergence, i.e., World Empire. He shifts the level of comparison from space to time, without abandoning the comparison as a method of analysis.

As is shown in this case, analysis without comparison is impossible. Global History could be a science only because the desire for classifying does lie in it.

We consider Global History as follows : First, its position of saying “No” to the desire for classifying leading to hierarchizing must be respected. Second, it is no more objective or more neutral than National History. Third, it still has the desire for classifying, but that is why it could regard itself as a science.

(3) What is History after all?

Of course, the purpose of historical research does not have to be “to analyze.” Depicting certain periods, space, or facts in order to show *wie es eigentlich gewesen* (“what actually happened,” famous phrase of Leopold Ranke) could be, if they belong to the past, an act of historical studies. We will call this act “art” hereinafter.

Here we come to some final and fundamental questions: What is the act of historians? What is their task? What kind of approach, methodology, or theory is necessary and effective to do it? In a word, is history a science which asks “why?,” or an art which depicts “how?” ?

Is history a science or an art? This is a question which many historians and philosophers have discussed since ancient times, finding no consistent answer today.

My personal, i.e., subjective opinion is presented here.

I think that history is a science and is an act of asking “why?” It must abandon the desire for non-classifying. Doing history means making clear the characteristic of a fact (which belongs to the past) by putting it in an appropriate causal chain with the comparative method.

We are living, however, in an age when everyone (or many...) comes to know that classifying is not an objective and neutral act but a subjective and arbitrary/intentional act. It is easy to take on a strong political character that sometimes leads to hierarchizing. History, if it would like to be a science, must re-assert that it is objective and arbitrary/intentional in setting up a research object by classifying. It must show that it is trying to ameliorate its relative subjectivity and neutrality, with the aide of phylogenetics (science of genealogy), for example.^{1 3} If we find a way to reach the classification-comparison without hierarchization after all these attempts, we could (re)conceptualize a history as a science.

But a problem remains : how could we classify and compare without hierarchization? Or could we find a concrete way to control the desire for hierarchizing? I think that bringing up and strengthening the sympathy in the Smithian sense, i.e., the capacity of imagining the situation of the Other, will be an effective one.^{1 4} Imagining the situation of the Other is what we would call compassion. When people from many States gather to compare National Histories with the sense of compassion, couldn't we find a clue to the classification-comparison without hierarchization, even if it is a long and winding road? I would like to call this act “sympathy-based comparative national histories.”

In today's talk, Professor Lim proposed to problematize the complicity between Global History and National History by introducing the concept of “worlding and decentered history.” I am still ambivalent about Global History as an approach, methodology, or theory, for it has many problems to solve.

But if you compare “worlding and decentered history” and “sympathy-based comparative national histories”, we find that they share the same purpose, i.e., controlling the desire for hierarchizing in the field of history. They constitute two approaches for historical science which do not lead to hierarchization.

¹ See Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” (*National Interest*, summer, 1989).

² An example of the former case is Sakamoto, Takao, and that of the latter is Fujioka, Nobukatsu.

³ See direction des *Annales*, « Histoire et science sociale : un tournant critique ? » (*Annales. E.S.C.*, 43-2, 1988) and Id., « Histoire et science sociale : un tournant critique » (*Annales. E.S.C.*, 44-6, 1989). These manifestos are said to be written by Bernard Lepetit, the journal's then editorial secretary.

⁴ As for the examples of criticism from the non-specialists of history, see Tomiyama, Takao, "Shiso no kotoba [preface]" (*Shiso*, 838, 1994) and Ueno, Chizuko, *Nationalism and Gender* (trans. by Beverley Yamamoto, Melbourne, 2004, original Japanese edition, 1998). Tomiyama is an English literary critic and Ueno a feminist sociologist. The word and concept of "Paradigms Lost" are from Carol Gluck, "Paradigms Lost" (*Social Science Japan*, 1, 1994).

⁵ This trend in Japan could be represented by many scholars including Nishikawa, Nagao, and Narita, Ryuichi.

⁶ Many historians could be cited as having contributed to the introduction of discourse analysis in the field of history : Joan Scott, Gareth Stedman-Jones, Patrick Joyce, etc. As for the trend of (new) cultural history which emphasizes the importance of the concept of agency, see Hasegawa, Takahiko, "Monogatari no fukken/shutai no fukken [Narrative is back, so the Subject]" (*Shiso*, 1036, 2010).

⁷ Probably because today we have too many studies on Global History. A recently published book on its historiography, focusing mainly on the U.S.A., Germany, and China, cites almost 1400 books and articles (Sachsenmaier, D., *Global Perspectives on Global History*, Cambridge, 2011).

⁸ See for example Fukasawa, Katsumi, *Toilerie et commerce du Levant au XVIIIe Siecle* (Paris, 1987) for analysis of network of merchants and commodities ; Id., et als., eds., *Shinko to Tasha* ([Faith and the Other], Tokyo, 2006) for that of religious organizations ; Kuroda Akinobu, *Kahei System no Sekai Shi* ([World History of Money System], Tokyo, 2003) for that of money ; Robert Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution* (Princeton, 1959/1964) for that of ideas (a little bit too old, I am sure).

⁹ Lucien Febvre, *Pour une histoire à part entière* (Paris, 1962).

¹⁰ See Christian Grataloup, *Géohistoire de la mondialisation* (Paris, 2010), chap.10.

¹¹ See, as an example of the latter case, Haneda, Tadashi, *Atarashi Sekaishi E* ([Toward a New World History], Tokyo, 2012) ; Id., ed., *Umi kara Mita Rekishi* ([History seen from the Sea], Tokyo, 2013).

^{1 2} Sato, Toshiki, *Shakaigaku no Hoho* ([Method of Sociology], Kyoto, 2011), pp.168-175.

^{1 3} As for the relation between the taxonomy (science of classification) and phylogenetics (science of genealogy), see Minaka, Nobuhiro, *Keitoju Shiko no Sekai* ([The World of Tree Thinking], Tokyo, 2006) ; Id., *Bunrui Shiko no Sekai* ([The World of Group Thinking], Tokyo, 2009); Id., *Shinka Shiko no Sekai* ([The World of Evolutionary Thinking], Tokyo, 2010).

^{1 4} As for the function and meaning of the sympathy in Smithian sense in the field of history, see Odanaka, Naoki, “From Responsibility to Compassion” (*Zeitschrift für Japanisches Recht/Journal of Japanese Law*, 31, 2011).