

## **A Pirate's View of World History**

### **A Reversed Perception of the Order of Things From a Global Perspective**

Piracy has become one of the main concerns of contemporary society. Underneath our present instability, one cannot overlook the fact that the post-World War II regime has come to a stalemate. This requires us to recast our entire conception of world history in the last five centuries. Since the so-called Age of Exploration, the surface of the Earth was segmented in accordance with the hegemonic power of Portugal and Spain, and subsequently taken over by the Dutch and the British. From the Tordesillas Treaty onwards, worldwide piracy was the main driving force heralding Western domination of the world. The commercial triangular transactions between the East, the West, and Africa also heavily depended on piracy and illegal trade. Historical realities are still hidden under official statistical documents. Moreover, the making of international law itself was tied up in the maritime hegemonic conflicts that arose among Western nations, and the notion of the “high seas” was linked to the legal codification of property and the formation of copyright laws.

Now we live in a revolutionary era of information technology and commodity distribution. Hacking in cyberspace and hedge funds in the trade market destabilize the worldwide social system and call for a drastic rethinking of notions of justice and fair-use. Accusation of rights infringement by the established regime and authorities are challenged by the opposing legal claims of those engaged in piracy, which are made within and outside of the parliamentary system.

It is obvious that the regulations of current laws are no longer capable of staying up to date with the latest nano-, bio-, and digital innovations. This also reveals the incapability of contemporary Western ethics and moral codes to deal with globalization. The established world order is collapsing. A new model to cope with the forbidden dependencies on its surface and the hidden disorder beneath it should be searched for in the realm outside the law, in the “survival art of piracy.”

Our research team at Nichibunken has been tackling these issues in the last three years. The team was subdivided into five groups to work on specific topics:

1. Piracy in the construction of the world order during and after the so-called “Age of Discovery”: Reconsidering the last five centuries of world maritime history
2. Illegal trade as a mirror of official commercial transactions: The underside of statistics
3. The history of plagiarism and commercial and media piracy today: Questions regarding copyright from the historical sociology of law and the cultural anthropology of gifts
4. The making of international law and piracy under imperialist expansionism
5. Internet piracy, hacking, leaks, and legal measures in the age of information technology

At the expiration term of the grand-in-aid from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, we organized an international symposium so as to thoroughly and intensively discuss for the future this important theme of piracy. The present proceedings aim to share with the public the outcomes of this endeavor.

Finally, allow me to briefly remark on the editing process of the present volume. Presenters at the symposium were requested to provide their papers for post-conference publication. They were screened and edited, and are now being published as part of Nichibunken's "International Symposium Series" (with an ISSN). Non-commercial paperback editions will be distributed, free of charge, to major Japanese studies research institutes. An online version is freely available on the center's homepage.

As the convener and person responsible for the research project, I would like to express my thanks to all the participants from abroad as well as from within Japan. The administrative staff of Nichibunken was also highly efficient in their management of the symposium. Furthermore, let me also give my special thanks to Dylan Luers Toda, who not only checked and edited all the papers written by non-native English speakers but also translated into excellent English all the Japanese papers and texts provided by the convener. The present publication may contain inevitable errors and mistakes, and the convener alone is fully responsible for them.

Last but not least, my special thanks also go to the administrative staff members, Jun Haruki and Naoko Terukawa at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies. Aya Okada and Minae Matsui helped me in the logistics and preparation of the symposium. As for the editing of this proceedings, Momoko Itō made meticulous work.

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