

## Preface

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## Preface

This volume is a compilation of papers from the International Research Center for Japanese Studies' (Nichibunken) 48th International Symposium, titled "Expos and Human History" and held in December 2015.

I would first like to express my deepest condolences for the untimely passing of Wu Jianmin (President Emeritus of the Bureau International des Expositions, former Chinese ambassador to France, and president of the China Foreign Affairs University), who delivered one of the keynote lectures of the public session "Asia and Expos" in this symposium.

Wu embodied the shifting international politics surrounding expos and the changing focus from Europe to Asia. In his lecture, he addressed the 2010 Shanghai Expo and expressed a wish that peace-oriented events would help build an international community that values cultural diversity. His dignified appearance not only during this talk but also other parts of the symposium charmed the whole audience as well as all participants and staff members.

After the symposium ended, Wu offered me from China warm words of encouragement regarding the group research project's future activities, of which the symposium had been part. He gave me concrete advice about holding a similar symposium in Shanghai and also wrote about the importance of actively creating connections between the project and the Bureau International des Expositions in Paris. As I prepared to bring his advice into fruition, I was very saddened to hear of his passing.

It goes without saying that the show must go on. In the year since Wu's death, the group research project he so appreciated has been actively striving to realize his advice, building on our members' positive experiences during the symposium.

"Expos and Human History" symposium was part of a group research project titled "Expos and Human History, with a Focus on Asian Dynamics," a three-year project that started in 2013 and aimed to share project outcomes with researchers around the world. We already published the anthology *Bankoku Hakurankai to Ningen no Rekishi (Expos and Human History)*, Sano, Mayuko, ed., Kyoto: Shibunkaku, 758 pages) in October 2015, just before the symposium, which had the same title as the symposium. The symposium was intended to build concretely on the anthology's contents; it served as a forum to confirm our project's direction and consider our future direction in the context of a larger network. Thanks to the dedication of all the participants,

I believe this aspiration was fully realized. Using the momentum from the symposium, in 2016 we started a new three-year group research project titled “Expos and Human History.”

In Japan, academic research on expos began around the time of the 1970 Osaka Expo. Since then, the body of research has continued to increase. Since its launch, this group has built upon the preceding research, but it has also sought to break away from past research trends in its search for new research directions that are meaningful in the 21st century. For a more detailed explanation of our research aims, I encourage readers to take a look at my introduction to the aforementioned anthology (at the end of this volume, you can find English translations of its table of contents and the introduction). In brief, however, our problem formulation can be traced back to the goal of “internationalizing the research on expos.”

It may seem contradictory to talk about “internationalization” in the context of an international expo, but in reality, the research on such events has a surprising lack of international character. It has been the norm for researchers in each country to focus on the particulars of the expos it hosts or participates in, as well as the circumstances surrounding such topics. However, expos are large-scale events that, since the 19th century, have had a large role in driving the world’s modernization. Thus, it is important that we reverse this research trend by drawing out expos’ yet untold historical and contemporary significance and recovering the international perspective that expos themselves are imbued with. Our research group has sought to face this challenge within the institutional constraints of Nichibunken’s conventional group research program, and it goes without saying that the opportunities presented by this international symposium are of special value.

During the “Expos and Human History” symposium, the project aims were as follows (you can find the entire program at the end of this volume). The sessions during the first day were primarily aimed at overseas researchers participating in this group research for the first time and intended to introduce the contents of our anthology. The anthology was broken into four sections—“People and Expos,” “Places and Expos,” “Professions, Society, and Expos,” and “The Beginnings and Development of Expos”—and I decided to address the first three in the symposium due to time constraints and asked the authors whose pieces more clearly represented each category’s main points to present them in the symposium. (For more explanation of the contents of each of these anthology sections, please refer to the introduction in that volume.)

The second day consisted mostly of presentations by overseas researchers, with some of the project members (anthology authors) acting as moderators and commentators. Here we were introduced to several research approaches that we had not been able to employ in our regular activities, which led to discussions most fitting of an international symposium.

The two presentations in Session 1, “Japan at World Expos and Global History,” both fo-

cused on Japan's past participation in expos, thus more or less connecting with previous Japanese research. However, past studies emphasized the exoticism of Japan and Japanese culture and positioned the nation as a marginalized other in the international community, despite all the attention the country enjoyed. On the other hand, the research presented by the two speakers, while closely based on historical sources, departed from this perspective. Both speakers objectively framed Japan as an emerging active participant in 19th-century international trade and intellectual exchange and the expos as a stage for this exchange. By relativizing Japan's place among the variety of other expo participants, and thus all participants each other, they added greatly to the existing research and demonstrated the rich potential of future expo studies.

Session 2, "Different Cultures' at World Expos: For Comparative Studies," and Session 3, "Organizing National Expos and the Respective Modernizations," consisted of four presentations that examined case studies from the Philippines, India, Brazil, and China. The two speakers in Session 2 examined their case studies from the perspective of expo participation, and the two speakers in Session 3 focused on organizing expos. Together, these presentations were an example of large-scale comparative research, fitting of an international symposium. Each discussed the involvement of a non-Western country in expos and, unlike in Session 1, they used research methods rather similar to conventional, historical research on Japan's role in expos. While I regret that we could not include a Japanese case study in these presentations, it is important to note that this kind of international comparison has been rare in the history of world expo research and that it facilitated an extremely stimulating discussion.

This volume includes nine of the presentations described above, presented in the first two days of the symposium. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the authors for preparing the manuscripts after the symposium finished, despite their busy schedules. The texts included are in the authors' preferred format: some are essays and others oral presentation records. If this causes any inconvenience to the reader, this is my fault as the editor. Additionally, I regret that, due to budget constraints, we could not include both Japanese and English versions of these diverse texts. However, we did include the abstracts for all presentations in both Japanese and English at the end of the volume; these are the version prepared for distribution at the conference venue.

It is also important to provide an overview of the remaining days of the symposium, while their discussion is not included in this volume. On the morning of the third day, we held a two-hour discussion looking back at the two previous days, and it goes without saying that it turned out to be a thoroughly lively conversation. I will refrain from summarizing the conversation, since the goal was not to reach a definite conclusion and the participants took away different things from the discussion. Nonetheless, I was left with the impression that there exists an un-

voiced contention between the view that expo research has great potential if removed, or when removed, from the perspective of so-called identity politics and the view that it is imperative to pursue identity politics through international cooperation.

Of course, future expo research will not have to choose only one of these views; future studies shall surely encompass both trajectories. The reason this tension intrigued me is because I found that the necessary balance between these two trajectories seems to be similar to the real-life management of our international community. In that sense our discussion demonstrated that the expo is a mirror reflecting the formation of international community in important and meaningful ways.

However, the expo does not merely “reflect” the world, but Edson Cabalfin (who gave the wonderful presentation on Filipino architectural history on the second day) made the point that the expo can also be seen a way to “empower” the world and participating countries. Indeed, “empower” was a keyword that transcended the aforementioned contention and appears to have resonated with all the participants.

After this general discussion, there was a session titled “Asia and Expos,” which consisted of public lectures. Sakaiya Taichi (author, former Minister of State for Economic Planning, Japan), a leading figure in Japan’s post-war expo history, and the aforementioned Wu Jianmin, presented the two keynote lectures, two people who very much embodied the theme “Asia and Expos.” Afterward, project members Hashizume Shin’ya (Osaka Prefecture University) and Ehara Noriyoshi (Institute for International Trade and Investment, former Director of the Japan Pavilion at Expo 2010 Shanghai) joined them for a panel discussion. This public session was enjoyed by the audience of 500 hundred.

On the fourth and final day, we prepared a themed tour of Nichibunken’s hometown, Kyoto, with the title “Expos and Kyoto’s Modern Times.” Both overseas participants and the Japanese project members enjoyed experiencing Kyoto’s many facets from an expo-research angle. Although Kyoto has never hosted a universal expo, it has played a leading role in Japan’s expo history since the early Meiji period and a great number of its brilliant traditional handicrafts have been exhibited at overseas expos, making Kyoto an exceptional “expo city.” For the details of this itinerary, please refer to the program at the end of this volume.

As previously mentioned, this symposium allowed the group research project to proceed to the next stage. Our next goal is to construct a comprehensive “expo-ology” that can serve as a window into human history. Concomitant with this process, our cooperative contact with the overseas researchers who attended the international symposium is being maintained and has already deepened.

I would finally like to offer my sincere thanks to the group research project members who

helped organize the international symposium, my colleagues at Nichibunken's Research Cooperation Division, who worked so hard behind the scenes, and the members of Nichibunken's Publication Office, who edited this volume.

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