

Day 3: October 29, 2006

Closing Remarks

WAKIMURA Kohei

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I believe the time remaining is very pressing, so I would like to be brief. My title or the title of myself is deputy dean in English, so I am just a housekeeper, the man who does miscellaneous duties. When it comes to education in the university, I teach Asian economic history. In research, I majored in the socio-economic history of India, so you can consider myself as a historian.

The role to be played or assigned to me is delivering the concluding remarks, but already wrap-up comments have been delivered at the end of the eighth session, so allow me to make two impressions at the very end of this symposium. I have been listening to the presentations for the past three days. Allow me to make my impressions as an audience.

To be candid with you, when it comes to the East Asian community I had a very pessimistic view and outlook, the reasons being East Asia has not come to a matured stage or environment, unlike that of Europe. But after listening to all the discussions in the symposium, I started to reconsider such notion of mine. But having said that, I am not saying I'm fully persuaded to have the optimistic view for the future, but rather, for the realization of the East Asian community there is only an extremely difficult roadmap. Especially on day 2, the discussions in session 4 and 5, security issue was discussed in depth and the more we realized the importance of security, the most difficulty I came to realize. But in spite of that understanding I was to some extent convinced of the needs and significance of the community.

In the first session and the second session on day 1 there was the discussion on the finance and currency, and in the last session the needs of de-dollarization was strongly appealed. That was the very strong inspiration and impression I've had. Therefore, in order to understand the significance of realizing the East Asian community, it is quite natural that there should be the very assertive single currency movement.

But in the third session on day 2, when it comes to regional market integration, probably we do not see the deep primary significance. By several presenters, RTAs have to be open regional RTAs, but at any rate we hope that we will be able to continue to have the merits and demerits of regional integration and RTAs from the various perspectives very seriously.

I have said I am a historian, so allow me to make a comment on the historical issues.

Today there was the presentation and discussion on the history in session 7. In East Asia this historical issue is an extremely difficult one. The historical issue is very much pertinent to the past 100 years in modern history. Needless to say, this historical issue is very much linked with the roles played by Japan in East Asia, but I do not intend to go into discussion of this complex issue, but allow me to make a few more minutes' comment.

Before we moved into the modern period, in the early modern period, from the sixteenth through eighteen centuries, there was the very important international relationship in Asia. The recent Asian economic history research has elucidated what happened during that period. In Asia in those days, in the Indian Ocean, South China Sea and East China Sea there were quite buoyant trade activities. Southeast Asia was acting as the bridge for such trade. In those seas, there were a lot of activities and roles by the overseas Chinese and Indian merchants. In that sense, the Dutch East Indian Company was also actively involved in the Asian trade in those days. So the economic interdependence of Asia can date back to that period. Therefore, when we talk about the future of the East Asian community we have to have the long perspective in looking at the situation.

As was discussed in session 6, the proposal was made for the establishment of a research institute for Asian regional integration. Hopefully, I hope that such institution will be equipped with research on humanities and social science focusing on history because of my expertise.

Lastly, Mr. Nagao, who was acting as the general coordinator, said "last but not least" he mentioned earlier. Through the discussions at this symposium I myself was very much inspired. For this reason I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all the speakers, and our Graduate School of Economics of Osaka City University was able to complete this important mission together with the Delegation of the European Commission to Japan headed by Dr. Reiterer.

Today it gives us great privilege and I express my deepest appreciation to the Delegation of the European Commission to Japan. And I would like to thank the interpreters lastly. Furthermore, I would like to thank the staff members, especially the graduate school students of the School of Economics of Osaka City University. Thank you very much. This concludes my concluding remarks.