

Preface

Foreword

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The Ninth Annual Meeting of the Society for Cultural Interaction in East Asia was held at the Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) in May 2017, titled “A Global Perspective on the Past and Knowledge Transfer in East Asia”.

Three scholars were invited to the meeting as keynote speakers. Professor Alfons Labisch, former president of the University of Dusseldorf and member of the Leopoldina, National Academy of Sciences in Germany, who made a speech on “Eurasian Transfer of Knowledge vs. Eurasian Interchange of Knowledge (The Times before Writing)”. He said that one-way “knowledge transfer” we had talked about in the past was no longer applicable, and it might be more fruitful if we conducted relevant research from the perspective of two-way “knowledge exchange” which involves the process of knowledge input and output. An emeritus professor at the Kansai University, Akira Matsuura 松浦章, explained the contribution of the four ancient Chinese vessels to the oceanic trade of East Asia and Southeast Asia during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912) in his speech entitled “The history of the East Asian Sea Exchange in the Qing Dynasty”. Professor Charles Willemen, member of Belgian Royal Academy of Sciences and Rector of the International Buddhist College in Thailand, made a speech titled “Buddhism Links More Than East Asia”, elaborating on the internationalization of Chinese Buddhism. Nearly 200 scholars and students from more than 10 countries gave presentations in 36 sub-forums and held discussions on “A Global Perspective on the Past and Knowledge Transfer in East Asia”.

A global perspective of the past is a new perspective and method of historical research and writing. It proposes to compile world history from a macro perspective or to inspect the micro-cases from a holistic approach focused on inter-connection, or to treat some transnational historical phenomena beyond the confines of the nation-state point of view. The

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research objectives, methodology, interdisciplinary features and digital means of cultural interactions were reviewed from a global perspective in the meeting so as to establish a study of Cultural Interaction in East Asia, including the histories of all countries in this area, with a horizon beyond national history, and understanding global change from the an interaction centric point of view.

The significance of this meeting mainly embodies the application of the following three aspects of the methodology. The first is a pan-cultural horizon. It truly looks beyond the confines of nation-states to study historical phenomena of cross-national, cross-regional, cross-cultural and cross-linguistic interaction. The second is a view of interaction which focuses on the research of historic relationships in interactive networks, understanding the history of East Asia and other countries in the world from the perspective of interaction, which means people in different regions, nationalities, and cultures interact with each other in the fields of economy, politics and culture by contact throughout history. The third is the integrated use of interdisciplinary research methods- anthropology, sociology, economics, geography and even a variety of natural science methods have been applied in the study of cultural interaction in East Asia.

The Tenth Annual Meeting will be held at the City University of Hong Kong in 2018 which will focus on “Maritime East Asia – Network, Exchanges and Mobility”. The history of East Asian cultural development not only has its own unique tradition, but also continuously innovates and experiences breakthroughs by the exchanges and interactions in East Asia and between East Asia and the world. It is through the study of cultural interaction in East Asia that we can truly understand that the civilizations of East Asia today are the result of the exchanges and collisions with different cultures and reveal the global significance of East Asian culture.