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## Introduction

MATSUKATA Fuyuko

### About this Booklet

This booklet is a report of the Open Seminar of the University of Tokyo Humanities Center(HMC) held on 29 November 2019, with two researchers from South Korea and two from Thailand. I am very thankful to the speakers and the audience, as well as the HMC staff who dedicated their support for the seminar.

The seminar was very successful. I found researchers from abroad, including from Germany, Korea, the Netherlands, Taiwan and the United States among the audience members. I am very pleased with the fruitful discussion that followed the speakers' presentations. The general discussion continued for two hours, but it



(image1) Workshop, 29 November 2019  
At the Ito International Research Center, the University of Tokyo

seemed short to me.

The workshop was challenging in terms of the subject and scholarly collaboration and turned out quite attractive to scholars outside our circles as well. So, I thought it would be a good idea to publicize our efforts as a part of the HMC booklet series. It was about two years later when I encouraged myself to ask the speakers for help, but the speakers were very cooperative and quickly sent copies of their papers.

Yet, the editorial process of this booklet was also challenging.

Initially, I tried to use the transcriptions of the delivered talks as a basis for published versions, but it was very difficult to transcribe recordings in a mixture of languages of English, Japanese and Korean. I had to change my approach.

When Prof. Dhiravat kindly contributed a complete paper in the style of a publishable article, I decided to edit each based on their respective papers. However, the style of their papers differed from one another.

The researchers from Thailand earned their PhDs in Leiden and London, receiving training in the European academic tradition. Their papers match the typical approach and style of English-language academic articles.

On the other hand, the Korean researchers are from a different tradition. As Prof. Koo spent two years at Harvard University and Prof. Jung studied in Hawaii and spent half a year at the University of British Columbia in Canada, they speak fluent English. But they are not accustomed to formal academic writing in English. Prof. Koo said that the seminar was the first time for him to present his paper in English. Prof. Koo and Prof. Jung kindly contributed the scripts from which they read at the seminar. I asked Dr. Travis Seifman, postdoctoral researcher at the University of Tokyo Historiographical Institute, for help. Having attended the seminar, he devoted time to adapting these English-language presentation scripts (based on the original

Korean-language versions of their papers<sup>1)</sup>) into a form more closely resembling the typical form of papers published in English-language scholarship.

That is why this booklet consists of two or three types of papers. To tell the truth, I gave up on unifying the style. Ultimately, I see no need to unify them. The world is diverse. Nevertheless, we would like to exchange our knowledge and share the fruits of our research efforts. If so, why should we give up publishing booklets, saying that we cannot unify the format?

In the end, the accumulation of such small efforts itself might be the process of internationalization. It is extremely difficult to write in English while we continue to read and write Japanese or Korean literature. Writing English is not only writing in English, but also reading English historiography, facing Anglophone and global audience, following Anglophone customs and restrictions. This booklet is one attempt to alleviate that difficulty. In other words, the creation of booklets such as this one is not only an end but also a means of internationalization.

The following is a reconstruction of my introduction for the seminar.

### **The Background: The Shuinsen (Red-Seal Ships) Project**

First, I would like to explain the backgrounds of today's session. I served as a leader of the Red-Seal Ships Project, or the Shuinsen Project from 2015 to 2018. "The Red-seals Ships in the Asian Settings: 'State Letters' and Envoys Sent To and From Japan in the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Centuries" research project was supported by the JSPS KAKENHI Grant number 15H03236, the Kajima Foundation,

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the Mitsubishi Foundation (For the details of the project: [https://www.hi.u-tokyo.ac.jp/personal/fuyuko/kaken/shuinsen\\_aboutus.html](https://www.hi.u-tokyo.ac.jp/personal/fuyuko/kaken/shuinsen_aboutus.html)). As a result of this research, I published an edited volume *Kokusho ga musubu gaiko* (*Correspondence between Crowns*). The key concepts of this book were kokusho, or state letters, and passes.

Today, I will focus on the former. *Kokusho* is a familiar term when discussing diplomatic history in Japan, but has never been adequately examined in the academic sphere. What, then, is a state letter? We define it here as “a diplomatic letter sent by one head of state and addressed to another.”



(image 2) *Kokusho ga musubu gaiko*  
(University of Tokyo Press, 2019)



(image 3) Baan Hollanda  
(The site of the factory of the Dutch East India Company in Ayutthaya)



(image 4) Chulalongkorn University



(image 5) Prof. Koo and I,  
in the library of the  
Seoul National University,  
Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies  
in March 2017

Images 3 and 4 are taken by  
Matsukata in February 2017.

Through the project, I visited Chulalongkorn University in Thailand and the Seoul National University in Korea in 2017. At Chulalongkorn, I saw my old colleague, Bhawan, and talked about the possibility of future collaboration. At the Seoul National University, Dr. Kanako Kimura, present today, introduced me to Prof. Koo and Prof. Jung.

After a short discussion, I found that Korean and Thai researchers understood our concept, *kokusho* or state letters, without any explanations. This was very surprising since when I talked in front of American and European researchers, they didn't understand my concept and I had to explain a lot. But I found that we (the Japanese, Koreans, and Thais) share a history of diplomacy!

Until now, however, I was able to hold only dialogues, i.e., Korean-Japanese or Thai-Japanese dialogues. Today I would like to create a triologue with a discussion among the three. I invited two researchers from Korea and two researchers from Thailand. I heard that no one reads classical Chinese in Thailand, and no one reads seventeenth century Dutch in Korea. I hope that this can be a good opportunity to exchange our knowledge.

The first and second presenters are from Chulalongkorn University, and they are historians of European interactions. And the third and fourth presenters are from South Korea and engage in research based on mainly Chinese sources.



(image 6) International Workshop, 19-21 February 2019, also attended by the graduate students of Chulalongkorn University's History Department



(image 7) In August 2019, I had an honor of talking in front of the team for editing *Comprehensive History of Korean-Chinese Diplomatic Relations* and research on Korean-Chinese Diplomatic History.

After finishing the Shuinsen Project, Bhawan and I held a workshop in Bangkok. This is a picture of the international workshop “Correspondence between Crowns: Asian Diplomatic Practice in the 17th-19th Centuries” held in Chulalongkorn University in February 2019 (see image 6). Later, in August, Prof. Koo and Prof. Jung kindly gave me an opportunity to talk in front of their research team (<韓中 外交史 總覽> 編纂斗 韓中關係史 研究팀) (see image 7).

### **From Dialogue to Trialogue: We share a history**

As we share a history of diplomacy, I do not think we need to discuss concepts further. I would like to make comparisons of history on the ground, looking at sources. I hope that presenters will talk about interesting sources.

My only concern is a gap of languages. The historian's thinking is influenced by the historical documents she or he is reading. The Thai presenters mainly use Dutch sources and the Korean professors use Chinese ones.

Through the Red-Seal Ship's project, I found it very difficult to talk among the researchers who read Chinese sources and those who read European sources. Even within Japanese academia, I find it difficult to bridge the difference between the Chinese-writing world and the Western-language world.

In Japan, Western concepts are translated into Japanese using Chinese terms. The Chinese terms, however, have their original implications in the context of Chinese (sometimes ancient) writings. We are usually unconscious about the difference of the implications of one word. In order to make a fruitful discussion, we have to be aware: Are you using the word as a translation of a Western concept? Or, are you using it as the original Chinese sense? Conversely, when we talk in English, we have to be conscious about the diverse of the meanings of a word. But this is just a trial.

Also, through our Shuinsen Project, we became aware that my arguments regarding “diplomacy with state letters” may appear too Japan-oriented or Japan-

based. We tend to overlook the relationship between diplomacy and warfare because actually there have been few threats of war in Japan, maybe thanks to the location of our country. So, both in Korea and in Thailand, it was pointed out that the Japan-bias is strong, and this remained an issue. Therefore today, we would like to listen to their talks and then have varied examples, and try to come to more general understandings.

Let me briefly introduce our topic today as in the subtitle, I used the word “global,” by which I mean just “not Eurocentric.” In Korea, it was suggested to me that I should use the term “comparative,” or perhaps another similar term, but I think “comparative” sounds more based in national history. I do not wish to connect this to national history. I would like this to be more general but I do not wish by usage of the term “global” to suggest integration. Again, this session is just a trial. This is the first time for us to get together and talk together.

So everyone does not have to be perfect and in order to realize this triologue, our first language should be English because the one language almost all of us share today is English. Japanese audience is also a part of this discussion, so Japanese is also welcome, and Japanese and Korean language share grammar and Chinese terminology. I asked students from South Korea who study at University of Tokyo to provide their support in interpretation. Therefore, please do not hesitate to raise your questions or remarks in Japanese and also in Korean if necessary. But at the same time, please don't rely too much on the interpretation support. As I said, translation and interpretation are very difficult. It is a creative effort, so please appreciate the effort if they support us. Yet still English is the only language we, the five researchers from three countries, share, although I myself am far from confident.

Thank you very much for your cooperation and I am looking forward to fruitful discussions.

## <Program>

The University of Tokyo Humanities Center, Open Research Seminar (Special)

Royal Letters, Imperial Documents:

A Japanese, Korean and Thai Trialogue for a Global History of Inter-State Relations

Organized by the University of Tokyo Humanities Center / LIXIL Ushioda East Asian Humanities Initiative

Co-organized by the Historiographical Institute, the University of Tokyo

Date: Friday, 29 November, 2019 13:00-19:00

Venue: 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Ito International Research Center, the University of Tokyo

Language: English, Korean, Japanese

All the papers will be presented in English, but the discussion will be held trilingually.  
The PPTs might contain Chinese characters.

Chair: MATSUKATA Fuyuko

(Historiographical Institute, the University of Tokyo)

13:00-13:20 Introduction

13:20-14:00 Bhawan Ruangsilp (Chulalongkorn University)

“Siamese-Burmese Diplomacy: A Study of the Royal Letters of the 1630s”

14:00-14:40 Dhiravat na Pombejra (formerly Chulalongkorn University)

“Chaophraya Phrakhlang’s 1703 letter on behalf of King Seu to the *Hoge Regering*: Trade, Treaty and the Royal Command

<Tea Break>

15:10-15:50 JUNG Donghun (Seoul National University of Education)

“Imperial Word, Spoken and Written: Two Dimensions of Sino-Korean Relations in the Early 15<sup>th</sup> Century”

15:50-16:30 KOO Bumjin (Seoul National University)

“Languages of the Qing Investiture Letters for Chosŏn before the Conquest of China”

<Tea Break>

17:00-19:00 General Discussion