

Report of International Conference

In commemoration of the Executive Committee Meeting of the International Economic History Association, which took place on the 6th and the 7th of November 2008 at Inamori Foundation Memorial Hall, Kyoto University, a symposium “Multiple Paths of Economic Development in Global History” was held from the 8th to the 9th of November. It was organised jointly by the Global COE Programme “In Search of Sustainable Humansphere in Asia and Africa”, and the Scientific Research Project (20242013) on “New Development of Global History Studies and the Reconsideration of Modern World-History”, Graduate School of Letters, Osaka University. The event was assisted by the IEHA Sub-Committee, Economics Committee, the Science Council of Japan, and received financial support from three learned societies relating to economic history; the Socio-economic History Society of Japan, the Business History Society of Japan, and the Political Economy and Economic History Society of Japan.

IEHA was established in 1960, and this is the second time that the Executive Committee meeting was held in Japan. The idea of a symposium emerged, partly to help funding, but primarily to create an opportunity for face-to-face discussion between the members of the Executive Committee and leading Japanese economic historians. All the office holders of the IEHA and most of its members participated, while the organising committee asked some of the leading scholars from the three learned societies to join. Members of Global COE programme and the global history research project were also invited. Altogether, approximately sixty people attended from sixteen countries.

The theme of the symposium was how to locate the different paths of economic development each region or country followed in the context of global history. There has been a vision of global history with the single path, that it, the Western path dominating the course of global history; more recently, there was a two-paths thesis, which argues that another, East Asian path, was important in pushing the diffusion of industrialisation forward. This symposium examined the possibility of formulating the “multiple paths” view of global history, in which tropics, as well as temperate-zone countries, would feature largely.

Eleven papers were presented and almost an equal number of discussants made comments on each paper. There was a constant exchange of ideas, and the organisers have received high appreciation from a number of participants afterwards. A proceeding will be compiled and submitted to funding organisation and societies, but, more important, a few seminal papers, taking into account the discussion in Kyoto, are expected to come out in various international journals.

The final programme is attached.