

Opening Speech

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Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to host a summer seminar on ancient history with two foreign scholars. Let me introduce these two scholars briefly. As we all know well, Professor KIM kyung-hyun from Korea University in Seoul is one of our important colleagues of the Japanese-Korean Symposium held every three years since 1985. Professor HUANG Yang of Fudan University in Shanghai has long studied the land-holding system in ancient Greece and obtained a doctor's degree from the University of London. He, too, was one of the main Chinese researchers at the Third International Conference on Ancient History held in Fudan University last year in which we, the six Japanese, participated. As you can find in the program, they are going to give us their papers on interesting themes tomorrow.

This summer seminar is a preliminary meeting for 2007 Tokyo Symposium for the promotion of the Greek and Roman studies in Asia with the participation of Korean, Chinese, and Japanese scholars. This Tokyo Symposium will be held under the common theme "City, State, and Empire---the Ancient Mediterranean World from East-Asian Viewpoints". It goes without saying that the studies on Ancient Greek and Roman history have been advanced mainly in European and American academic communities, and our Asian communities have attempted to catch up with them, modeling ourselves after their research.

In European and American studies, however, we can occasionally find some biased view which European and American scholars are not aware of. For example, they hold a view that justice or righteousness is always on the side of the Roman Empire, or take an attitude that the ethnic factors and the indigenous cultures are inferior in quality to the Greek and the Roman civilization. This often leads to the following opinion that the Roman Empire was a state which had to be highly appreciated, because she civilized the barbarians by bequeathing the Greek culture and Christianity to them. I suspect that behind this kind of thought there must be a nationalism and a pursuit of the national

interest in the nineteenth century Europe. Contrary to their belief there existed many original cultures and various places of indigenous lives in non-Roman areas. We have to rest our gaze more on the diversity of the areas which had been occupied by the Roman Empire. It is very important, for us the Asians, that we study Greek and Roman history with a research perspective different from those of the Europeans and the Americans, though referring to their accomplishments.

Lastly, I would like to remark on the relation of the Japanese and other Asians, including the Koreans and the Chinese, in the contemporary history. As we all know, Japan colonized Korea and invaded other Asian countries, China included. The Japanese certainly followed the European and the American imperialistic models from the second half of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century. Since the end of the Second World War we have strived to construct a New Japan after taking an oath to promote "Peace and Democracy", but it is to be regretted that even now there are some Japanese, especially in younger generation, who have not yet deeply reflected on our aggression on Korean and Chinese people before the Second World War, as we see in the case of some politicians including ex-prime minister who paid homage at Yasukuni-jinja Shrine every year. We have to admit our past aggression and apologize for it. Only after that can we really stand on the equal position. We must have respect mutually for the diversity of the Asian countries and study each other their/our culture and history in the equal relation. It is necessary for us to have this viewpoint when we research on the ancient Greek and Roman history, too. I'm sure that the research on the relationship between the Greek/Roman world and the Oriental one, on the non-Greek or on the non-Roman world will defeat a narrow-minded and intolerant nationalism and will cultivate the mutual understanding among us. I hope this seminar will be a successful one, and our mutual understanding will deepen and widen furthermore.

Thank you very much.