International Conference of Revisited Asian Society:

Exploration of Asian Indigenous Perspective

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Humanities and social sciences are characterized by the indigenous nature of research objects when compared with natural sciences in which universal facts are pursued. The indigenous nature is also reflected in research stance in which concepts and theories that are never free from cultural and historical constraints should be emphasized. However, major portion of study in humanities and social sciences has been affected by the concepts, theories and methodologies that were originally developed by Western researchers. Learning from the West was certainly required in the past, but it is time now when we, Asian researchers, should remind ourselves of the undeniable fact that we live in Asia, an area that consists of many countries which share historical and cultural background. It is time for us to start exploring our own studies intensively based on our own concepts, theories and methodologies.

In exploring our own way to go, we have to be careful not to exclude Western researches. Actually, a few Western researchers are already convinced that their academic activities have been bounded by their own historical and cultural background and thus it is simplistic to see phenomena in other areas of the world from their own perspective. Moreover, they are keenly interested in what and how new researches can emerge among those who have different historical and cultural heritage. It is productive to invite such Western researchers to join our challenge to explore our own way of studies.

Needless to say, many countries in Asia are different from each other historically and culturally while they have communalities. Here, differences and communalities should be examined simultaneously, that is, difference can be illuminated on the basis of communality while communality can be discovered in the investigation of differences. We should remember it without repeating the failure that was once made by Western researchers who were fascinated by Orientalism.

The need to develop Asian local-based knowledge has become an increasing necessity. The global financial crisis in the United States and Western Europe, triggered by the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in the U.S, indirectly raised anticipation amongst the world’s citizens for the resurgence of Asia to accelerate the world’s economic recovery. This time is the momentum of Asian social scientists to revive something that has existed in the long history of Asian’s civilization. The effort to produce the Asian knowledge is important because as it had been

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predicted by some experts, within the next few years, Asia will be the determinant of the direction of world. The objective of the conference is to discuss how best to work together to contribute to the Asian knowledge production that will be responsive to social changes and problems in Asian society. The anticipated results of the conference are: (a) International networking to encourage the Asian scientists to produce the Asian knowledge that is responsive to social change and problems in Asian society; (b) Establishing an academic association on Asian Studies to implement the missions of Asian knowledge production in face-to-face trust relationships, at once to preserve diversity and cultural heritage in the context of globalized society in this region.

Purposes of the conference

We have three purposes in the project. First, we aim at facilitating sharing concrete studies carried out in different areas or countries in Asia. Basically, the studies presented in the proposed symposium are not laboratory studies in an abstract situation but field studies that focus on a concrete phenomenon in a real concrete situation. Only such reality-based studies can bring mutual understanding of both communalities and differences among different societies in Asia to people whose historical and cultural backgrounds differ from each other.

Second, we emphasize not only descriptive approach but also practical approach. In humanities and social sciences, it is impossible for a researcher to be neutral or independent from the phenomenon he/she observes. Interaction is inevitable between a researcher and a research object regardless of whether or not he/she wants because the object, or a part of the object, is a human being. If so, more active interaction can be assumed between the both so that collaborative practice by the both is accepted or even appreciated. Action-research that is implemented to resolve practical problems is emphasized in our symposium.

Third, possibilities of new theoretical perspective are discussed. Western perspective has been characterized by the reduction of phenomena into elements and the attempt to reproduce the phenomena by synthesizing knowledge of the elements. Even most system theories are not exceptional for this. But, more holistic perspective might be possible. For example, it might be possible to assume that an individual person is not a fundamental element of a group or society but is crystallized as something like a point that is characterized by multiple belongingness to a unique set of groups, organizations and communities.

We invite scientists, researchers, students and other parties who are interested in ‘Exploration of Asian Indigenous Perspective: Communalities and Differences’ in multi-disciplinary perspectives of social sciences and humanities including economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, history, psychology and etc.

See you in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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Organizer
The Center for Research and Social Partnership
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