

GCOE Summer Program 2012: Special Session

*On the Road to BRIT XII: The Making of a Worldwide Community of Border Studies*

15:40 - 17:10 (July 31, 2012)

Room 403, Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University

One of the many ambitions of the Global COE program on border studies has been to bring the BRIT (Border Regions in Transition) conference to Japan. By co-hosting this event with one of its Asian neighbors, the aim is to enhance border studies across Eurasia and to expand Japan's connections with the global network of border researchers. To that end, researchers from both Japan and abroad have been working feverishly in the build-up to BRIT XII. To be held in Fukuoka/Busan (Nov. 13-16, 2012), BRIT XII has already attracted around 200 presenters from 40 countries and includes many distinguished border studies experts and practitioners from Europe, North America, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Russia, and China. Today's Special Session, in collaboration with the Global COE summer school, follows the core principles of the Program and outlines the framework of the coming BRIT as a forum for encouraging productive debates on developing border-related practices and theories, while at the same time cultivating promising young researchers. Akihiro Iwashita, Coordinator of the BRIT XII, will moderate the session.

\*Participants are encouraged to watch beforehand the online video of the pre-BRIT event at the East-West Center in Washington:

<http://www.eastwestcenter.org/node/33528>

\*For more details on the BRIT XII:

<http://www.borderstudies.jp/brit2012/top.html>

## Speakers:

Paul Richardson, Assel Bitabarova, Hiroshi Fukuda, Akihiro Hirayama, Tetsuro Chida



### (Akihiro Iwashita)

Fujimori-san asked me to finish this session exactly on time because the sushi will be ready for us around 5.30 pm. I guess the sushi bar may be more important than this session (laugh).

Everyone must have this handout advertising the coming BRIT-2012 in Fukuoka and Busan; in the back of this handout, you can see an explanation about BRIT-2012, so I am not going to mention it in too much detail and will start this session now. This special session is a process preparing for the coming BRIT-2012.

Since being invited as the next host at BRIT-XI in Geneva/Grenoble last year, we have been working hard in preparing for BRIT-2012. We are faced with various challenges such as conference venue, location, transportation etc. and most importantly, the program. Last month, we organized a pre-BRIT event in Washington. Then, we invited Dr. Martin Pratt from IBRU (International Boundaries Research Unit), and you may have already enjoyed his photos; Dr. Tony Payan, the former president of ABS (Association for Borderland Studies) and Dr. Satu Limaye, the director of the East-West Center. Their participation made a very great contribution to public sciences, especially to the Washington research community of border studies. The topic was mainly on China and it appeared that most researchers in Washington are interested in China. Because we planned the discussion to be on China border and maritime border issues, the venue was packed with more than 70 to 80 participants. You have probably already seen the video of this at the website of the East-West Center Washington.

Today is the second pre-BRIT event. However, this time we invited younger researchers from various backgrounds. Let me briefly introduce each panelist. First, Fukuda-san, is a historian specializing on Central Europe. He attended the BRIT Geneva/Grenoble and the ABS conference.

The next is Chida-san, who is also a historian but specializing on Central Asia. His recent research covers environmental issues. Because Chida-san only joined us recently, later he will share with us how he is amazed at the process of figuring out what border studies are on his own terms.

And the next is Paul Richardson from the United Kingdom. Paul, in contrast to most Japanese researchers, is very familiar with border studies. He is not a historian but a geographer focusing on Russia. Paul speaks Russian well. He now pays more attention to Japan's borderland issues since he has been staying here for two years. In the last GCOE Border Studies DVD I presented Yaeyama, and Paul was the supervisor of the English translation.

The next is Assel Bitabarova, from Kazakhstan. She just started her PhD program and is very talented in speaking many languages, including Chinese, Russian, Kazakh, English and Japanese. She works on the Central Asian countries and their relations with China.

Finally, the last panelist is Hirayama-san. His research is mainly on Southeast Asia, and Vietnam in particular. He is also a historian, but I personally don't think so. To me, he is more like an expert in literatures but pretending to be a historian (laugh). He speaks Vietnamese. He is related to the Southeast Asian border research community and hence in charge of inviting the Southeast Asian community to us. That is his mission.

So now, let's start the discussion before opening the floor to any questions. Two questions, I put forward for the panelists to discuss.

*The First Question: How do you understand border studies? What are its key points and characteristics? What are its strengths and weaknesses as a discipline? How is border studies related to area studies? In what ways can border studies move beyond area studies?*

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Paul, as a geographer, you must be the most familiar with the border studies among the panelists. Tell us about your concept and opinion?

**(Paul Richardson)**

Thank you for your introduction. I am not sure how familiar I am with border studies. Certainly, sometimes, historians are more familiar with borders, in time, and maybe I am more familiar with spaces. And that at least tells us about the great strength of border studies. It's a broad church. You look at the panelists here and the scholars who have gathered for BRIT. We are people from all continents,

all different spaces, disciplines and theories. Border studies brings all these communities together, which geography does to some extent but it still has its own disciplinary boundaries. Border studies, paradoxically, does not have its own disciplinary boundaries and it welcomes everyone.

One important characteristic of border studies is that border studies does not exclusively focus on international borders as it can equally be concentrated on administrative, ethnic, social, regional and cultural borders. Also, the emphasis is not just on how borders divide and separate but how they offer a way of connecting peoples and places. One example I could take from northern England is Hadrian's Wall, which is the border wall constructed by the Roman Empire. Some people view it as a wall between barbarians and civilization. Yet archeologists have reexamined this border and realized that it was actually a connection. People came to this border to trade, to meet with each other, to bring goods and to exchange information. It is the opposite of what if first appeared and borders have a habit of being not what they at first appear to be.

Today there are some debates on how border studies should evolve. Some people hope to make it a science or develop a universal theory out of border studies. However, the prevailing trend today is seeing borders as socially constructed and examining the intended, and often unintended, consequences of bordering practices. Because of such great diversity, I think another characteristic of border studies is that it is a research area where disciplinary boundaries are frequently crossed and mixed. This gives me new insights in my own work from various viewpoints. It also allows researchers and academics to meet with colleagues from diverse and different backgrounds and through this, border studies has an innovative edge and is a subject in which ground breaking ideas can be articulated.

In terms of border studies' relation to area studies, border studies is not analogous to Area Studies as borders often transcend regions. As an example, Russia is

usually situated in European area studies, yet it also has an extensive border with Asian countries and even the United States. Border studies can try to unify or provide a link between areas that would be missed with traditional area studies. There are also certain universal practices to bordering and I think this gives border studies a space for theories to compare different regions. There are some universal characteristics of border studies worth exploring. Borders studies ultimately encourage researchers to look beyond the borders of their own regional interests.

Last but not least, I will end on the important point that border studies as a discipline often gives a voice to communities and people on the geographical peripheries, who are often at the social and economic margins of society. This is another of its key strengths and distinctions from area studies.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Thanks. Fukuda-san, you are a historian of Central European area. .What do you think of border studies from your area studies experiences and discipline?

**(Fukuda Hiroshi)**

Last year, I moderated a panel at an international symposium held here at the Slavic Research Center. The title of the panel was “Divided Spaces: Jerusalem, Mostar, Ireland and Okinawa.” It was unthinkable for me to squeeze such disjointed areas into one panel. I’m a historian of Central and Eastern Europe (especially of the Czech and Slovak Republics), mostly focusing on the same narrow area. I joined the border studies project here two years ago, and I could not understand why Prof. Akihiro Iwashita was intent on mixing such various areas at first.

However, I realized that border studies can have a strong brainstorming effect on area studies. Previously, I had not imagined comparing border issues of Slovak-Hungary with that of Japan-Russia, for example. But, such a

seemingly-strange combination provides quite new perspectives for area studies. Every area has its own context and area researchers are also living under certain circumstances. If we're lucky, we can find something by mixing various areas. If not, we would get only a hotchpotch or area studies. Frankly speaking, border studies might be a kind of gamble. It is an advantage of border studies, and also a disadvantage.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

This is one of the remarkable points of border studies. A historian never imagines such a comparison. I believe all of the participants would get a new idea and thinking from the unimaginable combination. This style comes from the tradition of geography. Geography allows anything to be compared as long as it is spatial. However, this style of comparative studies also has some problems. Chida-san, a historian of Central Asia area but also a newcomer to us, you should have some complaints about border studies...

**(Tetsuro Chida)**

I don't think that border studies is an academic discipline, rather a kind of framework of studies or place for multidisciplinary discussions, which relate to phenomena occurring in specific border regions, across administrative, natural and social borders, and multilateral phenomena, relating to sovereignty, border control and demarcation of borders.

The similarity between border studies and area studies is their multidisciplinary character. However, these frameworks contain significant differences in approach. On the one hand, only specialists of a certain area of the globe belong to a certain academic society of area studies. Russian or Soviet specialists belong to the Society for Russian Studies, Indian specialists to the Society for South-Asian Studies and so on, which enable regional specialists to have deep and detailed discussions on specific regional topics. But, in principle, the doors of each society are closed to specialists of other regions. On the other hand, border studies

societies are not divided on a regional or disciplinary basis. In the border studies society, sub-sections and sessions at conferences are constructed in conformity with “topics,” like migration, transboundary river management, transportation etc., which let us grasp local border phenomena within a “global” worldview, and allow us opportunities for fruitful comparison of targeted topics in the global context.

Yes. A challenge exists. This character of border studies suffers from certain weaknesses. Frequently there are cases in which no one knows the real circumstances around border phenomena in a targeted region. It is often difficult for us to feel sure about the validity of the presented information by border studies specialists. Actually, it is impossible to fully understand border phenomena without in-depth regional knowledge of several geographical scales. I think it necessary for border studies specialists to belong to both the societies for border studies and area studies to guarantee “correctness” of their knowledge about localities. In this sense, “border studies” and area studies are quite complementary.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Yes. You are absolutely right. We have had such experiences at past GCOE symposium. By the way, Hirayama-san, I think you also did not catch up well with what the border studies are at first. But now you have many experiences of border studies-related conferences, for example ABS, BRIT and the Southeast Asian border studies community. Tell us about it.

**(Akihiro Hirayama)**

In my understanding, border studies is a research field where scholars focus on the diverse issues regarding national borders or borderlands such as border conflicts, cross-border trade, and migration problems. Due to the diversity of its research topics, border-studies requires the combination of other disciplines such as international relations, political science, political geography, sociology,

anthropology, history and so on. I think this interdisciplinarity or academic hybrid approach is an essential characteristic of 'border studies.

However, this also means that border studies often needs to borrow methodological frameworks from other disciplines. In one sense, it could be said that border studies is weak because it lacks an original framework. One of the strengths of border studies is its specific scope on peripheral borderlands, which enables us to relativize the centrality of the heartlands of nation-states and the function of central authorities. Such a peripheral scope could help us to revisit the history of nation-states from de-centralized perspectives. Unfortunately, in the field of area studies of Southeast Asia, both humanities and social sciences have tended to stress the role and ability of central authorities to govern and homogenize their territories, and not to see the limitation and unevenness of their governance. Border studies could put such a tendency in question and contribute to the study of the complicated relation between the center and peripheral borderlands.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

You seem to share similar points to Chida-san. But you suggest a kind of possibility of making a unique discipline of border studies from your field expertise. We will return to this point later. Assel, now you sit here as a representative of the graduate students. You have yet to join the ABS or BRIT but had a chance to join some conferences in the Russian Far East and Georgia. What about your story?

**(Assel Bitabarova)**

When we talk about border studies, we often refer to its conventional meaning, that is, research on border issues and borderlands. However, as traditional ideas of borders are being challenged in complex ways, border studies could be understood in its broader meaning, which includes political geography, migration, environmental management, trade activities, ethnic identity, security issues and

so on. Such a multidisciplinary approach to border-related issues makes it similar to area studies, which also makes claims of utilizing a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approach on a particular (geographical, cultural, etc.) region (African studies, Uighur studies, etc.).

In regard to the peculiarities of border studies, I find it very interesting that peripheral areas, often neglected, are often the focus of border studies research. In addition, border studies tends to take a micro-level approach. Finally, I could point out the “flexibility” of border studies. While there are on-going debates on “Globalization vs. Regionalism,” there is no inherent contradiction between them in border studies. In recent years researchers in the field of border studies have been trying to address the reshaping of borders by both globalization and/or regional integration. It might be one of the ways in which border studies could move beyond area studies.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Ok, thanks. Now the first round has been discussed in a more or less general way. Before opening the floor, let me proceed to the second round of discussion. The second question should be more concrete and detailed.

*The Second Question: Which conferences have you joined related to border studies? How is your specific research related to border studies? How has participation in border studies conferences impacted your research? And in what way?*

**(Akihiro Iwashita)** Here is the second round. Paul, you have recently joined many conferences. Tell me about your experiences first.

**(Paul Richardon)**

I think the question for me is which conferences haven't I been to in the last year! I have been to almost all the conference on border studies and was very fortunate

to have joined them. As I have mentioned, border studies is not completely new for me and I have been familiar with border studies since my undergraduate days. I remembered at that time reading a book by Anssi Passi, a very famous Finnish geographer, on the Russian-Finnish border. It really impressed me because he emphasized that how borders were represented could reveal much about the insecurities, desires and contradictions within the societies that created them. In this respect it had some similarities with Edward Said's work. It was very interesting for me that the border could be a kind of window through which to see wider trends and factors in politics, identity, and society.

In the last year I have joined the key border studies conference at BRIT XI and ABS. The greatest impact that these conferences have had on my research is that they have introduced me to new ideas and approaches that I could not find in Russian studies. For example, the journal *Slavic Review*, or the conference of the Association of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies would never have papers on the India-Bangladesh border; or the struggles of the hill peoples of South East Asia; or issues surrounding the surveying of Nigeria's borders. Yet such papers and presentations have given me new ideas and fresh insights into my own work. By comparing case studies, a new intellectual space is opened up in my own regional interests.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Fukuda-san, you also joined the last year BRIT and the ABS convention. How were they for you?

**(Fukuda Hiroshi)**

Last year, I attended the ABS Conference in Salt Lake City and the BRIT Conference in Geneva/Grenoble. It was my first experience to present in English. As I said before, I'm a historian, and now, I'm interested in the idea of Central Europe. Central Europe might be divided into two types, maybe at the risk of oversimplification: German and non-German. The former type envisions a

German-oriented unit under the auspices of Prussia. The German word *Mitteleuropa* (Middle Europe) was eventually used as a legitimizing term for the expansion of Germany into Eastern European countries during the Nazi era. At that time, quite a few German people thought Germany could not survive with its own territory and needed to expand.

The non-German type was composed of Czechs, Slovaks, and so on. They insisted that such “small” nations could not survive between two regional powers like Germany and Russia (or the USSR), and needed to foster solidarity among Central European countries, but without Germany.

Central Europe had never become a concrete polity with fixed borders, so every politician or scholar in the interwar period had a different image of Central Europe. Since such regional concepts existed also in other areas, it's important to compare ideas across regions. Border studies provides me with a valuable forum to talk with experts from other areas.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Chida-san, didn't you find some positive points of the border studies in your past activity?

**(Tetsuro Chida)**

I'm a newcomer to border studies, and my participation in the annual conference of ABS in April 2012 was an opportunity to join an international academic society related to border studies.

I'm a Soviet historian and use some knowledge of geographical science. My main research topic concerns the history and present situation of trans-boundary river management and water development in Central Asia, more specifically, in the Aral Sea and Ili-Balkhash basins. The Aral Sea basin cuts across five former USSR Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan,

Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) plus Afghanistan and Iran. The latter Ili-Balkhash basin embraces not only Kazakhstan, but also the People's Republic of China. Both basins are located in desert or semi-desert zones with annual precipitation around 100-300 mm. For them, water security is the most critical issue for sustainable development. Soviet authorities tried to artificially control the water balance in the basin under the concept of "Transformation of Nature," which finally led to the death of the large Aral Sea. Today water disputes are quite severe not only in the Aral Sea basin, but also between Kazakhstan and China in the Ili-Balkhash basin. We should approach these problems from various geographical scales - from the village management of water resources up to intergovernmental and international dialogue about water issues.

At the ABS conference, there were no speakers discussing Asian trans-boundary issues except for the Japanese delegates. However, I was really fascinated with presentations by U.S. geographers about U.S.-Canadian and U.S.-Mexican trans-boundary management. For example, one speaker discussed the water management in the Red River basin across the U.S. and Canadian border, mentioning the difficulty to control the "spring flood" caused by thaw water. Seasonal floods are also one of the critical issues in the Aral Sea basin. And I really enjoyed listening to how problems are settled between the U.S. and Canada, comparing them in my mind with Central Asian cases. Then I felt that I would be able to locate my specific study about Central Asia within a broader or global context. This was a great experience for me.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Thank you for identifying the good points. So Assel, you are from Kazakhstan and focus on Central Asian border topics. What experiences do you have from your conference activities?

**(Assel Bitabarova)**

Apart from participation in the previous summer programmes at our centre, I had

a chance to attend a couple of international conferences abroad. One of them, the scientific conference on “Non-governmental dialogue on territorial disputes in the Asia-Pacific Region (APR),” which took place in Vladivostok, Russia, was primarily focused on territorial issues. The other one I attended was the Third Regional Conference of the Central Eurasian Studies Society held in Tbilisi, Georgia. At this conference I participated on a panel called ‘Small States and their Borders’, where I delivered a presentation on Tajik debates over the Tajik-Chinese border settlement. In my research, a border has come to mean not only the physical border or the peaceful settlement of territorial disputes between countries, but also includes security, border management, water management, trade, legal and illegal migration, ethnic minorities on borderlands and other issues.

What was the impact of the participation in the above-mentioned conferences on my research? The two conferences were different in a number of ways. First, while the Vladivostok conference was mainly focused on territorial issues in the APR, the Tbilisi conference focused on Central Eurasia. Second, in terms of participants, as the conference in Vladivostok was co-organized by the Maritime State University and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), it was a good opportunity to interact closely with other academics and NGO activists. So, the conferences have not only provided opportunities for scientific discussions but also the chance to form a more practical understanding of borders and border studies.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Hirayama-san, of course, you joined the previous ABS and BRTI. What did you learn there?

**(Akihiro Hirayama)**

Last year, I attended the previous BRIT Conference held in Geneva and Grenoble. And in April this year, I took part in the Association for Borderlands Studies

Conference held in Houston. I have been conducting research on the mobilization of human and natural resources in northern Vietnam during the period of the war of independence from France and its effect on the control of peripheral borderlands. My research is related to border studies in that it examines the relation between wartime mobilization and the territorialization of borderlands. My participation in the conferences provided me an opportunity to get acquainted with an interdisciplinary way of viewing border studies. Because I am a historian, the knowledge provided by scholars of other disciplines such as political geography is fresh and attractive. I learned that many concepts of political geography, such as scale and place, would be useful and relevant for my research, because warfare and mobilization re-formulated the structure of local, national and international scales in the borderlands, therefore changing the meaning of places for local people. I am now seeking ways to apply what I learned from these conferences in my research.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Now we will open the floor, so we would welcome you to speak about your experiences, your concept of border and border studies and your background research. Please make a comment or ask a question to the panelists. So anyone? You are not stimulated by the discussion yet?

**(Tetsuro Chida)**

I think you are feeling Iwashita-sensei's "history-phobia." Iwashita-sensei seems to despise historiography. But I would like to discuss the participation of historians in border studies. The criticism by Iwashita-sensei is, I think, correct. We are historians and mainly Japanese historians concentrated upon some history of incidences and policies at certain points without taking into account geographical and special factors. . For example, the October Revolution happened in St. Petersburg. The history of the October revolution is traditionally regarded as a one-point history of revolutionary processes in St. Petersburg. This is true.

Geographers, of course, are dealing with space but I think that geographers are also always touching upon the past. So geographers are studying history always I think. But historians, we have not studied geographic knowledge. So I think history should be changed now and especially we have an understanding of geography, this is my opinion. In China, Europe and the U.S., how are historians engaging in border study, this is my question.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

It's a very good question. Please give your background. So if you are a historian, please raise your hand. Okay, please say something about your background and border studies. What is your impression?

**(Wenfeng Bian)**

I come from Beijing University's Department of History. I am very interested in the whole geographical relation of China. In the past, as we all know, China suffered a lot from the imperialist attackers including Japan and other western powers.

I haven't attended any international conference on border studies. In the depth of my heart, I really carefully observed or watched the whole situation which China faces. I wanted to ask you scholars on maritime border studies. How do you evaluate the geographical situation of the main powers of the world? I think, from the aspect of maritime borders, China faces a serious geographical situation. Don't you think so?

**(Paul Richardson)**

I think your question is about how the world views China's borders today or...

**(Wenfeng Bian)**

It's not only today.

**(Paul Richardson)**

In terms of the historical context?

**(Wenfeng Bian)**

Yes.

**(Paul Richardson)**

I think we have an interesting situation today and border studies can bring all of these issues together. We have economic issues, we have geopolitical issues. We have quite different cultural issues. There seems to be a lot of these issues coming together over a very small border dispute or small islands in the middle of nowhere. Very big issues are coming together here. I think there are great differences in understandings of what sovereignty means between the great powers. We have for example the United States which has a networked conception of sovereignty, which relies on overseas bases, free trade and freedom of navigation. China may have a slightly different conception of territory and sovereignty.



And these are all tied together and contemporary border studies would try to demonstrate how these disputes are more than about fishing rights or control of resources. It asks what do these disputes tell us about these big global questions and how they are tied to national identity and how they are tied to very different conceptions of the past. May be you could say in both the Chinese and Japanese case some historical topics in both countries are not so widely debated.

So border studies explores these far wider topics and can break down barriers in perception concerning some of these issues.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

It's quite right. Yes. I understand it's a very good chance to hear the border study experts because we have comparison. So we should listen to the opinion from Central Asia and South East Asia. But I ask you not to respond as a historian but to respond as a geographer or border studies researcher.

**(Assel Bitabarova)**

Yes, but actually the question you asked was about a kind of view in terms of history. Yes, I think this kind of a historical debate still exists. For example, there are certain issues with Central Asia and China's borders and, if I understood you correctly, you just mentioned about imperialistic expansion, for example, in Central Asia there was the case of the Russian Empire. Moreover, there was the so-called Great Game, and, for instance, the Pamirs region is seen as the main theatre of the imperialistic rivalry between the British and Russian Empires, however, we should also keep in mind that the Qing Empire has also played a certain role in this struggle for influence in the region

So, in this respect, it is interesting to compare the works of Chinese and Central Asian scholars – historians or experts in the field of international relations. We can clearly see that understanding history and its interpretation often differ. For example, in regard to territorial issues, specifically to justify the territorial claims

(toward the Central Asian countries), Chinese scholars do not only refer to the legal treaties, such as the Novomargelansky protocol in case of the Sino-Tajik boundary, but also often use historical arguments, such as China's "historical control" over some Central Asian territories or the so-called Chinese tributary system. For instance, the Kokand Khanate paid tribute to the Qing Empire. Although Central Asian scholars admit such concrete historical facts, however, they emphasize that Chinese control was not "historical" but rather sporadic by pointing out their own historical facts, which also sometimes serve to be just a sort of "justifying tool."

**(Akihiro Hirayama)**

In East Asia, I think the historical debate has not so good effects on today's discussion. But for some points it seems to me that the Chinese government tends to historicize or make a story to show us the continuity of their pre-modern dynasties to the modern nation states regarding territory. However, if we see the pre-modern histories in detail, the dynasties could not govern most of the territorial borderlands because they didn't have the detailed geographical knowledge in the sense of modern geography. But China seems to use some kind of histories of dynasties to legitimize the governance of the borderlands South East Asian countries or other areas of the borderlands of China.

I think I'm a historian, but I think that it is better to distinguish history in the pre-modern age from that of modern age. Today's discussion could only refer to the history of modern nations.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Anyone else please? Okay please, are you a historian?

**(Devika Sharma)**

No actually I am not. So I just wanted to put forth, is what I am saying is that I am not a historian. But I have some...

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

No, your background?

**(Devika Sharma)**

International studies. More like thoughts actually only because they were interesting ones to various panelists and hopefully other speakers.

I think like you said border studies is more like a sort of a framework or meeting ground where people from different disciplines, area studies, and different perspectives come together to look at the same concept — the border. Borders could exist in literature, in history, and in popular culture, art and so on. The concept of borders is more like a lens; which once you put it on, you begin to see borders everywhere. That's what brings us here. We're all looking at borders from our different perspectives and all around us — on maps, in the sea, in space and so on.

So from there I am looking at how history is in South Asia — I am not the best representative of historians in India because there are very brilliant historians working in India on Indian history and South Asian history who will be much better and far well versed with various aspects of Indian and South Asian history. But speaking from the border studies lens, what's interesting is that history begins to — if you are seeing it through that lens - history is no longer something that was written long ago like all of you mentioned that in the 1900s there was this war and territories were lost and that's where the conflict starts from and you begin to look like that.

What's interesting to see through border studies is that when you begin to see history it becomes a living memory of a loss and it's not that in the past. And that's very interesting because particularly when countries or conflicts are simmering like the one between India and Pakistan or India and China, history

becomes a very active actor where borders and bordering of relations and bordering of territories and bordering of peoples is concerned. And that's really interesting because if you see India and Pakistan, Pakistan came into being without a history. So essentially, it had to create a history for itself from some combined Indian history, British-Indian history or even a more pre-British era history and sort of bring for itself what it meant for Pakistanis to be Pakistani and for them to have a Pakistani history.

Historical borders are not merely historical remnants of past wars and peace agreements. Historical borders are alive and the past becomes an active player in the bordering of peoples, relations and territories in the present. This is true of South Asia as much as it is of other parts of the world. Cultural othering, implicit in the borders around us, is constantly historicised and given meaning in our present contexts; so much so, that the borders between history and the present begin to blur. In this way, the role of history in understanding and studying borders is a very important and a rich area of analysis of borders.



**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Yes, it's a very important place in recreating and rebuilding the perception of the

border conflicts. So I think that Europe is a very important case — Fukuda-san, your research area is so crazily full of conflicting people, but now it is a very peaceful phase. What representation effect do you have?

**(Hiroshi Fukuda)**

There are so many international territorial disputes so I cannot explain in a short time, but may I comment to Devika Sharma. I was just thinking about geopolitics because the concept of Central Europe was strongly connected to geopolitics at the time because it's a very important point that geopolitics itself was formed in Europe, especially in Germany and of course in the UK, but the German concept in this research field is important. But such kind of concept and image of border or territory region was strongly connected to expansionism of Germany as quite political and dangerous for neighboring countries. That's why after the Second World War, the word geopolitics was not used anymore. It's interesting. In Japan also geopolitics — we don't hear geopolitics in Japanese even now. And so maybe political geography is a new one and has neutralized this term. But as a historian I think it is very important to connect geopolitics and history. But we Japanese are maybe still not discussing about geopolitics well. So it is very important to reconnect the combination of geopolitics with historical research.

Sorry I didn't reply Devika-san but I was thinking about.

**(Paul Richardson)**

Yes, it's a very good point. I think it sums up exactly my thinking. First of all, about the idea of border studies, I think I was a bit misquoted earlier when I said it was a discipline. I don't think that it can exist as a discipline; it's too amorphous. But instead it is a kind of a node to connect things. It's exactly what you said now, first of all, it brings in area studies which are very much related to borders, which brings with it a lot of different opinions, different ideas. But to border studies Centers you should also have economists and historians and geographers and socialists, as well as anthropologists. This is what its strength is. It allows people to come together who wouldn't normally come together. So I don't think it can be

sort of a standalone discipline. Nobody can do all these things; nobody can be an expert on all these different things. Instead we can present our work and be critically assessed in conferences like BRIT by historians, who say, no that's not correct. Then you can go ahead and think about your historical context more. Economists say, no I don't agree with this aspect. I think this allows us to appreciate many different perspectives and this is basically border studies strength.

In terms of a very key point about history's relation with border studies, this is of course very contentious and a very difficult one. I mean contemporary border studies today it is very aware of history, because a lot of what we are often dealing with is historical documents, historical narratives, historical actors. Often in terms of borders of nation states, these are very hot issues.

I think we have to remember that the very concept of national borders is very new. There is an imagined permanence but often these borders are newly or arbitrarily created. And the actors who made these borders, whether it's in the Russian-Japanese case or the case of Britain and Argentina, were not acting in the name of the modern nation states as we know them today. Yet they are taken up by today's nationalists and it becomes a very contentious issue. I think border studies advances critical debate on these issues.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Okay, I want to invite my Finnish friend, because the Karelian Institute is one of the advanced places for border studies and you have many experiences on Russian borders. You have also analyzed representation of Russian-Finnish relations so there is something about...

**(Tatjana Lipiainen)**

Thank you. Well, I don't know if I have that much experience in border studies

myself, because I joined the institute in October. But one thing that I have been wondering about after I have joined the institute is how is border studies different from area studies. And I am kind of hoping to get some answers to this during these few days and summer school here. What is the unique added value of border studies?

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

What kind of difference did you find after you joined your institute? You said that you found a difference between border studies and area studies.

**(Tatjana Lipiainen)**

No, this is what I am trying to discover that, what is the unique difference? What is it that border studies can add that no other — not necessarily discipline — but no other research framework can add. This is something that I am curious about.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Okay, so any other questions?

**(Shuqin Gao)**

My name is Gao Shuqin. I would probably like a discussion between my alumni from Peking University and other historians.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Your background is?

**(Shuqin Gao)**

I have my background but not history.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Geography?

**(Shuqin Guo)**

No.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

What background?

**(Shuqin Gao)**

Maybe, Politics and International Studies. If we look at the historical context, of course in China since the 1990s, between Chinese scholars and Western country scholars particularly between China, the U.S. and EU scholars there were very serious disputes about globalization and attitudes to the sovereignty of states, these disputes reflected and taught people how to look and think about state borders. Definitely different countries have different attitudes and conceptions of globalization and their sovereignty. When we talk about borders, first we are considering political issues. Consequently, where politics lies, the border is built. And second, sometimes very often where the economy lies, the border is built. So when we talk about border disputes we never separate them from their historical context and some scholars and politicians often politicize and economize border disputes. The political-economic perspective of border studies seems to be more promising that is my personal opinion.

However, if we look at what happened recently in the international community, especially international security, political-economic institutions, ideological shifts, particularly after World War II, and recently about the efficiency of global governance and trade mechanisms, as well as environment and climate change at the global level, there has been massive debate, and unpredictable development trends. So the process of regionalization has already reshaped and influenced different countries on certain border studies dimensions.

As in the morning session Professor Iwashita pointed out the role of

internationalization, regional integration, trans-borderization and de-borderization. So I think that is a new research approach to thinking and rethinking a new phenomenon in international border studies. Of course, in different regions, we focus on different border level studies. For example, for Chinese scholars we still focus on border security, border disputes, exclusive economic zones or maritime resources disputes in border areas. But for European Union countries they have started to concentrate on environmental law or common energy external policy, calling all European unique members to implement common policies to address global climate change. This is representative of trans-border international community phenomenon and new approaches to de-borderization studies. Obviously, different approaches and conceptions of border studies exist between the EU and the Asian-Pacific region.

Correspondingly, when we are talking about border issues and border studies, we focused on the exact region, now we are also looking and comparing with other regions. Some rapid gradual transition like recently the Arab spring in North Africa or Middle East, has led some scholars to consider or call them the second color revolution or an opportunity for further extension of the European Union.

I think that regarding border studies, we can adopt different conceptions about the border and border studies. Like in this spring an international conference which the UK Royal geography Society held in London and another geography conference that will be held soon at the Edinburgh University, these conferences have demonstrated new conceptions about the security of geography and how the new geography of security comes to the international community. Consequently, just as traditional security, such as environmental problems and global climate change has shaped new border conceptions, so, as scholars undertaking border studies, shall shift and reshape border studies approaches as well. Thank you very much.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Thank you for the explanation for the current transformation of the China

situation. Any other comment or any other question? Okay, please.

**(J.J. Zhang)**

Thanks for the discussion. I am not a historian, like Paul, I am a geographer. Geography, as you might already know, has always been heavily criticized by sociologists and anthropologists for “stealing” their concepts. But I guess geography for me is like an eclectic platform that brings disciplines together. So I think border studies are kind of similar as well. It acts as a platform to pull in different disciplines... different studies together. I would just like to build on some points that were raised earlier, especially the one on moving beyond conventional meanings of borders, of seeing border as not just physical or static, but going beyond that...to look at social borders as well. So instead of interrogating the concept of border as a noun, we can also use border as a verb. For example, we can look at different social practices...different social bordering of people.

I guess perhaps we could also go beyond the physical border...go beyond the borderland... go beyond the people and go into things as well, especially the materiality of things. I think the video we watched just now on the Yaeyama Islands...I was intrigued by how it portrays the memories of the inhabitants. I think this is where history comes in. Instead of focusing on meta-narratives of macro historical events, we may want to look at micro memories of the people...their personal histories. The documentary looks at the contraband trade, the passports... people’s memories of material culture...going to Taiwan, buying things, and coming back...songs as well. So I guess this is one way to bring forwards the study of borders.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Thank you. Any other questions? Okay, please.

**(Dongmei Chu)**

Hello everyone! Let me introduce myself. My name is Chu Dongmei. I am from

China — the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Sorry for being late, because I missed my plane. I just arrived here. Frankly, I have no history with border studies because in college I studied Russian language and Russian literature and later on my major changed to International Studies. But after graduation maybe god helped me select border studies as my final major. So I am very thankful to the Slavic Research Center for inviting me here. It would be a wonderful learning experience for me and an amazing gift for me. So I wish all of us have a nice stay in Sapporo. Thank you.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Thank you Dongmei-san. China is very important as I told you that China has huge border power in Eurasia, but it is very interesting that her institute - the Research Center for Chinese Border, and History and Geography - is one of the largest centers in social academic science in China. It's very amazing because IBRU (International Boundaries Research Unit) is located at Durham University, it is not in London, it's near Scotland. ABS is developed not in the east coast of the United States but on the west coast. Most east coast guys have ignored for a long time border studies. And in Japan our center is of course Sapporo, it's very much a peripheral area. But China is exceptional. China has a national center for borderland studies in Beijing and they are a very rich institute. So this is, I think, one of the reasons China is so strongly looking at its surrounding borders. Therefore, it is very good to invite the good researchers every year, so thank you for coming.

Before closing the session, I ask final questions to each of you. Because time is limited, please reply as quickly as possible.

*Last Question: This November we will see the first ever BRIT hosted in Asia. How will this develop border studies in Japan? How can border studies in Asia and Eurasia become more connected and integrated as a result of this conference? How can academics and scholars be more effectively connected with practitioners?*

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

The coming BRIT XII is the first symposium in East and Southeast Asia. Hirayama-san, what do you think about the significance?

**(Akihiro Hirayama)**

The next BRIT will become a place where scholars of border studies on Southeast Asia and those focusing on other regions meet together to have dialogue. This is exciting because, unfortunately, there are very few opportunities for such dialogue. It is worth pointing out that in the past two or three years ASEAN started to learn from the experiences of regional integration of the EU, and the EU launched diverse support programs for ASEAN integration. Considering this fact, the next BRIT conference will possibly provide one of starting points to facilitate future collaboration between the two. I really hope this collaboration will be prompted in the field of institutionalization and human resource development. I am looking forward to hearing the practical dialogues regarding diverse border-related issues such as resolution of border conflicts, promotion of cross-border cooperation, and legal and illegal migration problems and problems related to refugees.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

A voice from Central Asia?

**(Assel Bitabarova)**

It is fair to note that, in Japan, or more broadly, in Asia (and not only in Asia), border studies are not well established yet. Although it might sound too simplistic, to develop border studies, the basic things we should consider are the practical needs and academic interest. In regard to the practical needs, it is needless to say how important border issues are to Japan and, in general, Asia, specifically, if we take into account the intensifying maritime boundary disputes in the Asia Pacific Region. In regard to border studies, I suppose it needs a more dynamic promotion. So, in this regard, I believe that BRIT XII will provide the impetus for border

studies in Japan and in Asia as well, as one of its primary goals is to foster relations between scholars on border studies worldwide. Also, it is an exchange of research results, ideas, experiences, etc.

Concerning the question “How can academics and scholars be more connected with practitioners,” it is difficult question to answer. The obvious answer could be to build such a framework for a closer dialogue and interaction. For instance, there is a program on border management in Central Asia at the University of Joensuu (Finland). Another example is the recent establishment of the Japan International Border Studies Network.

**(Tetsuro Chida)**

BRIT in Fukuoka/Busan will be the first opportunity to host a large-scale border studies event in Japan and East Asia as a whole. The stagnation of “political geography” in Japan during the 1970-80s to a certain degree played a role to block the development of border studies. Honestly speaking, I had not known the term of border studies until I started to work here as a research fellow. I had never regarded myself as a specialist of border studies before then. I think that few Japanese people or even scholars know what border studies are. This is our reality. Against this background, our project itself and the annual conference of BRIT in Japan/Korea will be a good opportunity to familiarize Japanese scholars and practitioners with border studies.

Connections between Japanese and European/American border studies will be strengthened as a result of active discussions at the Conference, but it is a bit early to say whether some “integration” of border knowledge in Japan and Europe/U.S. will be achieved because of the lack of recognition given to border studies in academic circles in Japan. Currently our urgent task is to propagate “diversity” of topics in border studies and to involve specialists with various academic disciplines and from different areas.

As for effective connection and cooperation between scholars of border studies and practitioners, I can address a good example in my research field; it is to depict concrete structures of transboundary problems in little known regions of the globe for planners of official development assistance. In the case of Central Asia, Japan is hosting the “Central Asia plus Japan” regional dialogue, which is aspiring for bilateral and multilateral cooperation including transboundary issues. However, there are only a few Central Asian specialists in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japan International Cooperation Agency. Central Asian specialists in Japan have the opportunity to identify transboundary issues, to which Japan can make a contribution with our technology and knowledge, and to formulate concrete technical assistance projects in the region.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Fukuda-san, you well managed the Japan delegation to the last BRIT in Europe. What kind of prospect do you have toward the coming BRIT?

**(Hiroshi Fukuda)**

The coming BRIT in Asia has the potential to become a great forum workable both for scholars and practitioners. Unfortunately, there are a lot of border disputes in Asia. Japan also has territorial issues with South Korea, China and Russia. For example, Japan’s negotiations with Russia over the Northern Territories has gone nowhere for a long time. Public opinion on both sides often becomes nationalistic and uncompromising. Needless to say, BRIT is not a forum for political negotiations, but it could provide opportunities for scholars and practitioners to network.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Finally, Paul. I deeply appreciate your contribution as a special assistant of the coordinator. You well know the details of the program, dialogues among the scientific committee members and the abstracts of the papers. Tell us about your

projection of BRIT.

**(Paul Richardson)**

The next BRIT is a truly unique chance for scholars in Japan to engage with an innovative and dynamic field of scholarship. However, with one or two notable exceptions there are very few scholars in Eurasia and Asia who are familiar with the research going on in this field. Therefore this conference can add new insights and experiences to the discipline from Asian and Eurasian specialists. For the first time ever there will be a strong contingent of scholars from these regions which will give a fresh balance to border studies. It is vital that practitioners are also involved in the border studies community and their cooperation and support is essential for developing border studies. BRIT XII builds on previous conferences by involving the regional administrations in two borderland communities as well as policy makers past and present.

There are of course challenges facing border studies, however, I am convinced that its diversity is its strength. In this context, I believe that a single unifying theory in border studies is unrealistic and unnecessary. Instead what should be encouraged is a discipline that welcomes multiple theoretical approaches. Border studies should offer an intellectual space for positivists to be influenced by post-structuralists and vice versa. The co-existence of competing theories gives border studies a richness that disciplines like American Political Science lack.

Another point is that this BRIT is between Japan and Korea. These two countries have great relations in many respects and some problems in other areas. Last year's BRIT in Geneva and France was very calm. But this one gives us a chance to talk openly and frankly and have a dialogue to exchange with scholars and maybe talk about some of the difficulties over borders shared by Korea and Japan. I think that is very important.

**(Akihiro Iwashita)**

Thank you for joining this special session. We recorded this session. I want to publish this session on the web to express some BRIT messages to the outside world. Is it ok for all of you? If there is no rejection I will prepare the textualization. Ok? Thank you. It is a very good promotion to publicize because there are many people interested in our BRIT XII. If they read today's discussion beforehand, certainly it will stimulate the discussion of the coming BRIT. This special session is also the start for this Summer School, so probably you will have something to add, something to criticize. We keep in mind what border studies is, what impacts on European expertise. We still have time to discuss, four days, five days, six days, of course, including the Sushi bar time. Thank you for coming. It would be our pleasure if you have enjoyed today's discussion and let's give a big hand to all the panelists.

**(Edited by Chierh Cheng & Paul Richardson)**

