



Cosmic Visions from the Asian Big History Association

TSUJIMURA, SUN, KATAYAMA, RODRIGUE & GUARNACCIA

JULY 28TH 2018, THE IBHA CONFERENCE AT VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY, USA

Thank you indeed for coming to see our panel.

This panel is historic because this is the first panel the Asian Big History Association holds officially. Therefore, we want to show our visions and directions.

And by doing so, we hope that this panel will be a starting point to firstly seek for Asian perspectives of BH and then to make BH richer and truly universal.

ABHA formed in 2014



ABHA formed in 2014 during the 2nd IBHA conference in California.

Let me introduce ourselves a little bit.

I am Nobuo Tsujimura, president of the ABHA. I introduced BH to Japanese people for the first time and have been the hub of Japanese BH movement. Now I promote BH education at J.F. Oberlin University in Tokyo.

Sun Yue argues China has her own tradition of BH and, with Chinese wisdom, he tries to add a moral dimension to the BH accounts. Sun has translated many important writings of BH and WH into Chinese.

Hirofumi Katayama started the first BH course at J.F. Oberlin University. To promote BH, he held the BH event in Mexico and made his students dialogue with Indian and Cameroonian students.

Barry Rodrigue has traveled Asian countries including China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam and India and has encouraged to foster Asian unique perspectives. This year he started the first BH course in South Asia at Symbiosis International University in India.

Rachael Guarnaccia conducted the first international communication on BH in Asia between Oberlin in Japan and Symbiosis in India.

ABHA co-hosted a BH conference at Symbiosis, India this year



In this March, ABHA co-hosted a BH conference with Symbiosis International University in India. This had a smashing success. It had free, sunny and lively moods.

The next IBHA conference will be held for the first time in Asia, that is, held at Symbiosis.

So this panel is also a starting point toward 2020.



The Cosmic Feast: The Big-historian Explosion

NOBUO TSUJIMURA

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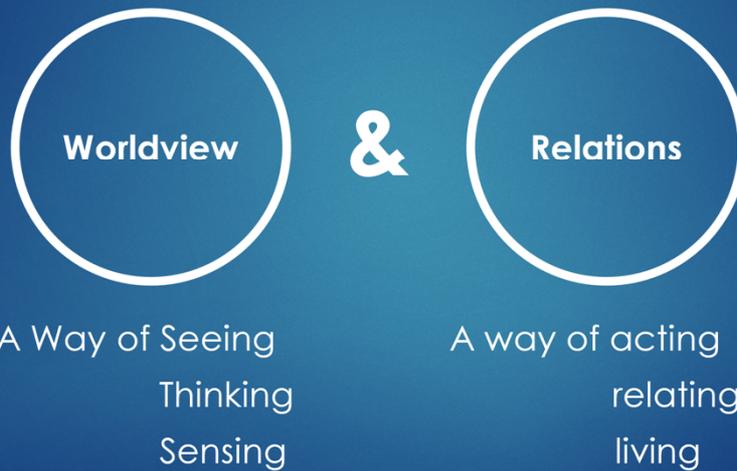
From now, I start my own presentation.

The Cosmic Feast is a gathering of diverse manifestation and expressions of cosmic sense and studies.

The subtitle, “the Big-historian Explosion” was named after the Cambrian Explosion of life. It is also influenced by artist Taro Okamoto. Taro is famous for a phrase, “art is explosion,” which means opening all of oneself toward the universe, without any conditions, any interests. It is a joy, a joy of living.

My point is to diversify our cosmic expressions as a joy by everyone.

BH is part of a great transformation



In my understanding, BH is part of a great transformation of worldview and relations with everything.

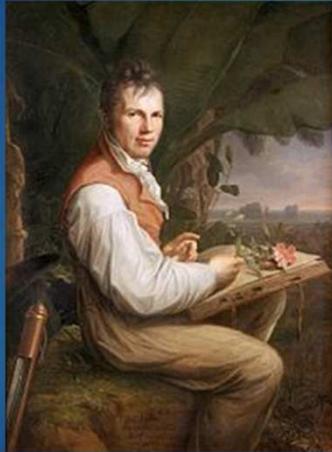
How to see, how to think and how to sense the world links with how to act in it, how to relate to others and how to live.

BH results in reorganizing our relationships with the world as well as recreation of our inner world.

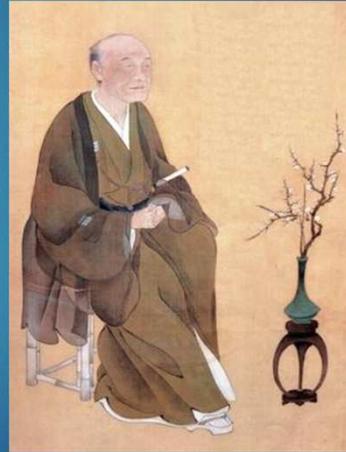
Therefore, what fundamentally matters is to establish a cosmic view within oneself, as it becomes a basis of one's action. That means, in the age of great transformation, everyone needs to be some kind of a big historian. This is also the reason why I call for the big-historian explosion.

For that, I show 4 future directions from now.

1. Make BH multicultural beyond Western-centrism



Humboldt (1769-1859)



Miura Baien (1723-89)

First, to be multicultural. BH is our common story. But to be truly shared and lived by everyone in the world, such story needs to reflect diverse senses and values of the people.

BH is an ambitious project to be holistic, global, common and universal. If BH doesn't desire such things, few people complain about BH. But as BH seeks for the wholeness, not a few Asians wants to say "It's not all, it's not everything," as Sun Yue concerns BH lacks room for morality. The limits of Western BH were detected in such a way.

Therefore, we have a motivation to review all of the concepts, frameworks, and theories of BH from Asian angles. It is a task to re-find and brush up meaningful insights in Asia in the light of BH. Only after examining unique views of each region and comparing them with others, we could find truly common things. In other words, BH is still on the way to be universal.

For my part, I plan to start a study of Japanese thinker Miura Baien. Although it is said Alexander von Humboldt is a founder of BH, Miura Baien shaped his own cosmology including all space and time before Humboldt published Kosmos. Miura might be the example BH emerged not only in the West but also in other regions.

2. Make BH multinatural beyond human-centrism



But, to be multicultural is not enough because multiculturalism presupposes that there is one single nature and multiple cultures. And it often presupposes that only humans have interiority and thus only we can interpret the world in multiple ways.

Yet, nonhuman animals also have a kind of identity and cognitive ability because they can judge who is the same species or enemies and who is male or female (Kinji Imanishi).

And what they see by such interiority is also different from humans. Swallowtails can see ultraviolet rays humans can never see. So, for swallowtails, green field doesn't look green and the color of flowers also looks different. This is because they have different bodies and sense organs. Thus, it is true at the same time that field is green and, say, pinky. It is not true that only green field exists, but also the pinky field exists too.

In other words, nature consists of different layers like pictures on Photoshop (Kyohei Sakaguchi). In this case, the field consists of a green layer of humans and a pinky layer of swallowtails.

And to imagine or try to experience a perspective of other beings is quite important, for we now face the need to improve the relationship with other living organisms and environments. Therefore, we also need to make BH multinatural or multi-species or multi-agent.

3. Make BH multiform beyond literal-centrism



Myth of Tomorrow (1968-9) by Taro Okamoto

Third, a great transformation of worldview and relations comes out with multiform expressions, not only writings but also movies, paintings, dancing, singing, music, VR and so on. It inevitably becomes a cultural and artistic movement because people can't stop that.

Ancient myths were not only written but also sung, danced and painted. The great transformation of worldview or our modern myth comes out with such various expressions. I call such diverse manifestations of new visions as the cosmic feast.

(Artist Taro Okamoto argued that artists are modern shamans. Artists shaken existing social standards and common sense by showing something chaotic, mystic, and fundamental hidden in life. They awaken us with impression and give us a feeling of fulfillment. With this spirit, Taro expressed a fundamental life force of the universe through paintings, sculptures, installations and writings.)

(Myth of Tomorrow – this picture shows a tragedy that a Japanese fishers suffered from radiation due to nuclear bomb test of the United States in 1954. At the same time, the strong shape and vivid colors represent outrage and pride of humanity. That shows resilience to overcome the tragedy for better tomorrow.)

4. A positive attitude for life meaning → saying yes



Fourth, the cosmic feast is the feast because it celebrates preciousness of life.

Seen from big history, a baby born today is not 0 year old but 13.8 billion years old. That could be a basis of dignity of life.

But a meaning of life doesn't work unless it is accompanied with behaviors. What makes a baby understand her preciousness would not explanation of the meaning but to love her and hug her. In this sense, we ultimately need a will to say yes to our life.

Thus we celebrate our life in muticultural, multinatural and multiform ways. That's the cosmic feast. Thank you.