

# Special Issue: Civilization Dialogue between Europe and Japan

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Currently, globalization has been rapidly advancing worldwide. As many have noted, the 20th century was a “century of war” as seen in the two World Wars and the Cold War. The world in the 21st century is concerned about the “clash of civilizations”, where the state of international order reflects a multi-polarization of world politics along with the progress of post-colonialization. Despite this tendency, it is impossible without cooperation among the international community to find solutions to issues such as climate change caused by global warming, which poses a threat even to human existence itself.

The present world is caught in between two conflicting forces. On the one hand, escaping the West-centered civilization, lifestyles formed in diverse natural environments in different world regions have been increasingly reconstructed as have the individual civilizations based on them. On the other hand, cooperation beyond the nation and community has become crucial for the resolution of global environmental problems, which are the results of extensive exploitation of natural resources through science-based technologies developed by modern civilization. To pursue sustainable development, it might be essential not only to resolve actual policy challenges but also to pool accumulated knowledge from different civilizations of the world and to create a dialogue between them for mutual understanding and cooperation.

Since its establishment in 1959, Tokai University Institute of Civilization Research has been promoting studies on various civilizations that humans have formed in different regions. The study of civilization itself does not form a single discipline. Given that various human activities such as the modes of production, lifestyle, rituals and social practices, collectively form a civilization, the overview of a specific civilization cannot be obtained without an integration of findings from each field. The Institute of Civilization Research has been working on a comprehensive study of contemporary civilizations under a project called “Trans-Disciplinary Humanities” as its key focus from this year.

In light of the above, we hosted an international symposium titled “Civilization Dialogue between Europe and Japan”. The foundation of contemporary civilization is arguably underpinned by values formed in modern Europe, which is especially symbolized by scientific knowledge and its application in industrial technology. Japanese society has proactively accepted not only science and technology but also the western social system and its associated values since the beginning of modernization in the Meiji era (1868–1912). However, modernization of Japanese society is not necessarily equivalent to westernization. Traditional values have remained in various aspects. The symposium aimed to compare and re-examine views of people, society and nature underlying the civilizations of Europe and Japan. This was also an attempt to find an academic response to two conflicting forces that the globalizing societies are currently dealing with. Here in this special issue, we included 7 original papers that were presented in the symposium.