

# A Reminiscence on the Formation of the East Asian Consortium of Japanese Studies

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**Abstract** | This essay describes the ideas and concerns that led to the formation of the East Asian Consortium of Japanese Studies (hereafter EACJS), and records its development since 2016. I first conceived of the consortium after the 2013 East Asia Forum for Japanese Studies. In 2014, I made an official proposal at the Awajishima East Asia Forum, and introduced plans for the realization of the EACJS at a seminar hosted by the Atsumi International Scholarship Foundation in 2015. The Tianjin Meeting in 2016 was the final check point prior to launching the EACJS, and the first conference of the EACJS was inaugurated in Songdo, South Korea on November 30, 2016. Since then, an EACJS conference has been held successfully for four consecutive years. The core values of the EACJS are “transnationalism,” the promotion of interdisciplinary integration across the humanities and social sciences, and a concern to nurture the next generation of specialists on Japan. These visions are embodied in three critical policies: a “rotating host formula” to prevent monopoly by a single state or institution; an “out-of-pocket system” to support the operation of panel sessions and lessen the financial burden for host institutions; and an “open door policy” to encourage the widespread participation of a diverse range of scholars. The formation and successful operation of the EACJS would be impossible without the support of its five founding members and many Japan-focused institutions in the region, not to mention generous backing from the Japan Foundation.

**Keywords** | East Asia Forum for Japanese Studies, East Asian Consortium of Japanese Studies (EACJS), network, Atsumi International Scholarship Foundation, Institute for Japanese Studies at Seoul National University, The Japan Foundation

The purpose of this essay is to describe the formation and foundational concepts behind the organization of the East Asian Consortium of Japanese Studies (Higashiajia Nihon Kenkyūsha Kyōgikai, hereafter EACJS), and record the development of the organization’s operation of the EACJS annual conferences. After attending the 2013 East Asian Forum for Japanese Studies (an annual

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meeting of the directors of various Japanese studies institutions across East Asia), I was inspired to imagine the EACJS framework. This I envisioned as an open forum in which scholars of Japanese Studies across the region might come together and discuss the issues of the moment. Between 2015 and 2016, I had meetings with the directors and executives of various Japanese Studies research institutions in Korea, Japan, China, and Taiwan. These meetings served to substantiate a collective vision for the inauguration of the EACJS.

The EACJS conference has been held successfully for four consecutive years since 2016. However, the initial process was not straightforward, as a significant number of Japanese Studies scholars across East Asia voiced concerns about this ambitious project. In this essay, I will try to be as detailed as possible in describing the founding concepts behind the organization, the innovative and streamlined management processes involved, and the launching and operation of the EACJS itself.

### **The East Asian Forum for Japanese Studies and the Formation of the EACJS Concept (2013-14)**

The idea to build a network among Japanese Studies scholars in East Asia existed before the launching of EACJS. With support from the Japan Foundation, Professor Yi Kang Min, the director of the Global Center for Japanese Studies at Hanyang University and Professor Xú Yì Píng, the director of the Beijing Center for Japanese Studies, first planned the East Asia Forum for Japanese Studies. Since 2010 this forum has been collectively organized by several research institutes from Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan, Russia, and Mongolia. Its purpose was to enable discussion about the multidisciplinary and regional promotion of Japanese Studies in East Asia. At these annual meetings, the participants talked about the state of Japanese Studies in their own institutes and collectively addressed future agendas (table 1).

Appointed as the director for the Institute for Japanese Studies, Seoul National University (IJS SNU) on September 1, 2012, I was invited to the Forum held in Pusan in December 2013 to present a paper on the status of Japanese Studies in Korea. While acknowledging the critical importance of regular meetings of the executives of Japanese Studies institutes, I suggested the need to enhance participation among a far wider group of scholars to further stimulate the field. I therefore presented the idea of an annual academic conference, featuring the participation of younger scholars, as a collective effort to elevate the regional discourse of Japanese Studies. While the directors welcomed the intent of the

**Table 1.** The history of the East Asia Forum for Japanese Studies

	Venue	Date	Participating states
1st	Cheju Island, Korea	Dec. 4-5, 2010	Korea, China, Japan (32 members)
2nd	Matsushima, Japan	Dec. 8-9, 2011	Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan (26 members)
3rd	Beijing, China	Nov. 3-4, 2012	Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan (26 members)
4th	Pusan, Korea	Dec. 7-8, 2013	Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan, Russia, Mongolia (25 members)
5th	Awajishima, Japan	Dec. 6-7, 2014	Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan, Russia, Mongolia, Estonia (26 members)
6th	Tianjin, China	Mar. 19-20, 2016	Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan (26 members)

Source: Japan Foundation.<sup>1</sup>

idea, most remained skeptical about the feasibility of constructing a permanent wider network of scholars, particularly in considering the financial burdens and logistical costs.

After the Pusan meeting, I continued to elaborate on ways to promote Japanese Studies in East Asia. On November 18, 2014, the IJS SNU held an International Workshop for Constructing an Academic Network of Japan Scholars in East Asia. Here we discussed how to establish an inter-institutional network across Korea, China, and Japan.

At this workshop, I highlighted the lack of organized interaction between scholars of Japanese Studies in East Asia, despite our relative geographical proximity, and contrasted this with the established networks in Europe and the US. While the substantial number of relevant academics and institutes had perhaps stood as an obstacle to the formation of such a network in East Asia, I emphasized that this very quantity of academics, the quality of their research and their familiarity with the Japanese language would all serve as advantages to such a regional organization. I suggested that, instead of establishing a single transnational body, it might be easier for individual Japanese Studies institutions to take turns in hosting an annual international workshop.<sup>2</sup> The approbation of the majority of participants at the workshop then became the bedrock for the further development of the EACJS framework.

In December 2014, I attended the Fifth East Asia Forum for Japanese Studies

1. I am grateful to Ms. Ko Eungang at the Japan Foundation, Seoul who found the records on the detailed information on the date, venue, and participants of East Asia Forum for Japanese Studies.

2. The contents of discussion were drawn from a transcript of the meeting assembled by the IJS SNU.

**Table 2.** International Workshop for the Tenth Anniversary of IJS SNU (2014)

Date	November 18, 2014 1:30 – 6:30 pm
Venue	International Conference Hall, Graduate School of International Studies, Seoul National University
Theme	Search for Korea-Japan-China trilateral cooperation among research institutes
Hosted by	Institute for Japanese Studies, Seoul National University
Participants	Park Cheol Hee (Director, IJS SNU) Han Young-hae, Lee Eun-gyong, Jin Pil-su (IJS SNU) Ochiai Emiko (Faculty of Letters, Kyoto University) Sòng Zhì Yǒng (Japan Institute of Nankai University) Lú Hào (Institute of Japanese Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) Yi Kang Min (Hanyang University, former Chairperson of Korea Association of Japanology) Kojima Hiroyuki (Director of the Japan Foundation, Seoul) Imanishi Junko (Atsumi International Scholarship Foundation) Yu Chaechin (Director, Global Institute for Japanese Studies, Korea University) Kim Sangchun (Chairperson, Korean Association of Contemporary Japanese Studies) Suh Johng-wan (Director, Institute of Japanese Studies, Hallym University) Yoon Byung Nam (Chairperson of The Korean Historical Association, former Chairperson of The Korean Association for Japanese History) Lee Won-deog (Director, Institute for Japanese Studies, Kookmin University)

in Awajishima, Japan. Building upon the concerns raised in the Pusan meeting and the 2014 workshop at IJS SNU, and the collectively held assessment of the condition of Japanese studies in the region, I presented a “Proposal for Constructing Japanese Studies Consortium in East Asia.” In the US, the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) was established in 1941, while in Europe, the Free University of Berlin had been organizing the European Association for Japanese Studies (EAJS) since 1973. Through these organizations more than 1,000 scholars have been enabled to share their research every year. Southeast Asia had recently followed suit in 2005, when the Japanese Studies Association-ASEAN (JSA-ASEAN) was established. In noting the development of these bodies, I raised a concern regarding the absence of similar horizontal networks across Korea, China, Japan and Taiwan, despite the presence of numerous Japan-focused research institutions. I therefore proposed the organization of a provisionally titled “East Asian Consortium for Japanese Studies” (EACJS).<sup>3</sup>

3. The Japanese title of the proposal paper I presented on December 7, 2014 was “*Higashiajia ni*

Given the dispersed nature of Japanese Studies academics and institutions across this large geographical region, I suggested the organization of a “consortium” or pan-institutional network among relevant research institutions, a vision shared by the East Asia Forum for Japanese Studies. The first step for such a consortium would be to coordinate an “international forum” of Japanese Studies by organizing three-to-four-day academic conference every year.<sup>4</sup> To financially assist this aim, I explained that the prospective EACJS would take charge in applying for funding for the plenary sessions, while the participating institutions would organize and fund the remaining individual panels. I also added that it would be ideal for the conference to be carried out in Japanese.

Those at the meeting were divided in their reactions, but skepticism was most evident as several problematic issues were immediately raised. Firstly, apprehension that there would be overlaps with the function of the East Asia Forum for Japanese Studies. Secondly, while many agreed that the regional staging of academic conferences by Japanese Studies scholars should be encouraged, the pertinent question remained, which people and which institutions would create and initially operate such a large network? This question reflected the shared concern with the effort involved in organizing and managing an executive office for such an extensive body, and the operational cost this would entail. As discussions proceeded, some suggested the launch of an academic journal to mark each conference, while others questioned whether the use of Japanese as a common language was appropriate. Due to all these issues, we failed to draw out a shared agreement on the launching of an EACJS, and the proposed framework was limited to only the status of acknowledgment by the participating members of the East Asia Forum.

However, the proposal evoked a significant positive secondary response. Ms. Imanishi Junko and Mr. Tsunoda Eiichi at Atsumi International Scholarship Foundation (AISF), who attended the Awajishima meeting as observers, were particularly enthusiastic. Their strong support for the EACJS idea reflected that the AISF had been planning to create an annual international academic conference for the recipients of the foundation’s scholarships, which various countries’ institutions would take turns in hosting. Furthermore, toward the end of the forum, Director Xú Xing Qing of the Center for Japanese Studies at National Taiwan University approached me and expressed strong support for

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*okeru Nihon kenkyūsha kyōgikai no kōchiku ni kansuru teigen.*” It was this occasion when I first used the tentative term “East Asian Consortium for Japanese Studies.”

4. In the paper, I dismissed the idea of dissolving existing academic associations or networks and absorbing them into a single organization. I suggested that it was quite possible to establish a “network” by utilizing the functions and membership of existing organizations.

the EACJS framework. From that day, Dr. Xú became the strongest backer and partner of the EACJS.

In addition, the Japan Foundation (JF) began to show great interest. Given the active exchange among relevant scholars in the US, Europe, Southeast Asia and Oceania, it was natural for the JF to want to encourage a parallel discourse across East Asia. Two participants from the JF, Director of Japanese Studies and Intellectual Exchange Department Shimizu Jun'ichi and Director of Asia and Oceania Section Hayase Tomonori, expressed similar concerns to those of the members of the East Asia Forum regarding the proposal's feasibility. Nevertheless, they continued to communicate with me about their concerns and interests relevant to the overall EACJS framework.

Simply put, most members of East Asia Forum were not against the idea in principle, but concerned only with the feasibility of the EACJS and the questions of burden-sharing and compliance with existing organizations. Despite this skepticism, it cannot be overstated that the interdisciplinary and international nature of the East Asia Forum for Japanese Studies was critical to supporting the further development of the initial EACJS framework.

### **Substantiating the EACJS Framework with Japanese Studies Specialists in East Asia (2015-16)**

In 2015, the two organizations that showed great interest in the EACJS framework provided me with the opportunity to present more details about the proposed agenda. The first was Director Xú Xing Qing of the Center for Japanese Studies at National Taiwan University, who invited me to give a talk on March 6, 2015, about the "New Stage for Japanese Studies in East Asia."

Upon Dr. Xú's invitation, I visited Taiwan in March 2015, to give a lecture at the Center for Japanese Studies on how the research environment in East Asia must undergo drastic changes on three different levels. Firstly, I emphasized that it was increasingly crucial to enhance the level of exchange and cooperation in the region. I argued for the creation of a transnational network based on horizontal partnerships among research institutions and scholars across the region, particularly in light of the growing scholarly interest in China and consequent diminution of Japanese Studies. Secondly, I indicated that the sharp division between the humanities and social sciences was one of the underlying causes for the lack of interaction among Japan specialists. To overcome this, I offered that it would be critical to eliminate the barriers between the humanities and social sciences and induce greater social and intellectual exchange between individual

**Table 3.** History of Asia Future Conference organized by AISF

	Date	Venue	Overall theme
1st	Mar. 8 – 10, 2013	Bangkok, Thailand	Asia in the world—potentials of regional cooperation
2nd	Aug. 22 – 24, 2014	Bali, Indonesia	Diversity and harmony
3rd	Sep. 29 – Oct. 3, 2016	Kitakyūshū, Japan	Environment and coexistence
4th	Aug. 24 – 28, 2018	Seoul, Korea	Peace, prosperity, and dynamic future
5th	Jan. 9 – 13, 2020	Manila, the Philippines	Sustainable shared growth—our common home and happiness

Source: <http://www.aisf.or.jp/AFC>.

academics, regardless of their individual research specialization. Thirdly, I suggested that communication must be enhanced between established academics and the next-generation of scholars. And, particularly to salvage the flagging academic interest in Japanese Studies, I argued that it was essential to incorporate new and energetic perspectives through featuring the work of pre-doctoral candidates.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, the AISF initiated in-depth discussions to solve the procedural complications before the launch of the EACJS. Ms. Imanishi and Mr. Tsunoda, with whom I shared the original idea in Awajishima, invited me to the AISF's regular meeting to inquire about the feasibility of the EACJS framework. The AISF's experience with the Asia Future Conference, which the foundation had organized annually since 2012 for the recipients of their scholarship, reassured me that the Asia Future Conference could serve as a reference for a successful EACJS framework.

On July 18, 2015, I presented the proposed operational plan for the EACJS in a paper titled "Call for the East Asia Consortium for Japanese Studies." In this I noted that in comparison to the state of Japanese Studies in other global regions, the field in East Asia could be considered in terms of various, dispersed "others within ourselves." Academic associations across the region are heavily fragmented and inter-institutional collaboration would serve to bring together large numbers of academics in discussion. The prioritization of individual research over collective discussion had arguably hindered the development of a greater

5. Based on the suggestions I made at this lecture, the EACJS later adopted "border-crossing," "integration," and "next-generation" (or "future") as terms reflecting the basic spirit of the organization.

regional intellectual community. To overcome this limiting and parochial approach, I argued that it was necessary to directly promote cross-national collaborative research. I pledged that the EACJS would strive toward this goal, while adhering to three basic principles: first, “internationalism,” communication of research outcomes to the wider international community; second, “communality” to pave the way for collaborative research; and third, “integration” to promote Japanese Studies through interdisciplinary exchange.

Beyond these principles, I also put forward concrete measures for the management of the organization. First, I proposed the EACJS would undertake a “rotating host formula,” in which each annual conference would be held in different country and city. This would ensure the EACJS would not become the responsibility of a single nation or institution. Second, to alleviate the operational burden, I suggested a “two-step plan.” In this plan we would organize the EACJS as a “consortium” for about ten years, and after reaching the goal of achieving 1,000 active members, the organization could then be upgraded to become a large-scale academic association. Third, rather than requiring a full-time executive office operating year round, the Consortium should focus on only the limited task of organizing an annual conference open to all Japanese Studies specialists. I therefore offered that an “open organization” system would help to alleviate the related burdens of the participating individuals and institutions. Fourth, to lessen the financial burden for the host institution each year, I recommended an “out-of-pocket” (or cost-splitting) system whereby participating institutions fund their own panel sessions. Lastly, I added that, given the limited financial resources, there should be a measure to allow pre-doctoral level participants to apply for external funding. It was also here that I first proposed to host the first EACJS conference at the Incheon Songdo Convensia in early December 2016.

After sharing the specifics of the proposed EACJS framework with the Atsumi Foundation, I began contacting Japan-related research institutes in East Asia to solicit their participation. As a first step, I had a meeting on July 30, 2015 with Professor Yi Kang Min, one of the founding members of East Asia Forum for Japanese Studies, Professor Jung Byeong-ho of Korea University, and Professor Suh Seung-won of Korea University, among others, to discuss how the EACJS framework could be put into action.<sup>6</sup> On August 6, 2015, I met with Director Osawa Mari of the Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo to provide detailed descriptions of the EACJS framework. While showing some

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6. At this meeting, the IJS SNU decided to host an international conference in early September 2015, to explain the EACJS framework to other leading research institutes in Korea and discuss the possibility for cooperation.

apprehension regarding the feasibility of the project, Director Osawa guaranteed that the ISS would participate in the consortium once the EACJS took off.

From August 30 to 31, 2015, IJS SNU held a workshop at Sheraton Grand Incheon Hotel, during which the members discussed not only the status of the IJS's internal activities and projects but also its position on preparing for the EACJS. Next to the Sheraton Hotel stood the Songdo Convensia, a convention center owned by the City of Incheon. After taking a tour of the facilities, I began to plan the organization of the EACJS. On September 7, 2015, IJS SNU hosted a "Conference for Constructing a Network of Japan Specialists in East Asia," inviting Professor Xú Yì Píng, the director of the Beijing Center for Japanese Studies, Director Xú Xīng Qīng of the National Taiwan University, Mr. Tsunoda from the Atsumi Foundation and various others. The purpose of this conference was to demonstrate the procedure through which the EACJS framework could be implemented.<sup>7</sup> This conference was also de facto the first gathering of all the founding members of the EACJS.

At this meeting, I brought up a few basic requirements for the successful creation of the Consortium. First, we needed a list of all potential participating members who might share the same vision for the EACJS. Second, based on an agreement among the participants, each member must reach out to other Japan-related institutions in their own country and region to encourage participation. Third, for the participants of project panels and next-generation panels, it would be necessary to acquire funding from the JF. At this point, the JF member who attended the meeting commented that he would positively discuss possible concrete measures with others at the Foundation to help address these requests.

Following this seminar, the IJS SNU initiated a preparatory committee to launch the EACJS in 2016. I entrusted Dr. Kim Tae Ki with overall management of this committee, as he had considerable experience with organizing academic conferences and had just joined our faculty as HK research professor.<sup>8</sup> The JF also provided assistance and the East Asia Forum for Japanese Studies, which had been scheduled at the end of 2015, was rescheduled to be held in China in March 2016. It had been customary for the East Asia Forum to take place in late December, but as the first EACJS conference was scheduled for the second half of 2016, the JF and the members of the Consortium agreed to reschedule the Forum. This meeting could serve as an opportunity to discuss the official

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7. In this seminar, I presented "Call for EACJS [*Higashi Ajia Nihon kenkyūsha kyōgikai e no yobikake*]," an updated and more detailed version of the talk at the AISE.

8. Dr. Kim assumed responsibility to organize the EACJS with exceptional passion and enthusiasm, but just before the opening of the First EACJS, he unfortunately resigned his position at the IJS SNU in November 2016 due to health reasons and left for the US to receive medical treatment.

**Table 4.** Details of the Conference for Constructing a Network of Japan Specialists in Asia

Date and Time	September 7, 2015 2:00 – 6:00 pm
Venue	International Conference Room, Graduate School of International Studies, Seoul National University
Host	IJS SNU
Theme	Strategy for promoting EACJS initiative
Participants	Park Cheol Hee (Director, IJS SNU) Xú Yì Píng (Director, Beijing Center for Japanese Studies, Beijing Foreign Studies University) Xú Xīng Qīng (Director, Center of Japanese Studies, National Taiwan University) Yi Kang Min (Professor, Hanyang University) Hayase Tomonori (Asia and Oceania Section, Japan Foundation) Imanishi Junko (Executive board, Atsumi International Scholarship Foundation) Tsunoda Eiichi (Secretary-general, Atsumi International Scholarship Foundation) Nam Kijeong, Jo Gwanja (Professors, IJS SNU)

Source: IJS SNU.

launching of EACJS.

The Sixth East Asia Forum for Japanese Studies was held in Nankai University from March 19 to 20 in Tianjin, China, with participants from numerous Japan-orientated research institutions. At this meeting, I made the first official declaration that the IJS SNU intended to host the inaugural EACJS meeting later in the year. Dr. Tomotsune Tsutomu, the Director of International Center for Japanese Studies (ICJS) at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, with whom I had little personal contact prior to this meeting, expressed full support for the EACJS framework. In fact, the ICJS, established in 2009, was itself at a transitional stage, looking to expand the academic network for Japanese Studies across East Asia. This reflected the fact that at this moment many universities in Japan, such as The Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Meiji University, and Hosei University, were also promoting “Global Japanese Studies” under the directive of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

## Preparing and Hosting the First EACJS (2016)

What I found out during the Tianjin meeting was that, to my surprise, the Korea Association of Japanology (KAJA), one of the largest Japanese studies association in Korea, was yet to affirm their participation in the EACJS. The KAJA's chairperson Dr. Ahn Pyeong Ho told me that he had not received any detailed information on the Consortium and Professor Jung Byeong-ho of Korea University, then the KAJA's general executive board member, confessed that the association had not reached general agreement on the matter. Upon returning to Korea, I wasted no time in making an appointment with both Chairperson Ahn and Professor Jung, and on April 15, 2016, with Professor Seo Dong Ju (of the IJS SNU) we had a meeting in Seoul. At this I hoped to urge the KAJA's participation in the EACJS. Chairperson Ahn promised "unconditional support" after listening for a mere twenty minutes about the founding purpose and intent of the Consortium.

With this affirmation from the KAJA, any other previously abstaining Japan-orientated organizations in Korea followed in backing the EACJS, and their directors personally displayed enthusiastic support for the staging of the first EACJS conference later in 2016. Among these, Director Suh Seung-won of Global Institute for Japanese Studies at Korea University, Director Lee Won-deog of Institute of Japanese Studies at Kookmin University, Director Jin Chang Soo of Center for Japanese Studies at Sejong Institute, Chairperson Jeon Jin-Ho of Korea Association of Contemporary Japanese Studies, Chairperson Yoon Byung Nam of The Korean Association for Japanese History, Director Suh Johng-wan of the Institute of Japanese Studies at Hallym University all promised to organize their own panel sessions.

The IJS SNU decided to hold the first EACJS from November 30 to December 2, 2016. The first task was to discuss the logistical issues with the Songdo Convensia and Sheraton Hotel. To reduce the financial burden for participating institutions and individuals, we held as many rooms as possible and negotiated with the Sheraton for a reasonable rate for attendees. Furthermore, we decided that participating individuals and institutions should be informed about the details of the Consortium at least six months prior to the November start date. To facilitate communications with potential participants regarding the conference schedule and logistical details through the website, the preparation committee of IJS SNU, including administration manager Ms. Jeong Yonu alongside numerous professors and research assistants, worked ardently.<sup>9</sup>

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9. Professors Nam Kijeong, Jo Gwanja, and Lee Eun-gyong at IJS SNU contributed to the develop-

In organizing this international academic conference, the IJS SNU preparation committee paid attention to the following issues. First, the planning and organization of each panel session—preferably consisting of about five panel members—was left to the discretion of participating institution, with interested members of the audience strongly encouraged to join the discussions after. The organizer of each panel was expected to cover the cost and provision of personnel on their own, so that the financial burden for the host institution would be minimized. Second, with support from the JF, thirty Ph.D. candidates were selected to participate in next-generation panels.<sup>10</sup> Third, we negotiated to invite Professor Aoki Tamotsu, a former Commissioner for Cultural Affairs, to give a keynote speech at the opening event. Fourth, we decided to ask every participating individual or institution to pay a registration fee.<sup>11</sup> Fifth, we coordinated a reception dinner for all the participants, for which the Korea-Japan Economic Association willingly covered the expenses. Mr. Yamazaki Hiroki, then Director of the Japan Foundation, Seoul, also offered to provide lunch for the participants, on top of the already-generous operational support given by the JF headquarters in Tokyo. Mr. Chung Byung-won, then the director-general of the Northeast Asian Affairs Bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also provided a significant financial contribution to cover printing costs and other incidentals. After August 2016, the IJS's preparation committee held meetings regularly. I have records in my personal planner that we held at least seven official meetings on August 18, October 6, 18, and 27, November 10, 17, and 24.

On October 21, 2016, the IJS SNU hosted an “International Seminar for Network-Building of Japan Specialists in East Asia.” We invited founding members of the EACJS to brief them on the progress of the preparation status and re-affirmed our request for their active participation in the Consortium. Through discussions with the founding members, twelve institutions were selected as a steering committee for the EACJS, after giving consideration to regional balance among the membership. We also reached the tentative decision that the directors of institutions in the steering committee take up the role of

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ment of EACJS framework from an early stage, while Professors Seo Dong Ju and Kim Hyojin oversaw the general preparation procedures and Dr. Kim Tae Ki was put in charge of arranging practical details.

10. We made a list of applicants based on the recommendations of founding members as well as participating institutions and made sure to allow balanced participation from across East Asia through fair screening by the promoters of each region.

11. The registration fee was just enough to cover room charge and the binding and copying of a presentation packet. Our intension was to urge each participating institution to take responsibility for funding its own panel session, even though this is an uncommon practice within other major academic associations.

**Table 5.** Details of the International Seminar for Network-Building of Japan Specialists in East Asia

Date	October 21, 2016 1:30 – 5:30 pm
Venue	SNU GSIS, Bldg. 140-2 Room 201
Host	IJS SNU
Participants	Park Cheol Hee (Director, Graduate School of International Studies, SNU) Nam Kijeong, Jo Gwanja, Kim Tae Ki, Lee Eun-gyong, Seo Dong Ju, Kim Hyojin (Professors, IJS SNU) Xú Xīng Qìng (Director, Center of Japanese Studies, National Taiwan University) Sano Mayuko (International Research Center for Japanese Studies) Yi Kang Min (Professor, Hanyang University) Suh Seung-won (Global Institute for Japanese Studies, Korea University) Ahn Pyeong Ho (Professor, Sungshin Women's University, Chairperson, Korea Association of Japanology) Hayase Tomonori (Asia and Oceania Section, Japan Foundation)

Source: IJS SNU.

moderator in the panel sessions organized by the EACJS. We also used this occasion to make a final selection of the participants within the next-generation panels, and thirty candidates were selected after the rigorous screening of their applications.

Then, finally, after meticulous planning and preparation, the First EACJS was held in Songdo, Incheon from November 30 to December 2, 2016. Despite the logistical limitations of the preparation procedure, 337 Japan specialists attended the First EACJS conference from thirty-eight institutions in Japan, China, Taiwan, and Korea. And, after the keynote speech, the founding members had the opportunity to go on stage to publicly discuss the intent and purpose of the EACJS.

After completing the scheduled programs, the steering committee, consisting of the founding members and directors of the core institutions, conducted a final meeting. The priority agenda was to decide on a venue for the Second EACJS conference. Five founding members as well as the directors of twelve institutions attended this meeting as members of the steering committee.

The most critical issue was to decide on a host institution for the Second EACJS in 2017. The participants had all agreed to take turns hosting the annual conference, but no decision had been made on a venue for the next conference. Director Suh Seung-won of the Global Institute for Japanese Studies at Korea University had volunteered to host the Fifth 2020 EACJS, when the rotation

**Table 6.** Members and institutions of the 2016 EACJS Steering Committee

State/ region	Membership institution
Promoter	Park Cheol Hee (Director, Graduate School of International Studies, SNU) Xú Yī Píng (Director, Beijing Center for Japanese Studies, Beijing Foreign Studies University) Yi Kang Min (Professor, Hanyang University) Komatsu Kazuhiko (International Research Center for Japanese Studies) Xú Xīng Qīng (Director, Center of Japanese Studies, National Taiwan University)
China	Institute of Japanese Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Beijing Center for Japanese Studies, Beijing Foreign Studies University Japan Institute of Nankai University
Taiwan	Center of Japanese Studies, National Taiwan University Center for Japanese Studies, National Taichung University of Science and Technology Association of Japanese Language Education in Taiwan
Japan	International Research Center for Japanese Studies International Center for Japanese Studies, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies Center for Asian Academic Collaboration, Kobe University
Korea	Korea Association of Japanology Global Institute for Japanese Studies, Korea University Institute for Japanese Studies, Seoul National University

Source: IJS SNU.

would come back to Korea. Professor Xú Xīng Qīng of National Taiwan University followed Director Suh and offered to host the Fourth 2019 EACJS. This left China and Japan as the remaining options. Director Komatsu Kazuhiko of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (a.k.a. Nichibunken), expressed his preference to take up the role in 2018, as 2017 would be very busy for the Nichibunken, being the Center's seventieth anniversary. Director Xú Yī Píng of the Beijing Center for Japanese Studies was also hesitant in making a final call, explaining that he had to bring the matter to the executive board before finalizing a decision. Then, Director Sòng Zhì Yǒng of the Japan Institute of Nankai University offered that his institution could host the next year's EACJS, if Beijing was unable. All attendees welcomed Director Sòng's proposition, and it was decided that Nankai University would be the venue for the Second EACJS, with Nichibunken in Kyoto hosting the Third Consortium. These bold and generous offers by the participating institutions brightened the

immediate and long-term prospects for the Consortium, and it is no exaggeration to say that this meeting was a turning point for the EACJS, marking its path to full establishment and institutionalization.

## Consecutive EACJS Conferences (2017-19)

Thanks to preparations made by the Japan Institute at Nankai University, the Second EACJS was successfully carried out from October 27 to 29, 2017, hosting more than 300 Japan specialists from four regions who engaged in rigorous discussion. It was particularly encouraging to witness the formation of new academic networks among the thirty young scholars who participated in the next-generation panels.

The Nichibunken took over the role as host institution for the Third EACJS. It was unavoidable that the third Consortium would be conducted at a reduced scale due to schedule overlap with other academic events at the Nichibunken and because it would occur during the tourist season. Still, from October 27 to 29, 2018, more than 324 members visited Kyoto from four regions to partake in the Third EACJS.

During the preparation period for the Third EACJS, I was on sabbatical in the US. Unfortunately, in the run up to the Consortium meeting I was presented with numerous complaints from potential presenting applicants across East Asia. First, many claimed that a significant number of applications for panel sessions, submitted by individual and group applicants from Japanese Studies institutes, were rejected by the host institution. And in fact, only sixty-two of 213 applications were accepted.<sup>12</sup> Second, the Nichibunken announced that the presenters of the next-generation panels must be accompanied by a translator provided at their own expense if they wished to make a presentation in a language other than Japanese. In addition, they requested the next-generation panelists form session groups related to their research topics—a quite demanding task for younger scholars relatively unconnected with each other. Third, while the topical and disciplinary range within the selected panel groups was relatively diverse, it was disconcerting that significantly fewer social science papers were being presented than humanities. My period of sabbatical notwithstanding, I decided to fly to Kyoto to address these concerns in person at the EACJS.

On the last day of the Kyoto EACJS conference, the steering committee, with

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12. I referred to the source provided by Nichibunken, the host institution. For general panel sessions, the acceptance rate was twenty-six percent for Japanese applicants, nine percent for Chinese, fifteen percent for Korean, and twenty-five percent for Taiwanese.

advance consultation from its founding members, reached an agreement on several critical issues that had emerged in relation to the event. First, it was deemed necessary to regulate and monitor the selection procedures of panel sessions and to promote the institutionalization of the management of EACJS. Second, we discussed the institutionalization of the steering committee, and agreed to delegate three institutions from each region, with further expansion of the membership to be made when necessary. Alongside the five founding members, it was decided that the steering committee would consist of seventeen members, and the JF would be granted observer status to oversee the general management of the organization. Third, we reconfirmed the hosting of the Fourth EACJS in Taiwan, and agreed to discuss the venues and host institutions in the 2019 meeting for the next round four-to-five-year term.

After returning to Washington, D.C., I began the process of drawing up the regulatory articles for EACJS. I shared this with other founding members who then provided further ideas for revision. We then contacted the JF to incorporate their perspective as a heavily engaged observer institution, before the steering committee oversaw the final review process. I began the writing process in the early November, and the final version was accepted by the steering committee on December 26, 2018, with the articles becoming effective on January 1, 2019.

The Fourth EACJS that took place in Taiwan from October 31 to November 3, 2019 was carried out successfully under the exemplary leadership of President Xú Xīng Qīng. It was impressive to observe how the Center for Japanese Studies remained flexible in adhering to the newly-established regulations despite the complex circumstances surrounding Taiwan, and Dr. Xu's own professional transition.<sup>13</sup> A total of 410 participants, including 357 presenters, joined the EACJS, representing a significant new chapter in the development of a regional network of Japan specialists in East Asia. It was regrettable that only a few Chinese scholars were able to attend the conference due to the complex diplomatic relations between China and Taiwan.

After the successful conclusion of the Fourth EACJS on November 3, the steering committee once again gathered to attend to a few critical matters. First, the members confirmed that the EACJS's new regulations, enacted on December 26, 2018, had come into effect as of January 1, 2019. Second, in accepting any additional membership for the steering committee, the committee must consider not only the geographical balance of the membership but also the applicant institution must demonstrate a willingness, and the ability, to host a future

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13. Dr. Xú Xīng Qīng left National Taiwan University in 2018 and was appointed the president of Chinese Culture University in 2019.

EACJS conference. Third, as the first cycle of rotation was completed with Taiwan's hosting of the EACJS in 2019, the committee discussed the future options for conference venues. Korea University had already volunteered to host the 2020 EACJS. For the 2021 meeting, Director Xú Yi Píng had confirmed via email (as he was absent from the Fourth EACJS) that the Center for Japanese Studies at Beijing Foreign Studies University would be the host institution. In addition, Director Tomotsune Tsutomu of the ICJS at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies stated his intent to host the 2022 EACJS. And, for the Eighth EACJS in 2023, even though no specific institution was named, the participants from Taiwan assured us they would realize the 2023 event in coordination with President Xú Xīng Qìng.

## Concluding Remarks

This essay reflects my personal perspective on the organization and management of EACJS thus far, based on my experience as a founding member. Although I introduced and developed the initial concept for the EACJS, the work of other founders and the JF in developing the functional framework was intrinsic to realizing the success of the Consortium. Much like the story of *Rashōmon*, to grasp the overall picture of the founding of EACJS it would be necessary to address all the different narrative perspectives of the other members. Such a process I hope we might one day join to collaborate on.

There is no denying that the EACJS has secured institutional establishment in a short time, and achieved value as a collective body devoted toward the “global public good.” At the initial stage, many remained skeptical if this large and ambitious organization would remain untouched by the weathering effect of time. Yet, after four successful iterations of the EACJS international conference and excellent prospects for its continuous implementation, few doubt the sustainability of the organization today. At the same time, for the EACJS to further advance its progressive and publicly beneficial work, it must sustain its essence as an “open network.” In the future, as our younger scholars widen the organization's possibility through openly sharing their concerns, tackling common issues, and acting together as a regional community, I believe the EACJS will become established as an intellectual assembly of global significance.

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