

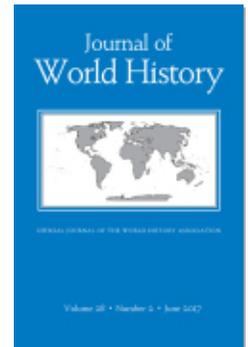


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the Geography of the Past

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Why Do Only Some Places Have History? Japan, the West, and the Geography of the Past*

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THE discipline of history does not encompass the world despite the best efforts of world historians.¹ While all places have a past, only a select few have “history” if we mean focused academic study. Luke Clossey and Nicholas Guyatt have dubbed this history’s “small world” problem. In a recent study, they tackled the issue quantitatively, examining nearly sixty history departments in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. What they reveal, to no one’s great surprise, is that “we’re overwhelmingly interested in ourselves.” More startling is the extent of our narcissism: “Europe, the US, and Canada are the subject of more than three-quarters of all historical research in Britain and North America.”² Particularly egregious is the United Kingdom where “84 percent of all historians work on the UK, Europe, or North America” which means that “16 percent of UK historians are left to work on 84 percent of the planet’s collective heritage.”³ Put

*My great thanks goes to Luke Clossey and Nicholas Guyatt for their galvanizing research, to Christian Šidák, then a Harvard sophomore, for his remarkable efforts on this project, and to the American Historical Association for their work collecting data. Further gratitude goes to Andrew Gordon, Fabian Drixler, Mark Ravina, Tanigawa Yutaka, Shimizu Yūichirō, Kuniko Yamada McVey at the Yenching Library, and the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study where I was Joy Foundation Fellow from 2014 to 2015 when I began this work. Finally, I would like to thank the two colleagues who supplied very helpful readers’ reports to the *Journal of World History*.

¹ For an engaging overview of the development and issues of world history, see Douglas Northrop, ed., *A Companion to World History* (Wiley Blackwell, paperback edition, 2015).

² Luke Clossey and Nicholas Guyatt, “It’s a Small World After All: The Wider World in the Historians’ Peripheral Vision,” *Perspectives on History* (May 2013), <http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history> (accessed August 22, 2014), 1.

³ Clossey and Guyatt, “It’s a Small World After All” (May 2013), 3.

differently, “Europe attracts three times as many historians as the raw population numbers would merit; the United States, around four times as many; the United Kingdom and Ireland, the multiplier is nearly twenty. Conversely, historians of East Asia comprise only around a quarter of the numbers we’d expect from the population data.”⁴ In short, the history departments that Clossey and Guyatt scrutinize are so heavily weighed toward the privileged few, while purporting to represent the generality that they might be charged as “rotten boroughs” by the definition of the British 1832 Reform Act. These findings raise disquieting and important questions for our understanding of history as a practice and for world history in particular.

Yet the “Small World” study has its own “small world” problem as Clossey and Guyatt would readily admit. Their elite, primarily English-speaking universities form a region as provincial as any other. If we are truly to understand how historians configure the world, we need a global study of historical interests, but don’t hold your breath. Such a project would be dauntingly difficult, very expensive, and enormously time-consuming. It would entail, following Clossey and Guyatt’s methodology, examining the CVs and research interests of every historian on the planet. My effort here is more modest. I extend Clossey and Guyatt’s project to Japan where a sample of elite universities shows that historians there have also produced a distorted historical geography, just as constrained as the small worlds of British and North American scholars but quite different. My investigation tabulates the data on historians’ interests at Japan’s two premier national universities, Tokyo and Kyoto, and two top private universities, Waseda and Keiō. (The challenges of acquiring this data and my methodology are described below.) Limited though my purview is, this demonstration of Japan’s alternative “small world” raises the fundamental question of what histories’ divergent localisms mean for the discipline’s claim to represent the world’s past.

Before delving into methodology and analysis, let me provide some highlights contrasting my discoveries about Japan with those of Clossey and Guyatt. Their North Atlantic scholars divide their attention among three areas: their own nations’ histories which can attract up to more than 40 percent of the interest, Europe which also attracts up to more than 40 percent, and “the rest” who are accorded the remaining

⁴ Clossey and Guyatt, “It’s a Small World After All” (May 2013), 2. There is slippage in the “Small World Study” between representation in accord with spatial categories like nationhood and region and representation in accord with contemporary human populations. I argue against both measures.

meager notice.⁵ (See Clossey and Guyatt, [Figure 1](#)) Historians in Japan's leading universities likewise envision a tripartite world, but their divisions, institutionalized in the Meiji period (1868–1912), map a different globe. Japan's three categories are Japanese history (*Nihonshi*); Eastern history (*tōyōshi* also sometimes translated as “Oriental History”) which covers Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the non-Anglophone Pacific; and, Western history (*seiyōshi*) which encompasses North America, Latin America, and Europe. Looking at all Japanese history faculty (including those without teaching responsibilities housed in universities' large research institutes), 40 percent of Japan's historical interest is apportioned to Japan's past, 29 percent to *tōyōshi* or “the East,” and 31 percent to *seiyōshi* or “the West.” (Chart 1) These three parts are roughly equal, with the preponderance of interest in the home country.

However, quite surprisingly, if pure researchers are left out and only teaching faculty is included, these percentages change to 33 percent for Japan, 25 percent for “the East,” and 42 percent for “the West” which, as I explain below, really means Western Europe. While Clossey and Guyatt's Small World Study disclosed that North Atlantic scholarly interest in “Europe” was slightly greater than the interest in “home history,” my findings reveal a more extreme situation in Japan. The teaching faculty there displays a significantly greater concern for “Europe” in comparison with their “home history” than do their Western counterparts.⁶ (Chart 3) Simply having a past does not qualify places as objects of historians' interest in either Japan or the North Atlantic, but in both regions “Europe,” meaning more precisely the parts of Europe dominant in the late-nineteenth century, are of primary interest.

Other oddities abound. For instance, the Japanese historians' designations “East” and “West” are backward from the perspective of the Japanese archipelago. The “East” of *tōyōshi* (Eastern history) is actually to the West of the Japanese islands. These labels linger from the curious moment in the late-nineteenth century when Japan energetically

⁵ The three regions used in the “Small World” study reflect the formal organization of some American history departments. For instance, when I arrived at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1994, the history department had just ceased to operate according to a formal tripartite division into the United States, Europe, and “Developing Countries” which had included Japan, the second largest economy in the world at the time.

⁶ The quotation marks around the geographical entities are inserted as a reminder that these are not precisely defined. For instance, as Kenneth Pomeranz points out in the AHA Roundtable responding to Clossey and Guyatt, “Europe” most probably refers primarily to Western Europe. Kenneth Pomeranz, “Reflections on ‘It's a Small World After All,’” *AHA Roundtable Perspectives on History* (July 2013), <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/summer-2013/reflections-on-its-a-small-world-after-all> (accessed February 22, 2015), 1.

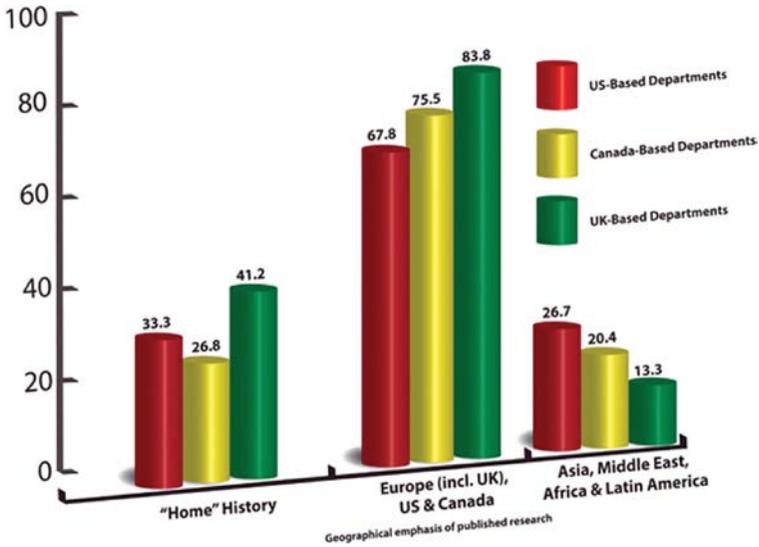


FIGURE 1. Comparing geographical range between United States, Canadian, and UK history departments.

From Luke Clossey and Nicolas Guyatt, "It's a Small World After All: The Wider World in Historians' Peripheral Vision" (May 2013). <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2013/its-a-small-world-after-all>. (Reproduced here with the kind permission of the authors.)

adopted a bifocal vision of the world, combining their own line of sight with that of Western imperialists threatening Japanese sovereignty. The result is that the historical world is seen from two perspectives at once in Japan. The term *tōyōshi* entails the West's point of view and Japanese historians use it in almost the same way except that Japan, from Japanese viewpoint, is not part of the "East" or *tōyō* but a place apart.

In short, the historical discipline whether in Japan or the North Atlantic divides the world into three parts with a special emphasis on Western Europe, but the parts are different and differently weighted. We can see these differences even more clearly when Japanese historians' geographical interests are broken out not according to indigenous tripartite Meiji-era categories (Japan, Western history, and Eastern history) but according to Clossey and Guyatt's more fine-grained, regional specialization categories shown in their Figure 2. Not surprisingly, "East Asia" as defined by the Small World Study reigns supreme in Japan with 57 percent of the research focused on Japan and its neighbors, particularly China, largely ignoring Korea. Essentially, for Japan's historians, the world by this measure exists in two halves: East

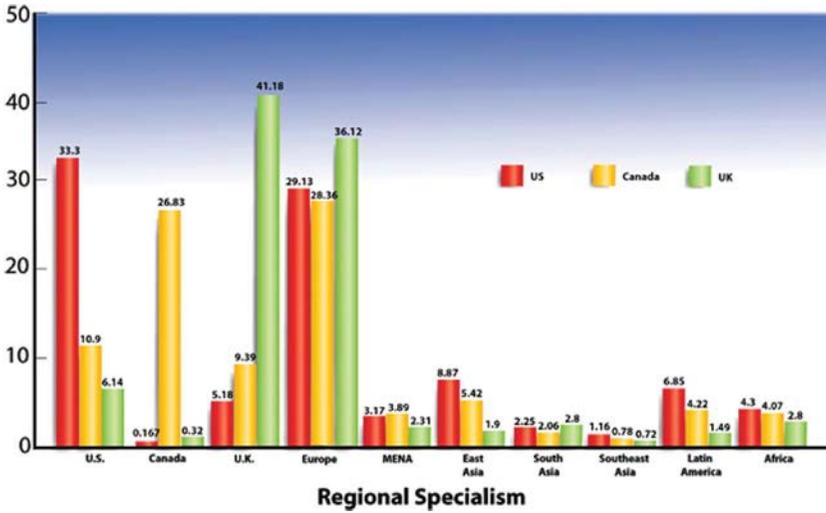


FIGURE 2. Percentage of historians working at United States, Canadian, and UK universities by regional specialism.

From Luke Clossey and Nicolas Guyatt, “It’s a Small World After All: The Wider World in Historians’ Peripheral Vision” (May 2013). <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2013/its-a-small-world-after-all>. (Reproduced here with the kind permission of the authors.)

Asia and everything else. By contrast, for North Atlantic scholars, “East Asia” hardly figures at all. It attracts less than 9 percent of American historical research, less than 6 percent of Canadian research, and a measly 1.9 percent of UK attention.

If we use the aggregate category of “Asia” (a much-vexed and ill-defined term), it could be said that the distribution of Japanese historical interest closely accords with current population figures.⁷ Something like 60 percent of the world’s population lives in “Asia” which approximates Japanese researchers’ 62 percent interest combining their concern for

⁷ On the designation “Asia,” as Victor Lieberman observes, “One hardly need rehearse the political benefits—directed as much against self-doubt as against colonial and semi-colonial subjects—that accrued from describing the non-Western world as awaiting the Western kiss of life.... Hence the compression of societies that were enormously varied but comparably vulnerable into a single category, ‘Asia.’” Lieberman, “Transcending East-West Dichotomies: State and Culture Formation in Six Ostensibly Disparate Areas,” in Victor Lieberman, ed., *Beyond Binary Histories: Re-imagining Eurasia to c. 1830* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 22. See also, Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (California, 1997). In the AHR Perspectives response, Pomeranz pointed to the problem of the term “Asia” as well asking where does “Asia” stop and “Europe” begin? Our study confronted this difficulty as well. See “Methodology.”

East Asia with the smattering of interest in South Asia (2 percent) and Southeast Asia (3 percent). (Chart 2) Mostly though, playing with the data in this way reveals how much depends on definitions since the seemingly proportionate ratio of Japan's historical interest to Asia's population obviously relies on "home country" concern and does not adequately represent the populations in other parts of that sprawling continent let alone the square miles of that vast terrain.

In Japan, both Meiji-era divisions and Small World Study divisions show that "Europe" is very attractive to Japanese historians whether the count combines teaching and non-teaching researchers (Charts 1 and 2) or includes teaching scholars alone (Charts 3 and 4). Europe's power and influence in the contemporary world might explain why Japanese historian's interest in Europe is two to three times as great as Europe's current population (about 11 percent of the world's total) would warrant, but this geo-realist explanation falters spectacularly when applied to other areas. Perhaps most puzzling of all, North America history receives only 4–5 percent of Japanese scholarly attention. Given the power and influence particularly of the United States in Japan ever since Commodore Matthew Perry forcibly opened the country to commerce and diplomacy in 1853, the lack of interest is curious in itself and even stranger when compared to Japan's greater attention to the Middle East (5–6 percent). Undeniably, Japan's historians have mapped a distinctive world.

What these statistics demonstrate, I argue, is that history doesn't have *one* "small world" problem; instead, we confront multiple "small worlds" at odds with each other. Not only is historical interest spread unevenly across the planet, dismissing some pasts and delving deeply into others, but it also creates incommensurate geographies depending on which of these small, incongruous worlds is home to the historian. These small worlds pose an acute problem for world historians if they seek a neutral place to stand since everywhere configures the world distinctively and parochially. Because of the impossibility of a neutral "view from nowhere," I think our best recourse is to reflect on these contending geographies and the interests they serve and then suggest how new geographies might better chart the global environment.⁸ This is why I have chosen to further Clossey and Guyatt's admirable efforts.

In what follows, I trace three lines of inquiry. First I say a few words about the long practice of history in Japan in order to show both its indigenous configuration of the historical world and the

⁸ I take the phrase "view from nowhere" from Thomas Nagel's *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

nineteenth-century reconfiguration of that world under the impetus of nation building and Western imperialism. Second, I discuss how the statistics used in this study were obtained, explaining why my methods were necessarily shaped by Japanese universities' particular institutional arrangements. Because of these institutional arrangements, it was impossible to adopt Clossey and Guyatt's method of analyzing the interests of history department faculty. Third, I take up the import of my findings that the geographical interests of history were cemented in the late-nineteenth century. Like Clossey and Guyatt, I bemoan history's current geographical distortions and obdurate parochialism but I take issue with their view that these should ideally be rectified by according "history" equally to all. Not only is it impossible, as they admit, to succeed (where Lord Acton failed) in transforming the discipline into a neutral, descriptive project according dispassionate interest to every bit of the globe, it would belie history's purpose as an evaluative discipline.⁹ We need, in my view, not a dispassionate historical geography but one responsive to the world's urgent questions.

THE HISTORY OF HISTORY IN JAPAN AND THE FOUNDATION OF ITS SMALL WORLD

As recently as 1979, it was still possible for a historian as renowned as Fernand Braudel (1902–1985) to intone:

Europe invented historians and made good use of them. Her own history is well lit and can be called as evidence or used as a claim. The history of non-Europe is still being written. And until the balance of knowledge and interpretation has been restored, the historian will be reluctant to cut the Gordian knot of world history – that is the origin of the superiority of Europe.¹⁰

⁹ I rely here on Thomas L. Haskell's brilliant distinction between objective history (which he argues is possible) and neutral history (which is both impossible and undesirable). Haskell, *Objectivity is Not Neutrality: Explanatory Schemes in History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

¹⁰ F. Braudel, *Civilisation Matérielle, Économie et Capitalisme, Xve–XVIIIe* (1979) translated by Siân Reynolds as *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400–1800*, Vol. II *The Wheels of Commerce* (Harper and Row, 1982, here Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1992), 134. See also Patrick K. O'Brien, "Metanarratives in Global Histories of Material Progress: *The Emergence of the Global Political Economy* by William R. Thompson; *Europe in the International Economy, 1500–2000* by Derek H. Aldcroft; Anthony Sutcliffe; *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* by Kenneth Pomeranz," Review Essay, *The International History Review* 23, no. 2 (2001): 354–355.

His statement is, of course, nonsense, but it encapsulates the ideological foundation of the West's "small world" with its sweeping dismissal of the entity he refers to as "non-Europe." Given the persistence of Eurocentrism in historical practice, it is necessary, if perhaps wearisome, to reiterate the fact that Japan's historical studies are not pale, belated reflections of a vibrant European intellectual enterprise, a fact Braudel should have known.¹¹ More than a thousand years ago, Japan along with China, South Asia, and other "non-Europes," developed protocols for preserving and verifying documents so as to analyze and narrate the past. Even discounting romances, religious texts, and popular tales, Asia had histories.

Here I can do no more than gesture toward Japan's long history of history, but a brief genealogy of the discipline is necessary to explain why Japan's "small world" is not the same as the North Atlantic's "small worlds." If Europe actually had "invented historians" and then bequeathed the profession to other cultures as Braudel claims, history in Japan and other places would mirror the West's. In other words, had Braudel been correct, we would now confront a single "small world problem" rather than the difficulty of many relatively well-lit small worlds that resist being combined into a single world history.

Reviewing Japan's approaches to the past reveals both categorical similarities and specific differences. In essence, "history" may be defined abstractly as a set of practices producing evidenced representations of the past. As such, it looks very much the same in Japan as in other places but, as my research shows, its geography is different. The area encompassed by Japan's historical world sets it apart because it centers, not surprisingly, on certain aspects of Japanese society and on places of importance to Japan. Since highlighting certain places is never a neutral act for the historian but a means of expressing value, the places defined as "historical" are the ones that matter. Some places and some people, rise to the level of historical visibility while others fade away along with their shadowy political, intellectual, cultural, environmental, and economic lives. Thus, in Japan as in Europe, the specific "small world" that emerged through the dialectic between history as an abstract general practice and history as the expression of site-specific values is not easily portable or easily globalized. The real "Gordian knot of world history," to use Braudel's phrase, is not why the West emerges as superior, but whether a single

¹¹ Readily available in Braudel's time was, for instance, W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank, *Historians of China and Japan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961; published in German in 1965).

world history is possible if the place where each historian stands has its own horizons.

The genealogy of recognizable “history” in Japan extends at least to the 700s, although the rhetorical devices and stories in these earliest works have an even deeper past both on the archipelago and on the continent, particularly in China. Indeed, the 1500-year trajectory of historical practice in Japan and its reliance on older practices borrowed from earlier, distant cultures should feel familiar to northern European historians thinking of their first practitioners such as Gregory of Tours (538–594) and Bede (672–735) reaching back to the Mediterranean classical and Biblical worlds.¹² From the earliest official chronicles sponsored by the Nara state (710–794) to the early modern period, most Japanese research and writing revolved around the origin and continuity of the imperial dynasty. Of the several approaches to cementing the imperial state’s moral authority, the three most important by the Tokugawa period (1600–1868) were the moralistic appraisals of Neo-Confucian Sino-Japanese historiography (*kangaku*), the nativist school (*kokugaku*) which attempted to extract a pure Japanese essence by close readings of heavily Sinicized texts, and the Mito School’s massive 397-chapter *Dainihonshi* (History of Great Japan) initiated in 1657 with the final installment appearing, after some lengthy interruptions, in 1906.¹³ The *Dainihonshi*’s celebration of both the imperial and shogunal lineages became problematic in the mid-nineteenth century when imperial and shogunal supporters came to blows, showing that contemporary politics in Japan, as elsewhere, altered historical perspectives. However, the political importance of history *per se* was indisputable, as was history’s “small world” centering on the Japan.

¹² See John Burrow’s engrossing recapitulation of the standard tale of European history beginning with the obligatory nod to ancient Egypt and Babylon and moving swiftly through the Greeks, the Romans, and Christendom to land with aplomb in northern Europe. John Burrow, *A History of Histories: Epics, Chronicles, Romances, and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century* (London: Allen Lane, 2007, references to First Vintage edition, April 2009). One of the greatest challenges to this view is Marshall Hodgson’s deeply researched argument centering history on Asia, though his “Asia” is different from Japan’s. Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History*, ed. Edmund Burke, III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹³ J. Victor Koschmann, *The Mito Ideology: Discourse, Reform, and Insurrection in Late Tokugawa Japan, 1790–1864* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987) provides a fascinating analysis of the intellectual acrobatics through which Mito scholars attempted to foster an ahistorical, natural form of government through historical action, including the writing of history. Also on the Mito School, see Herschel Webb, “What Is the Dai Nihon Shi?” *Journal of Asian Studies* 19, no. 2 (1960): 135–149.

Given Japan's long dedication to history as a political tool, it is hardly surprising that shortly after the arrival of Western imperialists and the overthrow of the Tokugawa bakufu in 1868, history's importance was rearticulated by the teenaged Meiji Emperor at the behest of his advisors. The April 1869 imperial rescript decreed:

Historiography is a for ever immortal state ritual (*taiten*) and a wonderful act of our ancestors. But after the Six National Histories it was interrupted and no longer continued. Is this not a great lack! Now the evil of misrule by the warriors since the Kamakura period has been overcome and imperial government has been restored. Therefore we wish that an office of historiography (*shikyoku*) be established.... Let us set right the relations between monarch and subject, distinguish clearly between the alien and the proper (*ka'i naigai*) and implant virtue throughout our land.¹⁴

Government leaders, exquisitely aware of history's power as a state ideological prop, created a Department of History (*rekishika*) in 1872 under the important Council of State (*daijōkan*).¹⁵ By April 1875, the department had been upgraded to the Office of Historiography (*shūshikyoku*), which attempted to produce official histories. However, in October 1888, the government decided to forgo direct supervision of historical research and moved this operation to an institute called the *Shiryō hensan kakari* (Historiographical Institute) within Tokyo Imperial University (Tōdai) founded in 1877. The *Shiryō hensan kakari* persists to this day, a redoubt of about 53 researchers, all without teaching responsibilities, nearly all focused on careful study of pre-Meiji historical documents, and almost entirely male.¹⁶ (See Chart 5 for the distribution according to Small World Study categories of the geographical focus of Tōdai's teaching faculty and Chart 6 for the geographical focus of teaching and research faculty combined.)

In June 1889, a few months after the Historiographical Institute opened at Tōdai, a Department of Japanese History (*kokushika*) was

¹⁴ Translated and quoted in Margaret Mehl, *History and the State in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 1.

¹⁵ Mehl provides an invaluable description of these developments in Mehl, *History and the State in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, 21–23.

¹⁶ In Japanese universities as elsewhere in Japanese society, the problem of gender equality seems to be getting worse: "In 2016, Japan was ranked 111th out of 144 countries in gender equality, according to the World Economic Forum, dropping ten spots from 2015." Devin Stewart, "Japan Gets Schooled: Why the Country's Universities are Failing." *Foreign Affairs* (October 31, 2016). <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/japan/2016-10-31/japan-gets-schooled>

founded to complement the Department of History (*shigakka*) established in 1887. This strange arrangement of two separate history departments, one national and one foreign, gave institutional form to the pervasive sense that Japan's history was discrete from rest of the world's, whether it was the Eastern history (*tōyōshi*) advocated by China scholars or the Western history (*seiyōshi*) that had been gaining ground for a couple of centuries beginning with "Dutch studies" (*rangaku*). History's three geographical domains (Japan, the East, and the West) took definitive hold by the 1890s. German historian Ludwig Riess (1861–1928), a student of Leopold von Ranke, was invited by the Meiji government to advise the new university on historiography, but as Sebastian Conrad observes, "Rankean source criticism did not necessarily seem a foreign intrusion." Indeed, it had much in common with the *kōshōgaku* tradition emphasizing "source critique and philological examination of documents."¹⁷ The formalization of historical studies within universities and the interest in European methodology were marks of Japan's modernity, but they also had deep indigenous roots. In 1919, the tripartite division of history into Japanese, Eastern, and Western was made official at all universities as a part of the government's restructuring of higher education.

Alongside Tōdai, the three other universities central to my research experienced much the same formation. Kyoto Imperial University, founded in 1897 after Tokyo, divided history into these same three arenas, but weighted them slightly differently. Tōdai has always emphasized Japanese history given its location in the nation's capital, its close ties to the government, and the Historiographical Institute's hoard of primary documents, but Kyoto Imperial University (abbreviated as "Kyōdai") has looked more to Asia because the *kinai* region with the ancient capitals of Nara and Kyoto has deep ties to continental culture, religion, and politics. The links between the eighth-century Nara court and the Silk Roads leading from Mesopotamia, the documents stored for more than a millennia at the imperial Shōsoin treasure house, and the glories of Buddhist architecture within Kyoto have given this university a particular strength in "Oriental history." Today, almost half of its teaching and research historians (45 percent) focus on "the East" (just west of Japan) including China, India, South and Southeast Asia, central Asia, the

¹⁷ Sebastian Conrad, *The Quest for the Lost Nation: Writing History in Germany and Japan in the American Century* translated by Alan Nothnagle (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010), 23.

Middle East, and North Africa while only 23 percent devote themselves to Japanese history (Chart 7).

In the mid-Meiji frenzy, private universities and colleges sprouted like mushrooms along with the imperial universities, but none have been more important than Keiō and Waseda. Keiō University, which began in 1858 as a school for Dutch studies has continued to emphasize the history of Europe, dedicating itself to producing graduates who would participate in strengthening civil society as opposed to joining government bureaucracies. Waseda, founded in 1882 as Tokyo Senmon Gakko, modeled itself on the world-renown German university system except that it adopted the Meiji tripartite division of the world's history. However, as my research shows, these "alternative" universities were not nearly as alternative as one might think in the way they mapped the world.

In summary, by the 1890s, the shape of Japan's "small world" had solidified in three ways. First, the tripartite division among the histories of Japan, "the East," and "the West" and the geographical inclusions and exclusions within each of these categories crystallized. Second, also by this time, institutions of higher education were divided between imperial and private universities with only a few public or *kōritsu* universities, though these grew dramatically under the American Occupation following World War II.¹⁸ Third, the distinction between research-only faculty and those who both teach as well as research was in place. These factors still shape the historical discipline in Japan despite several reorganizations, most spectacularly after Japan's 1945 defeat. In the postwar period, imperial universities became national universities and their number dropped from nine (one in Taiwan and one in Korea) to seven when Japan lost its colonies, but otherwise the number of universities soared from 49 in 1945 to 220 by 1952. As of 2010, this number had climbed to nearly 800.¹⁹ Not all have history departments, and now some of the smaller, weaker institutions are faltering as the population, especially of young people, declines.

¹⁸ For this history, see Murata Suzuko, *Kōritsu daigaku ni kansuru kenkyū: Chiiki shakai shikō to yūnibasarizumu* (Tokyo: Tankobon, 1994).

¹⁹ The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT, created in a January 2001 bureaucratic reorganization by combining the Education Ministry [Monbushō] and Science and Technology Ministry [Kagaku-gijutsu-chō]) organizes these institutions into three categories: 86 national universities (*kokuritsu* with the "former imperial universities" known as *kyūteikoku daigaku* retaining their preeminence), 95 public universities (*kōritsu*), and 597 private universities (*shiritsu*). Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/koutou/shinkou/main5_a3.htm (accessed August 12, 2016).

The important point for our understanding of Japan's "small world" is that neither changing imperial politics nor postwar institutional expansion fundamentally altered history's geography after the end of the nineteenth century. Fierce ideological debates such as the 1890s Kume Affair, the 1920s disputes between *rōnōha* and *kōzaha* Marxist factions over interpretations of the Meiji Restoration, and the postwar questions about the extent of Japan's modernization ignored the problem of history's limited geographical sweep. Latin America never came into view. Korean history remains oddly anemic as is the history of Japan's many other former colonies.²⁰ So too, Soviet (now Russian) history has never been a vibrant interest despite shared and disputed borders. Central Asia and the Middle East attract more historians than places such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Burma that were part of the wartime Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Perhaps most strikingly of all, Japan's historians shrug off the United States. As history became a university discipline by the 1890s, Japan's particular "small world" was cemented into its enduring shape. In this, it partook of a global process.

METHODOLOGY

I begin this section by tipping my hat to Clossey and Guyatt. Procuring basic statistics on the geographical preferences of academic historians is not the quick and easy task it might seem. When I began my research on Japan, conducted in 2014–2015 at Harvard's Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, I ambitiously believed I could survey a significant percentage of that nation's universities and colleges. This optimism was quickly dispelled. Even with the able research assistance of Christian Šidák, bicycling to Mars might have been more feasible. However, the difficulties we encountered were less discouraging than illuminating. In the universities we examined, the organization of academic units, databases, and the information available on the web varied widely, yet the world regions of historical interest remained roughly constant. This structure suggests a particular dynamic between institutional localism and an overarching philosophical view of what counts as historical.

As Clossey and Guyatt discovered, historians are remarkably bad at keeping records on ourselves. Indeed, the American Historical

²⁰ Not surprisingly, anthropologists, often better than historians at crossing borders, were extremely engaged with Korea as E. Taylor Atkins shows. Atkins, *Primitive Selves: Koreans in the Japanese Colonial Gaze, 1910–1945* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010).

Association, founded in 1884, seems unique, maintaining in-depth data on concerns such as the research interests of its members, the size and breadth of departments, the training and placement of graduate students, and the latest trends in hiring, tenuring, and remunerating. Helpful though this is, even this is inadequate. While the AHA may encompass a relatively high percentage of those in the profession, partly because the organization facilitates hiring, we cannot know how high the percentage is or whether AHA membership is skewed toward particular regions of interest. To help with ballpark numbers, in 2011, the American Historical Association had 14,196 total members, including students (32 percent) and history teachers at all levels as well as public historians. The 2011 AHA report also includes a chart showing geographical interests, with one category revealingly labeled “World/Western Civilization” (as though they were the same!) at 2.3 percent. North America was the geographical field of specialization for 36.2 percent and Europe for 37.2 percent.²¹

But in Japan, there is no national history association at all. Even the venerable Historical Society (*Shigakukai*, also abbreviated *Shigakkai*) founded on November 1, 1889 at Tokyo Imperial University principally serves only Tōdai, and has a rival organization on the same campus called *Rekishigaku kenkyūkai*.²² Other campuses and regions of Japan are served by other organizations, reflecting and reinforcing the local, vertical hierarchies within the university. Occasionally some of these organizations will join together to speak on critical national issues such as the Comfort Women controversy, but often there is little contact.²³ The standard pattern is for major universities to hire their own PhDs so

²¹ Robert B. Townsend, “AHA Membership on Rise Again in 2011,” *AHA Today: A Blog of the American Historical Association* (July 20, 2011), <http://blog.historians.org/2011/07/aha-membership-on-the-rise-again-in-2011/> (accessed August 16, 2016).

²² The *Rekishigaku kenkyūkai*, formed in opposition to the *Shigakkai*, principally by Marxist historians, is also based at Tokyo. At Kyoto there is the *Nihon kenkyūkai* and the *Shigaku kenkyūkai*.

²³ As an example of the diversity of history organizations in Japan, many of them tied to particular universities, see the sixteen signatories to the “Joint Statement by Associations of History Scholars and Educators in Japan on the ‘Comfort Women’ Issue” (press release issued May 25, 2015). These were (using the English titles in their press release) The Japanese Historical Council, Association of Historical Science, Association of History of Japanese Thought, The Historical Association of Senshu University, The Historical Science Society of Japan, The Historical Society of Fukushima University, The Historical Society of Tokyo Gakugei University, History Educationalist Conference of Japan, The Japan Association for Korean History (Committee), The Japanese Historical Society, The Japanese Society for Historical Studies, The Kyushu Society of Historical Science, Osaka Historical Association, The Society for Historical Science of Nagoya, The Society for Research on Women’s History, and Tokyo Historical Science Association. <http://www.torekiken.org/trk/blog/oshirase/20150525e.html>

interests and routines are often quite specific to institutions. This pattern of departments reproducing themselves continues despite reform attempts from on high, whether during the American Occupation (1945–1952) or by the Japanese Ministry of Education (now MEXT). In sum, there was no shortcut, no one-stop database, for information on university-based historians in Japan.

To overcome the lack of a single professional database, Clossey and Guyatt looked at history departments in selected research universities in Canada, the United States, and the UK, examining each faculty member's website in order to ascertain which region he or she studies. If a faculty member was interested in two regions, say Germany and South Africa, each region was accredited half. In the July 2013 AHA Roundtable discussion of Clossey and Guyatt's work, Anne Gerritsen, Mary Elizabeth Berry, and Kenneth Pomeranz all pointed out that focusing exclusively on history departments omitted historians in other units, especially area studies, somewhat distorting the results. While a valid criticism, during our research of Japanese universities, Christian Šidák and I came to envy Clossey and Guyatt. Defining someone as a "historian" because they hold a faculty appointment in a history department has a clarity that was unavailable to us as we examined Japanese institutions of higher learning.

As quickly became apparent, universities in Japan are organized along very different lines than in the West. For instance, Waseda has no "history department" at all but at least nine undergraduate faculties (*gakujutsu-in*) where history is taught plus organizations (*kikō*), centers (*sentā*), and an institute for advanced study (*kōtō kenkyūjo*) where historical research takes place. This discovery meant that we had to define who counted as a "historian" without relying on departmental labels. In the end, the only feasible, though immensely time-consuming approach was to examine the websites of every scholar in every academic unit who might plausibly be a historian. Relying primarily on scholars' self-identification and research interests, we would decide first whether or not they counted as members of the historical tribe and then we would ascertain which regions interested them. By our calculations, Waseda has about 99 historians despite having no discrete department of history. Other universities were slightly less perplexing. Kyoto, for instance, has a Division of History (*rekishi bunka-gaku*) with three schools (*shigaku*), one each for the study of Japan, Europe, and Oriental History, the latter with a subdivision for "West-Asian History" (*seinan ajia shigaku*) meaning Iran and Arabia. But other Kyoto University divisions such as the Division of Contemporary Culture (*Gendai bunka-gaku*) also had historians as did various faculties, graduate schools,

centers, and their Research Institute of Human Sciences (*Jinbun kagaku kenkyū-sho*). In order to be able to tally the numbers and interests of historians in Japan, we could not rely on the labels of academic units. Unlike the Small World Study, then, our study catalogs to the best of our ability all historians in all university subdivisions.

Another obstacle was the baroque structure of Japanese universities. Various units apparently accrue over time like sedimentary rock formations with all the deposits from earlier eras incorporated. Some units have only one faculty member. Many personnel are listed in multiple units. “Faculties” (the designation for units where undergraduates are taught), “departments” and “schools” (usually referring to graduate teaching), and centers and research institutes (for pure research) list everyone associated with them, even those whose home department is elsewhere. In other words, we had to be very careful to avoid double and even triple counting.

These obstacles, and the care required to overcome them, quickly deflated my hope for a broader sample. To do solid work on four of the most important universities in Japan became the aim. I choose the two most prestigious national universities, Tokyo and Kyoto, because of their impact on the outlook and training of historians throughout Japan. As later institutions of higher education were established, they tended to hire faculty from Tōdai and Kyōdai who carried the Meiji-era’s distinctive “small world” with them. Because of this, it made sense for us to map history’s small world in the pinnacles of Japan’s university hierarchy since this geography cascaded down to less prestigious institutions. However, I also wanted to balance the perspective of these two national universities by looking at private universities, choosing Keiō and Waseda. Although Keiō and Waseda are often presented as alternatives to imperial universities, it emerged that their historical interests matched those of Tōdai and Kyōdai, although Keiō tends to be slightly more attentive to the wider world.²⁴ Finally, since I wanted to compare my findings with those of Clossey and Guyatt who had chosen elite universities, I did the same.

The three major sources for the quantitative portion of this study were individual faculty profiles on departmental websites, university databases, and the independent Researchmap database

²⁴ See, for instance, Huda Yoshida al-Khaizaran, “The Emergence of Private Universities and New Social Formations in Meiji Japan, 1868–1912,” *History of Education* 40, no. 2 (2011): 157–178.

(<http://researchmap.jp/search/>), which functions somewhat like Academia.edu. None of these is entirely satisfactory. Our first step was to use departmental and university databases to figure out who might be doing historical research. Only after compiling that data did we check our figures against those in Researchmap. Researchmap permitted us to feel roughly confident about our findings in terms of raw numbers of historians and to check their regions of research interest, but Researchmap had two drawbacks: members are self-selecting so not everyone is accounted for and its keyword “history” brings up art historians and archeologists whom we excluded from our study and therefore had to exclude when they appeared on Researchmap. In this way, a search on Researchmap for “history” at “Tokyo University” yielded 154 search results. Since through other means, we had tallied 153 historians at Tokyo University, this figure suggested that we are not too far off the mark.

In terms of our overall sample size, we cataloged a total of 406 historians. In the spring of 2015, the total of all registered historians on Researchmap.jp was 3613, including art historians and archeologists. This includes 2216 at private universities, 221 at public universities, and 1186 at the 86 National University Corporations. (“National University Corporations” or *Kokuritsu daigaku hōjin* became the term for former national universities in 2004 when they underwent partial privatization.) If we assume that a high number of Japanese historians have profiles on Researchmap, that would mean our study surveyed approximately 11 percent of all academic historians in Japan. A sample size over 10 percent of the total pool is acceptable for the social sciences. But, since we omitted archeologists and art historians while Researchmap.jp includes them, the actual percentage of historians cataloged in our study is even higher. Partly because of the substantial number of historians working at the research institutes at Tokyo and Kyoto, these universities have disproportionately high numbers of historians. We supplemented this statistical research with interviews and with the literature on the history of Japanese higher education.²⁵

As this shows, the institutional particularities of Japanese and North Atlantic universities meant that the same method could not be applied to both. The three key differences can be summarized as

²⁵ Christian Šidák conducted interviews with Professor Tanigawa Yutaka (Kyoto University) on February 18, 2015 and with Professor Shimizu Yūichirō (Keiō University) on February 20, 2015. We thank them for their gracious assistance.

follows: First, by necessity, we tried to include all historians working at these Japanese universities regardless of departmental labels, while Clossey and Guyatt relied on designated history departments. Second, we used both Japanese Meiji designations (the Japanese tripartite world of Japan, East, and West) as well as the Small World Study's categories (Charts 2 and 4). Again, slicing the data two ways was complicated. For instance, the Small World Study lacks a designation for Central Asia, an area in which Japanese historians conduct significant research. So, for direct comparison with the Small World History Study, we broke down the Meiji *tōyōshi* category, counting Mongolian, Jurchen, and Manchu studies as East Asian history and Iranian and Turkic as MENA. When there was a professor who studied two or more regions, we counted him or her in fractions as did Clossey and Guyatt. For instance, Kyoto University's Ikuko Koike studies the African diaspora so she is half an African historian and half a North American historian by "Small World" categories. By Meiji categorization, she is half a Western historian and half an Eastern historian. Finally, because a large number of historians are employed in research-only institutes, we show how the world is divided according to the interests of teaching faculty as well as how the world is divided when the interests of teaching and pure research faculty are combined. Overall data and data specific to Tōdai and Kyōdai are shown in the final section labeled "Charts."

ANALYSIS: DISTORTED GEOGRAPHY AS A TOOL FOR HISTORIANS

What are we to make of history's many "small worlds"? This analysis considers three related questions: (1) why does our profession, everywhere, don geographical blinders, (2) is the main problem with history's distorted geographies disproportionate representation or, as I will argue, inadequate presentation of places vital to questions such as the roots of environmental degradation, the persistence of gender inequality, and alternatives to modern growth economies, and, finally, (3) can world history solve the small world problem? Clossey and Guyatt's study and the responses to it suggest that history's parochialism is a disappointment, even a scandal, and with this I agree, but I take issue with their conviction that the ideal is equal representation for its own sake.

First, why the ubiquitous blinders? There are many plausible reasons for the particular shape and size of histories' worlds. The focus on "home history," for instance, may be justified for the way it cultivates

citizens, as Kenneth Pomeranz rightly observes.²⁶ But the need for civic education does not entirely explain the difference between Canadian historians' relative modesty (26.8 percent) and the UK's self-absorption (41.2 percent). Proximity, a shared past, and national interest also partly explain histories' geographies, but fall short if we want to understand why U.S. departments are so little concerned with Canada or why Japanese historians barely glance at Russia.²⁷ Wealthy places apparently possess more history than poor places, but again the correlation is far from exact. If wealth measured by GDP per capita were a magnet, historians would surround Luxembourg and Qatar like iron filings. If national GDP were the determining factor, the world's three largest economies, the United States, China, and Japan, would dominate history departments everywhere. A multiethnic citizenry has some bearing on historians' appetites for knowledge about the wider world, especially in the United States, but Japan (where over 98 percent of the population are ethnic Japanese) engages a far wider world than the highly diverse UK. Half of Japan's historians are experts on regions outside East Asia while only 16 percent of UK historians peer outside "the West." In short, reasons such as civic education, wealth, proximity, and domestic multiculturalism only partly explain historians' distorted geographies.

Clossey and Guyatt propose that "our geographical biases reflect an ingrained preference for Westerners over resterners, to borrow a phrase from Niall Ferguson."²⁸ The phrase "ingrained preference" points, I think, to the most compelling explanation for our limited geographies: the persistence of ideological and institutional commitments long after their establishment. The primary reason for historians' distorted geographies in both Japanese and Western universities seems to be an

²⁶ Pomeranz writes, "To the extent that the purpose of history is the cultivation of citizens, there is a case to be made for over-weighting the history of one's home country. There is also a case to be made for insuring that graduates have some knowledge of other societies that have considerable influence on their contemporary world, and of societies that have particular histories of entanglement with their own." Pomeranz, "Reflections on 'It's a Small World After All,'" *AHA Roundtable Perspectives on History* (July 2013), <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/summer-2013/reflections-on-its-a-small-world-after-all> (accessed February 22, 2015), 1.

²⁷ Sho Konishi's *Anarchist Modernity* explores the neglected area of Russo-Japanese intellectual history. See Konishi, *Anarchist Modernity: Cooperatism and Japanese-Russian Intellectual Relations in Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2013).

²⁸ Luke Clossey and Nicholas Guyatt, "It's a Small World After All: The Wider World in the Historians' Peripheral Vision," *Perspectives on History* (May 2013), <http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history> (accessed August 22, 2014), 4.

inability to shake off the profession's origins; history departments were established in universities just as the nation-state and Western European power attained global ascendancy and often served the interests of these relatively novel political formations. Taking on the veneer of inevitability, nationhood and Western hegemony were embraced as the ultimate expression of history by Ranke, Kume Kunitake, and many others.²⁹ These nineteenth-century historians could claim, George Iggers observes, to be "both 'objective' and in the service of the nation" because of the widespread faith that history's true course ran through the nation-state. Given this belief, attention to the strongest nation-states seemed only natural since lesser nations and non-nations were axiomatically less historical. Likewise, the imperialist nations of Western Europe were particularly historical as they extended their reach.³⁰

Older preferences for classical studies of Chinese, Mediterranean, or Mesopotamian empires did not give way immediately as modern history entered universities. Indeed, "civilization" still lingers as a defining characteristic of places with history, perhaps explaining Japanese historians' fascination with Persia and their relative disdain for America. For instance, Prince Mikasa (1915–2016), youngest brother of Emperor Hirohito, exemplified the allure of ancient *tōyōshi*, not only serving as honorary president of the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan and the Japan-Turkey Society but also working as a scholar himself.³¹ But, in general, Western Europe's momentary ascendancy in the late-nineteenth century blinded historians, even path breaking figures like Braudel. Vigorous critiques of this "small world" geopolitics emerging from area studies, postcolonial studies, environmental history, and world history have done little to dislodge it. As both my study and the Small World Study show, the way historians collectively chart the world opens us to the charge of being apologists for the nation-state and for Western imperialism. Nineteenth-century

²⁹ Teofilo F. Ruiz points out that "Our curriculum reflects the political realities of 19th-century" in his response to the Small World Study. Ruiz, "Supporting an Expanded View" nation-building. <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/summer-2013/reflections-on-its-a-small-world-after-all/supporting-an-expanded-view> (accessed August 22, 2014).

³⁰ Georg Iggers, "The Professionalization of Historical Studies and the Guiding Assumptions of Modern Historical Thought," in Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza, eds., *A Companion to Western Historical Thought* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 235.

³¹ Reiji Yoshida, "Prince Mikasa, a China war veteran who spanned three reigns, dies at 100," *Japan Times*, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/10/27/national/prince-mikasa-china-war-veteran-spanned-three-reigns-dies-100/#.WBvSv6jyQq5> (accessed 27 October 2016).

geographical commitments still hold professional historians in their thrall, not as whispering ghosts but as possessing daemons insisting on an outmoded map. In short, *history* is the primary reason for history's small worlds today.

The tenacity of the discipline's originary geography is remarkable. In Japan, the inbred nature of hiring within elite universities like Tōdai and Kyōdai and the hiring by lower-ranking universities of graduates from these elite schools has reinforced mid-Meiji commitments. Nothing has shaken this pattern: not Japanese imperialism and not the American Occupation's rapid expansion of Japanese higher education. In the postwar period, as former imperial university graduates moved to staff the new universities springing up under American auspices, they carried their geographical predilections with them. Of the three hundred or so historians at the new public universities in 1959, almost seventy percent had gone to either Tōdai and Kyōdai. The faculties of private universities were likewise dominated by these graduates. As Sebastian Conrad notes, "The new academic generation of the entire country was trained largely at the two elite institutions in Tokyo and Kyoto."³² In this way, the small world of Japanese history retained its Meiji configuration even as political, social, and economic worlds metamorphosized in the second half of the twentieth century.

Today, little seems to be changing. History's geographies hold their shapes like remarkably durable sweaters despite being washed in blood, sweat, and tears. Clossey and Guyatt discerned slightly more openness in the United States, but note that the surge that "took place in non-Western history hiring nearly a generation ago...may already have ended. The United Kingdom, incredibly, seems actually to have retreated."³³ Established fields benefit from demands for speedy PhDs and "quantifiable outcomes." Learning new languages and exploring half-constituted archives is discouraged by universities, by governments as in the British REF (Research Excellence Framework), and by funding bodies like the Mellon Foundation in the United States.³⁴ Instead of widening their views, history departments in the United States, the UK, and Canada appear to be tightening their blinders, unable or unwilling to confront the systemic imperatives that undermine history

³² Conrad, *The Quest for the Lost Nation*, 54.

³³ Clossey and Guyatt, "It's a Small World After All" (May 2013), 5.

³⁴ See Anne Gerritsen's suggestion about the REF. See Gerritsen, "Not 'Them' but 'Us,'" *AHA Roundtable Perspectives on History* (July 1, 2013), <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/summer-2013/reflections-on-its-a-small-world-after-all/not-them-but-us> (accessed February 22, 2015) (page 3 of 3).

as a critical practice. It is perhaps no wonder that undergraduates are wandering away in search of better guides.³⁵

Japan's "small world" also perdures, and there too critics express concern.³⁶ Historian Momoki Shirō of Osaka University, for instance, argues that the discipline's persistent geographical framework inhibits Japan's grasp of its geopolitical reality, especially its important relationships with Asian nations. He observes that Japanese history is still "approached more or less in isolation, with much attention paid to the attributes distinguishing Japan from the rest of the region, almost as if the nation had developed in a vacuum. World history, meanwhile, has preserved an overwhelmingly Euro-centric viewpoint of the nineteenth century." One might even suggest that Japan's difficulty in confronting its imperialist past is related to the historical discipline's distorted geography obscuring its embeddedness in Asia. Momoki goes on to say:

Of those undergraduates who do wish to major in history, the vast majority choose Japanese history, having little interest in countries other than their own. Those with a more international bent choose the West for its 'progressive' and 'elegant' image. Asian history remains profoundly unpopular among Japan's university students, who persist in regarding other countries in the region as backward, anti-Japanese, and generally unpleasant places to study. Our postwar education system, instead of mitigating Japan's twin tendencies toward insularity on the one hand and adulation of the West on the other, appears actually to have exacerbated those proclivities.³⁷

Momoki's observations bear out my study's findings: Japan's nineteenth-century "small world" persists with many of the same priorities and commitments. The Meiji dispensation still rules.

³⁵ Scott Jaschik, "History Enrollments Drop," *Inside Higher Ed*, September 6, 2016. Jaschik reports the "from 2012-13 to 2014-15, undergraduate enrollments fell by 7.6 percent." <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/09/06/survey-finds-decline-history-enrollments> (accessed September 30, 2016).

³⁶ For a regional perspective, see Jie-Hynn Lim, "Historicizing the World in Northeast Asia," in Northrop, ed. *A Companion to World History* (Wiley Blackwell, paperback edition, 2015), 418-432.

³⁷ Momoki Shirō, "Gendai Nihon de rekishi no daigaku nyūshi ga kakaeru mondai ten," [Exam Hell and the Crisis in History Education] (February 2, 2016) nippon.com, <http://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a05103/> (accessed February 8, 2016). In the United States, Japan historian Mark Ravina has been a persuasive critic of the view that Japan developed in splendid isolation. See Ravina, *To Stand with the Nations of the World: Japan's Meiji Restoration in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Momoki's critique of Japan's small world leads to the second question in my analysis: what is history's ideal geography? Here we might discern two standards, one proposes more representativeness for the sake of fairness and the other argues for a new geography in the service of values ill-served by the discipline's current small worlds. In their admirable study, Luke Clossey and Nicholas Guyatt support fair representation, while I argue for remapping history's worlds in order to help us understand and critique processes such as those that have led to planetary environmental degradation. Meeting either standard would require history departments to reorient their hiring and training.

The ideal hovering behind "It's a Small World After All" is that perfection would consist of an exact ratio of historians to "the past." In Clossey and Guyatt's study, it is not entirely clear whether "the past" should be measured in terms of human population or in terms of national or regional terrain, but the general thrust of their vision is clear enough. They seek a disinterested standard of fairness. However, calibrating the past for the purposes of proper historical representation can never be a value-neutral exercise. For instance, were historians to try to represent the past according to human population, it would matter whether research were apportioned by contemporary population counts or by human numbers at some other time. If contemporary population figures were used, Nigeria would be due the same number of historians as the nine countries of continental Western Europe—Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Lichtenstein, and Monaco—since the Nigerian population currently equals the combined European total of about 192,000,000 or 2.55 percent of the global population.³⁸ If we were to look to the deep past for our population standards, Africa as the origin of everyone and the place with the longest human history would become the most heavily represented region in history departments. Yet purely human metrics such as these would surely disgruntle environmental historians attuned to other life forms and wishing to incorporate animals, plants, fungi, and bacteria. In short, for the purposes of historical representation, there is no neutral way to calculate populations.

Spatial measurements give rise to other complications. Departments housing one historian for each contemporary nation would have about 195 faculty, but such an arrangement would not please

³⁸ For population figures, see <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/nigeria-population/> and <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/western-europe-population/> (accessed June 2, 2017).

premodern historians who could rightly point to the lands, kingdoms, countries, and empires preceding nation-states nor would it please historians who feel the call of the sea or polar regions beyond all national territories.³⁹ Regions such as “Asia,” as I’ve noted, are fuzzy. Clossey and Guyatt, of course, recognize that a utopia of perfect historical ratios is impractical but, perhaps because of their essay’s shortness, they do not grapple with the ideologies at play in any measure of fairness. More inclusive *representation* remains their goal. They recommend that history departments ensure that “every major world region has representation on the faculty” and “agree to a more representative balance of wider-world to Western history.”⁴⁰

As I have said, I too urge greater inclusiveness and an expanded historical geography, but Clossey and Guyatt’s argument for representation ignores two important problems: the very nature of representation itself and the purposes of history. Think of it this way: with political representation, votes are apportioned equally among qualified citizens under the umbrella of a constitutional structure; but the world has no such umbrella, nor do the many small worlds inhabited by historians lend themselves to incorporation within a totalizing system. Instead, “radical difference is the very commonness of humanity” as Kenneth Mills put it, commenting on the Small World Study.⁴¹ Moreover, even well-meaning proposals for inclusive representation often assume that Western-style universalism will supply the appropriate global template. Vestiges of this idea linger in the AHA category of “world/Western civilization” mentioned above. Yet it is precisely this “universal” template that has been at the heart of many postcolonial critiques of Eurocentrism. If the goal is to move away from nation-based and Eurocentric histories, the plea for “representation” may actually undermine these objectives, reestablishing the ground of their dominance in the guise of neutral proportionality.

The second problem with the standard of fair “representation” is that it ignores the Small World Study’s own revelations as to history’s purpose. Historical practice in the North Atlantic and, as I have shown, in Japan as well took on its current geographical engagements in the service of interests ranging from civic education to the

³⁹ For a count of the nations of world, see <http://www.worldometers.info/geography/how-many-countries-are-there-in-the-world/> (accessed June 2, 2017).

⁴⁰ Clossey and Guyatt, “It’s a Small World After All,” (May 2013), 5.

⁴¹ Kenneth Mills, “Widths Within and Without,” *AHA Roundtable Perspectives on History* (July 2013), <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/summer-2013/reflections-on-its-a-small-world-after-all/widths-within-and-without> (accessed February 22, 2015).

justification (or obfuscation) of imperialism. If we wish to dislodge contemporary complacency and demonstrate the contingency of the present, a new geography is certainly required, but it will not be dispassionate. It too will serve as the handmaiden of particular interests and values requiring reflection and debate. For myself, I see hopeful signs of a new geography for environmental history emerging from the recent scholarship connecting alternative modes of community to particular uses of natural resources. Research ranging from early Himalayan anti-state resistance to contemporary degrowth movements in rural Japan maps an alternative “small world” skirting urban centers. It elevates local practices from the uplands of Zomia to the modernity’s backwaters unsupported—or opposed—by state structures.⁴² To bring this new geography into view, energies will have to be poured into finding tools to uncover lives lived beyond centers of power and in non-European places. A commitment to remapping history to explore humanity’s ecological engagements challenges the discipline’s current dispensation not from the impossible position of neutral inclusivity but from an alternative set of political and ethical values revealed on reconfigured maps.

To be clear, what I am arguing is that Clossey and Guyatt’s framing of the “small world” problem implies that history’s geographical non-inclusiveness and unevenness are mistakes as opposed to foundational, enabling aspects of disciplinary practice. Yet according to their own data, historians everywhere have made exactly the same mistake: even “a glance at the flagship universities in Mexico, China, India, and South Africa suggests that historical research in these counties is more inward-looking than in Britain.”⁴³ Indeed, as far as we know, the historical professional in every nation transgresses in this way. Rather than propose that for generations historians have failed to recognize our natural goal of equitable representation, I would argue that the ubiquitous smallness of histories’ worlds reveals that geographical selectivity is a disciplinary imperative. This geographical selectivity accords with our selectivity regarding many other aspects of our practice including facts. As E.H. Carr famously argued, “not all facts about the past are historical facts, or are treated as such by the

⁴² James C. Scott, *The Art of the Not being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009) and Peter C. D. Matanle and Anthony Rausch, *Japan’s Shrinking Regions in the 21st Century* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2011).

⁴³ Clossey and Guyatt, “Peripheral Vision: The Authors’ Response,” 3 (July 1, 2013), <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/summer-2013/reflections-on-its-a-small-world-after-all/peripheral-vision-the-authors-response>

historian.”⁴⁴ I would paraphrase Carr’s dictum and apply it to geography: not all places are historical places, nor do historians treat them as such. Distorted maps are necessary tools of the historian’s trade, part of the armor of argumentation.

In short, the purpose of history is not to represent the vast “everything” that was, but to debate and evaluate what matters. Selectivity is not only impossible to avoid in a practical sense, but also essential to history’s value and utility. The most effective critique of history’s small world problem is not that it is inadequately representative, but that the worlds constructed in the nineteenth century, especially the inordinate focus on Western Europe, no longer speak adequately to contemporary needs and questions.

Finally, what of world history’s relationship to these incongruous small worlds? Some have hoped that global history could be an ameliorating practice, transcending and encompassing the earth. Calling for “truly comprehensive histories” or a “single, seamless narrative,” these writers aspire to even distribution of geographical interest and equitable attention to all actors from the elites to the impoverished and to all factors political, social, economic, cultural, gendered, and environmental.⁴⁵ Yet language itself foils this aspiration. For instance, among those writing in English, distinguishing between “world history” and “global history” has led to a sharpening of wits and analytical categories. But for Japanese writers, no such debate is possible because there is no word for “global” as applied to human history. *Sekai* is the term for “world” in “world history” (*sekaishi*) but *chikyū* as in “global warming” (*chikyū ondan ka*) refers to the planet or Earth in a physical sense. In English, we can pursue subtle distinctions between “world history” and “global history” but in Japanese, calling for a “global history” or *chikyū rekishi* might be an awkwardly expressed call for geology or Earth history.⁴⁶ On linguistic grounds then, world history, even with the best will in the *sekai*, cannot neutrally represent all parts of the world.

⁴⁴ E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 7.

⁴⁵ See Teofilo F. Ruiz, “Supporting an Expanded View,” *AHA Roundtable Perspectives on History* (July 2013), <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/summer-2013/reflections-on-its-a-small-world-after-all/supporting-an-expanded-view> (accessed February 22, 2015) and Cynthia Stokes Brown, *Big History: From the Big Bang to the Present* (New York and London: New Press, 2007), xi.

⁴⁶ The actual term for geologist is “chishitsu gakusha.” A literal translation of “global historian” might be “chikyū rekisishisha,” but that phrase does not exist in Japanese. Kyoto University’s *Chikyū kankyō gakudō* (The School of Global Environmental Studies) is staffed predominately by earth scientists. Its lone historian, Naoto Kagotani, is not a “global historian” in the English-language sense but a specialist on East Asian economic history.

Examples from some of world history's greatest practitioners demonstrate that a partiality for certain places and processes is foundational for their arguments. Jürgen Osterhammel's masterwork, *The Transformation of the World*, provides breath-taking panoramas of the nineteenth century but largely neglects social history, slights environmental change, and acknowledges itself as a little "Eurocentrically" inclined.⁴⁷ Africanist Patrick Manning is exquisitely attuned to linguistic and cultural evidence in his depiction of human migration out of our Sub-Saharan origins and the integration of the human world.⁴⁸ Janet L. Abu-Lughod's *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* centers our view on the thirteenth century "Mideast heartland" and analyzes its web of integrated "co-existing 'core' powers" as a foil to Wallerstein's modern world system "organized hierarchically according to different modes of production (capitalist, semifeudal, and precapitalist) that were roughly coterminous with a specific geographical distribution."⁴⁹ Momoki Shirō's *Shimin no tame no sekai shi* [A World History for Citizens] aims at correcting what he sees as Japanese citizens' misunderstanding of their nation's development as a part of Asia and the wider world.⁵⁰ As these and many other possible examples demonstrate, world history in practice is far from geographically comprehensive or ideologically neutral. Every author and every world history reveals perspectives gained through engagements with particular places, languages, and intellectual genealogies, and these frameworks are what gives these histories their value. World history, then, is not the "solution" for history's small worlds problem, but another example of how historians embrace particular geographical distortions to serve narrative and argumentative purposes.

Today, the "small worlds" of North Atlantic and Japanese history departments are egregious not because history departments should be all-inclusive but because their geographical interests are strangely beholden to another age with a different set of hopes and concerns. The fossilized nineteenth-century contortion of the world, elevating the expansion of Western Europe and focusing on the nation-state, hampers the historical

⁴⁷ Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), xvii.

⁴⁸ Patrick Manning, *Migration in World History*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2012) and *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

⁴⁹ Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, reprint edition, 1991), 364.

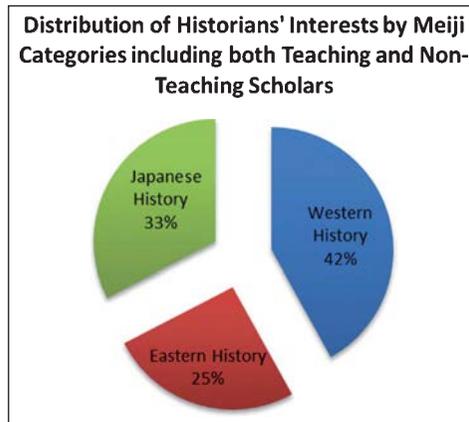
⁵⁰ Momoki Shirō, *Shimin no tame no sekai shi* [A World History for Citizens] (Osaka University Press, 2014).

discipline's ability to address vital questions. Neither the blindness of the West's historians to "the rest" nor Japan's combination of solipsism and European infatuation maps the range of human experience necessary to understand how our past might speak to our future in the twenty-first century. But they cannot be replaced by a view from nowhere and everywhere, a position without a perspective. There is only one Earth, but for historians there will always be many worlds.⁵¹

CHARTS

Chart 1

The chart below shows the distribution of historians' interests at the four Japanese universities investigated for this study: Tokyo, Kyoto, Waseda, and Keiō universities. It includes historians working in research institutes who do not teach students. The weight given national history is in part a reflection of the size of Tokyo's Historiographical Research Institute. Altogether the interest accorded to each area as defined by the three Meiji categories is about equal. For teaching staff alone, see "Chart 3: Teaching Faculty Only at All Four Universities by Meiji Categories."



⁵¹ This phrase takes its cue the first line of the 1987 UN World Commission report on Environment and Development called *Our Common Future*: "The Earth is one but the world is not." (1987: n.p.).

Chart 2

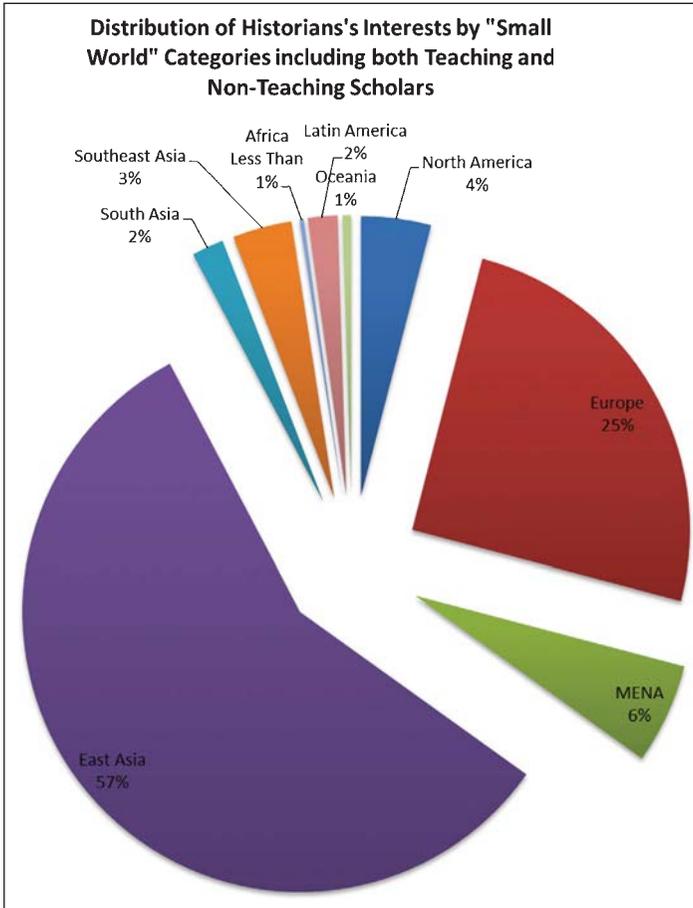


Chart 3: Teaching Faculty Only at All Four Universities by Meiji Categories

This third chart depicts the distribution of historical studies among teaching staff according to the Meiji classification. It does not include academic staff working at research institutes.

Compared with “Chart 1” which includes both pure researchers as well as teachers, this chart shows that historians who teach at premier Japanese universities have a comparatively higher interest in “the West” and a lower interest in Japanese history and in Oriental history.

The major reason for the difference between this chart and Chart 1 is the large number of non-teaching historians who work exclusively on Japanese history at Tokyo University's Historiographical Institute.

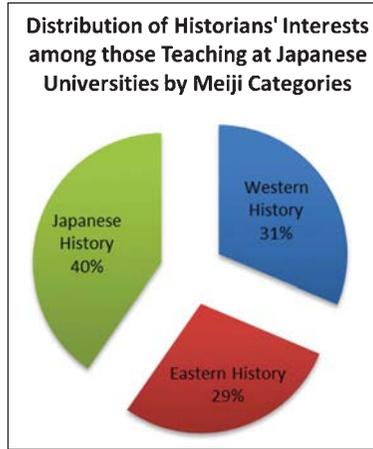


Chart 4: Teaching Faculty Only at All Four Universities by “Small World” Categories

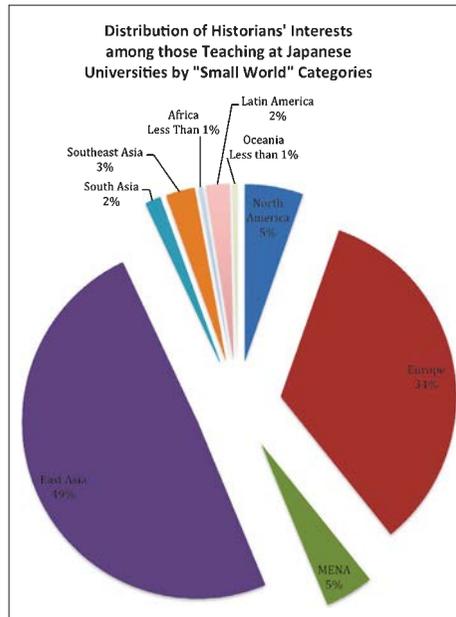


Chart 5: Tokyo University Historians Excluding Pure Researchers

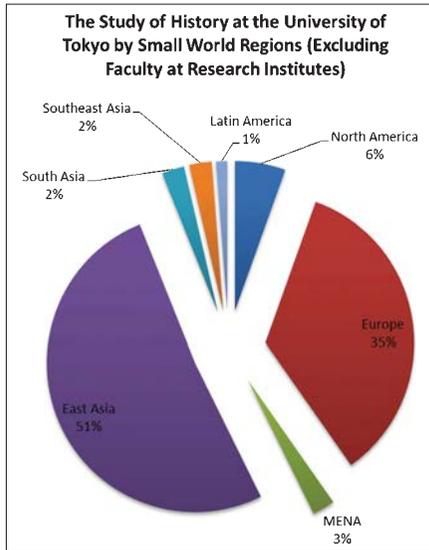


Chart 6: All Tokyo University Historians

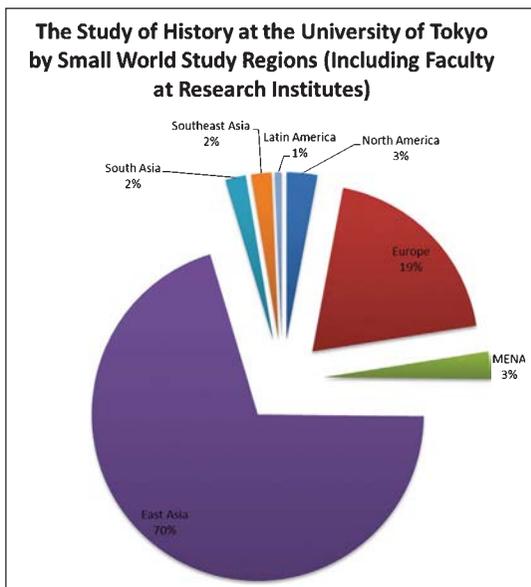


Chart 7: Kyoto University Conclusions