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## PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION

‘Historians place the highest value on monographic research, based on the archives.’<sup>1</sup>

‘We historians, I often think, tend to stop too soon, when we might continue our interpretive work until it reaches for more general conceptions.’<sup>2</sup>

Why am I publishing a new edition of *History and the State in Nineteenth-Century Japan*,<sup>3</sup> a book with a narrow focus on a single institution over a period of less than thirty years (1869–95)? *History and the State* deals with the Historiographical Institute at the University of Tokyo (Tôkyô Daigaku Shiryô Hensanjo) and its predecessors; well might one argue that I clearly stopped ‘too soon’ when I could have continued to work out the wider implications of my research on history and the nation state. Why have I nevertheless decided to publish the work with little more than cosmetic changes to the original edition?

My aim in this preface is not just to explain my motives, but also to share some of my reflections upon my work as a historian, especially the dilemma faced by many historians and phrased so well in the observation by Carol Gluck quoted above. Re-reading *History and the State* I feel that back in the 1980s and 1990s I made some effort at interpretation and that, as I reached for general conceptions, I even arrived at a few tentative generalizations. Ultimately though, I timidly hinted at what I now feel I might have boldly explored. I am not sure I regret this. I finished my Ph.D. thesis in what by German standards was fairly good time (around four years) and moved on to new projects. My next book, *Private Academies of Chinese Learning in Meiji Japan*, was on a subject largely, although not entirely, unrelated to historiography.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, other scholars have produced work which now enables me to approach the subject of *History and the State* in a way I could not have done back then. So rather than revise the old book, I use this preface to outline some broader implications that might be explored further by the next generation of scholars.

On a superficial level, the answer to the ‘why re-publish’ question is easy enough: in June 1999, while on sabbatical in Tokyo, I applied for an academic post at the University of Copenhagen. Applicants were required to send in copies of their publications, so I duly attempted to purchase extra copies of *History and the State* (published the previous year), only to find that, apart from a copy in one of the second-hand bookstores in Kanda at a price I was not prepared to pay, there were apparently none to be had, at least not before the application deadline. Believing that under the circumstances I could hardly be blamed for

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Mazlish, *The Uncertain Sciences* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2007 (1998)): xv.

<sup>2</sup> Carol Gluck, ‘The End of Elsewhere: Writing Modernity Now (AHR Roundtable)’, *American Historical Review* 116.3 (2011):676–87, 687.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Mehl, *History and the State in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> ———, *Private Academies of Chinese Learning in Meiji Japan: The Decline and Transformation of the Kangaku Juku* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2003).

copyright infringement, I borrowed the book from the Waseda University Library and had it copied at the Sôbisha print shop nearby.

Next time I checked, I found that *History and the State* indeed appeared to be out of print, and some years later I found that it was available from the publisher (which had now become Palgrave Macmillan) or from Amazon through ‘print on demand’ or as an ‘e-book’ (meaning a pdf-file). Of course, authors do well to keep track of what happens to their book after it has been published.<sup>5</sup> Young academics, however, quickly learn not to expect too much from their publications, beyond, if they are lucky, the next step up the career ladder. Besides, in my early years in the profession, I was too busy teaching new courses and writing my next book.

Meanwhile, the digital revolution was transforming book publishing.<sup>6</sup> A few years into the new millennium, I realized that print-on-demand and e-books had become so easy and cheap to produce that they offered new opportunities for authors as well as publishers; more precisely, they offered opportunities for the author-publisher. Following the helpful advice from the Society of Authors,<sup>7</sup> I asked Palgrave Macmillan for the reversion of the rights to *History and the State*, which they graciously granted. *History and the State* was now mine to do with as I liked, and I decided to re-issue it myself in order to retain full control over my work.

Full control means full responsibility, and so I feel I owe the reader an explanation for the decisions I have made.

My main reason for re-issuing the book is my belief that *History and the State*, despite its narrow focus, represents an important contribution to broader discussions relating to nation-building in the nineteenth century (and beyond), to the role of the past in creating national identity, as well as to the development of history as a modern academic discipline, which is so intimately linked to the formation of the nation state that to this day historians can struggle to overcome methodological nationalism. I will return to this point later. My confidence in *History and the State* as a useful contribution to scholarship has been further strengthened by the fact that a team of Japanese historians led by Chiba Isao and Matsuzawa Yûsaku have been working on a Japanese translation of the work for the last few years. In the draft of his postscript (*kaisetsu*), Matsuzawa describes *History and the State* as unique in its comprehensive and detailed treatment of official historiography by the Meiji government. Apparently, although several books and articles relating to aspects of historiography in modern Japan have been published by Japanese scholars since I completed my research, none of them provides a similarly comprehensive treatment, much less attempted to place official historiography into a comparative perspective.

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<sup>5</sup> As I well knew from the copious literature for aspiring authors, some of which I had studied as I worked on the book.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Guthrie, *Publishing: Principles & Practice* (London: Sage, 2011):14. By the beginning of the twentieth-first century the very survival of the book, at least in its printed form was in doubt, but so far predictions about its imminent extinction appear premature, and for scholars in the humanities and social sciences, books on publishing books remain both a necessity as well as a choice.

<sup>7</sup> Society of Authors: [www.societyofauthors.org](http://www.societyofauthors.org), accessed 17 January 2017.

## The Context: Writing about Historiography in Meiji Japan in the 1980s

Before I discuss developments in historical scholarship since I wrote my book, however, I will say a little about the circumstances in which I wrote it. *History and the State in Nineteenth-Century Japan* started life as a doctoral dissertation. This was submitted to the University of Bonn in 1991 and published in 1992, more or less as I had submitted it.<sup>8</sup> I gave it the title, *Eine Vergangenheit für die japanische Nation* (A past for the Japanese nation), because this was what I perceived to be the book's main theme: the Meiji government, as part of its nation-building project, made efforts not only to take control of the present and determine the future, but also to reshape the past. The German version also has a subtitle that describes the content of the work more precisely: *Die Entstehung des historischen Forschungsinstituts Tôkyô daigaku Shiryô hensanjo (1869–1895)* (The origins of the institute for historical research, *Tôkyô daigaku Shiryô hensanjo*). For the English version I revised the work thoroughly, having duly familiarized myself with the Anglo-American difference between a thesis and a book – in contrast to Germany, where such a sharp distinction was not generally perceived at the time.<sup>9</sup> I redoubled my efforts to flesh out the broader perspective, but essentially the work remained limited in its focus.

The historian in me wishes to let the work stand as a product of its time, both of my own academic biography and of the age. Never since have I been able to immerse myself in my primary sources so deeply and exclusively and for such a sustained period of time as in the two years from October 1987 to November 1989, which I spent as a research student at the University of Tokyo, thanks to a grant from the Japanese Ministry of Education and, when that expired, the German National Academic Foundation (Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes). Never since have I had quite the same experience of regular exchanges with fellow students and scholars, both Japanese and foreign, as in the history seminars of Professor Itô Takashi,<sup>10</sup> the Ph.D. Kenkyûkai research group at International House, and on various other, less formal occasions. And never since has Japan been as it seemed then, the economy 'bubbling', the atmosphere vibrant; if there was a sense of unease in the air, I was too preoccupied with my own concerns to notice.

The 1980s, the time of my extended stay in Japan, have now apparently receded sufficiently into the past to qualify as history; at the most recent conference of German-speaking Japanologists in Munich in August 2015, the modern history panel (convened by Urs Matthias Zachmann) was under the overall theme of 'new approaches', and one of the proposed innovations was that 'modern history' was now explicitly to extend to 1989. In January of that year, the Shôwa era finally came to an indisputable end with the passing of

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<sup>8</sup> Margaret Mehl, *Eine Vergangenheit für die japanische Nation: Die Entstehung des historischen Forschungsinstituts Tôkyô daigaku Shiryô hensanjo (1869–1895)* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> Regarding this distinction, see for example Beth Luey, *Handbook for Academic Authors (Revised Edition)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990 (1987)):26–38.

<sup>10</sup> Although I was never able to fully participate in the activities relating to the justly acclaimed work of Itô Takashi and his students in collecting, transcribing and making available primary sources, I did experience a taste of what George Akita has described so well: see Akita, *Evaluating Evidence: A Positivist Approach to Reading Sources on Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008):9–19.

the emperor, described in the media as ‘the last of the World War II leaders and Japan’s longest-reigning monarch’.<sup>11</sup> Months later the Berlin Wall came down, another highly symbolic event, which signalled the end of an order created in the aftermath of the Second World War. I only learnt about it on the Sunday morning after that memorable Thursday night of 9 November, when my radio alarm clock woke me in time to attend the Shigakukai’s hundredth anniversary conference (the Historical Society of Japan was founded in 1889, the year the Meiji Constitution was promulgated), thus fully living up to the cliché of the scholar too wrapped up in the past to take notice of the present.<sup>12</sup> I played a tiny part in helping some of Professor Itô’s students prepare an exhibition of relevant documents, such as a selection from the papers of several historians treated in *History and the State*.<sup>13</sup>

The 1980s were also a time characterised by revisionism in historical writing and a preoccupation with national culture, as well as sharp criticism of such trends. I remember that, in addition to the discussions about the emperor’s responsibility for Japan’s wartime aggression (*sensô sekinin*),<sup>14</sup> two instances in particular caught my attention that during my time in Japan. One was the responses to the textbook controversy that broke out in 1982, when the treatment (or rather non-treatment) in the ministry-approved school textbooks of Japan’s war role as an aggressor caused international outrage, chiefly in the Asian countries that had suffered from it. What perhaps was less known abroad is the fact that the Ministry of Education’s stance was strongly criticized by many Japanese historians as well.<sup>15</sup> The second was the establishment of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, commonly known as Nichibunken, in Kyoto as an Inter-University Research Institute of the Ministry of Education in May 1987. In 1988 I spent two months in Kyoto as an intern at the German Goethe Institute and during this time (on 9 March) I had the chance to attend one of the first public events organized by Nichibunken, a public symposium where the speakers were Claude Lévi-Strauss, Donald Keene and Nichibunken’s founding Director General, Umehara

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example Susan Chira, ‘Hirohito, 124th Emperor of Japan, is Dead at 87’, *New York Times* (7 January 1989). <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0429.html>, accessed 7 April 2016.

<sup>12</sup> An anecdote about the Austrian Orientalist August Philipp Pfizmaier (1808–87) relates that he only learned about the Franco-Prussian war six months after the event, from a Japanese (or Chinese) newspaper: Josef Kreiner, *Deutsche Spaziergänge in Tôkyô* (Munich: iudicium, 1996):61, 62.

<sup>13</sup> It was only at this point that I had the chance to see some of the papers of Shigeno Yasutsugu, which had not yet been systematically catalogued and were not accessible to the public.

<sup>14</sup> Only rarely did I observe evidence of a discussion about the people’s responsibility for the war. An exception was Hikohiro Takahashi, *Minshû no sensô sekinin* (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1989).

<sup>15</sup> My personal library includes topical publications I bought at the time: Nagahara Keiji and Yamazumi Masami, *Rekishi o gakkô de dô oshieru ka*, Iwanami bukkureto:90 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1987); Yamazumi Masami, *Kyôkasho mondai to wa nani ka*, Iwanami bukkureto, 21 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1983); Ienaga Saburô, *Kyôkasho saiban* (Tokyo: Nihon Hyôronsha, 1981); Nagahara Keiji, *Kôkoku shikan*, Iwanami bukkureto, 20 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1983); Amino Yoshihiko, *Nihon shakai to tennôsei*, Iwanami Bukkureto 108 (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1988); Iwai Tadakuma and Gotô Yasushi, *Tennô-sei to jidaigawari*, Kamogawa Bukkureto 21 (Kyoto: Kamogawa Shuppan, 1989) and, a couple of years later, Kamei Jun, *Kôshitsu hôdô no yomikata*, Iwanami bukkureto 168 (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1990).

Takeshi. The founding of the Institute was controversial both in Japan and abroad; it was seen as an expression of nationalism and an essentialist view of Japanese culture.<sup>16</sup>

Controversies of a different kind (and mostly limited to Germans) centred on the German Institute for Japanese Studies in Tokyo, founded in 1988. Although the new institute was officially represented as belonging to a tradition of German research institutes abroad, starting with the German historical institute in Rome in 1888, its research focus took a very different direction. The focus was to be on contemporary Japan in order to remedy the deficit in knowledge about Japan, of which many had become painfully aware when Japan displaced Germany as the second largest economy in the world.<sup>17</sup> One major controversy was between those who wanted it to be devoted to research of immediate relevance to the German business community, while others, chiefly scholars and others who considered themselves Japan experts, wanted a broader focus. There was also the question of who was or was not involved in the decision-making about the institute's aims, with old 'Japan hands', many of them resident in Tokyo, complaining that their views were ignored.<sup>18</sup>

While Japanese and foreigners alike were trying to make sense of Japan's history and culture, in Germany there was the 'Historikerstreit' (historians' dispute), which broke out in the summer of 1986 and continued into 1987.<sup>19</sup> Although in part a controversy about the uniqueness or otherwise of the annihilation of the Jews under the Nazis, it also related to broader issues about the place of National Socialism in German history and memory, including the long-standing debate about the German 'Sonderweg'.<sup>20</sup> Questions about the nature of Germany's modernization (whether belated, special or otherwise) have featured in studies of Japan's modern history, where the two 'latecomers' are compared, not least in the context of German influence on Meiji Japan. Needless to say, the 'Historikerstreit' attracted the attention of Japanese historians. One of the few Japanese works on German history that I read at the time was Mochida Yukio's book *Futatsu no kindai* (1988), where the author, a historian of Germany, discusses the 'Historikerstreit' and the 'Sonderweg' debate.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Examples in Gavan McCormack, 'Kokusaika: Impediments in Japan's Deep Structure', in *Multicultural Japan: Palaeolithic to Postmodern*, ed. Donald Denoon et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996):278–9.

<sup>17</sup> According to the website of the Max Weber Foundation, of which the institute became a part in 2002: <http://www.maxweberstiftung.de/institute/institute-dij-tokyo.html>, accessed 19 October 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Discussions at the first Japanese Studies conference in Tokyo organized by the German Asiatic Society (OAG) 7–8 April 1988.

<sup>19</sup> I followed the debate at the time to some extent. One publication I found useful a few years after the event is the German translation of a book by the British historian Richard Evans (with a new postscript for the German edition): Evans, *Im Schatten Hitlers?*, trans. Jürgen Blasius, (Frankfurt a. M.: Edition Suhrkamp, 1991).

<sup>20</sup> For a succinct treatment of that debate published in the wake of the 'Historikerstreit', see Jürgen Kocka, 'Germany before Hitler: The Debate about the German Sonderweg', *Journal of Contemporary History* 23.1 (1988):3–16. As Kocka points out, the word 'Sonderweg' was not necessarily used by historians who contributed to that debate.

<sup>21</sup> Especially the refutation of the "Sonderweg" thesis by the British historians Richard Evans, Geoff Ely and David Blackbourn; see Mochida Yukio, *Futatsu no kindai: Doitsu to Nihon wa dô chigau ka* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1988). One of my few memories of conversation about the Historikerstreit in Japan is from my first Shigakukai conference in November 1987, when one professor, on hearing that I had studied at the University of Bonn, asked me (in German), whether Professor Klaus Hildebrand was 'streitbar' (pugnacious), a description that amused me because the word seemed so

Was it in part under the impression of these events that I felt it was safest to stick to ‘facts’ documented in primary sources and to be over-careful about interpretation, just as the scholars I treated in my dissertation are perceived to have done?<sup>22</sup> Probably not. I think it is more likely that I felt overwhelmed by the complexity of the many questions my research raised. My training in history at the University of Bonn, moreover, not to mention the ‘positivist studies’<sup>23</sup> predominant at the ‘Department of National History’ (yes, the Department of Japanese History was still named Kokushika in those days!) did not exactly predispose me to venture too far out into the precarious territory of historical interpretation.

### Reception of History and the State

The narrow focus of *History and the State* was pointed out by some of the reviewers of the English edition.<sup>24</sup> Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi suggested that the focus could have been broadened in three ways: by examining historians who worked outside the government; by providing a more detailed comparison between Japan and Germany; and by pursuing the theme of my chapter 6 (‘History and Ideology in Conflict’) through 1945. While I agree that all these dimensions would have merited (and still merit) further investigation, I submit that pursuing any one of them would have resulted in a different kind of book rather than an improved version of the book I actually wrote.

Interestingly, the desiderata for future research suggested by Matsuzawa in his (draft) postscript to the forthcoming Japanese edition amount to a call for more detailed studies on some of the themes treated in *History and the State*, rather than for a broader perspective. The three areas he singles out for more detailed investigation are, first, the overall shape of the government historiography project (*shûshi jigyô*). The second is the government compilation of chronicles and documents relating to the most recent history and the process by which the compilation of a history of the more distant period starting with the fourteenth century (the Nanbokuchô period) came to take precedence as well as the relationship between the history of historical scholarship and the archive. Third, Matsuzawa suggests that there is a need to examine more closely the historians themselves, not only luminaries like Shigeno Yasutsugu and Kume Kunitake, but also the lower-ranking members of the Office of Historiography. In short, Matsuzawa calls for yet more detailed studies suggests that the historiographical

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quaintly old-fashioned (Hildebrand was to become my examiner in the Ph.D. *viva voce* in Medieval and Modern History, but at the time I had only attended his lectures and never spoken to him).

<sup>22</sup> These scholars represent what is known as *kangaku akademizumu*: see *History and the State*, pp. 103–12.

<sup>23</sup> George Akita, ‘Trends in Modern Japanese Political History: The “Positivist” Studies’, *Monumenta Nipponica* 37.4 (1982):497–521.

<sup>24</sup> John S. Brownlee, ‘Review of *History and the State in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, by Margaret Mehl’, *Journal of Asian Studies* February (1999):208–9; Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, ‘Review of *History and the State in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, by Margaret Mehl’, *Monumenta Nipponica* 53.4 (1998):560–2; Shimazu Naoko, ‘Review of *History and the State in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, by Margaret Mehl’, *Japan Forum* 11.1 (1999):150–1; Stefan Tanaka, ‘Review of *Japanese Historians and the National Myths, 1600–1945* by John S. Brownlee and *History and the State in Nineteenth-Century Japan* by Margaret Mehl’, *Journal of Japanese Studies* 25.2 (1999):406–12.

tradition I treated in *History and the State*, a work which itself shows many characteristics of that tradition, is still alive and well today.

This impression is reinforced by the fact that most of the subsequent Japanese works on related subjects cited by Matsuzawa appear to be narrow in focus: articles on Ludwig Rieß;<sup>25</sup> historiography and the compilation of topographies in the context of the nation state;<sup>26</sup> the role of textual criticism in the *kōshōgaku* tradition and the place of the *Dainihon hennenshi* (the chronological history of Japan compiled by the Office of Historiography) in historical scholarship;<sup>27</sup> the collection of information by the Meiji government and at the local level;<sup>28</sup> as well as the emperor-centred view of history and the controversy about the Northern and Southern courts.<sup>29</sup> Finally, Matsuzawa cites recent work on a subject I barely touched upon: official historiography by Japan in its colonies, namely Korea.<sup>30</sup> Although some of the authors cited by Matsuzawa do appear to place their research in a wider context, the titles of these works, mostly journal articles and book chapters, nevertheless suggest that no attempt at a comprehensive study of historiography and related activities by the Meiji government has been made.<sup>31</sup> Recently, Matsuzawa has edited a volume about historiography in modern Japan; here too, the focus is on detailed study of selected topics.<sup>32</sup>

As for works in English (and German), I will not pretend to have kept up with scholarship in this field while my research turned to other topics.<sup>33</sup> Nor is my intention here

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<sup>25</sup> Nishikawa Yōichi, ‘Shiryō shōkai: Berurin Kokuritsu Toshokan Rūtowichi Riisu shokan ni tsuite’, *Kokka Gakkai zasshi* 115.3/4 (2002); ———, ‘Tōkyō to Berurin ni okeru Rūdowichi Riisu’, in *Rekishigaku to shiryō kenkyū*, ed. Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2003); Hayashima Akira, ‘Kindai Doitsu daigakushi ni okeru Rūtowichi Riisu’, *Shōgaku kenkyū* 50.1/2 (2002).

<sup>26</sup> Nishikawa Nagao and Matsumiya Hideharu, eds., *Bakumatsu-, Meiji no kokumin kokka keisei to bunka hen’yō* (Tokyo: Shin’yōsha, 1995); Shimazu Toshiyuki, ‘Meiji seifu no chishi hensan jigyō to kokumin kokka keisei’, *Chirigaku hyōron* 75.2 (2002).

<sup>27</sup> Katsurajima Nobuhiro, ‘Kindai kokushigaku no seiritsu: kōshō shigaku o chūshin ni’ in *Shisōshi no jūkyū seiki* (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1999). Kojita Yasunao, ‘Nihonshi no tanjō: “Dainihon hennenshi” no hensan ni tsuite’, in *Seiki tenkanki no kokusai chitsujo to kokumin bunka no keisei*, ed. Nishikawa Nagao and Watanabe Kōzō (Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 1999).

<sup>28</sup> Ōta Tomiyasu, *Kindai gyōseitai no kiroku to jōhō* (Tokyo: Iwata shoin, 2010); Shigeta Masao, ‘Saitama ni okeru Kōkoku chishi no henshū katei’, *Bunshokan kiyō* 18. (2005).

<sup>29</sup> Ikeda Tomofumi, ‘Kindai “kokushigaku” no shisō kōzō’, *Ryūkyō Daigaku Daigakuin Bungaku Kenkyūka kiyō* 25 (2003); ———, “‘Nanbokuchō seijun mondai’ saikō – kindai “kokushigaku” no shisōteki mondai to shite’, *Nihonshi kenkyū* 528 (2006).

<sup>30</sup> Nagashima Hiroki, ‘Nihon tōjiki no Chōsen ni okeru “shigaku” to “shiryō” no isō’, *Rekishigaku kenkyū* 745 (2004); Hakoishi Hiroshi, ‘Kindai Nihon shiryōgaku to Chōsen Sōtokufu no Chōsenshi hensan jigyō’, in *Zen kindai no Nihon rettō to Chōsen hantō*, ed. Satō Makoto and Fujita Satoru (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2007).

<sup>31</sup> Admittedly, I have not studied these works myself.

<sup>32</sup> Matsuzawa Yūsaku ed. *Kindai Nihon no hisutoriorogurafi* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Two useful recent overviews are Sato Masayuki, ‘A Social History of Japanese Historical Writing’, in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing, Volume 3: 1400–1800*, ed. José Rabasa, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Axel Schneider and Stefan Tanaka, ‘The Transformation of History in China and Japan’, in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing Volume 4: 1800–1945*, ed. Stuart Macintyre, Juan Manguerra and Attila Pók (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Recent publications in German include Sebastian Conrad, Hans Martin Krämer and Tino Schözl, eds., *Geschichtswissenschaft in Japan: Themen, Ansätze und Theorien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006). Conrad has also published an excellent study of historical scholarship in Japan and

to report on subsequent research in the field of historiography in modern Japan. Indeed, I fear that such an immersion in such research might draw me into yet more study of details, in spite of myself, when what I wish to do at this stage is to reflect upon some of the broader issues regarding which I believe the history of historical scholarship and writing under the auspices of the Meiji government is relevant and important.

I believe that I touched upon several important larger questions in my thesis (completed in 1991), and certainly in the 1998 edition. These questions can be grouped under two themes. The first has to do with the function of history in the context of the nation state and the relations between nation states at the time when the Meiji Japan embarked on its course of modernization following Western models. Although I did not make this sufficiently explicit at the time, *History and the State* represented a contribution to a growing body of work that challenged the conventional narrative at the time, which imagined the process of fundamental reform after 1868 as far smoother than it actually was. The second has to do with historical research and writing, the nature of historical knowledge and the tensions between scientific history and the expectation that history provides societies with meaning.

Of course, it is easy to make such claims with hindsight. I can, however, cite passages from the book itself to support my claim. In my introduction, I suggest that ‘the emergence of a national ideology in late nineteenth-century Japan was not unique and must be seen in the contemporary world described by Barraclough’ I add that Japan, in adopting Western models, was not merely following the West, but actually ‘appears as contemporaneous with it’.<sup>34</sup> In the conclusion I write that my purpose with the brief summary of historiography in nineteenth-century Germany and its influence on Japan was not so much to show the extent of Japanese cultural borrowing from Germany as ‘to demonstrate how similar challenges, a newly formed nation state that had to be filled with meaning and define its purpose, caused Japan to look to Germany’.<sup>35</sup> Concerning cultural borrowing, I point out that Japan was highly selective in what it imported from foreign countries (as well as in which countries it imported from) and that the selection was in part determined by Japan’s own cultural traditions.<sup>36</sup> I also attempt to generalize about cultural borrowing by highlighting two points: one is that when Japan imported ideas and concepts from the West, it imported them as they manifested themselves at that particular point in time, without always recognizing how they had developed and changed over the centuries. The second point is that it was not necessarily the content of a system of ideas or practices that attracted Japanese attention, but the function it had within the Western society of the time.<sup>37</sup> I see this now as part of my effort at a more nuanced evaluation of ‘Western influence’. Not everything that superficially looked ‘Western’ (such as the collection and investigation of primary sources by the members of the

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Germany after 1945: Sebastian Conrad, *Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Nation: Geschichtsschreibung in Westdeutschland und Japan 1945–1960* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999).

<sup>34</sup> Mehl, *History and the State*, 4. Here and in the following passage, page numbers refer to the 1998 edition.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 158–9.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

Office of Historiography) had exclusively Western origins; as often as not, Western models were used to justify existing indigenous practices.<sup>38</sup>

Regarding the second broader theme, historical research and writing, the book demonstrates an effort to address the tension between history as a modern academic discipline centred on research, on the one hand, and the representation of history, commonly in a narrative, on the other. The three most important questions I ask are, first, why the historians at the Historiographical Institute did not become ‘interpreters of the nation’ and failed to play a major role in shaping the Japanese empire, in contrast to Ranke and his early disciples in Germany. Second, and related to this: why did these historians fail to complete the official history they were employed to produce? And third: why did emperor-centred myth-history ultimately prevail over source-based scientific history? My answers, as I was painfully aware at the time, are tentative. I argue that ‘the emergence of a “scientific” history, which neglected to address the representation of knowledge in the historical narrative and the function of historical knowledge in educating society and that left speculation about the meaning of history to non-historians, resulted in similar problems in Germany and Japan’. Not only were the official historians unable ‘to formulate a new conception of history that matched the new era’, but they failed to realize that even the kind of ‘objective’ history they envisaged involved making choices not given by the primary sources themselves.<sup>39</sup> They wished to distinguish clearly between fact and myth, and yet they perceived the myths as indispensable for giving meaning to the nation. Their solution to this dilemma was to distinguish between two kinds of history: scientific and educational. The position of Shigeno and his colleagues as government officials within the East Asian tradition of distinguishing sharply between officials (*kan*) and the people (*min*) encouraged the idea of knowledge as ‘the privilege of an academic elite, not to be imparted to the masses’.<sup>40</sup>

I may have relied too much on Japanese secondary sources when I wrote my German thesis, accepting the argument of Japanese scholars that historians of the *akademizumu* school retreated into positivist studies and were unable to withstand the emergence of a dominant emperor-centred view of history based on national myths. Thinking about it now, this seems like a conventional ‘science-versus-authority’ narrative, familiar from the history of the natural sciences in Europe, with the *akademizumu* school’s claim to objectivity accepted at face value. By the time I was preparing the English version of my original work, I could refer to Stefan Tanaka’s *Japan’s Orient*, in which the author reminds us that the historians representing the *akademizumu* approach to historical research with its emphasis on primary sources on facts were far from ‘objective.’<sup>41</sup> Ultimately, I am not sure that this, or for that matter Tanaka’s history of the construction of *tôyôshi*, helped me much as I grappled with the

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<sup>38</sup> See Margaret Mehl, ‘The European Model and the Archive in Japan: Inspiration or Legitimation?’, *History of the Human Sciences* 26.4 (2013):107–27. This point is also made in Akita, *Evaluating Evidence*, 120.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 161; 165.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 159–160.

<sup>41</sup> Stefan Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient: Rendering Past into History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). See also Margaret Mehl, ‘Review of *Japan’s Orient: Rendering Past into History* by Stefan Tanaka’, *History* 80. (1995):259.

paradox that the nineteenth century saw the emergence of history as both science and national history.

I reconsidered and elaborated on my argument a few years later, when I was invited by Professor Suzuki Jun of Tokyo University to act as a commentator at the hundredth general conference of the Shigakukai (Historical Society) in November 2002.<sup>42</sup> I rephrased my question as follows: How was it possible that Shigeno and his colleagues, who wanted to write history impartially and whose research has often been described as ‘objective’, nevertheless ended up compiling historical works that were highly biased? And why did they at the same time fail to produce the intended national history? I attempted to address the question in a way that went beyond the two prevailing lines of argument, namely (1) that the critical researchers’ efforts to write history objectively were suppressed by the increasingly nationalistic emperor state, and (2) that the annalistic compilations they produced were in fact far from objective and reflected an a view of history centred on the imperial institution.<sup>43</sup> My thoughts about historical narrative were inspired by Jörn Rüsen’s work on historical narrative or narration.<sup>44</sup> According to Rüsen, historical narration is based on facts; but it is a creative process in which the facts are selected and structured to form meaning. In this process, whereby past experiences are recalled in the present and whereby intentions for the future are related to these recalled experiences, both (experiences and intentions) become part of a continuum we call history and which provides orientation for humans within the flow of time.

My attempt to answer the questions has three parts. First, the supposed ‘objectivity’ of Shigeno’s approach to history cannot lie in recording past conditions ‘as they were’ (*ari no mama*), because historical research depends on its object having been identified. It is identified through a construction of meaning in narrative form. It follows that, whether or not Shigeno and his colleagues were aware of it, their research was dependent on a pre-existing construction of meaning. Second, they seem not to have been conscious of this, because they shared the positivist assumption that there is an objective history out there waiting to be discovered. They appeared to believe that the chronicles they compiled were objective, because they were no more than a collection of facts that their research had verified. Third, their preoccupation with facts appears to have precluded any reflection on meaning in Rüsen’s sense of a continuum linking past experience and future intentions. The Meiji

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<sup>42</sup> Published as Margaret Mehl, ‘Ari no mama no kako – Shigeno Yasutsugu to rekishika no shigoto ni tsuite no saikentô’, in *Rekishigaku no saizensen: Frontiers of historical studies*, ed. Shigakukai (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 2004).

<sup>43</sup> Stefan Tanaka points out that the historical school of *akademizumu* represented by Shigeno and his colleagues was not ‘objective’. James Edward Ketelaar rightly remarks that the *Kokushigan*, the only overview of Japan’s entire history the scholars at the Historiographical Institute did complete and publish, interpreted Japanese history as imperial and as divine history. See Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient*; James Edward Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and Its Persecution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990):92.

<sup>44</sup> Jörn Rüsen speaks of ‘historisches Erzählen’; he prefers the nominalized verb to the noun ‘Erzählung’. See Rüsen, ‘Geschichtsschreibung als Theorieproblem der Geschichtswissenschaft: Skizze zum historischen Hintergrund der gegenwärtigen Diskussion’, in *Formen der Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. Reinhart Koselleck, Heinrich Lutz and Jörn Rüsen (Munich: dtv, 1982). Then as now I felt that Rüsen’s model raises as many questions as it attempts to answer, but it does provide a useful framework for my reflections.

Restoration had introduced a strong element of discontinuous change into the age they lived in, including the necessity to take up a position on the international stage and the large-scale importation of an alien civilization. How could this discontinuity be integrated into a continuous narrative that would affirm Japanese identity and provide orientation? I found no evidence that the historians working on the *Dainihon hennenshi* in their professional role as historians had even asked this question. It seemed to me that the question of Japan's new position and destiny was only addressed by the next generation of historians. I will return to this point later.

### **The bigger picture (1): the nation and the modern world**

Revisiting *History and the State* today, I am much more aware of the global historical context of modernity within which Germany and Japan faced the challenges I had mentioned only briefly. For historians, modernity is in part defined by chronology: 'a condition, historically produced over three centuries around the globe in processes of change that have not ended yet'. Modernity 'possesses commonalities across time and space, however differently it is experienced in different places'.<sup>45</sup> The commonalities include the nation state, the call for national political participation, major social shifts, major changes in values and 'global forces of capitalism and industrialization', as well as 'incorporation into the reigning geopolitical world order' and experience of tensions between global and the local.<sup>46</sup> Other commonalities, particular relevant for the developments discussed in *History and the State*, are state-building, with the nation-state as the state form widely aspired to, and the growth and worldwide dissemination of a modern system of the sciences that includes institutions such as the research university with its laboratories and seminars.<sup>47</sup>

The global nature of modernity means that, certainly by the nineteenth century (if not earlier), in Bayly's words, 'national histories and "area studies" need to take fuller account of changes occurring in the wider world'.<sup>48</sup> Both Bayly and Osterhammel, another recent author of a global history of the nineteenth century, argue that the history of this period cannot be anything less than global history. In practice, of course, most histories will be much less.

Certainly, Japan's political and intellectual leaders were well aware of the global dimension of modern times from the start. The encroaching world, in the form of Russia, the United States and several European powers, forced the Tokugawa shogunate to abandon its isolation policy, which precipitated the collapse of the regime and the establishment of the Meiji government. The new leaders, both at national and at local levels, saw from the start the need to act within a global context. The pledge in the Imperial Oath of 1868 that 'knowledge shall be sought from all the countries of the world' found its remarkable expression in 1871, when half of the new government, which had only just managed to secure control over the entire country, embarked on what is known as the Iwakura Embassy, which took the

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<sup>45</sup> Gluck, 'End of Elsewhere', 676–7.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009):1105, 1779.

<sup>48</sup> Christopher Alan Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004): 3.

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, four vice-ambassadors and an entourage of nearly one hundred men, over a period of 21 months, to 12 countries as well as to every major sea port between Marseilles and Nagasaki.<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile, in the remote prefecture of Kashiwazaki (soon to be absorbed into Niigata Prefecture), in the spring of 1873, the Deputy Councillor, in a public notification to all village headmen concerning the ‘Control of Customs during the Spring and Autumn Festivities’, condemned young people’s dancing together, pointed out the government’s efforts ‘for our country to hold its own among the countries of the world (*bankoku to gotaiji*)’<sup>50</sup> and said that Japan must not be put to shame by the countries of the world (*bankoku no chijoku o ukuru*).<sup>51</sup> And in the Office of Historiography in September the same year, members expressed concern over the fact that a book about Japan’s recent history (*Kinsei shiryaku* by Yamaguchi Ken), the sale of which had been prohibited in 1872 because of its many factual errors, had been translated into English and thus become known abroad.<sup>52</sup>

Situating modernity within a chronology, albeit an open-ended one, and emphasizing its global nature renders problematic the notion of ‘alternative’ or ‘multiple’ modernities.<sup>53</sup> It does not follow, however, that the modern is unitary or universal. Certainly, modernity, often in the form of emulating the West, was widely aspired to and even regarded as inevitable. In the famous (or infamous) editorial ‘Datsu-A ron’ (Escape from Asia), usually attributed to Fukuzawa Yukichi, the spread of Western civilization is likened to that of measles.<sup>54</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam is probably nearer to the mark when he says that modernity is not so much a ‘virus that spreads from one place to another’ as ‘historically a global and conjunctural phenomenon’.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, Fukuzawa, writing in the late nineteenth century, did have a point. As Osterhammel convincingly argues, the nineteenth century *was* characterized by European dominance because European powers controlled and exploited large parts of the world, because changes in Europe significantly influenced the rest of the world and because Europe was widely perceived as a role model.

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<sup>49</sup> In addition, the embassy included students who stayed abroad, among them six girls. See introduction in Kume Kunitake, *The Iwakura Embassy 1871–73: A True Account of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary’s Journey of Observation through the United States of America and Europe*. ed. Graham Healey and Tsuzuki Chushichi, trans. Martin Colcutt et al., 5 vols., vol. 1: *The United States of America* (Kamiyakiri, Matsudo, Chiba: The Japan Documents, 2002).

<sup>50</sup> The expression (*bankoku to gotaiji*) appears twice in the *haihan chiken* (abolition of the domains and the establishment of prefectures) order of Meiji 4 (1871).7<sup>th</sup> month.14<sup>th</sup> day.

<sup>51</sup> Niigata-ken, ed. *Niigata-kenshi: Shiryô hen 14 (Kindai 2: Meiji ishin hen II)* (Niigata: Niigata-ken, 1983):931–2.

<sup>52</sup> Mehl, *History and the State*, 51.

<sup>53</sup> Gluck, ‘End of Elsewhere’, 676.

<sup>54</sup> For an English version, see Fukuzawa, Yukichi, ‘Good-bye Asia (Datsu-a), 1885’, in *Japan: A Documentary History 2: The Late Tokugawa Period to the Present*, ed. Lu, David J. (New York: Armonk, 1997).

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Gluck, ‘End of Elsewhere’, 677.

Modernity nevertheless manifested itself differently in different times and places. The differences result from the ‘plurality of pasts’ and the ‘plurality of futures’<sup>56</sup> or, in other words, the variations in ‘preexisting conditions’ and ‘available modernities’.<sup>57</sup>

In *History and the State* I stress the significance of such ‘preexisting conditions’ as I draw attention to the early education and careers of Shigeno and his colleagues and to historical scholarship before the Meiji period. Such conditions were more than ‘preexisting’; they were persistent. Western civilization did not replace overnight the Chinese-inspired scholarship and culture that had dominated Japan for centuries. The forms of knowing and learning predominant in the preceding Tokugawa era blended with the new Western models, a process that had its parallels in other areas, particularly in education.<sup>58</sup> As David Mervart, citing recent research by Japanese scholars, argues, ‘China’ as a universal and a normative reference (in contrast to empirical China) continued to hold the significance it had held for centuries. The fact that Western countries became the new frame of reference from the mid-nineteenth century did not immediately change this: the West was worth emulating because it excelled in “‘Chinese” normative virtues’.<sup>59</sup>

The history of the Meiji government’s efforts to produce an official national history illustrates the continuing significance of a normative China. The chronological history *Dainihon hennenshi* owes much to similar works compiled before 1868 and next to nothing to Western examples. The collection and eventual publication of sources followed the model of the late Edo compilation *Shiryô* by Hanawa Hokiichi (1746–1821). For all his interest in Western historical writings and scholarship, and all his calls for innovation, Shigeno never abandoned the Chinese epistemological and scholarly traditions in which he had been educated. Even Kume, who pioneered the systematic study of primary documents (*komonjo*), did so largely independently of Western influences.<sup>60</sup> In stressing this I emphatically do not wish to imply that their scholarship lacked innovation;<sup>61</sup> merely that their early education and beliefs decisively influenced their willingness and capacity to incorporate Western ideas and

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<sup>56</sup> Sudipta Kaviraj, ‘An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity’, *European Journal of Sociology* 46.3 (2005):497–526, 498, 500.

<sup>57</sup> Gluck, ‘End of Elsewhere’, 679, 681.

<sup>58</sup> Margaret Mehl, ‘Chinese Learning (*kangaku*) in Meiji Japan’, *History* 85. (2000):48–66; Mehl, *Private Academies*.

<sup>59</sup> David Mervart, ‘Meiji Japan’s China Solution to Tokugawa Japan’s China Problem’, *Japan Forum* 27.4 (2015):544–58, 555. See also Ben-Ami Shillony, ‘The Meiji Restoration: Japan’s attempt to inherit China,’ in *War, Revolution & Japan*, ed. Ian Neary (Sandgate, Folkestone, Kent: Japan Library, 1993).

<sup>60</sup> Mehl, ‘The European Model and the Archive in Japan’.

<sup>61</sup> For works that stress the innovative aspects of Shigeno’s writings, see Tao Demin, ‘Shigeno Yasutsugu as an Advocate of ‘Practical Sinology’’ in Meiji Japan’, in *Nihon kangaku shisô ronkô* (Suita: Kansai Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1999); Matsuzawa Yûsaku, *Shigeno Yasutsugu to Kume Kunitake: ‘Seishi’ o yume mita rekishika* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2012). See also Margaret Mehl, ‘Shigeno Yasutsugu: Ein Überlebender kämpft um die Vergangenheit der Nation’, in *Von Bauern, Beamten und Banditen. Beiträge zur historischen Japanforschung. Festschrift für Detlev Taranczewski zu seinem sechzigsten Geburtstag von seinen Schülern und Kollegen*, ed. Marie-Luise Legeland, et al. (Bonn: Bier’sche Verlagsanstalt, 2007).

methods into their work.<sup>62</sup> Innovation and modernization could – and, as both Shigeno’s and Kume’s work demonstrate, did – certainly take place without directly imitating Western models.

Even so, cultural borrowing from the West was such an important characteristic of Meiji Japan that it is difficult to separate modernization from Westernization: both were determined by ‘preexisting conditions’. Sir Hamilton Gibb, who (in 1964, in his discussion of Islamic influence in medieval Europe) states that three general principles determine what and how one culture borrows from another, argues that cultural influences are always preceded ‘by an already existing activity in the related field’ of the culture doing the borrowing. As I show in *History and the State* this was obviously the case with historiography. Gibb’s second and third principles are closely connected to the pre-existence of certain conditions: that which is borrowed will only develop if it adapts and blends with the ‘native forces’; and, the recipient culture ‘disregards or rejects all elements in other cultures which conflict with its own fundamental values, emotional attitudes or aesthetic criteria’.<sup>63</sup> These principles might explain, for example, why the Japanese found some interpretations of history expressed by Western writers more attractive than others, or why the enormous efforts poured into collecting and arranging sources did not lead to the establishment of a system of national and regional archives.<sup>64</sup> Gibb’s notion of the blending of imports with the indigenous also explains why it can be difficult to distinguish between the two. And in a transnational context of intermingling and hybridization (Gluck refers to ‘blended modernities’<sup>65</sup>) disentangling origins may have little significance except as an academic enterprise.

As for the ‘available modernities’ for Meiji Japan, intellectuals and political leaders at the time perceived them as ‘civilization and enlightenment’ (*bunmei kaika*) modelled by Western countries (*Ô-Bei shokoku* or ‘the countries of Europe and America’), which they understood to be to a larger or lesser degree ahead of them on a universal ladder towards progress.<sup>66</sup> The report of the Iwakura Embassy compiled by a future pioneer of modern historical scholarship, Kume Kunitake, provides striking illustrations of this understanding, for example when he reflects on Britain’s prosperity and the differences between East and West:

To speak of the error of being over-hasty to put knowledge to work is enough to suggest that the East is far behind the West on the path of development, but the fact is that even Britain and France, the most advanced countries, have taken a mere fifty

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<sup>62</sup> The fate of Zerffi’s *Science of History* illustrates among other things how much Zerffi took for granted concerning historiography which would have been alien to his Japanese readers.

<sup>63</sup> Sir Hamilton Gibb, ‘The Influence of Islamic Culture on Medieval Europe’, in *Change in Medieval Society*, ed. Sylvia L. Thrupp (New York: Appleton-Century-Croft, 1964). See Mehl, ‘The European Model and the Archive in Japan’.

<sup>64</sup> Kondô Shigekazu, ‘Joshô: “Hisutoriogurafi” to rekishi shori’, in *Rekishigaku to rekishi kenkyû*, ed. Tôkyô Daigaku Shiryô Hensanjo (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppankai, 2003). The National Archives of Japan were not established until 1971. Another interesting absence might be the lack of footnotes in the publications of the early Japanese historians, although this can in part be explained by the fact that many of the published articles were originally lectures. The footnote is generally regarded as one of the most significant characteristics of modern scholarship: Bruce Mazlish, *The Uncertain Sciences*.

<sup>65</sup> Gluck, ‘End of Elsewhere’.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 681.

years to reach their present prosperity. There are still innumerable countries in the world which lag behind in development, (...) [*emphasis in the original*]<sup>67</sup>

The message here and elsewhere is that Japan does not lag so far behind that it cannot catch up in the near future. The means to achieving the envisaged modernity was a unified nation, wealthy and with a strong army (*fukoku kyôhei*). Accordingly, Japan became a textbook case of state- and nation-building in the nineteenth century, and by 1900 was ‘one of the most tightly integrated nation-states in the world’.<sup>68</sup>

In Japan as in other places, however, the nation was not initially a psychological reality, or, in the words of contemporaries, the Japanese people lacked a sense of nation.<sup>69</sup> This is where national history had a role to play, by representing the nation as naturally evolved and thus as given. The connection between nationalism and national history, and – particularly in the German case – the modern academic discipline of history, has received plenty of scholarly attention and not much need be added here.<sup>70</sup> In *History and the State* I argue that the historians I examined did not become interpreters of the nation in a way comparable to Ranke or the historians of the Prussian School of history,<sup>71</sup> and attempt to answer the question why. I am no longer entirely sure to what extent this argument holds or whether the question is appropriate. But there is certainly a difference between Japan and Germany, where Ranke is remembered not only as a pioneer of the modern scientific discipline but also as a writer of grand historical narratives, and where academic historians wrote histories of the emerging and newly formed German nation. Shigeno and Kume, meanwhile, let alone their less prominent colleagues, if they are remembered at all, are associated with a school of institutional historiography that over-emphasized factual details (*kangaku akademizumu*) and the failure of national history in the *seishi* tradition of official histories by rulers. Matsuzawa’s booklet on the two is subtitled, ‘The historians who dreamt of a “seishi”’.<sup>72</sup>

Thus it is hardly surprising that these historians appear insignificant or at least uninteresting to scholars writing about conceptions of history or historical interpretations. For example, one Western scholar discussing the term *shigaku* as a concept for a series entitled

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<sup>67</sup> Kume Kunitake, *The Iwakura Embassy 1871–73: A True Account of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary’s Journey of Observation through the United States of America and Europe*, eds. Graham Healey and Tsuzuki Chushichi, trans. Martin Colcutt et al., 5 vols. (Kamiyakiri, Matsudo, Chiba: The Japan Documents, 2002):174. The italics (by the editors) reflect Kume’s markings for emphasis. The appearance of the complete English translation of the *Bei-Ô kairan jikki* enabled me to do something I had tried and dismally failed to do with the Iwanami bunko edition: to skim through the entire work and get an overall impression of it in a short time. Even Japanese readers might find this impossible with the original, written as it is in a heavily Sinicized style.

<sup>68</sup> Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014):414.

<sup>69</sup> *kokkateki kannen* or *kokuminteki kannen*. See Carol Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985):23, 318 n.320.

<sup>70</sup> The state control of memory and preoccupation with the nation were certainly not limited to Germany or Japan. Osterhammel names them among the salient features of the nineteenth century world: Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*.

<sup>71</sup> The best known representatives are Johann Gustav Droysen (1808–86), Heinrich von Sybel (1817–95) and Heinrich von Treitschke (1834–96).

<sup>72</sup> Matsuzawa, *Shigeno Yasutsugu to Kume Kunitake*.

‘Working Words’ devotes most of the article to discussing Mori Ôgai’s views rather than examining those of academic historians.<sup>73</sup> Even more striking, Christopher Hill in his justly acclaimed book, *National History and the World of Nations*, in which he analyses and compares the representations of national history in nineteenth-century Japan, France and the United States, mentions the government’s *seishi* project only in passing; the representatives of academic history are largely ignored.<sup>74</sup> *National History and the World of Nations* is otherwise an important book, drawing out exactly the kind of connections between narrating national history and the global context (defined by Hill as global capitalism and the system of sovereign states) which I only skirted and did not explore further. He shows how the authors he examined employed similar rhetorical and narrative strategies in response to challenges resulting from global change. His selection of Japanese writers includes the narrative histories of Fukuzawa Yukichi, Taguchi Ukichi and Tokutomi Sohô, but also prose fiction by Suehiro Tetchô and Mori Ôgai.

Of course, for those who believe that, ultimately, historians construct a past like a novelist constructs a plot, who perhaps even deny that there is anything approaching a scientific method in history (or in the humanities in general), the distinction between historians claiming to write scientific history and other writers of history is meaningless, and Shigeno might simply be regarded as an inferior storyteller compared to Ôgai.

My contention, however, is that Shigeno, Kume and others are interesting precisely because of their aim to write scientific history and their contribution to what became the modern, research-based discipline of history. In the following discussion, I will turn to the nature of historiography, here understood as historical scholarship and writing, in order to examine the foundation of history as a scientific discipline in Meiji Japan in a global context.

## **The bigger picture (2): national history and scientific history**

Before I move on to my second major theme, a word about ‘science’.<sup>75</sup> One of my greatest dilemmas in preparing the English version of my work was the problem of translating the German word ‘Wissenschaft’. I did not fully realize the broader scope of the word, compared to ‘science’, until I casually referred to history as a ‘science’ during a conversation with a fellow historian from Canada in the Komaba dormitory for foreign students, only to be told that history was definitely not a science. To be sure, the title of the book written by the Hungarian G.G. Zerffi in 1879 for the members of the Office of Historiography was entitled, *The Science of History*. But the discipline of history is not commonly described as a ‘science’ in the English-speaking world (nor are the other humanities disciplines, such as literature or music). On the other hand, it is usual to speak of the ‘social sciences’, which are sometimes taken to include history. Then there are ‘human sciences’, used synonymously with ‘social

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<sup>73</sup> Thomas Keirstead, ‘Shigaku/History’. EScholarship, University of California, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/32t6g8nf>, accessed 12 January 2017.

<sup>74</sup> Christopher L. Hill, *National History and the World of Nations: Capital, State, and the Rhetoric of History in Japan, France, and the United States* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008):53. Neither Shigeno nor Kume appear in the index.

<sup>75</sup> See also Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (new edition with an extensive new afterword) ed. (London: Granta Books, 2000 (1997)):45.

sciences' or else taken to include the humanities.<sup>76</sup> It appears that in the Anglophone world as well, the need for a term that covers the same ground as *Wissenschaft* is felt, and the adjective 'scientific' (often in quotation marks) is sometimes used in connection with the humanities, in order to describe the changes they underwent in the course of the nineteenth century. The characteristics that make history a science in the sense of *Wissenschaft* are 'an organized body of knowledge acquired through research carried out according to generally agreed methods, presented in published reports and subjected to peer review'.<sup>77</sup> Many, if not most, historians would agree that history is a *Wissenschaft* in this sense, even if they simultaneously share some of the postmodernist scepticism about truth and the possibility of researchers ever ascertaining it.<sup>78</sup>

The problem remains that *Wissenschaft* has long been broader in its meaning than 'science'. Still, in the English translation of Osterhammel's global history, *Wissenschaft* has been translated as 'science', and in the following discussion, 'science' should be understood in the broad sense of *Wissenschaft*.

The rise of science is one of the common characteristics of modernity. While much has been written about the natural sciences and a fair amount about the social sciences, a general history of the humanities is, in the words of Rens Bod, who published the first such work in 2010, 'conspicuous by its absence'.<sup>79</sup> Bod's groundbreaking work, in which he has made a commendable effort to include developments outside Europe, provides a useful basis for re-examining the history of historiography in Japan in a broader context. Bod emphasizes systematization and institutionalization as the most important innovations of the nineteenth century. He even concludes, 'If there was anything like a revolution, it was on the institutional rather than on a conceptual level'.<sup>80</sup> On the institutional level, moreover, developments in the nineteenth century applied equally to the natural (and the social) sciences and the humanities, namely the systematization of academic disciplines and the emergence of research institutions (particularly the research university with its science laboratories and humanities seminars), of the scientist as a new social type and of an

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<sup>76</sup> Mazlish, *The Uncertain Sciences*, 7; Rens Bod, *A New History of the Humanities: The Search for Principles and Patterns from Antiquity to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015 (2013)):4.

<sup>77</sup> Evans, *In Defence of History*, 73.

<sup>78</sup> When I first started work on the English edition as a postdoctoral fellow at Cambridge (1991–3; incidentally, the controversial award of an honorary doctorate to Jacques Derrida in 1992 was a topic of discussion at college dining tables during that time), I read numerous works about the nature of history and historical knowledge, from diehards like Sir Geoffrey Elton and Arthur Marwick to radicals like Keith Jenkins, without feeling much the wiser: G.R. Elton, *The Practice of History* (London: Fontana Press, 1989 (1967)); Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History*, 3rd edn. (London: Macmillan, 1989); Keith Jenkins, *Rethinking History* (London: Routledge, 1991). One of the best discussions addressing both ends of the spectrum is Evans, *In Defence of History*. Newer texts that likewise adopt a balanced view and ultimately defend history as a *Wissenschaft* include Knut Kjeldstadli, *Fortiden er ikke hvad den har været: en indføring i historiefaget* (Frederiksberg: Roskilde Universitets Forlag, 2002); John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (Revised Third Edition) (London: Longman, 2002); Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice*, 2nd edn (London: Hodder Arnold, 2006).

<sup>79</sup> Bod, *New History*. The 2010 Dutch version is thus aptly named *De Vergeten Wetenschappen* (The forgotten sciences).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

increasingly global scientific community. In fact, the very concept of science as distinct from other kinds of knowledge acquisition was new, characterised by ‘an emphasis on the conditional validity, intersubjectivity and autonomy of knowledge’.<sup>81</sup>

Bod questions the prevailing assumption of a major conceptual break in modern times; indeed, he emphasizes continuing trends from antiquity to modern times, such as the quest for patterns (and at the same time a parallel tradition of pattern-rejection). The contribution of Ranke to historiography, for example, lay in the systematization and proliferation of existing practices.<sup>82</sup> Bod does not, however, downplay the importance of the changes in the way the subjects of the humanities were investigated. The central role of textual criticism (‘philologization’ in Bod’s words) in the new discipline of history represented a new paradigm, and the basis for historiography’s claim to objectivity. At the same time, philology changed from a classical discipline into a national one, just as history increasingly became national history.<sup>83</sup>

Bod’s outline of Rankean historiography is not in itself new; the innovation lies in the way he treats historiography in the broader context of the humanities in general and their interaction with the natural sciences, which in the nineteenth century became the model not only for the social sciences, but also to some extent for the humanities. Bod even describes source criticism, so central to scientific history, as one of the world-changing contributions of the humanities.<sup>84</sup> And, as he points out, the humanities in the form they took in nineteenth-century Europe (like the natural and social sciences), came to dominate the rest of the world.

The transformation of philology from a classical into a national discipline, and, we might add, the formation of the scientific discipline of history as a national discipline in the nineteenth century, characterized Meiji Japan as well. It is in part a result of Western influence, but the development of Japanese Learning (*kokugaku*) as a challenge to Chinese Learning (*kangaku*) in the Edo period represents another example of pre-existing trends. Both Japanese Learning and Chinese Learning were transformed into a series of new academic disciplines, including the history of the East (*tôyôshi*) and national literature (*kokubungaku*) among others. Chinese-style chronicles of ruling houses (whether imperial or shogunal) gave way to national history, as Chinese-derived imperial ideals gave way to the concept of a world of nations.<sup>85</sup> And in Japan, just as in Europe, the liberation from previous yokes achieved by embracing nationalism resulted in a new yoke that all too soon proved equally limiting.<sup>86</sup> As long as nations were taken as given, however, nationalism did not necessarily appear as a yoke.

One might ask how far *kangaku* scholars of Shigeno’s and Kume’s generation took the nation as given at all, given that they had lived their formative years within a different frame of reference. These scholars themselves and the whole project of a government-sponsored

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<sup>81</sup> Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*:1106. ———, *Transformation of the World*:780.

<sup>82</sup> Bod, *New History*, 347–8.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 250, 251.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 352.

<sup>85</sup> For a discussion of the imperial imagination at the time of the Yamato imperial court, see Torquil Duthie, *Man’yôshû and the Imperial Imagination in Early Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 2014). For Meiji Japan, see Shillony, ‘The Meiji Restoration: Japan’s attempt to inherit China’.

<sup>86</sup> Bod, *New History*, 357.

history in the dynastic tradition might be described as representing a transition from one cognitive map to another and being engulfed in a major epistemic shift while simultaneously contributing to it. Possibly, Kume was more aware of this than Shigeno (and his other colleagues), and his experience of travel abroad with the Iwakura Embassy may well have been the main reason for this. I believe I might have underrated this when I wrote *History and the State*, although I did note the broad scope of Kume's writings.<sup>87</sup>

The narrative in *History and the State* effectively ends 1895; Chapter 6.6, about the textbook controversy, is included because of its significance to the story of conflict between scientific history and national ideology and because several of the scholars I discuss were involved in the debates. The closure of the Institute in 1893 and its reopening in 1895 marked the end of the transitional phase and a new departure for the former Office of Historiography.

Equally significantly, perhaps, 1895 marked a turning point for Japan as a nation. By the time the Historiographical Institute reopened, Japan had won its victory against China, an event that was celebrated as a new beginning. Scholars who had recently been engaged in lively discussions about history and historiography during what contemporaries diagnosed as a 'history fever', such as Kume Kunitake and Tsubouchi Shōyō, were among the first to discuss the significance of the victory in the new journal *Taiyō*.<sup>88</sup> It may well be that Japan's new departure on the road to empire – the victory over China resulted in its first foreign colony, Taiwan – gave impetus to the next generation of academic historians, with the result that at least some of them did play a major role in 'interpreting the nation' in the context of Japan's newly won empire. One might even say that the victory changed the goalposts for writing national history, since now not only the Japanese nation itself, but also its claims to dominance in East Asia had to be legitimated. In *Japanese Historians and the National Myths, 1600–1945*, published at around the same time as *History and the State*, John S. Brownlee analyses the positions of Mikami Sanji, Kuroita Katsumi and Tsuji Zennosuke (all of whom were employed in the Historiographical Institute at some time in their careers) and shows how, to varying degrees, these historians accepted the distorted view of history propagated by the state.<sup>89</sup> Kuroita's work shows that historians of the *akademizumu* school did in fact contribute to interpreting the nation. This is also evident from Lisa Yoshikawa's work, which shows that Kuroita played a significant part in the public representation of national history even while insisting on scientific research.<sup>90</sup> His wide-ranging activities included publishing historical works for a larger audience, commemorating historical figures

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<sup>87</sup> In the German version, I devote an entire section to Kume as a historian: Mehl, *Vergangenheit*, 180–9.

<sup>88</sup> Marius B. Jansen, 'Changing Japanese Attitudes toward Modernization', in *Changing Japanese Attitudes toward Modernization*, ed. Marius Jansen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964):74–5. See Margaret Mehl, 'The mid-Meiji "history boom": professionalization of historical scholarship and growing pains of an emerging academic discipline', *Japan Forum* 10.1 (1998):67–83.

<sup>89</sup> John S. Brownlee, *Japanese Historians and the National Myths, 1600–1945: the Age of the Gods and Emperor Jimmu* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997). See also Margaret Mehl, 'Review: Brownlee, Japanese Historians and the National Myths, 1600–1945', *Monumenta Nipponica* 53.4 (1998):554–7.

<sup>90</sup> Lisa Yoshikawa, 'Kuroita Katsumi and his State-sanctioned National History' (Yale University, 2007). Forthcoming as ———, *Making History Matter: Kuroita Katsumi and the Construction of Imperial Japan* (Yale: Harvard University Asia Center, 2017).

and participating in research and writing on Korean history, all of which helped to legitimize not only the emperor state but also Japan's dominance over Korea. Kuroita's activities suggest active complicity rather than submission in a repressive political climate: far from being passive in the shadow of a state-sanctioned national history, he was one of its architects.

A similar role of complicity in the Japanese colonization of Korea is described for Kita Sadakichi (1871–1939), the historian whose lecture sparked off the 1911 textbook controversy about the treatment of the Northern and Southern Imperial courts in medieval Japan.<sup>91</sup> Unlike Yoshikawa, however, the author, Etsuko Kang, does not discuss the quality of Kita's historiography as scholarship, raising the question of whether she regards this as irrelevant compared to Kita's political engagement.

As Japan became a colonial power, it also exported its version of modern historical science to the colonies. In Korea, for example, Japanese historians conducted research into the origins of the local culture with the aim of proving that Korea was a natural part of the Japanese empire. While their interpretation of Korean history was roundly rejected by Korean scholars after 1945, the work of Japanese scholars in collecting and preserving primary sources (texts and artefacts) represented a lasting contribution to research into Korean history, for use by Korean historians in their efforts to demonstrate Korean distinctness. In this endeavour they are often caught up in the same framework of methodological nationalism and the 'colonial historical and anthropological paradigms of racial invasions and territorial conquests to explain cultural change' as the Japanese scholars whose versions of Korean history they reject.<sup>92</sup>

### **Lessons from the history of history?**

In the introduction to *History and the State* I predict that 'for some time to come the story of history and national identity will be an ongoing one', and I conclude the book by observing, 'In the end the tensions experienced by Shigeno and his colleagues attempting to write a history for their nation – between truth and myth, fact and interpretation, disinterestedness and partisanship, science and art, research and writing – have to be confronted by historians in every time and place'.<sup>93</sup>

In fact, as I was working on the book, developments in Japan provided ample illustration of both statements. In 1990–1 the 'comfort women' issue, until then essentially one of historical scholarship, turned into a political problem when, in response to calls for an investigation, Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki claimed that the government and the military had played no part in forcing the women into prostitution. Kaifu was proved wrong, not only by the testimonies of former comfort women (the first one publicly told of her experience in 1991), but also by the investigations of the historian Yoshimi Yoshiaki. Yoshimi discovered

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<sup>91</sup> Etsuko H. Kang, 'Kita Sadakichi (1871–1939) on Korea: A Japanese Ethno-Historian and the Annexation of Korea in 1910', *Asian Studies Review* 21.1 (2007):41–60.

<sup>92</sup> Hyung Il Pai, *Constructing "Korean" Origins: A Critical Review of Archaeology, Historiography, and Racial Myth in Korean State-Formation Theories* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000):56.

<sup>93</sup> Mehl, *History and the State*, 15, 166.

the first official document that proved the military's involvement, and subsequent research revealed the extent of state and military complicity.<sup>94</sup> Since then, the comfort women controversy has never been out the media for long. The agreement between the governments of Japan and South Korea in December 2015 and the joint statement of their foreign ministers that the issue had now been 'resolved once and for all' have done little to resolve the problem.<sup>95</sup> This became evident when, only months later, verdicts were handed down in two court cases involving historians and their scholarly work on the comfort women. Yoshimi Yoshiaki, a well-known Japanese historian on the subject, had sued a right-wing Diet member for libel, because he had denounced Yoshimi's work as 'fabrication'. On the other hand Korean scholar Park Yu-ha herself was sued for her interpretation of the comfort women's perception of their role at the time.<sup>96</sup>

The treatment of Japan's wartime aggression in history textbooks has likewise proved a hardy perennial. From the mid-1990s, right-wing politicians attacked textbooks that included references, however brief, to the comfort women. The most salient neo-nationalist initiative was the launch in 1996 of the *Atarashii Rekishi Kyôkasho o Tsukurukai* (The Japanese Society for History Textbook reform, hereafter *Tsukurukai*) by Fujioka Nobukatsu, professor of education at the University of Tokyo, and others. Their aim was to publish a junior high school textbook that broke with the allegedly 'masochistic' view of Japanese history found in current textbooks, a criticism which, by the way, was not unique to Japan: similar criticism of the way national history was portrayed in textbooks was voiced at around the same time in the United States and Australia.<sup>97</sup> *Atarashii Rekishi Kyôkasho* was duly licenced in 2001, although few schools adopted it. Meanwhile, an edition for the general public (*shihanbon*) published in 2001 became an instant bestseller.<sup>98</sup>

Despite my having turned my research interests to other topics, it could not, of course, escape my notice that the members of *Tsukurukai* included Itô Takashi, formerly my supervisor at the University of Tokyo, whom I have so much to thank for.<sup>99</sup> When I first met him in October 1987, he had long secured his fame as a scholar working tirelessly to unearth historical documents and ensure that they were safely archived, catalogued and made accessible to historians. Or, in the more down-to-earth words of a student in the department of Western history at Tokyo University: 'nikki no suki na hito' (the guy who likes diaries). In

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<sup>94</sup> Mark Selden and Yoshiko Nozaki, 'Japanese Textbook Controversies, Nationalism, and Historical Memory: Intra- and Inter-national Conflicts', *The Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 7.24.5 (2009):1–24, 10.

<sup>95</sup> 'Japan, South Korea reach "final" deal to settle "comfort women" issue', *The Japan Times*, 28 December 2015.

<sup>96</sup> Jordan Sand, 'A Year of Memory Politics in East Asia: Looking Back on the "Open Letter in Support of Historians in Japan"', *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 16.9.3 (2016). The phenomenon of history in the courtroom is not limited to Japan and Korea, for a European example relating to Holocaust denial, see John Tosh, *Why History Matters* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008):107–8.

<sup>97</sup> Margaret Macmillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History* (London: Profile Books, 2010 (2008)).

<sup>98</sup> Janet Ashby, 'Controversial textbooks are big sellers for Fusosha', *The Japan Times*, 15 July 2001.

<sup>99</sup> He was a board member until 2006, when he resigned because of the continuous internal conflicts, but subsequently participated in other associations with similar aims. For his views on the most controversial topics in connection with Japan's role in the war (based on an interview conducted by the authors in March 2010), see Gi-Wook Shin and Daniel Sneider, *Divergent Memories: Opinion Leaders and the Asia-Pacific War* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2016).

2015 he published a memoir with the telling subtitle, ‘Reminiscences of a historian who has deeply engaged with historical sources (*shiryô*)’.<sup>100</sup> Clearly, his achievements in securing primary documents for future research are what he wishes to be remembered for. And yet, asking myself why he had teamed up with such unsavoury nationalists and amateur historians as Fujioka Nobukatsu and Kobayashi Yoshinori,<sup>101</sup> I was uncannily reminded of the prewar scientific historians who both pursued scientific, source-based historical research and collaborated in the creation of myth-history in the service of the nation.<sup>102</sup> Certainly, government suppression could not serve as an explanation here.

The present Abe government, however, does appear to be curtailing freedom of expression. Its efforts to influence history education have extended to history textbooks even in the United States, where it has attempted to suppress passages about the comfort women in a world history textbook. In response to what was perceived as a massive campaign of denial of Japan’s wartime aggression by right-wing politicians and media, a group of mostly North American scholars of Japan released an ‘Open Letter in Support of Historians in Japan’. It was eventually signed by over 500 supporters, including many from Europe.<sup>103</sup> The letter received more attention from the Japanese media than the signers had anticipated and was both praised and criticized. Reflecting a year later on his and his colleagues’ role and on the criticisms, the historian Jordan Sand considered the broader issue of history education and nationalism and the role of the historian in public debates. He concluded that ‘the record of our influence in the public sphere appears ambiguous’ and that academic historians might do better to concentrate on their role in the classroom.<sup>104</sup> This sounds disconcertingly like Mikami Sanji, who one hundred years ago drew the curtains of his lecture room to emphasize the separation of academic history from public history.

But should professional historians really retreat from public debates about history? Two eminent historians, Margaret MacMillan and John Tosh, who in 2008 published books about public history, have argued that professional historians should not leave the field to amateurs.<sup>105</sup> *The Uses and Abuses of History* and *Why History Matters* differ in their approaches and emphasis, but the most important message is the same: history matters and professional historians’ contribution to public history matters because they are trained to work with causality and sequence, both crucial to history, to deal with complexities, to highlight historical context as well as the otherness of the past and to challenge assumptions

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<sup>100</sup> Itô Takashi, *Rekishi to Watakushi: Shiryô o ayunda rekishika no kaisô* (Tokyo: Chûô Kôron Shinsha, 2015).

<sup>101</sup> Fujioka is a scholar of education and Kobayashi a manga artist; professional historians are, in fact, almost ‘wholly absent from the ranks of historical revisionists’. Sven Saaler, ‘Nationalism and History in Contemporary Japan’, *The Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 14.20 (2016):8–9.

<sup>102</sup> However, despite the textbook’s serious faults (I myself published a short critique: Margaret Mehl, ‘The Right History? Historical Scholarship and History Education in Japan’, *NIAS nytt* 4 (2002):10–11.), claiming that it perpetrates myth-history would be overstating the case.

<sup>103</sup> The initiators deliberately refrained from seeking signatures in East Asian countries: see Sand, ‘Year of Memory Politics’.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> MacMillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History*; Tosh, *Why History Matters*.

and point out alternatives.<sup>106</sup> Both authors stress the importance of reliable historical knowledge as a basis for responsible citizenship. Tosh describes history as ‘a critical resource for the active citizen in a representative democracy’.<sup>107</sup> This is his main thrust. The historian’s task as he sees it is to disseminate reliable knowledge of the past that is relevant to issues of the day and to promote ‘thinking with history’ and historical awareness. While he acknowledges history’s potential to give ‘a sense of belonging’, he sees the aim of history education not so much as fostering loyalty, but rather as developing citizens able to form a ‘considered and informed view of matters of public concern’. He ends by urging historians to become more engaged in public history, concluding that ‘(t)he prize is a critically armed and better informed public, providing the basis for a revitalized democratic culture’.<sup>108</sup>

Tosh thus offers a solution to the dilemma of how history education can both be based on scientific history and serve the interests of the nation (at least, a nation that values democracy). The Tsukurukai’s main criticism of existing history textbooks was that their portrayal of Japan’s past was not suitable for fostering a positive attitude to Japan, a criticism that rests on the assumption that the purpose of history education is to promote patriotism. If this notion is abandoned in favour of educating critical citizens, then the question of how to represent those aspects of the past which show the nation in a less than positive light will lose much of its sting.

Both MacMillan and Tosh (and they surely speak for most professional historians) more or less directly defend history as a science. Precisely their professional scientific training, however, can cause historians to shy away from engaging in public or ‘applied’ history, just as it makes them reluctant to write ‘big history’.<sup>109</sup> They find it difficult to reconcile detailed examination of the primary sources with generalizations and sustained interpretative work.<sup>110</sup> If, however, the aim is to make the fruits of historical research relevant to the public (or even just to scholars with other specializations) then to ‘stop too soon’ may well result in missed opportunities for learning from history. On the other hand, if historians can convince the public that ‘the merit of history lies in opening rather than in closing questions – in revealing options rather than insisting on answers’,<sup>111</sup> then they need not fear applied history as a threat to their professional integrity.

Here, then, is perhaps the main reason why I believe my detailed study of historiography in the service of the Meiji state is important and relevant. The history of scientific history and the emergence of the historical profession matter because professional, scientific history matters. The ways in which Japan’s earliest representatives of the modern historical

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<sup>106</sup> MacMillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History*, 38, 39, 167–9. See also Tosh, *Why History Matters*, 22–3.

<sup>107</sup> MacMillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History*, 165; Tosh, *Why History Matters*, ix.

<sup>108</sup> Tosh, *Why History Matters*, 140, 143.

<sup>109</sup> While Tosh cites the nature of historical science as one of the reasons for professional historians’ reluctance to engage in public history, Osterhammel states that the professionalization of historical science has made historians shy away from ‘Big History’. See *Ibid.*, 17–22; Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*, 14–15; ———, *Transformation of the World*, xv–xvi.

<sup>110</sup> Many historians do succeed in demonstrating the wider implications of their detailed studies based on close reading of the primary sources: for examples of how such studies have contributed to our understanding of modern Japan, see Akita, *Evaluating Evidence*, 65–124.

<sup>111</sup> Tosh, *Why History Matters*.

profession attempted (and ultimately failed) to combine their new professional ethos with serving the equally new constitutional nation state matter, because the essential challenge of upholding ‘the core principles of historical enquiry’<sup>112</sup> and at the same time contributing to public debate is still our challenge as historians today.

*History and the State* offers a glimpse into the thoughts and preoccupations of scholars in Japan who lived much of their life before 1868, in a world that was in many ways quite different from the world that was emerging towards the end of that century. In their lifetime they saw their country transform itself into a modern nation and then into a major imperial power. For their successors, Japan’s position has presented different kinds of challenges in the search for meaning, as it in turn became a defeated nation, an economic superpower, a country in crisis. By the turn of the millennium Western countries presented neither models to emulate nor the likeliest threat to Japan’s security. Global challenges necessitate global responses and thus cooperation between nations. The historians discussed in *History and the State*, while aware of being part of a wider world of nations, were preoccupied with the history of their own nation.

Historians today do well to treat even national history, whether of their own nation or of another, as global history, not only by being aware of the global dimensions of a nation’s history, but by accepting that national history is an international concern.<sup>113</sup> Ideally, history will contribute to the education of informed and critical world citizens rather than merely citizens of a nation. The way national history is told and taught affects the coexistence between nations and thus our global future.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>113</sup> Both MacMillan and Tosh discuss history and international relations: MacMillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History*; Tosh, *Why History Matters*.

## Notes on the New Edition

For reasons explained in my ‘Preface to the New Edition’, the text of the first edition of *History and the State* has been left largely intact apart from conservative copy-editing and the correction of obvious mistakes. An effort has been made to eliminate obvious inconsistencies in the transcription of Japanese terms, but generally they have been left as they were, even if they do not conform to the most common conventions for English-language publications.

While revisiting *History and the State* I corresponded with the Japanese scholars who have been preparing a Japanese translation for submission to Tokyo University Press. Their thoroughness has been both gratifying and embarrassing. Fortunately they do not seem to have discovered any major flaws in my work. Their comments have led me to reword a few passages (which I have not pointed out one by one) as well as to correct a number of inconsistencies and mistakes in the references. One point of terminology should probably be addressed. In *History and the State* I generally use the term ‘historiography’ in a broad sense of ‘doing’ history, including both research and writing, especially the latter. With the meaning of ‘writing history’, historiography also serves as a translation of the Japanese word *shûshi*. The Japanese translators rightly point out that I do not distinguish between *shûshi* and *shiron* (theoretical discussions of history, historical treatise). I see no need to do this in English, since the meaning of ‘historiography’ is broad enough to cover both.

‘Today’ in the 1998 edition obviously refers to the 1990s. Some things have changed since then, others have not, but I have left it to the reader to reflect upon. Among the most salient changes is that the rise of the internet has made many historical sources more easily accessible. Among the most important ones are the digitalized publications of the Meiji period available through the National Diet Library as well as the sources held by the Historiographical Institute, many of which are now available electronically, including the document collection *Shiryô hensan shimatsu*, one of my main sources. When I embarked on my project I had a hard time gaining access to materials relating to the Institute’s history, namely the *Shiryô hensan shimatsu*, which until that time were only accessible to the Institute’s own employees. Fortunately, my request to examine them came at a time when their declassification was being considered, and eventually I was given permission to consult them. Among my fondest memories of that time is virtually racing the veteran historian Ôkubo Toshiaki, then well into his eighties, to the Institute’s reading room counter in order to obtain the volume of my choice before he did. Professor Ôkubo was at this time revising – and sometimes rewriting – his writings on the history of historiography for Volume 7 of his collected works.

Information about the Historiographical Institute itself is likewise available, in English as well as Japanese, on the Institute’s website.<sup>114</sup> The short Appendix entitled ‘Hints for Using the Historiographical Institute’ has been therefore omitted.

Finally, a note about the jacket illustration of the first edition of *History and the State*: it represents the Imperial Rescript on Historiography of 1869, which I introduce and translate on page 1 of the book. As two of the reviewers cited previously noted, half of it is upside down. This is actually a result of the way the rescript was written, that is, on a piece of paper

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<sup>114</sup> <https://www.hi.u-tokyo.ac.jp/index.html> (English), accessed 17 January 2017.

which is folded in the middle with the direction of the (vertical) writing running downwards from the fold. Images of this document, including the one on the Historiographical Institute's homepage, invariably show the second part of the text upside down.