

Opening speech

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Thank you for kind words of introduction. My name is Sakano, Graduate School of Intercultural Studies, Kobe University. It is my great pleasure to be here, today.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude and heartiest welcome to you who come from Europe and Japan to attend this session. Please allow me to take this opportunity to offer a few words of opening address.

It is needless to say that the European integration, especially the European Union is the subject of intense academic interest in various fields. Roughly speaking, there have been following three main dimensions to the European integration studies: the political dimension, the economic one and the cultural or social dimension.

Although a large number of studies have been made on the European Union by political scientist and economists, few attempts have so far been made at the cultural dimension of European integration to the best of my knowledge. As far as the European Integration studies focusing on the cultural aspects are concerned, there has been no such theoretical divide and advance as a debate between neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism in international relation and comparative politics. It means that the cultural studies on European integration are in the early developing stage. But on the other points of view, we can say that it is full of research potentials.

Today's symposium which focuses on culture's functions in the development of European Union is one of such attempts and it is, therefore, of great significance. I would to express my appreciation to associate professor Sakai, who has organized our symposium very nicely and six panelists from Europe and Japan.

As many scholars argue, Europe is a cultural reality. The European integration is not only a political or economic project but also a cultural project which spreads well beyond the boundaries of the nation states. In my view, one of common themes thorough our today's symposium is what does 'Europeanism' mean, in other words, who is included and excluded from Europe, or in which way one has come to be identified with Europe.

In the following reports by four prominent scholars, we can get some noteworthy answers regarding those questions. Professor Ferragu highlights clearly the importance of Christianity in the European integration. Professor Eberhart reveals the spiritual importance of pilgrimage. Professor Meuret focuses on the journalism as a media which contributes to construct European identity. Furthermore, assistant professor Terao from Kobe University refers to minority languages as a guarantee of the cultural diversity in European integration.

In recent years, there are some noteworthy studies which place particular emphasis on the notion of European public sphere. While the nation state has been a dominant framework of thinking about public matters, it concerns a communicative space that might enable the

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formation of a transnational public. We sincerely hope that our symposium would become such a transnational public sphere which promotes to exchange ideas and deepen researches regarding the European integration from the inter-cultural perspective.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.