

On the Establishment of the Asia-Japan Research Institute

The late Professor Kozo WATANABE

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The Ritsumeikan Academy has continually strived to be a pioneer in university globalization. The very first results of such efforts can be seen in the establishment of the College of International Relations at Ritsumeikan University (RU) in 1988 and the opening of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU) in 2000. In 2006, “The Ritsumeikan Charter” was established, which declared, “Ritsumeikan, as a Japanese institution located in the Asia Pacific region, is committed to sincerely reflecting upon history and to building an institution where many cultures coexist in the spirit of international mutual understanding.” Furthermore, in 2014, both universities of the academy were selected for the “Top Global University Project” by the Japanese government. We take this as a form of recognition for Ritsumeikan’s numerous achievements and ambitious response to globalization as well as the presence of high expectations for our future.

Ritsumeikan has set forth the “Academy Vision R2020” as a concept of what the academy will be in the year 2020. The experiences and results I mentioned above are one of the cornerstones of this vision and are said to be epitomized in the concept of “Asian Gateway,” one of the three core concepts of Osaka Ibaraki Campus (OIC), which opened in 2015. In order to further give concrete shape to the concept of “Asian Gateway,” we decided to establish the Ritsumeikan Asia-Japan Research Organization and Asia-Japan Research Institute as important engines to propel Ritsumeikan towards its goal of becoming a “distinctive global research university” as put forth in the “Basic Policy for the R2020 Second Half and Beyond.”

Ritsumeikan University currently has a total of 50 leading research bases in Japan consisting of 6 research organizations, 12 research institutes, and 32 research centers. In December 2015, we established our 6th research organization, the Ritsumeikan Asia-Japan Research Organization, and our 12th research institute, the Asia-Japan Research Institute. One of the big goals that these establishments have set for themselves is to serve as a hub to connect various institutions and consolidate knowledge gained from research activities from multiple sources that are focused on Asia.

This is the first time in our university’s history that we have established a research organization and research institute simultaneously. It could be said that this is a display of our determination to pursue research that contributes to the “Asian Era” that is both strategic in nature as well as possessing Ritsumeikan-esque concepts, while also working to disseminate the results of such research to the world.

As an original and ambitious knowledge creation hub that promotes interdisciplinary research through the development and fusion of various fields such as the natural sciences and humanities, we intend to pursue various possibilities for new Asian studies. I sincerely hope you are as excited as we are about our up-and-coming research activities.