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Focus

Islam's Christmas tree (?) and Santa Claus (?)

I have been visiting Uzbekistan each year since 2005 to make observations on the Russian language in the Central Asian multilingual society of the former Soviet Union. From 2005 to 2009, I also visited two neighboring countries of Uzbekistan, i.e. Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. In this article, I would like to write about what I noticed, as a by-product of these observations, about Islam in this region. First, I reproduce the words of Muslims from the region that remain strong in my memory to this day. "Islam can be summed up as 'the religion of peace.' Those who engage in terrorism are not followers of Islam. It is clearly written in the Koran that 'people should not be killed'" (Dunganese former English language teacher, 2005, in a village on the outskirts of Bishkek, the capital city of Kyrgyzstan). "Fasting for Ramadan is good for your health. However, some people are not allowed to fast. These are the sick, expectant and nursing mothers, and those who are travelling. More than that, if fasting causes you to be sick, your whole household must immediately stop fasting. I kept the fast until yesterday, but I am now travelling, so I will eat breakfast" (Uzbek interpreter, 2008, on a flight between Tashkent and Bishkek). "I always intend

to keep the fast, but every year after a few days of fasting, I get a headache and end up being obliged to eat. That is why I am eating lunch today" (Uzbek engineer, 2009, in Tashkent, capital city of Uzbekistan). "What kind of religion is Buddhism?" – (my answer) "Buddhism in Japan is not at all strict as a religion. Although there are many branches of the religion with greatly differing doctrines, there is hardly any trouble between the different sects. Most Japanese people consider themselves Buddhist but have no interest in Buddhism. Christianity, however, is considered to be from outside. Even so, Christmas is celebrated without any religious meaning". "I wonder then if Buddhism in Japan, like Islam here, is

something that underpins everyday life" (Kyrgyz university lecturer, 2008, in Bishkek, the capital city of Kyrgyzstan).

There are also people in Central Asia who adhere to a strict form of Islam. These people, habitually, do not drink alcohol, and even their weddings are quiet, with men and women sitting separately and consuming no alcohol at all. Even Muslims who are not strictly observant will never go as far as eating pork. However, to tell the truth, as revealed by the quotes above, Islam as followed by completely ordinary people is "loose." There are those who are passionate about their religion and go to the mosque several times a day, but the majority of people, like the Japanese, prioritize work, and it is unusual to see someone stop work to pray.

In Russia during the Soviet era, religion was removed from Christmas and, from December until early January, Christmas trees known as *Novogodnyaya yolka* (New Year's spruce) were displayed. Santa Claus, the figure known for giving presents to children, was known as *Ded Moroz* (Grandfather Frost), and the gift giving remains as a New Year's day activity (NB: the Russian Orthodox Christmas is January 7th).

I saw this for the first time in 2013. In contemporary Uzbekistan, with most Russians having left the country and most of remaining citizens being Muslims, I was surprised to see the reemergence of *Novogodnyaya yolka* and *Ded Moroz*; old attitudes are gradually resurfacing as commerce modernizes society (Photo1). I visited the region at the end of the year in 2007, 2008, and 2009, but did not see such things. I thought that this was probably because of a decline in the Christian population and a shaking-off of Russian influence. However, it seems that it was instead attributable to the long economic slump after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The ordinary people in the country continue even now to struggle to survive. However, in the ten years since 2005, even as the

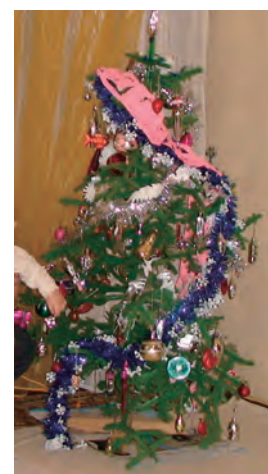


Photo 2

"New Year's spruce" in a Muslim household with small children



Photo 1

An advertisement for a company that organizes the delivery of flowers or presents by *Ded Moroz* (Grandfather Frost) (downloaded from the website of FlowerShop.uz in Tashkent)

gap between the rich and the poor widened, the cityscape of Tashkent has improved beyond recognition. Goods have also become plentiful, and many large-scale supermarkets, just as good as those in Japan, have been built. *Novogodnyaya yolka* and *Ded Moroz* appeared here and there in town as official New Year decorations in public spaces and to attract customers into the large supermarkets. The Muslims of Uzbekistan are aware that these items are derived from the practices of Christianity but do not consider it necessary to eliminate them. It is possible to explain this fact, on the one hand, as a result of the two practices arriving in the region already separated from religion in the Soviet era and, on the other, as a re-

sult of the “looseness” of Islam in the region (Photo2).

All the countries in Central Asia have eliminated extreme versions of Islam, and since the Soviet era, the region’s population has received an education largely based on scientism. It would therefore be a mistake to think that such a “loose” attitude exists generally in the Islamic world. However, it would be another big mistake to hold the opinion that Islam in general has “harsh rules” and “is frightening in that it does not allow the existence of other religions.” It could be said of any religion that there are societies in which religious rules are strict and others where they are loose. (Kenji Yanagida)

Recent Events

International symposium to mark the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Center for Northeast Asian Studies, “Northeast Asia: A new paradigm for Area Studies”

The Center for Northeast Asian Studies, established in May 1996 as a facility available to the whole of Tohoku University, reached its 20th year in 2015. The time of its inauguration, the mid-nineties, was a major turning point for the framework of international politics in the 20th century, with the way ahead difficult to discern. However, for Japan, the breakdown of the Cold War system raised expectations of improvement in relations not only with China, where “reform and opening-up” was already under way, but also with Russia and Mongolia. The Center for Northeast Asian Studies aimed to meet the needs of such an era. Meanwhile, in academic and educational circles, the limitations of the existing attitude to research, which distinguished between the arts and sciences, were being pointed out, and the necessity of the academic fusion of different fields, particular in the arts and sciences, was being championed. The then newly established Center for Northeast Asian Studies gathered together researchers from the arts and sciences, including those from the Faculty of Arts and Letters, Faculty of Sciences, School of Engineering, Graduate School of International Cultural Studies, Graduate School of Life Science, and Humanities and Linguistic Divisions. The Center’s mission was to conduct integrated academic research relating to Northeast Asia. Today, 20 years on, Northeast Asia continues to be dogged by many problems. Meanwhile, negotiations between various countries in the region are becoming steadily more intense, and the importance of Northeast Asian Studies has only increased.

For its 20th anniversary, the Center for Northeast Asian Studies planned an international commemorative symposium, entitled “Northeast Asia: Toward a New Paradigm of Area Studies” aimed at seeking new developments in research in a region of vital significance to Japan. Through this event, the Center intended to summarize the body of research accomplished over the last 20 years.

The commemorative ceremony on the afternoon of Saturday, December 5, started with a welcome address by the Director of the Center, followed by a congratulatory message from the presi-



dent of Tohoku University, Susumu Satomi, read out by Mr. Sadayoshi Itoh (Trustee for Research). After this, further congratulatory messages were read out from Mr. Norifumi Ushio, head of the Scientific Research Institutes Division of the Research Promotion Bureau at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; Dr. S. Chuluun, director of the Institute of History and archaeology, Mongolian Academy of Sciences; Mr. Narifumi Tachimoto, head of the National Institutes for the Humanities; and Mr. Makoto Taniguchi, chairman of the Northeast Asian Studies and Exchange Network (read by Yasuhiro Chiba, vice-chairman).



There were two commemorative lectures after the ceremony, namely, “Northeast Asia as a Philosophical Task” by Professor Shinichi Yamamuro of the Institute for Research in Humanities, Kyoto University, and “Formation of Japanese and Northeast Asian Populations from DNA-based Perspectives” by Dr. Kenichi Shinoda of the National Museum of Nature and Science.

A overview session followed the commemorative lectures. In this session, directors of four Japanese institutes engaged in research related to Northeast Asia spoke of current activities and future hopes from their various perspectives. Professor Atsushi Inoue, director of the Institute for Northeast Asian Research, University of Shimane, delivered the report “Problems to construct a learning on North-east Asia”; Professor Shinichiro Tabata, director of the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University, presented the report “Northeast Asia in Slavic-Eurasian Studies”; Professor Hiroko Imamura, director of the Center for Far Eastern



Studies, University of Toyama, gave the report “Northeast Asian Studies as a research hub of the Japan Sea coast”; and Professor Hiroki Oka, director of the Center for Northeast Asian Studies, Tohoku University,

imparted his views in the report “Northeast Asia as the Agenda: Historical Perspective.”

At the commemorative symposium, 12 sessions were organized around different issues. The sessions were organized into three groups: group A, “Natural environments in Northeast Asia: Natural history,” discussed the natural environment based on the Northeast Asian region and the relationship between nature and the people living there; group B, “Social environments in Northeast Asia: Border transgression,” tackled regional-level problems, which involve the movement of people and goods across borders or across large areas in Northeast Asia; and group C, “Preservation and legacy of heritage in Northeast Asia” focused on the theme of conserving and handing down the natural and cultural legacy of the region, on which the Center’s socially responsible research has focused.

Three related conferences were also held as projects to commemorate the 20th anniversary. One was the workshop “Reviewing Humanities and Qualitative Social Sciences Projects after Earth-

quake Disasters, and Exploring the Role of Researchers” held at the Tokyo branch of Tohoku University, spearheaded by the Center’s Professor Hiroki Takakura. The other two are projects related to Professor Motoyuki Sato, who is active in areas such as Northeast Asia from the position of applied electromagnetic wave engineering. The Korea-Japan Joint Conference on Electromagnetic Theory, Electromagnetic Compatibility and Biological Effect (KJJC2015) was held at the Sendai International Center from November 23 to 24. Later, on November 26–27, at Tohoku University’s Katahira Sakura Hall, the 13th Underground Electromagnetic Measurement Workshop “Investigating ruins using radar technology” was held.

Research relating to the Northeast Asian region is a field of area studies that is increasingly important in the 21st century. The Center can be expected to pursue further growth as a hub of Northeast Asian area studies, building on its past results and its body of work. **(Hiroki Oka)**

Recent Events

In Katahira Festival of Tohoku University, Center for Northeast Asian Studies presented “Northeast Asia Encounters and Discoveries”

The regular Katahira Festival was held during the weekend from October 10 to 11, 2015, with most events taking place on Tohoku University’s Katahira campus. The Katahira Festival is a project held once every two years, aimed at promoting research to the local population, organized by the nine research institutes or centers attached to Tohoku University, and the Tohoku University Archives. The overall theme of the latest Festival was “Can you feel it? The Power of Science.”

The contribution by the Center for Northeast Asian Studies was the program “Northeast Asia Encounters and Discoveries.” Its presence among a large number of scientific research exhibits by the Center, as an area studies center encompassing the humanities and social sciences alongside science, introduced a different tone from that in previous years.

The Center’s contribution, on the humanities side, was by Professor Hiroki Takakura (Russian/Siberian studies) and Professor Hiroki Oka (Mongolian and Central Asian studies) and the Department of the Uehiro Tohoku Historical Materials Research, and, on the science side, by Professor Motoyuki Sato (resources and environmental research).

The theme of Professor Takakura’s contribution was “The Daily Life and Environment of the Horse-owning Sakha in the Permafrost Soil of East Siberia.” Professor Oka’s contribution was “See and touch! How a Mongolian “ger” works and the daily life of the Mongolian people.” A tent used by Mongolian nomads, known

as a “ger”, and items of clothing were on display, along with information panels related to Mongolian history and culture. The Department of the Uehiro Tohoku Historical Materials Research took the theme of “reading, deciphering, and preserving ancient texts.” Professor Sato prepared the presentation “Opening up the World with Knowledge on Radio Wave - Ruins, Disaster Prevention, Land Mines -.”

In addition, the Center’s plans for the Katahira Festival are to hold, on October 10 (Saturday), “Challenges in Villages in Cambodia’s Land Mine Fields,” a lecture by Mr. Ryoji Takayama, director of the NPO International Mine Clearance and Community Development, and, on October 11 (Sunday), the sixth Lecture Meeting for Academic Exchange and Cooperation organized by the Tohoku University Center for Northeast Asian Studies and Date City Institute of Funkawan Culture, on the theme “Producing Sugar in the North:

The sweet enterprise of the Sendai hanshi” (Mr. Motoshige Date).

This Katahira Festival was extremely busy, with over 10,000 local people attending. **(Hiroki Oka)**



Recent Events

120th Tohoku University Science Fair

“Disaster Mitigation by Radio Waves: From land mine detection to reconstruction after the Great East Japan Earthquake”

“University research is too complicated to understand; it is difficult to ask the questions that you want to ask; there is no chance to

talk to university lecturers.” The Tohoku University Science Fair is a space for people who have these thoughts to meet university

faculty members in a friendly atmosphere. It is held once a month at Sendai Mediatheque in Sendai City.

On September 25, 2015, I was responsible for an informal session on the theme “Disaster mitigation by radio waves: From land mine detection to reconstruction after the Great East Japan Earthquake.” We are surrounded by such items as cellphones and televisions, and the theme of the day was on radar. ALIS, the radar and metal detector dual sensor that we developed, has been used in land mine clearance in Cambodia, which my research group has



been pursuing since 2009. The ALIS itself was made available to participants, and there was a slide presentation showing how it works and how it is used in practice in land mine clearance.

Next, the difference be-

tween ground-penetrating radar and metal detectors was explained using laboratory equipment brought to the venue. Using electric circuits handmade by students in the laboratory, in which an LED lights up when radio waves are detected, we divided the 60 or so participants into eight groups and then demonstrated how radio waves were emitted by their cellphones. We also placed the cellphones in metal or plastic boxes to demonstrate whether radio waves could get through. Subsequently, we proved that radio waves are detectable outside even if a radio control transmitter is submerged within a tank of water or a bucket of soil. Ground-penetrating radar searches for buried objects using radio waves travelling through the ground.

In the second part of the informal session, while answering participants' questions, we described the coastal search operations for victims of the tsunami after the Great East Japan Earthquake and the search for victims of the Mount Ontake eruption using metal detectors and ground-penetrating radar. **(Motoyuki Sato)**

Recent Events

Workshop led by the Research Unit for Applied Humanities on the Impact of Disasters on Local Cultural Heritage “Reviewing Humanities and Qualitative Social Sciences Projects after Earthquake Disasters, and Exploring the Role of Researchers”

The Research Unit for Applied Humanities on the Impact of Disasters on Local Cultural Heritage organized the workshop “Reviewing Humanities and Qualitative Social Sciences Projects after Earthquake Disasters, and Exploring the Role of Researchers” on October 24 (Saturday) and 25 (Sunday), 2015, at Tohoku University's Tokyo branch office.

On the first day, overseas cases were compared, with presentations by Mr. Suhadi Cholil (Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia), Ms. Min Li (Sichuan University, China), Ms. Susan Bouterey (Canterbury University, New Zealand), and Mr. Katsuhiko Takizawa (Nagasaki University). They discussed, respectively, the 2004 Indian Ocean and 2006 central Java earthquakes, 2008 Sichuan earthquake, 2011 Christchurch earthquake, and Great East Japan earthquake, and then reported on the disaster relief operations in which they themselves had been involved. Various post-disaster social situations came up as topics of discussion, such as studies of folk performing arts and festivals in local communities, role of interpreters during disasters, and role of religion in disaster relief. The contribution of the humanities to reconstruction



was discussed, and how it differs from that of scientific and technical disciplines, such as engineering and medicine.

On the second day, there were reports on Japanese cases, with presentations by Mr. Hiroyuki Kurosaki (Kokugakuin University), Mr. Toshiaki Kimura (Tohoku University), Mr. Hizuru Miki (Osaka Kokusai University), Ms. Migiwa Imaishi (Tokyo Institute of Cultural Property), Mr. Syuhei Kimura (Tsukuba University), and Mr. Mitsuru Haga (Tohoku University). The speakers discussed the practices after the Great East Japan earthquake, practice of followers of Shinto, efforts of non-sectarian chaplains, recording of folk and regional culture in disaster zones, and cooperation with urban engineering researchers in regional reconstruction. There were also reports on the aspects of disasters of special relevance to archaeologists; rescue of cultural resources and preservation of disaster relics; continued commemoration of the Great Hanshin earthquake, 20 years on; and status of solidarity with its victims.

Including the speakers, 29 people attended the workshop, and there were lively Q&A sessions and debate. Major issues arose in the discussion, including the difficulty of international comparison and types of contribution humanities research can make after a disaster. Each occasion at which discussion and research are shared in this way makes it less likely that disasters will be forgotten and more likely that action will be taken to mitigate their impact and prevent them. **(Mutsumi Yamaguchi)**

Recent Events

The Russia - Japan Workshop 2016 at Kawakita Research Forum

On February 15, 2016, the Russia Japan Workshop 2016 was held at the Kawakita Research Forum. It was jointly organized by No-

vosibirsk State University's Department of Humanities (hereafter, Department of Humanities) and Tohoku University's Office

of Japan–Russia Relation, Graduate School of Arts and Letters, Graduate School of International Cultural Studies, and Center for Northeast Asian Studies. The Russia - Japan Workshop organized by Tohoku University and Novosibirsk State University has been held many times, but this was the first time that young researchers and graduate students from the two universities were invited. Professor Hiroki Oka, Director of the Center, acted as master of ceremonies for this year’s workshop, which used English as the lingua franca.

After a welcome speech by Mr. Shotaro Shimizu (Graduate School of Arts and Letters), there were lectures by three academics. Professor Elena Voytishkek (Department of Humanities) spoke on “The Social Role of Ancient Wine Drinking Rituals in the Traditional Culture of East Asia”; Professor Hiroki Oka spoke on “The Emperor’s Mongolian Face: The Qing’s Context in Mongolian History”; and Professor Pavel Volkov (Department of Humanities) spoke on “How people Settled in Ancient Dwellings (Experimental Archaeology and Modern History).”

Thereafter, six young researchers reported on their work, as follows: Ms. Anastacia Rechkalova (Department of Humanities) spoke on “Research Trends of Japanese Heraldry in Western Historiography”; Ms. Alesia Campbell (Graduate School of Arts and Letters) spoke on “The Biography of Date Masamune as Written

in English in 1893”; Mr. Toru Otani (Graduate School of International Cultural Studies) spoke on “On the ‘Visuality’ of Kunyu Wanquo Quantu (The Complete Geographical Map of Ten Thousand Countries): A Comparative Analysis of the Representations of the Countries of Dwarfs and Giants in Chinese and Japanese Cartography”; Mr. Anton Trushukin (Department of Humanities) spoke on “The Role of Pakistan in Sino-Afghanistan relations”; Mr. Dmitriy Borisov (Department of Humanities) spoke on “Modern Misconceptions about Three Kingdoms: Fiction and Reality”; and Mr. Huhmuchir Bao (Center for Northeast Asian Studies) spoke on “Han–Mongol Social Relationships in the Ethnically Mixed Region during the Second Half of The Qing Dynasty: A Case Study of the Kharchin Region, Inner Mongolia.”

This workshop was significant in giving the young presenters an opportunity to speak at an international conference.

(Masachika Shiotani)



Awards

Nagano Prefecture governor’s commendation of efforts related to the search for people missing after the eruption of Mount Ontake

At a ceremony on October 22, 2015, the Center for Northeast Asian Studies has been awarded a governor’s commendation by Nagano Prefecture related to the search for people missing after the eruption of Mount Ontake. Assistant Professor Kazunori Takahashi attended the ceremony and accepted the certificate of gratitude from Nagano governor Mr. Morikazu Abe .



Certificate of gratitude from the Fukushima Prefecture police department for efforts in searching for tsunami victims after the Great East Japan earthquake

Professor Motoyuki Sato’s laboratory at the Center for Northeast Asian Studies used the large ground-penetrating Radar “Yakumo,” developed by the laboratory, to search for tsunami victims along the coasts of Miyagi, Fukushima, and Iwate Prefectures after the Great East Japan earthquake, in cooperation with the police in each prefecture. On January 12, 2016, a certificate of gratitude was awarded by the Fukushima Prefecture police department in recognition of this action .



New Staffs and Visiting Scholars

Professor Tatsuki TSUJIMORI

2015.9.1–present
Geology, metamorphic petrology



Research Fellow Mutsumi YAMAGUCHI

2015.5.1–present
Cultural Anthropology



Research Fellow
Sunhee LEE

2015.6.1-2016.3.31

Social anthropology • South Korea and Japan Studies



Visiting Scholars
Ayalew Abera DEREJE

Professor, Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia)

2016.2.4-3.26

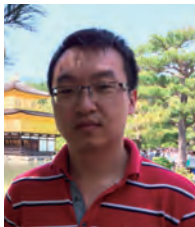
Petrology



Assitant Professor
Lilong ZOU

2016.4.1-present

Disaster mitigation and deformation monitoring by GB-SAR



Visiting Scholars
Hugejifu

Professor, Minzu University of China (China)

2016.3.1-4.30

Mongolian folklore



Visiting Scholars
Zhi Ning CHEN

Professor, National University of Singapore (Singapore)

2015.3.13-4.23

Research on Radar technology to be applied to environmental monitoring



Visiting Scholars
Zegang DING

Associate Professor, Beijing Institute of Technology (China)

2016.4.6-7.15

Synesthetic Aperture Radar technology



Visiting Scholars
Yildrim DILEK

Distinguished Professor, Miami University (U.S.A)

2015.5.28-8.21

Development of orogenic belts in Northeast Asia in comparison with West Eurasia



Visiting Scholars
Dan JIN

Research Fellow

2016.4.1-present

Environmental Economics



Visiting Scholars
Erdentu

Professor, Minzu University of China (China)

2015.10.1-2016.1.31

Mongolian philology



Visiting Scholars
Mako FUJII

Associate Professor, Aichi Shutoku University

2016.4.1-present

Mongolian Folklore



Visiting Scholars
Alyne DELANEY

Associate Professor, Aalborg University (Denmark)

2015.10.1-2016.1.31

Cultural Anthropology



Publications

The language of the following books is basically in Japanese except showing the other language.

■ Northeast Asian Monograph Series

This commercially published series presents scholarly monographs in Northeast Asian regional studies aimed at specialists, general readers and university students.

9. Religion across borders: Rise of Evangelicals in the post-socialist Mongolia. Katsuhiko Takizawa. Tokyo: Shinsensha. March 2015.

10. Stalin and Xinjiang: 1931-1949. Kyosuke Terayama. Tokyo:

Shakaihyoronsha. March 2015.

11. History of the Japanese Islands linked to the world. Kenichiro Aratake ed. Osaka: Seibundo. February 2016.

12. The modern local history of Northeast Japan: To a history image rich from various viewpoints. Kenichiro Aratake ed. Tokyo: Iwatashoin. March 2016.

13. The "Religion/ Irreligion" Discourse in Modern Japanese Cultural Border Zone: Nation State, Scientific Research and Social Dynamics. Takashi Oikawa. Tokyo: Shinwasha. March 2016.

14. Qiaoxiang: Home of Overseas Chinese. Kodai Kawaguchi and Tsutomu Inazawa ed. March 2016. Otsu: Korosha. March 2016.



■ Northeast Asian Books

Northeast Asian Books are being published as a trial to introduce fundamental knowledge about nature, history, culture and society in Northeast Asia to general readers. They are the result of natural, social science, and humanities research on the environmental and societal problems.

5. Let's learn a world heritage: World cultural heritage of Japan. Nobuo Irumada, Yoshifumi Nakano and Kenichiro Aratake ed. Sendai: Tohoku University Press. December 2015.

■ Northeast Asian Studies

Northeast Asian Studies is a periodical academic journal for the purpose of contributing to the development of area studies and its related fields in Northeast Asia.

19. Northeast Asian Studies. February 2015

20. Northeast Asian Studies. February 2016

■ CNEAS Monograph Series

Research results of CNEAS joint research projects and individual projects, irregular publication (in house publications).

56. Illustrated Catalogue of the Chinese classical books in the Asano Collection, Hiroshima City Central Library. Akira Isobe ed. 2015.



■ CNEAS Reports

A series for such purposes as timely reports from symposiums, cataloguing references, and promotion of exchange with national and international researcher communities since 2010 (in house publication).

18. Voices from Siberia: the creation of the ethnographic photography exhibition and messages from the field to home. Hiroki Takakura and Yoshito Chiba ed. 2015.

19. World Heritages and Cultural Resource in Northeast Asia. Masahisa Segawa ed. 2015.

20. Materials for Traditional Mongolian Dictionaries of the Ching Dynasty in the 18th Century. Hitoshi Kuribayashi ed. 2015.



■ Researcher's Initiative Publication

1. The story of disaster experiences in the different country, March 11 for Korean people living in Northeast of Japan. Research Project of the verbatim record on Korean's experiences suffered in the Great East Japan Earthquake (the representative: Norio Akasaka) ed. Sendai: Araemishi. July 2015.



Letters

Adrian Borisov, Senior researcher
IHIPN SB RAS (Russia)

Success in the second joint conference in Ulan Bator (Mongolia)

I was fortunate to be visiting professor at the Center for Northeast Asian Studies, Tohoku University in the winter of 2012-2013. It was a very fruitful time for me. I exchanged scientific experience with my Japanese colleagues and learned a lot of new things there. I especially liked the system of science organization in the Center. Prof. M. Sato as director was very nice and he was very supportive towards my work. The staff also helped me a lot. In hindsight, I am very grateful to them for this. My trip would have been over, had Prof. H. Takakura not been my colleague and friend for a long time. I am glad that our cooperation continues. We could establish cooperation between Russia and Japan in the particular field of science, and nothing would give me more satisfaction. After a series of consultations, the current director of the Center, Prof. H. Oka offered me an opportunity to conduct joint scientific symposia. This year, we held the second conference in Ulan Bator (Mongolia) at the Institute of History and Archaeology of the Mongolian Academy

of Sciences. We greatly appreciate the work of our Mongolian colleagues, including the director, Prof. Chuluun, and colleagues from Inner Mongolia (China).

Consequently, at the last symposium, we found common ground in the understanding of basic historical problems in the history of Inner Asia in the seventeenth century. The history of the nomads in two empires, Russia and Qing, was particularly interesting from a comparative perspective. Turkic and Mongolian peoples of Inner Asia were similar in their nomadic way of life. Moreover, they had a specific system of political organization. Both empires have used a range of different technologies in order to integrate these people. The two empires are also interesting in their socio-cultural aspects. While the Russian empire had



Orthodox religion, the Qing Empire followed Buddhism. There are great prospects for further cooperation in the field of science. Our "Institute of Humanities and Indigenous Peoples of North of Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences" (IHIPN SB RAS) continues to conduct research in the field of history, ethnography, sociology, political science, and linguistics in Northeast Asian Russia. Ethnographers and sociologists, who are

also working with our Japanese colleagues, have achieved special successes. We have recently focused on the problems of social and political history with respect to Yakutia. The work on the three-volume "History of Yakutia" will be finished soon. Every year, we hold conferences, including at the international level. We would be glad to see Japanese historians among our permanent partners.

Letters

Tamara Esenova, Professor and Doctor
Kalmyk State University (Elista, Kalmyk Republic, Russia)

A deep impression on my life in Japan

I worked as a visiting professor at CNEAS Tohoku University from May 31 to September 15, 2001. I have studied the language situation in southern Russia on the example of the Republic of Kalmykia. Based on the results of the study, I have prepared the research paper 'Russian spoken language of the Kalmyks: cultural and linguistic aspect' which was published in the CNEAS Tohoku University journal and the manuscript 'The Russian language in Kalmykia' which was later published in Elista.

The time spent in Japan has left a deep impression on my life. First of all, I have learned that a scholar ranks highly in the Japanese society. On the first day, I was given a private office which provided a comfortable environment for efficient and fruitful work. On the same day, Prof. Katsuyoshi Yamada, the director of Center for Northeast Asian Studies presented the work of the Center and some issues its employees work on. On that day, I met Prof. Hitoshi Kuribayashi, Prof. Hiroki Oka who cared for me during my stay in Sendai and enriched my scientific sophistication.

Second of all, due to the communication with my Japanese colleagues I have got new ideas on the problems I have been focusing on. I have learned so much from my colleagues: to appreciate the working time, not to stop at what has been accomplished so far, to engage in scientific reflection

fundamentally and correctly. I was just amazed by the Japanese researchers' pace of work, how intensively and passionate they could be about their researches: they are devoted to their research in their offices even on weekends or if the workday is over.

On September 11, 2001, I was lucky to give a speech at the symposium dedicated to the history and culture of the Mongolian people and organized by Prof. Hiroki Oka. There I met Prof. Tanaka and Prof. Kaji, my colleagues, who came from Tokyo to participate in the work of the symposium. This particular professional and excellently organized symposium has become a standard of such an academic event.

I often think back to the communication with the colleagues from CNEAS Tohoku University. This short period of time had given so much to me. I am grateful to Dr. Masachika Shiotani, a great expert of Russia, and, of course, my friend, Prof. Kyosuke Terayama, thanks to him my unforgettable trip took place to magnificent Japan, far but close afterwards.



Editorial

Editorial postscript:

We are sending you the fourth volume of the CNEAS Bulletin. Through this bulletin, we would like to inform you of CNEAS's activities from 2015 to 2016. In the Bulletin, we received letters from Prof. Adrian Borisov (IHIPN SB RAS) and Prof. Tamara Esenova (Kalmyk State University). We are very glad to know our old friends' present situation and to communicate their message to our Center.

Recently, the new director was elected. The present director, Hiroki Oka, will vacate his position in the end of March 2017. He eagerly led our center for four years. Prof. Hiroki Takakura will be the next director of our Center from April 1, 2017. We expect that he will guide our center in new directions. We hope that you will be interested in the new endeavors undertaken by our center from next April onwards.

The CNEAS Bulletin is published once a year by the Center for Northeast Asian Studies, Tohoku University.

The bulletin promotes a continuing exchange of information with

former visiting scholars and others who related to the Northeast Asian Studies.

Website: http://www.cneas.tohoku.ac.jp/index_e.html

Editor: Masachika Shiotani

Editorial panel: Akio Goto, Hyeon-Jeong Kim, Mitsu Hatakeyama

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