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Focus

Old man Z

I still cannot forget the deep furrows between the old man's eyebrows. The man lives in a farming village in the west of Hainan Island dotted with rice paddies and sugarcane fields. This is Mr. Z, who was born in 1923. I first met him in 2002 while visiting Hainan Island for my fieldwork. I visited the island again the following year and decided to write down his life story. Most of my conversations with Mr. Z began in Japanese. When he exhausted his vocabulary and stumbled over words, he would turn to Cantonese, the language I was most familiar with among the several Chinese dialects he spoke.

How is it that an old man who lives in a secluded farming village on an island off the southern coast of China speaks Japanese? The man's life story is deeply embedded in the modern history of East Asia. Japan took note of the abundant natural resources of Hainan Island and advanced into this region before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. For this reason, Japan established Japanese-language schools on the island to train interpreters. Mr. Z was one of the students there. He was recognized for his high achievements at a local school at age 13 and sent to one of the Japanese schools to receive special training. As soon as Japanese troops advanced into Hainan Island in February 1939, Mr. Z was recruited as an interpreter by a squadron headquarters of the Japanese military established near the village.

While working for the Japanese military, Mr. Z was caught in



In a farming village in Hainan Island



The Nature in Hainan Island

crossfire with the Kuomintang Nationalist Army (KMT) and was badly injured, with his skull gouged. When the island came under KMT rule, and Communist Party rule after that, Mr. Z was regarded as a collaborator of the Japanese military. He had his political and economic privileges revoked, and became mired in poverty. During the Cultural Revolution, even his freedom of movement was restricted, and he had to notify the authorities every time he went into town. However, such hardships gradually eased after the introduction of China's reform and opening-up policies. By the time I saw him for an interview, Mr. Z was finally beginning to be able to live a peaceful life.

One can encounter many living witnesses to history like Mr. Z while walking through farming villages in China. Their life stories could easily be cited by those who want to advance a certain political agenda. Certainly, these episodes could be useful in denouncing Japan's imperialism, or in criticizing the Chinese Communist Party's pursuit of the Cultural Revolution. However, it is obvious that Mr. Z has been tossed about by the waves of political and military developments in history. The hardships he has been through are more than enough for any single individual to bear. We need to listen sincerely to what he and others have endured and make efforts to preserve their stories for future generations without politicizing them in any way.

(Masahisa Segawa)

Recent Events

The birth of sitting manners and *rei*

The Center for Northeast Asian Studies (CNEAS) has been hosting public lectures in Tokyo every May. This year, the speaker was Haruhiko Nishizawa, professor at Musashino University Faculty of Humanities. The event was held at 3 p.m. on Friday, May 26, at the Tokyo branch office of Tohoku University.

Professor Nishizawa is a well-known cultural anthropologist specializing in China. The title “cultural anthropologist” may conjure up the image of a fieldworker engaging in onsite research to study contemporary issues. However, Professor Nishizawa’s research method belongs to what is known as “historical anthropology,” a discipline that seeks to study the characteristics and universality of human cultures and societies, including historical circumstances and human behavior, by utilizing old documents.

The theme of this lecture –*zahou* (sitting manners) and *rei* (bowing to show respect to others)—has historical significance for this reason. In East Asia, including Japan, the act of kneeling on the floor, which is the basis of *rei*, emerged from the ancient Chinese *zahou* of sitting directly on the floor. The act was formalized as the Confucian style of *rei* became established, Professor Nishizawa explained, citing a variety of ancient sources, including relief images.

The Confucian style eventually spread to nearby lands, such as Japan, in the course of history. However, in China, the birthplace

of Confucianism, *zahou*, or the way to sit, was drastically transformed since the period of the Song Dynasty, with *heiza* (sitting on the floor) giving way to *isuz*a (sitting on a chair). As people began to

sit on a chair and behind a table on which they put food and various utensils for everyday use, the practice of *rei* was also transformed. People began to greet one another while standing, instead of kneeling on the floor.

While Japan adopted the Chinese practice of *rei*, the use of chairs and tables did not gain a foothold until the Meiji period or after World War II. In Japan, *heiza* was the norm. *Seiza* (sitting on one’s heels) and *agura* (sitting cross-legged) have been practiced on wooden floors or on *tatami* mats. For this reason, the basic form of *rei*, an act of kneeling on the floor to show respect, has been maintained only in Japan, even though it was originally developed in ancient China, according to Professor Nishizawa. A method of greeting in which people sit on their heels in a *seiza* style, and the act of *dogeza* (prostrating oneself on the floor) to express sincere apologies, both of which are traced to the rules of decorum of ancient China, have been maintained in Japan, along with the practice of *heiza*.

These physical acts thoroughly permeate people’s daily lives, as they are linked with social ranks, seniority, and the code of conduct through various rituals and social interactions. For this reason, they exert strong normative powers and constitute an important aspect of human culture. Even so, they are rarely stipulated in writing because of their very nature as physical movements, presenting many challenges for those pursuing this subject in a serious manner. However, Professor Nishizawa has managed to collect many documents from a variety of sources and provided a truly remarkable analysis.

In premodern times, Japan adopted and incorporated Chinese culture in a variety of ways. In that sense, certain historical layers of Japanese culture and society are based on none other than Chinese customs and practices. Therefore, understanding Chinese culture as the basis of Japanese culture, and as part of Japanese tradition, remains an essential theme. The lecture was a strong reminder of this fact. **(Masahisa Segawa)**



Lecture by Prof. Nishizawa

Recent Events

Tenth Katahira Festival 2017

Tohoku University’s Katahira Festival 2017 was held on Saturday, October 7, and Sunday, October 8, mainly at the university’s Katahira Campus. Katahira Festival is an open house for area residents sponsored every other year by research institutes and research centers attached to the university. The overall theme of the latest event was “Surprise! Discovery! Scientific Wonderland from Sendai”, with each organization showcasing its research activities and work. In the CNEAS project entitled “Northeast Asia Surprises You”, five research teams exhibited the results of their studies. In the event hall on the first floor of Sakura Hall, the Division of Geochemistry, represented by Professor Tatsuki Tsujimori and Associate Professor Naoto Hirano, entitled its display “Let’s Get to Know Various Types of Rocks”. The group displayed rock

samples and introduced various geoscience phenomena around the plate boundaries of the Japanese archipelago. Meanwhile, the theme of the Division of Regional Ecosystem Studies, represented by Professor Satoshi Chiba, was “Small Creatures of Northeast Asia and Their Great Diversity”. The team demonstrated, using collected samples, that there is great biodiversity in Northeast Asia. The Department of the Uehiro Tohoku Historical Materials Research, under the theme of “Let’s Try Writing Japanese Characters in Cursive: Learning about Characters of the Edo Period”, introduced the team’s efforts to preserve historical documents, establishing an area to let people write their own names in *kuzushiji*, a cursive form used in the Edo period. The Division of Natural Resources and Environmental Science, represented by Professor



The exhibition of specimen by Chiba Laboratory

currently in use. The team set up a booth to let people use the Advanced Land-mine Imaging System (ALIS) to spot simulated land-mines buried in sand. At the outdoor site in the central

Motoyuki Sato, under the theme of “The World Pioneered by Radio Science: Historical Ruins, Disaster Prevention, and Landmines”, introduced efforts to prevent or mitigate disasters with the use of radio radar technology by displaying the devices that are

square, Professor Hiroki Oka’s Division of Mongolian and Central Asian Studies assembled a Mongolian-style portable house called a ger under the theme of “Let’s Visit a Mongolian House! ”. There was a panel display featuring the history and culture of Mongolia, as well as a booth where visitors could try on Mongolian ethnic costumes. One program at the event consisted of a series of lectures under the theme of “Stories about Science: Wonders of Science in 30 Minutes”. From CNEAS, Professor Sato and Professor Oka delivered lectures entitled “The Wonders of Radar Investigations of Ruins—Radar Showed the Inside of Ancient Tombs” and “The Wonders of Mongolian Houses—Portable Homes of Nomadic People”, respectively. Katahira Festival 2017 proved to be a very popular event, attracting nearly 10,000 people. CNEAS and the outdoor event site each received about 2,700 visitors during the two-day event. **(Toshihiro Ueno)**

Recent Events

International exchange: Novosibirsk State University Japan-Asia Lectures

In 2008, CNEAS sent Professor Hiroki Oka (then vice director) and Professor Hiroki Takakura to the Institute of the Humanities at Russia’s Novosibirsk State University (NSU), with which Tohoku University has an inter-university academic exchange agreement. There, CNEAS exchanged a memorandum regarding the establishment of Japan-Asia lectures with Professor Leonid Panin, the head of the institute. For a five-year period starting 2009, frontline researchers engaging in Japan-related studies at Tohoku University and other institutions delivered lectures to students studying the Japanese language under Professor Elena Voytishkek, head of the Department of Oriental Studies at NSU. In recent years, this activity has been taken over by CNEAS as a program of Tohoku University’s Office of Japan-Russia Relations with financial support from the university president’s discretionary account. “Japan-Asia” lectures were created by October of last year, with 15 lecturers delivering 18 lectures on various topics, such as Japanese history, culture, arts, and movies, either in Japanese or in English. It has become routine for Russian students to make presentations on their graduation research during these courses and for visiting Japanese lecturers to make comments on these presentations. Russian students have a strong interest in Japan, and their language skills are outstanding. By the time undergraduate students become juniors and seniors, they can usually understand

almost all Japanese-language lectures without interpreters. For this fiscal year, Assistant Professor Yoichi Takahashi and Professor Hiroki Oka of CNEAS visited Russia November 7–10, 2017.

Assistant Professor Takahashi delivered a lecture entitled “Japanese History and Travel” in Japanese. Professor Oka’s lecture, delivered in English, was entitled “Beyond the Horizon of Manchu-Mongolia: Imperialist Japan’s Historical Vision of the North.” The exchange, which began in 2008, is highly regarded by NSU. So is the Japan-Russia Workshop, in which, since 2013, NSU instructors and students studying Japan and Asia have been invited for a research presentation conference conducted in English with instructors and students at Tohoku University. Researchers and graduate students can interact with one another through these activities. Such programs are expected to expand even further in the future. **(Hiroki Oka)**



In the Institute of the Humanities (From the left the second person, Prof. Voytishkek, Prof. Oka and Prof. Takahashi)

Recent Events

Report from Cambodia—thoughts on land-mine removal

I visited Cambodia in early February. The nation’s capital, Phnom Penh, is lined with high-rise buildings. By contrast, development is slow in Siem Reap. Siem Reap is a tourist destination known for the historic temple complex of Angkor Wat, but there are no high-rise buildings there. Open grass fields are a mere half-hour drive away. The test field of the Cambodian Mine Action Center (CMAC) is located about a one-hour drive east of Siem Reap, in an area surrounded by ranches. There we conducted an evaluation

test of the latest land-mine detector.

During this visit, I tested the performance of the latest land-mine detector, which, in addition to a metal detector, has Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) that allows for underground imaging. The new detector is smaller than previous models. It is also easier to use, reducing the burden on the operator.

I conducted an experiment to find simulated land-mines buried at the test site. These were mock anti-personnel mines and anti-tank



The scene of the experiment to find simulated land-mine

mines. There were also mock unexploded ordnances. Some were buried a mere five centimeters below the surface, while others were buried as deep as one meter below, so as to simulate the actual conditions. The metal detector performed well, and the radar image analysis confirmed the depth and the size of the land-mines.

Next to the test site was the Peace Museum of Mine Action, which was completed just last year. I was able to visit this museum as well. Many land-mines and cluster bombs were displayed, including eight

types of anti-personnel mines. The land-mines and unexploded ordnances were made in various countries, such as China, the former Soviet Union, and the United States.

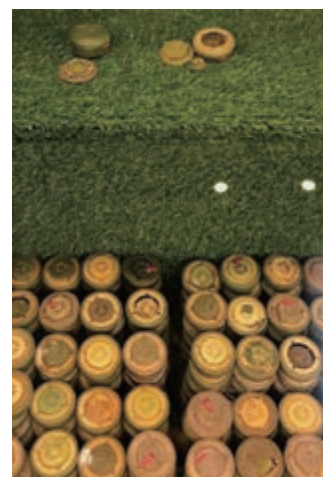
Outside the building, there were displays showing how the land-mines were planted. Some were buried in the ground, while others were placed in anthills. They are extremely dangerous, because children playing nearby could accidentally set them off. In the past, land-mines were buried in areas of Angkor Wat, and people could not enter there. Tourists no longer have to worry about these land-mines, since they have been removed from urban areas and

tourist destinations. However, there are still many land-mines left in areas slightly farther away. In particular, land-mines buried in farm fields create major obstacles in people's daily lives. CMAC is removing land-mines from such areas so that landowners will be able to start farming again. Many land-mines are being removed from populated areas, but land-mines and unexploded ordnances still remain a threat in the northern area bordering Thailand and throughout the southern part of the country.

The land-mine museum also displays photos of old neighborhoods prior to the war. They looked peaceful and beautiful. The original bridge in the photo was destroyed. But a new bridge has been built with assistance from Japan. I saw it when I traveled from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap. For many years, Japan has been assisting Cambodia in the removal of land-mines. In the section of the museum dedicated to equipment sent from Japan, there were land-mine detectors and heavy machinery used for land-mine removal.

My stay was brief, but experiencing current conditions in Cambodia has once again reminded me of the importance of my research.

(Kazutaka Kikuta)



The removed land-mines

Recent Events

“Jade”—the Origin and the Prehistoric Culture of Northeast Asia



The poster of public lecture

The CNEAS public lecture entitled “Jade”—the Origin and the Prehistoric Culture of NE Asia,” sponsored by the Japanese Association of Mineralogical Sciences (JAMS), the Japan Geochronology Network (jGNet), and the Tohoku University Museum, was held on February 18, 2018 in the Kawauchi Campus of Tohoku University. Nearly 90 people, including a professional Dutch archaeologist who specializes in the Japanese Jōmon culture, participated in the lecture. As always, the CNEAS public lecture reflected intellectual themes of

interdisciplinary studies of Northeast Asia.

The “Jade” lecture was organized into three themes: geological sciences, geoarcheology, and archeology. After a short speech to welcome the participants by CNEAS vice-director, Professor Satoshi Ciba, the following three speakers made their presentations.

1. Tatsuki Tsujimori (CNEAS / Department of Earth Sciences,

Tohoku University) *New geological insights into worldwide jadeitite (jadeite jade)*

2. Yoshiyuki Iizuka (Institute of Earth Sciences, Academia Sinica, Taiwan) *Mineralogical analyses of nephrite jade artifacts: New archaeological aspects*

3. Kaoru Aokoshima (Department of Historical Studies, Tohoku University) *Prehistoric stone culture during the late Ice Age: France, North America and Northeast Asia*

Jade (*yü*—玉 in China) is a term ascribed to two different materials. Jadeite jade (or jadeitite) consists predominantly of the pyroxene jadeite ($\text{NaAlSi}_2\text{O}_6$) and is hard jade (*ying yü*—硬玉 in China), while nephrite jade is tremolite-actinolite



From the left, Prof. Tsujimori, Dr. Iizuka and Prof. Akoshima

$[\text{Ca}_2(\text{Mg,Fe}^{2+})_5\text{Si}_8\text{O}_{22}(\text{OH})_2]$ and is soft jade (*ruan yu*—軟玉). Precious, as in the case of luminous green, jadeite jade is also known as *imperial jade* or *feitsui*—翡翠 in China and *hisui*—翡翠 in Japan. On account of its beauty and archeological interest, the two kinds of jade objects were a great collection target for archeologists and antiquarians. In the geological sciences, moreover, jade has not only been a subject of research interest in petrotectionics, geochronology, and geochemistry, among others, but current attention, especially for jadeite jade, reflects its significance with respect to the geochemical components of arc magmas in convergent plate boundaries where an oceanic plate dives under a continental plate.

The first lecture, by Professor Tsujimori, was a talk focusing on jadeite jade. Based on his experiences of science outreach, current knowledge on jadeite was introduced to the audience with

playful illustrations, photos, and videos. The second lecture, by Dr. Iizuka from Taiwan, was a presentation on nephrite jade. Dr. Iizuka explained clearly how the mineralogical characterization of nephrite artifact has brought about a breakthrough in archeology. The third lecture, by Professor Akoshima, was a noble archeology lecture on prehistoric stone cultures during the last glacial period. Impressive photos of some archeological sites demonstrated how to trace the ancient groups of people and their culture.

In the lecture hall, three large pieces of jadeite (total~40kg) from California, Guatemala, and Japan attracted the attention of many participants. Throughout the three lectures, all participants learned about jade as well as the importance of the interdisciplinary linkage between natural sciences and social sciences.

(Tatsuki Tsujimori)

Awards

Professor Motoyuki Sato wins Kiyasu Award at IEICE

At a general assembly of the Institute of Electronic, Information and Communication Engineers (IEICE) held on June 1, 2017, an article jointly authored by Professor Motoyuki Sato and Riafeni Karlina (then a student at the Graduate School of Environmental Studies) won a Kiyasu Award. The article, “Model-Based Compressive Sensing Applied to



Commendation ceremony (June 1, 2017)

Land-mine Detection by GPR,” was published in *IEICE Transactions on Electronics*, vol. E99.C (2016) no. 1, pp. 44–51. IEICE, which has about 30,000 members, is one of the largest organizations dedicated to studies of electrical engineering and information. The award was given because the article was regarded as the best of the 12 best papers awarded for this fiscal year. Zenichi Kiyasu, who also served as a professor at Tohoku University, is a pioneer of computer studies in Japan. This writer studied the basics of computer science as a student by reading Professor Kiyasu’s *Electric Circuit Theory*.

The article proposes a method of efficiently imaging land-mines using a compressive sensing algorithm for the Advanced Land-mine Imaging System (ALIS), a land-mine detection sensor developed in this laboratory. Ground-Penetrating-Radar (GPR) technology has long been regarded as an effective means of detecting land-mines. Tohoku University has developed ALIS, a handheld GPR sensor, and detected at least 80 land-mines in Cambodia.

(ALIS began to be fully implemented in Cambodia in October 2018.) (Motoyuki Sato)

The third young researchers’ ensemble workshop award at Tohoku University

Engaged area studies aimed at creating Ethio-tabi through Industry-academia-government cooperation with Africa

The purpose of this research is to understand how to create a culture of *Jika-tabi*: rubber-soled split-toe work footwear, so that African people who work barefoot will be able to work under better conditions.



Dr. Tanaka in Ethiopia

Marugo Company

Inc., a Japanese manufacturer, provided 30 pairs of *jika-tabi*. These were delivered to farmers in Woliso, in Ethiopia’s Oromiya state, the site of this research. The *jika-tabi*, manufactured in Woliso using local materials and technology, have been named “Ethio-tabi.” In order to make a work-footwear culture from Ethio-tabi, it is necessary to understand local footwear culture through interdisciplinary research. It is also necessary that fieldworkers, through a collaboration between industry and academia, try to create such products with an understanding of the needs of people in the region. The presentation also referred to the accumulation of the industry-academia collaboration projects undertaken by Marugo, possible future collaboration with the government, and a resolve to create Ethio-tabi as part of engaged area studies.

(Toshikazu Tanaka)

The third young researchers’ ensemble workshop award at Tohoku University

Cultural anthropological studies on the relationship between workers and residents of Hirono Town in Futaba District of Fukushima Prefecture

Hirono Town in Futaba District of Fukushima Prefecture is a rural town with a population of approximately 5,500 people (as of



Ms. Tachibana in Hirono town

2011). The town is home to Tepco's Hirono power station. The town has undergone a complete transformation since the Fukushima Dai-ichi reactor accident of March 11, 2011. Many workers—

about as many as the original residents—moved into this town. What does the presence of these workers mean? Interviews have revealed that some housewives in Hirono Town were scared of the

workers. I am conducting research to examine the circumstances under which such fears arise, as well as how people (including these workers) go about their daily lives, using the methodology of cultural anthropology.

To carry out participant observation, I worked part-time in Hirono town from August to October 2015 laying water-supply pipes. What I have learned from this experience is that how workers are viewed can vary depending on the viewer.

The goal of my research is to consider the relationship between the workers and the towns people to propose an appropriate level of distance between them and what must be done to achieve that distance. I will continue to search for an appropriate level of distance for their coexistence. **(Risa Tachibana)**

New Staffs and Visiting Scholars

Associate Professor **Alyne DELANEY**

2018.4.1 – present
Cultural Anthropology



Assistant Professor **Yu FUKUDA**

2018.4.1 - present
Sociology



Research Fellow **Sakura KORETSUNE**

2018.4.1 - present
Visual Arts



Visiting Scholars **Chin-Ho TSAI**

Associate Professor, National Dong Hwa University, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Studies (Taiwan)
2017.7.1 – 2017.8.31
Metamorphic Petrology



Visiting Scholars **Nelson BONIFACE**

Senior Lecturer, University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania)
2017.7.1 – 2017.9.29
Mineralogy



Visiting Scholars **FRIEDT Jean-Michel**

Associate Professor, Institute FEMTO ST, Time and Frequency Department (France)
2017.10.1 – 2017.12.28
Electronic Engineering



Visiting Scholars **Dmitry ZEDGENIZOV**

Professor, V.S. Soborev Institute of Geology and Mineralogy, Siberian Branch, Russian Academy of Sciences (Russia)
2018.1.5 – 2018.3.31
Geology



Visiting Scholars **Tamara LITVINENKO**

Senior Researcher, Institute of Geography, Russian Academy of Sciences (Russia)
2018.1.10 – 2018.3.31
Social and Economic Geography



Visiting Scholars **Otto HABECK**

Professor, University of Hamburg, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology (Germany)
2018.4.1- 2018.6.30
Social and 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.

20. Post-disaster Communities, Local Cultures and Ethnography: Towards the Development of Disaster Humanities. Hiroki Takakura and Mutsumi Yamaguchi ed. Tokyo: Shinsensha. January 2018.



■ 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.

7. Nature and Culture in Northeast Asia. Masachika Shiotani and Akio Goto ed. Sendai: Tohoku University Press. March 2018.



■ 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.

22. Northeast Asian Studies. February 2018

■ CNEAS Monograph Series

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

59. Monguor-Chinese Integrated Dictionary. Hitoshi Kuribayashi ed. 2016.

60. Written Mongolian Incises to The Dungsang Vocabulary and The New Shera-Yogur Vocabulary. Hitoshi Kuribayashi ed. 2017.

61. Integrated Dictionary of Written Oirat. Hitoshi Kuribayashi ed. 2017.

62. Mongolian Bible Translation: In the Context of the History of Religious Cultural Exchange. Katsuhiko Takizawa and Yutaka Shibayama ed. 2017.

63. Blanslaw Pilsudski's Sakhalin Ethnography: The Enchiw, Nivkh and Uilta around the beginning of the 20th century. Koichi Inoue translated, edited and annotated. Hiroki Takakura supervised. 2018.

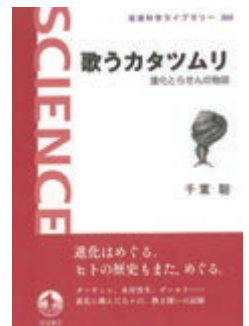
■ Researcher's Initiative Publication

1. The snail to sing – the story of evolution and spiral. Satoshi Chiba. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten. June 2017.

2. Global Warning and Human – Nature Dimension in Northern Eurasia. Tetsuya Hiyama and Hiroki Takakura. New York: Springer. August 2017.

3. The history and cultural ecology of Boreal Asia. Hiroki Takakura ed. Tokyo: Kokonshoin. March 2018.

4. Anthropological studies on transnational families and individuals. Masahisa Segawa ed. Tokyo: Kokonshoin. March 2018.



Letters

Joachim Otto HABECK, Professor.

Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology, Universität Hamburg (Germany)

Permafrost dynamics and land use in different parts of northern Eurasia

My cooperation with the Center for Northeast Asian Studies (CNEAS) started 15 years ago, when Professor Hiroki Takakura came as visitor to the Siberian Studies Center, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle (Germany) where I used to work previously. Since then, we have been working on different aspects of the pastoral economy in Central Yakutia and the sub-Arctic regions of Russia. In recent years, our research interests came to include the interaction of permafrost landscape dynamics and diverse forms of renewable resource use. My guest professorship at CNEAS (1 April to 30 June 2018) provided a welcome opportunity for intensifying this line of research. During my stay in Sendai, my focus was mainly on agricultural development (deforestation, drainage, irrigation) and its interaction with permafrost dynamics in Yakutia.

Visits to Mie University and Hokkaido University and participation in two scientific workshops gave me the possibility to discuss the above topics of research with a wider audience from both within Japan and abroad. Currently, with Avirmed Dashtseren (Mongolian Academy of Sciences) I am co-organising a workshop in Ulaanbaatar on permafrost landscape dynamics and



pastoral land use in Mongolia, to take place in March 2019. Among the participants are Tetsuya Hiyama (Nagoya University), Yoshihiro Iijima (Mie University), Mamoru Ishikawa (Hokkaido University) and Hiroki Takakura (Tōhoku University). The plan is to develop a research agenda with a regional focus on northern and northeastern Mongolia – a region where this topic has not been studied intensively yet.

One of topics of Professor Takakura's research team which has inspired me most is the study of disasters and their social and cultural consequences in different regions of the Pacific Rim; in addition, I have benefited very strongly from the MA students' seminar. Let me take this opportunity to pass my best regards and best wishes to all colleagues at CNEAS and my warmest thanks for a very inspiring time at Tōhoku University.

Letters

Aldo Tollini, Professor.

Ca' Foscari University, the faculty of Asian and Mediterranean African Studies (Italy)

Research on the origin of the Japanese language

I am a linguist engaged in teaching at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy. My field of study is the pre-modern Japanese language, which can be broadly categorized as wabuntai and kanbuntai, and the history of the Japanese language. The Tōhoku University and the Ca' Foscari University have an agreement that involves student exchange, collaboration between the teaching staff in the field of Japanese culture, and organizing conferences and other forms of cultural activities.

This summer, I was invited to the Center for Northeast Asian Studies (CNEAS) for two months, July and August, as a foreign research staff member. There, along with members of the CNEAS and of other departments, I conducted research activities, particularly on the origin of the Japanese language.

In my opinion, it is important to shed light on the linguistic relationship between Japanese and the other languages of Asia, in particular, those from the northeast region of the continent. Though the connection between Japanese and the languages spoken in this region is not distinctly clear, scholars assume that a genetic relationship is very likely and that, due to human migration, the languages spoken in this region

played a fundamental role in the development of Japanese.

The linguistic relationship, of course, implies cultural connections as well, and its study can help understand the history of the ancient people who had settled in that area and the mutual cultural influences.

It is also interesting to study the implications of the linguistic and cultural influences from Northeast

Asia and China merging in Japan. In fact, the current form of the Japanese language is, in all probability, an amalgam of two different linguistic flows from the continent.

I think that the CNEAS, due to its valuable resources, is an important center for the study of the influences that contributed to the development of the Japanese language and culture. Therefore, I hope that this kind of research will continue to be carried out at the CNEAS.



Editorial

Editorial postscript:

We are sending you the sixth volume of the CNEAS Bulletin. Through this bulletin, we would like to inform you of the activities of the CNEAS from 2017 to 2018. In the Bulletin, we received letters from Prof. Otto Habeck (Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology, Universität Hamburg) and Prof. Aldo Tollini (Ca' Foscari University, the faculty of Asian and Mediterranean African Studies). We are very pleased to know of our friend's present situations and to communicate their message to our Center.

In 2018, we were very surprised to see that US President Donald Trump and North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un met in June in Singapore. The meeting possibly signals the end of the Cold War in the Korean Peninsula. However, once the peace treaty between North and South Korea is concluded, the American army will withdraw from South Korea. This will drastically impact the political and economic situations in Northeast Asia. The year 2019 will prove to be an interesting year for researchers who engage in Northeast Asian studies.

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.

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Editor: Masachika Shiotani

Editorial panel: Shuichi Shikano, Hiroko Naito and Mitsu Hatakeyama

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