

NIHU (National Institutes for the Humanities) Area Studies Project for Northeast Asia

Theme for Tohoku University Environmental Anthropology Team:

International Networking for Environmental Anthropology of Northeast Asia 2016-2020

Purpose

Northeast Asia poses a unique challenge for anthropology in terms of the history of human adaptation to the harsh frigid-zone environment and the local peoples' relations to both ruled by historical empires and vigorous economic development. In spite of the clearly defined national borders dividing the area, an integrated understanding of the region is necessary from the linguistic and ethnographical viewpoints. This region, however, was once (and still is for some parts) ruled by a socialist system that rigidified state boundaries, making it difficult for social scientists from outside to study the area freely. The situation changed around the 1990s, but field research has been pursued separately by each state—Russia, Mongolia, and China. Field research and networking that transcends national boundaries is far from sufficient.

The purpose of this project is to share across national boundaries the results of anthropological research in Northeast Asia that have accumulated in each country. It will also try to lay the foundations for interaction and discussion among researchers in the region. In post-socialist Mongolia for example, there have been some cases in which Mongolian researchers interact with European and Japanese counterparts but rarely have any interaction with Russian or Chinese researchers. Our project aims to improve this situation and build an international anthropology network for Northeast Asia. It focuses on the perspective of the environment, specifically climate change and adaptation—with historical process taken into consideration—and on the local societies and cultural dynamics that relate to development of natural resources.

In the five-year period from 2016 through 2020, in cooperation with the National Institutes for the Humanities and related institutes, we plan to hold workshops, symposiums and various other events that will serve as opportunities for convergence of research and communication. These programs will nurture an international network of researchers focusing on Northeast Asian environmental anthropology pertaining to Russia, Mongolia, and China. At the same time, researchers will share what they consider to be the important topics for each of these countries and will identify through discussion the topics for international research that should receive priority.

Northeast Asia Area Studies has been pursued mainly from contemporary viewpoints oriented to international relations, security, and economic cooperation. This project will provide longer-term historical and cultural viewpoints for the advancement of research. Clarifying the role of anthropology focusing on cultural diversity in the

interdisciplinary field of Northeast Asian Studies, we will contribute to the creation of a regional image of peaceful coexistence.

Schedule

2016–2017 (1) Bilateral-interaction-type symposiums or workshops

- Interchange among scholars of environmental anthropology focusing on the Northeast Asian region through the cooperation of the research institutes concerned
- Identification of key researchers in Russia, Mongolia, and China
- Identification of key researchers in Northeast Asian environmental anthropology in Europe, the United States, and East Asia
- Training of young researchers

2018–2019 (2) Multilateral-interaction-type symposiums

- Production of collected essays based on the results of the first phase of the project
- Holding of multilateral-interaction-type symposiums in Russia, Mongolia, and China
- Training of young researchers

2020 Overview

- Establishment of research consortiums
- Production of collected essays based on the results of the second phase of the project

Related Organizations:

- National Institutes for the Humanities (NIHU) : <http://www-e.nihu.jp/e/>
- Center for Northeast Asian Studies, Tohoku University (CNEAS) :
http://www.cneas.tohoku.ac.jp/index_e.html
- Japanese HP: <http://www.cneas.tohoku.ac.jp/news/base/index.html>

Leader:

Hiroki Takakura	Professor	Center for Northeast Asian Studies, Tohoku University	Social Anthropology, Siberian Ethnography
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Members:

Name	Position	Affiliation	Specialty
Hiroki Oka	Professor	Center for Northeast Asian Studies, Tohoku University	Asian History, Mongolian History

Masachika Shiotani	Assistant Professor	Center for Northeast Asian Studies, Tohoku University	Russian Economic History
Toshikazu Tanaka	Research Fellow	Center for Northeast Asian Studies, Tohoku University	Ecological Anthropology
Yuka Oishi	Research Fellow	Center for Northeast Asian Studies, Tohoku University	Social Anthropology
Shuhei Uda	Associate Professor	National Museum of Ethnology	Environmental Folklore
Masanori Goto	Specially Appointed Assistant Professor	Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University	Cultural Anthropology
Hibi Watanabe	Associate Professor	The University of Tokyo	Cultural Anthropology
Yuichiro Fujioka	Lecturer	Kyushu University	Human Geography
Mari Kazato	Lecturer	Hokusei Gakuen University	Cultural Anthropology