



# OCCASIONAL REPORT No. 31

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### Tibetan Studies Today

#### A Family Affair: The Hoshi Family's Tibetan-Japanese Dictionary

**Izumi Hoshi**

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I am currently working on a Tibetan-Japanese dictionary. At the core of the editorial team are my mother, Michiyo, my father, Tatsuo, and me. My mother, a researcher of Tibetan, serves as editor-in-chief. My father, a company employee who can speak the language, provides invaluable assistance for all ends of the editorial operations, which often seem to be behind schedule. And then there is me. Though I joined the team later than my parents, I now occupy a central position, despite my limited knowledge. My parents and I often joke that the dictionary is a home industry. Come to think of it, our "industry" goes back nearly half a century. I would like to take this opportunity to describe how the Hoshi family became interested in the Tibetan language and got involved in the production of a Tibetan dictionary.

My parents first came into contact with Tibetan nearly 40 years ago. In fact, they first met at a Tibetan class held at Toyo Bunko, a library and research insti-

tute in Tokyo with a world-class collection of books on Asian history and culture. At the time, my father was a Russian major at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and a member of the school's alpine club. He enrolled in the course because he was interested in climbing the Himalayas. My mother was also a student at the university, majoring in Mongolian. She decided to take the class because of her interest in the distinctive properties and functions of the Tibetan language. After the course ended, my parents spent their days at Toyo Bunko—my mother to continue her research and my father to assist Professor Tokan Tada, who worked at Toyo Bunko. In time, they became friends and ultimately got married.

Right after the wedding, my father went to India in the hope of realizing his dream of climbing the Himalayan Mountains, and he subsequently lived there for four years. He spent his first three years working for a branch of a Japanese trade company and learning Tibetan and his last year living in a refugee camp for Tibetans. During that time my mother remained in Japan, continuing her research activities as a graduate student. Their wedding thus marked the start of a long separation. However, my mother did spend three months in India with my father, and I was the outcome of their visit together.

My father ultimately returned to Japan without climbing the Himalayas and got a job with the Japan International Cooperation Agency. My mother con-

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tinued her research, and my father devoted himself to providing full-scale support for her work. My mother has already written a number of volumes on Tibetan grammar and a textbook, as well as a dictionary. There is no doubt in my mind that these projects would have never been completed had it not been for my father.

### The Grammar Book

I will now describe the process of compiling a grammar book and dictionary that took shape in my family. In 1981 Toyo Bunko organized a seminar on Tibetan and asked my mother to speak as a lecturer. It also decided to produce a textbook on Tibetan grammar to be used for the course, which my mother agreed to produce. Even though she had no experience writing grammar books, she took the bold step of doing away with some traditional notions of Tibetan grammar and introducing novel concepts and radical new materials into the volume.

The draft consisted of photocopies of handwritten materials, and the job of producing a final, neat copy fell upon my father. My mother is a woman who brims with ideas but has trouble giving shape to them. My father was able to complement her strengths. It was thanks to him that my mother's epoch-making ideas on grammar were so clearly expressed.

The process took the following form: Initially, my mother jotted down all of the thoughts swirling around in her head. My father then read what she had written, trying to make sense of it and rewriting it into a more easily understood form. My mother checked this, pointing out where her ideas had not been conveyed fully and marking the passages that she wanted my father to rewrite. This give-and-take was repeated countless times. My memory of the project is not very good, since I was still a child at the time. I do recall, however, that they argued a lot and often worked through the night. The grammar book was truly a product of their constant struggle together.

My father expressed pleasure with the resulting volume, praising its crisp, easy style. Borne of the joint efforts of my mother and father, the grammar book enabled students to experience firsthand the allure of Tibetan grammar, something that other volumes had failed to do.

### A Husband and Wife Team

Talk of the dictionary first came up in 1986. My mother received a request from a publishing company to compile a basic volume with 3,000 or so entries, and she set about working on it.

Since she initially was asked to compile a slim volume, she imagined that all she would have to do was select which words should be included and find appropriate Japanese equivalents for them. It was at this point that my father came up with an important proposal, one that basically set the direction for subsequent dictionaries compiled by the Hoshi family. My father's idea was to approach the project from the standpoint of somebody who knew nothing about the language and include as many word combinations as possible. The publishing company realized that it had a formula for an original work and adopted my father's suggestion.

The first stage in the actual production was writing down all the Tibetan words my mother had gathered in the course of her research. Loose-leaf paper was used in place of index cards, and all data was handwritten on to these pages. Each piece of loose-leaf paper contained a single entry, along with its Tibetan spelling, pronunciation, meaning, and part of speech. Below this, possible combinations of the entry and other words were listed.

Hoping to get more data, my mother spent her days querying Tibetan researchers who were visiting Toyo Bunko. The number of words mounted, and in time she had more than 10,000 main entries and tens of thousands of subentries. The reams of loose-leaf paper remain even today and are covered with many sentences written on small pieces of paper that have been glued on, often several times over, reflecting the many times that the editorial policy changed along the way. The job of producing neat copies and cutting and pasting was done by my father, who spent his evenings and weekends working on it.

At the beginning of the 1990s, my family finally purchased a computer. Just around that time, a system for inputting Tibetan had been devised, and we immediately decided to computerize the compilation process. At the time I was a graduate student and knew virtually nothing about computers, so I began to read up on the subject and consult with people who were more knowledgeable. Though I was supposed to help out inputting the data when the time came, I always found an excuse for not doing so. Ultimately, my parents did most of the work.

### My Introduction to Tibetan

My interest in the world of Tibetan emerged naturally as a result of my upbringing by a mother and father both absorbed in the language and continued as I went first to college and then to graduate school.

My decision to continue on to graduate school and study Tibetan was simply the outcome of the fascination I felt for my mother's view of Tibetan grammar. At the same time, I also felt sure that it was a path that would open up many opportunities to make a meaningful contribution.

Such was the start of my own research. And as I delved deeper into my studies, an interesting world opened up to me. My own passion was the semantics of predicative expressions, which my mother treated as the basis of the grammar book. And just as the exchanges between my mother and father paved the way for the creation of a highly original grammar book, now unending discussions between my mother and I provided the impetus for progress in my own research. There could not have been a better environment for a graduate student.

### Constructing a Database

After submitting my doctoral thesis and procuring a post in the Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, I became a member of the dictionary's editorial team. Though the time had finally come for me to enter the fray, by coincidence my father was transferred to Nairobi in Kenya and my mother decided to join him there for three years. Naturally, she took the dictionary project with her to Nairobi. Though we initially planned to continue work on the dictionary separately in Japan and Nairobi, I felt uprooted and lost in my small office.

Just at the time I was weighted down by such worries, I was invited to a party attended by people interested in Tibet and there became acquainted with Fumihiro Chiba. Chiba told me that he hoped to see the publication of a Tibetan dictionary at an early date and volunteered to help out. I invited him to my office to talk about the project. In the course of our discussions he told me that he had experience constructing databases for his firm's clients and thought he could create one for the dictionary. Confronted with the daunting task of organizing some 100,000 words, I leaped at his offer.

It was in this way that we set about constructing a full-fledged database for the dictionary. Though we had input all the data, we had not given much thought to the structure at the time and could thus not make use of database-creation software. For this reason, we took care to consider the necessary structure for a dictionary, do away with unnecessary parts, and add on new sections that we deemed important. Three years have passed since that time, and we have

made considerable progress in creating a Tibetan dictionary database. Presently, we are working by trial and error on creating a system that would allow us to print out material and create proofs directly from the database.

### The Hoshi Family Dictionary

I will close here with a brief description of what sets our dictionary apart from others. When compiling a foreign language dictionary, most editorial teams select entries, collect examples, and define the word while making reference to existing volumes. My family, however, chose not to follow this pattern and instead adhered strictly to the following rules: First, to limit the entries to words used in ordinary conversation; second, to convey with the utmost accuracy the findings of our research; and finally, to clearly illustrate the meaning of each entry through a large number of example collocations. Because of our insistence on these points, the dictionary will not be indispensable for reading classic Tibetan works. But it will be significantly useful to people who want to communicate with Tibetan people in their own language. Even though Tibetan is considered an ancient language, its foundation is the ordinary conversations of the people, and we are confident that our dictionary has sufficient use as a supplementary resource when reading the classics.

The compilation of a Tibetan dictionary is a "home industry" that is not really profitable, and the problem of procuring sufficient funds was with us constantly. In 1999 we were awarded a Toyota Foundation grant, and this assistance helped us to get within one step of the dictionary's completion.

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### The Dege Printing House and the Local People Who Support It: Hand Printing the Buddhist Canon from Woodblocks

Jun'ichi Nakanishi  
*Filmmaker*

The Tibetan cultural region, spread out over a plateau surrounded by rugged, unapproachable mountains, is even today, with all our advances in transport and communications, worthy of being called one of the "unknown regions" of the world. There people lead lives based on both nomadic and agricultural lifestyles amid a nature both beautiful and severe. The rich spiritual world of the people of Tibet, nurtured by their remarkable coexistence with

nature and their traditional culture, continues to fascinate people all over the world.

### The Kham Region of Eastern Tibet, Richly Blessed by Nature

The Tibetan Plateau, sometimes referred to as the "roof of the world," is broadly divided into three regions on the basis of geographic and cultural differences: the U-Tsang region, centered on Lhasa in the center of the plateau; the Amdo region, centered on China's Qinghai Province in the north; and the Kham region, spreading from the west of Sichuan Province (in the east of the plateau) to the eastern part of the Tibet Autonomous Region. While studying at university in Sichuan Province, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to make several visits to the Kham region, which at that time still had severe entry restrictions.

For most people the mention of Tibet will bring to mind images of dry prairies and grazing herds of yaks and flocks of sheep. True, there are people in the central and northwest parts of the plateau who lead a nomadic existence grazing livestock on grassland at an average altitude of around 13,000 feet above sea level. But the Kham region in the east, no less part of the Tibetan cultural region, lies in the fold-mountain area at the eastern edge of the Himalayas, where the mountains are between 15,000 and 16,500 feet high. People here live mainly in valleys at altitudes between 10,500 and 12,000 feet. The villages scattered on the slopes stretching from the grassland of the river basins to the mountainsides are surrounded by rich forests—the area is not dry grassland. In the Kham region with its favorable natural conditions, the people lead a life that is mainly agricultural and only secondarily one of nomadic grazing—they grow wheat and barley, and each household has livestock. In the course of my several visits to the region, I learned that, like in central Tibet, the Buddhist temples form the core of the culture, with Buddhism as the cultural base. But at the same time, cultural life takes on many different forms with rich local features added to traditional art and culture.

### Encounter: The Start of My Research

When you visit a Buddhist temple in the Kham region, before the main hall there is a set of the Tibetan *tripitaka*—the complete set of the scriptures of Tibetan Buddhism. Around villages and on mountaintops or other sacred places where deities are thought to alight, you find prayer flags called *dar Ico*, fluttering in the wind. Both the sutras and the



A view of the Dege printing house.

flags are writings and appear to have been printed in black ink from woodblocks. Where are these blocks made? When I asked the local people, the unanimous reply was "Dege." Today Dege lies in Dege County in Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in the most out-of-the-way part of Sichuan Province. Once there was a great kingdom in Kham, and Dege was a town in which were concentrated the art and culture of the whole of eastern Tibet.

I wanted to visit Dege, but it was not something that could be done easily. For one thing, Kham was out of bounds for foreigners. On top of that, the location was so remote and the road leading to it so bad that it would take a full five days to get there by car even in favorable conditions from Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province. In fact, it was only after years of preparation that my wish to visit Dege was realized in the summer of 1996, 10 years after finishing my studies in Sichuan.

Traditional Tibetan printing is carried on in Dege in the printing house, called *parkhang* in Tibetan. Mr. Byang dGa' (pronounced as Shong ga), who was deputy head of the printing house's administration office and in charge of the study and maintenance of its collections, gave me a guided tour. The first thing that struck me was the huge quantity of hand-carved woodblocks (some 270,000) stacked close together, which were used to print the Tibetan Buddhist canon. What surprised me more was the way the printing was carried out by pairs of workers, taking the blocks down from their shelves. There were also blocks for printing images on prayer flags, and I was able to observe this operation too. Before my visit, I had imagined a printing factory, but in fact what I found was something very rare—a large-scale hand-printing studio. The Dege Printing House is still functioning as the only printing workshop producing the Tibetan Buddhist scriptures by a traditional

method. It is part of Asia's Buddhist heritage, indeed part of the world's cultural heritage.

At the beginning of my visit I thought it would be enough just to look around the inside of the building, but once I had seen it I wanted to get an outline knowledge of the actual printing system. As a result I spent one whole day at Mr. Byang dGa's home interviewing him about the various stages of the *parkhang* printing process. In the course of the interview I learned of the institute's financial problems and Mr. Byang dGa' asked for cooperation in preserving the printing house. After my return to Japan, I came to the conclusion that I should publicize the institute's plight in detail. At the time, however, foreigners still needed police permission to stay there, and we were only allowed to stay for three days. Consequently it was unfortunately impossible for me to make the necessary preparations, nor did I have the necessary time, to study in any depth the various problems confronting the printing house. I left Dege that year with the promise to Mr. Byang dGa' and his staff that I would visit Dege again.

Six months after my return to Japan, I published the results of my interview at Dege Printing House in the National Museum of Ethnology's *Kikan Minzokugaku* ("Ethnology Quarterly"). However, there was almost no reaction from researchers in the field of Tibetan studies. The Dege Printing House is considered one of the three great *parkhang* of Tibetan Buddhism. As the other two *parkhang* together with their woodblocks had already disappeared during China's Cultural Revolution, Dege's was of great value as the only extant *parkhang*. It appears that while importance is attached in Tibetan philological studies to the texts produced at the Dege Printing House, there is little interest in studying the methods by which these texts were printed.

I came to believe strongly that, if this woodblock printing studio that has transmitted Tibet's traditional technology to the present was to be preserved, full-fledged research had to be started and a record made of the present state of the printing house. Somebody had to put forward some suggestions. I consulted Takumi Ikeda, a specialist in Tibetan dialectology and at the time an associate professor at Rikkyo University. He advised me to apply for an individual-project grant from the Toyota

Foundation. I had no experience either of Tibetan studies or of cultural anthropology, but I applied for a grant for my project—to visit Dege as a journalist and report on the situation at the printing house.

### A Second Chance to Conduct a Survey

That is how I was able to visit Dege a second time in the summer of 1998, this time together with Associate Professor Ikeda and with the aid of the Toyota Foundation. I was able to meet Mr. Byang dGa', the deputy head of the administration office, once more, and was able to conduct a basic survey of the printing process and of the way the *parkhang* was managed.

Professor Ikeda carried out a study of the Dege dialect with a view to establishing the historical process by which Dege became the cultural center of the Kham region and the Kham dialect of Tibetan established itself in eastern Tibet as the regional common language. Although Dege was an important dialect, which had functioned as the regional common language for several centuries before Chinese spread throughout the area, it declined rapidly in modern times, so descriptive materials were insufficient and audio recordings were not available. We attempted a joint study making the best use of our respective specialties. We asked one of the local people to act as a model of Dege pronunciation, and starting with the parts of the body, we got our source to pronounce the vernacular names of everyday objects, including household items. While Professor Ikeda recorded the words on a Data Audio Tape, I filmed the objects denoted by the words with a digital video camera. It was a survey of limited scope consisting only of producing recordings of pronunciation and compiling vocabulary materials, but we were able to produce highly useful primary data of the living language by making a visual record of the objects referred to.

I had been away from Dege only two years, but as our survey progressed I could see clearly the changes that had taken place in that short space of time and were still taking place. The work of the printing house, which had been difficult enough two years earlier, was now even more difficult. To begin with, the number of people working on the hand printing of the sutras had decreased. Because the printing house was no longer able to employ



A wood carver at work on a woodblock.

the craftsmen to carve new woodblocks or repair existing ones, the system had changed. The *parkhang* now had to have this work done outside on a contract basis, and the carvers worked in their own homes. A part of the printing house needed repairs as the result of earthquake damage, but nothing had been done. The tasks of maintaining woodblocks that had become worn after years of printing and cataloguing woodblocks in the *parkhang*'s collection were not making much headway due to shortages of funds and staff. According to the person responsible for administration of the collection, even looking after the existing collection of woodblocks was a source of worry.

One thing that became clear as a result of our study is that the Dege Printing House, viewed as a cultural facility in the modern sense, has multiple functions. Inasmuch as it houses a collection of woodblocks of the Buddhist canon, it is a library. As a repository of *tanka*, the colorful traditional Buddhist scroll paintings, and of woodblocks of pictures, the *parkhang* is an art museum. The building as a whole, with the traditional printing system revived, may be regarded as a kind of living museum. At the same time, as an institution that trains craftsmen in the art of carving woodblocks, it performs the function of a center for the transmission of the techniques of traditional crafts. The *parkhang* is much more than just a printing workshop—it plays an important role as the center of the region's traditional culture. It also makes a pivotal contribution to the spread of linguistic culture in the region, because the sutras and other printed objects produced by the *parkhang* are purchased by local monks and taken to their respective temples, where they are used as texts for the teaching of Buddhist culture.

#### Toward the Permanent Preservation of the Printing System

In the spring of 1999, the year following our survey, we gathered together a number of young researchers in various fields who were interested in Tibet, and started a study group on the culture of the Kham region. This mini-symposium was the first opportunity to make public the video material we had recorded in Dege showing the current situation of its printing house. During the informal discussions after the sym-



Woodblocks featuring pictures.

posium, it was suggested that Japanese researchers should cooperate with local scholars in undertaking further research. It was gratifying to have the significance of our research recognized. Soon after this, with the help of interested members of the study group, a support group was formed to take forward the plan for a comprehensive survey of the Dege Printing House. The Japanese study group has been in regular contact with the administration office in Dege, various suggestions have been made, and exchanges of views have taken place.

I think that we now have to tackle the task of ensuring the permanent continued existence of both the "hardware" and "software" of the printing house. To do this, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth survey of the traditional hand-carved woodblock printing system itself, centered on the *parkhang*, and also its relationship with the regional society and traditional culture, within which the printing system was developed and by which it was supported. The staff of the administration office of the Dege Printing House and the members of the Japanese support group share the perception that the important task at present is, on the basis of such a survey, to provide support so that the local people can themselves permanently preserve and continue to operate the printing system as an independent operation.

In order to start the practical phase of permanently preserving the *parkhang* printing system, the people of Dege are hoping for a comprehensive survey to start at the earliest opportunity.

### Frontline Research on the Indochinese Peninsula

#### The National Archives of Cambodia

Peter Arfanis  
Consultant

Inside the old French colonial-era building that houses the National Archives of Cambodia, a group of university students presents a bouquet of flowers

and a basket of fruit to the NAC staff in a small ceremony. To the outsider it may not seem such a remarkable event—just a group of students thankful for the staff's work locating, retrieving, and photocopying material so that they could complete their end-of-year history projects. But for the Archives staff and for those students, it means something much more. For the staff it was a realization that their work means something to others, that what they are doing is important for present and future generations, and that they should feel proud of it. For the students it is a reminder that not all books and documents were destroyed during the Khmer Rouge period and that there is in Cambodia an accessible and reliable source of information providing a snapshot of a past they know little about.

To put this into context, one must envisage the condition of the NAC and the National Library of Cambodia in the early 1990s. During the Khmer Rouge period (1975–1979) the National Archives and Library of Cambodia were thrown into complete disarray. Books and files were pushed off shelves, catalogue cards were used to light fires, descriptions of the holdings were lost forever. A more tragic and serious loss was that of the staff: only one of the original staff came back to work in the immediate post-Khmer Rouge period. In the 1980s attempts were made to put the National Archives back into some order, but it was a difficult task. Cambodia was isolated by the West and what little help it received came from Vietnam and the Soviet Union, countries that were not as affluent as those in the West and that were facing many problems of their own. The staff of the National Archives made attempts to arrange documents and to type up inventories, but they lacked the expertise, funds, and support to carry out these tasks effectively. Without guidance on what the role of archives should be or how they should be managed, most of their work was either incomplete or inaccurate.

By 1995 the National Archives possessed only two typewriters; it had no electricity or running water; animals wandered in out of the building; and birds built nests among the documents. Staff morale was low, absenteeism high. There was no incentive or prestige associated with working for the Archives. Only a few researchers came each year to use the Archives' holdings. Archives staff, who had little idea of what those holdings were, only had jumbled lists of hundreds of pages to provide the patrons with and these in no way reflected the actually very rich collection.

With the arrival of the United Nations Transitional

Authority in 1991, huge amounts of development aid began pouring into Cambodia, but none of it was targeted at or reached the NAC. Nevertheless, in a climate of rapid change and development the NAC had to grow on its own and contribute what it could to the rebuilding of the country. Policymakers needed answers to questions about laws and frontiers, NGOs wanted to know about everything from agriculture to health and architecture. With the reopening and development of universities, historical questions were being asked. All needed answers, and for many the answers lay within the holdings of the NAC.

There is a popularly accepted myth that the Khmer Rouge destroyed all the books and documents in the NAC and the National Library. In fact, documents outside of the Library and Archives were indeed lost, but the staff of the NAC eventually realized that they had in their possession almost all the archives of the French colonial period, all surviving the depredations of the Khmer Rouge period. In 1995 I joined the NAC as a volunteer archivist, and the NAC was able, with funds from the Australian Embassy in Phnom Penh, to begin a project of institutional strengthening and capacity-building. Over the first three years the staff carried out the difficult process of sorting through thousands of files, books, newspapers, journals, posters and photographs. Most of the material had not seen the light of day for decades and was covered in dust. We established a computer database based on the original French Archives classification system devised in 1918, and began work on arranging, describing, and conserving the thousands of files that made up the French protectorate-era collection. Staff were given training in conservation methods, use of computers, and English language. The pace of work continued steadily thanks to further assistance provided to the NAC from the French Cultural Center, the Australian Embassy, and the Swiss Embassy.

The Toyota Foundation began supporting the project to develop the NAC in 1998. From then on, the development of the NAC accelerated, since the funding from the Toyota Foundation was substantial enough for the NAC to cover all areas of its activities. The support was also offered over a period of three years. This is extremely important in the development context, since it allows an institution to plan ahead confidently and to work towards longer term goals knowing that it has the support to accomplish them. Through this support the NAC was able to make strong links with other related institutions outside of Cambodia, to raise its profile nationally, and

to make people aware of the holdings of the NAC and the work of its staff.

During the last few years over 30,000 files from the French period have been entered into a computerized database. A CD-ROM of this database is now available for interested institutions. Hundreds of maps and plans have been repaired and encapsulated in archival-quality inert plastic enclosures. Over a thousand photographs have been catalogued and placed in acid-free albums. Forgotten posters have been unfolded, flattened and stored in large cabinets. Thousands of pages of old Khmer-language newspapers have been repaired and are now available for researchers to consult without fear of the paper crumbling. Researchers can now search a computer database for the thousands of magazines, journals, and other publications that have survived Cambodia's turbulent past.

Through the continued support of the Toyota Foundation the NAC was able to achieve a goal that would have been unthinkable five years ago. With a recent additional grant from the Japan Foundation Asia Center, the NAC has established a microfilm unit to preserve documents from its collection and those of other institutions in Cambodia on film.

However all this would mean very little if people did not actually use the Archives. Initially, only foreign visitors made substantial use of the NAC's holdings. The staff initiated a number of campaigns (e.g. through newspaper articles and publishing brochures in the Khmer language) to raise awareness of the NAC among the general population. The result is that the number of Cambodians using the archives has risen dramatically. Through well-constructed catalogues and searchable computer databases, researchers can now easily find materials of interest to them; this has surprised and excited local scholars. With the recent improvements in the NAC future Cambodian scholars will have free access to a rich source of primary source material that is useful for interpreting their past from their point of view, rather than having to rely on secondary, mostly Western sources.

The NAC still has a lot of work to do. The Royal Government of Cambodia is producing new documents every day that should in the future find their way to the NAC. Documents from the late 1970s, however, still sit in deplorable conditions in various ministries, since there are still no laws to protect the public documents nor guidelines on how government documents should be kept. The NAC is working towards helping the nation's lawmakers and bureaucrats to deal with these issues.

But, for now, the once familiar sound of birds singing in the Archives has been replaced by the steady hum of the photocopy machine and the sounds of excited voices of students discussing news from the past. The NAC staff have been instilled with a greater sense of purpose than ever before.

*Peter Arfanis is an Australian archivist who has been working as a consultant to the National Archives of Cambodia since 1995.*

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## Researchers of Ethnic Tai Groups Come Together

Shiro Honda  
Program Officer

An international conference on "The History and Literature of Tai Ethnic Groups" was held on March 22 and 23, 2001, in the ancient former Lanna Thai capital of Chiang Mai, in northern Thailand, with 22 researchers from China, France, Germany, Japan, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, and the United States giving presentations. I attended the conference and would like to share my observations.

The main speakers at the conference were local researchers living in remote inland regions of the Indochinese Peninsula, such as northern Thailand, Laos, the Xishuangbanna (Sipsong Panna in Thai) region of Yunnan Province in China, and the Myanmar state of Shan. All of them are involved in preserving and collecting old manuscripts written on palm leaves or the bark of paper mulberry and researching local history and literature. Unfortunately, it is difficult for them to conduct mutual exchanges because of the barriers posed by language, transportation, and national borders. And they also have limited opportunities for presenting their own views at conventional international academic meetings because of a relative lack of interest in the field.

The Toyota Foundation's association with researchers in Chiang Mai dates back to 1978, when it provided assistance for a project to survey palm-leaf manuscript copies in Lannathai, northern Thailand, and store them on microfilm. Since then, it has had the privilege of knowing researchers in Vientiane, Shan, and other places. In the course of discussions with Saraswadee Ongsakul, a historian at Chiang Mai University, the Toyota Foundation decided to make use of the network that had grown among local researchers and create a venue where they could



assemble. Such was the origin of the conference. Hoping to encourage open discussions, scholars from France, Germany, Japan, the United States, and other countries were invited to attend. Nevertheless, Thai was made the official language in consideration of the principal role played by the local researchers.

When preparations actually started in the fall of 2000, organizers were confronted with one problem after another. The conference's secretariat was set up in Chiang Mai University. Chiang Mai is only about 300 kilometers from Vientiane, Yangon (Rangoon), and Sipsong Panna, far closer than it is to the Thai capital, Bangkok. However, it is extremely difficult to make contacts with these cities. Communication lines between Tokyo and Chiang Mai were far better. Electronic mail could be sent between these two cities, enabling the immediate transmission of documents and messages necessary for the conference. The only viable means of communication between Chiang Mai and Vientiane or Sipsong Panna was facsimile. And in the case of Yangon, faxes were not permitted for certain reasons, and international telephone services and airmail parcels were the only reliable means. Ironically, phone and mail services between Tokyo and Chiang Mai were more dependable and often cheaper. It took just a few days for documents sent by airmail from Chiang Mai to reach Tokyo but up to two weeks for them to arrive in Yangon or Vientiane.

We became acutely aware that these snags in the flow of information were an impediment to contacts among researchers of local studies. Thanks wholly to the dedicated efforts of Professor Saraswadee, Yoshiyuki Masuhara, a graduate student at Chiang Mai University, and the rest of the secretariat, it was possible to break down these barriers and bring researchers from various regions together in one place. I felt a deep sense of gratitude for Professor Saraswadee and Masuhara when I saw the researchers scheduled to give presentations assembled together in one place on the first day of the conference.

Knowing virtually nothing about Southeast Asian studies and unable to speak Thai, I am not qualified to comment on the contents of the seminars. Those who are interested should refer to the proceedings put together by Professor Saraswadee. Being able to meet with researchers from Vientiane, Yangon, Sipsong Panna, and other places with close links to the Toyota Foundation gave me a sense of fulfillment beyond my wildest expectations.

In the final session of the conference, Dr. Sompong Witayasakpan of Chiang Mai University summa-

rized what had taken place over the past two days. He stressed the importance of the work performed by local researchers collecting and preserving traditional documents and undertaking research on the basis of those documents. He also pointed out that such efforts could play a role in promoting local culture—something that is easily overlooked in countries such as Thailand, China, and Myanmar, where nation-building efforts are concentrated on capital cities—and that a network that bypassed the capital and directly linked researchers in different countries needed to be built. This is exactly the perspective that the Toyota Foundation has cultivated in the course of supporting the work of local researchers active across the Indochinese Peninsula and is perhaps the most precious legacy of the scholars with whom the Toyota Foundation has been associated over the course of the past quarter century.

Many of the speakers at the conference have chosen remote, outlying regions of Thailand, Myanmar, Yunnan Province in China, or Laos as their field of study. It is therefore difficult for them to produce a major theory that enthralls Southeast Asian studies experts or initiate cultural preservation projects that attract worldwide attention. In other words, the real significance of their "unrefined" work, as reported at the conference, can only be understood if we turn our gaze to ordinary citizens who live in these areas. For nearly a quarter century, the Toyota Foundation has been blessed with the opportunity of forging close ties with researchers like these and helping them to conduct their vital work. If it had sought to encourage only the most fashionable debates and research by "professional" researchers in developed countries, it would surely never have been able to set its gaze on ordinary people. Though my association with Southeast Asian studies projects ended with the conclusion of the conference, I look forward to seeing what path the Toyota Foundation takes with local studies researchers over the next quarter century.

### Trends in Category A Research Grant Applications

Ryoko Kida

*Assistant Program Officer*

An analysis of the 538 applications received in fiscal 2000 was conducted in time for the start of the appli-

cation solicitation process for fiscal 2001 research grants. The purpose of the analysis was to uncover application and selection trends in Category A (individual project) grants. The proposed projects were broken down according to methodology, area targeted by the research, and theme, and a comparison was made of which types of applications were chosen and which were not. The number of applications received was enormous, and great variety could be seen in regard to methodology, targeted area, and theme, making accurate classifications difficult. Despite the inadequacies of the analysis, the results revealed a number of trends, which I will describe below.

### Methodology

Many project proposals employed methodologies that fell outside the realm of existing disciplines, such as sociology, economics, and anthropology, and defied classification, either lying on the borderline of a number of different disciplines or located somewhere between research and practice. Projects that could not be classified according to existing academic methodologies but held the promise of producing something original were categorized as "chaotic," and statistics for them were compiled accordingly. Of the 538 applications, 45 were deemed to be "chaotic," making it the largest category after sociology. Meanwhile, of the 42 applications selected to receive a grant, 16 were "chaotic," making it the largest category with 38% of the total. The following are two examples of "chaotic" projects: One, based on ecological surveys, sought to elucidate the relationship between local residents' values and the natural environment using anthropological methods and formulate environmental preservation measures. Another aimed to clarify the transnational connections that develop between people as Okinawan dance troupes at U.S. bases in Okinawa and Hawaii travel and perform, with the researcher herself being among the subjects of the study by traveling and dancing with the troupes.

### Targeted Areas

Project proposals that included fieldwork were divided according to the region targeted. Projects that did not involve fieldwork were classified as "laboratory or office." Though the latter numbered highest among the total applications, almost none were awarded grants.

Historical research centering on document surveys is often assumed to fall within the realm of re-

search that takes place in an office. But in most of the proposals that were awarded grants, researchers were to personally collect primary resources and conduct surveys at historical locations. Such projects were not classified as "laboratory or office" research but as fieldwork, and they were thus divided according to the targeted region. In another application, a researcher at a museum sought to find a new arrangement for museum exhibitions by conducting surveys in museums. In this case, the field targeted for research was deemed to be the museum itself and was therefore classified as "miscellaneous."

### Themes

There was great divergence among the themes of project applications. The most common themes were gender, immigrants, minorities, civil society, and resource management, indicating that a substantial number of researchers had devoted themselves to practical matters. Among the applications that were selected, the largest number—seven—fell within the realm of resource management, a category that covers research on the use and preservation of natural resources by communities. By contrast, gender was the most common theme among the applications overall, with 26.

In summary, the projects that were most likely to be awarded grants were those that sought to find a resolution to current problems based on field surveys and those that aimed to define new research methods in the process of solving such a problem. In the future, the Toyota Foundation will continue to monitor and deepen understanding of trends in research by young researchers.

### Recent Publications Based on Foundation-Supported Research

*Transnational Japan: Popular Culture Connecting Asia.* Koichi Iwabuchi. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, Publishers, 2001.

I once investigated how Japanese popular culture has permeated areas like Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand. At that time I lived in Manila. It must have been about six or seven years ago, because it was the period when trendy Japanese TV dramas like *Tokyo Love Story* were sweeping Southeast Asia

via the Hong Kong-based satellite channel Star TV. I had been making inquiries with people in the Japanese media, journalists, a producer at a Hong Kong record company, and a Singaporean researcher. Just then I felt the shadow of another researcher. By coincidence, he also happened to be interested in the spread of Japanese popular culture to East and Southeast Asia and was apparently engaged in researching a variety of aspects of this phenomenon. I was just wondering what this person was like when one day I received a phone call from him. It turned out to be the author of this book, Koichi Iwabuchi.

If I remember rightly, at that time Iwabuchi was involved in media research at a graduate school in Australia. A tall, active man, as I talked directly with him face to face I was surprised by his exceptional logic and investigative ability and the clarity of his explanations. I took my hat off to what I realized were the true hallmarks of a professional field worker. Iwabuchi had experience working as a producer for a commercial TV channel, and this background, along with his great ability to absorb information and tremendous talent for networking, gave him something extra that set him apart from more pure-bred academics. As time went by, Iwabuchi was awarded a Toyota Foundation Research Grant, and I spoke to him regularly by phone, even though he lived in Australia. He was engaged in field work, hopping nimbly from place to place all over East and Southeast Asia. This book is the result of that work.

Centered on popular culture, which is hardly regarded as an orthodox field of study, it seeks to illuminate a cross-border cultural phenomenon in East and Southeast Asia. Iwabuchi does not neglect to cast a critical eye over the political and economic implications of the spread of popular culture. It is a minor point, but the book also features a surprisingly eye-catching cover, considering Iwanami Shoten is a publisher of mostly serious, academic works. An English version of the book is due to be published in the near future by Duke University Press.

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*Migration, Family, and Ethnicity of China's Korean Minority.* Mamoru Sasaki and Fang Zhen-Zhu, eds. Tokyo: Toho-Shoten Co., Ltd., 2001.

In northeastern China, where the country meets the borders of North Korea and Russia, is the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture. In the Manchukuo

period the area was called Kando Province and was the base for the activities of anti-Japanese partisans. Nowadays, this autonomous region is home to about half of China's 2 million ethnic Koreans. Many of them are displaced persons who migrated to uncultivated land in the area after fleeing war or natural disasters on the Korean Peninsula. The book focuses on how their experiences of living through a complex history squeezed between the Chinese continent and the Korean Peninsula have influenced the shaping of their identity and the family relations and networks they have built up amid repeated migrations.

In order to shed light on the migrations, family networks, and ethnicity of China's Korean minority, the authors spent one year in the region conducting oral surveys.

The first part of the book is a collection of essays based on the findings of investigations conducted by Chinese and Japanese researchers on the ground. The lifestyle of the "Chinese" ethnic Koreans is unlike that of the people of North and South Korea, and discovering their lifestyle offers readers both a new perspective on China's status as a multiethnic state and a chance to view the history of East Asia as seen from the periphery. The second part is a collection of materials, including detailed records of the oral surveys and the family histories based on them. The work is packed with maps of the area and photographs, which are a great help to the reader in understanding the story of the people of Yanbian.

The Toyota Foundation supported the research on which this work is based through a 1996 Research Grant and provided a Research Report Grant to facilitate the publication of the book.

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*The Last Days of the Koreans in Japan.* Daekyun Chung. Tokyo: Bungeishunju Ltd., 2001.

Daekyun Chung, the author of this book and a Korean residing in Japan, received support from the Toyota Foundation in 1991. A reexamination of the application that Chung submitted at that time shows that his career has been a very unusual one for a scholar in Japan. After graduating from university in his mid twenties and obtaining a master's degree in ethnic studies in the United States, he went to South Korea and taught Japanese at several provincial universities. At the time of his application, he was an assistant professor in the Department of Language and Literature at Keimyung University in Taegu, South

Korea. Researchers with this kind of resume are rare in mainstream Japanese academia.

The methodology used in this study is an extremely commonplace one, consisting of taking excerpts from notes and other writings and offering interpretations of them. University students who have studied sociology or communication theory use this methodology in their graduation theses. However, Chung's ability to comprehend the deeper meanings of these excerpts and his narrative skill in drawing out the stories of the various people involved are sometimes brilliant. He most likely would have been unable to cultivate these abilities without the experiences of meeting so many different kinds of people and the opportunities for reflecting on his own brand of academic research that he gained through his travels in the United States and South Korea. This is hands-on scholarship, developed over a long period of time without regard to university degrees, results, or the other constraints of academia. Chung's own questions about how he should live his life underpin his wanderings and his search for his own brand of scholarship.

We can expect the content of this book to give rise to controversy. Just as Chung's individual history lies behind his point of view, those who have grown up amid different cultural climates and historical legacies will have different perspectives, and there will undoubtedly be arguments based on these differences. I hope that the controversies surrounding this book will prove useful as the Koreans living in Japan, with their diverse histories, go about creating various paths enabling them to live as they see fit.

### Message from the Editor

Readers may have noticed a change in the editorial policy of the *Occasional Report*. Starting this issue, we have added a number of special feature articles. We would like to hear what our readers think of this change.

The first feature of this issue brings together articles on humanities research in the region encompassing Tibet. The author of the first article—"A Family Affair"—Izumi Hoshi, is a young researcher who has followed in her parents' footsteps and devoted herself to Tibetan studies. The article conveys not only the passion of Hoshi and her parents for Ti-

betan studies but also how learning is handed down to the next generation.

The Tibetan region is home to a complex cultural web, in which the highly refined native Tibetan civilization maintained its own identity despite lying at the confluence of the Indian and Chinese civilizations. The rich culture of the region is described in "The Dege Printing House and the Local People Who Support It," an article by Jun'ichi Nakanishi on a woodblock print workshop where Tibetan Buddhist scriptures are printed. A filmmaker as well as an explorer, Nakanishi can be regarded as part of a group that includes Ekai Kawaguchi, Tokan Tada, and Bunkyo Aoki, who built the foundations for Tibetan studies in Japan.

The second feature deals with news on scholarly activities on the Indochinese Peninsula. The National Archives of Cambodia, which are located in the capital city of Phnom Penh, have been the target of Toyota Foundation grants since 1998 for restoration work. The archives fell into ruin under the Pol Pot regime and the subsequent civil war. Archivist Peter Arfanis, who has played a central role in the difficult task of restoration, describes the progress so far.

The Toyota Foundation has long been committed to assisting traditional manuscript surveys by local researchers on the Indochinese Peninsula. In March these researchers came together in Chiang Mai to report on their activities at an international conference on "The History and Literature of Tai Ethnic Groups." On a personal note, this conference represented my final assignment in the Southeast Asian programs.

We also feature an article covering trends in applications for individual project grants in fiscal 2000. We hope as a whole these articles convey to readers a snapshot of the work the Toyota Foundation is currently involved in. (Shiro Honda)

The Toyota Foundation welcomes responses from readers of the *Occasional Report*. Comments and questions should be addressed to the International Division, The Toyota Foundation, Shinjuku Mitsui Building 37F, 2-1-1 Nishi-Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 163-0437, Japan. The articles in the *Occasional Report* reflect the authors' opinions and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Foundation.

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