



OCCASIONAL REPORT No. 33

THE TOYOTA FOUNDATION

July 2002

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At the Forefront of Northeast Asian Studies

Revival of the Ethnic Korean "Home" in the Russian Far East

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When the perestroika reforms began in the Soviet Union, and particularly when the Russian economy was liberalized after the end of the Cold War, Primorsky Krai—the maritime region of the Russian Far East—again became a focus of attention in East Asia. It had first been in the limelight during the period of active population movements and contacts, starting when Japan and Korea came to have borders with a European country as a result of Imperial Russia's advance into the Far East, and continuing through the Russo-Japanese war to the Siberian intervention in 1918. As Primorsky Krai became increasingly sovietized and inward looking, it shifted out of Japanese memories. For Koreans in Korea, the forced migrations of 1937 meant the loss of their "compatriots in Russia" and Primorsky Krai suffered the same fate, falling into oblivion.

Those forced to migrate—the Koreans living in Russia—also forgot about Primorsky Krai. It was in 1989 that the memory of their Russian home began to return to them. This was the year when the Central

Committee of the Soviet Communist Party adopted the resolution "Concerning the Problem of Nationalities at the Present Time." This resolution publicly recognized the fact of the Koreans' deportation. By that time, however, the *Koryo Saram* (as ethnic Koreans in Russia were known) had already lost their national language and were scattered across Central Asia, far from where they had lived before 1937, Primorsky Krai. But the Korean-language newspaper *Lenin Kichi* (the present *Koryo Ilbo*), which had been published without a break since before the migration, broke its long silence and began to assert the injustice of the forced migration. Encouraged by these events, some of the *Koryo Saram* have returned to Primorsky Krai, the homeland of their forebears.

For the *Koryo Saram* of Central Asia, "returning" means going back not to the Korean Peninsula but to Primorsky Krai—the Russian Far East. For them, this "Far East" is the home they can return to and where they can claim the right of residence. Many *Koryo Saram* are at present returning to Primorsky Krai, but their lives there are by no means stable. In spite of this, "push" factors, such as internal conflicts and the linguistic nationalism that arose in many parts of Central Asia following the collapse of the Soviet Union, seem to have combined with "pull" factors, such as memories and a longing for an autonomous region to guarantee their revival, causing them to leave behind their third homeland and the place to which they had become accustomed, Central Asia. As the nationalism that erupted in the process of na-

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tion building has calmed, the flow of returnees has slowed; but it has not stopped entirely.

Thus Koreans are once more gathering in Primorsky Krai, but they are heterogeneous Koreans with differing identities. They include people returning from locations in Central Asia to which they had been forced to migrate, others who had stayed on in Sakhalin after World War II, ethnic Koreans from the adjoining Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in China, and North Korean laborers, not to mention investors and aid organizations from South Korea. This makes for a collection of ethnic Koreans of various nationalities who speak various languages and are products of various cultures.

I spent the period from November 2 to 29, 2001, in Primorsky Krai and was able to observe how these ethnic Korean returnees, at the mercy of the times and ideology, are reviving their "homeland." Ussuriisk (110 kilometers north of Vladivostok), where the largest number of Koreans in Primorsky Krai now live, is the center of the Korean community. It is also home to organizations supporting Korean migration back to the region, such as the Primorsky Krai Fund for Korean Revival and the Association for National Cultural Autonomy of Russian Koreans, as well as agricultural enterprises and religious and aid organizations from South Korea. Just a week before my arrival in Ussuriisk the Education and Cultural Center had been opened with the cooperation of local Korean associations and South Korean aid organizations. The center teaches local residents the Korean language and computing skills. Here I would like to look at the revival of national culture being promoted by such organizations and the cooperative relations among them. I shall make a frank appraisal also of the conflicts that arise due to their differing viewpoints. And after looking at the community's mode of existence in a multi-tiered space, I shall examine its significance as a Korean network in East Asia. By this means I hope to present a picture of how the *Koryo Saram* are striving to revive their homeland.

Rebirth of a Community

Many people felt an urge to return to their homeland when the Resolution Concerning the Rehabilitation of Russian Koreans was passed by the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation on April 1, 1993, a resolution that resulted in the granting of the right to return. But with the Russian economy stagnating, hardly any practical measures were taken to help the returning Koreans settle down and lead stable lives. Some 30,000 Koreans are said to have returned to

Primorsky Krai to date. But this is the official figure based on the number of people who have obtained Russian citizenship or registered Primorsky Krai as their place of residence. It is thought that in reality there are more than twice that number, because many of those who come to Primorsky Krai are anxious about their livelihoods in the new locality and stay there as foreign nationals, without abandoning their Central Asian citizenships.

As migration from Central Asia increased, Korean associations were formed in Primorsky Krai. In 1993 the Primorsky Krai Fund for Korean Revival was founded as an alliance of such associations in the maritime region. The fund is active mainly in the town of Ussuriisk and helps those Koreans who migrate into the region without means of supporting themselves to settle down, as well as keeping a register of Korean residents in the region. It has also been publishing a bilingual newspaper under the title *Won Don* in Russian and Korean. (In February 2001 *Won Don* split from the fund.) Another organization, the Association for National Cultural Autonomy of Russian Koreans, is active in advancing Korean rights and welfare and promoting cultural revival. The Arirang Dance Ensemble operates under the wing of the ANCARK. This group, which is led by North Korean teachers and performs folk dances anywhere where *Koryo Saram* live, is very popular with the Korean community. It boasts a high artistic level and has been invited to perform at dance festivals in North Korea, Yanbian, and South Korea. Such organizations play an important role in promoting the cohesion of the Korean community in Primorsky Krai.

South Korean aid has been a major factor in the activities of these organizations. In 1995, the chairman of the Kohap Group, which had come to Primorsky Krai when migration took on full-fledged proportions, donated the "Primorsky Krai Fund for Korean Revival Hall" to Ussuriisk. Subsequently, the Construction Association of Korea started its activities, repairing residences and supporting agriculture, which developed into its "friendship village" and "friendship farm" projects. An agricultural group called the Korean Rural Restoration Society is building farms as part of efforts to help establish Koreans in agriculture in the region. The former chairman of the Primorsky Krai Fund for Korean Revival, Kim Telmir, has traveled to South Korea to explain the plight of Koreans in Primorsky Krai and appeal for support.

The Korean Sharing Movement is a particularly active South Korean grass-roots nongovernmental organization and enjoys the trust of the Korean com-

munity in Primorsky Krai. It undertakes aid activities in areas closely connected to people's daily lives while maintaining the bonds between South Korea and the expatriate Korean community. It also extends aid to North Koreans, assists Chinese Koreans who have been lured to Primorsky Krai by Russian tricksters, and aids refugees from North Korea. The KSM teamed up with the Saemaul movement in October 2001 to open the Education and Cultural Center, which is accessible not only to Koreans but also to other local residents and has attracted interest with its IT-training programs and Korean-language classes. There are also cases—like that of the Korean association in Partizansk—where ethnic Koreans have built community halls through their own efforts, unaided by outside organizations.

Settlement Villages

Korean return migration from Central Asia to Primorsky Krai has now been underway for a decade. Quite a few of those who returned in the early stages have been able to build up a stable means of livelihood by securing traders' licenses in the Chinese markets on the outskirts of towns or through successful agricultural or business ventures. Their children, born in Primorsky Krai, are growing up. And many of the more recent migrants have come at the invitation of those who came in the early stages.

At the same time, a significant number of people who have arrived during the past four or five years have to endure lives of hardship. Those who had no close acquaintances or relatives in Primorsky Krai and so had to rely for accommodation and work on disused army barracks and agricultural land provided by the regional government lead particularly wretched lives. These are the residents of the so-called settlement villages.

The settlement villages consist of army barracks and land provided under an edict issued by the governor of Primorsky Krai, one of the measures aimed at rehabilitating and compensating returnees. The Primorsky Krai Fund for Korean Revival attempted to settle Koreans principally in these settlement villages. But between the time when the decision to transfer the barracks was made and the time when they were actually handed over, the barracks were looted by the local populace and their repair required a vast amount of money.

The management of six out of the seven settlement villages provided—Kremovo, Popovka, Platonovka, Razdolnoe, Novonezhino, and Orekhovo—was entrusted to the fund. People without means of support

had no alternative but to live in the settlement villages, which had poor amenities, no heating, and were sometimes even without electricity or water. The Construction Association of Korea, the Korean Rural Restoration Society, and South Korean private organizations have been providing relief in the form of volunteer activities and funds and materials for those in need. However, because the funds needed to improve a particular facility have not been available in time, the state of the villages has not improved, and more and more people are moving out of them. In fact, the former residents of the Platonovka settlement village are currently living in a nearby kindergarten that they have rented, while those in the Popovka facility have abandoned the barracks that were refurbished by student volunteers from South Korea and moved to an adjacent town.

The settlement villages have received support in the form of the various relief activities undertaken by the Korean Sharing Movement and the Korean Rural Restoration Society. The "bonds" program being carried out by the KSM is designed to establish bonds between *Koryo Saram*, Chinese Koreans (*Chaioxianzu*), and refugees seeking food, on the one hand; and organizations or individuals in South Korea, on the other. South Korean families taking part in the scheme help their "bond partner" in Primorsky Krai every month by donating minimum living expenses of 500 rubles (about US\$12.50). In 2000, 160 households received this support, mainly in the resettlement villages. The Korean Rural Restoration Society also provides volunteers for the settlement villages and sends food and other supplies to tide the residents over during the winter. The KSM employs a local doctor to carry out regular medical checks on the settlement-village residents and also provides medicines.

Although not all migrants from Central Asia pass through the settlement villages, the villages are the main conduit for aid operations. There are several important reasons for this. One is that the villages are symbols of the reparations to ethnic Koreans that are officially recognized by the Primorsky Krai government. Another is that it is preferable for ethnic Koreans to be engaged in agriculture rather than to be concentrated in towns. Channeling relief through the villages makes them bases of ethnic Koreans, and having the immense area of agricultural land of Primorsky Krai in Korean hands is a way of securing future food supplies for the Korean Peninsula. However, there was virtually no harvest in 1999 (because of drought) or in 2000 (because of floods), a further

factor that has contributed to people leaving the settlement villages.

The South Korean Agricultural Presence

The significance for the Korean Peninsula of having a possible source of food in Primorsky Krai is evidenced not only by the efforts of South Korean organizations to maintain the settlement villages but also by the presence of South Korean agribusiness in the region. There are currently 11 South Korean enterprises with agricultural operations in Primorsky Krai, including the Construction Association of Korea and the National Council of the Saemaul Undong movement. The common perception, however, is that up to now their efforts have failed to achieve their goals. Many of these enterprises, which began to branch into Primorsky Krai in the mid-1990s, came to the region for the laudable purposes of securing a source of food supplies, providing food support for North Korea, and supporting the settlement of ethnic Koreans, but also because they were attracted by the region's vast expanse of agricultural land.

Out of their experience of failure, the groups set up the Council of Organizations Operating in Primorsky Krai with a view to exchanging know-how and information, avoiding duplication of research, minimizing the need for Korean enterprises wishing to enter the region to start off using trial and error, and cooperating to provide support for expatriate Koreans. A notable feature of the council is that the scope of its activity is not limited to business matters but extends also to the systematic facilitation of aid activities for ethnic Koreans. In terms of organization, too, the council is broad-based. It is divided into an agriculture section and an ethnic section, and participating in the latter are various ethnic Korean aid organizations such as the Korean Sharing Movement and the Aid the Koryo People Movement (a sub-organization of the Korean Rural Restoration Society); research organizations such as the Institution of Overseas Korean Affairs and the National Episcopal Committee for the Reconciliation of Korean People; and religious groups. With this cooperative arrangement in place, the Primorsky Krai Pilot Farm has been set up in order to work out a model for enterprises that come to Primorsky Krai in the future.

As can be seen from the active involvement of various Korean groups, the Korean agricultural presence in Primorsky Krai, exemplified by the council and the pilot farm, results from an ethnic-oriented approach spanning aid for ethnic Koreans and the acquisition of a possible future source of food. It is

surely this approach that sustains the continued agricultural efforts in Primorsky Krai in spite of repeated failures. Viewed realistically, low productivity, disadvantageous distribution conditions, and other factors mean that—despite low production costs—farming in Primorsky Krai is not very competitive in price terms. It therefore does not have much export potential. Some farm produce grown in Primorsky Krai is in fact being sent to North Korea as food aid. Thus in the present situation, where Chinese and other foreign produce is being purchased and used for North Korean food aid, Primorsky Krai has a role to play as a stable and low-cost source for food aid. The regional government is also eager for agricultural investment from South Korea as a way of reviving Primorsky Krai's stagnating agricultural sector.

A Language Reviving

The level of everyday use of Korean by ethnic Koreans in Russia is extremely low. Indeed it is said that the *Koryo Saram* are the only ethnic group in Russia to have lost their national language. At the same time, quite a few people in their sixties or older can speak Korean, and the number of young people learning the language is growing. The reason for this is that many universities in the Russian Far East traditionally had a Korean department, and the presence of South Korean companies in the region has aroused both interest in and demand for the language. Ussuriisk State Pedagogical Institute and six other universities currently provide Korean courses, as well as 16 public schools. Apart from regular educational institutions, schools attached to various organizations and associations also teach the language. In addition, the Korean Education Center in Vladivostok offers Korean-language courses. Not all the students availing themselves of these courses are ethnic Koreans; they include many Russian students, too. At present, about one third of the 267 students at the Higher College of Korean Studies of the Far Eastern National University are Koreans. The number of ethnic Korean students in the Korean-language department at Ussuriisk State Pedagogical Institute is also growing; they now account for half of the first-year students. The department conducts exchanges with the Department of Russian Language and Literature of Daejeon University in South Korea.

Although over half of Primorsky Krai's ethnic Koreans live in Ussuriisk, apart from the university—and in contrast to Vladivostok—the town has so far not had an institution that provides systematic teaching of Korean. With the passing of the Federal Law on

National Cultural Autonomy on June 5, 1996, it became possible to set up national-autonomy organizations, national schools, and national-culture institutions. The Association for National Cultural Autonomy of Russian Koreans has been supporting dance ensembles and taekwon do and running Korean-language classes. But it encountered various problems in connection with the language classes because of a lack of teaching materials and instructors. Against this background, the Education and Cultural Center opened in 2001 to give ordinary citizens the opportunity to study Korean. The center is run on a membership basis. It is open not only to ethnic Koreans but also to other local residents and runs Korean and computer classes, as well as providing a library and even a karaoke facility. The center is a joint venture by the Primorsky Krai Fund for Korean Revival and the ANCARK. In practice the National Council of the Saemaul Undong movement and the Korean Sharing Movement play a joint leading role, contributing the capital and operating costs. Attracted by the monthly membership fee of 100 rubles (about US\$2.50) for computer and Korean classes, members have been growing in number since the center opened. Considering that the cost of one hour's access at the Internet cafe in Ussuriisk is 30 rubles (US\$0.75), the membership fee is insignificant and soon pays for itself. Registered members numbered 140 at the beginning. Of the 96 people taking Korean classes, 55 were ethnic Koreans and 41 Russian, while 38 of the 66 people taking computer classes were Korean and 28 Russian.

One factor in the revival of the use of Korean that must not be overlooked is the influx of ethnic Koreans from China's three northeastern provinces. Many people from China are currently in Primorsky Krai for business or farming purposes or in search of work, and many of these are ethnic Koreans. At the Chinese market on the outskirts of Ussuriisk one can hear Russian, Chinese, and Korean flying back and forth. Ethnic Koreans from Russia and China communicate with each other mainly in Korean. At the Chinese market I was able to meet old ladies who had come from Sakhalin or North Korea before the Korean War. I enjoyed the kimchi pickles that the ladies were

selling and the Yanbian cold noodles served in the eating places run by Chinese Koreans. One can also enjoy grilled skewered mutton there. Of course this delicacy can be found in Korea, and nowadays even in Tokyo's Shinjuku and Ueno districts. The dialect of Korean spoken by the Russian Koreans is quite similar to that of the Chinese Koreans, so they have little difficulty in communicating. In fact *Koryo Saram* say that it is easier for them to communicate with Chinese Koreans than with South Koreans. It seems likely that the presence of these Chinese ethnic Koreans is a significant factor in the resurgence of the national language among Russian Koreans.

Cooperation and Discord: A Multinational Community

The situation of the multinational Korean community reflected in the scene at Chinese markets in places like Ussuriisk and Artem has recently attracted the attention of the South Korean media. It has been idealized as a kind of experiment in how the Korean Peninsula might be after unification. That is to say, Primorsky Krai has been presented as a place where South Koreans, Chinese Koreans, Russian Koreans, and North Koreans cooperate. The presence of Russian Koreans was instrumental in the migration of Chinese Koreans and South Koreans to Primorsky Krai. There are cases like the Arirang Farm, where Chinese and Russian Koreans are cooperating in managing a successful farm. But one cannot ignore the fact there are also hostilities and conflicts caused by the fact that the nationality aspect of the multinational Korean community has been brought out into the open; these must be overcome in order to achieve cooperation.

Many South Korean entrepreneurs operating in Primorsky Krai say that they do not trust *Koryo Saram*. Some even say they prefer to employ Russians because they work harder than *Koryo Saram*. Organizations like the Primorsky Krai Fund for Korean Revival have also been criticized. It has been claimed that although a great deal of South Korean money has gone to the *Koryo Saram* community, little has changed as the funds have been pocketed by a few cronies. At the same time, the *Koryo Saram*



Women selling kimchi at a market in the suburbs of Ussuriisk.

side also harbors mistrust, accusing South Korean businesses of cozying up to the *Koryo Saram* community when there is money to be made, but abandoning it once they have established connections with the regional government.

The distrust between the *Koryo Saram* and South Koreans—exacerbated by the opaque way in which the fund managed its finances; embezzlement by the fund's middle managers; the haphazard aid policy of the aid organizations and agricultural enterprises; and power struggles—eventually exposed a serious difference of opinion in regard to the “friendship village.” The Construction Association of Korea had been proceeding with housing repairs, farming assistance, and other *Koryo Saram* aid projects since 1998. The village is a housing estate built by the association in Mikhailovka, Primorsky Krai, as a collective dwelling for *Koryo Saram* returning to the region from 2000 onwards. At the end of 2001 the village was formally opened, albeit on a much smaller scale than originally planned, but there was a difference of opinion between the builder and the fund concerning the method of allocating the dwellings. The dispute created a stir throughout the *Koryo Saram* community.

Of course, such splits are the exception, not the rule, in Primorsky Krai's multinational Korean community as a whole. In point of fact, the presence of the *Koryo Saram* was a significant factor in both the migration of Chinese Koreans to Primorsky Krai and the setting up of operations there by South Korean enterprises. Although some people say that ordinary *Koryo Saram* are not suitable to be used as interpreters, in conditions where administration was inefficient and social controls were strict the *Koryo Saram* played an important role. And even though South Korean entrepreneurs express distrust of *Koryo Saram*, in practice they are an indispensable source of employees. The role of *Koryo Saram* middle managers is said to have been essential for the 20 or so South Korean apparel factories in Primorsky Krai, the only sector considered to have been successful. As I have already described, South Korean aid to the *Koryo Saram* has sustained their basic livelihoods as they settled down after returning to the region, and has extended to the cultural sphere in such activities as the teaching of Korean. It cannot be denied that South Korean economic development and the South Korean presence in Primorsky Krai have been influential in raising the social status of the *Koryo Saram*.

A People Without a History Regain Their Rights

The history of the *Koryo Saram* stops in 1937, the year

of their forced migration. During a meal with influential members of the *Koryo Saram* community, the current chairman of the Primorsky Krai Fund for Korean Revival, Evgeny Kan, criticized former chairman Kim Telmir, who had vigorously pursued the project to promote the return to the region, saying that his historical perception was overly fixated on the forced migration of 1937. Maybe this showed that a new national movement is needed now that 10 years have passed since the start of the return to the region. The changeover from Kim Telmir, a revolutionary's son, to the current chairman, who has risen to a position of influence in Primorsky Krai by dint of his business operations in the region, is a reflection of the transformation taking place in the *Koryo Saram* community.

It is ironic that, against the background of the ongoing series of political and legal processes to restore the honor lost as a result of past political oppression, the focus of *Koryo Saram* history lies increasingly in the forced migration. The emphasis on this event has meant that the wealth of independent achievement in education, the arts, culture, the media, and other fields that the *Koryo Saram* had attained up to that point is gradually being forgotten. Of course, from around 1989 *Koryo Saram* associations started to be formed in various places, and at the same time as promoting the rehabilitation of language and culture, served as an arena for debates on national autonomy. But it appears that as far as the history of their autonomy before 1937 is concerned, *Koryo Saram* either know nothing, or at best have only a fragmentary knowledge. It seems unlikely that those who have returned to Primorsky Krai recently are any different in this respect, for hardly any use is being made of the experiences of the *Koryo Saram* before the forced migration. History is repeating itself—the problems faced by *Koryo Saram* society before the migration are replicated in their society today.

A number of such problems can be identified by comparing the situations before 1937 and now in such areas as citizenship and newspaper publishing. Limitations of space prevent me from going into detail here, but if it is true that awareness of history is necessary not only for the recovery of national identity but also in order to avoid repetition of the past, what has significance for the present is not the “end of history” that occurred at the moment of the forced migration but a reexamination of the more than 70 years of history that was brought to an end by the migration. This is the reason why Oleg Pan, a former editor of the newspaper *Won Don*, dug up the history

of the migration and published the results in the newspaper. The value and meaning of *Koryo Saram* ethnic newspapers in Primorsky Krai is highlighted by this case, and Pan even traveled to South Korea to appeal for support for his publication. I heard of Pan's death in January 2002. May the spirit of this editor who was deeply attached to both the history of the *Koryo Saram* and his publication rest in peace.

"Homeland": The Politics of Spatialized Memory

What does "homeland" mean for the *Koryo Saram*? Almost all those migrating to Primorsky Krai from Central Asia were born not in Primorsky Krai but in towns or villages in countries like Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan. The "homeland" that they are attempting to re-create is neither the Korean Peninsula, nor Russia, nor the Central Asian villages in which they lived. Where they actually lived before is of no consequence—what they have in mind is a space called "Primorsky Krai." By spatializing their memories, the "homeland" is re-created. Sometimes a "homeland" is created artificially in accordance with the regional government's policy. If a homeland is created *ex post facto* in this way, the people who have "returned" to Primorsky Krai may start "hometown" societies based on where they were born. Then they would discover their "hometown" once more. In fact, people who have moved to Partizansk say they chose that location because the landscape resembles Central Asia.

A Primorsky Krai *Koryo Saram* culture festival took place throughout Vladivostok from September 30 to October 3, 2001. Although it was held on the initiative of Yury Ten, a member of the lower house of the Russian parliament and chairman of the Association for National Cultural Autonomy of Russian Koreans, it would have been impossible without the cooperation of such organizations as the Korean Education Center in Vladivostok. It would be no exaggeration to say that the principal objective of the festival was the creation of a "homeland" called Primorsky Krai by means of the national culture, as is clear from the fact that the festival's primary emphasis was on the idea that Primorsky Krai was the "original home" of the Korean people. The festival was timed to coincide with South Korea's National Foundation Day (October 3), and it may be that this was an attempt to recover the "homeland" as spatialized memory in a temporal sense as well. If the recovery of a "home" is a political issue, then the "home" that was to be recovered through the festival probably had a different meaning for those promoting it than for the gen-

eral public. The *Koryo Saram* "home" that was once formed in the course of diplomatic maneuvering between Russia and Japan has now been revived within the framework of amity and economic cooperation between Russia and South Korea.

The cultural festival, endorsed by the central and regional governments, passed off successfully amid interest from Russians and with the participation of other ethnic minorities. The *Koryo Saram* were able to display their cultural pride as a people to the populace of the host community. "Homeland" within this framework can help to establish goodwill and harmony between the *Koryo Saram* community and local residents. Now that the idea of establishing an autonomous region has dropped out of sight, I believe that in Primorsky Krai, where there is already a multinational, multicultural Korean community, the *Koryo Saram* themselves have been placed in a situation where they must envisage what kind of "home" they wish to build.

Building a Better East Asia: The Toyota Foundation Yuseong Conference

From February 13 to 15 a conference was held at the hot-spring resort of Yuseong, near the city of Daejeon, South Korea, for young researchers involved in studies related to the Korean Peninsula. All of the participants had received grants for individual research projects under the Toyota Foundation Research Grant Program since the mid-1990s. Kim Puja details what was actually discussed at the conference below. Some aspects of the event—such as participants rooming together in dormitories, drinking and talking until the early hours, and bathing together in the hot springs—ran counter to what one expects of a typical modern conference. But such informality is essential in terms of building networks of researchers and deepening trust between people. As suggested by the theme of the conference, "Building a Better East Asia," it is hoped that the participants will look beyond national borders to work together both in research and in practical efforts to build peace and stability and a better culture in East Asia. (Shiro Honda)

Kim Puja

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It was noticeably chillier in Seoul than in Japan when we arrived on the Lunar New Year. A three-hour bus ride took us to the famous hot-spring resort of

Yuseong in Daejeon City, where we stayed at the Yuseong Youth Hostel, which is unconnected with the hot spring. We based ourselves there for the conference, which was held from February 13 to 15 under the stewardship of Dr. Yim Kyung Taek, chair of the organizing committee.

This conference was set up as a forum for researchers who have received Toyota Foundation grants for research relating to the Korean Peninsula to meet each other, Foundation members, researchers on Taiwan, and others, to present their research, and to exchange views and information. The gathering was notable for the wide range of the participants' research fields, including the middle ages, the colonial period, modern South and North Korea, the Korean diaspora, and gender research; for the fact that members had come not just from South Korea and Japan but also New York; and for the large number of women researchers. Apart from those involved in the same fields, the participants had not met each other before, but by giving self-introductions on the bus and at a gathering on the eve of the conference, and by rooming and eating together, the ice was soon broken.

On the day after we arrived, February 14, first we took an early-morning bath in the Yuseong hot spring, and then the first session—on research relating to colonial Korea—got underway. I was the first presenter and gave an overview of my doctoral thesis, titled "The Relationship Between Gender and Attendance and Nonattendance at Primary Education Institutions in Colonial Korea." Next, Ryuta Itagaki, a graduate student at the University of Tokyo, gave a report based on his dissertation, "Normal Schools and Local Communities Under the Colonial Regime: One School in Sangju, Kyongsang Pukdo," which he wrote after conducting fieldwork in Sangju. In a presentation titled "An Aspect of the Movement to Resolve the Korean 'Comfort Women' Problem: Links with the Anti-Sexual Violence Movement of the 1980s and 1990s," Yeong Ae Yamashita, a lecturer at Ritsumeikan University, discussed not so much the colonial period but the modern women's movement campaigning on the "comfort women" issue in Korea. Meanwhile, under the theme "Japanese Anthropologists in the Imperialist Era," Dr. Yim Kyung Taek, a lecturer at Chonbuk National University in Korea and chair of the conference organizing committee, discussed figures like Chijun Murayama and Takashi Akiba whose influence continues to be felt in anthropology and historical research today. Professor Takeshi Hamashita of Kyoto University

asked a series of incisive questions based on his knowledge of the subject.

The second session was due to start after lunch, but the youth hostel where the conference was taking place was so cold that some participants raised objections to continuing there, leading to a noisy discussion on the idea of switching to another venue. In a classic case of people being unable to see what is staring them in the face—and following an offer by the kind lady in charge of the cafeteria where we ate lunch—it was decided that we would use a private room on the second floor of the cafeteria instead. We hurriedly moved to the new venue, and in the end all subsequent presentations were made there.

The second session—held in the room that was small but warm thanks to a Korean floor heater—was a forum for significant research on topics relating to Koreans living in Central Asia, China, and Japan. Dr. Lee Aeliah of the Japan Center for Area Studies of the National Museum of Ethnology reported on the past and present of ethnic Koreans living in Kazakhstan, under the title "The Current State of Korean Communities in Central Asia and the Issues They Face." A book by Dr. Lee on this subject will soon be published. In "Do Ethnic Koreans Exist? The Drifting Ethnicity of Ethnic Koreans Living in Korea," Hyun Mooam, a graduate student at the University of Tokyo, analyzed from a postcolonial standpoint views surrounding the 150,000 Chinese-born ethnic Koreans said to now be living in South Korea. Meanwhile, Lim Youngmi, a graduate student at the City University of New York, and Dr. Lee Inza, a lecturer at Tohoku University, offered analysis of Koreans living in Japan. Lim's presentation focused on interviews with Koreans of Japanese nationality and was titled "Ethnicity by Choice and Imposed Race Categories: The Paradox Surrounding the Identity Symbols of Korean Japanese." In "What Migrants Want from Their Hometowns and What Their Hometowns Want from Them: The History of Exchange Between a Friendship Association for Koreans in Japan and the Migrants' Home Village," Dr. Lee focused on a friendship association and newspapers to tell the story of migration down the years from Goneiri Village on Jeju Island to Arakawa in Tokyo. The differences in the approaches and methods of these two researchers in the same field—Koreans in Japan—provided considerable food for thought. Dr. Kim Taegi of Honam University in Korea made a more general presentation on the subject titled "International Relations and Koreans Living Abroad." It was the first time I had ever heard such a

variety of reports on Koreans living abroad in the same forum.

There followed a general debate—which apparently continued until well into the night—on the future of research on North Korea and other topics. After another refreshing dip in the hot spring the next morning, the third session, on society and culture on the peninsula and the archipelago across the sea, got underway. First, Kunihiko Doi, a researcher at Rikkyo University, reported on “Maehyang Rituals as Seen Through Maehyangbi in Samchonpo,” in which he said that studying the Maehyangbi rock carvings from before Confucianism took hold in Korea had revealed that *feng shui* was practiced for altruistic rather than selfish reasons. He also reported that local historians all over South Korea had accumulated a rich store of materials on this. Next, Sangji University lecturer Kim Young presented “Attitudes Toward Labor Unions of Female Temporary Workers: Comparing Japan and Korea,” which included tales of her struggles to conduct surveys in Japan and South Korea. Finally, the leading figure of South Korean research on North Korea, Dr. Han Hongkoo of Sungkonghoe University, presented “The Democratization of South Korea and the Dissolution of Militarism.” Dr. Han currently co-chairs a citizen’s coalition for conscientious objectors to military service and takes the view that South Korea cannot become a democratic society without shedding militarism. From that highly practical viewpoint he painted a vivid picture of the reality of the Korean military and the issues surrounding it, and his presentation left a deep impression. We also heard about chair Dr. Yim’s experiences of military service.

I found the cross-disciplinary event highly stimulating as a forum for airing the kind of research and opinions relating to the Korean Peninsula that one does not encounter in forums limited to one’s own field. There was, however, some disappointment that due to time restrictions the presentations tended to resemble self-introductions, with little chance for deeper discussions. As for the future, there were suggestions for symposiums on research on Koreans living abroad of the kind presented at the conference, publications, and a further session on colonial research. And there is no reason to stop at research on the Korean Peninsula. Holding such events has great potential for facilitating a range of research exchange. Sessions could cover such themes as the colonial era in Taiwan or the former Manchuria, international gender relations, ethnicity, and migration.

Delays in preparation actually meant that at one

stage the Yuseong conference was in danger of cancellation, but in the end arrangements for things like printed materials and equipment were completed in time. The problem of the unexpectedly cold youth hostel was successfully overcome thanks to the quick thinking and action of organizing committee chair Dr. Yim, Dr. Lee Aeliah, and Kim Young. I would like to thank them for their efforts.

Dr. Yoshimi Yamamoto, a visiting research associate at the Institute of Ethnology at Academia Sinica in Taiwan, attended the conference as part of preparations for a similar event on the subject of research on Taiwan, an enterprise that is sure to lead to exciting developments. Also, a collection of the reports from the Yuseong conference is due to be published, and I encourage those interested in learning more about the subjects covered to consult this collection.

Meeting of Young Toyota Foundation Research Grant Recipients

Ryoko Kida

Assistant Program Officer

On January 24 and 25 the Toyota Foundation held a meeting of young researchers who are conducting studies with research grants from the Foundation. The theme of the meeting was “Human Activity and the Environment: Between Research and the Field.” Over 60 people gathered for the event, filling up the rather small venue at Kyoto Shigaku Kaikan.

A growing number of research grant applications involve field studies focusing on how the social conditions of local communities, local culture, and people’s everyday activities relate to the natural environment. The meeting brought together young researchers involved in such studies to discuss not the content of their research but various peripheral issues, including problems they have noticed in the course of research, the manner in which they disclose the results, and the desired form of research support.

Presentations were made by researchers of diverse disciplines, specialties, and careers. They included a former Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer who, based on his experiences during two years in Kenya, has been exploring ways for wild animals and neighboring humans to coexist; a scientist researching a Guinean community’s attitude toward nature as observed during a study of wild chimpanzees; and an

Inner Mongolian who, after working as a reporter for a radio station in his native land, trained as a historian and is now working to shed light on the desertification of Inner Mongolia from a historical perspective.

The reports provided an opportunity to hear the researchers express the kind of candid thoughts that cannot be gleaned from academic presentations and papers. One presenter after another honestly voiced the anxieties and difficulties they had felt while doing fieldwork. "I could not give a convincing answer when asked by villagers why I had gone to the trouble of coming so far just to conduct my study," said one. Another confessed, "A local told me, 'We will answer your questions. What will you do for us?' and I did not know what to say." Comments were also made on the question of how to share research results with local communities and on the powerlessness of fieldworkers when an urgent situation arises in the field.

A member of the audience pointed out that fieldworkers excessively torment themselves with the sense of guilt they feel for conducting their studies in developing countries. The meeting may have played up the negative aspects of field research, because one of its aims was to shed light on the problems perceived during fieldwork. Nevertheless, when we inhabitants of "developed countries" involve ourselves in some way with "developing countries" in the present social context, there is no doubt that any insensitive actions we unwittingly take can undeniably have a great impact. Reflecting on how one should respond to the sincere questions of the people who are the object of one's fieldwork is surely a necessary attitude in carrying out research. It is an attitude that is expected of us—yet often forgotten—in the relationships not only between developed and developing countries and between researcher and informant but also in those between aid-giving and aid-receiving countries, strong and weak, and majority and minority.

The presenters included two foreign students, one from Inner Mongolia and the other from another part of China. They are investigating the desertification of Inner Mongolia from the contrasting perspectives of ecology and history. Although Japa-

nese is not their first language, both presentations were explicit and conveyed their critical awareness plainly, perhaps due to their strong sense of responsibility toward the place where they are conducting research.

Among the other presenters was a researcher with experience in conducting environmental surveys as a construction consultant, who raised questions about the manner in which Japan provides assistance to developing countries and what part researchers studying in the region should play in those efforts. Several people made concrete proposals to the Toyota Foundation in their presentations, including a call for long-term support and a request for the Foundation to become a hub that brings together people of diverse careers.

Voices from the Field

The second day of the gathering commenced with presentations by Yoshitaka Tanaka, Yutaka Une, and Shintaro Sugiyama, who shared their experiences engaging in research and other activities in the field.

Tanaka, founder and executive director of the Foundation of Agricultural Development and Education in Thailand, gave a talk titled "Research, Academics, Funding, and the Feedback of Research Results to the Local Community," focusing on his research and its funding. Tanaka is currently conducting a survey of useful plants in Vietnam. He reported that the FADE would soon complete production of a three-volume illustrated plant guide

at a cost of ¥6,000 per set by printing and binding the books in Vietnam. Local production is not only much cheaper than making the books in Japan, but it makes it easier to distribute them to local inhabitants. Tanaka revealed the know-how he has acquired through conducting research without the support of large organizations, including the importance of carefully checking the particulars essential to carrying out a field study, such as the local people and the publishing and distribution infrastructure.

Sugiyama then discussed the organic-agriculture research and promotion project that he is conducting in cooperation with farmers in Thailand. He and the



A grant recipient plays a Laotian folk instrument at the gathering.

farmers have been grappling with the problems that arise, including crabs eating the rice plants and pumpkins being damaged by pests, on a trial-and-error basis. Sugiyama also touched on an episode in which he and an assistant from northeastern Thailand pledged on a rainbow to continue further research on organic agriculture.

The final speaker was Yutaka Une, who left his job as an agricultural promoter in Fukuoka Prefecture to establish the Institute of Agricultural and Natural Environments. Une talked about the modernization of agriculture and about perspectives for describing farm work in ways that conventional agricultural studies could not, citing such specific examples as the *medaka* (a tiny fish inhabiting ponds, rivulets, and rice paddies) and commonplace insects. Finally, he asserted that new academic disciplines should pursue the nature of true human happiness and affluence and outlined several new disciplines that he has in mind, including the study of the relationship between nature and humankind, the study of how to move beyond modernization, and studies that are about more than just science. "Why do only academics become researchers?" Une asked.

All three of these speakers have demonstrated through their own activities that "research" is not the exclusive domain of university-based specialists.

Discussion: Between Research and the Field

In the afternoon of the second day, around 20 people took part in a discussion of the issues involved in research and fieldwork, particularly those that had been highlighted in the earlier presentations. The mediator was Takeshi Ryusawa, who was an editor of scholarly books with Heibonsha for over 30 years and is now on the editorial board of the magazine *Hon to Konpyuta* (The Book and the Computer).

Ryusawa listed six points for discussion: how to form relationships with the local community; feeding research results back to the community; how to ensure the continuity of a study; the need to connect several different disciplines; research and practice; and expectations of the Toyota Foundation's grant activities. Ryusawa started the session by commenting on the proceedings leading up to the discussion. "I sensed that great changes are happening to universities today, and that the status quo can be said in some ways to be falling apart," he said. "This is affecting the publishing world as well. The academic world as a whole is being called to consider the general direction in which it is changing."

The discussion lasted for two and a half hours.

Every participant contributed to the debate, which took many turns but was ultimately focused on the issues of research versus practice, on the one hand, and approaches to expression in research papers and their evaluation, on the other.

Research and practice have generally been seen to play two distinct, if not opposing, roles. One of the views voiced was that breaking free of this dualistic thinking may lead to new ways of thinking. The distinctions between research and practice and between researcher and activist are meaningless when attempting to tackle the problems that plague modern society. A comment was also heard that agricultural science and fisheries science today are two disciplines that have forgotten the importance of the field. If research is about solving the various problems and mysteries found in society, then the forms of research should be just as variegated as the real world. It may be, however, that over time the label of "research" came to be applied only to those undertakings that fit in with convention. Many of the participants of this meeting were people who are trying to overcome the framework of convention. But the remarks made in the discussion suggested that unconventional efforts often still do not receive the recognition they deserve from universities and academic societies.

A young researcher observed: "Doing fieldwork, one makes many interesting discoveries that cannot be compiled as data. This information is stored in the mind of the researcher, but it seems to get lost in the process of writing out the report." This observation illuminates the discrepancy between the kind of things field researchers would like to express and the kind of things that receive recognition when papers are evaluated. A non-researcher suggested, "Then why not write a paper on the very things that cannot be made into a research paper?" Another participant boldly asked whether those researchers present had not lost the desire to write about the things that had impressed them during fieldwork.

Several of the participants sent us their comments after the gathering. One of them pointed out, "The sense of involvement is weakening in the world of research, and this ultimately is draining the cogency of individual studies." This led me to think that the idea of involvement may offer a key to solving some of the problems that were brought to light at the meeting. We will be able to take a big step forward toward a solution if all of us—not only researchers—strive to always be aware of our involvement in the settings in which we live and are active. Universities, as a part of society, will naturally change shape as

society undergoes transformation. This meeting brought home the need for the Toyota Foundation to recognize that its involvement in research means that it is affected by changes in universities and in academics and that it must devise flexible programs that can cope with these changes.

The presenters offered us much valuable input right from the preliminary stages of organizing the meeting. They also assisted us with the actual preparations, from putting together the program to sending out invitations. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their services.

Recent Publications Based on Foundation-Supported Research

A Social History of Blind Priests in Japan and South Korea. Akiko Nagai. Fukuoka: Ashi Publishing, 2002.

In recent years, the themes and frameworks for many research proposals have been selected for no more reason than that they are in fashion in the academic world centered on North America. Such plans give little clue as to why the researcher felt compelled to study the theme and leave the impression that the application might have been filed not by a living person but by a research robot. Akiko Nagai, the author of this book, entered the world of academics at an age when most researchers are approaching the end of their careers and are already losing the stamina and powers of memory that sustain young scholars. But Nagai more than makes up for this with the depth of her involvement with people on the fringes of society—relationships that she has built up over many years—and with her resolute motivation for research based on that involvement. She has used these assets to the full in her research on blind priests in Japan and South Korea, which she started in 1995. There is something remarkable in her ability not only to freely enter the world of blind priests in her home country Japan but also to overcome barriers of language, history, and culture to enter the equivalent world on the Korean Peninsula. Maybe she feels that there are no barriers between herself and the blind priests. The beauty of this book lies in the fact that it describes a world that is obscured from the view of people in mainstream society and that it attempts to treat the Japanese island of Kyushu and the Korean

Peninsula as a single sphere. In that sense it has profound implications for the future.

New Secretary

On January 1 Norio Kanie took over as secretary of the Toyota Foundation. He was previously project general manager of Toyota Motor Corp.'s Corporate Planning Division. From July 1 he has also served as managing director.



The photograph shows Kanie welcoming participants at the recent Toyota Foundation Yuseong Conference held in South Korea, which is described on page 7 of this report.

Obituary

Makoto Numata, a member of the Toyota Foundation's board of trustees, died at the end of last year. He was 84. Numata made a major contribution to nature conservation in Japan, including serving as president of the Nature Conservation Society of Japan. He will be sorely missed both by the Foundation and by the movement to which he gave so much.

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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