

PREFACE

The Slavic Research Center (SRC) of Hokkaido University held an International Symposium, entitled “Siberia and the Russian Far East in the 21st Century: Partners in the ‘Community of Asia’,” at Sapporo, Japan, on July 14-16, 2004. The Symposium was mainly funded by a special scientific research grant from the Japanese Ministry of Education’s 21st Century “Center of Excellence” program (Making a Discipline of Slavic Eurasian Studies: 2003-2008, Project Leader Ieda Osamu) and partly assisted by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (Russo-Chinese Cooperation and Its Implication for Eurasian Security in the Post-Cold War Period: 2003-2006, Project Leader Iwashita Akihiro).

The SRC invited some of the leading Russian experts from Siberia and the Far East and provided a discussion forum between them and other top specialists from Korea, China, the US and Japan. Twenty presenters participated, including seven from Russia, two from Korea, two from China and three from the US. The Symposium was also organized to consider the diversities within the countries of the participants. The Russian delegation consisted of participants from Novosibirsk, Khabarovsk, Vladivostok and Sakhalin. The two Chinese presenters from Harbin and Beijing, and a discussant from Shanghai also participated. The SRC invited Korean specialists from the UK and Singapore as well.

The Symposium started with its opening speeches: Valerii Kuleshov's "Economic Transformations of Siberia and the Russian Far East in the Coming Decades of the 21st Century" and Gilbert Rozman's "Sino-Japanese Competition over the Russian Far East: Is the Oil Pipeline Only a Starting Point?" The sessions of the Symposium covered discussions on regional economic integration, international relations, energy cooperation, fisheries, literature, history and others. The Symposium aimed to verify the possibility of Siberia and the Far East becoming members of an emerging "Asian Community" and to debate its challenges and perspectives. Considering the variety and diversity of topics, the SRC decided to publish these proceedings separately according to their specific field. This first volume, entitled "Crossroads in Northeast Asia," focuses on international affairs on the northeastern edge of the "Asian Community," mainly consisting of participants' papers in the session on the Russian Far East and US-China-Japan-Korean relations.

Why should we now discuss Siberia and the Far East in the unfamiliar framework of the "Asian Community"? An explanation could be given by briefly looking at the unsuccessful debates over the Far East in Northeast Asia conducted in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. Many specialists on the region were then enthusiastic about the creation of a "common house" in Northeast Asia, considering how the Far East, as well as Northeast China, the two Koreas and Japan, could be cooperative, interactive, or (at best) integrated and discussing the probability of a new community or regional order conceived from the countries, regions, nationalities, ethnicities and social sectors. This was partly a reflection of the rapid mutual economic dependence between the concerned countries within Northeast Asia itself and of the political reconstruction following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Chinese departure from traditional socialism and the provisional detente on the Korean Peninsula.

The unrealistic hope for a "common house" in Northeast Asia soon faded away, however. The regime of North Korea has changed little, while the current nuclear crisis looms over the Korean Peninsula like a dark cloud. Chinese migration was seriously viewed by many as a "threat" to the political stability of the Far East. And the Japan-Russia territorial deadlock still remains touchy and unresolved.

One reason for the cooling down of the notion of a sort of “common house” in Northeast Asia most likely derives from our mistaken conception of the Far East within Northeast Asia itself. It is probably not appropriate to discuss the Far East separately from Russia as a whole. Northeast Asian communities might as well seek to cooperate by finding ways to integrate the Russian Far East with an understanding that the Far East is a different but undivided territory and community of Russia. From this vantage point, we naturally and keenly look upon Siberia as being “distinct” from the Far East and as a region connecting European Russia with the rest of the Far East. In this sense, the term “Northeast Asia” sounds a little awkward. The Siberian people may have some sympathy with Northeast Asia but are probably more familiar with Central Asia, including Xinjiang Uygur China and West Mongolia. Therefore, despite our being conscious of its vagueness and boldness, the term “Asian Community” seemed more fitting for the Symposium discussion.

The current discussion was most likely influenced by the new dynamics and interaction surrounding Russia and the rest of Asia. Traditionally, we are accustomed to discussing issues individually through the regional framework of Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia and so on. But recent developments on the Eurasian continent make it almost impossible to have any meaningful discussions about the current developments of Northeast Asia through a purely regional framework. These areas are rapidly overlapping owing to regional transformation and the preeminence of US power. Examples are easily introduced: the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, originating from Russia, China and three Central Asian countries for their border cooperation, has reached a stage of maturity where it is now analyzed even by South Asian specialists.¹ Countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Iran should be studied by Korean and other East Asian regional experts in part because of the Bush administration’s current endeavors against “international terrorism.”

1 See Iwashita Akihiro, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Its Implications for Eurasian Security: A New Dimension of ‘Partnership’ after the Post-Cold War Period” in Tabata Shinichiro and Iwashita Akihiro, eds., *Slavic Eurasia’s Integration into the World Economy and Community* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2004), pp. 259-281.

This volume, with a special emphasis on the international affairs of Northeast Asia, follows from the “spirit” of the Symposium. Most papers, on the surface, may focus solely on political, economic and social issues of the various and distinct sub-regions and countries within the narrow confines of Northeast Asia, but they are undoubtedly conscious of the new dynamics appearing on the Eurasian continent whose countries often share borders with Russia and Asian countries.

On the other hand, this volume, while not neglecting the new environment as mentioned above, exclusively focuses on the Russian Far East in Northeast Asia. Before entering into the next stage of discussions, we are apt to reconsider the past misleading debates on the region during the early 1990s. Not only should the one-sided “gloomy threat” perception or the “rosy development” expectations in the Russian Far East be considered but also the mono-tone contrast of “conflict” vs. “cooperation” in the region in the twenty-first century should be separate from the overall discussion. The truth is always more complicated than originally imagined.

We selected the four papers on international relations during last summer’s Symposium for the first volume. Gilbert Rozman’s chapter gives us, as a guide map of the volume, a way to approach and tackle issues deriving from the “complicated nature” of the Russian Far East in Northeast Asia. His argument on “Sino-Japanese competition over the Russian Far East” may sound similar to those in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The chapter, however, with its attention to the US and the two Koreas’ interests fully reviewed, may betray the reader’s expectations. His persuasive logic and conclusion avoids some of the usual pitfalls of the past. In the second chapter, Sergei Sevast’ianov successfully categorizes and analyzes security and military issues in the Russian Far East. Especially, he puts them in the wider context of a Eurasian continent under the strain of globalization, while keeping the “spirit” of the Symposium never far from his mind. In the third and fourth chapters, Nakano Junzo and Ni Xiaoquan prepare inspired overviews of Japan’s and China’s interests in the Russian Far East. Nakano’s contribution on Japan’s military policies towards the region is unique because Japanese academics in the area of international affairs tend not to provide thorough military analysis. Ni’s well-balanced explanation of China’s policy towards the Russian Far East,

covering the latest Sino-Russian Summit held in mid-October in Beijing, also gives us a better understanding of the region.

Two more chapters are incorporated into the volume. One is written by Jeanyoung Lee, an expert on Korean-Chinese minorities in the Russian Far East. The other is by Iwashita Akihiro, a specialist on the Sino-Russian territorial issue. The former was partly presented at the International Conference: A Future for Multi-Nation, Multi-Culture and Co-Habitation in Northeast Asia, held in November 2004, in Vladivostok.² The latter was also reported at the International Symposium organized by Hopporyodo Taisaku Kyokai [Northern Territories Issue Association], at Toyama in October 2004. With migration and border disputes being key topics in the Russian Far East, the presence of both chapter five and six in this volume seems quite natural. First, Lee's excellent contribution covers the Korean presence within Chinese migration in the Russian Far East. It not only sheds light on some previously unknown facts and details but provides insights for resolving the issues over minority groups in the Russian Far East. Readers may receive from the chapter a strong message over the possibility of a new "house" in Northeast Asia. Second, Iwashita's chapter is timely following the finalization of Sino-Russian territorial disputes near the end of 2004. He draws some lessons from past Sino-Russian negotiations and how Russia and China finally resolved them successfully. The chapter also provides some possible hints for resolving another territorial deadlock, e.g., the long-frozen territorial dispute over the sovereignty of the "Northern Territories."

The fruits of the contributing authors' intellectual endeavors are well appreciated. It is our goal that these small but important academic contributions by some of the leaders of our field of study prove to be an impetus for further academic inquiry. If this goal is achieved, it would be a great pleasure of ours.

This volume greatly benefited from the contribution of Jaeho Chung, Professor of Seoul National University, a special commentator during last summer's Symposium. I would like to express my gratitude to Seth Cervantes, Lecturer of Tomakomai Komazawa University, for his special contributions during the editing phase of this volume. I owe

2 *DV Uchenyi*, December 1, 2004, p. 5.

much to Ito Kaoru for kindly agreeing to take on the laborious challenge of designing the volume's cover and maps included in chapter six. I would also like to thank Ito Eri, Hosono Mitsue and Mark Hudson for their tireless efforts on the completion of this volume.

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Editor
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