

Preface

In 2016, the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center celebrated its 60th anniversary by hosting an international symposium on December 10–11, 2015 at which we examined the history of our Center, with special emphasis on the period of its birth. This volume includes some of the important presentations at that symposium, as well as major findings and documents from the research carried out by David Wolff and Tetsuro Chida on the Center's origins. In 1995, when we celebrated the 40th anniversary, we published a book, *40 Years of the Slavic Research Center* (in Japanese), which included some essays, lists of staff, seminars, publications, etc. Because we have not published this kind of book since that time, I would like to write here about two of the major events at our Center in the 2000s: the start of the graduate school in 2000 and the renaming of our Center from Slavic Research Center to Slavic-Eurasian Research Center in 2014.

With respect to the start of the graduate school, when I began to work at SRC in 1986 together with Tetsuo Mochizuki, we had no teaching obligations. But since the 1980s, we had discussed at our notorious weekly staff meetings how our Center should contribute to the education of the next generation of researchers. We talked about whether we should separately go into graduate schools in the various disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, e.g., I would join the graduate school of economics, and Professor Tetsuo Mochizuki would join the graduate school of letters. The alternative was to join one graduate school all together. At last, we decided to join the graduate school of letters *en masse*.

Consequently, since 2000, all of our staff members began to collaborate with programs in the graduate school of letters to provide graduate education and degrees in Slavic-Eurasian Area Studies. In the past 16 years, we approved 20 doctoral dissertations and 67 master's theses. Now, students who graduated from our course are working at universities and other research institutions, in media and private companies, in Japan and abroad. This may be a modest step, but a source of pride for our Center.

Concerning the change in the name of our Center, the “official” explanation was that “Slavic-Eurasia” more appropriately indicated the area that we were studying than just “Slavic.”¹ Needless to say, there are so many countries in the former Soviet and East European space which have predominantly non-Slavic populations. In addition, there are a number of non-Slavic republics in the Russian Federation as well.

Fortunately for us, the search for the new name was not so troublesome, because we had already invented the word “Slavic Eurasia,” when we started a big project in 1995, entitled “Changes in the Slavic-Eurasian World” under the leadership of Professor Shugo Minagawa. We have continuously used this word in book titles and research projects since then, so we could relatively easily adopt Slavic-Eurasian Research Center as our new name in 2014.

In spite of this official explanation, however, some outside observers thought that this renaming meant a planned expansion in the Center’s geographical coverage. In fact, even before this renaming, two factors expanded our research activities and our collaboration with area study specialists covering other regions of the world. First, especially since the large-scale 21st Century COE program, entitled “Making a Discipline of Slavic Eurasian Studies,” which began in 2003, we had paid considerable attention to the interaction between Slavic Eurasia and neighboring regions, including East Asia, the Islamic world and the European Union. From this research emerged the idea of border studies that culminated in a subsequent Global COE program, entitled “Reshaping Japan’s Border Studies.” Through border studies, we have advanced studies of neighboring areas and cooperation with specialists in those areas.

Second, especially in the research related to another big project, entitled “Comparative Research on Major Regional Powers in Eurasia,” we were increasingly engaged in comparison of Slavic-Eurasia with

1 Tomohiko Uyama, “The SRC to Be Renamed the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center,” *Slavic Research Center News*, No. 21, March 2014. [<http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/eng/news/no21/ECenterNews21.pdf>]

other regions in the world, including China and India. This entailed close cooperation with area study specialists of China and India, among others. Nowadays, it is not unusual that specialists of China, India and the Middle East participate in our annual international symposia.

In this way, in the 21st century, border studies and comparison between different regions became two of the most important key words at our Center. We intend to develop the area studies of Slavic-Eurasia taking advantage of these two approaches in the near future as well, now including Northeast Asian and Arctic studies.

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