

## Memories of Ulises Granados as an Advisor in Japan

Takeshi Hamashita

I remember that it was the winter of 1996 or 1997 when I first met with Ulises Granados at the University of Tokyo, when he stopped by the director's office at the Institute of Advanced Studies on Asia. I recollect that he told me he was working on Mexico's diplomatic relations at the time, and I asked him about his plans to continue his research in the doctoral program. This was the first time we met, and I was interested in how his future research would develop in Japan.

During his doctoral course, Ulises actively pursued his research and presented his papers at international conferences, generally focusing on international relations surrounding Asia's maritime seas in the 1920s and 1930s. We would sometimes meet at international conferences in Singapore and other places.

The general state of research at the time viewed maritime issues of Asia as an extension of Western colonialism. The analysis of international relations in the South China Sea in the 1920s and 1930s was based on the fact that the Western powers had colonized Southeast Asia, and therefore that the region's maritime international relations were constituted through relations between the Western powers, including Japan. For Asian states, questions of maritime governance in the period were an outgrowth of Western colonialism, rather than a product of the region.

In contrast to this tendency, however, Ulises Granados' doctoral thesis offered exciting new research into the regional history of international maritime relations. By examining Asian maritime issues from a more historical standpoint, the thesis offered a new perspective on the nature of maritime policy in Asia and for its states. In other words, the thesis offered a series of exceptional insights for the study of international relations based on the author's historical research on Asian maritime issues. Ulises Granados would complete his doctoral studies at the University of Tokyo's Graduate School of Humanities in March 2004.

Our subsequent interactions were largely Christmas cards and irregular email correspondences, but in retrospect a major turning point was in 2010 when Ulises informed me that his job at Komaba (Associate Professor, Institute for the Advancement of Liberal Education, Faculty of Liberal Arts, University of Tokyo), would expire in 2010, and that he was on the lookout for new employment. In that email, he expressed a strong desire to work in Japan, and especially to remain in Tokyo. It was around this time that I also met his entire family. Some of the information is quoted below:

## Greetings from Granados (Hamashita Sensei 20100512)

Ulises Granados <ugqxiaohu@yahoo.com>

2010年5月12日 下午3:21

*Dear Prof. Hamashita,*

*I hope health is going well for you this year! I am still working at Komaba Campus, this is my 5th year, but unfortunately I cannot continue beyond the 6th year. Therefore I am starting my job hunting. I prefer to apply for an Asian related job (teaching and research) instead of Spanish (now I feel already the urgency not to spend more years teaching language....) I wonder whether it is possible to ask you for a recommendation/ recommendation letter for a future employer. I would like very much to work in Tokyo, but if this year I cannot find a job, I will need to look overseas. I just love Japan, especially Tokyo, so to go to another country is my last option. Mexico is the last resort, its security and economic conditions are worsening, therefore it is not an option for me. Thank you so much! .....*

*Regarding my own research, I would also like to ask you for advice (please forgive me for the long message). I am preparing research on navigation in Guangdong during the period 1870-1900. I am struggling with sources (primary and secondary) and I wonder whether you might lead me to some (Japanese and Chinese) research on this topic...I have some sources on the CMSC navigation company (Li Hongzhang`s one) but particularly with Guangdong I need more. Please give me advise. Thank you!!*

*This month I am going to ICES conference, I hope we can meet there!!!*

*Sincerely,  
Ulises Granados  
Ulises Granados, Ph.D.  
Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
The University of Tokyo, Japan  
ugqxiaohu@yahoo.com  
granados@ask.c.u-tokyo.ac.jp (office)*

Subsequently I heard in 2012 that he had taken a job in Mexico.

## New job appointment

Ulises Granados <ugqxiaohu@yahoo.com>

2012年4月28日 週六 下午11:14

*Dear friends and colleagues,*

*I'd like to share with you I have been appointed Associate Professor in the Academic Department of International Studies at Mexico Autonomous Institute of Technology –ITAM– in Mexico City. I am happy to share this moment with you, and hope to continue to receive your support in such a challenging and exciting job both in Asia and Mexico. Cheers!*

*Ulises*

The email also included the photo of the school gate, and I remember feeling reassured by the willingness of Ulises to engage in both teaching and research in his home country. Almost immediately, a follow-up email gave me more details about the new job and research plans that Ulises was developing for his return home.

## I got a job in Mexico

Ulises Granados <ugqxiaohu@yahoo.com>

2012年5月11日 下午7:27

*Dear Hamashita Sensei,*

*I would like to share with you I was appointed Associate Professor at the Academic Department of International Studies, Mexico Autonomous Institute of Technology (ITAM), a private think tank nurturing the current economic and political elite in Mexico. It is an excellent job that demands me to regularly publish in international journals, teaching and traveling to Asia for academic exchanges. Therefore I have to focus my current research on international relations of Asia, where I would like to do parallel research on maritime Asia, like the South China Sea. One of the tasks for my job is coming to China, Japan, India and SE Asia to try to make academic exchanges, so I hope to have more chances to see you besides academic conferences.*

*I am traveling to Mexico in July, so I have time and you are in Tokyo we could meet before having my new post.*

*Sincerely,*

*Ulises*

*Ulises Granados, Ph.D.*

*ugqxiaohu@yahoo.com*

The direction of Ulises's research was clearly evolving, retaining its basic focus on the international relations of maritime affairs in Asia, but coming to include several new research topics within that broad frame. Particularly, Ulises was looking to develop a focused research agenda examining navigation issues for the period running from 1870 to the 1900s, focusing on Guangdong and its relations with East Asian and South-East Asian countries. The project also enthusiastically highlighted a number of international academic exchange initiatives with East and Southeast Asian countries, and promised that Ulises would again appear in Japan for research visits in the near future.

It is a tragedy that such a promising researcher on Asian maritime issues should be taken from us, particularly given the evolving international situation which demands the active contribution of such promising scholars to questions occupying people around the world today. The bright and enthusiastic attitude which Ulises brought to such questions frequently lit up his face in a dazzling smile, one which I was fortunate enough to experience many times in the fifteen years following our first meeting, and which I am able to see as if it were only yesterday. I wish here to express my deepest condolences to his family.

At Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China.  
June 19, 2023

\*This essay was translated by Edward Boyle.