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A Report on the 8th Japan-Korea-China Joint Conference on Geography

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Abstract The 8th Japan-Korea-China Joint Conference on Geography was held from July 31 to August 5, 2013, mainly at the Hakozaki campus of Kyushu University with 144 participants in attendance. This article provides a detailed account of the conference.

Key words Japan, Korea, China, international conference

Outline of the 8th Conference

From July 31 to August 5, 2013, the 8th Japan-Korea-China Joint Conference (hereafter called the 8th Conference) was held, with the Hakozaki campus of Kyushu University as the main venue (Photo 1)¹. The 8th Conference was co-organized by the Association of Japanese Geographers, the Korean Geographical Society, and the Geographical Society of China, under the auspices of the Department of Geography, School of Letters, Kyushu University. In addition, the conference was subsidized by the following (in alphabetical order): the Fukuoka Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Kyushu University Fund, the Association of Japanese Geographers, and the Murata Science Foundation. Furthermore, a joint session was held at the IGU 2013 Kyoto Regional Conference (hereafter called Kyoto RC) with Kyoto RC organizers on August 5. An optional tour from Fukuoka to Osaka was arranged after the session.

The Japan-Korea-China Joint Conference on Geography intends to offer Asian geographers, especially young geographers from these three countries, a venue for academic discussion and the opportunity to build a network of scholars. In addition to holding the conference this year at Kyushu University, Japan has played host twice before, for the 2nd Conference at Kumamoto University and the 5th Conference at Tohoku University. The 8th Conference was organized by a committee chaired by TAKAGI Akihiko (Kyushu University), with KONNO Ena (Tokyo University of Agriculture) and NORITO Takashi (Kyoto University) as secretaries-general (their affiliations are at the time of the conference). The organizing committee was launched in March 2012, consisting chiefly of graduate students, research fellows, and junior teachers throughout Japan².

The number of participants in this conference was the highest ever, with 144 participants (comprising 87 pre-senters, 63 oral presentations, 25 poster presentations, and 77 participants in the optional tour). An evaluation of the participants' nationalities reveals that 66 came from Japan, 22 from Korea, 53 from China and 3 from India. Moreover, the participants from Japan included students from Vietnam and Austria. These facts indicate that this conference boasted a greater diversity in the nationality of the participants than ever before.

Setting the Theme and Logo of the 8th Conference

The organizing committee adopted the theme of "One Asia/A Thousand Asias: Toward the Establishment of New Crossroads" for the 8th Conference. This theme evokes the development of the various regions and societies that coexist in Asia. That is to say, Asia is one region

Photo 1. Group photograph in front of the former faculty of engineering building, Kyushu University.

Figure 1. Conferences logos.

but can be thought of as a thousand. It can be seen as a place where social components such as people, capital, and national states connect freely and intricately under a variety of natural conditions, but still ultimately has unity as one region. The committee believes that we geographers can present a vision of Asia as pursuing the ideal of the nation as a “crossroads,” a place of interwoven diversity and cooperation that stands in contrast to the globalizing economy and society, by clarifying the multifarious natural or social phenomena occurring in “One Asia/A Thousand Asias.”

In addition, every time the annual meeting has been held in Japan, the organizing committee has created a logo that expresses the theme of the conference. The logo is composed of two elements. One is geography, symbolized by a globe. It signifies that this conference and the research findings presented here contribute to the geographical community. The other element represents the participants from Japan, Korea, and China. It implies the committee’s wish to further develop academic exchange by convening the conference. In addition to the two basic elements, the organizing committee devises a logo in line with the theme of each conference (Figure 1).

The logo for the 2nd Conference depicts three people on a triangle (Figure 1-a). It represents the committee’s wish to promote friendship among researchers by deepening the discussion on research, as well as the desire to trigger a new movement within the field of geography in Japan, Korea, and China through the conference.

The 5th Conference built on the logo for the 2nd Conference by adding the image of a leaf, which signified not only the “Green Society” theme of the 5th Conference, but also the blossoming and continual growth of ourselves (Figure 1-b).

While the logo for the 8th Conference is still based on the globe and the silhouettes of three people, it has three more implications: it is the 8th; it connects people, and it stands for our infinite possibilities. In addition, the eight

plum blossoms that are wreathed on the globe indicate the venue of the 8th Conference, as plum blossoms is the official flower of Fukuoka Prefecture, the host of this conference (Figure 1-c).

The logo has changed from year to year, but its philosophy—the wish for success and for developing friendship between fellow researchers—has not changed since its initial creation.

Practices of Preparing the Convention and Souvenirs for the 8th Conference

The responsibilities of the organizing committee were roughly divided into two categories—planning and site management—and a team was assigned to each. The former team was mainly managed by graduate students and junior scholars around Japan, with the support of experienced scholars. This team handled the “intellectual” arrangements such as planning, devising the theme, organizing the programs, and registering and managing participant information. The latter team was chiefly composed of faculty members and graduate students from the host Kyushu University, and engaged in the physical preparation of the facilities including setting up the sites, arranging accommodations, and purchasing equipment. The operations of the two teams were not conducted separately, but were carried out in close cooperation with each other, facilitated through the steady sharing of information through cloud services³, a mailing list, etc.⁴ The organizing committee adopted Google Apps™ as the cloud service, as was the case for the 5th Conference as well, making use of its services such as a mailing list, website maintenance, schedule management, file sharing, and so on. Moreover, some new attempts were made to lighten the workloads of the committee members, such as the adoption of ADOBE® Forms Central to manage participant registration and the registration of information on the website, and the delegation of reservations and the

Photo 2. A set of souvenirs offered at the 8th Conference.

arrangement of the optional tour, including a field trip to Osaka, to a travel agency (JTB Western Japan, Corp.).

On top of these various preparations, the committee members undertook all the work regarding the souvenirs for the conference, from selection, to design, to order placement, as they wanted the souvenirs to be an ice-breaker and open up communication at the conference. Blue was chosen as the predominant color, and six souvenir items were created on this color theme. The first is a seven-color notebook, which is essential to geographers, with the conference logo on the cover (Photo 2-a). The second is a ballpoint pen, themed on the color aqua, with a quick-drying ink that facilitates smooth writing (Photo 2-b). Third is a summery key chain bedecked with a motif of the conference logo (Photo 2-c). Forth is a Japanese-patterned tote bag, made from recycled flags and banners to highlight “Japanese”, to hold the booklet of abstracts and the other conference souvenirs (Photo 2-d). As no two bags were exactly alike, such a wide variety of Japanese design was highly appreciated by the participants. The fifth souvenir was a Japanese fan (*uchiwa*), made of Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*) from Hita City, Oita Prefecture, that participants could use to cool themselves during the hot weather of the conference (Photo 2-e). Sixth was a nametag made of Japanese paper and patterned with flowing water, worn by participants during the conference (Photo 2-f). Emphasizing Japanese style, the string of the nametag was made of Edo braided cords and tied by hand with a tassel knot (*niju kanou musubi*), which symbolizes a prayer for “everyone’s wish to come true” (the Japanese kanji character “*kanou*” means “a dream comes true”). Last but not least, the organizing committee prepared a booklet of abstracts and a guidebook for the field trip, which featured a stylish blue design (Photo 2-g).

Photo 3. Keynote speech by Prof. TSUTSUMI.

The Conference Schedule

On Wednesday, July 31, the 8th Conference commenced with a keynote speech entitled “Thinking from Japan beyond the Four “D”s, Concerning with Social Capital—Diversity, Disparity, Depopulation and Deprivation—” by TSUTSUMI Kenji (Osaka University) in the main lecture room at the Faculty of Engineering’s main building, Kyushu University (Photo 3). The ensuing welcome party included speeches by representatives from each country and a Shorinji Kempo demonstration (a kind of martial art) by Dr. KOMAKI, a committee member, and Professor TSUTSUMI, which greatly enlivened the mood of the participants.

Between Thursday, August 1 and Friday, August 2, there were vigorous discussions on 63 oral presentations in 10 sessions: (1) Industry, Traffic, and Development; (2) Urban Space; (3) Environmental Study and Policy; (4) Food, Agriculture, and Rural Space; (5) Cultural Policy and Food Culture; (6) Tourism; (7) Nature and Climatology; (8) GIS; and (9) Earthquake Disaster, along with 25 poster presentations (Photo 5). On Thursday, August 1, three short trips were organized on the initiative of com-

Photo 4. Prof. TSUTSUMI and Mr. KOMAKI, a committee member, demonstrating Shorinji Kempo.

Photo 5. Research presentation.

mittee members from Kyushu University: an “Ito Campus Tour” to visit the new campus of Kyushu University as well as trips to *sake* brewery; a “Tenjin Tour” and a “Nakasu and Hakata Tour” to observe scenic spots and urban development in the center of Fukuoka City. These excursions provided a good opportunity for participants to interact and forge friendships (Photo 6). After the presentations on August 2, a closing ceremony was held to confer the “Young Geographer Awards” to young researchers who, having entered the competition prior to the conference, gave excellent presentations. At the same time, the “Impressive Presentation Awards,” chosen by anonymous participant votes, were conferred to honor memorable and interesting oral or poster presentations for the purpose of furthering exchange with participants other than those from the presenters’ own countries. The awardees recipients and their presentations are as follows.

Young Geographer Awards (in alphabetical order by name of recipient): “Putting what the First?: Natural Resources or Subsistence of the People: Survival Strategy and Resources Using of Alangan-Mangyan in Mindoro, Philippine” by SHIRAISHI Natsuko (graduate student, Kyoto University); “Process and the Driving Factors of Central Asia’s Urbanization: A Case Study in Kazakhstan” by WUZHATI Yeerken (graduate student, Chinese Academy of Sciences); and “Extrospective Politics in Urban Policy-making Process: A Case Study of Ecotown Plan, Kitakyushu City” by YIN Guanwen (graduate student, Kyushu University). Impressive Presentation Awards (in alphabetical order by name of recipient): “Destination Island Effects: A Framework for Reconstruction and Assessment of Tourism Environmental Effects” by LI Gang (Northwest University); “Spatial Filtering and Location Patterns of Enterprise R&D in Kanto Region: Case Study of Electric and Electronic Equipment Industry” by LI

Photo 6. Field trip to Hakata and Nakasu.

Photo 7. Recipients of Young Geographer Prize/The Impressive Award/Welcome Award.

Nana (graduate student, Nara Women’s University); and “A Geographical Study on Cyberpolitics in Virtual Geography and Relevance between Cyberspace and Physical Space: South Korea’s Presidential Election in 2012” by PARK Sookyung (Sangmyung University). The conference also conferred “Welcome Awards” to two presenters who were not from Japan, Korea, or China.

A banquet dinner was held on the same day, where locally brewed sake and Japanese tea were served, among other things. Afterwards, many of the conference par-

Photo 8. Dancing along to “Tanko Bushi,” fostering a sense of unity among the participants.

ticipants from other countries danced along to “Tanko Bushi”, a work song originating in the Chikuhō region (the destination of the following day’s field trip) which was a high point of the party (Photo 8).

On Saturday, August 3, the field trip was undertaken, based on the theme of investigating the similarities and diversities of sustainable development in Asia, through understanding industrial modernization and post-industrial society. The tour intended to enable the participants to physically feel the metabolism of industry as they traveled northward by bus departing from the Hakozaki Campus of Kyushu University, visiting the Tagawa City Coal Mining Historical Museum and the site of the Yahata Steelworks, observing the Kitakyushu Eco-town from the wheel window, and finally arriving at the Mojiko Retro District. After a group photo shoot in front of Old Moji Customs Building (Photo 9), the participants of the optional tour to Osaka headed for the Shin-Moji Port and the others returned to Kyushu University.

The group of participants subsequently joining the Kyoto RC spent the night cruising from the Shin-Moji Port to the Kobe Port over the Seto Inland Sea. On the next day, Sunday, August 4, the group went to a Korea Town in the Tsuruhashi District, Ikuno Ward, Osaka City, where, divided into three groups, they received an explanation of the history of Korean migrants and the origin of Korea Town with people from the Korea NGO Center as a guide. They had *bulgogi*, a Korean ethnic dish, for lunch in Korea Town, savoring the taste associated with home-made food known as *comeoni* (“mother” in Korean). In the afternoon, they visited Expo ’70 Commemorative Park to do a group photo shoot in front of the Tower of the Sun (Photo 10). They then observed the Expo ’70 Pavilion to reminisce over Japan as it was in the closing days of rapid economic growth. After this, the group explored

Photo 9. A group photograph at Mojiko Retro District.

Photo 10. A group photograph at the Tower of the Sun.

some exhibits, organized by theme and by region of the world, at the adjacent National Museum of Ethnology before proceeding to Kyoto.

On Monday, August 5, a joint session entitled “Regional diversity and a possibility of collaboration in East Asia—a contribution from young geographers—” was held at the Kyoto RC in conjunction with Kyoto RC organizers (Photo 10). The seven presenters were ENDO Nao (Kochi University), KONNO Ena (Tokyo University of Agriculture), CHOI Haeok (Tsinghua University), ZHANG Yan et al. (Beijing Union University), TSURUSHIMA Daiki (graduate student, Tohoku University),

KIENER Johannes (graduate student, Osaka City University), and LU Shan (Northeast Normal University) (their affiliations are at the time of the Conference). In exploring the proper methods for conducting geographical studies, these young scholars from East Asia successfully engaged the audience in an active debate from the viewpoints unique to younger people, who can think flexibly across boundaries of sections as well as scales, and consider the spectrums of spaces from urban to rural, of geographical disciplines from physical to human, and of scales from micro to macro. The joint session also gave us a chance to voice our accomplishments and contributions over the past eight years to both domestic and international geographical communities.

Concluding Remarks

This conference has taken place eight times annually up to and including this year, with not only geographers participating, with various themes as their force of study, but increasingly with researchers from related areas also taking part. Following in the steps of the 5th Conference, the 8th Conference was organized by young researchers and graduate students who worked with their own interests. This approach allowed the participants to generate a sense of participation in running the conference from scratch, to facilitate a lively discussion among them, and to build a network of scholars they can carry forward into the future.

The organizing committee for the 8th Conference is a time-limited body. It will dissolve once all conference-related work is completed. Japan is next scheduled to have a turn playing host in 2016, when the organizing committee for the 11th Conference will be formed. It will be desirable for the committee to build on previous hosting experiences, to carry on the philosophy of this conference, and to successively seek ways of managing the conference so as to give a platform for junior scholars, putting all

these factors into practice at the 11th Conference.

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All photos courtesy of committee member TADA Tadayoshi, except for Photo 6, which is courtesy of MORIKAMI Yuki (undergraduate student, Kyushu University).

Notes

1. The order of the three countries in the name of the conference is determined in the following manner: the host country comes first and the next host country comes second. See Yamamoto (2011a, 2011b) for the outline of its establishment and previous conferences.
2. The organizing committee for the 8th Conference consists of 44 members in total (17 university faculty members, 8 adjunct and part-time lecturers and research fellows, 19 graduate students).
3. A cloud service stands for a service that enables data use and a range of applications on a network.
4. The utilization of the cloud service was fully introduced at the time of the 5th Conference. See Komaki et al. (2011) for more details.

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(J) written in Japanese

(JE) written in Japanese with English abstract