GROUP DISCUSSION

**Reflections on the Inception of the Japanese Society
for Slavic and East European Studies**

Wakio Fujimoto, Takashi Kimura, Otsu Sadayoshi,
and Takayuki Yokota-Murakami

Yokota-Murakami: Good afternoon everyone and thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to attend the present reunion. On this occasion The Japanese Society for Slavic and East European Studies (JSSEES) closes its 38-year history to consolidate its organization with The Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies. Although the academic organization JSSEES will no longer exist, the scholarly journal “Japanese Slavic and East European Studies” will continue publication through The Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies. The present issue, No. 38, as a result, will be the final publication of JSSEES as an independent entity. I have taken advantage of this occasion to convoke the initials members of JSSEES in order to officially record our reflections on the inception of the organization and its scholarly journal, as well as our perspective for the future. Today we are joined by Wakio Fujimoto, Chairman of the Asian Research Institute at Osaka University of Economics and Law, Sadayoshi Otsu, Professor Emeritus of Kobe, Takashi Kimura, Professor Emeritus of Kyoto University and, acting as facilitator of this meeting, Takayuki Yokota-Murakami from the Graduate School of Language and Culture/School of Foreign Studies at Osaka University. I would first like to ask about the circumstances which led to the foundation of JSSEES. Didn’t Professor Fujimoto and Professor Otsu first initiate the founding of the academic association?

Kimura: I remember that at the time I was living in Nagaya and made the trip to Kyoto where the founding assembly was being held.

Yokota-Murakami: Please find the documents in front of you that elucidate the founding prospectus for the organization.

Yokota-Murakami: According to the founding prospectus, there had already been coordination toward the founding of the organization 3 or 4 years prior to Mr. Kimura's recollection. So, if there is no objection, shall we adhere to the founding prospectus to explain the events that led the founding of the association.

Fujimoto: Why don't we let Professor Otsu tell us about that since he has been involved in the founding of association from the very beginning.

Otsu: I was first invited by Iwao Yamaguchi who at the time was teaching Russian at Kyoto University, Department of Liberal Studies. Professor Yamaguchi was in the same liberal studies department at Kyoto University and it was in the office of Professor Masatachi Takahashi, a specialist in economics, where the idea first came up of creating an academic association comprised of researchers of Russian, Slavic and Eastern European Studies. Professor Takahashi was not a specialist in either Russian or Eastern European Economics, but after attending a conference in Romania became interested in both Russia and Eastern Europe. It was Mr. Yamaguchi and Mr. Takahashi who first came up with idea. They both agreed that it was unfortunate that, in spite of the large number of studies carried out in Japan on Russian, little of this research ever reaches foreign borders. So, the idea was to publish research carried out in Japan in English, as well as other European languages, to build a name for Japanese researchers overseas. The problem was that researchers are generally reluctant to create journals with other researchers in different disciplines. With this in mind, the founders thought to create an association with three major areas of studies, economics, history and humanities and social studies. In summary, the initial motivation was that someone needed to take the initiative get Japanese researchers recognized abroad, especially in Europe. I was called by Professor Takahashi to start organizing an academic organization along these lines when the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science was accepting applications for overseas delegates, for which I applied. To my surprise I was accepted and found myself in Moscow from October 1979. I seemed to have veered off the initial background of the organization of the association that is how I remember it.

Yokota-Murakami: So it was in the last half of the 1970's that, in spite of the high quality of research being done in Japan on the Slavic regions, it was determined that Japanese researchers went virtually unrecognized overseas.

During the exchanges with foreign researchers was there a specific occasion that led to this realization?

Otsu: Sure, of course. Even among Japanese academic associations, such as the one Mr. Hiroshi Kimura belonged to, there were publications in English, albeit low in number.

Otsu: However, from our point of view, disciplines other than international politics, Mr. Kimura's area of expertise, that are broader in scope needed recognition more so than others. Wasn't it for this reason that efforts had to be made?

Yokota-Murakami: Professor Fujimoto, do you have anything to add? Weren't you already involved in May of 1978 when the prospectus was being drawn up?

Fujimoto: I was in Moscow from October of 1978 to September of 1979. But if we are talking about who were the founders, I was already in agreeance with the idea even before the prospectus was drawn up. I was not around for the first founding assembly. Looking at the roster I see it was dated September 5, 1978, and that there were about 80 founding members. Up until that point academic associations on Russia and Eastern Europe were primarily based in Tokyo. This meant that even talk of an association in the Kansai area also originated in Tokyo. That indeed had been discussed, but when it actually came to deciding the founding members, this meant that no matter how much a call for members all around Japan was made, that a great number of them were in Tokyo.

Otsu: Yeah, that's right, there was a call for a broad spectrum of membership.

Fujimoto: Mr. Sadatoshi Igeta from Waseda University, Mr. Masanori Kikuchi from Tokyo University, Mr. Shoichi Kimura also from Tokyo University, Mr. Sotokichi Kusaka from Nihon Fukushi University were all involved. In this way, there were members from all over Japan. The idea was not to limit ourselves to the Kansai area, but to extend out to all other areas in Japan. Another thing is that, as Professor Otsu mentioned, Japan was already a political and economic center, so the creation of a Russian/Eastern European academic association was taking an entirely new turn. What we were really emphasizing were the contributions that Japanese researchers were making abroad. As the association regulations purport, the association proposed publication of a European language journal, making its objectives different from other academic associations.

Yokota-Murakami: So in the beginning there was a mutual understanding about the multilingual nature of the association. The original founder roster

consisted of 78 diverse members, all sympathetic to the cause and motivated to making a name for themselves abroad.

Kimura: Spirits were really high at the founding general assembly.

Fujimoto: It was November 23rd, 1978 at the Rakuyu Hall in Kyoto. It says here in the meeting minutes that Mr. Shoichiro Takenami from Momoyama Gakuin University gave a memorial lecture on “Recent...”. At the time the chairman was Mr. Katsuzo Okumura from Ritsumeikan University and the secretary was Mr. Sadayoshi Otsu.

Yokota-Murakami: Professor Fujimoto, you were not present at the founding general assembly.

Fujimoto: That’s right, at the time I was still in Moscow.

Yokota-Murakami: So at that time Professor Yamaguchi composed the founding prospectus?

Fujimoto: It was Mr. Takeshi Sakon from Osaka City University, Mr. Iwao Yamaguchi from Kyoto University and Mr. Masadachi Takahashi.

Fujimoto: Others included, Mr. Akiyoshi Nakayama from Kyoto Sangyo University. When debating the contents of the prospectus there was an active exchange of opinions.

Yokota-Murakami: That is how it was brought together. And when there was a positive response when we decide to go through with it.

Fujimoto: The administrative headquarter was set in Kyoto.

Kimura: We had an IBM electric typewriter at Kyoto University, which turned out playing a huge role. This was a ball head type “Selectric typewriter” in which fonts and script sizes could be changed with different typeballs.

Kimura: That belonged to Mr. Masadachi Takahashi who brought with him that overpriced typewriter to the economics room at the liberal arts faculty at Kyoto University. It was used among the Russian class office staff, Ms. Haruyo Kinoshita, at the faculty of liberal arts in Kyoto University, and the officers of JSSEES based in Kansai area to type up their own editions. They typewriter was equipped with a square magnetic card which had memory storage. One card would only store about a third of a typed page, and it didn’t have a display so every texts had to be printed out and verified. Needless to say, any correction was really troublesome.

Fujimoto: That is one of those things that you have to actually experience to know how hard it really is. (*laughter*)

Kimura: You would spend a long time to type everything out and then take the magnetic card to the printers. On top of that, the printing technicians were not equipped for languages other than English.

Fujimoto: One of the reasons that Kyoto University became the headquarters is because they were the only ones with a typewriter.

Kimura: Not only that, but the font and script size had a lot of adjustments, as well as bold type. However, every adjustment required that the ball be changed. It was a real hassle.

Yokota-Murakami: Yeah, all of the texts in the initial stages needed to be manually printed. All of them. I remember it was in 1987, when I started at Osaka University and Professor Kimura said to me “you know how to type in English, don’t you?”

Kimura: And we eventually start using computers. It was one of the first Macintosh models. At that time, Macintosh was the only ones that could process different European languages. The printing companies wound up changing from IBM to Macintosh. Even then, that didn’t change the fact that we had to make our own issues. I remember that it what it was like.

Yokota-Murakami: Yeah that is for sure. We have gone off track a bit too much. Let’s go back to the background of the inception of the association. The founding assembly was held on November 23, 1978. At this stage JSSEES was already founded. But the first journal was published in 1980. That means in November of 1978 preparations for the first edition were made the following year, and the year after that the editing process was started.

Kimura: The first issue was coming up with money. If there was no capital then we couldn’t publish any journals. That is why even after the year following the foundation of the association we still didn’t have the first edition out. I remember hearing about the first edition being put off for a long time.

Yokota-Murakami: I have here a newsletter for the first edition and it is dated March 27, 1979. That can only mean by 1980 the first edition had already been published and the spring of 1979 editing was already in process as well as we do it now. Part of that editing process for the first edition of the journal was the newsletter.

Kimura: There was also the issue of proper refereeing of manuscripts. We had an especially large number of literary contributions and, knowing that it would be read abroad, we had to make sure quality standards were beyond

national norms. This led, as I heard, to a conflict in agreement between members of the publishing committee. Some claimed that if member's papers were rejected they may threaten to quit the association, adding to the disagreement.

Yokota-Murakami: The newsletter for the second edition is dated April 15, 1980 in which there was a call for papers for the second edition, so the first edition must have already come out. The process of this second edition is still unclear.

Fujimoto: Hey, look at this. On the back of the first edition newsletter are the editing policies for the founding edition.

Yokota-Murakami: They sure are. The editing policies for the founding edition.

Fujimoto: It says we had secured 96 pages for the first issue. That's one research survey and concerning the articles...

Yokota-Murakami: So that means by this stage contributions had already been published. In other words, when the newsletter came out the association had already officially initiated the call for papers and that resulted in the contributions.

Fujimoto: At this point there had already been one policy established. An annual survey was to be published which divided research carried out in Japan into three fields.

Otsu: Yes, that's right.

Kimura: It seems to me there was indeed a column for a survey.

Yokota-Murakami: So, Professor Kimura, approximately when did you start submitting contributions.

Kimura: I started along with Mr. Otsu and the others at the same time. From April of 1979 to March of 1980 I was on academic leave at the Russian Literature Research Center in Leningrad. I submitted a paper I had written on the poetry of Lermontov set in Georgia. However, I had to rewrite it three times. I think it was finally published in the third edition. Later when I sent an offprint of the paper to researchers at the Russian Literature Research Center it was received with strong criticism. In the journal that the research center publishes, there was an extremely critical review of my interpretation of Russian history. It was so bad that I wouldn't even call it a scholarly article. I then published another article in response to the previous one which clarified the relationship between Georgia and Russia. That is how my relationship with the JSEES journal got started. So in one way the journal has fulfilled its role as an international publication.

Wakio Fujimoto, Takashi Kimura, Otsu Sadayoshi, and Takayuki Yokota-Murakami

Otsu: I see what you mean.

Yokota-Murakami: Looking at the second newsletter it says there were 247 members, which shows that even from its inception membership was not an issue.

Kimura: Yeah, there were quite a few members.

Otsu: I think we did pretty well.

Yokota-Murakami: How about the collection of membership dues?

Otsu: We had a steady flow of income from dues.

Yokota-Murakami: Yeah, those were the days. It was 2,000 yen a head. Was 2,000 yen enough to cover the costs during that time?

Kimura: In order to cut back on expenses almost everyone brought their own lunches.

Fujimoto: Among the members, Professor Bunei Tsunoda, the archeologist who at that time was director of the Heian Museum in Tokyo, was another important resource.

Otsu: Indeed, there were people who were influential.

Fujimoto: Because of his administrative position in the museum he had strong ties with business circles. And that Mr. Tsunoda got donations from businesses, and most importantly, suggested a donation register. He informed us that the most important part of a donation register is the first name that appears, so the head the list should be carefully thought out.

Kimura: Yeah, more often than not, businesses decide their donations depending on the first entry in the register and the amount donated.

Fujimoto: On several occasions Mr. Tsunoda got the founders together and went to the Bank of Japan's Kyoto branch, in what is now the Heian Museum. There the founders learned how to approach businesses and acquired the initial entry in the register. Then they went to Osaka to collect donations. Mr. Yamaguchi and the others got together and exclaimed what an important international journal it was. And then we got the first donation. If you look at the list of the supporting members you will see it.

Yokota-Murakami: There were several charter sponsors, but just three supporting members. There were a hundred charter sponsors.

Fujimoto: As the charter sponsors, we were expected to pay double our share in dues.

Kimura: Yeah, that's right.

Fujimoto: We went to several businesses to solicit supporting members.

Kimura: There were a few who put out for donations.

Fujimoto: It all started coming together when we got supporting membership dues from businesses. When we looked at how much we got, Mr. Tsunoda said that we wouldn't be able to do anything with that amount. So I remember we went off to a few more places.

Yokota-Murakami: That was before the economic bubble burst, so that was a time when companies were still comparatively favorable to donating. Yeah, I would say that, comparatively speaking, it was a good start. Then there was the application for funds from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science in 1980. This was...

Fujimoto: We didn't get accepted for the longest time.

Yokota-Murakami: Really? There weren't any grants?

Kimura: We didn't start getting accepted for grants until 1991. Even though every year Mr. Masadachi Takahashi, in accounting, providing all the documentation to apply, we never got accepted. I remember being told year after year that we had been turned down again for funds to help publish an academic journal.

Otsu: Yeah, that's right.

Yokota-Murakami: So the association had to make do with membership dues and funds from the supporting members.

Kimura: We made do with just the dues we ourselves paid.

Yokota-Murakami: So you are saying that even with donations finances were extremely tight?

Fujimoto: Since we did all the typing ourselves we had no labor costs to pay. Later on we had the printing company print out the journal which wasn't all that costly.

Yokota-Murakami: You mean the printing costs. Since we made the template ourselves.

Kimura: There were quite a few libraries and research facilities abroad that accepted donations of our journal. However, overseas shipping costs were expensive.

Yokota-Murakami: I am sure they were. Well, here it says the costs for the first issue were 895,000 yen for printing and 100,000 yen for shipping.

Kimura: That is a lot for sure.

Yokota-Murakami: For a total of 1,000,000 yen. That is much more expensive than it would cost now.

Kimura: What happened with the printing costs was that at the printing press so many proofs had to be made. Even though we made the copy blocks, after that was a lot of hard work.

Fujimoto: Well actually, printing costs were a lot more expensive back then. They are not cheap like they are now.

Yokota-Murakami: However, it says here that 80,000 yen was not enough for the first issue, and that they needed 200,000 more yen... There were 247 members and even at 2,000 yen a head and double for the charter members, it wasn't even close to covering the costs.

Yokota-Murakami: How did you come up with the rest?

Fujimoto: Well what we did was, for the first year we only collected funds without actually publishing any journals. For the second year we collected funds and published the journal, so we had collected twice and published one journal.

Yokota-Murakami: It is stated here that the insufficient amount was made up in the 1980 fiscal year. So, as you said there was a year in which dues were collected and there was no journal published, right?

Fujimoto: As Mr. Takahashi mentioned, if at any point journal publication was concluded than one year of dues would have to be paid back.

Yokota-Murakami: That was an issue that came up at the meeting about the merge of JSSEES and The Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies. Well, thinking about it now 2,000 yen isn't really that much. From what we have discussed it was financially challenging, but were there any other aspects that were particularly troubling? One mentioned earlier was the process of making the printing plates.

Kimura: The printing plates were a lot of work but getting everything shipped off was also a huge challenge. When it was time to send out the journals we all got together and rented a delivery truck. I remember hauling everything to the Sakyo Post Office. At delivery time about ten people at a time got together to fill up bags.

Yokota-Murakami: You mean kind of like a shuttle service?

Kimura: Yeah, that part went smoothly. The problem was the journals were so heavy. When we got the ones going overseas bundled up and it was quite a load.

Kimura: Yeah. To make a name for the association abroad donating copies of the journal overseas at our cost was the original plan. And at the same time,

we had to get the journals sold overseas. Also, Professor Otsu was coming back from London so we had him go through an English agency to get the journal sold in Europe. Just to mention that was a big help on his part.

Otsu: Actually, I was there not for a conference, but for another reason. It was a company that put out pocket editions. It was called Lavis Marketing. We couldn't believe it when we found on the back cover the following: "JSSEES has appointed Lavis Marketing as its sole stockholding agency for all areas outside Japan."

Fujimoto: Professor Otsu did us a huge service every time he went to the U.K. and stopped in at the agency.

Fujimoto: There was also the contract that was sent every year tot agency. I guess we sent about fifty copies.

Kimura: Yeah, that sounds about right.

Fujimoto: The deal with the agency was that they would sell them at international conferences so to send the journals off to them. They said to send about fifty. We continued sending issues for a number of years then it finally faded out.

Otsu: That's because we didn't follow up on it.

Fujimoto: Yeah, but we did sell a few copies.

Yokota-Murakami: So that is how we went about shipping them overseas. And then there was the newsletter. We got requests for the first issue from France, Romania, Hungary and the U.K., from quite a number of places. So we talked about financial challenges, and the difficulties of getting known abroad. Were there issues related to journal editing, like getting enough contributions, refereeing and general issues related to editing?

Kimura: As I remember, like I said before, the refereeing for literary papers was extremely strict and, in most cases, papers were rejected.

Yokota-Murakami: So the refereeing was carried out by the members.

Kimura: The refereeing was done by the editorial committee. Papers were distributed to members according to their discipline.

Otsu: Each one.

Kimura: Each was separated by discipline:

Yokota: Murakami: Were there comparatively a lot papers sent in?

Kimura: A lot were sent in but not many actually got published.

Yokota: Murakami: You mean that there were a lot of submissions but that many were rejected.

Kimura: I had the same experience. I received pretty harsh opinions from referees. I remember rewriting papers several times after receiving comments from referees.

Yokota-Murakami: That is usual for an academic journal.

Kimura: Yeah, I guess so. That's what we do now.

Yokota-Murakami: That is what needs to be done in order to maintain high quality. From the editorial committee's perspective, isn't it by publishing papers of quality that the association can make a name for itself?

Kimura: Well, I guess. (*laughter*)

Kimura: I wonder. In international conferences literature is really popular and when I go abroad to these events people often say that we have really brought the association along. But they are probably just saying that. I bet it is not the same story with economics. Economics and politics, I mean.

Otsu: It is different with those two disciplines (politics/economics). There are not many paper submissions, but too few. One reason is because many in the editorial committee are from older generations. I also had limited contacts. I remember comments like "We really need more submissions", "if that is the case, then we should.." and "that should definitely be submitted" among editorial committee members. So it really varied from discipline to discipline.

Fujimoto: Papers from politics and economics only came out once a year. Even if there were submissions publications were so slow that it was almost obsolete. It was extremely difficult to get submissions.

Yokota-Murakami: The journal was late coming out. Especially by the time I got involved there was a long wait for literary papers. That appears to be a current trend, but it is not necessarily negative. Even after the merger with the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies, JSSEES will be known for culture and literature, especially recently.

Fujimoto: Another thing I thought about the journal was that one of its principal objectives was to introduce Japanese research abroad. That is why it had a chronicle since the first issue. Another thing was it was also good for introducing personal research achievements.

Kimura: There was column for members to list their annual research achievements.

Fujimoto: We did that all the way to the end. Actually, that was a good selling point. There was talk about getting rid of that column, but it never happened

because it was thought that we would lose a lot of members. Even with that, the column lasted for a long time.

Kimura: We had it in Japanese, but as I recall Mr. Egawa, Mr. Hara and the others put out their “Russian Notebook”. That also got a really good reception for the same reason. They put up a good sum of money to introduce research trends in Japan. That is something that is pretty difficult to do on your own, it takes money and labor. But that is something that JSSEES has kept up. Along those lines, the meaningful work done by Mr. Tetsuo Mochizuki from Slavic Eurasian Research Center from Hokkaido University has been highly recognized.

Yokota-Murakami: I believe it has been an extremely important database. I assume that it will continue to be so.

Kimura: Now with the internet it may have lost some of its gravity. But it is amazing that the association has kept it up since the days of making your own lunches.

Yokota-Murakami: I think the referential value is obvious. Even after the merging of the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies and JSSEES, I hope that the “Japanese Slavic and East European Studies” tradition of publishing a European language journal continues. Earlier we talked out how in the second newsletter it says the journal was effective in diffusing research related information from Japan. Are there any papers they we have published that can be considered research achievements abroad? For example, does anyone has knowledge of someone who has read a paper in JSSEES?

Fujimoto: In the thirteenth newsletter dated May of 1984, there was a column about a response to the journal abroad in which a paper written by Mr. Kimura (No. 3), (No. 4) was mentioned. It says that “with respect to Mr. Kimura’s ‘Lermontov’s Novice and the Georgia problem’ Mr. Gregorian from the Russian Academy of the Science Literature Research Center published a criticism titled “Kimura’s ‘Lermontov’s Novice and the Georgia problem’”. After that, in response to the controversy surrounding Mr. Haruki Niwa and Mr. Kiichi Mochizuki “Estimating the Russian Military Budget” there was a letter from a Russian living in West Germany named Adirim, requesting the publication of a critical thesis.

Yokota-Murakami: That is how by creating controversy the association has diffused its name abroad. That is really something special.

Fujimoto: So it has had an impact? For instance, in the Russian Academy of the Science library (INION) in Moscow there have been editions of JSEES

for some time now. They always had old editions on hand. Having the journal in a library was really significant.

Otsu: That's for sure.

Yokota-Murakami: The journal was also sent to the American Library of Congress. They must have all the issues. Professor Fujimoto mentioned previously, but in the following issue there will be a general index of all of the submissions to date, which hopefully will be seen by a wide range of researchers of Slavic studies and spark interest in past papers, and even become a source of reference. I really hope that it becomes recognized as intellectual property, and more specifically as such in the world of Slavic research. Up to now the association has surely forged a name for itself in intellectual property terms of academic property. However, as mentioned earlier the journal JSSEES, as an academic organization, will merge with the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies. I believe there to be many reasons for the merger, such as difficulties related to the editing the journal and issues with administrating the academic association, just to name a few. These difficulties administrating the organization, especially the hardships related to its foundation, were the center of our discussions, but how about the challenges after the journal was up and running? Any thoughts?

Kimura: About the issue with soliciting grants from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science mentioned earlier, in order to be recognized as a respectable academic association, besides a publication, you need to host symposiums and regular research presentations. That is what is really difficult. Getting presenters, among the relatively small number of members, to present every year on a wide range of specialties and disciplines, not to mention securing the venue, is quite an undertaking. We seemed to get all that done. But I remember someone saying that by figuring out what overlapping areas there are with the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies we can share the burden.

Yokota-Murakami: So JSSEES started out with the sole objective of publishing a European language academic journal and then began hosting symposiums and other activities related to academic associations much later.

Kimura: I think a reason why our applications for grants kept getting turned down was because we didn't have the appearance of a legitimate academic association.

Yokota-Murakami: That was much later.

Kimura: Later? It was around the mid 90's that we started to get publishing funds from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. (Editor's note: JSSEES began receiving a grant for publication of JSEES since 1991 [no. 12].)

Fujimoto: About why we started to get approved for funds for publishing was, I don't remember who said it, but someone said, "one reason why you guys don't get accepted (applications were submitted from the first year on) is because the percentage of dues collected is low". Applications are not accepted unless there is at least 80% collection rate. We had no idea and, honestly, we only had 70 something percent. After that was pointed out to us we realized that it made sense why our applications were always rejected. After that we decided to increase our collection percentage to over 80%. What we did was we had members with long outstanding dues withdraw from the association. By doing that we soon had over an 80% collection rate. We were unaware of the standards for achieving grants. We had academic lectures from the beginning, but we didn't call them conferences. That is something that we should have done. So that is what we did and from then on, we received grants every year. It has a lot to do with prioritizing making a name for Japanese research published in European languages. It has gone smoothly until now, but it will become more difficult and funds will be reduced. In other words, we will have come to terms with a very being a low-budgeted academic society that cannot receive funding.

Kimura: At one time we were told that if the printing costs were under 1,000,000 yen then we should cover the costs ourselves.

Fujimoto: In the end what they were saying was to fend for yourselves. From that point on our budgets got really tight. Up to then weren't we receiving about 800,000 yen?

Yokota-Murakami: We stopped getting funded from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science about ten years ago. That was because Japan was going through some educational policy problems, and even now they are cutting back on financial aid for international conferences and other nominal financial support. That has been problematic for JSSEES and the tightening of educational policies has only been getting worse.

Fujimoto: Whatever the setback, temporary or not, the reason for being accepted for grants had everything to do with our presence abroad.

Kimura: You have a point.

Fujimoto: I guess we stayed on that path and kept getting accepted for grants. But from here on those small amounts would be pretty useless which explains the cutbacks. It is harder and harder to be an academic association whose primary activity is publishing a European language journal.

Yokota-Murakami: In addition to administrative issues, problem of organizing a symposium, not to mention the manpower needed.

Fujimoto: About the manpower, The Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies and JSSEES have already collaborated on a symposium and I don't really think it was that much of an issue. Some years the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies have hosted symposiums and some years JSSEES has done it.

Yokota-Murakami: So that is how is what done?

Fujimoto: And in fact there are quite a few of us who belong to both associations so it is often hard to tell which association is hosting events. It is not because JSSEES wasn't capable of doing it.

Fujimoto: Yeah, I guess it was because there were a lot who were in both associations. In addition, it became difficult for the administration office to get anything done. When Mr. Yamaguchi from the liberal arts faculty at Kyoto University was the chairman, Ms. Haruyo Kinoshita, one of the office staff for the Russian language classes, really got a lot of administrative things done. Once she was transferred to another department all the responsibilities fell on the office director.

Yokota-Murakami: Collaborated events like symposiums with the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies have been being hosted for a long while. Were there any other collaborations before these symposiums?

Kimura: Every year JSSEES has been hosting smaller scale events. But since the collaborations started, the two organizations have been taking turns administrating conferences.

Fujimoto: Costs for hosting a conference were distributed in proportion to the number of members in the association.

Yokota-Murakami: Wouldn't you say since then it appears to be a completely unified collaboration?

Fujimoto: Actually no, because JSESE has independent general assemblies. But at one point we decided to collaborate and on the afternoon of the second day, following the JSESE general assembly we collaborated on the

second symposium we organized, but rotated administration of the collaborated conferences.

Yokota-Murakami: I see, administrating conferences.

Kimura: There were also conferences that JSSEES administrated. So that is what you mean by taking turns.

Yokota-Murakami: So when was the first discussion of a merger?

Kimura: In order to take the association further, I first started considering the inevitable merger with the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies about ten years before I retired from Kyoto University. In other words, I left in 2008 so it was in the late 1990's.

Yokota-Murakami: That was quite a while ago.

Kimura: I started thinking about it, well quite a long time ago. I remember it was when I attended a JCREES (The Japanese Council for Russian and East European Studies 5th Liaison Council Assembly) conference with Mr. Shigeki Hakama from Aoyama Graduate University and we talked about the possibility of a collaborative conference. In other words, in spite of the numerous members specializing in literature at conferences hosted by the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies almost none of them make presentations. I also tried to sell the idea by saying that a collaborative effort with JSSEES would create new possibilities, and as a result we started to host conferences collaboratively. From then on we hosted all the conferences jointly. However, I remember after about five years I slowly worked up the chance to bring up the subject of merging.

Fujimoto: Mr. Hakamada was the chairman and I was the vice chairman so we understood where the director of the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies was coming from, and we knew that he wasn't even considering a merger. (*laughter*)

Kimura: Yeah that's for sure.

Fujimoto: Mr. Hakamada agreed that if we merged then we should integrate the Russian literature academic association and go back to our original objective as a Japanese association that publishes a journal in European languages.

Kimura: I imagine that is what he said, even though I didn't hear it for myself.

Fujimoto: There were no internal discussions concerning a merger between the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies and JSSEES.

The discussion first emerged between the chairman of JSSEES, Mr. Tadayuki Hayashi and the representative director of the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies, Mr. Toshihiko Ueno. Two thirds of the members of JSSEES are members of the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies so one merit of the merger would be a decrease in association dues for those members.

Yokota-Murakami: Well, whatever the background was, the merger takes into effect in March of 2018. As I mentioned earlier, we intend to maintain the journal.

The journal has been the backbone of JSSEES and will remain just as it has until now. With regards to the journal publication, there will be no future changes or discussion on how it should or shouldn't be. The founding members have their own ideas about the future of the journal. With that in mind, could you share your thoughts on the journal?

Kimura: There needs to be a consistent number of contributors. In order to increase contributors, the journal must be appealing enough to attract more interest. So I have many thoughts on what the that appeal consist of? As the journal originally sought out to accomplish, I think it is international recognition for Russian/ Slavic studies research in Japan. At the 2015 international conference in Makuhari the journal was on display at the exhibition space and JSSEES appealed to how it has steadily been built it up. Even if it is a slow uphill haul I think international recognition is the only future for the journal. At Makuhari I had back-numbered issues on hand and I and the chief director, Mr. Hayashi, took turns manning the exhibition space. Some conference members thumbed through it, but even though it was free not many actually went off with a copy. It was a bit depressing.

Otsu: Yes, it was.

Yokota-Murakami: I have been on the editing committee for about the last ten years. It is pretty rudimentary, but the level of the contributions is the most important thing. If researchers from overseas think there are academically pertinent articles in every issue then that will add to the prestige of the journal. But the problem is how to maintain the level once you reach it. I really hope that a merger with the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies will increase the statistical numbers of contributors, and with it the level of the contributing articles. At present, academic associations for Slavic studies

already have high standards, but my hope is that this will increase even more so. However, in Japan, since its inception, JSSEES has been riddled with problems that, in my opinion, have yet to be solved. In spite of the high level of Slavic studies in Japan there is still no recognition abroad. One obvious problem in the poor level of linguistic competency. Recently there are fewer and fewer article submissions. That is because, even if researchers can compose a quality academic article, many can't express themselves in a foreign language. That was a challenge we faced in 1980 and has yet to be resolved. I truly hope that we solve this issue and can continue to seek out recognition overseas.

Kimura: Except, like everyone says, graduate student supervisors nowadays need to at least appeal to overseas researchers by publishing in a European language, unlike when we were young. With time I think this will all change because the number of graduate students, compared to the old days, are quite abundant.

Yokota-Murakami: I don't feel that attitudes of supervising professors has changed all that much, but I myself have sometimes found graduates student's inclinations surprising. In my opinion, more than Japanese, those who present in Russian or English and address international crowds obviously deserve more merit. Hopefully there are more of them in the future. Obviously students write papers, etc. in Japanese, but don't the majority of supervising professors take this for granted? As Professor Kimura pointed out, recently students have changed a lot so I think things will be better in the future. Professor Otsu, what do you think about JSEES after the upcoming thirty-ninth issue?

Otsu: From early on there have been contributions written in English in economics and sociology in the various academic associations. We have especially dedicated all our energy to for this. It is really moving to consider how far we have come. In spite of my limited help, Mr. Kimura's proactive work has truly supported JSSEES activities. I really mean it when I say that his efforts have paid off.

Yokota-Murakami: I am sure you will also do what it takes to keep the association going.

Fujimoto: A recent problem is how should we deal with contributions by foreigners sent from overseas. This problem has been the center of discussion for a long while. Until now even when the papers are of quality, we have essentially closed our doors to those articles written by non-members. We have done that because we, the members, have been financially supporting the association. But

(From left) Profs. Fujimoto, Otsu, and Yokota-Murakami.
At OUEL Research Center, Osaka University of Economics and Law

I don't think we can continue this way. I think that unless we have more open policies to overseas contributors as well, and have Japanese pass the same level of refereeing, it will be difficult for our academic journal to make the grade. Another thing, with the digitalization of books, it has become a rarity to read paper-printed books. I think we need to consider putting out a digitalized version as well.

Kimura: Actually, we are doing that. All associations do and we are no exception.

Fujimoto: We are but...

Kimura: You mean the number of accesses.

Fujimoto: There are accesses, aren't there?

Otsu: How about the number of accesses just for the JSEES journal?

Fujimoto: It is something we have to do for the good of the journal. And we have to promote it widely in the same way. If people think it is only a paper journal, no one is going to look at it. I think that is something we have to look into from here on.

Yokota-Murakami: As I said before, I agree with the digitalization issue. And about loosening policies for overseas contributors and more widely advertising. If you look at academic journals in western countries, one that only allows members to publish are the minority and journals that accept con-

Prof. Kimura in Morioka participated via FaceTime

tributions from around world are the majority. So, we should do that as well. In addition, the promotion of Japanese Slavic studies abroad should continue to be are objective. Finding a healthy balance between the two is going to be the principal issue at hand. Another major concern is what I mentioned earlier about the language issue. When JSSEES was started the premise was to put out a European language journal, not English only. When we discussed merging with the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies, they adamantly stressed making an English language journal. Their argument was that, unless it was an English only journal people abroad would not read it. I was apprehensive about this. In JSSEES there are a lot of members in culture and literary studies. The Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies is more oriented towards economics which explains the pressure for an English language journal. That said, in the future there is a possibility that JSSEES will be forced to be an English only journal. Professor Otsu, what is your take on this?

Otsu: There may be a mutual understanding that in order to be more influential English is better, but I think continuing to allow contributions in Russian would be an added characteristic to the journal. It may be easier said than done.

Kimura: In America, as a general rule degrees in Russian literature research have to be written in English. It sounds a lot like English imperialism that

they don't use Cyrillic, and that all quotations must be translated. I don't have a problem with papers on economics written only in English though. However, internationally speaking, journals in which several languages are employed tend to be considered of poor quality.

Fujimoto: At this stage the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies doesn't seem to putting up much opposition.

Yokota-Murakami: With regards to the future of JSSEES, among the members of the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies, which includes myself, the discussion could change, or then again, it may not. It could go either way. Either we limit ourselves to English as a means to survive globalization, or make our mark as a multilingual journal, like the rest of the world. I think it is quite plausible that these are our two options. Personally, I think we should stay true to the original JSSEES principle of a European language, multilingual journal.

Kimura: It sounds like we are talking about a species on the verge of extinction. (*laughter*)

Kimura: Something strange happened a while ago. In December of 2016 I was invited to MGIMO in Moscow. At the conference oral presentation were in English or Russian, but those presentation to be published in the journal had to be submitted in English. Those kinds of recent trends make me think that English imperialism is upon us.

Yokota-Murakami: That is because nowadays Russians are proficient in English.

Kimura: Yeah, recently everything is done in English.

Yokota-Murakami: Especially younger generations. Compared to Japanese, Russian students are much better at English. That is a sign of the times. It makes you think about how different things are now from the Soviet era. JSSEES will need to decide its fate in this changing political climate. So what shall we do for a final word. Anything is fine. Let us know if there is anything to add.

Kimura: Not only the ones that are here, but I think that everyone has dedicated themselves to JSSEES.

Yokota-Murakami: Their labors have been left as the intellectual property of the association. That is something we must preserve. I think that, as members of the Japanese Association for Russian and Eastern European Studies, we need to insure the condition that, in addition to continuing the journal, the issues

published up to date are stored in a data base as intellectual property of the association for future utilization.

Fujimoto: I feel it is strange that MGIMO, an adjunct university of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, requires English publications. There is one thing I want to say. When JSSEES was founded, during the first assembly the acronym “JASSEES” was made. The Japanese Association for Soviet and East European Studies claimed they had the same acronym, so we wound up dropping the “A”. However, the issue of how to read it was a problem. It was not clear if it should be read in Japanese as “JESEEZ” or “ISEEZ.” In the end they changed their name and the acronym problem was resolved. However, the problem of how to read it is still unresolved, it varies from person to person. But once the organizations merge the issue will be essentially resolved. So this has become a bit of a punchline.

Otsu: That is how it was interpreted? (*laughter*)

Fujimoto: So the name we made was resurrected.

Yokota-Murakami: Isn’t that something.

Kimura: The winner is the one who lives longer. (*laughter*)

Yokota-Murakami: Well I believe we have brought JSSEES a long way. Professor Kimura, thank you for coming all the way from Morioka. Professor Fujimoto, Professor Otsu, thank you very much.