

SLAVIC-EURASIAN RESEARCH CENTER NEWS

No. 28
March 2024

Report on 2023 Summer International Symposium: “The Phase of Catastrophe? The Crisis of the 14th Century in Afro-Eurasian Context”

Introduction: Perspectives of the Symposium

The Slavic-Eurasian Research Center’s 2023 Summer International Symposium: “The Phase of Catastrophe? The Crisis of the 14th Century in Afro-Eurasian Context” has ended. Once again, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who supported the symposium. The main aim of this symposium was to understand the “crisis of the 14th century” as a world-historical phenomenon that transformed a world system into another. For this purpose, we need to think not only in a Western context, but also on an Afro-Eurasian scale. Throughout the discussions of the symposium, the following five points emerged on the “crisis of the 14th century”: 1) regional diversity, 2) chronological diversity, 3) historiography, 4) temporal cycles, and 5) the emergence of a new era and new powers.

Slavic-Eurasian Research Center 2023 Summer International Symposium
co-organized as 6th Meeting of the Mongol Empire Spring Series

The Phase of Catastrophe

The Crisis of the 14th Century in Afro-Eurasian Context

崩壊の局面 ユーラシアから
14世紀の危機を思考する

Date: July 13-14, 2023 All times are Japan time (JST/UTC+9)

PROGRAM

DAY1 13 July (Thu.)

9:30-9:45 **Opening Remarks**

9:45-11:45 **Session 1 "Reconsidering the Crisis from the West."**
Chair: Yoko Aoshima (SRC)
Toshio Ohnuki (Tokyo Metropolitan University, Japan)
Rudolf Shakhmatov (SRC)
Johannes Preyer-Kappeler (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Austria) [Online]
Discussant: Masaru Ozawa (Wakayama University, Japan)

13:30-15:30 **Session 2 "The Crisis in East Asia."**
Chair: David Wolff (SRC)
Nobuhiko Ueno (Hiroshima Shudo University, Japan)
Ishayahu Landa (University of Bonn, Germany)
Francesca Faschetti (University of Vienna, Austria) [Online]
Discussant: Soyoung Choi (Dongguk University, South Korea)

15:50-17:50 **Session 3 "New Methods to Calibrate the Crisis."**
Chair: Tomohiko Ujamaa (SRC)
Takeshi Nakatsuka (Nagoya University, Japan)
Yoko Nishimura (Toyo University, Japan) [Online]
Yoshi Iwahata (SRC) & Takeshi Nakatsuka (Toyo University, Japan)
Discussant: Adam Ledebski (Max Planck Institute of Geoanthropology, Germany) [Online]

DAY2 14 July (Fri.)

13:30-15:30 **Session 4 "The Crisis from the Viewpoint of Connectivity."**
Chair: Mladen Bekarunov (SRC)
Yasuhiro Yoshikuchi (Rikkyo University, Japan)
Yihao Qiu (Fudan University, China)
Philip Slavin (University of Stirling, UK) [Online]
Discussant: Wonhee Cho (Academy of Korean Studies, South Korea)

15:50-17:50 **Session 5 "Crisis in Northern World from Macro and Micro Perspectives."**
Chair: Norihito Naganawa (SRC & CAE)
Marie Perle (Paris Nanterre University, France)
Kazuyuki Nakamura (Hokkaido University, Japan)
Nicola Di Cosimo (Institute for Advanced Study, USA) [Online]
Discussant: Konstantin Golov (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria)

VENUE
Room 403, Slavic-Eurasian Research Center (SRC), Hokkaido University, Japan

ACCESS MAP

LANGUAGE: English
中国語 英語 日本語

Details & Registration
<https://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/sympo/2023/summer/index.html>

Registration deadline: 24:00 (JST) on 2 July (Sun), 2023

Organizer
JPS Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (S): "Interdisciplinary Approach to the 'Crisis of the 14th Century'"
(B): "Explorations in Survival Strategies at the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University"
JPS Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (S): "Transmission of Milieu and Atmosphere: Reality's Product"
Supported by Japan Consortium for Area Studies (JCAS)

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1. Regional Diversity: Different Climates

The first point is regional diversity. For example, with regard to the Great Famine (1315–1322), the Byzantine empire experienced a drought (1315, 1317) during the same period, a different kind of extreme weather than in rainy northwestern Europe (Preiser-Kapeller). Regional deviation from the Great Famine was also observed in Russia, where the Great Famine occurred earlier than in northwestern Europe, from 1305–1309, but also with heavy rains (Shakhmatov). In East Asia, on the other hand, unlike Europe which experienced a significant cooling trend, average temperatures continued to rise consistently from 1290 to 1320. Furthermore, precipitation, which is generally inversely related to temperature in East Asia, did not decline during the 1320s. Amid these climate anomalies, floods accompanied by famines occurred frequently in the territory of the Yuan dynasty (China) during this period (Uno).

However, in more northern areas, especially around the Amur River estuary, historical records concerning the activity of “barbarians” in the region indicate cold temperatures from the late 13th to the beginning of the 14th centuries (Nakamura). General terms are not sufficient for an understanding of the climate of East Asia. In addition, in West Asia, between Europe and East Asia, especially in the Baghdad region, there was a marked cooling from the end of the 1260s to the 1280s, corresponding with a period of political turmoil in the Ilkhanate (Iran and Iraq), Golden Horde (Russia), and Yuan dynasty. This period also coincides with the beginning of the Wolf Solar Minimum (ca. 1282–1342), a period of declining solar activity. However, cold events cannot be generalized on the Afro-Eurasian scale. As mentioned earlier, East Asia began to warm from the 1290s, and Central Asia was exceptionally warm and humid during this period. Qaidu (d. 1301),



A scene from the discussion

based in this region, reached the peak of his power in this period (Isahaya & Nakatsuka). In the context of global climate change, the largest eruption in the past 2,500 years, which probably occurred around 1257, of Mount Samaras in Indonesia, is also noteworthy. Even in Europe, the effects of this volcanic eruption are evident in the historical records of western Germany, in the form a cool summer and crop failure in 1258 (Ohnuki).

As for the Black Death, it was not until 1348 that the plague struck the two thalassocracies of Genoa and Venice, but of course it reached the northern coast of the Black Sea, where the ships carrying the plague left port. By the spring or summer of 1346, the plague had reached several of the cities of the Golden Horde, such as Urgench, Sarai, and Azak (Favereau). Recent paleogenetic studies indicate that the origin of this second plague pandemic was at the foot of the Tien Shan Mountains between 1316 and 1340, or the first half of the 14th century (Slavin). This area was the base of the Chagatai Khanate (Central Asia).

2. Chronological Diversity: Periods of the “Phase of Catastrophe”

As we have seen in the previous section, the timing and impact of climate change varied on an Afro-Eurasian scale. This is also closely related to the issue as to when the “phase of catastrophe” emerged in each region—or, did not emerge at all. In the Byzantine empire, the phase took place during the civil war period between 1341 and 1357. It also coincided with the period of the Black

Death (Preiser-Kapeller). On the other hand, a different picture can be drawn when we look at the other side of the Black Sea. After surviving the Black Death, the Golden Horde conquered Tabriz, the capital of a post-Ilkhanate dynasty in 1357, thereby marking the culmination of the Golden Horde's territorial expansion. The subsequent "phase of catastrophe" of the Golden Horde was connected to a political crisis; in 1360, the dominance of the Batuid family in the White Horde and that of the Ordaid family in the Blue Horde both ended (Favereau). Although the written sources concerning the Golden Horde do not tell of any environmental crisis, it is also likely that a major dzud, a cold and snowy spell, may have occurred in the territory of the Golden Horde in the following year, 1361 (Shakhmatov).

3. *How was the Crisis Narrated?*

What do contemporary historical sources tell us about this "phase of catastrophe"? The Byzantine historiography represents the extreme weather of the crisis period of the 1340s and 1350s as a sign of divine disapproval, while the Great Trouble in the Golden Horde from 1359 is only described as a political crisis. The cause of the trouble is attributed to Birdibek's (d. 1359) murder of his own brothers and son (Favereau). Conversely, with respect to the Ilkhanate, the Persian court chronicles hardly mention any climate events. It is possible that the court chroniclers, extolling the virtues of the Khans, did not wish to present them as being on bad terms with Heaven (Landa). Furthermore, in the Yuan dynasty, the 14th-century materials do not only speak of decadence and catastrophe, but also of challenges against the backdrop of a large-scale network that extended east and west across Eurasia, as seen, for example, in the travel account of Wang Dayuan (d. 1350) (Fiaschetti). In this sense, Arghūn Shāh al-Nāṣirī (d. 1349), who traversed from the Yuan dynasty to the Ilkhanate and eventually came to power in the Mamluk Sultanate (Egypt and Syria), is a typical "14th-century figure" (Qiu).

4. *The Importance of Temporal Cycles*

It is also important to think of a "crisis" not as a single year, but as a cycle. In the history of East Asia in particular, the most devastating famines have occurred when harvest yields return to normal after a 10 to 20 year period of good harvests. This is the theory that climate change of 16 to 64 year cycles, neither short nor long term, has taken a toll on society (Nakatsuka). This theory might not only be applicable to cases in East Asia. Societies in western Germany suffered from a massive famine in 1224–1226, which was caused by a sudden change from a warmer climate prior to the 1220s to a colder climate with a tendency toward more rainfall (Ohnuki). On the other hand, while cycles create "crises," they also form "patterns." During the Yuan dynasty, which opened a network on a Eurasian scale, the overlap of the nomadic cycle of seasonal migration and the maritime cycle defined by the monsoons generated a unique rhythm in taxation, trading, and diplomacy (Yokkaichi).

5. *The Emergence of a New Era and New Powers*

Thus, the 14th century was a period of transition from the Medieval Warm Period to the Little Ice Age, but it was also a period of transition from



Participants of the symposium

the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period. The “Mongol globalization,” which expanded and integrated its network to the Afro-Eurasian scale, created “middle grounds” in various places, which became the sites of both negotiations and conflicts. Another characteristic of the globalization of this era is that the effects of what happened at the “middle grounds” spread to other parts of the world. The same was true for crises such as the Black Death (Di Cosmo).

This “crisis” led to the collapse of the Mongol empire, but new powers emerged in Eurasia to replace it. In the Golden Horde, for example, the downfall of the royal families in the 1350s gave those of collateral descent a chance to rise to power. Timur (d. 1405), who was to build a great empire in Western Eurasia, also came to power under these circumstances (Favereau). Anatolia, which had suffered a major decline in population and economy under the Byzantines, began to recover after 1500 under the rule of the Ottoman empire, which had gained supremacy in the Eastern Mediterranean (Preiser-Kapeller). In China, the Ming dynasty, which emerged from South China, overthrew the Yuan dynasty. It is noteworthy that these new Eurasian powers emerged from Transoxiana, Anatolia, and South China, none of which had been political centers before the “crisis.” In the Eurocentric historical narrative, it is Portugal, a previously provincial country, that became responsible for the great leap of Europe after recovery from the “crisis of the 14th century.” However, when we think on an Afro-Eurasian scale, we understand that the rise of the peripheries and their imperialization was not a Western phenomenon alone. The “crisis” for the old powers was also the “future” for the new powers.

ISAHAYA Yoichi

The Plenary Meeting of the Platform for Exploration in Survival Strategies and the International Symposium: “Survival Strategies of Ukraine and Russia”

The Center’s Platform for Exploration in Survival Strategies held the international symposium “Survival Strategies of Ukraine and Russia: A Year On from the Outbreak of War,” both in-person and online, on February 20–21, 2023, concurrent with the Plenary Meeting.

Russia’s war of aggression on Ukraine has laid bare the fact that the continued existence of an independent nation and its people, and of human society itself, cannot be fully guaranteed. While the sacrifices caused by this war are extremely serious, new movements have also emerged, such as the unity shown by the Ukrainian people and the various accompanying cultural and social activities, as well as the revitalization of international relationships, including support for Ukraine from Western countries and Japan. Many of these are topics deserving of attention within the Exploration in Survival Strategies research.

As an initial step in the plan of the Plenary Meeting of the Platform for Exploration in Survival Strategies, the leading



The report on Ukrainian women poets in wartime

authority on global cold war history Professor Odd Arne Westad gave a keynote lecture, explaining the modern situation of China's "renewed imperialism," on the basis of his own recent research interest, namely the global transformation of imperial rule in the nineteenth century. Afterwards, we welcomed researchers from University College London, which has an exchange agreement with the Center in



Participants of the symposium

order to reflect on the state of academic study of the history and politics of the thirty years since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This took the form of a round-table discussion in search of possibilities of future research on Russia, given the complex relationship between vertical authority and horizontal human networks. In addition, representatives of the respective sections of the Platform for Exploration in Survival Strategies held a brainstorming session on methods of researching survival strategies from the angles of international politics, history and culture in the light of the current war, with the discussion including reflections on previous research and new points worthy of consideration, as well as methods of interdisciplinary collaboration.

The symposium on survival strategies of Ukraine and Russia commenced on the evening of the first day. During the first session, a discussion on Ukrainian politics took place, tackling how previously-indicated issues such as the vulnerability of democracy, the influence of financial conglomerates, and corruption are progressing during wartime, and what kind of solutions can be considered. On the second day, topics raised at the second session included the relationship between Russia's population policy, gas exportation, and the war, and how to estimate trade statistics in a situation where such statistics are no longer released. The third session cast a spotlight on the activities of poets, filmmakers and other artists in Ukraine, which has been in a state of partial war since 2014. The speaker's voice was thick with emotion while reading a poem on the devastation of the Donbas region. At the fourth session, discussions were held on the future direction of historical research in Ukraine, particularly in association with world history and European history. One speaker, who participated online from Kyiv, spoke about the tense situation of evacuating to shelters due to air-raid alarms. During the final wrap-up discussion, in response to criticism regarding the generally shallow understanding of Ukraine among researchers of Russian studies, a lively debate on the future direction of research took place.

While the current war has produced differences of opinion among scholars, at this symposium we were able to grasp the situation in Russia and Ukraine from multiple aspects, and hold constructive discussions with an ongoing awareness of the possibility of different interpretations. Although the event was held with a limited number of in-person attendees due to coronavirus measures, the actual number of participants (in-person and online combined) reached 151 persons.

UYAMA Tomohiko & NAGANAWA Norihiro

“Ukraine Initiative”: Invitation of Ukrainian Specialists

How should the respective fields of academia confront the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and locate a new vision going forward? In order to tackle such questions, the SRC has organized multiple international and domestic seminars over the past eighteen months. The amount of research on Ukraine remains small, even in current times, and there is a resulting tendency for these issues to be argued from the perspectives of research on Russia, the EU, and the USA. There is, therefore, significance in the task of focusing on the subjective viewpoint of Ukraine, and incorporating this into academic discussions. Among the SRC’s academic events, the international symposium “Survival Strategies of Ukraine and Russia: A Year On from the Outbreak of War,” held on February 21 and 22, 2023, proved to be a turning point. As a major project in continuation of this symposium, we investigated the possibility of inviting Ukrainian specialists during fiscal year 2023. In concrete terms, the “Ukraine Initiative” was conceived, with David Wolff taking a leading role, within the framework of the SRC’s Foreign Visitors Fellowship Program and the construction of the international Platform for Exploration in Survival Strategies. These initiatives invited Professor Serhii Plokhii, Director of the Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, and Dr. Olesya Khromeychuk, Director of the Ukrainian Institute London, respectively. Professor Plokhii’s stay lasted for just over two months, from May 25 to July 27, and Dr. Khromeychuk stayed in Japan for approximately one month, from June 1 to July 3. In addition, Dr. Uilleam Blacker, Associate Professor of Ukrainian and East European Culture at University College London (UCL)’s School of Slavonic and East European Studies, who was visiting the SRC during the same period, also joined the team.

The team traveled to Tokyo on June 8, and held lecture meetings on the Russo-Ukrainian war entitled “International Seminar: The Russo-Ukrainian War: The Return of History” on June 9 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at the Hongo Campus of the University of Tokyo on June 10. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, around twenty of the Ministry’s junior officers attended Professor Plokhii’s lecture, and the subsequent discussion session also included Dr. Khromeychuk and Dr. Blacker. The lecture at the University of Tokyo seminar given by Professor Plokhii and Dr. Khromeychuk, which was jointly hosted with several domestic academic societies in relevant fields—the Japanese Association for Ukrainian Studies, the Japanese

Association for East European Studies, the Japanese Society for the Study of Russian History, and the University of Tokyo’s Department of Occidental History (European History)—gathered an audience of approximately seventy researchers in the humanities and social sciences, both domestic and international. In addition, on June 12 the team conducted an interview with the Ukrainian Ambassador to Japan, and held a press conference at the Japan National Press Club (JNPC) during the afternoon. The press



A scene from the discussion
at the University of Tokyo

conference, at which consecutive interpretation was provided, attracted an audience of over one hundred, combining in-person and online attendees. The team then conducted multiple newspaper and television interviews after the conference. Interest in the Ukraine war was high throughout the trip, with audiences at each venue listening keenly to the speakers and participating in question and answer sessions. Furthermore, in West Japan, Professor Plokhii went on to speak at the 163rd Nichibunken Lecture at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in Kyoto on June 15, on the topic of “Nuclear Power and the Arrogance of Man: Revisiting the World’s Worst Nuclear Disasters”.

Following the team’s return to Sapporo, on June 30, the SRC hosted a workshop for young researchers. The workshop, which was aimed at building a foundation for Ukraine research in Japan and cultivating young talent, included five Japanese researchers and graduate school students, and one graduate student from the University of Seoul, a partner university to Hokkaido University.

We have also continued to carry out various dialogues within Hokkaido University. On June 23, we hosted an informal luncheon conference at the SRC, where our guests spoke about the current state of Ukraine research in the USA and UK and the initiatives of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, the Ukrainian Institute London, and UCL’s School of Slavonic and East European Studies. An exchange of opinions took place, including SRC staff members and Hokkaido University graduate students. Furthermore, at Hokkaido University’s headquarters, Professor Plokhii engaged in a discussion with Professor Aya Takahashi, Vice-President of the University, confirming the strengthening of the SRC’s cooperation with Harvard University as well as the policy of ongoing contribution to the development of Ukraine research. These activities have, in fact, been highly evaluated, leading to the University’s decision to grant assistance to the establishment of the Research Unit for Ukraine and Neighboring Areas.



The press conference at the JNPC



The Nichibunken Lecture at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies

AOSHIMA Yoko

Platform for Explorations in Survival Strategies Has Opened

In April 2022, with financial reinforcement from the national government, the SRC launched a five-year project to explore survival strategies in a changing world order with a view toward redefining its missions. For details, please visit <https://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/srcw/en/>.

Why “survival strategies”? We are witnessing an unprecedented crisis in the world order, which we have taken for granted as the pivotal precondition for sustainable development. Today’s world order derives from the period around the 1870s, when the globe was covered and dominated by the Western empires. Notwithstanding the many negative consequences of their colonialism, these empires also fostered and maintained liberal values and the international infrastructure of democracy, human rights, multiculturalism, free trade, freedom of movement, and globalization. Recent years, however, have seen the traditional core of the West, American and British citizens in particular, speaking out against the very values and infrastructure that have underpinned their prosperity and predominance: the United States, the last standing Cold War superpower, has slumped into America First-ism, while the United Kingdom has exited from the European Union. Meanwhile, China, India, and other emerging economies are thriving, innovatively appropriating for their own purposes the very infrastructure that the Western powers have built. This dynamism, with the core of the system withering and its peripheries stirring, is very familiar to students of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union: it was the discontent of the Russians as a core nation of empire that made their empire unsustainable. While many experts have regarded the year 1991, namely the demise of the Soviet Union, as marking the end of the 20th-century, we are now witnessing the end of the long 20th-century.

Slavic Eurasia, a periphery in the long 20th-century world order, has constantly interacted with the West and thereby has shaped the transformation of the order itself. Recent years have seen Russia become a decisive factor in the world’s dis/order with the annexation of Crimea in 2014, interventions in Syria in 2015 and the US presidential election in 2016, and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Central and Eastern European countries have ardently longed for their integration into Europe, while simultaneously challenging the European Union’s coherence. Central Asian countries are artfully playing with hegemonic Russia, growing China, influential Europe and the US, as well as friendly Korea and Japan. While Japan has enjoyed economic prosperity based on the alliance with the West and the 20th-century model of industrialization, should we continue on this paved path, when the two prerequisites are no longer sustainable?

As Japan’s national center for Slavic and Eurasian studies, the SRC has observed tectonic changes in the political regime, economy, society, and culture of the Eurasian continent in general, and Russia and its neighbors in particular. Predicated upon the experiences and lessons we have learned from a wide variety of peoples in this landmass, we will attempt to understand and explain to a broader public the global crisis we are confronting. While the Japanese tend to see the US-China collision as an existential crisis, we must take seriously the profound crisis that emanates from a part of the world that is alien to Japanese and Western perception. This project sets as a pillar of our exploration the entanglements of Russia and the Middle East. The SRC has always incorporated Europe and Northeast Asia into its research agenda, and has demonstrated its presence and competence. Yet Japanese scholarship has so far lacked an understanding of how Russia and the Middle East interact in a way that determines war and peace in our world. Our survival strategies research will fundamentally probe the meaning of Slavic and Eurasian studies on the global scale, and articulate the

special contributions of Japanese scholarship of Slavic Eurasia. We shall achieve these goals through highly energetic synergy with international scholars that transcends borders and academic disciplines.

NAGANAWA Norihiro

Adoption of the Research Unit for Ukraine and Neighboring Areas Establishment Project

As one of Hokkaido University's new initiatives to promote the "strengths and distinctive features of each department," a project to establish a Research Unit for Ukraine and Neighboring Areas (referred to as the "Ukraine Research Unit") as one of the research units within the SRC was adopted on November 14, 2023. The project will run from 2023 until March 2025, and will be tackled as a start-up with anticipation of further expansion after completion of the term. In light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it can be stated that the task of obtaining a correct understanding of the background and current situation, as well as knowledge needed for future response, is an urgent global issue. The SRC intends to employ our strengths, cultivated over almost seventy years of interdisciplinary research in the humanities and social sciences, to 1) build a Ukraine-related library collection, 2) expand the international network of Ukraine research within and outside Japan, implement joint research, and disseminate research results, and 3) proactively conduct outreach activities to the general public.



Hosted the plenary meeting
in February, 2024

AOSHIMA Yoko

Foreign Visitors Fellowship Program

The SRC invited the following scholars as Foreign Fellows for 2023–24

Name: **Robert David Greenberg**

Position; Affiliation: Professor and Dean of Arts, University of Auckland

Research Topic at the SRC: Narratives on Language Identity from the Former Yugoslavia to Ukraine: The Impact of War on Language Status and Planning

Name: **Ildus Gubaidullovich Ilishev**

Position; Affiliation: Independent Scholar, Deputy Prime-Minister of the Republic of Bashkortostan, Russia, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary (Ret.)

Research Topic at the SRC: The War in Ukraine as a Delayed Democratization of Russia

Name: **Mark Naumovich Lipovetsky**

Position; Affiliation: Professor, Director of Graduate Studies, Columbia University, Department of Slavic Languages

Research Topic at the SRC: The Trickster's Modernity: Narratives of Soviet and Post-Soviet Cynicism

Name: **Serhii Plokhii**

Position; Affiliation: Professor and Director, Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University
Research Topic at the SRC: The International Reaction to the Annexation of the Crimea (2014)

Name: **Mykola Yuri Ryabchuk**

Position; Affiliation: Principal Research Fellow, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Institute of Political and Ethnic Studies

Research Topic at the SRC: A Return of Geopolitics? Russian War in Ukraine and the Prospects for the New Global Order

Name: **Batbayar Tsedendamba**

Position; Affiliation: Principal Researcher, Mongolian Academy of Sciences, Institute of History and Ethnology

Research Topic at the SRC: Iosif Stalin and Ethnic Mongolian Territories of the USSR: Buryatia, Kalmykia and Tannu Tuva (1930–1944)

New Members

Special Associate Professor

On August 1, 2023, Dr. Yoichi Isahaya was appointed as a Special Associate Professor. Joint research between the humanities and the sciences occupies an important position in the “Project of Exploring Survival Strategies,” which is budgeted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology currently in progress at the Center. While survival and resilience are pressing issues, there are few researchers at the Center able to tackle it directly. Moreover, following the retirement of Professor Tabata, the difficulty of securing such human talent has become even more keenly felt.



Dr. Isahaya, who has been appointed to the role, specializes in the history of the Mongol Empire. With the ability to analyze documents in Arabic, Persian and classical Chinese, he wrote his doctoral thesis on astronomy of the classical Chinese world and the Islamic world, into which the Mongol Empire extended. Currently he focuses on the crisis caused by climate change in the 14th century in the context of the decline of the Mongol Empire as a historian. To this end, he is collaborating with leading scholars both in Japan and overseas from a broad range of fields including astronomy, meteorology and environmental history, in addition to proceeding with a large-scale joint research project with multiple external researchers. The quantity and quality of his research results are outstanding among researchers of his generation, and he has already established a clear position internationally with regard to astronomy in the Islamic world. In addition, Dr. Isahaya has achieved ample educational results as a university teacher, receiving reports of high praise from his students. After careful evaluation of the above performance and a comprehensive decision, we have appointed Dr. Isahaya as a Special Associate Professor with full confidence that he will

serve as indispensable talent for the implementation of the aforementioned project. In July 2023, when the screening process was complete, the international symposium “The Phase of Catastrophe: The Crisis of the 14th Century in Afro-Eurasian Context,” in which Dr. Isahaya played a central role as organizer, was held to great acclaim. Accordingly, his forthcoming activities are eagerly anticipated. Since the position is granted to the project itself, his tenure will last until March 2027.

NOMACHI Motoki

University Research Administrator

During the winter of 2022, the Center publicly advertised the role of URA, the first to be affiliated with this department, with the aim of further expanding and improving the Center’s research activities and environment. URA is a position that provides support and management for the purpose of stimulating research activities. At the Center, the URA will have a particular focus on management of public relations, editing and publishing, and support for foreign researchers, in addition to a diverse range of anticipated activities conducted in coordination with the administrative office.



With a large number of applications received from regions across Japan, alongside multiple applications from foreign nationals, the recruitment process demonstrated the increasing internationalization of the university sector. After careful and impartial screening of applicants, Sayaka Tamiya was appointed to the role.

Ms. Tamiya, a graduate of Hokkaido University’s School of Law, progressed to post-graduate study at Kobe University’s Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies, where she was awarded a Master of Law degree. She subsequently accumulated a broad range of practical experience in her roles at the National Institution for Academic Degrees and Quality Enhancement of Higher Education and the secretariat of Hokkaido University of Education. While this is Ms. Tamiya’s first appointment as an URA, she has already carried out a steady number of duties in the short time since taking up the post, inspiring great confidence in all of us at the Center.

NOMACHI Motoki

Assistant Professor

On March 1, 2024 (accidentally, it coincided with the Independence Day of the Bosnia and Herzegovina), Dr. Jasmina Gavrankapetanović-Redžić joined the SRC as an Assistant Professor. Dr. Gavrankapetanović-Redžić was already well-known to the SRC for her important contributions to Balkan studies, including her publications in *Acta Slavica Iaponica*. Thus, we are very pleased to welcome her as a new faculty member, as Balkan Studies, despite its importance, has long occupied a marginal position at the SRC.



Previously, she was an Associate Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts at the University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dr. Gavrankapetanović-Redžić specializes in the modern history of the former Yugoslavia, with a particular focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, she is an expert in art studies and has worked on the politics of memory from an interdisciplinary perspective, especially by combining the two aforementioned fields—history and art studies—in a broader comparative context, which

resulted in her Ph.D. dissertation titled *Politics of Memory in Visual Arts—Contemporary Art from Okinawa and Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2014).

Dr. Gavrankapetanović-Redžić’s career is surprisingly international: A true polyglot and a diligent worker, she earned three MAs (Japan, Italy, and the UK), one Ph.D. (Serbia), and then became a postdoc, again in Japan, at Doshisha University. During her new scholarly challenge in Japan, now at the SRC, Dr. Gavrankapetanović-Redžić will work on the analysis of the political representation of Muslims in the two important events that preceded the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995), namely the 1991 elections and the 1992 independence referendum. Dr. Gavrankapetanović-Redžić has already started this research project and will publish a monograph on this topic.

We believe that Dr. Gavrankapetanović-Redžić’s scholarly activities will not only enhance the SRC’s Balkan studies, but will also contribute significantly to the SRC’s current joint project “Survival and Resilience in a Changing World Order.”

NOMACHI Motoki

Professor Shinichiro Tabata’s Retirement and Final Lecture

On the evening of March 3, 2023, Professor Tabata, who has worked at this Center for nearly 40 years, presented the 44th Public Lecture as his final lecture. While Professor Tabata’s final lecture could have served as a retrospective of his career as a researcher, instead, at his own insistence, he gave a future-oriented talk entitled “Post-Putin Russia: How will the Economy be Restored?”, which was both bleak and critical. The lecture summarized several topics that Professor Tabata has worked on thus far, and his suggested perspective contained a clear outlook on the dark clouds gathering in the future. At present, Russian oil and gas exports have dramatically decreased, and exports to Western countries are now virtually zero. Import substitution has progressed in agriculture since 2014, and while Russia has become a net exporter of grain, in all other aspects its technology gap and disparity in living standards with Western countries continues to widen. In the background of this situation is an economy that has become reliant on the production and export of oil and gas, leading to the so-called Dutch disease whereby an internationally-competitive manufacturing industry could not be cultivated due to the rising exchange rate. For the Russian economy to recover, direct investment from foreign nations will be crucial, and the question of whether an alliance with the West can be achieved will be key. To do so, Russia must cease its foolish war as soon

as possible, and become a country that its young people who have left to go abroad will return to. This was a deeply resounding conclusion from Professor Tabata, who ordinarily refrains from using emotion-laden words.

The final lecture was held in room W203 of the Humanities and Social Sciences Classroom Building and also as a webinar, with over 80 in-person attendees in addition to more than 100 online. At the close of the lecture, Professor Tabata was presented with bouquets



Prof. Tabata receiving a bouquet of flowers after his lecture

of flowers, not only from this Center, but also from Hokkaido University Arctic Research Center, with which he holds close connections through joint research.

IWASHITA Akihiro

Ms. Mika Osuga, Happy Retirement!

Ms. Mika Osuga, who has long been responsible for the editorial work of our media, including this newsletter, and for supporting visiting scholars from abroad, will retire at the end of this academic year (March 31, 2024). Ms. Osuga joined the SRC in 1990, when the SRC was granted the status of a National Joint Use Research Institute in Japan. Since then, Ms. Osuga has been one of the driving forces in the development of our Center, especially in the dissemination of our research activities and results. To name just a few of her accomplishments, until her



retirement, Ms. Osuga edited 26 issues of this annual newsletter, 113 issues of the quarterly newsletter in Japanese, 31 issues of *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, 29 issues of *Slavic Studies* in Japanese, and many occasional publications of the SRC. In addition to her editorial work, she wholeheartedly supported foreign visitors so that they could live in Sapporo and work at the SRC comfortably and effectively.

Although her retirement is a great loss to us, Ms. Osuga's role at the SRC has been successfully taken over by Ms. Sayaka Tamiya, a University Research Assistant of the SRC and the editor of this issue of the newsletter. We hope that Ms. Osuga will remember her SRC colleagues and her work fondly, and we sincerely thank Ms. Mika Osuga for being a part of SRC for many years.

NOMACHI Motoki

Our Faculty Members (FY2023)

ADACHI Daisuke: Associate Professor, Modern Russian literature and culture; History of representation in 19th-century Russian literature

AOSHIMA Yoko: Associate Professor, European History; Central and East European Modern History; History of the Russian Empire

HATTORI Michitaka: Professor, Economy and political processes of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus

David Wolff: Professor, Russian and Soviet history; Siberia and the Far East; Cold War; Northeast Asian region construction

IWASHITA Akihiro: Professor, Border studies; Tourism; Foreign policy; Northeast Asia studies; Political geography

UYAMA Tomohiko: Professor, Modern history and politics of Central Asia; Comparative imperial history; Comparative politics

NAGANAWA Norihiro: Professor, Modern history of Central Eurasia

ISAHAYA Yoichi: Special Associate Professor, Histories of Premodern Central Eurasia; Mongol Empire and Sciences

SENGOKU Manabu: Professor, Comparative politics; Political economy; Welfare policies; East European politics

NOMACHI Motoki: Professor, Slavic linguistics

Jasmina Gavrankapetanović-Redžić: Assistant Professor, Modern history of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Visual culture; Media studies; Social memory studies

Special Assistant Professors

INOUE Takehiko: Modern and Contemporary History of Central Eurasia, Russian Buddhist Cultural Studies

MURAKAMI Tomomi: Archaeology; History of Textiles

Library and Information Service Staff

TONAI YUZURU: Associate Professor, Library and Information Science; Bibliographer; Russian History

TAMIYA Sayaka: University Research Administrator, Publications

OSUGA Mika: Research Assistant, Publications

Ongoing Research Projects

Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, excluding “Grants-in-Aid for JSPS Fellows” and “Grants-in-Aid for Publication of Scientific Research Results: Scientific Literature”

Scientific Research A

Headed by NOMACHI Motoki: “Multi-hierarchical Approaches to Kashubian Grammar on the Basis of a Newly Devised Corpus” (2017–23).

Headed by David Wolff: “Multi-Archival Analysis of Critical Junctures in Post-war Northeast Asia” (2019–23).

Headed by SENGOKU Manabu: “Correlation between Changes in Political Parties and Changes in Social Policy” (2020–23).

Scientific Research B

Headed by ADACHI Daisuke: “A Comprehensive Study on the Melodramatic Imagination in Russian and Former Soviet Culture” (2019–23).

Headed by IWASHITA Akihiro: “Representations of “Territory” and Social Transformation in Northeast Asia” (2020–24).

Headed by AOSHIMA Yoko: “Melting Empire: Modernizing State and Destabilized Society in the Borderlands of Late Imperial Russia” (2021–24).

Headed by ISAHAYA Yoichi: “Interdisciplinary Approach to the “Crisis of the 14th Century”” (2021–24).

Headed by UYAMA Tomohiko: “Contemporary History of Great Power Nationalism” (2023–26).

Headed by TONAI Yuzuru: “Siberian Intervention “On Site” and Diplomatic Visions of Japan and Russia” (2023–26).

Headed by NOMACHI Motoki: “The (Pre-) History of the Macedonian Literary Language: An Interdisciplinary Approach” (2023–27).

Scientific Research C

Headed by ITANI Hiroshi: “The Russian/Soviet Expansion Policies in Northeast Asia: Japan-Russia Relations Over the Straits” (2023–25).

Headed by MURAKAMI Tomomi: “Study on Silk of the Western Regions by Investigating Textiles Excavated from Eurasia: Aiming at the Source Identification of Textiles” (2023–26).

Fund for the Promotion of Joint International Research

Headed by MURAKAMI Tomomi: “A Study of Textiles Collected by the German Expeditions and Newly Excavated Textiles in the Xinjiang Region” (2020–23).

Headed by ADACHI Daisuke: “Post-Socialist Melodramatic Culture” (2023–27).

Grants-in-Aid for Young Scientists

Headed by MURAKAMI Tomomi: “Circulation of Ancient Textiles and Transmission of Textile Techniques from the Perspective of Central Eurasian Archaeological Materials” (2019–23).

Headed by INOUE Takehiko: “Buddhist Monks in Social Service in the Russian Empire” (2020–23).

Visiting Professors and Associate Professors from Abroad (FY2023)

Name: **Sabine Dullin**

Position; Affiliation: Professor of History, Institut d'études politiques de Paris, Centre d'histoire de Sciences Po

Research Topic at the SRC: Cold, Survival and Sovereignty. Yakutia-Sakha facing Soviet Collapse and Ice Melting

Name: **Irina Morozova**

Position; Affiliation: Privatdozentin, University of Regensburg

Research Topic at the SRC: The paradox of progress. The decline of Soviet Modernity and the rise of the oil industry in Atyrau, from the 1980s – onwards

Visitors from Abroad

Abel Polese (Dublin City University) for exchange of views (June 2021)

Sergiy Korsunsky (Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to Japan) for exchange of views on bilateral communication (October 2021)

Andrzej Stelmach & Maciej Walkowski (Adam Mickiewicz University) for exchange of views (October 2023)

Sabri Kiçmari (Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Kosovo to Japan) for exchange of views on bilateral academic communication (February 2024)

Guest Lecturers from Abroad (FY2023)

International Seminar, “The Russo-Ukrainian War: The Return of History” **Serhii Plokhii** (Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University) & **Olesya Khromeychuk** (Ukrainian Institute London) (June 2023)

International Workshop, “Colonial and Postcolonial in Recent History of Central Asia” **Irina Morozova** (University of Regensburg): “Diffusion of the Postcolonial: Reform in “Domestic Central Asia” in Relation to Soviet Policy in the “Foreign Orient” (the 1970–80s)”; **Isaac Scarborough** (Leiden University (online)): “Reconsidering and Recalculating Soviet “Subsidies”: Financial Transfers to the Tajik SSR in the 1970s and 1980s”; **Elmira Nogoi-baeva** (Center Polis Asia, Esimde Research Platform, Kyrgyzstan (online)): “Memories of

Urkun in 1916: De/anti-colonial Echo”; **Alima Bissenova** (Nazarbayev University (online)): ““The Man with the Character of Horse”: The Narratives of the Revival of Horse Herding and Kokpar in Kazakhstan” (October 2023)

Considering Eurasian History in Hokkaido

David Moon (School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London / Foreign Fellow, 2022)

On my first full day in Sapporo, a Sunday, jetlagged and mildly culture-shocked, I left my accommodation and headed south towards the University Campus. It was a bright, sunny day in early November. The campus resembled a park celebrating autumn. Its many trees were covered in leaves that had turned into striking hues of gold, yellow and red. The ginkgo trees were the most spectacular and, unfamiliar to a native of North East England, reminded me that I was in an unfamiliar environment as well as a different culture. I was approached by a gentleman of retired years who politely greeted me in slightly accented English and asked if I would like a tour of the campus. He was a volunteer guide. We went to the Ōno Pond, a peaceful expanse of water surrounded by more trees in their autumn colours, and the avenue of poplars. We walked to the Furukawa Memorial Hall, an old, wooden building that contrasted with the University’s modern buildings. He explained the university’s origins as the Sapporo Agricultural College, founded in 1876. Then came a surprise: the bust of William S. Clark, the president of Massachusetts Agricultural College in the United States. He had been invited by the Hokkaido Development Commission to advise on establishing an agricultural college. Imperial Japan was seeking to “develop” its new settler colony on the island it had recently renamed Hokkaido, in part to counter possible imperial Russian expansion south from Sakhalin.

I was on familiar territory. In recent years my research has focused on Russian imperial expansion in the Eurasian steppe, which it transformed into a settler, agricultural colony, albeit a long way from Sakhalin.¹ The Russians were pioneers in settling and ploughing up a semi-arid, grassland environment to convert it to European-style arable farming. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the United States government learned from the Russians’ experience in its settler, agricultural colony in the Great Plains.² Thus, in this period, knowledge transfer was taking place between settler colonial states around the world. I was familiar with the Indigenous peoples who had been dispossessed, displaced and worse in the Russian Empire/Soviet Union and the United States, and wondered about the Indigenous peoples of Hokkaido. During my stay in Sapporo, in my spare time I visited museums to find out more about the Indigenous Ainu people and the colonization of Hokkaido. I learned a great deal in the impressive Hokkaido Museum (<https://www.hm.pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/en/>). It presents the geological and human history of the island, tracing the significance of the island’s location between North and South, Russia and Japan, the life, culture and history of the Ainu, their dispossession and displacement in imperial Japan, and the recent history of Hokkaido, including life stories of Ainu people in recent years. The Ainu National Museum (<https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/facility/museum/>), 90 kilometres south of Sapporo in Shiraoi, offers a lavishly-funded view on Ainu life and culture, with exhibits, performances of folk songs and dances, a village with activities for visitors (I tried my hand at archery), in beautifully-landscaped grounds. It was a very pleasant day out, but I was left the impression that Ainu life and culture were in the past with no significant place outside the museum in modern, Japanese Hokkaido. I also enjoyed my visit, on a sunny but cold and snowy December

day, to the Historical Village of Hokkaido (<https://www.kaitaku.or.jp/en/>). Also situated in beautiful grounds, the outdoor museum contains a collection of historic buildings from the 1860s–1920s, including a replica of the Development Commission office as well as a school, houses, shops and businesses from that period. It was opened in 1983 “to preserve important cultural assets of Hokkaido for future generations.” Although not advertised as such, it is a museum of settler colonialism. I looked in vain for even a mention of the Indigenous population the settlers displaced, but recalled that one of the features of settler colonialism is the erasure of Indigenous peoples from history as well as their land. While visiting museums in Hokkaido, I thought about museums and heritage sites in my native United Kingdom which only in recent years have started to come to terms with present-day legacies of colonialism (all aspects) and slavery in Britain’s imperial history.

As an environmental historian, I always keep in mind the histories and environments in which I am working as well that I am studying. I had not expected to learn so much from Hokkaido. I drew on what I learned in the Hokkaido Museum in my first lecture at the SRC. Entitled “East-West knowledge transfer in settler societies: how the U.S. Great Plains became the ‘American Steppe’,” I opened by referring to the story of knowledge transfer from Massachusetts to Hokkaido in the Meiji period as context for my discussion of how the U.S. authorities and settlers preferred to learn from the experience of Russian settler colonialism in the Eurasian steppe than Indigenous knowledge of the peoples who had lived for millennia in the Great Plains. The knowledge that was transferred from the steppes to the Great Plains included varieties of crops suitable for the environment, the new science of understandings soils that was devised by Russian scientists, and techniques for planting shelterbelts of trees to protect land against the drying effects of the wind. The knowledge was transferred by migrants (Mennonite settlers, Jewish and White Russian emigres) as well as direct contacts between scientists and government departments responsible for agriculture.

I focused on the Eurasian steppe, my main area of expertise, in my second lecture at the SRC. Invited by Professor Yoichi Isahaya to take part in a workshop on “Waters in the Steppe” organised under the auspices of the Hokkaido Association for Central Eurasia, my presentation was entitled: “Were the steppe rivers drying up?: Debates over environmental change in the Russian Empire.” I focused on the rivers Dnipro, Don and Volga (Itel), and Jaiyq (Ural). I discussed how, over the nineteenth century, educated Russians became anxious that the steppe rivers were drying up. They investigated whether and, if so, why this was happening. Several pointed the finger of blame at deforestation. These concerns were part of wider anxieties in the Russian Empire and around the world at this time that human actions were having an adverse impact on the environment. To place the nineteenth-century discussions about rivers in broader contexts, I reviewed observations of the steppe rivers made over many centuries and by people from backgrounds as diverse as the Ancient World, the Medieval Islamic World, Imperial China, and Europe. None thought the rivers were drying up. The nineteenth-century concerns were fueled by awareness of the importance of the steppe rivers for transport and communications, as sources of water for humans, their livestock and crops, and in identity formation. The notion of the Volga as the Russian “Mother River” was developing at this time. The eventual “solution” to the “problem” of changing water levels in the steppe rivers came in the Soviet period when the rivers were dammed and turned into chains of artificial lakes, but the roots of these engineering projects lay in the previous century. The consequences of such projects were analysed in the other paper at the workshop, by Professor Tetsuro Chida on: “The role of pastoralism in the recovery from the Aral Sea disaster in the Small Aral Sea region in Kazakhstan.”



Talking to Waters in the Steppe workshop

While my research on steppe rivers may seem remote from my new interest in the Indigenous population of Hokkaido, in the article I am preparing for publication in the *Acta Slavica Japonica* I am trying to consider the rivers from the perspective of the different peoples whose land they have flowed through, including Mongol and Tatar nomadic pastoralists as well as Slavic farmers, and in the states they currently reach the sea in modern-day Ukraine, Russian Federation, and Kazakhstan.

In addition to my lectures at the SRC, I was very pleased to have the opportunity to lecture to students at Tokyo University, on the invitation of Professor Ikeda, on Russian and Soviet environmental history. The students took part in a lively discussion after the lecture and three joined us for lunch afterwards at a nearby restaurant. I had not visited Tokyo before and was pleased to spend a couple of days exploring the city, before returning to Sapporo on the Shinkansen to Hakodate at the southern tip of Hokkaido, which took about four hours, and then the local train at more leisurely pace to Sapporo.



Snow shoe hiking Daisetsuzan national park

As an environmental historian I am keen to visit sites where the environment has been protected and spent a weekend at the Daisetsuzan National Park in the mountains of central Hokkaido. I combined the luxury and comfort of staying at a hotel with hot spring baths (onsen) in the resort of Souunkyō with the excursion of a day's snow shoe hiking in the national park with a guide.

I would like to end my essay by extending my sincere thanks to the director, faculty and staff of the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center. I benefitted enormously from the chance to spend uninterrupted time reading, thinking and writing, and learning from stimulating conversations, interesting seminars and symposia. Approaching the Slavic-Eurasian world from the east, from Hokkaido, gave me a new perspective on this part of the world.

1 David Moon, *The Plough that Broke the Steppes: Agriculture and Environment on Russia's Grasslands, 1700–1914* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

2 David Moon, *The American Steppes: The Unexpected Russian Roots of Great Plains Agriculture, 1870s–1930s* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

Summer 2022 in Sapporo

Alyssa DeBlasio (Russian Department, Dickinson College / Foreign Fellow, 2022)

In summer 2022 I spent two unforgettable months as a fellow at the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center at Hokkaido University. Though I was only in residence for a brief stay, my fellowship was more than two years in the making. I received notice of my initial award in December 2019, right before the onset of the pandemic; what would follow was two years of delays and uncertainties, as the world grappled with waves of Covid-19 illnesses and closed borders. The SRC was helpful and prompt in communicating all travel and visa restrictions, but ultimately all we could do was wait. In those early months of the pandemic, reading Japanese novels and watching Japanese films in preparation for the trip became a welcome distraction from the uncertainty and suffering of the global crisis. More than two years later, and in a world that had been forever changed by shared experiences of Covid-19, my family and I boarded a plane to Sapporo to make the trip that had for so long seemed like it might never happen.

When we arrived in Sapporo, we immediately felt a sense of comfort and ease. Surprisingly, there was no big adjustment to this new environment, apart from the thirteen-hour time difference and accompanying jetlag. The city was rationally laid out and, thus, quickly became familiar; Sapporo is easy to navigate by both foot and public transport, with all necessary conveniences only a short walk away. The campus of Hokkaido University is beautiful and the SRC, in turn, offers a collegial and conducive space for academic work. The facilities at the Center surpassed my expectations: comfortable office space, a convenient location, and excellent administrative support. In a lucky coincidence, my office windows looked out over the university tennis courts, where I could listen to the meditative sounds of my favorite sport while writing.

The SRC strikes a welcome balance as both a quiet space for work and also an active center for international collaboration. The Center hosts a Friday lunch series, which provides a sense of community and an opportunity to learn about the work of faculty and other visiting fellows. The SRC is also well-connected to work happening outside of Japan, and regular lectures, as well as international conferences, bring scholars from all over to Hokkaido, where the Center serves as a meeting place for ideas and conversation. During my time in Hokkaido, the SRC arranged for me to give talks at Keio University, in Tokyo, and at Osaka University. These trips facilitated valuable connections with colleagues across Japan, including those working in my research field of Russian philosophy and intellectual history. I am especially grateful to Associate Professor and Head of the Foreign Visitor's Program, Daisuke Adachi, for connecting me with colleagues in Osaka and Tokyo, and to Kanako Nakajima for outstanding administrative support, including visa support for my family.

Sapporo is a wonderful setting for academic work, but it is an equally glorious place for exploring. The city is full of parks, shops, a few museums, and an abundance of restaurants. My



Also enjoyed the nature of Hokkaido

young daughter found it a thrilling, friendly, and safe environment to explore and practice her Japanese. From nearly any spot in Sapporo you can see the mountains that flank the city, giving the impression that you are always within nature, even while in an urban space. On the weekends, my family and I drove all around the prefecture, from coast to center, to get as full a picture as possible of the landscape, culture, and cuisine of Hokkaido. Highlights included Lake Shikotsu, Lake Toya, walking the crater of Mt. Usu, and the mountain passes and waterfalls of Daisetsuzan National Park.

I remain grateful to the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center at Hokkaido University for supporting my work, for welcoming me to Sapporo, and for connecting me to a network of Japanese colleagues, especially after the difficult years of the pandemic. My only regret is that my stay was so short, but I hope that it won't be my last.

My Reflections from Sapporo where Slavic and Eurasian Studies Remain Vibrant

Robert Greenberg (University of Auckland / Foreign Fellow, 2023)

Sitting in the office at the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center on my final day of my visiting fellowship, I am already feeling nostalgic for this wonderful place. I am incredibly grateful to the SRC for granting me this time to reflect, read, write, and probably most importantly, to engage with colleagues with similar interests. I have particularly enjoyed my time with Nomachi Sensei, with whom I can converse in depth on the history and structure of the Slavic languages. We have long had the tradition of speaking **B**osnian/**C**roatian/**S**erbian together, and I have so enjoyed using my BCS with him for so many hours over the past couple of months. By now, my iPhone no longer auto-corrects the non-English text messages I am sending, and to me that is a clear sign of the frequency of our communication and the beginning of a new phase in our collaborative work. We are looking to progressing our joint project on the notion of “language affirmation” of some of the more recent Slavic standard or literary languages, and look forward to co-presenting that work in conferences and lectures in the near future. We will work to develop a theoretical framework to describe the phenomenon of language affirmation, which we define as a two-way process whereby language codifiers seek to gain international acceptance of the language they are promoting, and international experts or linguists reciprocate by affirming the existence of the language in their writings. Our intention is to focus first on the Macedonian and Montenegrin languages.

Our trip to Tokyo was a particular highlight of my stay here; I so enjoyed presenting to eager and bright young students on language ideologies impacting conflicts in the Balkans and



Lecture at the University of Tokyo, Komaba Campus

in Ukraine. I am grateful to Yamazaki Sensei of the University of Tokyo for supporting this special event. Inspired by the students' many questions, I felt optimistic for the future of Slavic Studies in Japan, and I can only hope that my talk may have provided them with just a little bit of insight into the value of sociolinguistic and interdisciplinary studies.

I already had been aware of the high quality of the research at the SRC from my two previous short visits in 2010 and 2016. I so enjoyed reconnecting with colleagues from those visits, and learning more about their research. I had several long talks with Adachi Sensei and Aoshima Sensei about the new directions in their research and spoke at length with several of the doctoral students. I was also pleased to interact with colleagues from nearby units at the University, such as Ogura Sensei whose work focuses on Russian and Polish literature in the Humanities Faculty. I noted a great willingness on the part of all the colleagues I met to engage in interdisciplinary work and was pleased that my own interdisciplinary journey seemed to resonate with them. In retrospect, my two earlier visits to the SRC felt rushed given how since 2008 I have been balancing my research activities with significant university leadership roles. As a result, I have had to rely on short and compressed periods of time to focus on my scholarly pursuits; usually these periods have been during my weekends, holidays or under strong pressure to meet a deadline for a conference or sending of an often overdue manuscript for publication. By contrast, during the past two months in Sapporo I could immerse myself in my research and am so appreciative that I have had the headspace to make meaningful advances in my research agenda. This fellowship enabled me to make progress on a new research topic that has been outside my usual comfort zone- language, identity, and war in Ukraine and the possible influence of parallel events in the Balkans during the 1990s on the conflict and war in Ukraine since 2014. As a relative newcomer to Ukrainian Studies, I was pleased that my time here overlapped with that of a prominent specialist in that area, Professor Serhii Plokyh, the Director of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, my neighbor on the fifth floor. I am grateful for Professor Plokyh's comments during my Bento Box presentation and my SRC lecture.

For many practical aspects of my stay, I was fortunate to be supported by the amazing staff at the SRC, especially Nakajima San, who went above and beyond the call of duty to assist me throughout my stay here. I am also grateful to Tamiya San and Yamamoto San for their kind assistance and efforts to problem-solve and make the technology work. I enjoyed the spring blooms here on campus and walks around Sapporo including the visit to the Botanical Garden with its Ainu Museum. I was pleased to learn more about the Ainu people, and the Center for Ainu and Indigenous Studies at Hokkaido university. I was glad to initiate conversations on collaboration in this area with the Director of the Center, Kato Sensei. I found out that interest among postgraduate students in Ainu and Indigenous Studies has grown, and the program has taken new initiatives and has engaged in new research. In general, I am hopeful for stronger collaborations between Hokkaido University and my own institution and that colleagues from the SRC and in other units here would have the opportunity to present their work at the University of Auckland in the coming years.



After lectures at SRC

I have enjoyed immersing myself in daily life in Japan, from frequenting the local businesses near the apartment to seeking out time to play the piano in one of the city's municipal buildings. My very limited Japanese always seems to evoke a smile on people's faces. As a blind person, I was first intimidated by the busyness of the place and was concerned about the language barrier. However Sapporo citizens have been helpful and friendly. People went out of their way to point me in the right direction or walk with me to a destination if they had the time. It gave me a chance to practice my non-existent Japanese, or they had a chance to use their English. I am also impressed at how the country has accommodated blind people. Most sidewalks have raised lines that can guide my steps from place to place. All elevators seem to speak, and I quickly learned how to say in Japanese "doors are opening" or "fifth floor." The subway tracks are separated from the platform by barriers and gates, so it is far safer for me than the New York subway! I also benefitted from how orderly the sidewalks are in Japan, with cyclists mostly obeying the rules. The sidewalks are truly for pedestrians, unlike in Auckland where the e-bikes and e-scooters are often strewn haphazardly where pedestrians go. By the end of my stay, I felt very safe here and very much at home and am even slightly worried about returning to the more challenging streets of my home city of Auckland. Another contrast to the US and New Zealand is how Japan is friendly to me as a car-less person, with high-quality efficient and punctual public transportation. The subways are clean and the announcements frequent. As a music lover, I also learned to enjoy the jingle signalling an approaching subway train. Sapporo is surrounded by beautiful places, so I had several fantastic weekend excursions to places like Otaru and up to Mt. Moiwa. The latter is accessible on a city streetcar, bus, cable car, and small train. It was a very nice trip for a transportation nurd like myself, not to speak of the stunning views and fresh air at the summit. During my final weekend, Ogura Sensei kindly drove me and Nomachi Sensei to Lake Shikotsu and Noboribetsu's Hell Valley. It was wonderful to see these stunning places and to speak Russian the whole way in the car and learn more about Slavic Studies in Japan.

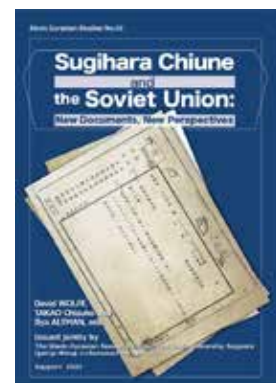
My stay here has reinforced for me the importance of the field of Slavic Studies for our times. As we watch with horror the war in Ukraine, I admire the SRC for its efforts to promote Ukrainian Studies and for its emphasis on Slavic and Eurasian Studies that go well beyond the study of Russia. I am also impressed by the new directions of collaborative and interdisciplinary research at the SRC, with programs such as the one in Survival Strategies Research which I consider to be innovative and world-leading. As I prepare to return my office key to Nakajima San, I feel a deep sense of gratitude to this place which has inspired me and reminded me of the relevance of what we do. Arigato gozaimas to everyone who has made my stay here so memorable and enjoyable.

Publications (2022–23)

David Wolff, TAKAO Chizuko and Ilya Altman, eds., "Sugihara Chiune and the Soviet Union: New Documents, New Perspectives," *Slavic Eurasian Studies*, no. 35 (Sapporo: SRC, 2022).

Acta Slavica Iaponica vol. XLIV, 2023, refereed journal in English and Russian.

Eurasia Border Review vol. 12 and vol. 13, 2022 and 2023, refereed journal in English.



Post scriptum

We apologize for the delay in publishing this newsletter due to the extended illness of the previous chief editor, Ms. Mika Osuga. Finding a suitable replacement proved challenging, but we are committed to maintaining the high standards set by Ms. Osuga at the SRC. Thanks to Ms. Sayaka Tamiya, who joined the SRC in 2023 as a University Research Administrator and took over the position of the editor-in-chief, the newsletter has resumed publication. This is the first issue edited by her. I firmly believe that Ms. Tamiya and her editorial team will continue to publish and develop the newsletter.

Dr. Motoki Nomachi, Director of the SRC

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Slavic-Eurasian Research Center Hokkaido University

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