

In Memory of Professor Ulises Granados Quiroz

The tragic news regarding the death of Ulises Granados Quiroz reached us on June 1, 2021, from one of our friends who saw it on Facebook. At first, none of us could believe it, but after a few phone calls and emails, we received confirmation that this was not a hoax. At the time, we did not know the cause of Ulises' death and thought that it may be COVID-19 related, but later we found out that he had fallen victim to assault. Ulises was one of the kindest and most caring souls we know, so it is possible that, as a good Samaritan, he was trying to help someone in trouble and became a victim himself. Until today, the exact circumstances of Ulises' passing remain unclear.

The news was shocking to all of us. Ulises, who was still in his early 50s, had so much ahead of him as an individual and as a scholar. He was one of the very few experts on China in Mexico, and numerous people, including those in the media and diplomatic circles, relied on his expertise. Ulises had come to Japan for his post-graduate studies and received a PhD from the University of Tokyo. He studied and conducted research on Sino-Japanese relations and became a bridge between Japan and Mexico. Ulises worked at the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) in Mexico City, a distinguished private university that fosters the Mexican diplomatic elite, where he contributed to education and research on international relations in East Asia.

Alexander Bukh: I first met Ulises at a conference in Korea in 2010, at a time when both of us worked in Japan. Ulises' mentor was Professor Takeshi Hamashita, also a contributor to



Office in ITAM

this memorial issue. Ulises studied maritime issues in Asia as well as the history of China under Professor Hamashita's supervision. Ulises and I became friends immediately, as we had many things in common, with both having the experience of being an international student in Japan and foreigners working at Japanese universities. At that time, I worked at Tsukuba University before moving to my current position at Victoria University of Wellington. Ulises was working at the University of Tokyo but eventually moved back to his hometown, Mexico City. We remained good friends even though we worked in different parts of the world. We met again in 2016 during my

visit to Mexico, and Ulises was an exceptional host, driving me around and showing me various parts of Mexico City. Ulises also asked me to introduce Japanese experts and scholars on Asia to run an intensive course on Asia, supported by Japan Foundation. This is when I introduced Ulises to Akihiro Iwashita, an expert on China and Russia, who went to Mexico City later that same year.

Akihiro Iwashita: During my stay in Mexico City, I gave several lectures on border studies and territorial issues in Russia, Japan and China as well as Eurasia. The Japanese ambassador to Mexico also attended these lectures, and I induced Professor Yoshifumi Nakai (affiliated with Gakushin University at the time, also a contributor to this memorial issue), to lecture on the same intensive course. This responded to a request from Ulises to invite an expert who could speak about China's foreign policy.

In July 2017, I invited Ulises to the summer symposium at the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center. I organized a panel titled, "Very Near, Far, Wherever You Are: Views on Sino-Russian Relations," in an attempt to diversify perspectives on Sino-Russian relations with experts on Russia from India and Mongolia, and Ulises took part in this panel, sharing his views as a China expert from Mexico. This memorial issue includes the hitherto unpublished papers from that panel.

Naomi Chi: When Ulises came to Sapporo, I instantly hit it off with him and we became very good friends. At the time, I was the Representative of the Japan Chapter of the Association for Borderland Studies (ABS), and when I asked for his cooperation, he gladly promised to support our project. When the annual ABS conference was held in San Antonio in April 2018, Ulises took part and presented on the various challenges existing at the border region between Mexico and Guatemala. His presentation covered the situation concerning undocumented migrants and the smuggling of goods across the Mexico-Guatemala border, and was based on field work conducted in Chiapas, at the southern border of Mexico, with Akihiro Iwashita in 2017. There were numerous presentations concerning border regions between the U.S. and Mexico at that conference, but very few on border issues to the south of Mexico. Therefore, Ulises' presentation was not only well received but all of us had high expectations and were looking forward to hearing more about this border region from him. Even after the San Antonio conference, we continued our research collaboration and organized a panel at the 2018 IPSA (International Political Science Association) in Brisbane, Australia. I also met Ulises at the ISA (International Studies Association) in Asia which took place in Singapore in July 2019, where he brought his son and we all had lunch together at a hawker center near the conference venue. Sadly, this was the last time I saw Ulises.

We, Bukh and Iwashita, also met Ulises on July 21, 2018, during the IPSA conference. By chance, Bukh contacted Iwashita after he found his name in the program, and all three of us went out for a dinner together. Surprised by the unreasonable prices, we left early and continued to drink at a slightly cheaper beer hall. We celebrated to our future research cooperation and friendship. After the IPSA conference, Ulises visited Wellington and spent few days at Bukh's home. Sadly, July 2018 was the last time we saw Ulises.

Iwashita: The last email I exchanged with Ulises was dated November 12, 2020. After talking about the difficulties of teaching during COVID-19, we made a promise to go to Belize, Mexico's neighbor to the south, together when this pandemic is over.

Bukh: The last time I exchanged words with Ulises was on October 28, 2020, just after a Zoom presentation I did on territorial disputes in Asia for his ITAM class. As always, we promised to see each other soon, online or in person, but unfortunately this was not to happen.

The three of us write this preface in memory of our dear friend, Ulises Granados, and wish

to send our deepest condolences to his family and friends. We sincerely hope that his work and aspirations will be recorded and passed on to future generations. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to this memorial issue and everyone who assisted in the editorial process.

Ulises will live in our hearts forever.

July 30, 2023

On behalf of his friends

Akihiro Iwashita, Alexander Bukh and Hyunjoo Naomi Chi