

The Classroom-Teacher Exchange at Elementary Schools in Four Countries on the  
Sea of Japan:  
The Foundation for the Creation of a Cohesive Society in East Asia

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## Introduction

In attempting to get even one step closer to the realization of a cohesive society in the Japan Sea rim region in the northeastern part of East Asia, what we have tried to do at the Elementary School Attached to the Faculty of Human Development, University of Toyama, is a classroom-teacher exchange by elementary school teachers from four countries of the Japan Sea rim region (Japan, the ROK, China, and Russia). The attempt had a great impact on the elementary school teachers (ordinary teachers and teachers in managerial roles) of the four countries, and was acknowledged as an effective new means toward a future-oriented coexistence in this politically complex region.

### 1. Overview of the Classroom-Teacher Exchange and the Points given Consideration

#### 1) The Number of Classes and their Titles<sup>1</sup>

The classroom-teacher exchange in four countries on the Sea of Japan has been continued from 2003 until today between the respective elementary schools attached to Kyung Hee University, Dalian Maritime University, and the Admiral G. Nevelsky Maritime State University—located in the Sea of Japan rim region in Seoul (ROK), Dalian (China), and Vladivostok (Russia), where movement back and forth is possible in a matter of two hours by regular international flights from Toyama airport—and the Elementary School Attached to the Faculty of Human Development, University of Toyama. In the four years up to 2006 classes were executed a total of 11 times; 6 times with the ROK, three times with China, and twice with Russia. This was a carrying out of classes for children with instructors reciprocally going out to elementary school classrooms in the counterpart country.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, regarding the people visiting, there was a general rule of classroom teachers and principals or vice-principals from the managerial level teaming up and visiting.

Taking the subjects of the classes as arts and crafts and music, which are considered to have a low language barrier and easily receptive in both directions, the classes undertaken to date were

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the exchange, see Amemiya, Yoji, *Elementary School Attached to the University of Toyama, "Umi wo koeta kokoro no kyatchiboru"* [Playing Catch with Minds across the Sea], University of Toyama Press, 2007. Regarding the promotion of this project, I add that I also received the support, in addition to that of the University of Toyama, of the Toyama Prefecture New Century of Japan Seaology Organization.

<sup>2</sup> Although there are examples of visiting classes—the attempt at practical experience of the social studies education in ROK high schools by means of the (graduate) seminar over which Akihide Tanikawa presided (Tanikawa, Akihide (ed.) *"Japan-ROK Exchange Classes and Social Studies Education"*, Akashi Shoten, 2005), and music classes (September 2005) at the primary school of its ROK sister school by a graduate student of Aichi University of Education—and an example for elementary school teachers—arts and craft classes by Tsutomu Uchino at an ROK primary school (Uchino, Tsutomu "Korea Arts and Crafts Exchange Spring and Autumn 2005: 'Bing Bang Zing Zang Art Class' Crosses the Strait", *Biiku Bunka*, January 2006 edition, Biiku Bunka Kyokai)—it is considered that there are no examples of precedents for bidirectional, multilateral class exchange in elementary schools as in this paper.

carried out with the following titles respectively: the ROK teachers used “Simple Composition Using Key Chords” and “The Environment and Human Beings (Arts and Crafts)” in Japanese classrooms; the Japanese teachers used “I’ve Explored the Seabed 10,000 Meters Down” and “The Great Adventure of Color Sticks” (both Arts and Crafts) in ROK classrooms; the Chinese teachers used “Papercutting” (Arts and Crafts) and “Chinese Folk Dance (Music)” in Japanese classrooms; Japanese teachers used “Feel the Beat (Music)” in Chinese classrooms; Russian teachers used “The Russian Winter (Arts and Crafts)” in Japanese classrooms; and Japanese teachers used “Feel the Beat (Music)” in Russian classrooms. In the fourth year of exchange with the ROK, however, things developed toward exchange classes in social studies with “Korean Traditional Patterns” and “Japan’s Traditional Sport: Sumo”.

## **2) Some Considerations**

In order to see such visiting class exchanges successful, the following three points were considered in particular.

First, for the children in compulsory education, the Japanese teachers in particular, regarding whether they would be able to have a free hand in giving their classes in the classrooms of the elementary schools of the host country, have been involved in the form of the structure of the relationships of trust. Happily, the studying abroad of University of Toyama and other students for language and intercultural experience at these universities and the exchange including programs for practical educational experience at the elementary schools attached to the partner universities had been built up for more than 10 years, and because relationships of trust had been established, it can be said that the negotiations via the universities that administer the relevant elementary schools proceeded relatively smoothly.

Second is the framing, using the newly begun time for interdisciplinary study, of the content of the activities for international understanding in two forms: activities in English, and activities in the languages of the Sea of Japan rim. Through the respective exchange students studying at the University of Toyama from the ROK, China and Russia teaching at the attached elementary school, the person charged learns the differences from the activities in English via classroom meetings and classroom practice, and for the exchange students accurate interpretation has become possible in actual visiting classes by learning the situation of Japanese elementary schools and children.

Third was the obtaining of the understanding and support of the parents and guardians. In line with the progression of such a project, it came to be that every year at the parent-teacher’s meeting we uniquely planned a “Sea of Japan rim exchange festival” and, centered on the exchange students from each country, we presented such things as the picture books and games of their countries, and cooking and tasting sessions for their traditional foods; the understanding of the parents and guardians regarding the Sea of Japan rim activities had been deepened.

## **2. The Look and Feel of the Visiting Classes**

Here I would like to introduce in part the classroom scenes which four teachers from the four countries undertook.

### **1) The Class in China by the Teacher from Japan**

Accompanying the piano played by the music teacher of the school attached to Dalian University, China, 50 third-grade Chinese children began to sing a song of welcome with

“*Sa-ku-ra* ♪ ♪ *sa-ku-ra*, ♪ *ya-yo-i no ...*” When in due course the teacher from Japan named Hirai was introduced, the teacher, while smiling from ear to ear and introducing herself with “*Wo shi Pingjing* [I am Hirai]”, went in front of the piano and while being accompanied by it, began to sing “*Tetsuwan Atomu* [Astro Boy]” in Chinese, and midway the children too, as though ensnared by the beautiful voice of the teacher, began to sing together loudly.

Once this icebreaking finished, the teacher, while showing the children a scrap of paper from her bag which had written on it “*Ganshou paizi* [Feel the beat]”, pronounced it in Chinese. The lesson, mixing hand games of various tempos with a quadruple-time rhythm, in a musical game sensed with the body, is familiar for Japanese elementary school students. Would the sensibility of Japanese and Chinese children be the same? This was a matter of great interest for the classroom teacher.

“My boyfriend!” called teacher Hirai and made one boy sitting in the front row stand at the front of the class, and showed the class a demonstration performance: while singing Astro Boy, the teacher tapped the boy on the shoulders four times with both hands, “tap tap tap tap”, and turning around and reversing roles, this time had the boy tap the teacher’s own shoulders. Very soon 50 children excitedly became engrossed in the quadruple-time-rhythm shoulder tapping. The tempo of the melody which the teacher played gradually became faster, children who knocked heads because they didn’t reverse position in time came to be seen, and the classroom became a riot of laughter. Further, the teacher took out pieces of paper from her bag on which were written in Chinese such things as “*Mianbao mianbao* [bread bread]”, “*Qingjiao BLANK-rou* [green pepper with BLANK-meat]”, pronounce them to the children, and the children, seemingly concerned about the Japanese teacher’s pronunciation, tried their hardest to instruct her. Eventually, it moved to a quite difficult physical-sensation game where they tapped shoulders in the quadruple-time rhythm in line with the Chinese, and didn’t tap where the blank came.

## 2) The Class in Japan by the Teacher from the ROK

Teacher Kim, who entered the fifth-grade classroom, said loudly in accented Japanese “I am very good at Korean!” and smiled broadly, but the children just stared at the teacher. Then the teacher suddenly began shaking hands with each child in turn while saying “*annyeonghaseyo!* [hello]”. Seeing the children’s faces finally begin to open up, finally they could get down to business.

The teacher, taking out a large picture in a wooden frame he brought from the ROK, explained: “I very recently thought about the huge tsunami that occurred in the Indian Ocean and human sadness, and to express that it became this piece of artwork. It is not just drawing or painting a picture; I have expressed it by tearing sad human figures out of paper and sticking them on, and sculpting. Today’s class is one where, on the theme of ‘environment and human beings’, everyone pictures something in their head, and expresses it freely on Kent paper.”

After the silence had continued for a while, with the teacher’s words of “Those who haven’t thought of anything yet come to the front”, about half of the children gathered around the teacher. Saying “I’ll draw some examples”, teacher Kim, with a writing brush he had brought, drew with ease and showed them pictures of such things as CO<sub>2</sub> and cars, river water and sick people, and incinerators and smoke, and touching the children’s shoulders, smiled broadly. The children went back to their seats, and then the teacher walked around between the desks, and began guiding them with the writing brush. The continuation was carried out on the following day, and before you knew it, teacher Kim, who had come into the class, had begun guiding the children, the teacher said something about a finished piece, the child nodded and made a happy expression,

and that sight was purely the relationship between teacher and child. In addition, that time was without an interpreter present, and it proceeded smoothly.

### **3) The Class in Japan by the Teacher from China**

While the excitement hung in the air from the fifth-grade children having sung “*Mo Li Hua* [Jasmine Flower]” in Chinese, teacher Ding took out of the bag he had brought with him small bright red bags and began handing them out to the children. Inside them were elaborate cut-paper works which the teacher had cut from colored paper with scissors and shaped into prawns, flatfish, elephants and lions. The children who oohed and aahed at their elaborateness were drawn to the screen of the computer which the teacher had got ready. After they learned that the same cut works are different for each region of China and that the way they are used also varies, he said “I’m going to get everyone to make pieces like these using scissors and colored paper.”, and teacher Ding, holding a piece of colored paper up high so everyone could see, slowly began cutting. He explained the essentials, which included: “Without cutting off any paper, you have to continue to cut the paper as long as possible, from time to time making curves, and in places try and cut so as to make holes.” Teacher Ding, just like a conjuror, moved his hands deftly. After just one minute he opened out the colored piece of paper. And then, indeed, a Chinese-style pattern had been completed. Against the cries of delight from the children who had seen the handcrafting artistry with their own eyes, the teacher put some glue on the artwork and stuck it flat against the window-pane of the arts and crafts classroom. That artwork which glowed in the sunlight, depending on the angle, created a variety of moods. When the teacher said “So let’s start making them.” in a flash children here and there said “It’s impossible.” and “It’s too difficult.” “Don’t be afraid of failing, and just keep going at it!” the loud voice of the homeroom teacher resounded, and teacher Ding began instructing the children individually. Suddenly, with “Please look at this. A wonderful piece of work has been made.”, teacher Ding held up one child’s work high and showed it to the other children. Could it be that a piece strongly resembling a difficult-looking piece of artwork seen on the computer screen just before had been completed? Perhaps stimulated by this the children began to use the scissors rhythmically, and completed works were stuck one after the other on the window.

### **4) The Class in Japan by the Teacher from Russia**

“When you use gouache hold the paint brush like this and apply it as though you’re hitting points on the paper! You see, don’t you?” said teacher Marina, and in unison from the children came “*da*”, Russian for “yes”. She said “Do you understand the content of these pictures that Russian children have painted?”, and once again “*da*” loudly resounded, filling the classroom of Grade 2 Class 2, when she showed them several pictures which she had brought with her, and the class on pictures with the title “The Russian Winter” commenced. One child, touched by teacher Marina’s hand, was giving it a go with the gouache paint and Russian-made art paper which the teacher had brought, and it resembled the method for teaching Japanese calligraphy. Without yet hearing the words of the interpreter, to the question of the child of “What do I do here?”, said in a Toyama accent, teacher Marina rushed hurriedly to the child’s side, and while conversing in Russian with a feeling of “You do this part like this.”, was fixing the child’s picture using a paint brush. The scene took on a sublime appearance of an elementary school teacher and child that transcended nationality, and was something that opened a window on a starting point for creating a cohesive society. The allotted 45 minutes flashed by. The teacher held several of the children’s pictures up high and showed them to everyone. “Ho!”: sigh-like noises of surprise burst out,

without any thought, from the Japanese teachers who were around and looking on. Could it be that somehow all of the pictures had come to be “Russian-style pictures”? It was a surprise that when the instructor and teaching materials were different, Japanese children’s work would change so much.

### **3. The Significance of the Classroom-Teacher Exchanges**

#### **1) What Captured the Interest of the Classroom Teachers**

Regarding what captured the interest of the teachers on both sides within the border-crossing classroom practice amounting to 11 occasions, putting it simply it appears apt to express it as: “the comfort of finding commonalities, across borders, in our minds as teachers”. The content is summarized in the three following points.<sup>3</sup>

First, what the teachers who taught in elementary schools in another country mentioned as one was the sentiment of: “While taking the class it felt as if I was connecting with children from my own country, and whatever the country, children are the same!” The teachers attempted to get across with all their energy to the 40 children in the class the essence of the music or the arts and crafts lessons they had prepared. This was because, there, between the teacher and the child, comfort was engendered where a feeling of respect as human beings and a relationship of trust were continuing to be built. In particular, simply as the essence of the music or the arts and crafts draws out the sensibility and creativity of the children, it turns into a future-mindedness for polishing up the sense of a child as a human being, whereas for the teacher developing the appealing lesson, whatever country they were from, it was confirmed that a short-lived teacher-student relationship arises.

Second is the attractiveness of different cultures, and at the same time the joy of new discovery through the renewed awareness of one’s own culture. Despite being lessons which are ordinarily carried out in the elementary schools of the respective countries—the Russian picture lesson by teacher Marina using materials for gouache pictures, the class in the ROK by teacher Oshima from Japan making models using clay and bamboo splints, the class of teacher Ding on Chinese folk crafts of pictures of cut paper and dragons, and others—a new attractiveness could be discovered when seen from the view point of the cross-cultural instructors and children, and although using the same class materials, because there are differences for the respective countries in how they are used, there was a mutual new stimulation in regard to the research of class materials also. In order for the teachers who had suddenly come from abroad to get close to the children of their class in a short time, the cooperative preparation by the instructors of the school, including the person in charge, is also vital. That gives a glimpse of the school culture created within the traditions of the respective countries, and regarding the good methods therein, a feeling mutually arose of straightforwardly taking them into the schools in one’s own country.

Third, as the lesson teachers could not rely completely on language in classrooms in another country, they made clear the keypoints that they wanted to get across to the children through their lessons, and they had to immerse themselves in preparatory research into the lesson skills and the producing of teaching materials to that end. In addition, they had to investigate beforehand as to whether these wouldn’t conflict with the cultural traditions and customs of the

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<sup>3</sup> These three items are the author’s observed results, which the author put in order, connected to all of the visiting class exchanges across the Sea of Japan, and relate to the keyterms of international education and education in understanding other cultures.

other country. In this fashion, effective classroom skills for visiting classes were built up, and the teachers developed also by reevaluating their classroom skills in their own country.

The above are commonalities obtained via elementary school class exchanges, and when expressing them generally as aims for activities including all forms of international exchange aside from classes it would be all right to paraphrase it as “nurturing the mind via mutual communication of feelings”. This is not limited to “international scenes”, but it is necessary, amid people getting involved with one another, to pay attention to the point of guiding the transformation of the mental attitudes to be nurtured. Saeki (2004) entwines it with Japanese culture and terms this “the foundation of sensibility in the domain of the unconscious” and “the very culturing of a person”, and alongside that takes it as being a “hub of knowledge” and equivalent to “the home of learning”. And then he says “because communication in the true sense doesn’t come about where minds don’t connect, then true learning also doesn’t come about. (In so doing) the debate with people coming from abroad ends up a contest of self-assertion (supremacy). At present, learning in the United States (the globalization of performance) has lost the “mind” the most (p. 277).

Pointing out the importance of such a “foundation of sensibility” is similar to the position of Fujita (2006), who, from the view point of “the construction of schools for the era of coexistence”, criticizes the revolution in education symbolized by the school-selection system which is currently underway. That is, he points out that although Japan’s institutions of compulsory education were for the creation of an equitable societal path (the foundation for Japan) called a “lifeline”, forming a human platform which has built up within its own traditions and practices, there is the danger that they could come to be forced to abandon it (moral hazard) (pp. 40–42).

And so now, while avoiding that danger, what is the thing that must be made the most important at the elementary school-stage of education within school education adaptable to internationalization? This is the above-mentioned “nurturing the mind via mutual communication rich in feelings”, and for the children who are within the homogenous group of Japanese people in schools within Japan, the stimulation from actual scenes of international exchange has the potential to generate greater momentum for the nurturing of a child. The actual situation (mentioned in Section 2 above) for Japan-Sea classroom-teacher exchange at elementary schools in this paper—the content of which simultaneously was made to cover the three view points of “nurturing the independence of both sides in the exchange”, “nurturing the idea of coexistence”, and “nurturing what moves both teacher and child”—can be said to have these elements nicely.

## **2) The Common Awareness Shown by the Accompanying School Principals and Others from the Four Countries**

Let’s summarize, from the remarks, etc., of the people in responsible positions (principals and vice-principals or assistant principals) in schools from the respective countries who accompanied the classroom teachers, what they took in at the chalkface in Japanese elementary schools and the educational challenges that elementary schools have in that country.<sup>4</sup> However, as it is completely impossible to touch on the content in regard of the amount of paper, I would ask the reader to refer to all of the materials already made public.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> After the class exchanges, I visited the schools in question and public schools, and organized the information based on an interview survey and the content of the first-hand reports of the people involved.

<sup>5</sup> Please see: “The Seeking of a Cohesive Society through the Elementary School Class Exchange in the Sea of Japan Rim Region” in the Elementary School Attached to the Faculty of Human Development, University of

When put together the points in common for the remarks and actions of each of the accompanying elementary school principals and assistant principals (vice-principals) at the time of the classroom-teacher exchange at elementary schools on the Sea of Japan are as follows.

First, within the development of education policy in order to face an economy and society of borderless competition with each country, there is an aspect of the responsible persons in each school shouldering the responsibility for the analogous challenges of how to continue developing the handing down of one's own country's culture and the fostering of a child's individual identity.

Second, all schools alike are confronted with the competition among schools for the creation of distinctive schools, and the position has become pronounced of teachers in managerial roles of wanting to continue absorbing the good points coming from abroad as well.

Third is that the end of the Cold War between the East and the West ended the big obstacles to international exchange for elementary school teachers from these four countries which hem in the Sea of Japan.

Fourth, via the Japanese side taking the initiative with a model of mutual benefit and equality—the “use of power” in the sense of standing in front of a class and giving a lesson in elementary schools in each other's countries—the construction of a relationship of trust was able to be verified between elementary school teachers who mutually consider the education of the children.

The elementary schools of the four countries where classroom-teacher exchange was carried out

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Toyama, *Fiscal Year 2005 Research Plan*, FY 2005. The Elementary School Attached to the University of Toyama PTA website: <http://www.fes.toyama-u.ac.jp/futaba.htm>, Principle's Column No. 68, December 2004. What the Democratization Declaration (1987) in the ROK made clear as educational reform laws were the three education laws in 1997 (the Basic Education Law, the Primary and Secondary Education Law, and the Tertiary Education Law). Currently, regarding their concrete development, concurrently with the cultivation (the setting up of gifted schools and classes based on the Gifted Education Promotion Act) of people able to respond to the intense competition of the global market (globalization) and policies meeting the calls of the public for more humanistic education (the delegation of authority to principals and the democratization of school management, the fulfilling of the fundamentals and basics, and the strengthening of the capacity for self-learning, etc.), and a somewhat nationalistic philosophy represented by “broad benefit to human beings”, it is necessary to be careful of it turning into a somewhat chaotic seeking out of policy (Chung Kwang-Hee “ROK Education Reform and the Three Education Laws”, *Japan Academic Society for Educational Policy Yearbook*, No. 10, June 2003). Amemiya, Yoji “*Fiscal Year 2004 Report of the Classroom Research Exchange Group with the School Attached to Dalian Maritime University, China*”: <http://www.nihonkaigaku.org/>. Subsequently, on the second class exchange (November 2006) the new Vice-Principal Tan who came to Japan stated candidly the new education ideal (disposition education that emphasizes personality and sentiment) and the current situation which the instructors at the chalkface groan about, being in the tight space of reality (the competition in progressing in education). In the background to that was the frenzied educational reform via the route of China's reform and opening (the formulation of the 1993 Teachers' Law, the formulation of the 1995 Education Law, and the promotion of the Action Plan for the Revitalization of Education (for the 21st Century), etc.). Amemiya, Yoji “*The Fiscal Year 2005 Seeking of a Cohesive Society through the Elementary School Class Research Group in the Sea of Japan Region (Four Countries): Report of the Classroom Research Exchange Group with the Elementary School Attached to Maritime State University named after G.I. Nevelskoy, in Vladivostok, Russia*”: <http://www.nihonkaigaku.org/>. “What is to Be Learned from the Symposium Sea of Japan Rim Exchange (Russia Edition)” in *Fiscal Year 2006 Research Proceedings toward Children engaging in Dialogue*, Elementary School Attached to the University of Toyama, 2006. With the Russian Federation law “On Education” formulated in July 1992 (which clearly stated the shift from the Marxist-Leninist principle of the right to a state-monopoly education to an education with the principle of the sovereignty of the people that emphasizes individual rights and benefits), the basic law on education for the newly-emerged Russia, although amended five times to date, has not changed in terms of essence. The problems lie in financial backing for the reform ethos and whether it is being pushed ahead steadily by government and the people in authority (Tokoro, Shinichi “*Have Russia's School Education System and Educational Philosophy Changed?*”, Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 1996: <http://src.h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/sympo/Proceed97/tokoro.html>). “The Seeking of a Cohesive Society through the Elementary School Class Exchange in the Sea of Japan Rim Region” in *Fiscal Year 2005 Research Plan toward Children engaging in Dialogue No. 29*, The Elementary School Attached to the University of Toyama, 2005. Seto, Ken “The Teachers Crossing the Sea of Japan are Coming” in *Identicalness*, The Elementary School Attached to the University of Toyama Identicalness Group, 2007, etc.

are all schools attached to universities, and that social status makes them the leaders of other schools; there is also the actual situation that they continue in fostering the leaders of society from the students who have graduated from them, and it is also certain that the trend is toward such cutting-edge educational practice being recognized by the respective school authorities and the administrative authorities behind them.

#### **4. Japan Sea Rim Economic Exchange and its Effectiveness for the Creation of a Cohesive Society in East Asia**

The experience of classroom-teacher exchange in the Japan Sea rim region mentioned up to this point is extremely effective for fostering the Japan Sea rim region (regional) mindset of a teacher, and subsequently the influence that that teacher has on the inner world of many children and pupils whose education they are guiding is beyond measure. That influence takes a double form of new relations between the teachers that crossed to another country along with the new evolution of the creation of relations among teachers and between teachers and pupils at the partner school and their own school, and of the deepening of mutual understanding concerning the people of the Japan Sea rim region. In the long term, the students who graduate from those schools will give life to the words and actions aimed at harmonious coexistence for this region, and it will become an opportunity to go on developing the creating of a common foundation for breaking through the wall of Japan Sea rim economic exchange and the limits to Japan's involvement in an East Asian Community.

##### **1) The Challenges for Japan Sea Rim Economic Exchange**

With the shift to the “Warm Sea of Japan” brought on as a result of the end of the East–West Cold War, the Russian Far East, the three provinces of China's Northeast, the DPRK, the East Sea coast of the ROK and the cities on the Japan Sea coast—the Japan Sea rim regions which had clear disparities, and left behind in economic growth and exchange—raised their expectations for the activation of exchange and for economic growth in one go in the 1990s. The active moves displayed were that several organizations were formed for the exchange of opinions of local governments and regional business circles, which included Japan, the ROK, China, Russia, and also the DPRK and Mongolia, by local governments on the Japan Sea coast,<sup>6</sup> and all kinds of multilateral cooperation development projects were also proposed.<sup>7</sup> Representative of this was the UN agency (UNDP) approved Tumen River Area Development Programme. For its concrete progress it is taken that finance and technological support from the Japanese side is indispensable, but the passive stance of the Japanese government has not changed to date. As a result, for all the countries bilaterally, without Japan, the development of transportation infrastructure, the setting up of special economic zones, and the inward investment needed for

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<sup>6</sup> Representative examples include: the Summit of Local Governments of the Japan Sea Rim centered on and promoted by Toyama Prefecture (now: Association of North East Asia Regional Governments), the Conference of Major Cities in the Japan Sea (East Sea) Rim Region by the Mayor of Sakaiminato and others, the Pan Yellow Sea City Conference promoted by Kitakyushu (now: The Organization for the East Asia Economic Development); and Japan Sea Rim economic (exchange) research institutions set up by Niigata and Kanazawa, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Within the 2007 “Proposal for Promotion of the Realization of the BESETO Corridor Vision” [BESOTO is a combination of the names of the three countries' capitals] by the governmental research institutes of the three countries of Japan, China and the ROK (National Institute for Research Advancement (NIRA), Institute of Spatial Planning & Regional Economy Research, and Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements (KRIHS)) they emphasized the point that “the strengthening of Northeast Asian civil society (person-to-person relations) will be an essential element for the building of the BESETO corridor”.

them have been furthered, and recently, using it as a footing, combined with the Northeast revitalization policy which China has laid out, the private-sector-driven “Greater Tumen Initiative” plan, which expands the area of development, has come to be carried out (September 2006), and all of a sudden activity has become lively.

Regarding the background to multilateral cooperation<sup>8</sup> in the Sea of Japan rim region, which is proceeding at a snail’s pace, Ikuo Mitsuhashi (Economic Research Institute for Northeast Asia (ERINA)) stated that “(in this region) what is most lacking is intraregional mutual trust”,<sup>9</sup> and “in order not to leave to our descendents relationships with the neighbors which are continually worsening, what can be done now in the economic sector is the linking of the three provinces of China’s Northeast, where 65 million people live, by means of the Tumen River and crossing the Sea of Japan, to the east coast of the ROK and the Japan Sea coast of Japan”, and ERINA has taken a step toward the realization of the operation of a cross-Japan Sea ferry service. In activating the flow of goods and people by a new Sea of Japan ferry route, tying the Japanese economy to the giant market of the opposite shore (particularly the three provinces of China’s Northeast), and expecting renewed development, this is something that will play a part, by means of the ferry, in the upturn in the relationships with the neighbors in the Sea of Japan rim region. The important thing in order not to derail such a move is probably that the educational institutions of this region, in conjunction with the diplomacy of local governments, play a role for the sake of the construction of relations of mutual trust in the Sea of Japan rim region.

## 2) The Challenges for the Japanese Side in Creating an East Asian Community

The surmounting of the Asian currency crisis and China’s outstanding economic development resulted in the affirming, at the summit meeting which put together the three countries of Japan, China and the ROK with ASEAN, of the promotion of regional cooperation in the economic and political spheres toward the establishment of an “East Asian Community (AU)” (2001). The degree of Japan’s dependency on imports and exports from and to this region has already exceeded that vis-à-vis the United States, and time now cannot be lost in the building of good relations with Asian countries.

Shindo (2006), while bearing in mind the difference with the EU, stated the following regarding the challenges for “Building an East Asian Community”. First, he states that “common threats, common interests and common values” are the three conditions for a regional community to be created. In the case of East Asia the common threats are “the casino capitalism seen in the Asian currency crisis and the US hegemonism after the 9/11 terrorist attacks” and for the common interests he points out “the interdependent economic development seen in the economic growth of the Asian newly industrialized economies (NIEs), ASEAN and China, and, being a result thereof, the reduction in the relative disparity”. The common values are “Confucian culture lying in the base stratum and a pure-and-simply preventative diplomacy by means of confidence building, which is a cooperative security method which ASEAN devised based on the experience of the anguish of colonial rule by Western powers”, and differs from the EU. Japan’s position lies within such a situation and in the economic sphere it has a measure of legitimacy, whereas regarding the “Asian experience of being colonized”, which is a common Asian value, it has the exact opposite

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<sup>8</sup> Several ferry services are already in operation bilaterally between Russia, the ROK, China and the Japanese ports on the Sea of Japan, but what is being pointed out here is that there is greater difficulty for multilateral cooperation projects to overcome the barriers of the nations of the Sea of Japan rim region.

<sup>9</sup> Mitsuhashi, Ikuo “Toward the Establishment of a Cross-Japan Sea Ferry Route” in *Kaiun*, The Japan Shipping Exchange, Inc., July 2007 edition.

position. Therefore for today's challenges in order for Japan to aim toward building an East Asian Community, Shindo, designating it as a "third opening to the outside world",<sup>10</sup> stresses "sharing history and the perception of history", "new values for coexisting and the creation of authority", and above all "the strengthening of the fostering of human resources to that end and enabling them to flow".

While based on the limits of people-to-people diplomacy,<sup>11</sup> it is necessary that we advance a "creation of common denominators of the mind in Asia" appropriate for the "third opening to the outside world". Without doing that, when we prioritize economic activity alone, a human segregation by nationality will progress, we will seek refuge in our own cultures, the creation of common values commensurate to global economic society will not be possible, and will lead to the causing of new problems.<sup>12</sup>

### 3) The Role of the Schools Attached to Universities of Education located on the Sea of Japan Coast

The practical examples of classroom-teacher exchange at elementary schools in four countries on the Sea of Japan mentioned in this paper, in order to move closer to the people of this region holding common values (a regional mindset), appear to be an extremely effective human development method where Japan can take the lead, and matters will grow into win-win relationships with the countries concerned. In concert with the association of small nations which is ASEAN having an influence on the building of an East Asian Community, via ASEAN Plus Three, the regions of the Japan Sea rim, where the light of the central governments isn't cast, need to deepen the complexion of an association of small nation-like regions and to be involved in the building of an East Asian Community. In the light of Japan's historical background and the high degree of safety and stability of its economy and society, it is necessary for the Japanese side to continue taking the initiative earnestly, and actively and objectively. At the end of this paper I would like to make the following proposal. "Each of the schools attached to universities for teacher training located on the Sea of Japan coast, via their links with universities (faculties of education), should embark on education for mutual understanding with their Asian neighbors in the form of the international educational exchange of classroom teachers which I mentioned in this paper, and making that their underpinning should continue to widen it gradually to public elementary schools"—and it is here wherein lies the important twenty-first-century role which the national university corporation-attached schools of Japan within the region should take on.

[Translated by ERINA]

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<sup>10</sup> The first opening of the country is taken as corresponding to the industrial revolution by nineteenth century Europe, and the second to the US period of the twentieth century global manufacturing revolution.

<sup>11</sup> Kubo, Takao "The End of American Unipolar Domination and Eurasian Dynamism" in Takao Matsumura and Koichi Takakusagi (eds.) "*What Japan is being Questioned about: Is an East Asian Community worth it? and, the creation of East Asian standards*", Iwanami Shoten, 2007, pp. 197–209.

<sup>12</sup> Typical examples of this can be seen in Japanese seafarers on ocean-going vessels who have suddenly been thrown into working and living together with foreign nationals without preparation, such as education in understanding other cultures (Ono, Miki "*Filipino Seafarers and Crisis Management*", Seizando Shoten, 2000).

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