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**IN COMMEMORATION OF IX ICCEES WORLD CONGRESS**

**2015 — The Year of the ICCEES World Congress**

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During the last several years, Japanese specialists on Slavic and Eurasian studies worked hard for the World Congress of ICCEES (International Council for Central and East European Studies) to be held in Makuhari on August 3-8, 2015. For example, the 5th East Asian Conference on Slavic Eurasian studies held at Osaka University of Economics and Law (Yao Campus) on August 9-10, 2013 was a "general rehearsal" for the world congress. This event, thanks to the generous support by the university and its president, Professor Wakio Fujimoto, was a great success. It is worth mentioning that a number of ICCEES leaders from Europe and Oceania took part in the conference. The Osaka conference created an agora where "many Wests meet many Easts."

In 2014, this assembly was multiplied by the active cooperation of Japanese and foreign specialists. As of today, 1,761 of our colleagues have registered as Congress participants and 450 panels and roundtables have been organized. Obviously, the World Congress in Makuhari will be one of the largest congresses in the history of ICCEES. During the months leading up to the congress, the Organizing Committee is working to bridge the academic and business worlds and involve the latter in the world congress. This endeavor will result in a significant increase of representatives from business circles among the congress participants.

ICCEES was established in 1974 to promote what then called Soviet and East European studies. It is not a secret that the ICCEES was a product of the

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Cold War. In this framework, the West studied the Soviet-bloc countries. After the Cold War, ICCEES has tried to transform itself into a real world organization by opening the door to the former Soviet-bloc countries and Asia. In 2008, the Chinese Association for Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies (CAREECAS) became a full member of ICCEES. In that same year, the Korean Association of Slavic Studies (KASS) normalized its relationship with ICCEES, which had been strained since the early 1990s. In 2012, Mongolian colleagues created their national association of Central and East European studies and in the next year, they became a full member of ICCEES. In 2014, Kazakhstani specialists followed this example. That same year, the Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, thanks to the initiative of its director, Dr. Yury Petrov, became an associate member of ICCEES. This is an extremely important step in the way towards the creation of Russian association on Slavic Eurasian studies, which will legitimately become an important member of ICCEES.

Based on the Memorandum of May 7, 2008, signed by the presidents of KASS (Park Soo-Heon), CAREECAS (Li Jinkjie), and the Japan Council for Russian and East European Studies (Hakamada Shigeki), Asian specialists on Slavic Eurasian studies declared they would hold a yearly East Asian conference (with the status of an ICCEES regional conference). We have already held six regional conferences — Sapporo in 2009, Seoul in 2010, Beijing in 2011, Kolkata in 2012, Osaka in 2013, and Seoul again in 2014. European colleagues hold a regional congresses once in five years (in Berlin in 2008 and in Cambridge in 2013), but we did not follow this example. Because of the colonial academic mentality of our research field, we, Asian Slavists, were familiar with American, Russian (East European), and to a lesser extent, European historiography, but we did not know each other's. It was necessary to hold a regional congress yearly.

The ICCEES used to have two problems hindering its development. The first was the lack of national associations on Slavic Eurasian studies in the Slavic Eurasian countries themselves. This weakness began to be overcome because of the establishment of national associations in Mongolia and Kazakhstan and of the associate membership of the Institute of Russian

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History of RAS. The other serious problem was that during the past quarter century, world congresses of ICCEES have constantly been held in Europe. It has not been held even in North America since the last "non-European" world congress in Washington D.C. in 1985. This situation resulted in a continuous decrease in the number of participants in the world congresses during the last decade. To change this situation and considering the active cooperation among specialists in Slavic and Eurasian studies in Asia, in 2010, the International Council of ICCEES decided to hold "the first world congress outside Europe and North America" in Makuhari. The Executive Committee of ICCEES held at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, UK, decided to propose Montreal to the International Committee as the venue of the 10th World Congress of ICCEES in 2020. After a long interval, this will be the first world congress to be held in North America since 1985.

We often observe that if a research field does not have a worldwide association, a North American regional association begins to assume that role. Even though North American associations on area studies, as a rule, are large, influential, and professionally minded, this does not seem a desirable scenario. Any national (regional) academic tradition has its strengths and weaknesses. This is why we should exchange our opinions internationally as equal and independent scholars, not as hosts and guests. It is our sincere desire to make Makuhari a place for such equal exchanges.

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