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## Focus

### New Challenges in Northeast Asian Studies



The framework of Northeast Asian studies has undergone a significant transformation since the onset of the “war” triggered by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This event has fundamentally reshaped the world into an era of globalized conflict. While there were already indications of structural changes, this development has pushed

the situation to the point of no return.

The Center for Northeast Asian Studies was established in 1996, spurred by the end of the Cold War and the subsequent initiation of exchanges between the former Soviet Union and East Asia. At that time, there was a need for interdisciplinary knowledge that addressed the environmental issues collectively affecting Russia, China, and Japan. Moreover, there was a need to facilitate economic cooperation.

The situation has changed though and, going forward, the additional focus of the center will likely shift to the study of the origins of conflicts, disputes, and wars in these regions—both past and present—and the exploration of paths to resolution. This shift will not only redefine research methodologies and perspectives across various disciplines, but will also affect the broader framework of interdisciplinary studies.

In recent years, Tohoku University has engaged in research projects aimed at fostering impactful societal contributions, particularly by deepening our understanding of neighboring countries through Northeast Asian Studies. Last year, as part of this initiative, we organized an online lecture series for high school students

to gain insights into Russia. Experts delivered lectures showcasing aspects of Russia that are rarely covered by the mainstream media. The enthusiastic participation and thought-provoking questions from students made this program exceptionally meaningful, and demonstrated that there is an urgent need for greater societal understanding of Russia and Northeast Asia as a whole.

Moreover, we have come to recognize the critical importance of studying authoritarian states such as Russia and China. Understanding what is happening within these regimes, how people live under these systems, and how Japan and the global communities should engage with them are among the many pressing questions that demand further exploration. As a research institute, we must develop new analytical approaches to examine both historical and contemporary issues. More importantly, it is becoming increasingly vital to uncover interdisciplinary knowledge that contributes to peaceful coexistence in the region.

Key strengths of the Center for Northeast Asian Studies include its distinguished researchers who are globally recognized in the fields of humanities, social sciences, and natural science, and also our longstanding commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration. This is a point of great pride for us. The Center has fostered cross-disciplinary research, bridging fields such as biology with history and archaeology, and anthropology with hydrology and geology, and the results of these efforts have garnered international recognition. Building on this strong foundation, we must continue to develop and expand the frontiers of Northeast Asian Studies to meet the challenges of today and the future.

We look forward to your continued engagement and support as we embark on this crucial journey. **(Hiroki Takakura)**

## Recent Events

### Reflecting on Domestic COVID-19 and Disaster Response: A Perspective from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

On the afternoon of January 20, a public lecture titled *Reflecting on Domestic COVID-19 and Disaster Response: A Perspective from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare* was held, featuring guest speaker Toshihiko Takeda, Policy Advisor to the Cabinet Secretariat’s Office of Health and Medical Policy.

Mr. Takeda, a graduate of the University of Tokyo Faculty of Law, has held key positions within the Ministry of Health and Welfare (now the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare), overseeing medical insurance administration and healthcare policy. He later transitioned to the Fire and Disaster Management Agency

(FDMA) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, where he played a leading role in disaster response as a senior official. Since his retirement in 2018, he has continued to serve as a Policy Advisor to the Cabinet Secretariat.

Drawing from his extensive experience at the forefront of medical and disaster administration, Mr. Takeda provided valuable insights into the realities and challenges of Japan's recent COVID-19 response. He also shared information about disaster management efforts during events such as the Great East Japan Earthquake.

His lecture covered a wide range of topics, including an introduction to the National Crisis Management Center, the activities and crisis management system of emergency response teams, and the general disaster response efforts carried out by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. He also discussed Japan's disaster medical system, and shared firsthand accounts of how past disasters and lessons have been remembered and passed down in the areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Additionally, he examined key aspects of the COVID-19 response, including the evolution of healthcare system capaci-



ty, vaccine distribution, and treatment strategies. Drawing from the extensive experience and firsthand his involvement in leadership roles within medical and disaster response organizations, Mr. Takeda offered valuable insights.

During the Q&A session, numerous questions and comments were raised by the audience, with lively discussions held.

(Hiroki Oka)

## Recent Events

### Geological Traverse Across Southwest Japan: Unraveling Geological Continuity with Researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences

From November 29th to December 5th, 2023, a group of eight geologists, led by Professor Zhai Mingguo, an academic from the Institute of Geology and Geophysics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, visited Japan as part of an international collaborative research project. Over six days, the group conducted a geological traverse across Southwest Japan, examining key geological formations.

On the first day, the team departed from Fukuyama City in Hiroshima Prefecture, crossed the Shimanami Kaido, and entered Shikoku. Along the way, they visited quarry sites of granodiorite, widely known as "Oshima-ishi," on Oshima Island and observed granitic rocks and Ryoike metamorphic rocks along the coastal areas of the Takano Peninsula in Imabari City, Ehime Prefecture. The second day involved traversing along the Kokuryo River in Niihama City, crossing the Ishizuchi Mountain Range in the Shi-



Group photo in front of the eclogite conference monument at Seba in Besshijama, Niihama, Ehime Prefecture

oku Mountains, and investigating the Sambagawa metamorphic rocks in the Besshijama area. On the third day, the group traveled from Matsuyama to Uwajima, then along the Shimanto River, reaching the Pacific coastline in Shimanto City, Kochi Prefecture. They observed pillow lavas of the Shimanto Belt and diorites at Cape Ashizuri in Tosashimizu City. After the previous day's chilly weather, including occasional snow in the mountainous regions of Shikoku, the warm sunlight and breeze of Tosa provided a stark contrast. Later, the team traveled from Kochi City to Sakaide City, Kagawa Prefecture, via the Shikoku Cross-Island Expressway. On the fourth day, the group crossed the Seto Ohashi Bridge to Okayama City and visited a granite quarry famous for producing "Mannari-ishi." They then traveled northward to Niimi City in Okayama Prefecture to examine limestone formations of the Akiyoshi Belt. The fifth day focused on studying high-pressure schists of the Suo and Renge Belts, as well as serpentinite of the Oeyama Belt in Maniwa and Niimi cities. The group then headed north to the snow-covered Mt. Daisen in Tottori Prefecture, where they observed dacitic lava. In total, the group covered a distance of 1,600 km during the geo-traverse. Throughout the journey, lively discussions were held with young researchers, fostering fruitful academic exchanges. On the final day, rock samples were packed, and the Chinese researchers were bid farewell at Hiroshima Airport.

Through further collaboration, we aim to deepen our understanding of the geological continuity and crustal growth processes in East Asia before the opening of the Japan Sea.

(Tatsuki Tsujimori)



## Recent Events

### Life and Climate Change on the Arctic Island of Greenland

The program for this public lecture offered an introduction to Greenland, one of the places most impacted by climate change. The speakers included a local activist, a professional photographer, the director of a seafood company, and several researchers. Together, they explored the deep connection between the people of Greenland and the sea, covering topics such as fishing, hunting, traditional culture, and contemporary society.

The event began with a welcome from organizer Alyne Delaney, followed by remarks from Jacob Isbosethsen, the Greenlandic government representative to East Asia. Greenland's largest industry is fishing, and East Asia plays a key role in the region's seafood exports. The first speaker, Mr. Takaaki Shimoda, Managing Director of Royal Greenland, Japan, addressed this important industry. He was followed by Prof. Shin Tomiyasu from Hokkaido University, who shared insights from his research collaboration with local fishermen.

The focus then shifted to the beauty and dangers of Greenland's sea and landscape. Professional photographer Tsutomu Endo presented a photo essay documenting the lives of Arctic inhabitants, particularly the months he spent accompanying hunters in the Qaanaaq region. These hunters pursued whales, polar bears, and walrus in the remote northern part of Greenland.

The presentations concluded with a talk by Pipaluk Lykke, who highlighted the drowning hazards facing Greenland's youth and the efforts being made to improve water safety.

The event wrapped up with a 30-minute Q&A session, allowing the audience to engage directly with the speakers. With nearly 100 attendees and lively interaction throughout, the event was both informative and successful. **(Alyne Delaney)**



## Recent Events

### Tohoku University Special Liberal Arts Seminar: Aggression and Conflict in Human Society

Conflict has remained an unresolved issue since prehistory. However, Japanese society has only engaged with this topic in a very indirect and winding manner for the past few decades. This seminar addressed conflict from multiple disciplinary perspectives. I provided a brief overview of conflict studies in the field of human history. I felt that I was somewhat mismatched with the other “big name” speakers—Vice President Toshiya Ueki, an expert in international law, and Specially Appointed Professor Masakado Kawata, an evolutionary biologist. The seminar deeply engaged our participating students, leading to an overwhelming number of questions that extended beyond the scheduled time. A transcript of the seminar will be published in the Seminar and ILAS Colloquium Reports, Institute of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Tohoku

University, 2024.

I am not optimistic enough to believe that conflict could be eradicated during my lifetime, but not so pessimistic as to deny the contribution of conflict studies, even though it could be tiny, to reducing the devastation caused by conflict. It is my hope that the seminar can contribute to building a future without conflict.

**(Kohei Tamura)**



## Recent Events

### Special Exhibition:

The 69th special exhibition at the Yamamoto Town Museum of History and Folklore, titled *Historical Records Reveal Society in the Early Modern and Modern Eras—Insights from the Ōeda Clan Doc-*

*uments and Sakamoto Village Records*

This exhibition showcased the findings of an ongoing research collaboration between the Uehiro Historical Materials Re-

search Division and the Yamamoto Town Museum of History and Folklore. Since 2019, we have been investigating historical records from the Ōeda clan, which governed the area during the Edo period, along with administrative records from Sakamoto Village, which date from the Meiji era onward.

The exhibition highlighted several key themes. From the Ōeda clan records, we presented evidence of their relationship to the ruling Date clan such as detailed genealogical records of the Ōeda name and Date Masamune's Kokuin-jo, and maps of the Sakamoto Fortress (castle) and its castle town. A historically-significant map from 1687 (4<sup>th</sup> year of the Jokyo period) shows the expansion of samurai residences and the development of roads, revealing a shift toward urbanization and residential land use during the Edo period.

From the Sakamoto Village records, we introduced reports on disaster relief efforts following the great famine of 1905 (38<sup>th</sup> year of the Meiji period) and a devastating fire the following year. Food rations including rice, dried vegetables, wheat flour, buckwheat, black bread, potatoes, taro, miso, and soy sauce; and articles such as clothing, blankets, and school supplies for children were distributed as a part of the region's recovery efforts. Numerous receipts for these relief distributions remain in the records, offering valuable documentation of the diverse aid activities that supported local efforts to rebuild.

As part of the exhibition, we hosted a special lecture on November 10 titled *Learning the Regional History of Yamamoto Town: Sakamoto Village in the Edo and Meiji Periods*, featuring Dr. Tei-

ji Nomoto (Associate Professor of the Faculty of Education at Kaichi International University) and myself. It is our hope that this exhibition planted in guests an appreciation for the historical records that tell the story of Sakamoto Village's past, and that our research will inspire future studies. (**Kazuo Takehara**)



## Awards

### Associate Professor Yongchao Cheng Receives the 13th Mishima Kaiun Academic Award (Humanities Division) for 2024

Associate Professor Yongchao Cheng of our center has been awarded the 13th Mishima Kaiun Academic Award in the Humanities Division.

The Mishima Kaiun Academic Award was established in 2012 by the Mishima Kaiun Memorial Foundation, founded by Mishima Kaiun, the creator of Calpis, to commemorate the foundation's 50th anniversary. It recognizes young researchers under the age of 45 who have demonstrated exceptional research capabilities and creativity in the fields of natural sciences and humanities, with the aim of supporting the further development of their work. The Humanities Division specifically honors academic research in the humanities and social sciences related to Asia, including studies on Japan.

Dr. Cheng received the award for her book, *East Asia in the Kai Hentai transformation: Trilateral relations among Tokugawa-Joseon and China in the 17-19th centuries*, (Seibundō Publishing, 2021).

The award ceremony took place on July 5th at the Tokyo Kaikan in Marunouchi, Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo. At the ceremony, the award was presented to Dr. Cheng by Masashi Haneda, Chairman of the Mishima Kaiun Memorial Foundation. The selection committee's review was delivered by Professor Shinichi Yamamuro, Emeritus Professor at Kyoto University. Dr. Cheng's book

was chosen from among a record 24 nominations and was highly praised for providing new perspectives on the unique international relations of early modern East Asia. Her book was also recognized as a groundbreaking contribution establishing the framework of early modern trilateral relations among Japan, Korea, and China.



Chairman Haneda presenting the award to Associate Professor Cheng at the ceremony



## New Staff and Visiting Scholars

Visiting Scholar

**Donatas Brandišauskas**

Feb. 2024 - Mar. 2024

Social anthropology



JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowship for Research in Japan

**Victoria Peemot**

Mar. 2024 - present

Cultural anthropology



Visiting Scholar

**Jaroslava Panakova**

Apr. 2024 - Jun. 2024

Cultural anthropology



Visiting Scholar

**Kotlerman Dov-Ber**

Jun. 2024 - Sep. 2024

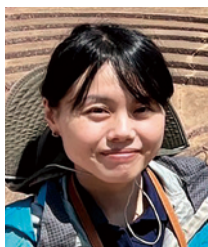
Jewish literature



JSPS PD Fellow (Specially Appointed Research Fellow)

**Asami Tsukuda**

Cultural anthropology



Visiting Scholar

**Skuzovatov, Sergei**

Jul. 2024 - Sep. 2024

Petrology



Research Fellow

**Moe Terao**

Apr. 2024 - present

Social anthropology



Visiting Scholar

**Ekaterini (Katia) Frangoudes**

Oct. 2024 - Dec. 2024

Sociology



Visiting Research Fellow

**Kazuko Hase**

Feb. 2024 - present

Evolutionary behavioral ecology



Visiting Scholar

**Wang Guangtao**

Jul. 2024 - Aug. 2024

History of Sino-Japanese relations



Visiting Scholar

**Tom Gill**

Apr. 2024 - Jun. 2025

Social anthropology



Visiting Scholar

**Konstantinos Zorbas**

Sep. 2024 - Dec. 2024

Cultural anthropology



Visiting Scholar

**Ken Daimaru**

Dec. 2023 - Jan. 2024

Sociology

Visiting Scholar

**Florian Sttamler**

Jan. 2024

Cultural anthropology

Visiting Scholar

**Aytalin Ivanova**

Jan. 2024

Cultural anthropology

## Publications

The language of the following books is Japanese, unless otherwise noted.

### ■ CNEAS Monograph Series

This commercially published series presents scholarly monographs in Northeast Asian regional studies aimed at specialists, general readers and university students.

Kenichiro Aratake, Sakuichi Takeda [eds.], The official document of the Tohoku district farm village in 1827: The documents of Kuwana family in Sukagawa City, Center for Northeast Study, December 2023



Kenichiro Aratake, Shiroishi Komonjo Group [eds.], The Sato family documents of the Katakura family vassal in Shiroishi: Documents of the samurai in Zao Town, Miyagi Prefecture, Center for Northeast Study, January 2024

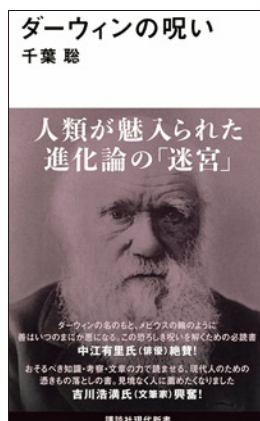


### ■ Northeast Asian Studies

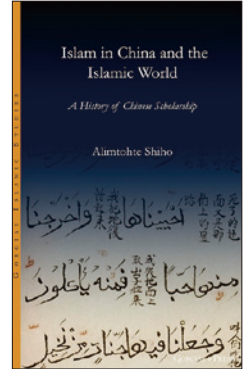
Northeast Asian Studies is an annual academic journal for the purpose of contributing to the development of area studies and its related fields in Northeast Asia. Northeast Asian Studies vol. 28, February 2024.

### ■ Researcher's Initiative Publications

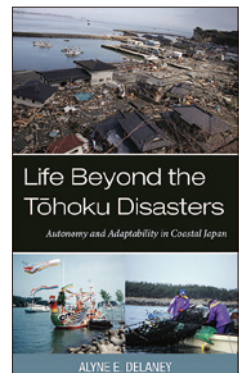
Satoshi CHIBA, *Darwin No Noroi* (*Darwin's Curse*), Kodansha, November 2023



Alimtohte SHIHO, *ISLAM IN CHINA AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD: A History of Chinese Scholarship*, Gorgias Press LLC, January 2024



DELANEY Alyne, "Life Beyond the Tohoku Disasters: Autonomy and Adaptability in Coastal Japan" Lexington Press, May 2024



Michael Knuppel, Oleg Pakhomov "Vladimir Il'ich Iokhel'son: Personal Memoirs from Siberia" BoD (Book on Demand)



Michitaka HATTORI, Atsushi YOSHIDA [eds.], *Roshia Kyokutou / Siberia wo shiru tame no 70 syou* (*The 70 chapters for understanding the Russian Far East and Siberia*), Akashi Shoten, May 2024



## Letters

Ekaterini (Katia) Frangoudes  
(Université de Bretagne-Occidentale)

### Social or economic role for women groups in coastal communities?

My name is Katia Frangoudes, a researcher at the University of Western Brittany, France. My research primarily focuses on the governance of European fisheries, with a particular emphasis on power dynamics. Over the years, I have analyzed the decision-making processes within fisheries governance, highlighting the power relations that shape resource allocation between small- and large-scale fleets, as well as the distribution of subsidies.

Participatory observation has revealed the essential role of family labor in the sustainability of small-scale fisheries enterprises. Within these enterprises, family members, particularly the wives of fishermen, undertake numerous critical tasks. These contributions, however, are often unpaid, unrecognized, and largely invisible within society. Recognizing and securing social rights for women's contributions has become a central focus of my research. Through action-based research, I have supported French fisher wives in advocating for legal recognition of their contribution. This culminated in the establishment of the legal status of "collaborative spouse," which provides women with access to pensions, training, and participation in fisheries organizations, thereby enabling them to engage in fisheries management decisions.

At the European level, this advocacy led to the creation of AKTEA, a network of women in fisheries advocating for gender equality and women rights in European Union. This network facilitated international collaborations, including connections with Japanese researchers and the Umi Hito network, which represents Japanese fisheries women. The networks exchange experiences to identify commonalities in women's contributions and advocacy in Europe and Japan.

In 2016, with support from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), I conducted a two-month project in collaboration with the National Fisheries University in Shimonoseki. The project investigated the significance of women's groups in enhancing entrepreneurial abilities in Japan. Fieldwork involved participatory observations and interviews with women leaders in regions such as Yamaguchi, Miyazaki, Saga, and Okayama. The findings revealed that women's groups—both those affiliated with Fisheries Cooperative Associations (FCAs) and independent groups—play a significant role in their communities.

FCA-affiliated groups primarily address social cohesion by fostering intergenerational connections. Older women often organize social activities for the elderly, while also engaging in economic activities, such as producing fish-based goods, to generate supplemental income. Due to their lack of formal employment throughout their lives, many older women are financially vulnerable. Independent women's groups, in contrast, focus on entrepreneurial endeavors. These groups aim to ensure stable incomes for members through the production and marketing of high-value seafood products, such as nori, which are sold locally, nationally, and internationally. Notably, a women's group in Saga successfully exported nori to a luxury store in Paris since early 2024. However, FCA's groups face internal challenges, including disparities in leadership styles and financial management, particularly regarding equitable compensation among members.

Further research conducted during a three-month stay at CNEAS explored changes within women's groups since 2016. Interviews with women entrepreneurs, FCA representatives, and government officials, examined the role of women towards national initiatives such as Umigyo and revitalizing of rural and coastal communities. Despite policy goals to support women's projects, many FCA-affiliated groups face challenges due to aging membership, leadership conflicts, and limited financial support. For instance, in Ehime prefecture, the number of active FCA groups has dwindled, with only 12 out of 25 still operational. Structural reforms and renewed support are urgently needed to sustain these groups.



Independent fishermen's groups face a range of structural and systemic barriers that impede their economic development and limit their broader impact on rural and coastal communities. These challenges highlight the interplay of financial, policy, cultural, and institutional factors:

**Limited Access to Credit:** Access to financial resources is a critical hurdle for women entrepreneurs. Banks are often hesitant to provide loans to women, citing doubts about their ability to sustain economic activities. This forces women to rely on male guarantors, such as husbands or fathers, perpetuating dependency and undermining gender equity.

**Tax Policies:** Tax regulations disincentivize women from earning beyond specific income thresholds (e.g., 1,400,000 yen annually). This constraint discourages women from fully leveraging their entrepreneurial potential, as exceeding the threshold would subject them to higher taxes, effectively penalizing economic success.

**Cultural and Institutional Biases:** Deep-rooted cultural norms and institutional practices often fail to recognize women as legitimate economic agents. Fisheries Cooperative Associations (FCAs) and local governance structures tend to view women's contributions as supplementary to household or community welfare rather than as central to economic revitalization. This perception marginalizes their entrepreneurial efforts and limits access to support mechanisms.

**Undervaluation of Economic Contributions:** While women's initiatives are praised for fostering social cohesion—through community engagement and intergenerational support—their potential to drive economic growth remains undervalued. As a result, their projects are rarely prioritized in development agendas, leading to insufficient investment in their scalability and long-term impact.

This research underscores the critical yet underappreciated role of women in fisheries governance and entrepreneurship. Addressing systemic barriers and fostering gender equality are essential for empowering women to drive sustainable development in coastal and rural communities.



## Letters

Konstantinos Zorbas  
(Shandong University)

### BEYOND SIBERIA: TREADING PATHS OF SHAMANIC RELIGION IN NORTHEASTERN JAPAN

My fellowship at the Center for Northeast Asian Studies involved an unparalleled context of ethnographic experiences associated with Indigenous religious cosmologies throughout Eastern Siberia and the Okhotsk Sea. As an anthropologist writing on shamans and similar purveyors of visionary experience, I have a fascination for legends about shamanic “souls” and their sociopolitical afterlives (with a focus on the Russian Republic of Tuva, South Siberia). During my fellowship at CNEAS, I expanded this area-focused project into an overarching research framework with synergies across the Sakhalin and the Northern regions of the Japanese archipelago. This initiative was motivated by a key premise concerning the enduring (or revitalized) presence of animistic notions of relatedness between Indigenous peoples and their respective realms of shamanic and ancestral spirits. From September until mid-December 2024, I collected ample substantive data as part of a multi-sited fieldwork project, based in Hokkaido (‘Hokkaido Museum of Northern Peoples’, Abashiri, Okhotsk sub-Prefecture, and the ‘National Ainu Museum’, Shiraoi Town), as well as in the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka. Supplementary data were obtained from the (charming) collections of Abashiri’s Municipal Museum, adding thus further insights in the confluence of traditional beliefs and modernizing trends in this interesting coastal town and leading to novel outcomes, which were not anticipated when this fieldwork was originally designed. The data from these museums’ collections (involving an array of ceremonial attires, artifacts, amulets and effigies as the standing symbols of spirits among the Indigenous Udege, Nivkh, and the Uilta of Sakhalin) affirm a well-known thesis on the ubiquity of shaman-

ic cosmologies among hunting and pastoral societies of Northern Eurasia. The significance of this research lies in the fact that the data on shamanism derive from a region (in Northern Hokkaido), which has been at the crossroads of Siberian and Northeastern cultures. I envision new trajectories of collaborative ethnographic research in Japan as a sequel to this highly productive period of carrying out research at Tohoku University, and I express my gratitude to Prof. Takakura, the administrative officers and the faculty members of CNEAS for providing unequalled intellectual resources and opening new paths of knowledge.



The author, Hokkaido Museum of Northern Peoples, 11/14/2024. In the background, a wooden mask of the Inuit, Indigenous people of the North American Arctic.

## Editorial

### Editorial postscript

Welcome to the 12th volume of the CNEAS Bulletin! Over the past year, we’ve seen exciting changes—Tohoku University became Japan’s first University for International Research Excellence, marking a new chapter in global academic leadership. With Professor Hiroki Takakura returning as director in April 2024, our center has grown, welcoming 15 new colleagues, each bringing fresh energy and expertise. Alongside our research efforts, we have also engaged the public in crucial conversations—from post-pandemic policies to climate change in Greenland. This edition fea-

tures letters by Dr. Ekaterini (Katia) Frangoudes and Dr. Konstantinos Zorbas, highlighting the strong international ties that shape our work.

Northeast Asia is changing, and so are we. As the region navigates shifting geopolitics, CNEAS remains committed to bridging disciplines and perspectives—because understanding our world demands more than one lens. We look forward to another year of discovery, collaboration, and dialogue.

The CNEAS Bulletin is published once a year by the Center for Northeast Asian Studies, Tohoku University.

The Bulletin promotes a continuing exchange of information with

former visiting scholars and others who related to the Northeast Asian Studies.

Website: <http://www2.cneas.tohoku.ac.jp/english/index.html>

Editor: Toshihiro Ueno

Editorial panel: Alyne Delaney, Yongchao Cheng, Yuanyuan Teng, and Mitsu Hatakeyama

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