

Preface

The Russian Far East with the current population slightly more than 7 million people occupies a vast land (6,216,000 km²) of the northeastern part of the Eurasian Continent. Its eastern end is very close to Alaska, the fiftieth state of the United States. The narrow Bering Strait separates Russian Far East from Alaska. The national border lies between Big Diomedes Island (Russia) and Little Diomedes Island (U. S.), which are only a few kilometers away from each other. Its southern most end is touching to North Korea though only in a short stretch. Its island portions, i.e., Sakhalin island and Kurile archipelago are almost visibly close to Japan. The most of its lengthy southern rim is directly facing China with Amur River and one of its tributaries, i.e., Ussuri River being the national border. Its southwestern corner is very close to Mongolia. In the west, it is connected with East Siberian territories ; Chita oblast, Irkutsk oblast, and Evenki and Taymyr autonomous okrugs. (Oblast, krai and okrug are large administrative units in Russia Federation.) Its northern part belongs to the Arctic circle and faces the Arctic Ocean.

Arctic tundra covers the northern portion of this vast land. Its central portion is dominated by forest taiga. Large parts of the southern portion are the Amur and Ussuri River basins. The land is diverse not only in natural but in ethnological conditions. More than 25 ethnic groups live there with their own culture. Mainly remote and sparsely populated areas are rich in precious minerals, diamonds, gold, tin, and more.

From an administrative point of view, the Russian Far East consists of the following ten territories : Amur Oblast, Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, Jewish Autonomous Oblast, Kamchatka Oblast, Khabarovskiy Krai, Koryak Autonomous Okrug, Magadan Oblast, Primorskiy Krai, Sakha Republic (Yakutia), and Sakhalin Oblast.

Under the support of the Doshisha University Academic Frontier Research Project (1999–2003 academic years), we visited some cities, towns, and villages in this region every summer in the period of 2001–2003 to find how its economy and environment have been changing since the Soviet collapse in 1991. This is the report of our observations, interviews, and literature readings on this region, followed by our own analysis. We also made field trips to East Siberia in the period of 2000–2002 under the support of the same project as above. If we think that it is important for us to compare the situation of the Far East with the one of East Siberia, we describe our observations in the latter as well.

This report is organized as follows. Chapter 1 is devoted to our understanding of gen-

eral situation of the Russian Far East. Chapter 2 is a brief history of Sakhalin and its current condition. Chapter 3 is the travel diary of our research trip to the Lower Amur, Magadan and Kamchatska. Chapter 4 is devoted to describe the current situation of energy sector in the Far East with some mention of East Siberia. Chapter 5 is the analysis of the wood industrial sector. Chapter 6 presents the current status and future perspective of ecotourism in Kamchatka in comparison with the Baikal region (mainly Republic of Buryatia and Irkutsk oblast). At the end, we present our summary and conclusion. Statistical Appendix serves the readers to obtain a general overview of the Russian Far East and its ten territories.

All photographs in this report are supplied by Haruna Murota (currently a student of Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada) who participated in several of our research trips in Russia as our assistant in charge of photo documentation. Maps are made by Mr. Sergei Sofronov, Moscow and Mrs. Chikoto Haruki-Sekiya, Tokyo.

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Responsibilities of remaining errors, however, solely belong to the authors.

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and
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