

# *The Nikkei Asia Scholarship Program*

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*Research Activities File*

## *The Nikkei Asia Scholarship Program* *Welcomes Its Tenth Researcher*

*2009 marks the fourth year of the Nikkei Asia Scholarship program, which brings researchers from institutions and universities in Asia to the Japan Center for Economic Research to conduct research into economics-related themes. Including this year's participants, 10 individuals have thus far taken advantage of this opportunity as visiting research fellows. With globalization progressing at a rapid pace, it is essential for think tanks to create overseas networks of individual researchers. Each of the young scholars who have taken part in this program is active on the forefront of research in his or her home country, and we have managed to assemble an exceptionally diverse group of participants.*

The Nikkei Asia Scholarship program, inaugurated in fiscal 2006, is administered jointly by the Japan Center for Economic Research (JCER) and Nikkei Inc. The program brings researchers from Asian research institutions and universities to JCER, where they investigate economic issues. The two newest participants, who are scheduled to arrive in Japan soon, will bring the total number of scholarship recipients to 10. In addition to allowing talented researchers from China, India, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere in the Asian region to carry out uniquely themed research, the program also aims to enliven the exchange of research and human resources between Japan and other parts of Asia through dialogue between program participants and JCER's Japanese researchers, who provide them with support.

As those who have studied or worked abroad are no doubt well aware, living and working in a foreign country when one is relatively young can be a tremendous asset, as it provides enormous intellectual stimulation and invaluable experience. It is very important for young researchers on the leading edge in their fields to come to Japan and sense firsthand the differences and relative strengths and weaknesses between their host and home countries and apply this experience to their future research.

At the same time, such interaction is also incredibly valuable for JCER's researchers and staff, who often find themselves nodding in agreement with the fresh perspectives provided by the visiting research fellows. One might even argue that it is JCER, rather than the overseas researchers, that benefits most from these discussions.

While the program itself lasts only from six months to a year, papers and books often continue to be exchanged after visiting research fellows have returned home, and past participants occasionally meet with JCER's researchers and representatives at international conferences held in Japan and other countries. It is by no means an exaggeration to state that the primary aim of the scholarship program is to create a long-term network of individual researchers throughout Asia.

Most of the visiting research fellows have been in their thirties. Five hold doctorates, and the remainder all have master's degrees; six have been men and four

women. Following is an introduction to the individual visiting research fellows in this multinational group.



Men's Recent book  
"Openness and national strategic system"

*An Impressively Balanced Perspective*

Men Honghua, the youngest person to ever join the faculty of China's Central Party School, specializes in the field of strategic theory. With such a weighty reputation, we worried he would turn out to be a very unbending sort of individual. But when we finally met this tall, slim gentleman, he proved to be of the generation in China that

is not in the least bit dogmatic, as well as a very curious person whose wide range of interests include Japan's industrial, economic, and social advances since the Meiji era.

Though he spoke fluent English, Men humbly admitted that he didn't really enjoy studying languages. He applied himself diligently to learning Japanese, however, professing to recognize the necessity of learning more about Japan through the country's literature. An avid reader, he has over 10,000 volumes in his personal library. Men always dressed smartly in a suit, and could often be found typing away furiously at his computer.

He wrote a Chinese-language essay on a strategic framework for a joint Sino-Japanese profit structure shortly after returning home. The essay views Japan and China's interests from a long-term standpoint without making any emotionally charged assertions; its balanced approach presents a favorable attitude toward Japan.

Men has remained a prolific writer since returning home in August 2007, authoring 28 essays and four books, including those he has edited or translated. Soon he will take up the post of vice-president at an administrative college in the western province of Qinghai.

The next visiting researcher from China was Li Zhongmin, a member of the Chinese Academy of Social Science's Institute of World Economics and Politics. Li's specialty was trade theory, and he had experience working in China's Guangdong Province. Li had a steady personality and worked assiduously at his research. The duration of his stay was just six months, and he expressed disappointment at not being able to stay longer and broaden his experience in Japan. He authored a paper on finance during his time at JCER. After returning to China he published a number of papers in rapid succession, including ones on US steps to address the economic crisis, Japan's financial strategies, and the prioritization of China's foreign direct investment goals. In 2008 Li moved to the institute's newly established international



Li's research result is introduced on the front page of his organization's website

## Short Column :

**Closing the Distance Between Loved Ones at Home**

Although 6 of the 10 participants are married, 4 left their spouses and other family members at home when they came to Japan. Worawan, for example, regularly spoke with her family in Thailand using Skype's Internet telephony software.

Visits from family members have proven the perfect chance to take a trip or visit a hot-spring resort. Wang took his wife, a university teacher, to one such resort at the base of Mount Fuji when she came to Japan during the Chinese New Year holiday.

Men and Li were accompanied to Japan by their spouses, and their first children were born right around the time they returned home. Men's daughter is now in her third calendar year, and Li's son just turned four months.

investment division, where he coordinates research on China's foreign investment.

Wang Yongzhong hailed from the same research institute as Li, and also chose to conduct finance-related research. With his buzz cut and casual air, Wang was always an amusing companion. Dining with JCER staff members on one occasion, he was asked if he had ever seen a kabuki performance. He jokingly responded, "That's in Shinjuku, right?" in reference to Tokyo's bustling areas of Kabukicho.

Every evening around seven, Wang, who had left his family behind in China, would disappear for dinner and return less than 20 minutes later. "That was fast," we'd say, to which he responded like a typical Japanese salaryman: "I had gyudon [beef on rice]." He would always grin and say that he'd gained weight since arriving in Japan.

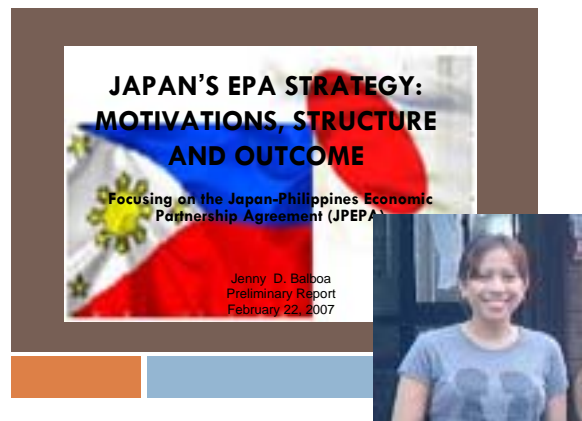
Wang returned to his wife in Beijing at the end of June 2009. Awaiting his return, however, was a government order prohibiting returnees from Japan from going to their workplaces for a period of one week, owing to fears of an H1N1 swine flu pandemic. As a result, Wang apparently spent the time at home, enjoying a leisurely period of recuperation from his journey.

***The Novelty of Four Seasons***

Jenny Balboa was obsessed with the temperature. "It's — degrees Celsius today," she would say by way of greeting. She would check the temperature online several times each day. Hailing from the Philippines, Balboa had never before experienced winter, and was constantly fascinated by Japan's four-season lifestyle. ("There are only two seasons in the Philippines," she claimed. "Hot and hotter.") She enjoyed conversation and would wander over to her neighbors' rooms looking for lunchtime companions. She also had a cheerful personality and was fond of drinking. One vivid memory of Balboa is the sight of her at a party, chatting pleasantly with a wine glass in hand. She later mentioned that she'd purchased another bottle at the supermarket on her way home to enjoy on her own.

She was also devoted to her parents, who were undergoing

Balboa (right) studied the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement



long-term care at a hospital in the United States. In April she took a photograph of a row of blossoming cherry trees and sent it to them by e-mail. And when she was invited to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum's Study Centers Consortium Conference in Peru in summer 2008 as a delegate of the Philippine government, she visited them in the hospital during a layover in her 30-hour journey.

Balboa is now participating in a study on regional integration and cooperation at the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, and will present a paper on APEC's impact on the Philippines at the APEC Study Center's meeting. She also works as a consultant to the World Bank on fiscal reform in the Philippines.

Worawan Chandoevrit, of the Thailand Development Research Institute, also hailed from a warmer climate. Unlike Balboa, however, she was accustomed to cold winters, having obtained her doctorate in Canada, and even knew how to ski. Though her expression was always tranquil, her powers of observation turned out to be well honed. She displayed sharp insight into the behavior of her fellow researchers, who would remark on her perceptiveness with surprise. "But I'm a researcher," she'd reply. "And the scope of my observation includes people, too."

Worawan's area of expertise is social security, and she frequently travels abroad in the course of her work. She was invited to a conference on demographics held in Seoul by the US National Bureau of Economic Research and the Korea Development Institute. In this connection she also participated in an editorial conference for an issue of the *Asian Economic Policy Review* (a JCER English-language journal) focusing on population issues, which took place in Tokyo in fall 2008. When she visited Japan, she was thoughtful enough to bring along a bag full of Thai sweets to give to her former colleagues.

She is now the research director for social security at the TDRI, and has authored regional research papers for the International Labour Organization and other groups.

Pornnapa at the field excursion



Pornnapa Leelapornchai, also from Thailand, was a free-spirited individual who worked as an economist at the Bank of Thailand. She was very diligent about meeting with scholars in the field of trade, her own area of focus.

The year after returning home, Pornnapa was sent to the Bank of Korea on a short-term training assignment. She had the chance to meet up with JCER researcher who was visiting South Korea on business, and appeared just as cheerful and enthusiastic as ever.

During her time at the Bank of Thailand's Economic Research Department, she put together reports on private sector investment, and recently co-authored a discussion

Worawan participated in the editorial conference of AEPR.

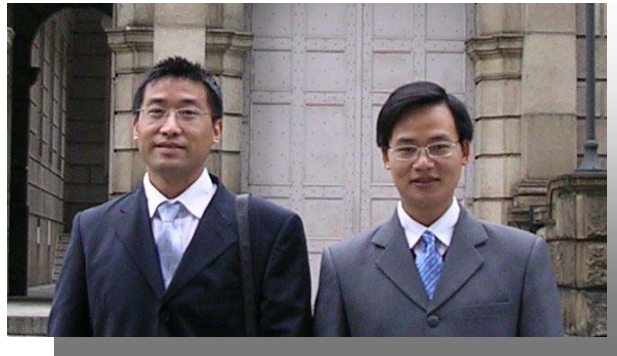


paper on Thai investment after the Asian financial crisis. Since January of this year, she has overseen the monitoring and analysis of foreign exchange trends (including effective exchange rates) as part of the Monetary Policy Department's Monetary Policy Strategy Team.

### *Year-Round Efforts*

Nguyen Cao Duc from Vietnam was perhaps the most serious of all the participants. He was a dyed-in-the-wool economist, offering his interpretation of Paul Krugman's theories even at casual drinking parties. He was always hard at work in JCER's library, hunting down works and books of statistics from the 1960s containing figures for Japan, from which he would make copies and input data.

Wang (left) and Duc (right) at the Bank of Japan



It was a matter of course for him to be at his desk even at ten or eleven o'clock at night, and he was usually the last one to leave. When center staff members would show up on Sundays to deal with pressing assignments, they would find him sitting at his desk, working away as usual.

Duc was involved in economic forecasting at his home institution, Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences. He professed the desire to experiment with a variety of new methodologies and accumulate know-how during his stay, which he could put to use once he returned home to Vietnam.

Sanjeev Joshi from India researched Japan's financial system. Joshi was an active duty civil servant. He came to Japan alone since his wife was also employed, and appeared to struggle with meals and other aspects of living alone. He revealed his kindheartedness through such actions as gifts of souvenirs to JCER staff.

Another researcher from India, Sukanya Natarajan, will arrive this fall, and the JCER's first visiting researcher from Indonesia, Deni Friawan, is scheduled to arrive in January next year.

### *Appreciation for Japanese Food*

Most of the visiting research fellows seemed to thoroughly enjoy eating Japanese cuisine. Balboa noted that although there were Japanese restaurants in Manila, they were quite expensive. Fortunately, the program participants found the food eaten by everyday Japanese very much to their liking.

When Worawan came to Japan for the AEPR meeting, she expressed the desire to drop by one of her favorite Japanese restaurant to enjoy a sablefish lunch. Unfortunately she didn't get the chance, as her busy schedule dictated she return home on the weekend.

Wang often ate ramen, a dish of Chinese origin, during his time in Japan, and he complimented the Japanese variety for its intricate flavor. Men remarked that the taste

of Japanese sushi was slightly different from that served in Beijing. Perhaps when noted cuisines from different countries spread beyond their national borders, they acquire a unique, localized flavor.

Pornnapa loved sushi, but said she didn't know how to gauge the freshness of the sashimi sold at the grocery store, and so could frequently be found dining at sushi restaurants together with JCER staff.

### *Lasting Impressions of Japan*

Participants often remarked on how impressed they were with Japan's rail systems and other aspects of its well-organized transportation network. Visiting research fellows used the Japan Rail or subway systems to commute to JCER and took the Shinkansen bullet train on field excursions, and they were struck by the order and dynamism with which the trains are run. Duc said that his first surprise came at seeing how pedestrians would wait for the signal to change before crossing the street.

To be sure, many of the participants often found it difficult to get by in a world where the written language consists mostly of kanji (Chinese characters). English-language travel websites allowed them to easily make reservations for hot-spring resorts, but an inability to use English to communicate in the course of daily life, for example in procedures at the bank, apparently caused some of the researchers to feel like illiterates. Those who could read Chinese characters had an easier time of things in that regard; still, the kanji used in Japanese writing differ substantially from the simplified characters used in places like Beijing. Thus it seems that generally speaking, visiting research fellows often feel the Japanese lifestyle to be one not yet easily navigated by outsiders.



Men, Joshi and Worawan at the museum in Toyota-city (from left)

### Short Column : **Field Excursions**

Program participants were taken on what could be termed a standard tour of Japan's key political and economic institutions, including the Bank of Japan, the Tokyo Stock Exchange, and the National Diet Building in Tokyo.

In order to gain a broader understanding of Japan, participants were also required to visit areas outside the capital; accordingly, they made overnight stays or took day trips to cities like Kyoto, Nagoya, Nagano, Nagaoka, and Kawagoe. There, they visited corporate museums and other facilities with connections to Japanese industry or visited local companies. In between such visits they gained exposure to traditional Japanese culture by touring castles, temples, and other sites, and sampled the traditional cuisines so essential to Japan's provincial cultures.

### The list of the recipients of Nikkei Asia Scholarship program

Name	Length of stay	Home organization and the title of research report
Men Honghua (China)	Sep. 2006-Aug. 2007	China's Central Party School
		"East Asian Order Formation and Sino-Japanese Relations"
Sanjeeve Joshi (India)	Oct. 2006-Mar. 2007	Planning Commission, Government of India
		"Japan's Experience in Fiscal Reforms- Analysis of Budgetary Impact of Local allocation Tax on the Local Governments in Japan and Comparison with Statutory Tax-sharing in India"
Worawan Chandoeewit (Thailand)	Dec. 2006- Mar. 2007	Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI)
		"Social Security Systems in Japan: Lessons Learned for Thailand"
Pornnapa Leelapornchai (Thailand)	Apr. 2007-Aug. 2007	Bank of Thailand
		"Trade Integration and Production Network in East Asia"
Li Zhongmin (China)	Sep. 2007-Feb. 2008	Institute of World Economics and Politics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
		"Macroeconomics Fragility, Short-term Capital Flows, and Financial Risk"
Jenny de Asis Balboa (Philippines)	Oct. 2007- Jul. 2008	Philippine APEC Study Center Network, Philippines Institute for Development Studies
		"Negotiated Trade Liberalization in East Asia: Examining Japan's Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)"
Wang Yongzhong (China)	Sep. 2008- Jun. 2009	Institute of World Economics and Politics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
		"Liberalization of Foreign Exchange Controls: Japan's Experiences and Its Implications for China"
Nguyen Cao Duc (Vietnam)	Oct. 2008- Aug. 2009	Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences
		"Tax System Reforms in Japan: Lessons for Vietnam"
Sukanya Natarajan (India)	Sep. 2009- Feb. 2010	Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations
		"Global Financial Crisis and its Impacts on Japan, India and China (tentative)"
Deni Friawan (Indonesia)	Jan. 2010- Aug. 2010	Centre for Strategic and International Studies
		"Study of the Two Financial Crisis: their Impacts on Financial Integration in East Asia (tentative)"

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