

# Academic Exchange with El Colegio de México



interview with

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Executive Vice President for Education and Student Affairs

## Academic exchange with El Colegio de México, Mexico's "storehouse of knowledge" —High academic standards, plus a dynamic Japanese studies program

Hitotsubashi University and El Colegio de México concluded an agreement for academic exchange in September 2000, and since that time have engaged in a variety of exchange programs in the fields of research and education.

The reason Hitotsubashi chose to partner with El Colegio de México is that it is an institution pursuing research and education in the social sciences and humanities with academic standards that are without doubt the highest in Latin America. When the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) resulted in the Franco dictatorship, large numbers of intellectuals who had supported the Republic emigrated to Mexico in fear of their lives, as the then president of Mexico, Lázaro Cárdenas, had declared his intention to offer them asylum. As it would be a shame to waste such an influx of outstandingly talented and capable individuals, he decided to create an academic and educational institution in Mexico of the highest quality, and in 1940 El Colegio de México was founded.

There are seven research centers within El Colegio de México: the Center for Historical Studies; the Center for Linguistic and Literary Studies; the Center for International Studies; the Center for Studies of Asia and Africa; the Center for Economic Studies; the Center for Demographic, Urban, and Environmental Studies; and the Center for Sociological Studies. The faculty-student ratio at El Colegio de México is nearly 1:1 (between 350 and 400). Students come from around the world and all the students from Central and South America are provided with scholarships; by providing such a hospitable environment for study, El Colegio de México has produced many distinguished politicians, diplomats, and academics. The former and the present ambassadors of Mexico to Japan have been graduates of El Colegio de México, and the present ambassador, Claude Heller, has also served as chairman of the United Nations Security Council. In short, graduates of El Colegio de México are highly accomplished and prestigious individuals.

The Center for Studies of Asia and Africa at El Colegio de México has a Department of Japanese Studies. It not only provides instruction in the Japanese language, but also has for decades provided such a place for leading scholars to pursue wide-ranging research into Japanese politics, economics, society, culture, and literature that it can be described as a "seat of learning". Many of Central and South America's leading translators of Japanese literature have studied in the department, an indicator of its high level of international recognition.

With support from the Japan Foundation, the Department of Japanese Studies has welcomed a large number of

Japanese intellectuals as visiting faculty. Their distinguished ranks include Kenzaburo Oe (later Nobel laureate in literature), Masao Yamaguchi (cultural anthropologist), Takeshi Ishida (political scientist), Yoshishige Yoshida (film director), Munetake Mita (sociologist), and Chizuko Ueno (sociologist). In 1999, Professor Tetsuro Kato (political scientist, now professor emeritus) of Hitotsubashi's Graduate School of Social Sciences was invited as a visiting faculty member.

The history of Hitotsubashi University's relations with El Colegio de México dates back to 1965, three years before the Mexico City Olympics, when Professor Yuji Muramatsu (former dean of the Department of Economics) stayed there for three months to give lectures at the invitation of UNESCO. As El Colegio de México is renowned for its Chinese studies program, lectures by Prof. Muramatsu, one of the foremost authorities on Chinese social and economic history of the day, must have made a lasting impression.

## Implementation of regular exchanges, including student joint seminars and faculty exchange programs

One of the specific projects that has emerged since the academic exchange agreement was established was a workshop "Images, Education and Nation: A Dialogue Japan-Mexico on Mexican Independence Day," convened at El Colegio de México in 2007. A group of five Japanese scholars, including myself, mainly from Hitotsubashi University, presented papers regarding this theme on September 16, the Mexican Independence Day, from perspectives quite different from those of local researchers, addressing such topics as a comparison of Mexican and Japanese national consciousness at the time of the centennial of Mexican independence (1910); Independence Day seen in terms of the relationship between regions and the metropolis; a comparison of Mexican and Argentinian independence celebrations; and a comparison of independence day observances in Kyrgyzstan, a newly established Central Asian state, with those in Mexico as it approached the bicentennial of its independence. The Mexican participants in the workshop, beginning with commentator Dr. Javier Garcíadiego, president of El Colegio de México, welcomed these fresh and unusual perspectives on Mexican Independence Day, which they tended to see primarily as their greatest domestic political event. I believe the workshop also served as an excellent opportunity to establish their trust in Hitotsubashi as a partner in academic exchange.

After this, beginning in 2008, regular student visiting programs were initiated, to take place in alternate years. For the first year, 2008, seven graduate students from El Colegio de México's Department of Japanese Studies were invited to Hitotsubashi to participate in a joint seminar, conducted in English, with Hitotsubashi students. The Mexican graduate students gave presentations on their

master's dissertation topics, which the Japanese students then commented upon, followed by general discussion. The topics were diverse, ranging from major themes such as "the spirit of constitutionalism in Meiji Japan" to analysis of popular news items of the era, and the discussion was equally wide ranging.

Because this was such a meaningful interaction for both sides, it was decided to continue with this project, and by December 2012, three of these joint seminars had been held.

Meanwhile, discussions were conducted with Jean-Francois Prud'homme, vice-president of El Colegio de México toward the implementation in 2009 of a faculty exchange program between the two universities.

As background to this, I should explain that the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs and El Colegio de México concluded a cooperative agreement to expand Mexican studies in leading educational institutions throughout the world—University of São Paulo (Brazil), Jawaharlal Nehru University (India), Peking University (China), and Hitotsubashi University were selected. Aside from Hitotsubashi, the other institutions selected were all major universities in the BRIC countries, a logical strategic choice for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. That Hitotsubashi was also selected is attributable, I believe, to our reputation for quality in the field of the social sciences, our fearless presentation of our research (laughs)—and to our proven track record in academic exchange in the form of the joint graduate student seminars.



So it was that in 2010 we began our faculty exchange program. I will introduce the details in a moment, but leading Mexican scholars and authorities from a variety of fields have visited and taught at our university, while from Hitotsubashi such distinguished faculty members as Professor Emeritus Tetsuro Kato (Graduate School of Social Sciences), Professor Nobumasa Akiyama (Graduate School of Law, School of International and Public Policy), and Professor Makoto Saito (Graduate School of Economics) have gone to teach in Mexico City. Five installments of this faculty exchange program are planned, but I have proposed another idea to Vice President Prud'homme: that when it is completed El Colegio de México, Hitotsubashi University, and the three BRICs universities I mentioned earlier should convene a symposium on academic and stu-

dent exchange. If this plan is realized, it should provide a chance to deepen a network of relations with Mexico as the hub.

## **F**or two countries possessing both local and global aspects, the significance of working together on common themes is immense

As I have already said, education and research at El Colegio de México meet the highest standards of academic quality. But there are quality universities throughout the world. What makes Mexico special?

Beginning in the twentieth century, modernization (and westernization) progressed at a rapid pace, even among the countries geographically remote from the Western world. But this process did not mean that all countries were homogeneously dyed with Western influence. Non-western modern societies have retained strong strains of what may be called "local cultures" that have resisted assimilation to the Western paradigm. Japanese society is one of them. Local and global elements coexist, and a situation arises in which people can select between them in response to particular conditions. In this sense, Mexico and Japan have something in common.

In Japan no one feels any particular conflict between an animistic worldview which believes that spirits reside in all things, and a modern daily life manipulating computers and other advanced technology. In Mexico, conquered and westernized by Spain since the sixteenth century, westernization and modernization have advanced and the majority of the people have come to speak Spanish, but pre-Hispanic cultural traditions dating back to the Aztecs, Maya and other autochthonous peoples have also endured. Among the graduate students visiting Hitotsubashi as part of our visiting program, one woman bore a pre-Hispanic first name.

In other words, both Japan and Mexico are neither western nor non-western—they are modern nations of the non-western world which have both exercised considerable effort and ingenuity to combine both local and global aspects. And if we take up this common theme and work together to address it, original results are certain to emerge. Our academic collaboration with El Colegio de México, Mexico's storehouse of knowledge, was born out of this perception and has produced a rich fourteen-year legacy of joint educational and research activities. We hope to work together to continue to deepen and develop this collaborative relationship in a variety of forms.



## **Student exchange program as a springboard to an academic career at Hitotsubashi**

**Atziri Mariana Quintana de Hamada**, Ph.D. candidate in the Graduate School of Law

I first came to Hitotsubashi University in 2008 as a graduate student in the Department of Japanese Studies of El Colegio de México. With the support of a scholarship from the Japan Foundation, I was a participant in the student exchange program which began in that year, in which seven students from El Colegio de México, including myself, visited Hitotsubashi. My impression of Hitotsubashi was that it was a university with personalized instruction and high academic standards, where you can concentrate on your research with few distractions or worries. I was there only for a week, but when I left I vowed to return—and

I did so, in 2009, with the goal of continuing my studies at Hitotsubashi. After a year of additional Japanese language training at a school in the Kansai region, I was able to enter the doctoral program in the Graduate School of Law at Hitotsubashi. My concentration is in international relations, and my goal is to pursue research on the theme of cultural diplomacy.

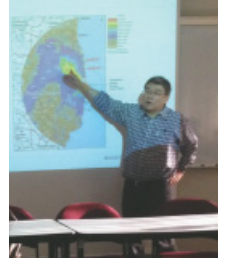
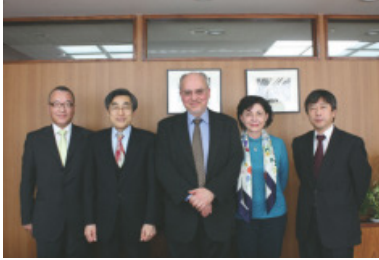
Coming to Japan had been a dream of mine since childhood. Like many other Mexicans, my image of Japan is very positive. One reason for this is television programs. Many Japanese animations and dramas are broadcast on Mexican TV, so Mexican kids grow up watching Japanese television pro-

grams. Cartoon characters such as Hello Kitty are also very popular. Even so, very few Mexican students study abroad in Japan; most of them go to the United States and Spain or to universities in the Spanish-speaking world. The Japanese language seems to be a major barrier.

I am now married to a Japanese man, and aside from the overly hot summers, I am enjoying my life here (summer temperatures in Mexico City average about 28°C, and the low humidity makes them pleasant).

If I can become someone who can transcend national boundaries to convey the wonderful aspects of both Mexico and Japan it will be a wonderful thing.





Hitotsubashi University has sent faculty members to El Colegio de México three times. The two photographs on the right side show Professor Makoto Saito of the Graduate School of Economics delivering a lecture as a part of the third faculty exchange program.



## Academic Exchange with El Colegio de México

### Faculty Exchange Program with El Colegio de México: First Series

#### ● From Hitotsubashi University to El Colegio de México

Visiting lecturer: Professor Tetsuro Kato (professor emeritus, Graduate School of Social Sciences)/Political Science

Period of visiting lectureship: March 6–17, 2011

Lecture topic:

US-Japan relations in historical perspective

- (1) From Commodore Perry to General MacArthur, 1853–1945
- (2) Between the two ends of wars: World War II and the Cold War, 1945–89
- (3) From the last decade of the 20th century to the present, 1990–2011

Audience: Faculty and students



#### ● From El Colegio de México to Hitotsubashi University

Visiting lecturer: Professor Lorenzo Meyer/History

Period of visiting lectureship: January 24–27, 2011

Lecture topic:

US-Mexico relations from a historical perspective

- (1) From the end of European colonial rule in North America to the territorial dispute, 1776–1848
- (2) The building of a Mexican nation under the shadow of a northern empire, 1848–1917
- (3) From the policy of revolutionary nationalism to the Free Trade Agreement and beyond: 1917 to the present

Audience: 66 people



### Faculty Exchange Program with El Colegio de México: Second Series

#### ● From Hitotsubashi University to El Colegio de México

Visiting lecturer: Professor Nobumasa Akiyama (Graduate School of Law)/International politics and security issues

Period of visiting lectureship: March 6–13, 2012

Lecture topic:

- (1) The Great East Japan Earthquake in an international context
- (2) Reaffirming the US-Japan alliance through disaster relief
- (3) The impact of the Fukushima nuclear accident on the international nuclear industry and nuclear regulatory regimes

Audience: Faculty and students



#### ● From El Colegio de México to Hitotsubashi University

Visiting lecturer: Professor Gerardo Esquivel/Economics

Period of visiting lectureship: November 29–December 1, 2011

Lecture topic:

- (1) Why isn't Mexico rich? Why should it be?
- (2) Mexico and the international financial crisis: impact and perspectives
- (3) The economics and politics of drugs and violence in Mexico

Audience: 76 people



### Faculty Exchange Program with El Colegio de México: Third Series

#### ● From Hitotsubashi University to El Colegio de México

Visiting lecturer: Professor Makoto Saito (Graduate School of Economics)/Economics

Period of visiting lectureship: March 18–25, 2013

Lecture topic:

On Japan's social and economic recovery in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake

- (1) On the social and economic impacts of the tsunami disaster
- (2) Some lessons from the Fukushima nuclear accidents
- (3) A behavioral approach to managing natural disaster risks

Audience: Faculty and students

#### ● From El Colegio de México to Hitotsubashi University

Visiting lecturer: Professor Alejandro Castañeda/Economics

Period of visiting lectureship: May 18–June 2, 2013

Lecture topic:

- (1) The status quo in telecommunications. Recent constitutional changes and the agenda for the future
- (2) The evolution of telecommunications regulation. From public monopolies to private monopolies, the importance of design and the economic outcome
- (3) Recent events in telecommunications. Political competition and media power, the power of the telecommunications colossus

Audience: 70 people





We spoke with Vice President Prud'homme of El Colegio de México about the exchange programs between his university and Hitotsubashi that began in 2000.

### **Jean-François Prud'homme**

Vice President of El Colegio de México

**Q** ..... May I ask your observation about Hitotsubashi University?

**A** ..... We regard Hitotsubashi as one of the foremost Japanese universities in Social Sciences, Law and Business studies.

**Q** ..... Since the year 2000 when El Colmex and Hitotsubashi signed an academic cooperation agreement, the two institutions have enjoyed various types of academic exchange including student exchange programs, chair programs for Mexican, Japanese studies and joint seminars, among others. How do you place them in the practice of the academic policy of your institution?

**A** ..... Collaboration with Hitotsubashi University is very important for us. At El Colegio de México, we have been teaching and researching on Asia for almost 50 years. Obviously, Japanese studies have always been an important part of those academic activities. This is why we have maintained strong ties with important Japanese universities. More recently, at the beginning of this millennium, we decided to formalize and expand our international policy with our American, European and Asian partners through the promotion of strategic partnerships that included not only students and faculty mobility but also the organization of joint activities. Our collaboration with Hitotsubashi University is part of that new international strategy.

**Q** ..... Hitotsubashi highly values academic cooperation between us and wants continuing it. May I ask your opinion about our performance so far and next steps to take?

**A** ..... El Colegio de México highly values its collaboration with Hitotsubashi University. Our students who visited Hitotsubashi were impressed by the academic level of faculty and fellow students at your university. We also deeply appreciate the seriousness of your commitment with our academic agreement—be it when you receive our students and professors or when you send professors to El Colegio de México. We have been positively impressed by the high academic level of your faculty members who participated in the Hitotsubashi Japanese Studies Chair at El Colegio de México. In the future, we would love to receive more students from Hitotsubashi and explore the possibility of establishing joint research programs.