Aboard the "Hanbada": An international experience in higher education, communication and culture

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Abstract: This paper introduces, describes and discusses a symposium held in Tokushima, Japan, in May 2010. The symposium was jointly organized by The University of Tokushima, and Korea Maritime University, Pusan, South Korea. The paper notes the uniqueness of the symposium, as the venue was literally on board (or, abord) a ship, the Hanbada. The paper outlines the organization and content of the event, and recognizes some of the difficulties involved in hosting the symposium. The paper concludes by considering the symposium within a wider, historical framework; the historical record suggests that the symposium should be seen as a positive event, especially in light of the long, often quite difficult, relationship between Korea and Japan.

(Key Words: Symposium, international cooperation, invited talks, poster presentation.)

Prologue: On the afternoon of May 19, 2010, the Hanbada, a student-training and oceanic research ship for Korea Maritime University, completing a two-day journey from the city of Pusan, Korea, docked at Komatsushima Port in Tokushima, Japan. For the next two days (May 20-21), the Hanbada, in addition fulfilling to its normal day-to-day roles of an educational training ship (1), was the primary venue for an academic-oriented, international conference.

1. Introduction:

The focus of this report is the "Second International On-board Symposium: Human Health, Energy and the Environment, 2010." Generally speaking, international conferences or symposiums are not unusual, or particularly noteworthy yet—this was a unique event; the site of the symposium was an ocean-going vessel, the Hanbada. (1) Thus, it can be safely stated that, apart from the Hanbada crew, and students and professors connected with the Hanbada on a regular basis, the symposium being considered in this article was—indeed—unique.

2. Participants and Organization

Approximately 220 participants were involved in the event. The speakers, visiting professors, poster presenters and students were all from universities located in Japan, Korea, China, New Zealand and Taiwan. Accentuating the academic diversity, the range of nationalities represented was also diverse; participants’ home countries included Bangladesh, China, Egypt, England, Indonesia, Japan, Korea and Taiwan.

The overall organization of the symposium consisted of eight plenary sessions (featuring oral presentations, mainly from professors) and two separate poster-presentation sessions, each session was held on a different day—for graduate students, to share their research findings.

Goals and Aims

➢ The primary aim of the symposium was to provide an opportunity for researchers, both student researchers and professors—to share ideas of ongoing research activities, as well as sharing the results of concluded research.

➢ An additional goal was to provide opportunities for researchers (students and professors) to improve their research methodology and increase their knowledge in the fields of Health, Energy, and the Environment.

➢ The third aim of the conference was educational in nature. This aim was particularly in the area of health; several of
the presentations addressed aspects of personal health, fitness and hygiene. For example, one oral presentation discussed in detail the proper (and often neglected) method for washing one's hands.

- Lastly, though not explicitly stated, cross-cultural communication and learning about cultural differences were important aspects of the symposium.

3. Symposium Highlights

Initial Arrival and Welcoming Events

On the evening of May 19, at Komatsushima port, a University of Tokushima (UT) delegation was waiting to greet the Hanbada upon its arrival and docking. After ship-docking procedures were completed, the UT delegation boarded the ship. A brief welcoming ceremony included prepared remarks by the President of Korea Maritime University, President Keo-Don Oh, and Tokushima University President, Susumu Kagawa. President Oh—who had traveled on the ship from Pusan—expressed his delight at being in Japan. In his comments, President Kagawa congratulated the Hanbada's captain, officers and crew on their navigational skills and for graciously allowing the use of their ship's facilities to host the symposium. The last person to talk was the Hanbada's skipper, Captain Byung-Deug Bae, who introduced the officers of the deck (superintendents of the ship).

At the conclusion of the initial welcoming reception, participants were greeted with a traditional Korea-maritime, loud, rousing welcome by the Hanbada trainee-students and crew.

Hanbada's first day in Japan ended with dinner, a banquet sponsored by Korea Maritime University featuring a wide array of tasty Korean food. In addition to the food—liquor, beer, soft drinks, were available. The banquet time provided an opportunity for participants to become acquainted with each other and with their interests and research topics. The participants enjoyed the reception party and shared a great laughter.

The evening banquet featured a welcoming address from President Keo-Don Oh of Korea Maritime University (KMU). Additional remarks by President Susumu Kagawa, The University of Tokushima (UT), recognized the hard work of the Organizing Committee. President Kagawa also noted the importance and timeliness of the featured themes for the Symposium: Health, Energy, and the Environment.

4. Opening ceremony

The Thursday (May 20, 2010) opening ceremony included two different speeches, given by the two attending University presidents. The first address, delivered by UT President Susumu Kagawa, emphasized the long-term scientific goals and benchmarks required in order to make improvements in Health, Energy, and the Environment. He pointed out that everyone should strive to contribute in order to achieve the maximum benefit for society.
The opening address by KMU President Koe-Don Oh expressed his views and suggestions about scientific research and its implementation. He also shared his ideas about technology development and its distribution; how progress can be achieved. Finally, he stressed the importance of continuing to make gains in the fields of human health and the environment.

5. Symposium: Program Details

As mentioned earlier, the symposium featured numerous lectures, research-papers and poster presentations. On the first full day of the symposium, May 20, there were twenty oral presentations and twenty-one poster presentations. The participants gave 20 minutes presentation of their research work. The poster presentations were on display in two sessions of 90 minutes, one May 20 and the second on May 21. On each full day, May 20 and May 21, some of the presentations were in the morning, and some were in the afternoon.

May 21 Proceedings

The second full day of the symposium, May 21, was as busy and productive as the first one. The second day there was a total of eighteen oral presentations and twenty-four poster presentations.

The morning sessions were organized and presented under two different general themes: "Research Progress in Engineering," was the first theme. The second organizing theme was devoted to exploring topics and linkages in the category of "Human Health and Engineering."

Invited Talks

Apart from the oral presentations already mentioned, there were additional presentations, referred to as "Invited Talks." The speaker for each invited talk was an established scientist. These scientists were selected from within the academic community--except for one--who is currently affiliated with a major, well-known, Japanese electronics firm (now, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Panasonic Corporation). A total of eight scientists gave invited talks.
Invited-Talk Speakers

The names and affiliations of the eight scientists who were invited to make special presentations, referred to as, "invited talks," are as follows:

1. Akira Takahashi, Institute of Health Biosciences, The University of Tokushima,
2. Munehide Matsuoka, Institute of Health Biosciences, The University of Tokushima,
3. Hideki Matoba, The University of Tokushima.
4. Jae-Bong Kim, Korea Maritime University.
5. Yun-Hae Kim, Korea Maritime University.
6. Xiaoping Song, Xi'an Jiaotong University, People's Republic of China.

The majority of oral presentations, including invited talks, were given by professors, of all ranks (Assistant, Associate, and Senior Professors). The poster presenters were graduate students. Invited-talk speakers, other speakers, and those involved in poster presentations were all asked to allow five to ten minutes for questions from the audience. The intention of the question and answer sessions was to encourage and stimulate energetic, lively discussions.

7. End of Symposium Events

The last day of the symposium proceedings ended in two stages. The first part of the symposium was marked by a closing ceremony on the Hanbada, the place where all the presentations and sessions had taken place. The second, different location—chosen to celebrate the successful conclusion of the symposium—was the Pacific Harbor restaurant in the host city of Tokushima—located off board the ship Hanbada.

8. On-board closing ceremony

At the ceremony marking the on-board ending of the symposium, Professor Ri-ichi Murakami was asked to make some closing remarks. Professor Murakami, from The University of Tokushima, is affiliated with the faculty of Mechanical engineering. He is also a key Director in one of the UT Centers that helped to organize and administer many of the symposium events, the Center for International Cooperation in Engineering Education (CICEE).

6. Symposium Summary

As noted, there were eight talks, presented by established and published scientists from both the academic and the corporate worlds. Furthermore, in addition to the eight invited talks, there were an additional thirty-eight oral-presentation papers delivered and a still more, forty-five, poster presentations.

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international cooperation between Korea Maritime University and The University of Tokushima. Specifically, he stated his wish that similar events can be held in the future.

At the banquet, thanking remarks was given by Professor Tokuo Ohnishi, UT Dean of the School of Engineering, thanked all the participants and organizers for their interest and efforts in helping to organize the symposium.

Ohnishi’s remarks were followed by an award ceremony. Certificates of recognition were awarded for best oral presenters, best poster presentations, and more; certificates were handed out by President Susumu Kagawa.

The symposium came to a final end with further concluding remarks, by UT President Susumu Kagawa. President Kagawa thanked all the organizers, students, professors, speakers, and other participants for helping to highlight important issues connected with the conference themes: Health, Energy and the Environment. The President underscored one of the fundamental underlying purposes of the event: to promote and strengthen international cooperation, and to do this in a way that was both enjoyable and informative.

10. Other, related, symposium activities

An additional, student-oriented, social party was held on Thursday evening (May 20, the opening day of the symposium). The Thursday evening party included a multi-course Korean dinner.

A separate activity provided information about—and a demonstration of—the Tokushima-based Awa Odori dance festival. This Awa Odori demonstration included both Japanese dance and music.
11. Some difficulties with the on-board symposium

As might be expected in an event of this type, there were some areas of difficulty. One difficulty that presented itself was, from a practical viewpoint, the sheer amount of noise that was present. Because many of the ship systems (electrical, air-conditioning, engine room) on the Hanbada are not designed—nor are they intended—to be easily and quickly shut down, it was difficult for the listeners to always hear what the speakers were saying.

There were, at several key moments, an apparent lack of communication and understanding about the exact locations for some of the sessions.

Additionally, there was a lack of a clearly defined “chain of command” for how to communicate requests for help or clarification. For example, in one of the main rooms hosting one of the May 20, sessions, a large number of cardboard boxes, containing some supplies, were found to be sitting on top of the chairs—thus preventing participants from sitting in the chairs. The boxes were eventually moved and stacked in a corner but, it caused a delay and some temporary confusion for the approximately one hundred people using the room.

Again, considering the fundamental purpose of the Hanbada—to serve as a fully functional, seaworthy, ocean-going vessel, it is probably unavoidable that there will be some unavoidable difficulties, noise, for instance.

13. The symposium considered in a historical framework

From a broader, historical perspective, it should be noted that the symposium, taking place in 2010, was held almost exactly one hundred years after the, still controversial, “annexation” of Korea, by Japan, in 1910. The Japan–Korea Treaty of 1910 is also sometimes referred to as the Japan–Korea Annexation Treaty.

During the year 2010, in both Korea and Japan, there were numerous television programs and magazine, newspaper and internet-based articles acknowledging this momentous event. Though the colonial relationship between Japan and Korea that began with the 1910 treaty ended in September 1945, strong feelings and vivid recollections of these times still abound in both the Korea and Japan. Thus, when considered within a broader, historical context, it can be said that the level of cross-cultural cooperation and planning involved in the organization of this symposium was a welcome event.

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Notes

1. The Hanbada is a multi-purpose, fully operational ship, whose primary missions are, simultaneously, educational and research-oriented. The ship also provides practical training in maritime operations for students hoping to enter maritime-oriented careers. The ship is owned and operated by Korea Maritime University, located in Pusan, Republic of Korea. The Hanbada became operational in 2005 is almost 120 meters in length (117.20) and nearly 20 meters in width (17.80). The ship weighs 6,686 tons.

 Additionally, this trip of the Hanbada to Japan was not its first such trip. More information on details of the Hanbada and another, earlier, trip to Japan can be found at the following website: [http://www.kobe-u.ac.jp/en/info/topics/2006_11_22_01.htm]
More information about the Hanbada training ship, and Korea Maritime University, including some photographs, can be found at the following web site: