

FROM NANZAN TO NAMSAN

By Gabor Markus, PhD

These words can be written by two Chinese characters as 南山 and the meaning of both words is the same: “Southern Mountains”. In this sense one could think that going from Nanzan to Namsan means nothing since the beginning and the final position is the same. As a matter of fact Nanzan is a place in a Japanese city called Nagoya and Namsan is a district of Seoul, the capital city of the Republic of Korea.

For me Nanzan University has been a very important place since the early eighties of the last century. That was the place where I started studying the Oriental culture, science, religion and the Japanese language in the late Showa period. Those days I was a poor Hungarian student in a rich country in the Far East. During the communist period, ordinary Hungarians (as well as ordinary East-Europeans) lived in the communist block separated from the capitalist countries and we did not have any direct connections with the rest of the world.

It happened in 1982, that I arrived in Japan with no money in my pocket and no credit cards in my wallet. At that time the communist currencies were not convertible and the Hungarian banks did not issue any credit cards. At the time of my arrival to Japan I could speak neither Japanese nor English and I did not know anything on the economic and social situation of Japan. During the communist era, English was not taught in my schools. In those days, Russian language was an obligatory subject of instruction in the schools of East-Europe.

I had a very modest way of life in Japan but thanks to the scholarship I got from Ryokusei Kigyo Kabushiki Kaisha and from Nanzan Tomonokai, I successfully completed my study program in Nanzan University. According to the agreement between me and Ryokusei Kigyo KK, they covered my costs and living expenses in Japan and I had to cover the travel expenses

between Hungary and Japan. That time the flight tickets were extremely expensive. Because of that I decided to book a ticket for the Trans-Siberian Express train to travel from Budapest to Nakhodka and for a Russian boat to travel from Nakhodka to Yokohama. The journey took 13 days and it was very cheap because I booked the cheapest sixth category ticket for the boat. That was the beginning of the story but the boat-captain in Nakhodka announced that there were very few passengers and because of that he did not want to let the passengers use all the cabins. He wanted to avoid heating and cleaning the whole boat and he ordered all the passengers to use first class cabins regardless of the amount of money they had paid. That was the reason, that I arrived in Yokohama in a first class cabin in the boat although I had booked a ticket for a sixth category one. Thirty years ago at the beginning of my study program in Nanzan University my only one contact to the Orient-Asian society was my relationship with the Japanese Esperanto movement. Thanks to this relationship and working together with very many famous Japanese esperantists, I could meet a great success in my life and could make a very successful professional career. After finishing my study program, I went back to Hungary and started constructing lively international scientific and social co-operations among different European and Orient-Asian scientific, industrial, commercial and social organizations. I regularly attended conferences and scientific meetings, met professors and deans of famous universities, founded a joint venture with Scandinavian company owners and published a lot of successful books and articles in several languages.

After graduating from the Center for Japanese Studies, I gathered together all the results from my research at Nanzan and acquired a doctor's degree back in Hungary. The subject of my thesis was the analysis of the Japanese postwar economic development. Later I became a manager in the largest Hungarian industrial organization and worked as a strategic manager for the

Hungarian Petroleum Corporation. After the political changes in East Europe, I was working for the audit and control institution of the Hungarian Parliament and my task was controlling the government and auditing the implementation of the national budget. I analyzed whether they acted and implemented the budget in accordance with the law. Besides, I was also asked to work as a Far-East editor for the largest Hungarian periodical in the field of international computation.

In my professional career, I regularly used the international language Esperanto beside English, Russian and Japanese in order to construct wider international relations for my offices both in the Hungarian Petroleum Corporation and the State Audit Office. I published more than one hundred articles on my results in the periodicals of the Prime Minister's Office, in the monthly review of our Ministry of Finance and in very many cultural, religious and scientific papers.

This way it became clear for the leaders of our governmental and industrial institutions that Esperanto was also a useful means of communication to construct efficient international scientific, professional, cultural and economic relations. In the last years, I usually spend several weeks or months in Seoul, near the district of Namsan. That is the place where the main office of the Seoul Esperanto Culture Center is located. Its president, Lee Jungkee is a reader and associate professor of two Korean universities teaching the international language in many institutions. Beside this work, he is regularly involved in organizing special conferences for linguists and language teachers and in preparing different cultural and religious meetings. I have been asked to deliver a lecture in these conferences and meetings for the last several years and these activities also help me to make new relations and co-operations with many Chinese, Japanese and Korean universities and other social organizations.

Beside these co-operations, I also have a permanent contact and work together with professors and lecturers of my former university in Nagoya as well as with the leaders of the International Congress University of the Universal Esperanto Congress in Hanoi. As a result of my wide international activities, my life has changed significantly. Nowadays it is not necessary for me to book the cheapest tickets for the trains and I could easily afford booking a room in a four-star or a five-star hotel during my trips to foreign countries. I could do it, but I never do it. I have already got accustomed to a modest way of life and at my age, in the late sixties I could not easily change my modest way of life. Traveling in Japan, China and Korea, I see with a great pleasure that I am already able to read the writings on the walls in three (sometimes in four) languages, namely in English, Japanese, Korean and Chinese.

The most significant result for me is, that my notebook is full of different international scientific, cultural and social meetings where I am asked to deliver speeches on my experiences in economics, financial control, linguistics, religion and culture. I got this successful situation by my study program in Nanzan University, by my co-operation with some Chinese and Korean universities and other academic institutions and by the help of the Japanese Esperanto movement. 2013 is the year of the hundredth jubilee Japanese Esperanto Congress and in this special year I can say that the Japanese Esperanto movement is a strong movement. I thank the Japanese esperantist community for supporting me and I have to declare that my working together with this organization made my life significantly richer. I could get to a successful professional career by the help of my permanent collaboration with the esperantists of Hokkaido, Sendai, Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Wakayama, Kameoka and Kyoto.

Nowadays some journalists criticize Esperanto for not having become a real international language for more than one hundred years. In spite of this, I am saying that although Esperanto is

not a widely accepted international language today, it is also true, that the Esperanto movement already exists and the movement is very successful in many countries. I can say that Esperanto has a chance to become a real international language one day in the future. Even if it did not come true in the first one hundred years, there is a chance that it may become real in the second or the third hundred years.

The same phenomenon happened in the history of Christianity. At the beginning, when Jesus Christ established this new religion there were only several hundred people who used to belong to this community. Even a hundred years later, the Christian religion was not a widely accepted religion in the word of that time. But in the first half of the fourth century Constantine the Great, the head of the Roman Empire declared that Christianity should be an accepted and officially recognized religion. Later it became the established state religion in the whole empire. Several hundred years later, it became the largest religious group in the Western world and these days 2.2 billion people, a third part of the world population belong to the different Christian organizations. Two thousand years ago Jesus said the following words: *“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. This indeed is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it grows up it is larger than any herb and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in its branches.”* The meaning of this parable is that everything is small at the beginning even if the outcomes and results are very significant and grandiose. Thinking of this parable we should hope that Esperanto also has a chance to be a widely accepted international language in the future. We may think mankind will understand that by reason of its neutrality, simplicity and logical grammar. Esperanto will then be suitable to become a widely accepted international language of the world.



Márkus Gábor and prof. Mizuno Yoshiaki at the Blue Danube in Budapest in front of the houses of the Hungarian Parliament



Márkus Gábor is giving a copy of his book 赤い太陽と緑の星 to the president of Nanzan University

