

## EAMA SCHOOLS AND EAYAM

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the East Asian Young Astronomers Meeting (EAYAM) is to provide a chance for young astronomers from or working in China, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan to meet, learn about each other's scientific research, exchange ideas and cultural views, and find out more about leading research facilities in the different member regions. I report on the inaugural EAYAM held in Taiwan in 2003, and the future of this meeting. The purpose of the EAMA Schools is to teach young astronomers how to make best use of the research facilities of member regions. The first EAMA school is currently being organized to better inform young astronomers on using the SUBARU telescope.

*Key words* : general:history and philosophy of astronomy

### I. INTRODUCTION

In 2003, the Institute of Astronomy & Astrophysics (ASIAA), Academia Sinica, hosted the inaugural East Asian Young Astronomers Meeting (EAYAM). The participants comprised primarily graduate students and postdoctoral fellows from or working in China, Japan, Korea, and of course Taiwan. The purpose of this meeting was to provide a chance for young astronomers in the East-Asian region to meet, learn about each other's scientific research, exchange ideas and cultural views, and find out more about leading research facilities in the different member regions. The goal is to improve the overall quality of research and to promote cooperation and collaboration.

The meeting was held at the Tienlai Spring Resort at Jinshan Shiang, located at the foothills of Yang-Ming Shan (Yang-Ming Mountain) north of Taipei, on 9–12 November 2003. A reproduction of the poster announcing the meeting is shown in Figure 1. Pictures of the resort and its attractions are shown in Figure 2.

### II. A SHORT HISTORY OF EAYAM

The idea or impetus for a regular meeting for young astronomers (postdocs and students) in the East Asian region originated from the writer (a staff member at the ASIAA). My hope was for this meeting to be organized primarily by young astronomers for young astronomers, so that the conduct of the meeting best reflects the wishes of the participants themselves. This hope was realized for the inaugural EAYAM because a number of young astronomers at the ASIAA took up the cause. I have been asked to give an oral report and provide a written record of this meeting, but the organizational

work was largely the effort of my young colleagues.

One person often has to step up to lead as well as devote substantial time to bring an idea to fruition, and for the inaugural EAYAM this person was Dr. Michael Tsai. At the time this meeting was first conceived, Dr. Tsai was a postdoctoral fellow at National Tsing-Hua University in Taiwan but based primarily at the ASIAA, and who by the time the meeting was conducted was an Academia Sinica Fellow. Behind every leader is an able lieutenant, who in this case was Miss Cindy Chiu, an excellent administrative assistant at the ASIAA.

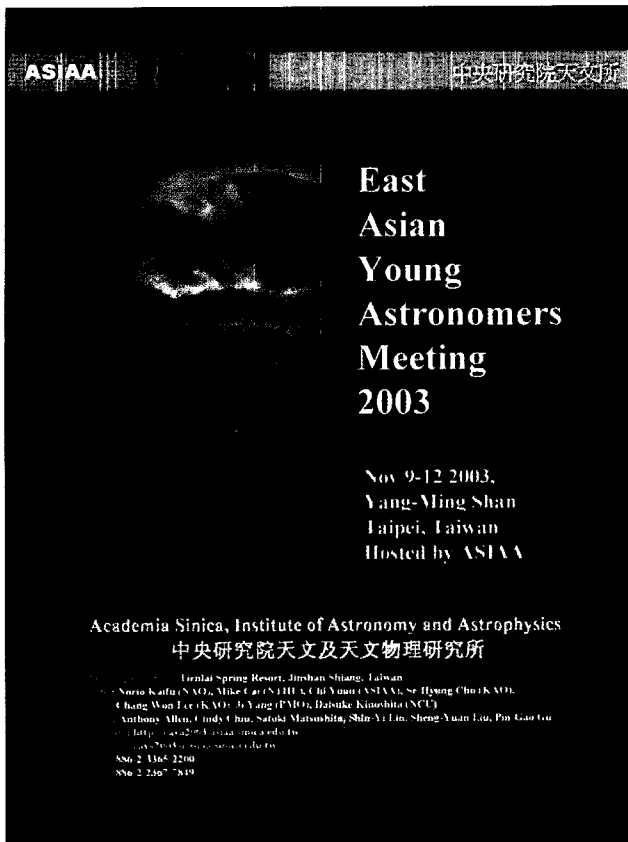
### III. ORGANIZING THE MEETING

EAYAM was organized under the auspices of the East Asian Meeting of Astronomers (EAMA), whose executive council gave a strong endorsement for Taiwan to organize the inaugural EAYAM. Funding was secured from the Academia Sinica, which provided ~US\$17K, and the National Science Council of Taiwan, which provided ~US\$3K. This funding was used to cover airfare for invited speakers, and local expenses for (nearly) all participants (transportation, lecture rooms, refreshments, accommodations, and meals). Overseas participants secured their own airfares from their individual universities, research organizations, or funding agencies.

A Scientific Organizing Committee (SOC) was formed comprising a junior and senior astronomer in each of the four regions. This committee comprised Dr. Michael Tsai (ASIAA) and Prof. Yuan Chi (ASIAA), Dr. Daisuke Kinoshita (fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science) and Prof. Norio Kaifu (National Astronomical Observatory), Dr. Se-Hyung Cho (Korean Astronomical Observatory) and Dr. Chang-Won Lee (Korean Astronomical Observatory), Dr. Rui-Qing Mao (Purple Mountain Observatory) and Dr. Ji Yang (Purple Mountain Observatory). This commit-

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**Fig. 1.**— A reproduction of the official poster advertising the East Asian Young Astronomers Meeting in Taiwan.

tee, co-chaired by Dr. Tsai and Prof. Kaifu, was charged with selecting invited speakers, as well as participants based on the quality of their submitted abstracts and other relevant information.

The Local Organizing Committee (LOC) comprised three postdocs at ASIAA, Dr. Anthony Allen, Dr. Satoki Matsushita, and Dr. Liu Sheng-Yuan, a research assistant at ASIAA, Miss Lin Shin-Yi, and Miss Cindy-Chiu, the aforementioned administrative assistant at ASIAA. This committee, chaired by Dr. Allen, was charged with arranging the logistics of the meeting. A number of local students and research assistants pitched in to help with the final arrangements and at the meeting. The enormous workload and diligent effort of the LOC, when things go well, often go unnoticed or under appreciated, except for that brief moment when they are officially thanked. Their efforts, however, often has the most lasting impression, especially when individual attention is required.

#### IV. THE PARTICIPANTS

The original targeted number of participants were fifteen young astronomers from each of the four regions. The actual number of young astronomers who attended



**Fig. 2.**— The Tienlai Spring Resort, showing a view of the hotel and one of its hot springs.

the inaugural EAYAM were nine from China, thirteen from Korea, twenty-one from Taiwan, and thirty-two from Japan! Problems in obtaining visas to Taiwan prevented a number of prospective participants from China attending. Fewer people from Korea registered than was expected. On the other hand, the large numbers of registrants from Taiwan and, especially, Japan pushed up the final participation numbers from these two regions. The enthusiasm from Japan was such that a number of the participants paid for all the necessary expenses (airfares, meals, and accommodation), which was beyond the available budget, to attend the meeting.

The final number of participants was limited to seventy-five, including four invited speakers and two local astronomers (The Director of ASIAA and myself), by the available accommodations. The participants included sixteen students enrolled in Masters programs, twenty-nine in PhD programs, sixteen postdoctoral fellows, and eight research assistants from Taiwan with either BSc or Masters degrees or providing administrative support. The official photo of EAYAM participants

is shown in Figure 3.



Fig. 3.— The official photo of EAYAM participants.

## V. THE INAUGURAL EAYAM

The inaugural EAYAM, for most of the participants, actually began on 8 November 2003 when they arrived in Taipei and was accommodated at the Howard International House adjacent to the National Taiwan University, where the ASIAA is located. On 9 November they were transported by buses to the Tienlai Spring Resort, which was to be their home for the next three and a half days. I was one of the few participants to drive to the meeting, but then I was charged with transporting over 100 bottles of Smirnoff and beer for a combined social and scientific session!

The scientific program comprised four invited talks of duration 1-hr each, and forty-five oral presentations of 15 minutes each with 3 minutes question time. The oral presentations were given by three Research Assistants, seven Masters students, 18 PhD students, 16 postdoctoral fellows, and one Research Scientist. Although not originally planned, because of the larger number of participants than expected and the lack of available time for oral presentations, the scientific program also included a total of 23 posters. The scientific topics ran the entire gamut of frontier research in astronomy and astrophysics, including the Sun and Solar System, the formation and evolution of stars, galaxies near and far, relativistic astrophysics, Cosmology, as well as instrumentation. The official language of the meeting was English. Both the quality and breadth of the presentations bode well for the health of astronomy and astrophysics in the East Asian region.

Figure 4 shows some of the pictures taken at the inaugural EAYAM. Amazingly, while the weather was mostly dry (albeit overcast) in Taipei, it rained hard and virtually nonstop for the entire meeting at Jinshan; like all good stories, it only stopped raining on the last session of the final morning. While this prevented any official pictures being taken of the participants in the

hot springs, the rain did not actually prevent them from enjoying the hot springs. After the meeting, the participants were transported by bus back to the Howard International House in Taipei on 12 November 2003.

During the meeting, plans were laid by the young astronomers themselves to hold the next EAYAM. The first positive steps have already been taken. The participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire to determine what they liked and did not like about the meeting, how future meetings can be improved, and whether they would be willing to help organize future meetings. A report of this survey, as well as a short summary of the main aspects of the meeting, has been provided in a written report by Dr. Daisuke Kinoshita to the EAMA executive council. At the time of writing, Dr. Kinoshita has put together a group of young astronomers willing to help organize the next meeting, and submitted proposals to funding agencies to hold this meeting in Japan in 2005.

## VI. EAMA SCHOOLS

Although EAYAM was the first coordinated effort to bring together young astronomers in the East-Asian region under the EAMA umbrella, the individual regions have for many years conducted their own schools bringing together young astronomers in their respective regions. The author is aware of the annual young astronomers meeting in Japan, annual workshop in high-energy astrophysics for graduate students in China, annual topical workshop at the Korean Astronomical Observatory for undergraduate students, annual national Astronomy Olympiads in both China and Korea to select high school students for the International Astronomy Olympiad, and an annual summer student program at the ASIAA primarily for undergraduate students.

The number of major telescope facilities constructed and theoretical astrophysics programs established by individual or bilateral members of EAMA have grown significantly in recent times. There is a strong consensus to promote closer regional scientific partnerships, with a view to establishing an East-Asian Observatory. One positive step the EAMA plans to take is to hold schools for young astronomers to teach and encourage them to use member facilities. The first such school planned is the Subaru school to be held in Hawaii in 2005.

## VII. FUTURE AND CHALLENGES

Each of us in the EAMA consortium, especially those currently in Masters, PhD, or postdoctoral programs, has an important role to play in the future of EAYAM and EAMA Schools. I hope that EAYAMs can be held regularly, perhaps once every 2 years, and that the organizers and participants conduct the meeting according to their own wishes and continuously innovate. The role of the newly established EAYA working group

will be to provide whatever advice and help necessary to facilitate future EAYAMs, and to identify relevant topics for as well as encourage EAMA Schools.

The challenges facing us should not be underestimated, but can be overcome with a little effort and goodwill. Holding EAYAM as will EAMA Schools will require financial support. While the organizers and participants can seek financial support from their individual funding agencies, the EAMA consortium might consider whether it should establish a fund for supporting such incentives. The most important aspect, however, is not financial. Senior astronomers, especially those who have benefitted from similar programs, play a critical role in ensuring the success of future EAYAMs and the planned EAMA schools. Encourage your students and postdocs to engage in helping organize future EAYAMs, and to attend EAYAM as well as EAMA Schools.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We all are indebted to a great number of people who made the inaugural EAYAM such a success. My thanks go to Paul Ho, then the Director of ASIAA, and Yuan Chi who encouraged me to pursue my vision for EAYAM. Thanks also to my young colleagues at ASIAA who actually organized the meeting, especially Mike Tsai who selflessly put in the time and effort to realize its fruition and Cindy Chiu for her tireless dedication.



Fig. 4.— Pictures from the East Asian Young Astronomers Meeting in Taiwan.