

# Weaving Ties with the World for 50 Years and Onward

**JAPAN**FOUNDATION

國際交流基金

**50**<sup>th</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY



# Message from President

In October 2022, the Japan Foundation (JF) celebrates its 50th anniversary. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who have supported our activities and to those who have worked together with us in the field of international exchange.

Fifty years ago, Japan was in the midst of rapid postwar economic growth and was speedily increasing its presence within the international community. This was a time when Japan became the world's second largest economy, hosting major events such as the Tokyo 1964 Olympic Games, the World Expo 1970 Osaka and the Sapporo 1972 Winter Olympic Games.

Against this backdrop, JF was established on October 2, 1972, with the purpose of “deepening the understanding of other countries toward Japan, promoting mutual international understanding, and contributing to culture and other fields around the world, thereby contributing to the development of a favorable international environment and the maintenance and development of Japan’s harmonious relations with other countries” (Incorporated Administrative Agency, Japan Foundation Law, Article 3). Since then, JF has been engaged in cultural exchanges with other countries in the fields of 1) arts and cultural exchange, 2) Japanese language education overseas, and 3) Japanese studies and international dialogue while responding to changes in the international situation surrounding Japan.

We have produced this booklet in the hope that it will offer you with an opportunity to look back on the significance of international cultural exchange and its potential future, while explaining JF’s 50 years of history and introducing the voices of those who have supported our activities in various ways. Unfortunately, it is not possible to cover all of our activities over the past

half century, but key selections have been included. We hope you will take a look at as many stories as possible and experience the depth and breadth of exchange between Japan and the rest of the world over the years.

Over the past 50 years, as globalization has progressed, a better understanding of Japan has been promoted throughout the world. Today, for example, there are approximately 3.8 million people studying Japanese language overseas, an increase of approximately thirty times since the end of the 1970s. Compared to the past, when interest in Japanese culture was limited to specialists and enthusiasts, it is truly heartening to see so many people around the world interested in and enjoying various aspects of Japanese culture.

On the other hand, the path forward is not necessarily an optimistic one. Over the past two years, the coronavirus pandemic has drastically changed our daily lives and greatly restricted human interaction between Japan and the rest of the world. In addition, it seems almost every day the media reports the heartbreaking scenes of frequent natural disasters in various parts of the world as well as global events that have shaken the very foundations of the international order.

However, it is precisely in turbulent times such as these that the true value of cultural exchange is being realized. In an increasingly multi-polar and uncertain international society, it is more important than ever for Japan to strengthen its ties with people around the world. While many countries are increasingly interested in soft power diplomacy, competition in this field is becoming more intense. Therefore, we feel that we must work harder than ever before to maintain the presence of Japanese culture on the global stage in the future.

JF will continue to play the role of catalyst for deepening mutual understanding and trust between the people of Japan and overseas, and we will redouble our efforts to build good relations between Japan and the world. I would like to ask you all for your continued support for our endeavors.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the many people who kindly agreed to be interviewed and provided a wealth of valuable information to produce this publication.



October 2022

**UMEMOTO Kazuyoshi**

President  
The Japan Foundation

# 50 Years of JF

Looking back on the 50-year history of the Japan Foundation with symbolic photos of its activities by decade.

## 1970s

(1972-1979)

Due to rapid postwar economic growth, Japan became an economic power. This increased its international role and there were voices both at home and abroad calling for a specialized institution that would introduce Japanese culture to the rest of the world, promote mutual international understanding and culturally contribute to the world. Against this backdrop, the Japan Foundation (JF) was established on October 2, 1972 as a special legal entity under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Inheriting offices in five overseas cities from its predecessor organization, the Society for International Cultural Relations, JF has built its foundation while responding to changes in the international situation surrounding Japan, and has started projects that continue in the fields of arts and cultural exchange, Japanese language education overseas, and Japanese studies and international dialogue.

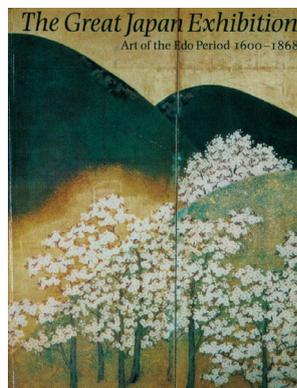


1. In 1972, then Prime Minister TANAKA Kakuei addressed the inauguration ceremony of JF
2. In 1974, writer Mr. André Malraux (France) was invited

## 1980s

(1980-1989)

As interest in Japan grew around the world along with the country's economic growth, a major Japan festival was held in the United Kingdom in 1981-82. JF organized the successful "Great Japan Exhibition: Art of the Edo Period, 1600-1868" as a core project, attracting 520,000 visitors. Since then, JF has cooperated with art festivals and cultural institutions in various countries to strengthen the introduction of Japanese culture to other countries. Meanwhile, in 1982, six projects were conducted in Japan to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the establishment of JF, stepping up efforts to introduce other cultures to Japan. In 1980, following the conclusion of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and China, the Japanese Language Training Center in China (now the Beijing Center for Japanese Studies) was established, and to this day continues to provide a high level of Japanese studies and Japanese language education. During this period, the number of Japanese language learners around the world grew steadily, and in 1984 the Japanese Language Proficiency Test was administered for the first time in 19 cities overseas. In 1989, the Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa was established as a training facility for overseas Japanese language teachers.



1. In 1981, "The Great Japan Exhibition: Art of the Edo Period, 1600-1868" (U.K.) attracted 520,000 visitors
2. In 1984, the "African Film Festival" was held
3. In 1985, the Beijing Center for Japanese Studies was established
4. In 1989, the Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa was established

# 1990s

(1990-1999)

In 1990, the ASEAN Culture Center was established to introduce Asian cultures to Japan; in 1995, the Center was reorganized as the Asia Center to promote two-way exchanges with Asian countries. Then, in response to the end of the Cold War and the intensification of Japan-U.S. trade friction, the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership was established in 1991 with the view of strengthening the Japan-U.S. alliance. Since then, in addition to existing programs with the U.S., many experts have been nurtured who serve as bridges between the two countries through intellectual and grassroots exchanges, and there has been constant support for joint Japan-U.S. efforts to address the challenges facing the world. In 1997, the Japan Cultural Institute in Paris (Maison de la culture du Japon à Paris) opened as one of the largest overseas centers through French-Japanese, public-private cooperation. That same year, the Japanese-Language Institute, Kansai was also established as a training facility for diplomats, public officials, researchers and various other Japanese language learners from each country.



1

©YAYOI KUSAMA



2



4

Photo: YAKOU Masahiko



3

# 2000s

(2000-2009)

1. In 1993, KUSAMA Yayoi served as Japan's representative artist at Japan Pavilion in the 45th Venice Biennale
2. In 1995, the Abe Fellowship Symposium, "50 Years Since the War: An Overview of U.S.-Japan Relations and the Challenges for Policy Relevant Studies" was held
3. In 1997, the Maison de la culture du Japon à Paris was established
4. In 1997, "Lear," an international theater collaboration by artists from six Asian countries, premiered

As globalization advanced and the presence of Japanese culture in the world grew, there were calls for a full-fledged international art exhibition to be held in Japan. Based on many years of experience participating in the Venice Biennale, JF contributed to the successful launch of the first Yokohama Triennale in 2001, attracting 350,000 visitors from Japan and abroad. That same year, with the terrorist attack in the U.S. and the start of the Iraq War in 2003, the strengthening of exchanges with the Middle East region, and in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, which struck the southeastern U.S. in 2005, the new agenda of "peacebuilding, disaster recovery and culture" began to be addressed. In October 2003, JF transitioned from a special legal entity to an independent administrative agency. Then, in 2006, the Japan Foundation China Center was established to promote youth exchange between China and Japan. With the Economic Partnership Agreements with Indonesia and the Philippines coming into effect in 2008, Japanese language training programs for prospective nurses and care workers also began.

2



1. In 2001, the 1st Yokohama Triennale was held and attracted 350,000 visitors
2. In 2005, Istalif potters from Afghanistan were invited
3. In 2008, a Japanese language training program for prospective Indonesian care workers started



1

Tsubaki Noboru + Muroi Hisashi The Insect World / Locust 2001 photo: Mikio Kurokawa

3



# 2010s

(2010-2019)

In the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake, efforts to support reconstruction through cultural exchange were strengthened. In 2014, in order to build momentum for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the “WA Project - Toward Interactive Asia through Fusion and Harmony” commenced. A new Asia Center was established to expand and deepen two-way exchanges with Southeast Asia and other regions. Japonismes 2018, the largest-ever overseas celebration of Japanese culture, was held in Paris and other French and Japanese cities in 2018, with JF acting as the secretariat and commemorating the 160th anniversary of diplomatic relations between France and Japan. This festival brought the broad appeal of Japanese culture to more than 3.53 million visitors during the 8-month period. That same year, the number of Japanese language learners worldwide reached 3.85 million. In 2010, JF released the “JF Standard for Japanese-Language Education” to accelerate the spread of Japanese language education to enhance the communication skills of learners, and in 2019, JF also launched the Japan Foundation Test for Basic Japanese (JFT-Basic) for those who wish to come to Japan under the Specified Skilled Worker program.



1. In 2013, the “Marugoto: Japanese Language and Culture,” Japanese language coursebooks were published in multiple languages
2. In 2014, the “ASIAN ELEVEN,” football exchange program with Southeast Asia, began
3. In 2015, the “Sanriku-Asian Network Project,” an exchange program for performing arts between the Tohoku region and Asia, began
4. In 2018, the “Japonismes 2018: Souls in Resonance” (France) attracted more than 3.53 million visitors
5. In 2019, the “Japan 2019” (U.S.) attracted more than 1.29 million visitors

# 2020s

(from 2020)



1. In 2020, conversation series “Asia Lounge,” co-presented by the Japan Foundation Asia Center & Tokyo International Film Festival, was held
2. In 2021, the “STAGE BEYOND BORDERS - Selection of Japanese Performances” started, distributing stage performances online. A total of 92 films were viewed more than 9.5 million times

The spread of COVID-19 around the world from February 2020 had a serious impact on cultural exchanges. JF has activated online projects and other initiatives, so as not to close its carefully built channels of exchange between people in Japan and around the world. At the same time, in April 2022, a reorganization was undertaken to develop the foundation’s activities more effectively and efficiently. JF’s network of overseas offices, which started with five cities around the world when it was established 50 years ago, has since expanded to 25 cities in 24 countries thanks to the support of many people.

# JF Special Stories

Exclusive stories about 50 years of JF,  
focusing on our projects to weave ties with the world.



## Culture

- [01] **Souls in Resonance, The Legacy of “Japonismes 2018”**
- [02] **International Art Exhibitions in Venice and Yokohama Bring Together Art and its Aficionados from around the World**
- [03] **Drama, Animation, Documentaries ...  
Sharing the Spirit of Japan with the World through TV**
- [04] **“Shunkan,” “Antigone,” “The Cherry Orchard,”  
Expanding the Circle of Excitement beyond Language Barriers**

## Language

- [01] **Japanese Language Education Blossoming in the Middle East from Cairo University;  
A 50-Year Journey Alongside the Japan Foundation**
- [02] **A Second Home for Overseas Japanese Language Teachers,  
Training Programs Offered by the Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa**
- [03] **“NIHONGO Partners,” Bringing Living Language and Culture  
to Middle and High-School Students Studying Japanese in Asia**

## Dialogue

- [01] **How Has America Viewed *The Tale of Genji*?  
The Charm of Japan Elucidated by an American Scholar**
- [02] **“Heart to Heart”—Connecting the Hearts of the Younger Generation  
to Expand the Japan-China Friendship Network**
- [03] **“Learning from One Another and Growing Stronger Together”  
Bonds with Asia Nurtured through Sports**
- [04] **Two Programs that Link Japan and the U.S.,  
Aiming to Develop the Next Generation of Leaders**

## Others

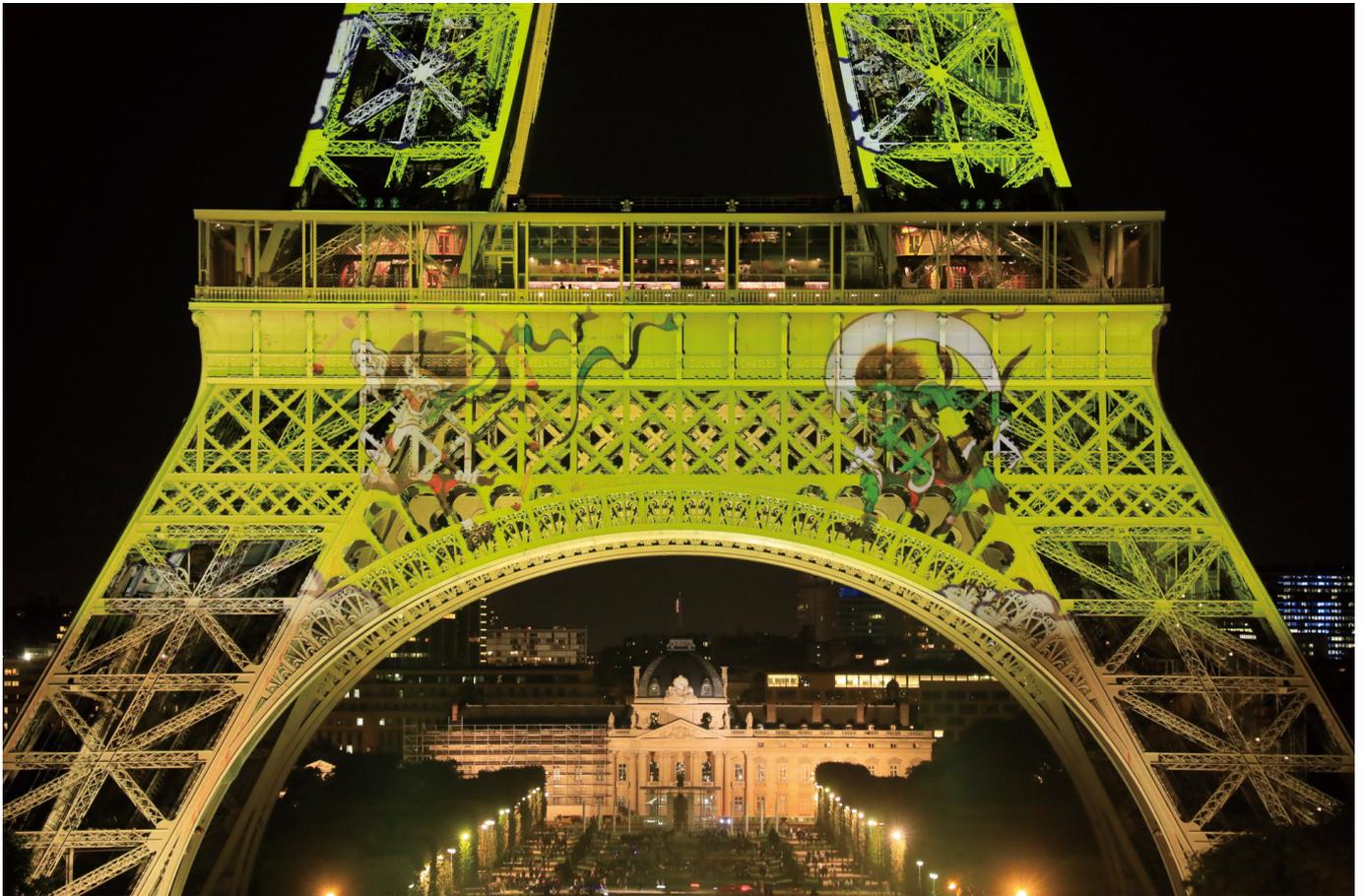
**Spiritual Recovery through Local Traditions and Culture:  
Overcoming the Disaster**

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More stories can be found on our 50th anniversary website.  
We hope you enjoy the variety of articles (see page 35 for the overview).

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# Souls in Resonance, The Legacy of “Japonismes 2018”



*The Japan Foundation has had a focus on large-scale Japanese cultural festivals for many years. The key to broadening the understanding of Japan to as many as possible starts with the overall concept, coupled with close collaboration with the host country and related organizations.*

The Japan Foundation (JF) introduces various elements of Japanese culture in creative ways. The quintessence of such an activity can be found in large-scale Japanese festivals. The “Japonismes 2018: les âmes en résonance” (“Souls in Resonance”) was considered particularly successful in terms of its ripple effect. As a Japanese festival, it was produced on an unprecedented scale, and was held in 2018, which marked the 160th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and France. JF acted as the festival secretariat and took on full responsibility from the planning to the actual implementation. “We hope to introduce the ‘unknown Japan.’

This is the only aspect we want to promote through ‘Japonismes 2018,’” stated ANDO Hiroyasu, then President of JF, and Secretary General of the Secretariat.

“Japonismes 2018” was based on the concept of the Japanese aesthetic, and the resonance between Japan and France. Accordingly, humanity is considered an integral part of nature, which is itself revered and respected. Harmony is valued, and differing values are shared and coexist with a spirit of tolerance. “Japonismes 2018” sought to share such Japanese sensibilities with the people of France, from the ancient Jomon era to contemporary digital art.

The “Eiffel Tower Special Light-up – Eiffel Tower Dressed in Japanese Lights,” one of the official projects under Japonismes 2018. A variety of symbolic Japanese designs were projected sequentially onto the Eiffel Tower, including a view of “Fujin Rajjin-zu Byobu” (The Wind God and Thunder God, screens painted by TAWARAYA Sotatsu and owned by Kennin-ji temple) (detail), a National Treasure which traveled to Europe. Planners and Producers: Motoko Ishii & Akari Lisa-Ishii

Until then, the concept behind most large-scale Japanese festivals held overseas leaned towards whatever view of Japan the host country expected. “Japonismes 2018” was a joint project between Japan and France, and JF’s focus was to convey a view of the unknown Japan and the Japanese spirit through a program that evolved from ideas offered up by both parties, Japan and France.

The introduction of Japanese arts and crafts at the International Exposition of 1867 in Paris brought Japanese culture to a much wider international audience, and the term “Japonisme” soon became popular. In 2018, some 150 years later, this new project was



A long line in front of the Petit Palais in Paris, the venue for the “Jakuchū, the Colorful Realm of Living Beings” exhibition. The first full-scale Jakuchū exhibition in Europe proved immensely popular.

named “Japonismes 2018,” with the year added to draw a clear distinction from 19th century Japonisme, which included a fascination for Orientalism, and reflecting a desire to convey the “current” situation of the Japanese people.

### *Introducing the Unknown Culture of Japan from Ancient Times to the Present Day*

However, the road to holding the festival was far from smooth. For example, when planning the exhibition “Jakuchū, the Colorful Realm of Living Beings,” the initial reaction from the French side was: “Jakuchū? Never heard of him – how about Hokusai?”

The Jakuchū exhibition, which was realized after much back-and-forth

discussion, attracted 75,000 visitors during its limited four-week run, and was so successful that a long line of visitors formed in front of the Petit Palais, which hosted the exhibition. The French cultural magazine, *Télérama*, described the exhibition as: “An unforgettable experience,” “Jakuchū’s genius is in his detail,” and concluded the article with, “This exhibition is perhaps the most beautiful gift Japan has bestowed on us.”

The subtitle, “Souls in Resonance,” reflects the concept of “resonance between Japan and France.” For its first exhibition in France as an official project, teamLab created a new experiential digital art exhibition, “teamLab: Au-delà des limites (Transcending Boundaries)” at the

Grande Halle de La Villette. In the exhibition, the audience was able to become part of the full work, creating a natural immersive experience in a digital world. This art exhibition attracted 300,000 visitors. There were constant shouts of joy from children during the exhibition, and visitors commented: “The teamLab exhibition was like going on a unique journey that you could never experience elsewhere.”

TeamLab’s exhibition was not the only place for emotions that transcended language. Embodying the overall concept of the festival, the exhibition “FUKAMI – une plongée dans l’esthétique japonaise (Fukami, a plunge into Japanese aesthetics)” was held at Hôtel Salomon de Rothschild, a renovated 19th century mansion. Along with works by old and new Japanese artists such as ANREALAGE, MANABE Daito, Hokusai and SENGAI Gibon, works by Picasso and Gauguin were also on display in an ambitious attempt to create a dialogue between East and West over the entire space. On social media, many visitors expressed their satisfaction with the exhibition, describing it as “An exhibition immersing visitors in Japanese aesthetics.”

A wide range of stage performances were put on, from Gagaku court music to contemporary theater and dance, Vocaloid (featuring the popular character HATSUNE Miku) and 2.5D



The teamLab exhibition featured a space combining several artworks that were created digitally in real time and changed due to the presence of people. It proved extremely popular to physically dive into this art without boundaries.

Exhibition view, *teamLab: Au-delà des limites*, 2018, Grande Halle de La Villette, Paris ©teamLab



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 Graphics by SEGA / MARZA ANIMATION PLANET INC.  
 Production by Crypton Future Media, INC.

HATSUNE Miku’s performance in France, an official “Japonismes 2018” event, on the first day of its first European tour, “HATSUNE MIKU EXPO 2018 EUROPE,” for which tickets sold out immediately. Many fans came to the venue at La Seine Musicale, and in a post-performance survey, all respondents agreed that their familiarity with Japan had increased.

musicals. There were also large-scale special screenings introducing the 100-year history of Japanese cinema, as well as special features regarding Japan on local television. Many visitors, from avid fans of Japan to those who knew little about the country, enjoyed this sampling of Japanese culture, ranging from Japanese food, Japanese sake and crafts to festivals based on various locations in Japan. Also, they could enjoy events related to judo, tea ceremonies, flower arrangement, Zen and literature. The former Minister of Culture in France, Jack Lang, said, “With ‘Japonismes 2018’ we have seen a Japan that is far from stereotypical.”

### *The Importance of Connecting to the Future*

During the eight months of “Japonismes 2018,” more than 300 events were held in more than 50 cities across Japan and France, attracting some 3.53 million visitors. This figure alone surpasses the 2.2 million population of Paris. It successfully conveyed the aesthetics and values of Japanese people through a wide variety of projects throughout its duration, but in order to ensure that this was not simply viewed as a one-off event, it has been essential to continue with so-called “follow-up events.”

One of the official projects was the “Interschool Presentation Day,” where high school students from Japan and France were able to interact. One year after the festival closed, in February 2020, JF invited some French high

school students who participated in this project to Japan and provided them with opportunities for homestays, Japanese cultural experiences, and one-day enrollment in a Japanese high school. Since then, the project has fostered online exchanges among high school students.

With the enthusiasm for “Japonismes 2018” still fresh in people’s minds, in 2019 the stage moved to the United States for a Japanese festival called “Japan 2019.” JF carried out eight official projects mainly in Washington, D.C. and New York. Among them, three large-scale art exhibitions were held by American curators who conducted research in Japan as JF fellows. These exhibitions, the culmination of many years of Japanese studies and Japan-U.S. exchanges, were highly acclaimed by the local media as well for their unique perspectives in introducing the fascinating world of Japanese art.

Cultural and artistic exchanges is one area that appeals directly to people’s hearts, creates a sense of empathy that transcends language, and fosters a broad range of fans of Japan by facilitating new discoveries and the joy of shared creation. Japanese festivals, demonstrating such essence, are the perfect opportunity to showcase not only the ageless charm of Japan, but also its new “face” – which is constantly being updated. JF will continue to bring about these high-quality projects around the world with the cooperation of many people so that visitors can experience the multifaceted aspects of Japanese culture.



During the “Interschool Presentation Day,” the younger generation took on a leading role. High school students from Japan and France gave presentations at the Japan Cultural Institute in Paris under the theme, “Discovering Japan-France Exchange through People, Their Lives, and Their Works: The Role of the Individual in History leading to Japonismes 2018.” Photo: ©MIHO

View of the “Shinto: Discovery of the Divine in Japanese Art” exhibition, one of the official projects under “Japan 2019.” Through six themes, including Shintoism and Buddhism, the exhibition unraveled the influence on Japanese art by reverence for the gods. Dr. Sinéad Vilbar, Curator of Japanese Art at the Cleveland Museum of Art, who curated this exhibition, conducted research at Tohoku University as a 2002 JF Fellow. Photo by David Brichford; courtesy of the Cleveland Museum of Art.



# International Art Exhibitions in Venice and Yokohama Bring Together Art and its Aficionados from around the World



The Japan Pavilion designed by YOSHIZAKA Takamasa, which stands at the Giardini, the venue for the Venice Biennale. The building was renovated by ITO Toyo in 2014. Photo by Peppe Maisto

*The Japan Pavilion exhibition at the “Venice Biennale,” which attracts worldwide attention, has been a major project of the Japan Foundation since 1976. Using our participation in Venice as a springboard, we participated in the launch of the “Yokohama Triennale” in 2001.*

The Venice Biennale is also known as the “Olympics of Art.” This international exhibition began in 1895 and operates a national participation system. Japan participated for the first time during the 26th exhibition in 1952, marking its return to the international art world. The exhibition organizer of the Japan Pavilion was the Japan Foundation’s (JF) predecessor, the Society for International Cultural Relations (Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai). Since then, Japan has continuously participated in the Venice Biennale, and from 1976, JF has organized exhibitions in the Japan Pavilion. On the international stage, which attracts people from all over the world, we present cutting-edge contemporary art from Japan through exhibitions by representative Japanese artists.

## *Expectations of a More Open Platform for the Japan Pavilion*

The Artistic Director of MAXXI, the National Museum of 21st Century Arts in Italy, Mr. Hou Hanru has been paying

close attention to the Japan Pavilion since the 1990s. Mr. Hou describes his impression of the Japan Pavilion as follows: “In general, it reflects the current state of contemporary art both in Japan and internationally. MIYAJIMA Tatsuo’s work in 1999 using digital counters embodied the atmosphere of the 90s, portraying creativity emphasizing the role of new technologies in contemporary Japanese and global culture. Also, TANAKA Koki’s 2013 work proved a lively collaboration of video and photography, and the excellent use of the atrium space in the Japan Pavilion was impressive.”

Mr. Tanaka’s exhibition at the Japan Pavilion in 2013 was highly acclaimed, and in 2017 he was invited to participate in the Biennale’s special exhibition. One’s reputation at Venice is also directly connected to one’s global reputation, as evidenced by ISHIDA Tetsuya, who was invited to participate in the 2015 exhibition and was “discovered” in Venice, leading to his solo exhibitions in Madrid and Chicago.

Mr. Hou expressed his hopes for the future of the Japan Pavilion saying,

“I think art is an open platform. So, I don’t see art as having anything to do with competition. Art is all about helping society to be more open towards different people, cultures and so on. There are so many wonderful artists with different backgrounds working in Japan, and we hope to be able to see how they can present their special angles to look at global issues.”

In addition to the art section, the Venice Biennale initiated the International Architecture Exhibition in 1980, and since 2001, it has alternated with the art exhibition every two years. Japan has been an official participant since the fifth exhibition in 1991, winning the Golden Lion award in 1996, when ISOZAKI Arata served as commissioner, and in 2012, when ITO Toyo served as commissioner. It exhibited the process of creating “Home-for-All,” a place where those who lost their homes in the tsunami could enjoy a little respite in Rikuzentakata City, which was severely damaged by the Great East Japan Earthquake. This exhibition, “Architecture. Possible here? Home-for-All,” was highly evaluated for its courage and importance in questioning the fundamental meaning of architecture through how it deals with natural disasters.



TANAKA Koki’s work on display at the Japan Pavilion in 2013. Mr. Tanaka exhibited an installation titled, “abstract speaking – sharing uncertainty and collective arts,” in which video monitors and photographic works are placed here and there, while flashlights and books, etc. that appear in the video footage are scattered throughout the venue. The exhibition at the Japan Pavilion received a Special Mention. Exhibition at the piloti “painting to the public (open-air),” 2012 Photo: Takashi Fujikawa, created with Aoyama Meguro, Photo: Keizo Kioku



The first Yokohama Triennale attracted approximately 350,000 visitors during its two-month duration. The photo shows the exhibits mentioned by Ms. Shiota. Chiharu Shiota, *Memory of Skin*, 2001. Installation: dresses, dirt, water, showers. Yokohama 2001 - International Triennale of Contemporary Art: Mega Wave - Towards a New Synthesis, Yokohama, Japan. Photo by ITO Tetsuo ©JASPAR, Tokyo, 2022 and Chiharu Shiota.

### *The Venice Experience Lives on in Yokohama*

An art critic and a senior advisor to the Mori Art Museum, Mr. NANJO Fumio is also well acquainted with JF's involvement with the Venice Biennale. "I worked at JF from 1978 to 1986, serving as program director for the exhibition program. From that time on, I was in the middle of a conflict between the Japan that foreign countries wanted to see and the Japan that Japan itself wanted to show. I was busy with the internationalization of Japanese contemporary art as the two sides' intentions clashed," he said.

Mr. Nanjo's encounter with the Venice Biennale dates back to his days at JF, when he was in charge of the Japan Pavilion exhibition in 1984 as a staff member. In 1988, after leaving JF, he was the first Asian curator of the Aperto (now discontinued), a gateway to success for new artists, and in 1995, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Biennale, he co-curated the exhibition "TransCulture: La Biennale di Venezia 1995" with Dana Friis-Hansen, featuring MURAKAMI Takashi and up-and-coming artists from dozens of countries around the world. It was co-organized by JF and the Fukutake Science and Culture Foundation and officially supported by the Biennale. He also served as commissioner of the Japan Pavilion in 1997 and the NAITO Rei exhibit received high international acclaim.

While participation in international exhibitions in Venice and other countries has expanded the international activities of Japanese artists, there have also been calls for Japan to have its own international venues. In response, JF

took the lead in organizing the first "Yokohama Triennale 2001." 109 artists from 38 countries, including Japan, participated. Mr. Nanjo was an artistic director of the exhibition, along with KOHMOTO Shinji, TATEHATA Akira and NAKAMURA Nobuo.

The Yokohama Triennale 2001 came together under the theme of "MEGA WAVE - Towards a New Synthesis," with the aim of positioning contemporary art within society at large. It promoted mutual understanding and dialogue between citizens, a varied audience, and artists from Japan and abroad, without being confined to the framework of contemporary art, while contributing to the revitalization of urban communities. As a result, large-scale exhibitions appeared in various locations throughout Yokohama, including facilities that had not been associated with art exhibitions in the past, such as Pacifico Yokohama convention center and Red Brick Warehouse No. 1. "I'll never forget overhearing an elderly person commenting that even the trash on the side of the road looked like art. In selecting the artworks, we challenged the Western-centric view of art by choosing them with our own eyes and showing them the choices and decisions we made. The lively discussions that took place in preparation for the event are an asset that remain with us to this day. Our experience in Venice is definitely alive and well in Yokohama," affirmed Mr. Nanjo.

The Yokohama Triennale is a stage for international presentations and a place to disseminate information on Japanese art to the world. At each Triennale, Japanese artists participate along with foreign artists. One such artist is Ms. SHIOTA Chiharu, who participated in the first Triennale and is now based in Germany. Ms. Shiota recalls, "When Mr. Tatehata came to Berlin for his research, I was just exhibiting my work at a museum there and he approached me. I was 27 years old, and I remember how happy I was to have the opportunity to exhibit on a large stage for the first time ever. I was working on a piece about memory, so I wanted to express memories from the skin that could not be washed away by continually showering 14-meter large mud-stained dresses."

The exhibited work, "Memory of Skin," mentioned by Ms. Shiota will remain in the memories of many people along with its overwhelming power, and she is now one of the most prominent artists on the international art scene. In 2015, she was selected to represent Japan at the Venice Biennale, and her installation

"The Key in the Hand," a red string installation of 180,000 keys collected from around the world and tied together, received great acclaim. Furthermore, "Shiota Chiharu: The Soul Trembles" held at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo in 2019 attracted 660,000 visitors. The exhibition has since traveled throughout the Asia-Pacific region and recently to the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA) in Brisbane, Australia in 2022.

Artists and professionals in the artistic and architectural fields continue to engage in dynamic international exchanges at the Venice Biennale and other major international art exhibitions. JF will continue to convey the appeal of Japanese art and architecture to the world, not only by collaborating on such exhibitions but also by supporting the artists' continuing evolution.



Mr. Hou Hanru. Artistic Director of MAXXI, the National Museum of 21st Century Arts, Italy. In 1991, he became involved with the Venice Biennale when serving as co-curator of the French Pavilion. He was a member of the International Committee for the 2008 Yokohama Triennale. Photo: ©Musacchio&Ianniello



Mr. NANJO Fumio. Senior Advisor of the Mori Art Museum and art critic. He has been involved in numerous international art projects to date, including co-curating "Against Nature: Japanese Art in the Eighties," which traveled to seven U.S. cities as a JF co-organized exhibition.



Ms. Shiota is an artist born in Osaka and living in Berlin. "I believe that art is something that can be shared beyond language and national borders, and that it can create a dialogue where nationality and gender are irrelevant," she says. Shiota Chiharu - Berlin, 2020 Photo by Sunhi Mang

# Drama, Animation, Documentaries ... Sharing the Spirit of Japan with the World through TV



Tokai TV and the Japan Foundation co-produced “The Japanese Hospitality Challenge: Bride and Pride Spin-off,” a documentary about six foreigners who try their hand at being serving staff at a ryokan (Japanese-style inn). The competitors, hailing from Mexico, the Philippines, Spain, Taiwan, the U.S., and Uzbekistan, were selected from among more than 100 applicants. Although they clash at times, they grow closer too.

*Television has been highly instrumental in introducing Japanese culture. The Japan Foundation is providing TV programs overseas to bring people in Japan and around the world closer together.*

The Japan Foundation (JF) has been offering Japanese TV programs to countries and regions with limited opportunities to access Japanese content. For nearly 40 years, JF has been undertaking these efforts to effectively introduce Japanese culture to a wider audience and has provided a total of over 5,000 TV programs to more than 170 countries and regions. These programs have been winning Japan a lot of fans, even in countries previously unfamiliar with Japanese culture.

## *“Oshin” and “Hanayome Noren (Bride and Pride)” Have Worldwide Popularity*

“Oshin” is one of the most popular Japanese TV programs around the world. JF helped to translate it into many languages, having made the program available in about 70 countries. The main character, Oshin, who was born and raised in a farming village in Japan’s north-eastern

Tohoku region and who lives an earnest life despite numerous hardships, won viewer’s hearts worldwide. The popularity of the program in some countries was even called “Oshin Syndrome.” When the scriptwriter, HASHIDA Sugako, passed away in 2021, many people overseas mourned her passing, demonstrating once again the widespread appeal and deep-rooted popularity of Oshin.

Even in recent years, some programs provided by JF have become international hits. These include the daytime drama series “Hanayome Noren (Bride and Pride),” which began airing in Japan in 2010. The series, in which a conflict between a bride and her mother-in-law unfolds in a long-established ryokan inn, has been broadcast in about 20 countries and regions and has gained massive popularity. “I never expected such a strong overseas response to a drama series about the relationship between a woman and her mother-in-law.

Perhaps these are common concerns that transcend language and culture,” reflects Mr. ICHINO Naochika, head of the Tokyo Production Department of Tokai Television Broadcasting (Tokai TV), who was responsible for the production. “After all, people can relate to the concepts of kindness and compassion that the series explores. I believe that the feeling of wanting to care for others is something the whole world can understand. Also, when I learned that JF was helping these



A ceremony for the handover of TV programs from Ambassador MIZUUCHI to Minister of Information and Media, Ms. Chushi Kasanda at Zambia’s state-run broadcasting service ZNBC in 2021. Courtesy of the Embassy of Japan in Zambia



Set in a long-established traditional ryokan inn, the drama “Hanayome Noren (Bride and Pride)” depicts the battle between a former career woman and her traditionally minded mother-in-law. In Japan, 205 episodes across four seasons were broadcast between 2010 and 2015.



The popularity of “DOCTORS: The Ultimate Surgeon” in Kazakhstan was so great that one of the country’s magazines ran a multi-page feature on the show.

programs gain viewership in countries where we never expected them to be broadcast, it sparked my interest. I enjoy knowing who is watching our programs in which situations and where. As a drama producer, I find it very rewarding.” In 2021, in response to high levels of support overseas, Tokai TV and JF jointly produced the documentary “The Japanese Hospitality Challenge: Bride and Pride Spin-off.” In this documentary, six non-Japanese women take on the challenge of training as serving staff at the traditional inn in which the drama series is set.

Many Japanese medical dramas have also become huge hits. “DOCTORS: The Ultimate Surgeon” starring Mr. SAWAMURA Ikki, which was provided to foreign countries as part of the JF project, became incredibly popular in Kazakhstan. Mr. Sawamura also had a positive response to the international viewership, saying, “I was surprised that it gained such popularity in a country with a different medical system and environment. All the creators and I put a lot of work into the program, so I am very honored. There are many comical exchanges between Drs. Sagara (played by myself) and Moriyama (played by TAKASHIMA Masanobu), but I’m glad that viewers also feel the empathy and hope conveyed by the doctors when they must confront the issues faced by their patients.”

In some cases, programs offered by JF have had an unexpected impact. From 2006-2007, JF offered an Arabic-language version of “Captain Tsubasa,” an anime focusing on football, to local TV broadcasters in Iraq—where the sport is immensely popular—during the country’s postwar

reconstruction period. Fifty-two episodes were broadcast, in which the main character, OZORA Tsubasa, becomes a professional soccer player and builds friendships with the world’s top players while competing against them. Previously, the program had been broadcast via satellite only, but at that time, few households in Iraq had access to satellite broadcasts. When JF secured the anime’s terrestrial broadcasting, we were able to share a world of hopes and dreams with more viewers, especially the children who will go on to take responsibility for the future of the Middle East. Up to 2009, Japanese Self-Defense Force units were dispatched to Samawah, Iraq, to provide humanitarian and reconstruction assistance. They traveled around the region in water trucks decorated with large “Captain Tsubasa” stickers. This animated program became the face of Japan and played a role in facilitating local activities.

### **Local TV Stations as Points of Contact for Introducing Japanese Culture**

The introduction of Japanese TV programs by JF has proved to be very useful for overseas TV stations. On Canal 22, a national broadcasting service in Mexico, about 7% of broadcast programs feature at least some Japanese content supported by JF. Mr. Eduardo Nava, Director of Programming at Canal 22, says, “Especially popular are TV drama series such as ‘Carnation’ and ‘Gochiso-san Bon Appetit!’, as well as documentaries that show Japanese qualities throughout—for example, street scenes of Kyoto. Anime programs are very popular not only with children, but



Mr. SAWAMURA Ikki, star of “DOCTORS: The Ultimate Surgeon,” says, “As Japan’s role in the world is changing these days, I feel that we can learn a lot from how people overseas react to Japanese dramas about what we should cherish in our lives.”

also with adults. We schedule anime programs at a later hour so that adults can also watch them,” he says. “Aspects of Japanese culture such as the scenery, nature, architecture, clothing, culinary customs and music that are so different from Mexico’s have a lot of appeal. Watching a TV series offers us a glimpse into the daily life of an average Japanese family and what they usually eat. For most Mexican viewers, Japan is a distant place which they won’t have an opportunity to visit themselves, so I feel responsibility and am happy that we, as a TV station, can be a window into Japanese culture.”

Feeling moved by the same story or being exposed to different cultures through television can help bring distant countries and Japan closer together. Japanese TV programs are sure to continue playing a major role in the exchanges between Japan and the rest of the world.

# “Shunkan,” “Antigone,” “The Cherry Orchard,” Expanding the Circle of Excitement beyond Language Barriers



A performance of “Antigone” in New York as an official “Japan 2019” project. Photo: Stephanie Berger

*From traditional performing arts to contemporary theater, the Japan Foundation has shared its excitement with overseas audiences through the introduction of Japan's unique performing arts. It was the tireless efforts and enthusiasm of all involved that led to the realization of these historic performances.*

Performing arts, where audiences can see the performances live on stage, are the starting point for cultural exchange, conveying emotions that transcend language to many people. The Japan Foundation (JF) has introduced a wide range of Japanese performing arts to overseas audiences. In 1973, the year after its establishment, JF organized the first Southeast Asian tour by Takarazuka Revue, which was held in three countries, even though the infrastructure was hardly ideal. In 1979, JF presented a Grand Kabuki performance in China to commemorate the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and the People’s Republic of China. It was received

with great enthusiasm by the citizens of Beijing, and is still talked about today. In 1989, a group including taiko drum performer HAYASHI Eitetsu and jazz pianist YAMASHITA Yosuke traveled through six African countries. In 2004, JF helped realize the Broadway revival of musical “Pacific Overtures,” directed by MIYAMOTO Amon, in commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the U.S.-Japan Relationship. It was a historic event, as it was the first Broadway production by a Japanese director.

In striving to deliver the best performances by the finest performers, the overseas productions organized by JF have occasionally brought about

artistic fusions and innovative staging. A good example is “Shunkan,” a joint performance featuring Noh, Kabuki and Bunraku that took place in four European cities in 1994. This would not have been possible in Japan, but thanks to the conditions of the overseas performance, it became a reality.

## *Realizing a Project that would be Unthinkable in Japan*

The background was the end of the Cold War and the 125th anniversary of the Japan-Austria Treaty of Amity and Commerce. Until then, Eastern European countries had few opportunities to be introduced to

Japanese culture. JF's aspiration to deepen its relationship with these countries matched the timing of the Vienna Art Week's special feature on Japan, which was held during this commemorative year. Under the title "Three Major Traditional Performing Arts in Europe," the production started in Vienna, then went on to Warsaw, Prague and London, attracting audiences that cumulatively totaled more than 10,000.

However, there were many obstacles to making this happen. First of all, a collaboration between Noh, Kabuki and Bunraku represented an unprecedented challenge. The artists bearing these traditional performing arts, however, all shared a strong desire to tackle new challenges as modern-day artists. They were able to surmount all obstacles through their enthusiasm and the joint efforts of the production staff and performers, who were determined "to show their best with this rare opportunity" and "courageously push forward." The powerful backing of classical theater researcher KAWATAKE Toshio as general supervisor and KANZE Hideo as artistic director served to enthuse their efforts. Another significant factor behind its success was that the Japan Arts Council, being in a position to promote the three performing arts, was their leading proponent.

Secondly, the difference in stage structures between Europe and Japan also posed a conundrum for the creation of equipment and staging. At the time, out of the four cities where the show was to be performed, JF only had a base in London. Therefore, a special system was put in place to coordinate everything from travel arrangements to the securing of theaters and the making

of stage sets locally and internationally. However, as it turned out, these experiences proved to be a great asset for JF.

"Shunkan" is a human drama with timeless universality including thoughts for one's hometown, the sadness of separation and feelings for loved ones. This creation, imbued with the overwhelming expressiveness of Noh, Kabuki and Bunraku, clearly conveyed the unique sensibilities and sensitivities of Japanese people to audiences from all over the world. There were at least eight curtain calls each time, all to lasting applause.

Dr. Peter Pantzer, then director of the Institute for Japanese Studies at the University of Bonn, attended the Vienna performance. He wrote in an article for JF's "International Exchange" magazine about a young man who sat next to him at the theater. He was an electrician who seemed to have come straight from work. He told Dr. Pantzer that he had attended a symposium about Japanese performances and became interested in stories about the artists, and that he longed to know more about Japan. His story left an indelible impression on Dr. Pantzer. He concluded the article with the words, "Shunkan's suffering has been rewarded."

### *A Desire to Create Universal Appeal in Theater*

In 2019, a quarter of a century after the excitement of "Shunkan," the Greek tragedy "Antigone," produced by the

influential director Mr. MIYAGI Satoshi, enthralled New York audiences. The performance was organized by JF as one of the official projects of the Japan Festival "Japan 2019" in the United States, with the Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC), where Mr. Miyagi is the General Artistic Director.

The impetus for this performance came in 2017 when SPAC's "Antigone," directed by Mr. Miyagi and supported by JF, was selected as the opening production of the Avignon Festival in France. It was the first time in the festival's more than 70-year history that an Asian theater company had opened the prestigious festival. The New York performance was thanks to Pierre Audi, Artistic Director of Park Avenue Armory, which was the venue for Japan 2019, who had been at the Avignon Festival in 2017.

Regarding the production of "Antigone," Mr. Miyagi said, "The venue in Avignon was the courtyard of the Pope's Palace, the pinnacle of power in Europe in times past. It has a glorious history, but it also cohabits with the souls of countless people who experienced tragic deaths and remained unnoticed. Mourning these unfortunate souls with care is an important theme of 'Antigone.' We hoped to bring peace to the innumerable souls present in the Pope's Palace. On the other hand, I thought it was a strange coincidence when I learned that the Park Avenue Armory was also a former military facility for an infantry regiment that fought in the American Civil War. This was also a place where the dead were



In 1979, JF organized the first performance by a Grand Kabuki troupe in China. The 20-vehicle-long cavalcade of performers, comprising some 70 members of the troupe aboard luxury limousines and minibuses, with an accompanying police escort, received a rousing welcome from the citizens of Beijing.



Curtain call at the Vienna performance of "Shunkan." London's Daily Telegraph described the moment at the end of the performance when the three Shunkan characters, played by Noh, Kabuki and Bunraku performers, appeared on stage simultaneously, saying, "In this moment,

we are not only given the realization that these three classical theatrical forms have very different powers, but we are also given three different insights into the same situation at the same time. It took 600 years to reach this stage, but it was worth the wait."



Mr. MIYAGI Satoshi was appointed General Artistic Director of the Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC) in 2007. “Antigone” was selected to open the 2017 Avignon Festival. Photo: ©Ryota Atarashi

The performance of “Antigone” during “Japan 2019.” During the run, there was also an educational performance to which students at New York City public schools were invited. They were so rivetted by the performance that they gave a standing ovation. Photo: Stephanie Berger



gloriously interred. I am very grateful to the Japan Foundation for connecting me from France to the U.S.”

Mr. Miyagi said he sensed a connection between the Japanese belief that we all become Buddhas after death and the line from “Antigone,” “If you die, you are all the same.” Everything on stage, from the water that reminded the audience of the Sanzu River, a mythological river in Japanese Buddhism, to the shadows created by the lighting, resonated with the audience. As a result, tickets for the New York performance were sold out on the second day. This is the first time in history that a Japanese theater production has drawn an audience of more than 10,000 in New York City. Time magazine ranked this performance as one of “The 10 Best Theater Performances of 2019.”

What roles do the performing arts play in international exchanges as venues for sharing great emotions that transcend cultural differences? Mr. Miyagi states, “Theater is the most native form of expression, bound by one’s language, one’s body, and by the climate of the land one grew up in, making it the hardest field to become universal. Yet I want to create something universal there. The reason is that the way people laugh should be the same for everyone. Then there must be the potential for people to empathize with each other.”

International co-productions provide an opportunity to explore the possibilities of international exchange through the performing arts. In 2021, SPAC led by Mr. Miyagi staged Chekhov’s “The Cherry Orchard” with a French director, Mr. Daniel Jeanneteau,

at the Shizuoka Arts Theatre as part of “International Creations in Performing Arts” introduced by JF. This program was initiated to maintain opportunities for discussion and contact between artists, which had been limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, it expanded new potential for performing arts and one of the characteristics of the project is that it introduced an observer system to visualize the creative process. The system documented the site of the co-production from a third-party perspective, and the final report is available on the JF website.

“The Cherry Orchard” is a co-production with T2G - Théâtre de Gennevilliers Centre Dramatique National, with which SPAC has established deep ties, and was able to be performed under the various restrictions imposed by the pandemic. The fact that JF and SPAC invited Mr. Jeanneteau and other French staff members to Japan, despite their two-week quarantine upon arrival, is an expression of JF’s and SPAC’s belief that the circle of cultural exchange should not be closed. Mr. Jeanneteau

expressed the same sentiments before the opening performance, saying, “I feel that this international co-production, made possible with the support of the Japan Foundation and SPAC, is a triumph and gives us hope. I believe that we must never, under any circumstances, give up on creation and on exchanges across national and ethnic boundaries.”

In each of the performances, “Shunkan,” “Antigone” and “The Cherry Orchard,” a deep relationship of trust was established among the performers and the producers, and this has resulted in performances that will be talked about for years to come. In addition, although they are all classical productions, they all share the same universality of storytelling that transcends country and time. It strongly appeals to our modern-day hearts and minds. The miracle of a once-in-a-lifetime encounter, in which the audience and performers share time and space, is the quintessence of performing arts. JF will continue to promote performing arts performances as a nexus that connects the amazing talents of artists who create excitement.



SPAC AUTUMN – SPRING 2021 – 2022 #2 “The Cherry Orchard” selected for the International Creations in Performing Arts Program and performed at the Shizuoka Arts Theatre (2021)  
© Miura Koichi

# Japanese Language Education Blossoming in the Middle East from Cairo University; A 50-Year Journey Alongside the Japan Foundation



The Japanese speech contest that was held at the Faculty of Arts, Cairo University, on April 28, 2013. A total of 14 students participated, five at beginner level (2nd year students) and nine at intermediate level (4th year students).

*The development of Japanese language education in the Middle East has centered around the Department of Japanese Language and Literature at Cairo University in Egypt, which was established with support from the Japan Foundation. This article traces the journey of Japanese language education and Japanese studies, which are bearing fruit in the Middle East.*

In 1973, the year that Japan was hit by the oil crisis, then Deputy Prime Minister MIKI Takeo visited Egypt during his tour of the Middle East. That became the impetus for the Department of Japanese Language and Literature to be established the following year at the Faculty of Arts of Cairo University, Egypt's premiere academic institution, becoming the first of its kind in the Middle East and Africa. From the outset, the Japan Foundation (JF) began dispatching Japanese Language Specialists to the university in order to contribute to the development of Japanese language education in the Middle East, and at times there were four such specialists dispatched in a year.

Later, in response to the growing demand for Japanese language education in the Middle East, Cairo University began dispatching Japanese language instructors to other institutions in Egypt and other countries in 1989, and in 1994, it opened a graduate school from which many post-graduates have earned their doctorates. In addition, the Japan Foundation, Cairo was established in 1995 as an important pillar of the Japanese language education support program, further strengthening the support system for the university.

From the 2000s onward, many books and translations on Japanese culture and Japanese language learning materials have been published by Cairo

University professors. In 2010, JF published "The Basic Japanese-Arabic Dictionary," which was translated by four of the university's lecturers. This was long awaited by learners of Japanese, as, until then, there had been no practical dictionary for use by Arabic speakers studying Japanese.

Thanks to JF's continuing support and the efforts of local teachers, the environment for Japanese language education is steadily improving and the effects are also spreading to nearby Saudi Arabia. The dispatch of Japanese Language Specialists from JF ended in fiscal 2010, and the university became independent as a Japanese language education institution. In recognition of the university's



Dr. Karam Khalil Salem. Professor Emeritus of Japanese Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University. Doctor of Literature. He chaired the department for eight years in total, from 2003-2005 and 2009-2015. He has contributed to the development of Japanese language education in the Middle East by helping to establish Japanese language departments in educational institutions in Egypt and other countries.

significant achievements in Japanese language education in the Arabic-speaking world, JF awarded the Japan Foundation Award 2011 for Japanese Language to the Department of Japanese Language and Literature in the Faculty of Arts at Cairo University.

### ***More Students Pursuing Japanese Literature Studies at Cairo University***

We spoke with Dr. Karam Khalil Salem, professor emeritus at Cairo University and former cultural counselor at the Embassy of Egypt in Japan, about the ties between JF and the Department of Japanese Language and Literature at Cairo University, which have been working together for 50 years. “Many students come from Saudi Arabia, Syria and African countries to study Japanese at Cairo University. The Japan Foundation and the university have also dispatched Japanese Language Specialists to other universities in Arabic-speaking countries. In addition, the university has regularly hosted Japanese speech contests and international symposiums on Japanese language with the support of the Japan Foundation.” Dr. Karam was also dispatched from Cairo University to King Saud University in Saudi Arabia from 1993 to 2002, where he worked hard to improve the environment for Japanese language education.

Dr. Karam describes the evolution in the motivation of his students to learn Japanese. “As Egypt has a thriving tourism industry, many of the early students who aspired to study Japanese at Cairo University were thinking of working as tour guides or travel agents. On the other hand, there is also a segment of the population that is genuinely interested in Japanese culture, as the drama ‘Oshin,’ which became very popular in the Middle East in the 1980s, and the anime ‘Captain Tsubasa’ that was broadcast

in the 1990s increased the momentum to learn Japanese.”

According to a survey conducted by JF in 2018, there were 110 students enrolled in the department. “Some of our graduates have gone on to become executives in large Japanese companies. The Arab Spring and the COVID-19 pandemic have affected the tourism industry, so some guides are beginning to resume their studies at the university to become certified Japanese language teachers. The number of students wishing to study literature has also increased, which was perhaps influenced by the production of a series of textbooks on Japanese culture and literature in Arabic. Authors KAWABATA Yasunari and OE Kenzaburo are well known, and MURAKAMI Haruki is very popular, of course,” he said. Also, in Egypt, women’s social advancements are making progress, and there are many female students in the Department of Japanese Language and Literature. “Some students study modern and contemporary Japanese female writers such as HIGUCHI Ichiyo and YOSHIMOTO Banana.”

When asked what is needed to

continue fostering Egyptian people’s interest in Japan, Dr. Karam replied, “Both sides should increase the number of exchange students and deepen interactions. I also think it would be good if more high-quality Japanese TV dramas were aired, as ‘Oshin’ aroused interest in Japan and the Japanese language in the past. Televisions, which can be found in the living room of every home, have great power as a catalyst for the public to become more familiar with Japan.”

### ***Column Inserted in Japanese Language Textbook Becomes Popular***

In Saudi Arabia, where Dr. Karam also taught, Japanese language education has spread since the establishment of a Japanese major course at King Saud University in 1994. Prof. Dr. Faris Shihab, who teaches Japanese at the university, recalls, “At the time, King Saud University’s College of Languages and Translation sent requests to various countries to develop foreign language personnel, and the Japan Foundation dispatched a Japanese Language Specialist from Japan in August 1993. I used to study Japanese at Cairo University and have been teaching Japanese at King Saud University since 1994.”

When asked what interests people in Saudi Arabia who study Japanese in Japan, Dr. Faris mused, “The image of Japan is favorable due to the excellent reputation of Japanese products, the country’s economic strength during its rapid economic growth and the popularity of Japanese anime. It seems that interest in the Japanese language and culture itself has led to students studying the language. In addition, the



In 2010, a Japanese expert from the Grand Egyptian Museum Conservation Center was invited to speak to Japanese exchange students and Cairo University students as part of a cultural experience. The photo shows Dr. Karam introducing the speaker.



Prof. Dr. Faris Shihab. Professor of the Japanese Language Program at King Saud University. Obtained a Doctorate from the University of Tsukuba. In 2015, he was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette in recognition of his contribution to promoting mutual understanding between Middle Eastern countries and Japan.



Dr. Faris teaching at King Saud University.

results of a questionnaire we previously conducted showed that some students wanted to be able to introduce Islam, which is often misunderstood, in Japanese. This is a unique motivation for learning foreign languages in Saudi Arabia, which is home to the holy city of Mecca, perhaps because it is considered the mission of those born in Saudi Arabia to introduce objective and accurate information about Islam to Japan.”

“Japanese for the Arabs,” written by Drs. Faris, Karam and others, is the first fully fledged textbook designed for students of Japanese in the Arab world. We asked Dr. Faris what he focused on in the production process. “The first point is cross-cultural understanding. As students learn, they will naturally deepen their understanding of the different culture and will be able to introduce their own culture in Japanese. The columns at the end of each unit are also very popular. In order to help students communicate

more smoothly with Japanese people, we have included things related to the contents of the conversational sentences that are learned in each unit. For example, in a unit discussing ‘hanami,’ we wrote about cherry blossoms and Japanese people, and in a unit on food, we introduced Japanese cuisine. I also heard that a family member of one of the students said that they too wanted to study Japanese after reading the column.”

Dr. Faris said that “securing staff and teaching materials” is necessary in order to increase the number of Japanese language learners in Saudi Arabia in the future. “I have been able to continue teaching Japanese because of my connection with the

Japan Foundation. I believe that the King Saud University Japanese major course would not have survived without such support as the dispatch of Japanese language teachers and subsidies for teaching materials. I would once again like to express my gratitude to the Japan Foundation. In the future, I would like to look for more opportunities for students who have studied Japanese at university to visit Japan. It is also important to secure employment that utilizes Japanese language skills after graduation. The Embassy of Japan has been very helpful in establishing contacts between Japanese companies and students, by holding events to introduce Japanese culture and speech contests, and I am very grateful for such cooperation.”

The seeds of Japanese language education have blossomed in the Middle East thanks to the efforts and enthusiasm of the local teachers. JF will continue to support the development of Japanese language education around the world and hopes that the number of learners who become familiar with Japan and Japanese culture through Japanese language education will increase further.



“Japanese for the Arabs” has many example sentences that can actually be used when visiting Japan. There are also columns on Japanese culture and the Japanese language, making it enjoyable to read.

# A Second Home for Overseas Japanese Language Teachers, Training Programs Offered by the Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa



*Japanese language teachers who are working overseas play an important role in the promotion of Japanese language education. At the Japan Foundation’s Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa, our training programs support teachers who want to continue to advance their careers.*

Skillful Japanese language teachers are essential in order to increase opportunities for people to learn Japanese around the world. According to a 2018 survey conducted by the Japan Foundation (JF), there are approximately 77,000 Japanese language teachers worldwide. This



The Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa also has a library specialized in Japanese language education with a comprehensive collection of Japanese language education materials and related resources from around the world.

is 18.9 times the number that existed in 1979, according to the survey. However, there is a constant need to improve teaching ability, and JF offers a variety of training and support for overseas Japanese language teachers at the Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa (the Institute) in Saitama City, and at JF’s overseas offices.

Since the Institute opened in 1989, more than 10,000 teachers have gone through the training program, taking advantage of its exclusive facilities and experts in Japanese language education who work there. Program graduates are now working around the globe. In addition to long-term and short-term on-site training programs, the Institute also offers country-specific training programs in cooperation with partner governments and ministries of education, programs co-sponsored by other organizations

and online training programs.

Our training programs currently include the “Basic Training Program” for teachers who are at an early stage in their careers in order to comprehensively improve their Japanese language skills, acquire the basic teaching methodology and deepen their knowledge of Japan. Additionally, the “Japanese-Language Program” to further improve teachers’ Japanese language skills as well as the “Comprehensive Japanese Teaching Methods Program” for those with more than two years of teaching experience to improve their teaching methodology and to cultivate their ability to understand other cultures are also available. Participants in our on-site training programs stay at the Institute for intensive training. During this training, not only are there exciting classroom lessons with Japanese language teachers from around the world, there are also field trips, school visits and Japanese cultural activities such as “ikebana” (Japanese flower arrangement), Japanese calligraphy and Japanese tea ceremony. In response to COVID-19, from fiscal 2020 we have been offering online programs as well.

## *What I Learnt from the Institute Is a Learner’s Perspective*

Let’s hear from some of the teachers who went through our training programs. First, we have Ms. Cholpon Kanbalayeva, working at the Kazakhstan-Japan Center for Human Development (KJC) which was established in 2002 to support human resource development in Kazakhstan and to promote mutual understanding between the two nations. At KJC, she is the manager of the JF Japanese language course which was launched in the spring of 2012.

After beginning her Japanese language studies at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Ms. Cholpon



Ms. Cholpon's training session at the 2016 conference for graduates of the JF Course Instructor program. A shot of her giving a group presentation on designing a support course for specific purposes.

started working at the KJC, initially on a part-time basis. While assisting in the making of teaching materials, she began studying to become a Japanese language teacher and joined the Institute in May 2011 to participate in our Comprehensive Japanese Teaching Methods Program. This was just two months after the Great East Japan Earthquake. "Of course, I hesitated," says Ms. Cholpon. "My family was also against it, but I decided to take the opportunity and when I arrived, I was very moved by the news that those who were affected by the earthquake were prioritizing saving other people's lives over worrying about their own families. In order to understand how they could act in such a way I watched a lot of news on TV. Looking back now, I know that I went to Japan at the right time."

During this time, JF formed the "JF Standard for Japanese-Language Education" based on the "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages," which is being widely introduced as a set of guidelines for foreign language education around the world. As a framework to think about the methods of teaching and learning Japanese and evaluating student learning achievement, it is used for designing courses, creating lessons and making evaluations. According to Ms. Cholpon, "The training at the Institute also followed this standard, and every day we were instructed to evaluate our own mock classes out of three grades and write comments. Back then, because I was on the learning side, I always wondered why I had to do this process every day, but after returning to my country and now a teacher myself, I have finally come to understand its significance. Thanks to my experience as a learner, I can now put the tools learned through the training into use."

Since then, Ms. Cholpon has taken part in a number of our on-site programs. Participants share their experiences and after returning

to their home countries, they put what they have learned into practice as teachers. "I learned a lot about making curriculums and designing courses and this became useful for my position as a manager of the Japanese language course," says Ms. Cholpon. "Eventually, I would like to create a network of participants who have completed the program so we can share our experiences with students who have just joined."

### *Opening Up a Career Path and Taking the On-Site Program While Gaining Experience*

Next, we spoke with Ms. Katharina Dudzus, a full-time teacher at the Japan Cultural Institute in Cologne. She took the "Graduate Program in Japanese Language and Culture (Master's Course)" at the Institute in 2007. This program started in 2001 as a collaboration between the Institute, the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, and the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics, with the aim of developing educators who can take on the role of a leader in the field of Japanese language education in their home countries. During her long career, Ms. Dudzus has participated in many training programs.

However, there were twists and turns before Ms. Dudzus became a full-time Japanese teacher. As a child, Ms. Dudzus developed an interest in Japan through a close Japanese friend. Majoring in Japanese at university, she began studying the language in earnest and went to study in Japan for a year after entering graduate school. After graduation, she worked as a CIR for three years at a town hall in Ishikawa Prefecture. There she had the opportunity to teach German to local students, which sparked her interest in teaching languages, and she began considering a career as a teacher. "I found Japanese to be interesting as a language. However, in Germany, there were already many native Japanese teachers at the time, so I was worried about whether I would be able to find a job as a Japanese teacher in the future," says Ms. Dudzus. "After returning to Germany, I began studying to become a Japanese language teacher

at Landesspracheninstitut Nordrhein-Westfalen while also teaching Japanese privately. Luckily, in 2005, I managed to become a part-time teacher at the Japan Cultural Institute in Cologne, where I had been working part-time in the library."

It was during this time that Ms. Dudzus learned of the Graduate Program in Japanese Language and Culture, and she joined in 2007. "I had the luxury of learning in an intensive class of a small size. I was envious when I heard from the Asian teachers who took the program with me that in their home countries there was a high demand for Japanese language study for the purpose of job seeking, and that there were many opportunities for employment as a Japanese language teacher."

Upon her return to Germany, Ms. Dudzus worked a total of four part-time jobs while improving her career. Finally, in 2011, she became a full-time teacher at the institute. She talked about her ambitions, saying, "I want to focus on training Japanese language teachers in Cologne from now on. I would also like to resume teaching Japanese cultural experience courses and visit schools to teach Japanese after the COVID-19 pandemic settles down."

The tireless passion every Japanese language teacher has towards learning is the driving force behind the dissemination of the Japanese language throughout the world. Many of the Japanese language teachers who participate in the training at the Institute, who come from all over the world, already possess a wealth of knowledge. For this reason, we provide a place where participants can learn not only from the Institute's experts, but also from each other. As a second home for Japanese language teachers working abroad, we at the Institute warmly welcome educators visiting Japan.



In 2017, Ms. Dudzus was in charge of the Japanese language trial course at the Japan Cultural Institute in Cologne during an evening event called, "Lange Nacht der Museen" (Long Night of the Museums).

# “NIHONGO Partners,” Bringing Living Language and Culture to Middle and High-School Students Studying Japanese in Asia



*The “NIHONGO Partners” program dispatches Japanese citizens to Asian countries where the Japanese language is taught, to support classes in local schools. This new form of international exchange began in 2014 and has continued, enduring through the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Do you know about “NIHONGO Partners,” who are dispatched to middle and high schools in Southeast Asia and other Asian countries as assistants for Japanese language lessons and to introduce the culture of Japan? Over eight years between 2014 and 2021, the Japan Foundation (JF) dispatched approximately 2,500 NIHONGO Partners to 12 countries and regions: Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam, with many scheduled to arrive in 2022.

Although the requirements for NIHONGO Partners vary depending on the location, an applicant must be (1) between 20 and 69 years of

With their diverse backgrounds, NIHONGO Partners are the perfect candidates to convey the real-life image of the Japanese people. For those living in the communities to which they are dispatched, it can be their first encounter with a Japanese person.

age and a Japanese national, (2) competent in daily conversation in English and (3) available to participate in the whole training schedule prior to their departure (approximately 4 weeks). Applications are accepted from anyone and neither knowledge of nor experience in Japanese language education is required. Once they pass the application screening and interviews, applicants will go through their pre-dispatch training before departing to their destinations for up



to one year.

Why dispatch NIHONGO Partners when they are not specialists in Japanese language education? The answer is that in the Asian region, second-language education is well developed and Japanese has always been a popular second language. Additionally, after the 2000s, more people from the younger generations became interested in the Japanese language through pop culture and Japanese companies began to expand



Ms. Tamaoki was dispatched to the Tondo district, an impoverished area in Manila. She taught 12 Japanese language classes four days a week, making sure that the students enjoyed learning the Japanese language and culture. To this day, she still exchanges messages through social media with the people she met there.

into the region.

For these reasons, Japanese language education became popular even at a middle school level. However, even today, increases in the number of teachers and opportunities to meet in person with Japanese citizens have failed to keep pace with the rapid increase in the language's popularity.

In addition to the more recent dispatch of NIHONGO Partners, JF has been dispatching specialists to support Japanese language education institutions around the world since its establishment in 1972. We believe that having Japanese citizens serve as partners of Japanese language education across a wider range of educational settings and on a closer level will provide more complete support for students and teachers in each country.

### **What Does It Mean for Japanese Citizens to Set Foot in Local Areas?**

“To further understand Japanese language and Japanese culture, the NIHONGO Partners program is a highly strategic and excellent method,” says Prof. Dr. Ir. Achmad Jazidie, the Director General of Secondary Education at the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia when this program was initiated in 2014 and who signed the agreement for the implementation of the program as the person in charge. “It is crucial to pass on language and

culture from person to person, and face to face. When Japanese citizens as NIHONGO Partners were dispatched to Indonesian high schools, I highly expected them to go beyond teaching the language and tell us about what it means to be Japanese.”

With his background of studying abroad in Japan during the 1980s and 1990s, Prof. Jazidie felt a strong need for Japanese language education for the younger generations of his country as the future workers. Also, as Indonesia is a large country with many islands, there was the problem of educational disparities by region. From that perspective, NIHONGO Partners were valuable as they were dispatched even to rural areas.

The mission of NIHONGO Partners includes learning the local language, understanding the local culture and spreading that experience extensively. “We have many Muslims in our country and they are often perceived as scary or frightening. I believe that the NIHONGO Partners program is a great system for Japanese people to get rid of such prejudices and understand the real Indonesia,” says Prof. Jazidie.

Just as Prof. Jazidie says, a majority of our NIHONGO Partners have accumulated intercultural exchange experiences, which cannot be attained through ordinary travel, at their dispatch destinations. Ms. TAMAOKI Chika is one such partner. She was sent to Manila, the capital of the Philippines, for eight months from July 2019. Previously, Ms. Tamaoki worked in real estate. Although she had traveled to the Philippines before, she says, “Working at a local high school and living within the community, I

have learned many things about the local lifestyle I never knew such as the Filipino nature of cherishing family and friends.” Keeping in mind that the NIHONGO Partners’ job at school is to take on a supportive role, she made an effort to make it easier for the teachers to conduct classes by taking charge in the Japanese pronunciation lessons, writing on blackboards and introducing the culture.

### **What Are the Benefits of Mutual Cross-Cultural Understanding?**

Ms. Tamaoki says, “I believe I myself evolved at my dispatch destination. There were times when things did not go according to plan or I was put in charge of something out of the blue and thanks to that, I became more flexible and less concerned about trifling matters.” She is now working for a support company related to the Specified Skilled Worker program and is in charge of teaching Filipinos who come to Japan as foreign skilled interns. “Thanks to my experience as a NIHONGO Partner through which I was able to further understand Filipinos and their culture, I can communicate smoothly and know how to convey the Japanese language and culture. From now on, I would like to use my teaching skills to pay back the support and kindness I received from the Filipino community.”

To meet the growing needs and expectations from Japanese language education institutions and learners in Asian countries, the NIHONGO Partners program continues to expand. In an era when we can connect with the world online easily, the value of real human connections, like those offered by NIHONGO Partners, is perhaps even greater.



Prof. Achmad Jazidie currently holds the position of Rector of Nahdlatul Ulama University Surabaya. He comments, “I wish for the program to continue and dispatch even more NIHONGO Partners.”

# How Has America Viewed *The Tale of Genji*? The Charm of Japan Elucidated by an American Scholar



The banner for the 2019 exhibition “*The Tale of Genji: A Japanese Classic Illuminated*” displayed in the main entrance hall of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Prof. Melissa McCormick, Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Japanese Art and Culture, Harvard University. A leading expert on *The Tale of Genji* and premodern Japanese art and literature. Her work, including numerous articles on medieval emaki (picture scrolls) in both English and Japanese, has expanded the scope and methods of examining and interpreting literary artifacts. She has been a JF fellow twice, in 1995 and 2013.

Photo by Martha Stewart

***The Japan Foundation has long supported researchers in Japanese studies around the world through a wide range of programs that bolster relations between Japan and other countries. As a result, a deeper understanding of Japan has been promoted in many different ways.***

The Japan Foundation (JF) has three main focus areas: Culture, Language, and Dialogue. “Dialogue” consists of two fields: “Japanese studies” and “global partnership programs.” Since its establishment, JF has provided grants to Japanese studies researchers in other countries, in addition to organizing symposiums and collaborative projects that allow intellectuals from various countries to engage in dialogue with scholars in Japan. Promoting the creation of human networks to develop solutions to global issues is another important area of JF’s work.

JF has offered the “Japanese Studies Fellowships” program since the organization’s establishment in order to increase the number of researchers in Japanese studies overseas who strengthen mutual understanding between Japan and the rest of the

world. This program provides support for preeminent foreign scholars in the field of Japanese studies to conduct research in Japan. It is available to scholars and researchers in the humanities and social sciences, as well as graduate students who are writing their doctoral dissertations. To date, nearly 7,000 researchers have traveled to Japan as fellows.

### ***Realizing the Importance of Extra-disciplinary Research While Studying in Japan***

Harvard University Professor Melissa McCormick is a two-time former JF fellow (1995 and 2013) who curated the opening exhibition for “Japan 2019”, a Japanese cultural festival held in the United States in 2019. The exhibition was titled “*The Tale of Genji: A Japanese Classic Illuminated*,” and was co-organized

by JF and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (The Met). Curated by Prof. McCormick and Dr. John T. Carpenter, Mary Griggs Burke Curator of Japanese Art at The Met, it displayed 138 objects, including two National Treasures and nine Important Cultural Properties as well as many other picture scrolls, hanging scrolls, folding screens, calligraphy, and even manga. It was the most comprehensive overseas exhibition ever held on the theme of *The Tale of Genji*, and was highly acclaimed by The New York Times and The Washington Post. With over 210,000 visitors, the exhibition nurtured new interest in Japan.

Prof. McCormick first became interested in *The Tale of Genji* as an undergraduate studying at the University of Michigan. After reading the English translation and learning about “The Tale of Genji Scroll,” she

National Treasures were also exhibited at *The Tale of Genji* exhibition at The Met, curated by Prof. McCormick. Visitors looking at one such National Treasure: “The Tale of Genji, Sekiya Miotsukushi Screen” by Tawaraya Sotatsu (Seikado Bunko Art Museum collection).



became fascinated by the intricate ways in which text (words) and pictures (images) were interrelated in Japanese art and calligraphy. In graduate school, she studied ancient Japanese and gained knowledge of Japanese cursive script (kuzushiji) and the variant kana syllabary (hentaigana). “It’s important to read the translation and get the meaning, but it’s still best to look at the oldest manuscripts, to consider what the author might have been trying to communicate and what her readers would have understood,” explained Prof. McCormick.

In 1995, she visited Japan as a JF Fellow. At the time, she was writing her doctoral dissertation, and her mentor was Professor CHINO Kaori of Gakushuin University. Prof. Chino advised her, “If you want to understand Japanese art and culture, you need to take a variety of courses including ones on architecture.” She then enrolled in a course with Professor Emeritus NISHI Kazuo of Kanagawa University, who specialized in architectural history. Prof. McCormick recalls those days: “I have fond memories of Prof. Nishi and his graduate students. Once in the deepest cold of winter, we visited a temple in Kyoto and measured the

size of the paper used for the painted sliding doors (fusuma) and were given a special tour of Nijo Castle as a reward. I realized the importance of studying how Japanese painting was integrated with its environment and of engaging in fields outside of my own research area.”

### Using the Fellow Experiences to Lead the Exhibition to Success

In 2013, she returned to Japan as a JF Fellow, but this time also as a professor at Harvard University. Since then, as a researcher of art history, focusing on the interrelationships between art and literature, she has taken a broader and deeper interdisciplinary approach to researching painting forms, social history, and the intention behind the creation of works of art. Prof. McCormick’s broad perspective was fully demonstrated in the 2019 exhibition “*The Tale of Genji: A Japanese Classic Illuminated*” at The Met.

Prof. McCormick says: “I was happy to work with my colleagues in the U.S. and in Japan to help display 138 objects in the show, and to bring National Treasures and designated Important Cultural Properties to New York. One aim was to help museum attendees unfamiliar with *The Tale of Genji* understand that it is not a superficial romance. Of course, the tale hinges on elements associated with the romance genre, but its depiction

of court life and political maneuvering, as well as its Buddhist worldview have had a profound impact on Japanese culture and society.”

The world of *The Tale of Genji* has been expressed not only in modern translations, but also in various media in Japan, such as Noh, Takarazuka performances, and animation, with various interpretations having emerged in each media format. Among them, YAMATO Waki’s manga “Asaki Yumemishi” has been especially popular and is a remarkable work of art. In the exhibition, an entire room was dedicated to Yamato’s work and to introducing her original paintings for her manga. At a talk event with Prof. McCormick held during the exhibition, Yamato was asked why she turned *The Tale of Genji* into a manga. “With manga, one can understand the totality of an entire page of pictures at a glance. *The Tale of Genji* is an extremely long novel written more than a thousand years ago with a vast number of characters. Because it is written in classical language, it takes perseverance for people today to read. But with manga, I thought I could convey the appeal of the text to many people.”

Prof. McCormick’s deep understanding of and passion for Japan, which was strengthened through her experience as a JF fellow, made the exhibition captivating both for those who knew nothing about *The Tale of Genji*, and for those who knew it well. The significance of the fellowship program is to promote Japanese studies in other countries, and to increase the number of Japan experts. Furthermore, knowing the interests of these experts will help Japanese people learn about the individuality of their own country, which they may not have noticed before. It is our hope that these varied approaches to Japanese studies by scholars with diverse perspectives will further promote the appeal of Japan to the world.



This was the first time that manga art was exhibited at The Met, but in the room where the original drawings of “Asaki Yumemishi” were displayed, many visitors spent a long time scrutinizing the details. A talk event was also held with Prof. McCormick and Yamato Waki (left).



At Harvard University, Prof. McCormick teaches “Humanities 10,” a year-long course for first-year students. The class focuses on globally influential works of literature, as well as philosophy, religion and traditional culture. The works studied in the course range widely from Homer to *The Tale of Genji* to Virginia Woolf and W.E.B. Du Bois.

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# “Heart to Heart”—Connecting the Hearts of the Younger Generation to Expand the Japan-China Friendship Network



*Young people from Japan and China, coming to understand each other and developing friendships by spending time together. The Japan Foundation has been promoting dialogue amongst young people—the future leaders of Japan-China relations—through a variety of exchange programs, including long-term invitation programs and collaborative events.*

In 2006, the Japan Foundation (JF) launched the “Japan-China 21st Century Friendship Program” with the aim of promoting deeper exchange among the next generation of Japanese and Chinese youth, and established the Japan Foundation China Center to be the department in charge (reorganized into the Global Partnerships Department in April 2022). The previous year, 2005, was a year of rapidly cooling Japan-China relations in which large-scale anti-Japanese demonstrations were seen throughout China. At the same time, however, many young Chinese people were fascinated by Japanese pop culture, including manga, anime, TV dramas and fashion. There was a discrepancy between the harsh Japan-China relations seen in everyday news coverage and the passionate interest directed by Chinese youth toward

content coming out of Japan. There were also few opportunities for young people in Japan to learn directly about the reality of Chinese society achieving dramatic economic growth. These circumstances called attention to the need for Japanese and Chinese youth to be able to engage in direct dialogue and learn from each other, as the first step toward developing future-oriented Japan-China relations.

### *Hoping for a New World and Seizing the Opportunity to Study in Japan*

The “Japan-China 21st Century Friendship Program” engages in various efforts under the theme, “Xin lian xin,” which means “Heart to Heart.” Their main program, the “Long-Term Exchange Program for Chinese High School Students,” is an invitation program aimed at

Chinese high school students studying Japanese, giving them the chance to stay in Japan for one year and attend a Japanese high school, while living with a host family or in a dormitory. One of the students who participated in this program was Ms. Liu Siyu, who came to Japan as part of the program’s fourth cohort in 2009.

Ms. Liu began learning Japanese in 2005, when she was in her first year of junior high school. This was a time when many Japanese companies were expanding into China—even the TVs in her parents’ home were made in Japan—leading to strong interest in the country. Ms. Liu says that she applied to the program as a high school student because she “had a yearning for a new world.” She says, “My generation was even hungrier for knowledge of the outside world than people are now, but only a few of us were able to study abroad. It was a privilege reserved for a few really affluent families. That’s why I didn’t hesitate at all to apply to this program—this opportunity that would let me study abroad on public funds if I were chosen.”

Ms. Liu passed the exam with flying colors and came to Japan with 35 of her



The first group of Chinese high school students came to Japan in 2006. By 2019, a total of 442 high school students had visited Japan across 14 groups.



Centers for “Face-to-Face Exchanges,” located in 18 cities across China, provide Chinese youth with the latest information about Japan and promote exchange between Japanese and Chinese youth. This photo shows an event held at the Chengdu Center for “Face-to-Face Exchanges” in 2020.

peers. The students from the program are dispersed throughout Japan, from Hokkaido Prefecture to Okinawa Prefecture; she was sent to Takaoka City in Toyama Prefecture. “I really wanted to go to Tokyo, and not knowing where Toyama was, I was anxious and confused at first. But in hindsight, I feel very grateful that I was able to come here. It’s unusual to be able to say you’ve lived in Toyama, so it serves as a conversation starter even now.”

### *The World beyond the “Obstacle” of the Toyama Dialect*

Ms. Liu was the only foreigner at the high school she attended in Toyama Prefecture. “Since none of my classmates could speak Chinese or English, it took me a long time to get to know them, and there were times when I struggled. I was able to overcome that obstacle, though, when I made an effort to speak to people in Japanese, and even more so when I was able to speak the Toyama dialect fluently. I would listen carefully to the dialect as it was being used, memorize phrases, and then try using them the next day. I’d get such a positive response, and it was more practical and interesting than when I was just studying Japanese in China. That was when I really started

having fun—making friends, joining the tea ceremony club, and getting to know junior and senior students.”

For Japanese high school students, the sight of foreign students from other countries is an inspiration, and for Chinese high school students, who have been devoted to academia since childhood, Japanese high school students who instead devote themselves to extracurricular activities and school events, and also spend time just hanging out, are a breath of fresh air. The simple interest and empathy felt for their peers stood before them goes beyond any image that they may have seen in the media and online. Ms. Liu says, “I was a high school student at the time, and because I had not yet fully developed my worldview, I was able to accept the new culture, including the Toyama dialect, with open arms. If I had grown up without that, I might have judged other countries based solely on my own worldview. I think that every culture has parts that are acceptable and parts that are unacceptable, so I think it’d be good for both sides if we could just coexist without prejudice.”

After spending a year in Japan, the high school students return to China and choose their own paths for the future. Some of them enter a Japanese

university, while others study at a Chinese university, or study abroad in other countries in Asia, Europe or the U.S. Ms. Liu went on to attend the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, where she studied business and Japanese, while also joining “F-Katsu,” a team that aims to revitalize the Centers for “Face-to-Face Exchanges” established by JF at universities and other venues around China to offer opportunities for interaction. In this program, university students from Japan and China collaborate to plan and run cultural festivals. Ms. Liu participated through cosplay and by setting up a makeup booth for the festival. After graduation, she came to Japan again, this time to work for a major Japanese advertising agency in Tokyo. She works with both Japanese and foreign companies and has been involved in global strategies, drawing on her experience as a student.

The “Long-Term Exchange Program for Chinese High School Students” has been on hiatus since 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. JF, however, has held an online exchange program called the “Japan-China High School Student Dialogue and Collaboration Program” since 2020. Through this endeavor, young people from Japan and China are able to communicate with each other and get to know and understand each other. We hope that these small efforts will serve as a foundation for expanding the circle of friendship between Japan and China, building a relationship of trust between the two countries.



In the 10 years since, Ms. Liu (left, with her host brother and sister) has kept in close touch with her host family, contacting them frequently. “I go back to Toyama every year during the Bon Festival in August. My host brother moved to Tokyo for college, so I also sometimes take him out to dinner. I’ve lived in Tokyo longer than him,” she said.

# “Learning from One Another and Growing Stronger Together” Bonds with Asia Nurtured through Sports



The photo is from when coaches of Giravanz Kitakyushu were dispatched to Cambodia for a short period of time. Photo courtesy of Giravanz Kitakyushu

*The Japan Foundation has been engaged in sports exchange projects since its establishment. Here, we would like to introduce several unique projects that JF has implemented involving judo and football in Asia in recent years.*

Through sports, one can easily interact with people from all over the world without relying on words. Since its inception, JF has been dispatching experts in sports such as judo, wrestling, gymnastics, volleyball, karate, etc., to Southeast Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and other areas. From 1977 to 2001, JF organized short overseas tours for large sports teams made up of around 20 members, primarily to compete in friendly matches. In 1981, JF launched a special project to promote interchange with the countries of the Middle East through sports. This project involved the long-term dispatch of instructors, as well as the dispatch of delegations for kendo, aikido, football, etc., over a period of five years.

We would now like to introduce two unique judo and football projects, which follow from these past

achievements, that JF has implemented recently in Asia.

### **Judo: Linking Japan and ASEAN through the Principle of Mutual Welfare and Benefit**

First, the judo-based “JAPAN-ASEAN JITA-KYOEI PROJECT” was jointly implemented by the JF Asia Center and the Kodokan Judo Institute for six years from 2016. It was based on the principle of “JITA-KYOEI” (mutual welfare and benefit) advocated by the founder of judo, KANO Jigoro Shihan—“Achieving a state of mutual trust and assistance benefits both the individual and society at large.” “Mutual welfare and benefit” is a philosophy that is closely linked with the Asia Center’s mission of “nurturing a spirit of empathy and coexistence among Asian people.” The aim of



As part of the JAPAN-ASEAN JITA-KYOEI PROJECT, young coaches from throughout ASEAN who will lead judo programs in their respective countries were invited to the Kodokan Judo Institute to participate in international seminars where they were taught correct theories and techniques. The participants were awarded certificates of completion at the closing ceremony. Photo courtesy of the Kodokan Judo Institute

this project was to promote cultural exchange and mutual understanding between Japan and Southeast Asia through judo.

Mr. OTSUJI Hirofumi, manager of the International Department of the Kodokan Judo Institute in charge of this project, recalls: “We really focused on developing instructors in each country who will go on to teach

and spread judo throughout Asia, especially in ASEAN countries. The idea of the project was to develop instructors who will lead judo in each country and to use this scheme as a starting point to educate and enlighten *judoka*, coaches and referees.”

In addition to dispatching judo instructors from Japan to various countries, young coaches from each country were also invited to participate in training camps held at the Kodokan Judo Institute. In between judo instruction, the participants had the chance to experience facets of Japanese culture such as calligraphy. Furthermore, this project included exchanges with presidents of several national judo federations and the creation of educational videos for instructors. This was not a one-way project; the teachers also learned from the experience, Mr. Otsuji recalls. “We are constantly learning as we pass on our knowledge and skills with enthusiasm. I couldn’t be happier that the Kodokan Judo Institute is working with the Japan Foundation to contribute to the advancement of judo in Asia and elsewhere as a bridge between Japan and the rest of the world.”

### **Football: Seeds of Goodwill Sown by “ASIAN ELEVEN”**

The other project is “ASIAN ELEVEN,” a football exchange with Southeast Asia that has been jointly implemented by the JF Asia Center, the Japan Football Association (JFA) and the Japan Professional Football League (J.League) since 2014. This project is part of “Sport for Tomorrow,” an international contribution and exchange project promoted by Japan through public-private partnerships in its role as the host country of the

In 2019, the ASIAN ELEVEN Project held a friendly match “JapaFunCup” at J-Village Stadium in Fukushima. A team transcending national borders made up of U-18 players from each country that took part in this project claimed a splendid victory over a Tohoku U-18 team.

Photo: ©JFA



Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The aim of ASIAN ELEVEN is to share the knowledge and experience cultivated by Japanese football while also building good rivalries and friendship with Southeast Asian countries through football. It has also focused on dispatching coaches and developing players with the aim of elevating the level of “Asian football.”

FIFA/AFC Instructor and JFA Deputy Technical Director ONO Takeshi explains, “Over the past 30 years or so, Japanese football has grown rapidly and Japan is now able to compete on an equal footing with many of the world’s powerhouses. The Southeast Asian countries who have witnessed the rise of football in Japan have high expectations for this project, thinking, ‘we’re next!’ Coaching in these countries goes beyond merely elevating the level of football; it is also necessary to consider how to develop players and build a training system, in environments with different cultures and customs. The coaches also have lots to gain, as the opportunity to coach in such an environment is not available in Japan. Bringing home the experience from coaching overseas will also improve the level of Japanese football.”

Of course, there are language and cultural barriers. Mr. OHARA Kazunori, Technical Director of the Football Federation of Cambodia, who

is responsible for the development of the local youth teams and their coaches, explains, “Even before talking about football, creating an atmosphere of open communication within the organization can be difficult. That said, we should not simply impose the Japanese way of doing things. It is important to understand others and to feel that you are also growing through this learning process and are happy with it. I believe that this will lead to international exchange in the truest sense.”

Meanwhile, top football players and young executives of football federations from various countries are also invited to Japan, which is useful not only for improving skills but also for person-to-person exchanges. Mr. Ono of JFA explains, “During their stay, we provide them with opportunities to learn about Japanese culture. As the participants are carefully selected top young players and executive candidates, they will play central roles in promoting the development of football in their country after they return home. And if they are able to make connections, this will facilitate smoother communication because there will be many opportunities to meet again face to face at international matches in the future. So, the ‘bonds’ that have been forged by learning together will live on in various ways.”

What these two projects have in common is that neither is focused solely on improving skills in sports. As they both target young people, they highlight the importance of opportunities to encounter Japanese culture and have educational value in terms of “courtesy” and “interaction with the local community.” What is born through international exchange is not victory or defeat. Together we all gain new friendships and new bonds, because the appeal of sports is the chance to learn from each other and grow together. JF will continue to help build bridges to the rest of the world through sports.

Judo instructors were dispatched to Bhutan as part of the project. This led to the Bhutan Judo Association joining the International Judo Federation in 2016.

Photo courtesy of the Kodokan Judo Institute



# Two Programs that Link Japan and the U.S., Aiming to Develop the Next Generation of Leaders



Group photo of the participants of the fifth cohort (2018-2023 – prolonged due to the global COVID-19 situation) of “The U.S.-Japan Network for the Future” program during their visit to Washington, D.C.

***The Japan Foundation has long focused on projects to deepen communication between experts from various countries. In terms of Japan-U.S. relations, programs have been created to develop future generations of leaders and build networks in both countries.***

Since its earliest days, the Japan Foundation (JF) has been continuously promoting dialogue between experts from around the world. Here, we would like to focus on two programs JF has been promoting with the U.S. to facilitate intellectual exchange.

## ***The Birth of the Abe Fellowship Program***

From the late 1980s through the 1990s, a deterioration in sentiment toward Japan caused by trade friction cast a dark shadow over U.S.-Japan relations. In 1990, the late former

Foreign Minister ABE Shintaro visited the United States as a government envoy to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. It was during these travels that he proposed the creation of the Japan-U.S. Partnership Fund with the hope of overcoming the growing tensions through the promotion of mutual understanding. Abe’s vision was strongly supported by the leaders in both the U.S. and Japan, and the following year, the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership (CGP) was established, financed by the Japan-U.S. Partnership Fund.

CGP’s philosophy was that the people of the United States and Japan and other countries around the globe need to pool their wisdom and cooperate to solve global concerns and issues facing the international community. With a mission statement acknowledging that “the United States and Japan are partners sharing major responsibilities in world issues” and with the aim of “deepening and broadening the interchanges between our two countries from a global perspective,” CGP supported various U.S.-Japan joint research, dialogues and collaboration projects and focused on



Dr. Pharr received the 2016 Japan Foundation Award for her longstanding efforts and significant contributions to the promotion of international mutual understanding, particularly between the U.S. and Japan, as well as advising numerous JF's programs.



Dr. Susan J. Pharr, is a Professor Emeritus at Harvard University, where, until 2021, she was Edwin O. Reischauer Professor of Japanese Politics. For 32 years she was Director of the Harvard Program on U.S.-Japan Relations. Her research has explored the social basis for democracy in Japan and globally. Photo by Martha Stewart

fostering a new generation who could play a role in the U.S.-Japan global partnership. Its core program was the “Abe Fellowship Program.” This program supported interdisciplinary and international research on the most pressing current global policy issues by scholars from both countries. Since its inception, 447 Abe Fellows have been supported, and many continue to be active internationally, particularly in the field of policy research.

“The birth of the Abe Fellowship reflects the rise of Japan’s position in the world. At the time, Japan’s importance in policy debates was growing,” says Susan J. Pharr, Professor Emeritus of Harvard University, where, until 2021, she was Edwin O. Reischauer Professor of Japanese Politics. Dr. Pharr, who has been committed to deepening intellectual exchange between the U.S. and Japan, came to Japan in 1978 as a Japan Foundation Fellow in Japanese Studies and again in 1994 as an Abe Fellow; in 2016 she was a Japan Foundation Award recipient.

Dr. Pharr stated, “In the early 90s, when Japan was in its bubble period, tension over trade was high. Many of the commentators who were voicing opinions were not very well informed about Japan. So there was much to be gained by bringing Japan experts into the debate to provide background and context to the discussions that

were going on, and at the same time to deepen the knowledge of outstanding scholars and experts in other fields who wanted to learn more about Japan. The Abe Fellowship, by supporting these endeavors, greatly enriched the policy debate over issues and problems relating to Japan. Many countries today seek to engage U.S. experts in the study and analysis of their part of the world by offering them fellowships and study trips; it’s a competitive marketplace out there. Among these various programs, the Abe Fellowship Program stood out for its success in attracting outstanding applicants. When you look at who the leading commentators are on issues related to Japan, a great many deepened their knowledge during their time as Abe Fellows. The program truly stands out as a signal achievement of the Japan Foundation.”

### *The Next Generation of Leaders for the Future of U.S.-Japan Relations*

In 2009, a new program, “The U.S.-Japan Network for the Future,” was launched, co-organized by JF and the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation. The program is designed for mid-career individuals and the younger generation of Japanese specialists, such as researchers and practitioners, who are expected to be involved with shaping U.S. policy and public opinion. Study tours and training programs are held several times over a two-year period in Japan and the U.S. to deepen their



Group photo of the participants of the third cohort (2014-2016) of “The U.S.-Japan Network for the Future” program during their study tour in Japan. Standing in the center are Dr. Pharr and Dr. Vogel of Harvard University. Dr. Vogel passed away in December 2020.

understanding of issues pertinent to Japan-U.S. relations and to form networks amongst themselves. The Network is comprised of 84 members and recently announced and started activities with the sixth cohort. Dr. Pharr and a distinguished team of advisors, including the late Dr. Ezra Vogel, Professor of the Social Sciences Emeritus at Harvard, were instrumental in launching the original program with a mission to foster the next generation of intellectual Japan-oriented leaders in the United States.

Dr. Pharr reflected on the background of the program's creation. "Our particular focus was younger generation scholars and researchers in the academic world who had a deep knowledge of Japan, but who were under pressure to focus purely on academic research in order to get tenure. While supporting them in their academic work, we wanted to encourage them to expand their horizons and learn more about issues and problems of importance in U.S.-Japan relations, and to contribute to policy debate. We set three goals. First, we wanted to inform participants about current issues and engage them in the way I just described. Second, we wanted to help them along in their chosen careers and facilitate networking between participants in different institutions to foster collaboration and mutual support. Finally, we saw the program as a way to keep Japan studies alive and well. Many scholars have multiple interests, and can get pulled towards the study of other parts of the world. The Network program creates incentives to keep scholars and experts engaged in the study of Japan."

Dr. Pharr continued, "With the

establishment of this program, Japanese studies among the younger generation is once again being revitalized. The strength of the program is that it targets a wide range of people involved in politics including think tanks and NPOs as well as academics. What we want to produce are future leaders. Some of our past participants have begun to work as Japan specialists in think tanks, some have also become outstanding researchers leading Japan studies in North America, while others hold key government positions."

Dr. Joshua Walker joined the program in 2016-2018 as a participant of the fourth cohort. He is currently President and CEO of the Japan Society in New York. Having lived in Hokkaido from a very early age until 18, we asked about his motivation for participating in the program. "When I left Japan at the age of 18, I thought I must learn to become an American when I went to university. I had hoped to one day work as a bridge between Japan and the U.S., but I also wanted to work more widely. So, after graduating from college, I worked for the U.S. government in areas outside of Japan."

A major turning point for Dr. Walker was the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. "For me, Japan was a familiar country where I spent time from the age of one. I took Japan for granted, I didn't appreciate Japan fully. I actually thought that I had lost my parents in the Great East Japan Earthquake, and when I saw the pictures of what happened to Tohoku, I realized I had to do something for Japan and the people who were suffering. So, after that major tragedy, I began to focus more

on Japan, little by little. Even when looking at global issues, I began to think about them in relation to Japan. Later, a friend introduced me to this program, and I applied. I was very surprised when I recognized that "this is a Japan program; it's going to have a global reach." When I participated, the mentors were amazing. It was a pleasure to meet Professor Vogel, who had always been a big part of my life, and to spend so much time with him and form such a deep relationship."

Through this program, Dr. Walker says he has become acutely aware of the importance of the U.S.-Japan relationship. "I think there should be more successors to the older generation such as Professor Vogel and Professor Pharr. Japan needs friends like us, Americans for the next generation. I still keep in touch with my fellow participants, and we feel a responsibility to give back to the next generation."

Today, the world is once again in the midst of turbulent times. Dr. Pharr stated, "I can't remember any time when international relations have been shifting as much as they have. But there are alliances that are anchored during this period of change and U.S.-Japan relations were built brick by brick over the post-war period, coming out of a terrible war and have held together at the grass roots. The intellectual exchange component of that is crucial. This is a structure that took a long time to build, and needs to be preserved to help us in this new fluid situation we are now entering."

JF will continue to support the efforts of tomorrow's leaders in Japan and the U.S. to resolve global issues, in order to contribute to the world based on Japan-U.S. cooperation.

Dr. Joshua Walker is President and CEO of the Japan Society, a Japan-U.S. exchange organization in New York City. He is a Senior Fellow at the Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress, Adjunct Associate Professor of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, Presidential Leadership Scholar, David Rockefeller Fellow of the Trilateral Commission, Munich Security Conference Young Leader, and Nakasone Yasuhiro Award Winner.



Group photo of the participants of the fourth cohort (2016-2018) who visited Japan, including Dr. Walker who stated, "In addition to the high quality of education, this program combines the unique experience of Japanese culture and in-depth discussions that can only be had in a retreat setting. The bonds I have formed with my mentors and participants are lifelong assets to me."



# Spiritual Recovery through Local Traditions and Culture: Overcoming the Disaster



The transnational collaborative performance and workshop “Genealogy of the Lion/Deer Dance” at the Sanriku International Arts Festival 2019. Japanese and Balinese local performing arts, which share the common aspect of lion/deer masks, were performed together. Photo: IDA Yuki

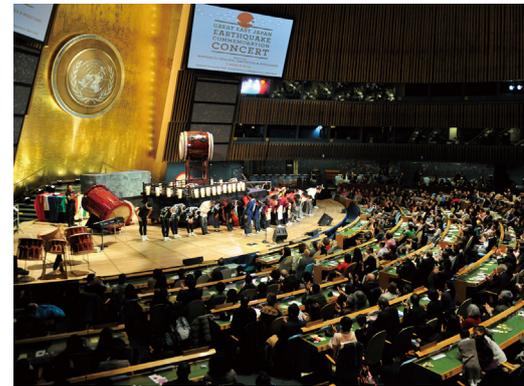
*After a massive natural disaster, supporting steps by locals toward recovery and rebuilding communities can be as important as work done to repair buildings and infrastructure. The Japan Foundation has been working on “spiritual recovery” through traditional and cultural exchanges in areas where disasters and conflict have occurred.*

The Great East Japan Earthquake occurred on March 11, 2011, causing extensive damage in Japan’s north-eastern Tohoku region. In the years that have followed this disaster, the Japan Foundation (JF) has implemented a wide range of reconstruction assistance projects in the area. Here, we would like to share how JF has been involved in the process of helping local residents connect with the world through international cultural exchange programs, using the traditional culture of the disaster-stricken areas as a source of support.

Since the earthquake and tsunami occurred, the devastation caused by the disaster has been conveyed to the rest of the world. Consequently, images of disaster may first come to mind to

people outside of Japan, despite the natural richness of the Tohoku region. It was felt, not just by JF but by many people in Japan, that it would be better if we could promote the appeal of Tohoku in a more positive manner. JF held a series of discussions on what could be done, based on the two keywords of “culture” and “exchange,” as befits an international cultural exchange organization.

In March 2012, JF organized a month-long comprehensive cultural program, “Overcoming the Disaster: Gratitude from Japan to the World,” which featured stage performances, exhibitions, lectures, films and documentary screenings and other programs about Tohoku and its recovery and revitalization. These were



In 2012, Wakumizu Kagura and Ondekoza & Musicians gave a moving performance at the United Nations General Assembly Hall. Filling the huge venue with exhilaration, this concert was a great success, with standing ovations continuing long after the performance ended. Photo by Lee Wexler

held in the U.S., France, China and other countries to express gratitude for the support sent to the area from all over the world. On stage, the kagura musicians, performing a style of traditional music passed down through generations in the Tohoku region, were joined by taiko drummers and other musicians from different genres

to create a performance that conveyed the essence of Tohoku. Attending the performance at the United Nations General Assembly in New York—one of the venues where the event was held—then-Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon delivered the powerful message that the international community stands with Tohoku.

### *Exchange Programs for Youth with Experience of Similar Disasters*

JF has long been involved in activities devoted to helping restore local community traditions and culture after disasters and conflict.

The year after Hurricane Katrina caused heavy damage to New Orleans in the U.S. in August 2005, JF dispatched experts who had played key roles in recovery work following the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of 1995. JF has continued to carry out dialogue-driven projects to share and pass on experiences. This accumulated know-how was immensely useful in the Great East Japan Earthquake reconstruction assistance project.

During fiscal 2012, JF implemented 10 new projects under the theme “Beyond March 11th—Uniting with the World.” Among these were exchange programs for young people from Japan and other countries with similar experiences of disasters, which aligned perfectly with the aspirations of the participants.

One such project was the Miyagi-New Orleans Youth Jazz Exchange. A month after the earthquake, the Swing Dolphins, a junior jazz orchestra from Kesennuma City, Miyagi Prefecture, deprived of its instruments by the tsunami, received new instruments from New Orleans. Since the city, known as the birthplace of jazz, and Japan had exchanges in the past, there

were strong existing bonds. Based on this connection, in October 2012, a high school jazz band from New Orleans visited three disaster-stricken areas in Miyagi to support local residents through music. They also performed with local junior jazz bands. The following year, members of the Swing Dolphins visited New Orleans and reunited with their friends there to perform. Their mutual respect gave rise to harmonies in both music and in friendship.

Another project, the Minamisanriku-Chile Youth Music and Poetry Exchange, was an exchange of poems and stories by high school students who had personally experienced disasters. Students from Minamisanriku Town, Miyagi Prefecture, which was hit by the tsunami, and from Constitución, central Chile, which was hit by the devastating earthquake in February 2010, could share their own stories in workshops in Japan and Chile. Across the sea, youth from these two regions engaged in meaningful dialogue.

### *Projects Connecting Tohoku’s Sanriku Region with Asia through the Performing Arts*

Furthermore, the JF Asia Center, newly established in 2014, implemented ongoing cultural exchanges between Tohoku’s Sanriku region and other parts of Asia. The Sanriku-Asian Network Project (SANPRO), which began in 2015, was one such exchange program. Performing artists from Southeast Asia were invited to Sanriku and local performing artists were sent from Sanriku to countries in Southeast Asia.

Mr. ONODERA Sho, a resident of Minamisanriku and a preserver of the Gyozan-ryu Mitobe Shishi Odori deer dance, a traditional performing art passed down in the former Sendai

Domain including Minamisanriku, visited Bali, Indonesia in 2018 as part of the SANPRO program.

Mr. Onodera, who was a vocational college student at the time, recounts his memories of that visit. “I performed the traditional Shishi Odori of Minamisanriku with students from the performing arts clubs of high schools in Miyagi and Iwate prefectures. I was in the fifth grade of elementary school when I started performing the dance. I couldn’t imagine that this dance, which originated more than 300 years ago and had only been performed within our local community, would ever leave Japan and be seen by people from other countries. As we were shown traditional Balinese dances and talked with the dancers, I realized something. Although the instruments and the tempo of the two traditional dances are different, the intention of the dances is the same: to drive away the evils that inhabit the land and to pray for people to live in happiness. I think that Sanriku and Bali are far away from each other and our cultures are completely different, but there is a commonality in our local dances. I would never have realized this if we hadn’t joined the exchange.”

Mr. Onodera says that his experience of participating in the exchange program has given him a new passion for the Shishi Odori. “The dance has continued for more than 300 years, undeterred by earthquakes, but some aspects of it such as its origin still remain a mystery. I’d like to unravel these mysteries, little by little, while continuing to engage in exchanges with communities in various regions. I also hope to communicate with children to create an interest in the dance, so that it will continue to be performed in the future.”

These exchanges between Japan and Asia were triggered by natural disasters but will lead to leaps forward in creating a new future for Japan’s local performing arts. JF intends to keep widely sharing the discoveries that emerge when people meet face-to-face.



Mr. ONODERA Sho (far right) participated in the Bali visit program. While there, he had the opportunity to learn local Balinese performing arts. He says that experiencing different performing arts enabled him to deepen his understanding of the Shishi Odori he performs.

Photo courtesy of ONODERA Sho

In 2018, seven young dancers selected from Shishi Odori groups from Iwate and Miyagi prefectures visited Bali, Indonesia. For about a week, they conducted exchanges with Balinese dance and gamelan groups. Photo courtesy of ONODERA Sho



# Special Website - Overview

Explore more exciting content created just for the JF 50th Anniversary celebration on the special website.



## JF Special Stories

- Delivering Japan's Outstanding Stage Performances Online to Every Corner of the World
  - Helping Cherry Blossoms Bloom the World Over: Developing a Global Network of Japanese Language Institutions
  - The Hub of Japanese Culture on the Banks of the Seine, Welcome to the Japan Cultural Institute in Paris
  - The Japan Foundation Prizes for Global Citizenship —Linking the Regions of Japan with the World
- ... and more will be added.

Also discover 50 years of JF history together with data to explore.



<https://jf50.jpf.go.jp/en/>

JAPAN FOUNDATION  
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50th  
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