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Let's create a vision of the post-pandemic society through UNESCO activities

NAGANO Hiroshi, President, the Minato UNESCO Association



The second year of the Reiwa Era (2020) will be remembered as the year of COVID-19 by the posterity. Under the proclamation of the state of emergency, human traffic such as business trips has been substantially restricted, and we are strongly requested to adapt to a “new normal” way of life, including remote working. A silver lining from this hardship includes freedom from commutation by crowded train and more flexibility in business scheduling. However, media reports on those who are at a loss because they do not have enough space for work at home.

The pandemic is likely to forcibly change our life pattern in many ways. For one thing, more digitalization will characterize our society. Indeed we often see the word “Digital Transformation,” abbreviated as DX, cited in media reports. Remote working has long been regarded as a pie in the sky in Japan but in about six months it became a new normal. DX may also cause abolition of the “Hanko” stamp which has been almost a part of the traditional Japanese culture. It seems like a typical attestation that Japan accepts changes only after it was placed under mounting external pressure.

We are now at a crossroad, individually and as a society, facing a big challenge – whether or not we can respond appropriately to the substantial change. It seems unavoidable in the post-pandemic years that changes be incorporated extensively into societal backbone systems, including working style, how to utilize time at home, how to enjoy leisure, how to educate, and how to balance cities and rural areas. It seems the most critical challenge for us is to choose between the following two approaches; to passively respond to the changing environment or to proactively create new systems out of our own ideas. I trust it is our responsibility to conceptualize, discuss and create a desirable society where all of us can be happy in the foreseeable future.

Regrettably ordinary citizens in Japan do not have enough opportunities to engage in such discussions in daily life. In this respect, the civil UNESCO activities, which originated from grassroots initiatives, offer an optimal platform to promote such discussions and actions. Here at the Minato UNESCO Association, we launched a new series of symposia titled “Let’s think about peace” from 2019. The first symposium aimed at how to learn SDGs and take necessary actions, drawing on cases of individual and regional efforts which have addressed the climatic changes. In the second symposium, scheduled this month, we will promote attendees’ understanding of the ocean which has a deciding impact on the humans’ survival, thereby heightening their awareness of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development initiative which will start next year.

Keeping the UNESCO Constitution philosophy in mind, we at MUA will provide continued opportunities for its members and citizens to discuss what kind of society we should hand down to the following generations.

(Translated by TANAHASHI S., the PR & Internet Committee)

The First 2020 Cross-cultural Awareness Workshop The History, Mythology and World Heritage of Ancient Greece

Speaker: Ms. TOMONO Satoko, World Heritage Academy Certified Instructor

Date: October 15, 2020

Venue: Minato City Libra Hall

Co-sponsor: Minato City Board of Education

Sponsor: World Heritage Academy



I am pleased to talk to you about the mythology and world heritage of ancient Greece. Almost all the cultural heritages are closely related with history and mythologies. As there are many world heritages which are in ruins now, please observe them stretching your imagination based on their histories and mythologies.

There are 18 world heritages in Greece, the land of which is one third of Japan, and most of them are related with Greek mythologies. The population of the country is approx. 10 million and as many as one third of them live in Athens.

Agean Civilizations

The so-called Dark Ages started after the Aegean civilization, when Greek mythologies were talked about by people and the age of polis and gold came into sight. As to the four great civilizations of the world, Mesopotamian civilization first emerged in the area surrounded by the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers which currently belongs to Iraq. Aegean civilization originated in Crete under the influence of Mesopotamian civilization and Egyptian civilization. Between 2000 B.C. and 1600 B.C., which is after the Crete civilization where Linear A was used, the center of civilization migrated to Mycenae located in Peloponnese Peninsula where Mycenaean civilization emerged that used decipherable Linear B. From around 8th century B.C., after the destruction brought about by the invasion of Dorians followed by the dark ages when no letters were invented, poleis were formed in various places. Those poleis prospered centering around Athens.

Ancient Greek called themselves Hellenes. As the languages spoken by different ethnic groups they dealt with at the Mediterranean trade sounded to them like “bababa...”, they called those people Barbaroi.

Persian Empire expanded its supremacy to the Mediterranean Sea from the east, thereby brought about the Persian war. Macedonia was founded by Alexander the Great in the 4th century B.C. Poleis started to decline and, eventually, united into Roman Empire. The Mediterranean area is very hot during summer time and the soil is so poor that wheat does not grow while olives and grapes grow well. It takes a lot of work to grow olives for the first ten years, however, after that period they bear fruit without much work at all. Quite different from producing Japanese Sake, people can produce wines just by throwing grapes into barrels and leave them. The Mediterranean Sea did not exist during the glacial period and there spread mountains and plains instead. Just like Japan was connected to the continent, Aegean Sea took shape as the glacial period ended and the air became warmer. Then, agriculture was introduced and the area became civilized. As you can see in the four great civilizations, the civilization brought about letters, tools like bronze ware and the formation of city-states.

Crete civilization emerged in the Mediterranean. Temple of Knossos is the oldest temple in the world. As it has been restored with the modern construction method, however, it has not been certified as a World Heritage Site. There exists valuable equipment considered to have been produced under Egyptian civilization in the huge storage that clearly shows the trading activity was

thriving. The blue of the sea is painted on walls which offers a bright image of the civilization.

Crete civilization is also called Minoan civilization, as the name of the king was Minos. King Minos is a son of the god Zeus and the Phoenician princess Europa. A child of King Minos was a fearsome creature with cow horn in his head. King Minos had a labyrinth built in the Crete Island to confine the creature named Minotaur and sent a sacrifice to him every year. Prince Theseus of Athens visits the island to exterminate Minotaur. There remains a mythology that Princess Adriadne, a daughter of King Minos, fell in love with Prince Theseus and supported him in exterminating Minotaur.

Crete civilization was destroyed by the Achaeans in the end. Linear A was used under Crete civilization but it has been undecipherable. On the other hand, Linear B used by the Achaeans was decipherable, and, therefore, the history became clearly known to the people. During that time, there occurred many conflicts among states. There remain many wall paintings which portray battle scenes.



A golden mask produced under the Mycenaean civilization is said to have been owned by Spartan King Agamemnon while the fact has yet to be discovered. Mycenae civilization has long been considered to have been destroyed by Dorians who invaded from the north. However, as there were many cases that civilizations were destroyed by people invaded from the sea, Mycenaean civilization might also have been destroyed in the same way.

Dark Ages and Greek Mythologies

Mediterranean civilization emerged around 2600 B.C. in Troia which is located in current Turkey. This fact was discovered by Heinrich Schliemann, a German archaeologist. He believed in the existence of the world of Iliad described by Homer, a Greek poet, which triggered him to start the excavation and succeeded in 1871.

As we have just seen, Crete and Trojan civilizations were destroyed by Achaean who developed Mycenae civilization, but was destroyed by Dorians later. Dorians started to use ironware instead of bronze ware which has long been the mainstream of civilizations then, thus they were very strong in wars. The age of poor written records started thereafter which is called dark ages when many mythologies were given birth.

Greek gods are directly connected to those of Romans, but the way they were called was different.

- Zeus is the king and all-purpose god. The symbol is lightning. They have children in various places, and the inhabitants of the area worship the god Zeus.
- Hera Queen. Zeus' sister and wife. The symbol of the Hera is a peacock.
- Athena Zeus's daughter, the god of battle, and the guardian deity of the city-state. The influential Acropolis temple is dedicated to Athena. The symbols are shields and olives. The rival is Poseidon. There is an anecdote. The people of Polis, who were told by Athena to "give olives if they would

protect as a guardian deity" and Poseidon to "give water", chose Athena as their guardian deity, and the name of the polis became "Athens".

- Apollo, the god of the sun, giving prophecy. Symbols are laurel crown, lyre, bow and arrow, etc. One of Zeus' twins. Apollo's laurel crown is struck by a "silver arrow" that falls in love because he ridiculed Eros, the god of love, and his opponent Daphne is struck by a "lead arrow" that refuses to love. Apollo in love chases Daphne, but Daphne, whose father is the god of the river, turns into a laurel, and Apollo's thoughts are cut off. Sad Apollo knits a crown with laurel, wearing it forever.



- Moon Goddess Artemis Apollo and twin brothers and sisters, hunting god, symbols are skirts, bows and arrows, etc.
- Aphrodite aka Venus, the goddess of love, beauty and sexuality, the symbol is a scallop, and it is also said that a piece of the male genitalia of Zeus' grandfather Uranus fell into the sea and was born from the bubbles. The child is a god of love, Eros.
- Dionysus, also known as Bacchus, the god of grapes, wine and theater. A child between the god Zeus and humans, he was not a god, but he became enshrined as a god because he spread viticulture and winemaking. A grand festival was held in Athens to celebrate Dionysus.
- Asclepius, the god of medicine. Apollo's child. Raised by Centaur (human head and horse body but clever). He is good at medical practice and has revived the dead, so he buys Zeus's wrath and is shot dead by a thunderstorm. However, his achievements are evaluated, he is raised to heaven, and he becomes a member of God as a snake seat. The snake-wrapped cane on the WHO logo comes from Asclepius, and the surrounding laurels come from his father Apollo.

At the end of the mythical story, I will talk about the "Judgment of Paris," which is said to be the cause of the Trojan War. This is the story of Zeus, the son of King Troy and the shepherd, Paris, who decides to be the most beautiful of the three goddesses. Hera, the wife of Zeus and the queen of the gods, offers "the throne of the world" if she chooses herself, and Athena offers "victory in battle", but in the end Paris chooses Aphrodite, who offers to "give the most beautiful woman". Paris gets Helen, the wife of King Sparta, which leads to a war. In the first place, the war was aimed at reducing the number of humans who had grown too much, so the gods intervened in the war and the war was prolonged, but Troy was destroyed.

Polis era

Polis are formed around the 8th century BC, but the conflict between polis becomes a total war including citizens, and Citizens who are responsible for the fight naturally want to participate in politics, and democracy develops in Athens. There will be reforms of Solon to solve the problem of the gap between rich and poor, and then the Persian War will occur, such as the battle of Marathon, which is famous from the conflict with the Persian Empire. The Delian League was formed in preparation for Persia, but in the 5th century BC, the Peloponnesian War broke out with the Peloponnesian League of rival Sparta (a country engaged in military training), and the polis society eventually declined.

World Heritage

- ① Archaeological sites of Mycenae and Tiryns
BC1600-BC1200 BC Civilization by the first wave Achaean Greeks. The megalithic fort is characterized by its geometric pattern and intricate structure. The center of Mycenaean civilization. Excavated by Schliemann. A golden mask (Agamemnon, King of Sparta in Greek mythology), etc.
- ② Archaeological site of Troy (Turkey)
Excavated by Schliemann, believing in the "Trojan Horse Legend" written in Homer's "Iliad".
- ③ Parthenon (Acropolis of Athens)
A temple dedicated to the goddess Athena. The pillars are Doric (there are Corinthian and Ionic). It is made of the golden ratio. The golden ratio is 1: 1.618, which is the ratio that people find most beautiful.
- ④ Temple of Athena Nike (Acropolis of Athens)
A statue of Nike with its wings cut off was enshrined so that the goddess of victory Nike would not fly away.
- ⑤ Theater of Dionysus (Acropolis of Athens)
Greek tragedy was performed.
- ⑥ Archaeological site of Olympia
The sanctuary of Zeus. The ancient Olympics were held with the aim of interrupting the conflict between polis. Europeans have a strong admiration for Athens. The modern Olympics begin with the advocacy of Coubertin.
- ⑦ Heraion of Samos and Pitagorian
A place to fire the torch. Samos is the birthplace of the goddess Hera. The island where Pythagoras was born.
- ⑧ Temple of Epikourios on Delos Island
Doric order. The island where the sun god Apollo and the moon goddess Artemis were born.
- ⑨ Archaeological site of Delphi
An oracle land that enshrines Apollo.
- ⑩ Sanctuary of Asclepius in Epitaurous
The sanctuary of the medical god Asclepius. There were several temples and lodgings, and there was also a hot spring where the sick could rest and heal.
- ⑪ Temple of Apollo Epiclios in Basse
It was built in 420 BC by the residents who escaped the plague epidemic. Doric order, Corinthian order, and Ionic order are mixed.



(Written by YAMADA Yuko, the International Science & Culture Committee, and translated by SUDA Y. and MAEDA M. of the PR & Internet Committee)

Japanese-Language Study Class - Start of a trial lesson course -

Date: Saturday, September 26, 2020
Venue: MUA secretariat office

On September 26, we held a trial lesson class of the Japanese-language Study course, addressing beginners. Although several applicants were registered in advance, most likely due to the rainy weather, the number of attendees shrank to a few.

A series of ten classes will enable the beginners to acquire the basic linguistic skill to speak daily conversation in Japanese. Each class will prioritize an easy-to-understand approach, based on a primary textbook titled “Minnano Nihongo Shokyuu I” along with complementary materials. First of all, our class will teach the attendees pragmatic expressions so that they can go out on the street and make themselves understood.



During the first class, the following expressions were taught:

“(noun) onegaishimasu”

“(noun) kudasai”

“Daisukidesu/Sukidesu/Sukija-arimasen”

Each class is designed to allocate 60% of time to the text and 40% to practical expressions. During the course, topical phrases, such as the following, will be also taught:

“Osusumeno misewa?”

“Naniga otoku?”

“Mecha umai”

“Nanini hamatteru?”

“Tapiru”

“Guguru”

Also, emphasis is placed on the use of “Naze (why)” concerning the Japanese manners and customs which have been enigmatic for the attendees. In addition, we will promote the exchange of information among attendees in each class which will be useful for everyday life in Tokyo.

From October this year, the trial course will be geared up to formal study classes. Although the number of attendees is yet to increase, we will strive to provide optimal lessons which will match the progress of attendees’ learning. Our class has been quite vibrant, with conversation on interesting topics from attendees’ respective home countries or from current news in Japan.



(Written by TAGAWA J., the Foreign Language Study Committee, and translated by TANAHASHI S., the PR & Internet Committee)

World Cooking Workshop: “Yakuzen” Dishes for the Autumn Season

Instructor: Ms. YAMAGUCHI Yumiko

Assistant: Ms. HONDA Yoshiko

Date: Sunday, September 27, 2020

Venue: Minato City Gender Equality Center

This workshop was originally planned to take place in June with 24 attendees but was postponed to September due to the corona virus. All possible precautions were taken, including the limited number of attendees (16) and MUA staff, as well as the requirement to wear masks and sanitary gloves, etc. Also, to minimize the risk to expose cooking materials to hand touches, preliminary cooking arrangements had been done by the instructor and her assistant.



First, Ms. YAMAGUCHI gave a power-point lecture on “Yakuzen” (Chinese medical cooking) dishes which are based on the Yin Yang five elements theory. She presides over a class called “Mandarin Kitchen” in Fukuoka City and also teaches at Fukuoka University’s “Care-men’s Kitchen” as an instructor. Yakuzen dishes have a long history in China as attested by its appearance in a scripture called “Shurai” published over 3,000 years ago. These dishes are a combination of coking materials and medically effective herbs. Through the long process, Yakuzen dishes have developed into a food culture which enables people to acquire physical vigor by eating the best seasonal food materials which have valid medical effects.

During the lecture we also learned some of the traditional culinary wisdom in China, including “White-colored food materials are good for your lungs and skin,” “Continued ingestion of such materials as are nutritious for the kidney will grow your hair,” and “Chinese people don’t drink cooled beer because it impairs vitality of the stomach.” The instructor also recommended that the ingestion of a bit of hot stuff in autumn will work as physical detoxication before you enter into winter. The interesting talk extended 15 minutes over the originally allocated time slot.

The day’s menu:

- ① Spareribs porridge
- ② Steamed vegetables with mala-meat miso
- ③ Small fried fish good for the kidney
- ④ Lotus root cake
- ⑤ White fungus gelee
- ⑥ Sentoujan soy milk soup, chrysanthemum and cassia seed tea

The cooking exercise progressed smoothly, thanks to the well-prepared cooking arrangements. The attendees enjoyed tasting the cooked dishes while taking reasonable social distance and refraining from talking. This autumnal cooking class focused on Chinese medical cooking to strengthen pulmonary functions and immunity to protect against the invisible enemy expected to resurge in the cold dry season. It was a most appropriate class under the current societal environment where our daily life is threatened by the corona virus.



(To be continued on P. 8)

UNESCO Press Release
COVID-19: Two-thirds of poorer countries are cutting their education budgets
at a time when they can least afford to. (22/02/2021)



Education budgets are not adjusting proportionately to the challenges brought about by COVID-19, especially in poorer countries. Despite additional funding needs, two-thirds of low- and lower-middle-income countries have, in fact, cut their public education budgets since the onset of the pandemic, according to the new joint World Bank – UNESCO report, Education Finance Watch (EFW).

In comparison, EFW demonstrates only one-third of upper-middle and high-income countries have reduced their budgets. These cuts have been relatively small so far, but there is a danger that they will grow as the pandemic continues to take its economic toll, and fiscal positions worsen. These differing trends imply a significant widening of already large spending disparities seen between low- and high-income countries. (Excerpted)

(Continued from P. 7) World Cooking Workshop – “Yakuzen” dishes



(Written by YAMADA Y., the World Cooking Workshop Committee, and translated by TANAHASHI S., the PR & Internet Committee)

Minato UNESCO Association is a citizens' voluntary membership organization that promotes Japanese traditional culture, holds cross-cultural workshops and presents multicultural events and international symposia for world peace. For any questions or comments about our articles, please contact our secretariat office at:

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