



MINATO

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Bulletin

MINATO UNESCO ASSOCIATION NEWS & CALENDAR

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Let's make our society more innovation-oriented while also maintaining Japan's sophisticated values

NAGANO Hiroshi, President of the Minato UNESCO Association



Progress in technology has been amazingly rapid. We can't spend a single day without using a mobile phone. The other day I noticed while passing a Keio Line exit that I had lost my smartphone. I immediately submitted a search request to the lost & found office at the station. Fortunately, it turned out that a passenger had kindly turned in the smartphone to a nearby railway station. Last year I lost my precious pocketbook while on board the Oedo Line subway. In this incident, I also experienced a fortunate case of being helped by an honest passenger. In contrast, I remember that I had my pocket picked three times on the subway in Paris. We are blessed to live in a country where people still retain honesty as a human value.

The above experiences motivated me to take a cross-cultural look into the behavior of average Japanese. Let's take a case of mask wearing. Mass media reports that, in several Euro-American countries, citizens were infuriated by the governments' mandate for mask wearing and went into riots. In contrast, the pandemic spread in Japan has been comparatively curbed well even though the government measures taken against the coronavirus has been not well organized. A decisive factor must be each citizen's awareness & proactive practice to wear masks and wash hands.

However, there are practices in Japan which I do not like. For example, a traffic sign was recently installed on a 2-meter-wide narrow street, close to my home, where we rarely see car traffic. I don't think a traffic sign is necessary there because any car driver, who sees a pedestrian, can easily stop. In reality, most pedestrians disregard red light and cross the street although some wait until the sign okays. Once, when I crossed the street at red light, a policeman came up to me from the Koban and cautioned me not to do so because other pedestrians were waiting for green light. I know he did only what a policeman is expected to do. However, this incident poses two issues. First, the traffic sign was installed without any public hearing about its necessity. Second, the policeman cautioned me based on the conform to the norm principle. Let me elaborate on the latter mindset.

Today one of the largest challenges in the world economy is how to foster innovative startups. Regrettably, Japan lags behind in the number of startups. Unless Japan eradicates the die-hard conformist culture where people hammer down a peg that sticks up, we cannot expect timely emergence of societal innovations, including the birth of unicorns. According to a professor who has established the highest score in launching startups from the University of Tokyo, he cannot receive even today wholehearted respect for entrepreneurial efforts from the ivory tower.

Let's turn our eyes to UNESCO activities. The civilian UNESCO movements have enabled regional UNESCO associations to undertake in their own style efforts to pursue peace. It embodies well the spirit of grass-roots activities which prioritize the importance of respective values. It is

(To be continued on P. 5)

**2021 Symposium Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of MUA
Nature Reserves Preserved by Local Community
= UNESCO Biosphere Reserves =**

Date: November 19, 2021 6:30 – 8:30pm

Venue: Auditorium, The International House of Japan

The symposium this time was held in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of MUA foundation. It was held in the form of venue participation as well as on-line under the COVID-19 pandemic. We had the pleasure of having three panelists and a commentator as listed below:

Panelists:

Ms. ISODA Hiroko, Professor, Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences/Alliance for Research on the Mediterranean and North Africa, University of Tsukuba

Ms. SAKAI Akiko (D. Sc.), Professor, Graduate School of Environment and Information Science; Plant Ecology, Yokohama National University

Ms. Aida MAMMADOVA, Ph. D, Associate Professor, Organization for Global Affairs, Kanazawa University

Commentator:

Mr. MATSUDA Hiroyuki (D. Sc.), Professor, Faculty of Environment and Information Sciences, Yokohama National University

All three panelists gave speeches on the subject and, then, the commentator did a recap. The summary is as shown below.

The symposium was commenced with a remark given by Mr. NAGANO Hiroshi, President of MUA who played a role of coordinator. We at MUA have held a symposium once a year as a series of “think peace”. The theme of the 1st symposium was on the climate change, the 2nd on The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, and the 3rd, this time around, on the Biosphere Reserves in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of Japan’s membership in UNESCO as well as the 50th anniversary of UNESCO’s Man and Biosphere Program (MAB).



Then, Mr. TAGUCHI Yasushi, Director-General for Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education who was staying in Paris for the general meeting of UNESCO gave a remark on-line followed by the speech by Ms. OKAMOTO Aya, a member of The Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, Office of the Director-General for International Affairs, Ministry of Education. “This is the year of milestone with the commencement of The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. It was decided by the UN general meeting to designate November 3rd as the international day for UN Biosphere Reserves. All the people, including those who reside in the metropolitan area, should bear in mind that each and every one gains benefit from Biosphere Reserves as well as ecosystem.”

Speech by Ms. ISODA Hiroko;

The UNESCO MAB program is an intergovernmental scientific program that aims to establish a scientific basis for enhancing the relationship between people and their environments. It combines the natural and social sciences with a view to improving human livelihoods and safeguarding natural and managed ecosystems, thus promoting innovative approaches to economic development that are socially and culturally appropriate and environmentally sustainable. Biosphere Reserves, known as UNESCO Eco-Park in Japan, is the main activity in MAB program.



131 countries join the program and 10 sites are designated in Japan. Those are Hakusan; Mount Odaigahara, Mount Omine and Osugidani; Shiga Highland; Yakushima and Kuchinoerabu-Jima; Aya; Minami-Alps; Tadami; Sobo, Katamuki, and Okue; Minakami; and Kobushi. These sites are selected under the strict examination criteria and categorized into 3 zones as the core areas, buffer zones and transition area. Recently, MAB program (2015~2025) was decided and Lima action plan (2016~2025) was adopted as the concrete action plan for the effective implementation. I am involved in the functional research of biological resources and expect to develop towards the 9th goal of SDG's "Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure as well as the

17th goal "partnership" through the evaluation of biodiversity, contribution for fundamental research and creation of a new industry.

Speech by Ms. SAKAI Akiko;

The deterioration of natural environment caused by human factors is on the way on a global scale. It is widely said that the present day is the 6th mass extinction era. We must take good care of the ecosystem as human being and its society totally depend on it. What needs to be done to preserve the plains and village forests where an abundant biodiversity remains. There could exist two approaches toward the preservation of nature. The one is protection, and the other is preservation while utilizing it. It calls for a huge transformation and is not easy at all. One of the frameworks to consider this would be Biosphere Reserve. UNESCO Headquarters introduced Rhon, Germany as one good reference. As the region was left out of development, it became the treasure trove of endangered species. Reevaluate the abundant scenery and biota within the framework of Biosphere Reserve, and connect the outcome to the regional promotion, which eventually would benefit both human being and the nature.



The importance of networks has been well recognized from the beginning. The networks provide the opportunity for coordination. Japan is a member of East Asia Network, and those people in the picture posted here are representatives of China, South Korea, North Korea, Russia, Indonesia and Vietnam. I strongly felt the picture represents the hope for the world.

Speech by Ms. Aida MAMMADOVA;



I am an Azerbaijani. Azerbaijan is a country gained independence from Union of Soviet Socialist Republics 30 years ago, and is located 8,000km away from Japan in distance. I have been involved in the Biosphere Reserve since 2015. I joined the Youth Forum in 2017 and received the Young Scientist Award in 2019. Hakusan BR was designated as the first Japanese BR back in 1980. There are many issues associated with BRs in Japan; i.e., absence of successors and young generations, decrease in employment, depopulation, aging and so forth. Whether Biosphere Reserve or Geopark could attain the goal under SDGs?

Keeping these in mind, I started an education on Biosphere Reserve at Kanazawa University. The program started back in 2015 became a very popular program in which 350 people from over 20 countries participated.

Kanazawa University sent 100 students to the 5 neighboring BRs and exchanged with local people there in association with 6 Russian universities. We started on-line coordination with 3 BRs in Japan 2 years ago and also launched the MAB Network among 6 Japanese universities. We started coordination with 4 Central Asian countries and 3 European countries as the international network. Then, we expanded our training course to South East Asia, thereby established ASEAN university network.

Why we conduct these activities? There are not many young people in the villages of Japan. We expect to bring up young people who would eventually contribute not only to BRs but other UNESCO activities by getting as many young people as possible involved in our expanded networks.

Recap by Mr. MATSUDA Hiroyuki:

Metropolitan Tokyo area depends on the water source on Minakami BR and Kobushi BR; i.e., Tone River and Tamagawa River. By the way, Yokohama depends on Sagami River. World Heritage is the concept for preserving values, whereas MAB Program is designed to create values in an open space. Furthermore, while world heritages are maintained by member countries, Biosphere Reserves are taken care of by local people or local governments. The importance of coexistence between human beings and the nature is frequently mentioned here in Japan, the concept of which is quite similar to that of MAB program. It is occasionally said that the physical contact between human beings and wild animals resulted in infection under the current COVID-19 pandemic. It cannot be resolved, however, just by segregating them. They can coexist as they fear each other. You need to comprehend this aspect.



We had a Q&A session where each panelist gave a short closing remark toward the end of symposium, and then, the symposium was closed at 8:30pm.

(Written by MIYASHITA Yukari, Vice President of MUA, and translated by SUDA Yasushi, the PR & Internet Committee Associate)

Hands-on Cultural Workshop: Japanese calligraphy Instructor: Ms. KANADA Suimu (Mainichi Shodo Association)

Date: Sunday, September 26, 2021
Venue: Minato City Life-long Learning Center

Workshop contents:

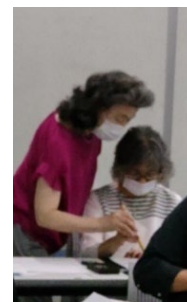
- History of Japanese calligraphy
- Exercise imitating the model letters
- Draw favorite letters elaborately on Shikishi paper

Impressions from the attendees on questionnaire:

- Enjoyed it again after many years
- Learned a lot from the kind instructor
- Unforgettable good memory

Comment from MUA staff:

It was amazing that attendees made visible improvements under the instructor's seasoned effective teaching.



(Written by KASAHARA M., Standing Director, and translated by TANAHSHI S., the PR & Internet Committee)

“Bonsai” – A Traditional Japanese Culture

- Demonstration & Hands-on Exercise -

Date: Sunday, November 7, 2021

Venue: Minato City Life-long Learning Center

Contents of the program:

1. History of Bonsai
2. Seedling
3. Front image, flow to the right, flow to the left
4. Plant a black pine into the pot
5. Fix the root
6. Place moss
7. Water the completed plant
8. Maintenance of Bonsai

Impressions from the attendees:

- The instructor taught us how to enjoy it.
- I totally enjoyed the new experience.
- The class atmosphere was so pleasant.
- I could feel the charm of Bonsai.
- I'd like to try with Japanese apricot tree next time.
- I dived pleasantly into a miniature universe.

We could join the program without anything to bring with us. I'm so thankful for MUA's generosity.

- The first experience brought me a great pleasure.



Bonsai established itself as a traditional Japanese culture during the modern to contemporary period. Today it is internationally known as “BONSAI” and boasts high popularity. Bonsai-philas from around the world visit Omiya-ku, Saitama City as the mecca of the plant art. Seikouen, which has a long history since the end of the Edo period, has played a central role in the community. We had the pleasure of having Mr. Kawakami of Seikouen as the instructor. He gave us a comprehensible lecture along with seasoned demonstrations. We noticed that Bonsai minds its front view where the boughs are arranged in a right-side flow or a left-side flow. Mr. Kawakami was very generous to answer each and every question raised during the Q&A session. All attendees expressed their appreciation with a big applause. We sincerely hope that the black pine Bonsai, created by each attendee, will bring in a happy New Year to all.

(Written by HIRAKATA K., Vice President, and translated by TANAHASHI S., the PR & Internet Committee)

(Continued from P. 1) Let's make our society more innovation-oriented

truly amazing to know that this bottom-up grass-roots power enabled Japan's accession to UNESCO even before the end of Allied Forces' occupation of Japan. Regrettably, however, many leaders in regional UNESCO associations, who have been driving forces under the banner of world peace, are old today. Therefore, the largest challenge is how to hand over the UNESCO activities successfully to the succeeding young generation. In Tokyo, a new initiative named “2000 Project” is underway, in an effort to double the members, especially young people, who would share the UNESCO spirit. I sincerely hope that we can strengthen UNESCO activities by welcoming innovative & disruptive ideas while also maintaining good sophisticated Japanese values.

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

The Minato UNESCO Association 40th Anniversary Commemorative Event in 2021

The 5th Japanese-Language Speech Contest

Date: Sunday, December 12, 2021

Venue: Minato City Gender-free Center “Libra”

We at MUA were delighted to register 12 applicants this year for the flagship event. In retrospect, our first contest back in 2017 started with seven applicants. My predecessors have taken the trouble of visiting many Japanese-language schools, located in Minato City, to recruit applicants. Without any double, it must have been an enormous challenge. Thanks to their accumulated efforts over the years, we could recruit 12 applicants this time, an increase of two over the initially planned number. It certainly suited the special occasion of MUA's 40th anniversary.

In an effort to advertise for applicants, we mailed out publicity leaflets to public facilities, foreign embassies, international schools, and Japanese-language schools located in Minato City. We also spread the information by SNS and word of mouth. In addition, we made it a rule to advertise this event to the attendees who participated in a variety of MUA programs, including Japanese calligraphy, Bonsai and Bonseki.

As the MC of this event, I started with an interesting ice breaker, asking the speakers and the audience the following questions which are all related to the number “40” in one way or another:

Question 1: What would you choose as major world news that took place 40 years ago?

(Ans: Wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana, The Pope's first visit to Japan, etc.)

Question 2: Can you name the 40th Emperor in Japan? (Ans.: Emperor Tenmu)

Question 3: Who is the 40th President in USA? (Ans.: Ronald Reagan)

Question 4: What is the 40th chemical element? (Ans.: Zirconium)

Question 5 was addressed to a few young speakers who participated in this event.

What would happen if you eat 40 cups of ice cream at once? (Ans.: Loose stomach)

This concluded my ice breaker and the speech competition started.

Let me summarize the winners. Pariyar Nabin from Nepal won the grand prix (right photo). Once when he was delivering newspapers, he was greeted by an elderly lady saying, “Sumimasen.” He wondered why she said so and came to a conclusion that she just wanted to express her appreciation for his paper delivery service early in the morning darkness. It's important in learning Japanese to catch the implied intention behind the expressed words. From Nabin-san's speech, we could understand the process how he thought deeply about the said question and arrived at his understanding of the Japanese mentality which we natives sometimes overlook. I trust the judges highly evaluated his sensitivity.



In the last contest, we added a new “Audience Popularity Award.” This provided an opportunity for the audience to vote for their best choice speakers after they had listened carefully to each and every speech. The following list shows the winners (name, home country, speech subject) of different awards:

Grand prix award: Pariyar Nabin (Nepal, “Sumimasen to ¥200”)

MUA president award: Chen Huang (China, “Kansha no kokoro”)

Minato City mayor award: Sarah Emily Harrison (UK, “Hontouni hitsuyou desuka?”)

Judges award: Jomok Sahra Sicilia (Philippines, “Jinsei wa maemukini susunde ikou”)

Merit award: Nguyen Thi Mai (Vietnam, “Nihonjin wa tsumetai”)
 Merit award: Yan Jinye (China, “Watashiga mita nihon”)
 Merit award: Lkhagvasuren Javzmaa (Mongolia, “Corona to watashi”)
 Merit award: Tran Thi Bien (Vietnam, “Akiramenai”)
 Merit award: Luke Chon (Age 12, South Korea, “Luke no dilemma”)
 Merit award: Maya Olivia Wheeler (Age 6, USA, “Corona”)
 Merit award: Janine Chon (Age 9, South Korea, “Doushite corona ga sukijanaika”)
 Merit award: Aibike Daiirbekova (Age 7, Kirghizia, “What is Japan like to me?”)
 Audience popularity award: Sarah Emily Harrison (mentioned above)

MUA’s 40-year-long history must have countless episodes to be shared. We’d like to keep up this annual contest as a platform where Japanese-language learners can demonstrate what they have acquired. We hope this flagship program will help in promoting cross-cultural understanding.



Jomok, Chen, Harrison and Nabin



Audience Popularity Award winner Hrrison



Speakers and audience enjoy conversation



(Written by TAGAWA J., Standing Director, and translated by TANAHASHI S., the PR & Internet Committee)

“Bonseki” – a traditional Japanese art
Demonstration & hands-on workshop
(Co-sponsored by Minato City Education Board)

Date: Sunday, October 17, 2021

Venue: Minato City Life-long Learning Center

Our instructors for this workshop were again Dr. MIZUNO Kayano, industrial counselor & Gestalt therapist, and Ms. KUBOTA Mari, flower design artist. We were pleased to have a total of 30 attendees, including a Chinese and two MUA members. Three MUA staff assisted the instructors in accommodating the group. In “Bonseki”, you create a grand scenery of ocean or mountain images on a black lacquered tray, using typical utensils such as feathers of swan or hawk and tiny spoons, and laying out small stones and white sand on the tray. This creation process is called an action of “Utsu.” Other utensils include silver spoon, small broom, sifter and tiny twigs. “Bonseki” was originated and developed during the Muromachi period by renowned historical figures such as Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, Senno Rikyu and Hosokawa Tadaoki. Thus, it was polished and established as a unique Japanese culture.

Contents of the workshop:

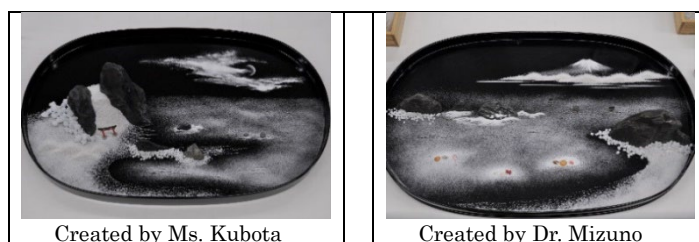
- History of “Bonseki”
- Explanation on utensils
- Demonstration by the instructors
- Hands-on exercise by the attendees

Attendee comments in the questionnaire:

- I totally enjoyed it. Historical explanation was helpful and the demonstration was superb.
- I want to join again.
- Most rewarding experience.
- It was an exceptional experience.
- Control of subtle feeling was difficult.
- Most satisfying workshop.
- Amazed to know that difference in feather techniques or stone layout creates diverse scenery.



Ms Kubota (left) and Dr. Mizuno



Created by Ms. Kubota

Created by Dr. Mizuno

Comments from MUA staff:

Because of many applications, we decided to accept 30 attendees although the original plan was for 20. When we held “Bonseki” workshop last year, we received a strong request for another round. We regret we could not accept all who were on the waiting list. Our two instructors, Mizuno-sensei and Kubota-sensei, are both students of YASHIRO Baika, a master of “Bonseki” whose students include HIH Takamatsunomiya. All attendees were delighted to have a close look at the artistic feather-techniques of our instructors. Throughout the workshop, the classroom was filled with joyful atmosphere.



Demonstration of feather technique



Guidance on utensil handling

(Written by HIRAKATA K., Vice President, and translated by TANAHASHI S., the PR & Internet Committee)

MUA Workshop of Traditional Japanese Culture “Let’s make and fly kites”

Instructor: Mr. FUKUOKA Masami, Director, Japan Kite Association

Date: Sunday, November 28, 2021

Venue: Minato City Aoyama Elementary School

Workshop contents:

- History of Kites
- Demonstration of how to make kites by the instructor
- Draw favorite pictures on the Washi paper
- Attach bamboo structures to the Washi paper by bond.
- Fly the completed kite on the playground.

Impressions received from the attendees:

- Totally enjoyable.
- It was the first experience in kite making but was easy.
- It’s nice I could participate with my parents.
- It made a good memory.
- I’m thankful for the precious experience.



Comments from MUA staff:

Our initial plan was to recruit 30 attendees but ended up with 70 due to great popularity. We divided the attendees into groups and they worked in a science classroom and a conference room. Most attendees were in parent-child combinations. There was an infant girl, at age one plus, who ardently drew nice pictures. Children drew their favorites images, such as Mt. Fuji, sunflower, and the costume pattern from a popular Manga’s hero, with crayon and water-base pen. Once their kites with different images were completed, the children started kite-flying on the playground covered with artificial turf.

We were blessed with fine weather and no accidents. Thanks to generous understanding of We’d like to extend our sincere thanks to Vice Principal Takasuga who generously understood our intention and let us to use the facilities of the history-rich Aoyama Elementary School. This event was televised on J·COM Channel on December 2 (rebroadcast on Dec. 3).



(Written by HIRAKATA K., Vice President, and translated by TANAHASHI S., the PR & Internet Committee)

Zazen Workshop

Date: Monday, November 22, 2021

Venue: Seishoji Temple in Minato City

Because of the pandemic, we were forced to limit the number of attendees to 13, after consultation with the temple on how to minimize the risk of infection. All of the attendees came to the temple despite a rainy weather.

Ms. WATABE, MC & chairperson of the Zazen Workshop Committee, gave the opening address, followed by a welcome speech by a representative priest of the Seishoji Temple. Next, Reverend KAMADA Mukan gave a lecture on Zen and related experiences. All attendees listened intently to his talk.

In the post-event questionnaire, most of the attendees expressed their experience very rewarding. Specific comments included, “It was an extremely interesting experience which is not easy to get.”; “I’m interested to know what the next Zazen workshop will offer.”; “I’d like to join other MUA events as well.”



(Written by KIKUCHI K., VP, 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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