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If Only Your Eyes Meet

Kimitada Miwa, MUA President and Professor Emeritus of Sophia University

Is it because there are happening every day most unsavory incidents that I cannot help smiling at the passing-by little doggies in the street? I adore those precious moments when our eyes meet. The very presence itself of the innocence of a new-born baby in the baby car is so angelic that it washes away earthly worries of my mind.

We smile at doggies and speechless tots because when our eyes meet some chemical of warm feeling starts traveling between us. It may be better put to say that when our eyes meet some warm kindly thought is drawn from my heart to the dogs' curious looks. The babies may be asleep, yet their sun-like shining faces give us peace at heart.

Then why aren't we grown-ups not up to smiling at each other by making our eyes meet? In fact we Japanese are more apt to feign that we don't recognize the presence of each other. Is it due to the long established social manner of ours in Japan that we pretend that we are not seeing what we actually see? I feel almost malevolent intention in not responding with an eye-contact when the adversary foregoes a polite response.

This social phenomenon has been aggravated by the popularity of the cellular phone. The subway train seats accommodate people working like in their studios, or conversing in lounges, refusing strangers' intrusion. For some they become their boudoirs. If you observe closely, women give emphatic attention to their eye-lashes, and men to their facial hair, moustaches and whiskers. Some boys have their eye-brows trimmed clean. Inasmuch as their physical appearances have attained individuality they are prone to avoid meddlesome contact with strangers.

In Japan the most dreadful things in life have been traditionally earthquake, thunder, fire and bossy male parent, but nowadays, the father does not pose any threat. He likes to be a little bit bad boy, carrying no exemplary weight for the young.

“Be gentle to this planet earth” has become a guiding norm for everyday life. What we have done and still are doing to the natural environment in spite of this slogan seems more sinful than the violent struggles we do within the human world. So much so that we feel like getting resigned to let them kill each other in hate and revenge. What a devilish existence we the humankind are!

During the First World War, Turkey allied with Germany and engaged in an ethnic cleansing of the Turkish-Armenians, resulting in up to 1,500,000 deaths, either shot or
(To be continued on Page 19)

The 27th MUA International Symposium 2009
(Endorsed by Minato City Board of Education)

**World Heritage Not All Blessings, Tourism Destroys Environments:
Japanese Traditions and Innovations May Help Resolve the Predicament**

Date: January 20, 2009

Place: Minato City Gender-free Center

This year we invited the following four panelists and asked them to express their opinions about the subject from their respective standpoints:

Ms. Hiwatashi, Kiwako: Representative, Ombudsman Minato

Mr. Inoue, Shoji: Mayor, Miyazu City, Kyoto

Mr. Maeno, Masaru: Chairman, Japan ICOMOS National Committee

Ms. Nakami, Mari: Professor, Seisen University

Dr. Kimitada Miwa, MUA president, moderated the presentations and discussions. At the beginning Mr. Hiroshi Matsumoto, MUA Director, gave an opening welcome speech and introduced Mr. Takei, Minato City Mayor.

Mayor Takei talked about the high ratio of non-Japanese residents in the city which characterize the international nature of the community. He also touched upon a new municipal initiative which focuses on invigorating the city's tourism, combining traditional manufacturing skills, commercial streets, foreign embassies and other spots of interest.

The following is a summary of the presentations, discussions and Q&A's.

Dr. Miwa (Moderator):

In our flyer for this symposium, we quoted a remark about Japan by Paul Claudel who was a renowned French poet-diplomat. He said, "The Japanese are poor but noble - - - If there is a nation that is worth surviving, it is the Japanese." Japanese today are enjoying materialistic affluence but how about their mental state? It is reported that, based on publishing industry's statistics, books of Dostoevski's works in Japanese translation as well as books on philosophy are selling well. It seems as if a new era had come where we must think about what human beings are or what we live for.



Angkor Wat in Cambodia is a very popular UNESCO world heritage where fancy hotels are built and many tourists visit. It is reported that the total volume of water used at those hotels each day, for shower, swimming pools, flushing toilets and other services for their guests is equivalent to the accumulated quantity of water used by the local community during a single month. World heritage sites produce those who benefit by them while such sites also produce those whose life has been threatened by the tourism. This symposium was planned with our awareness of such negative challenge. Japanese culture during the Edo period has been perceived as an "Inkyo

Culture,” which sustained the preservation of traditional cultural heritages through ordinary people’s daily life. Can’t we offer from Japan helpful know-how to solve the negative impact from world heritages?

Professor Nakami: Muneyoshi Yanagi is known as the initiator of the “Mingei” or folk art movements in Japan. The movements are based on the idea that superb beauty exists in daily utensils made by ordinary people. Folk art as a Japanese culture has been successfully exported overseas. I wonder why the idea has been accepted overseas or why very common daily life items have appealed to the mind of foreigners. Can’t we find a noteworthy clue to successfully export Japanese culture, from the backbone idea which has nurtured the “Mingei?” Even during the prewar years, Yanagi highly recognized the individual characteristics of different people’s culture and already possessed the philosophy of multi-cultural coexistence.



In particular, he was known for his endorsement of Korea. Japan started to colonize Korea from 1910 and a majority of Japanese people looked down upon the country. In contrast Yanagi highly evaluated Korean people and their culture. Yanagi was stimulated by Korea’s movement for independence in 1919 and started to criticize Japan’s colonization policy, especially the forcible cultural integration. He was also outspoken to protect Korean cultural assets. For example, he is well known for his protection of Gwanghwamun gate, which is the main entrance to the Gyeongbokgung Palace. In 1924 Yanagi established a museum of Korean arts and encouraged Korean people by admiring the expression of excellent beauty in Korea’s daily life.

Yanagi called Korea as a country of “Great Beauty” and, among others, highly admired the Seokguram in Gyeongju Province, which was registered as a UNESCO world heritage in 1995. His philosophy was to perceive an organic combination of people, natural environment, folk art, etc. as a single “life.” When the Japanese government general in Korea announced a plan to renovate the Seokguram, Yanagi criticized the attempt, insisting “Why not ask the Korean people themselves to undertake the job since they have thoughtfully integrated nature and arts in an extremely well-balanced manner?” In the process of the government general’s renovation, the Seokguram was covered with concrete, which caused the problem of high humidity and moss growth. Today it is surrounded by glass while the temperature and humidity are adjusted by air conditioning.

Yanagi’s activities were substantiated by a peace-loving philosophy, expressed in his remarks such as “Peace is secured when the whole world is not painted with a single color,” or “Beauty arises from the coexistence of differences.” He insisted that it would be a loss for the world if any one of Japanese, Korean or Chinese cultures were to be deprived. He compared his viewpoint of multi-cultural coexistence to nonviolence initiatives.

Yanagi also highly appreciated the respective culture of the Okinawans, the indigenous Taiwanese, and the Ainu’s. He insisted that the ruling people should not

force their own values upon the ruled, and that the ruled people should have pride in their own culture, instead of obediently imitating what they were forced to accept by the rulers.

Yanagi was also critical of an attitude to see nature as the target of human conquest. From his viewpoint, nothing is more beautiful than nature. He insisted that human beings should behave more respectfully toward nature. When an exhibition took place in Paris featuring the spirit of Japan's Mingei, Yanagi's art works were shown along with folk art items. We can see something common between Mingei and Yanagi's works.

In our efforts to export Japan's culture, we should be mindful of the following points:

- If we set our eyes on something other than elite culture, it will enable us to discover long buried cultural assets.
- A conquest-driven attitude will bring about the destruction of natural environment and nurture an attitude to look down upon the culture of other people.
- During the process of exporting Japanese culture, we should pay respect to different culture while also promoting peace and international exchanges.
- Export of Japanese culture would be successful only if Japan has the capacity to embrace the culture of the importing countries.

Ms. Hiwatashi: The Japanese government enacted an action plan in July 2003 to make Japan a tourism-oriented country, following the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's plan formulated in November 2001 to expand Tokyo's tourism industries. The Tokyo administration's plan addressed the following two objectives:

- (1) Make Tokyo a still more international city where tourists from all over the world visit.
- (2) Double the number of inbound tourists, from 2.77 million to 6.0 million during the planned five years. (The recorded number for 2007 was 5.33 million)



The Tokyo administration formulated a follow-up 5-year plan (2007 – 2011), in which it addressed new objectives such as the hosting of the 2016 Olympic Games, the expansion of Haneda Airport into an international facility, along with appropriate administrative measures for the aging and low-fertility society. We are facing a big challenge of how to promote tourism while also protecting natural environment by formulating well-balanced measures.

As far as resources for tourism are concerned, Minato City is unrivalled in Tokyo. We have modern attractions such as Tokyo Tower and Roppongi Hills while also maintaining a total of 244 Buddhist temples. The harmony between nature and different architectures in our city seems to symbolize the cultural tradition maintained over centuries in Japan. Minato City is also outstanding to have a total of 74 foreign embassies. These resources are our city's strong advantages for appealing to overseas tourists.

For administrative purpose, we have divided Minato City into the following three zones by the type of tourism resources:

- (1) Landmark zones: Tokyo Tower, Zojoji Temple and Shiba Park areas.

- (2) Utilization zones: Shimbashi areas (town of business people)
- (3) Creative zones: Shibaura and Konan areas. There are bridges and ports. How to develop them into greater attraction is the challenge.

In Minato City, tourist resources are divided into two categories: natural resources (forests, seashores and rivers) and humanities resources (historical sites, shrines and temples). I for one have focused on the preservation of natural environment. Since his inauguration, Mayor Takai has instituted a comprehensive network system which enables the administration to formulate policies as it listens to the voice of citizens.

Mayor Inoue: Amano-Hashidate, counted among the three spectacular sceneries in Japan, is renowned for its beautiful seaside with silver sand and green pines. It was an important model for creating beautiful Japanese gardens as well as an origin for Japanese cultures. Although it was not included in the preliminary listing of world heritage candidates, the scenery received a high evaluation score.



We have challenges to overcome. For example, global warming will cause the rise of sea level and it may submerge the scenic beauty. All of us in the city share the risk and are exerting preventive measures. For example, we have started to employ a civil engineering method called “sand bypass” to preserve the seaside along the bay. In the past we could expect a natural emergence of beautiful sceneries but it is not possible today.

Therefore, it became necessary for us to implement a harbor renovation project to protect the silver sand and green pines. For example, we are sprinkling chemicals over the pines to prevent withering while volunteer citizens are engaged in cleaning along the seaside. We must protect the seaside from natural disasters as well. About four years ago, a typhoon hit our region and blew down 200 pine trees. In response we started a project to revive the fallen pine trees. In addition, we must protect the pine trees from environmental contamination.

As a community where environmentally motivated citizens live, Miyazu City has been exerting proactive efforts to cope with the challenge of global warming and subsequent rise of sea level. In June 2008, a total of 2,200 citizens participated in a hand-in-hand campaign, forming a long chain of people standing all along the seaside. We hope that our campaign message was well received domestically and internationally, and that we would receive support from related sectors.

Mr. Maeno: In 1960 Egypt constructed Aswan High Dam at an upstream location of the Nile. Before the start of the project, people found out that the Abu Simbel shrine, built in the 13th century, B.C., would be submerged under the water. UNESCO appealed to the entire world and succeeded in relocating the historical monument for preservation. This incident led to the enactment in 1964 of the “International Charter for the Preservation of Monuments and Ruins” (known as the Venice Charter). At the same time, ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) was established as an NGO. The mission of ICOMOS as a private sector organization is to undertake evaluation, supervision and the preservation of world heritages. ICOMOS of Japan was officially started in 1979.

It was in 1979 that the world heritage treaty was adopted at the U. N. general assembly. Japan ratified this treaty 20 years later than most of the member countries. Why so? The world heritage is based on the assumption that the eligible heritage, which cannot be preserved by the owner country, should be preserved under international cooperation. In Japan, we declared in Article 9 of its constitution renunciation of war as well as determination not to wage any international conflict by military means. In addition, Japan was confident of its capability to preserve its cultural heritages without international cooperation. However, the following years saw the emergence in other countries of a tendency toward the rating of cultural assets to determine their qualification as world heritages.



Thus, Japan ratified the treaty in 1992 and started to take steps for world heritage registration. It is regrettable to see a tendency in recent years that the motivation behind applications for world heritage registration resides not in the original philosophy but in commercial intention to utilize world heritages as tourist attractions. As of 2008, there are a total of 878 world heritages sites: 679 cultural, 174 natural, and 25 mixed properties.

Let me outline the application procedure of world heritage registration. When member countries submit applications, UNESCO will ask ICOMOS for screening and evaluation. ICOMOS will examine the applications and send cultural asset specialist to the sites for local survey. For example, Japan recently sent an application to have the National Museum of Western Art in Ueno, Tokyo registered as a world heritage architecture designed by Le Corbusier. In response, specialists appointed by ICOMOS visited Japan from Austria for survey. ICOMOS will report their findings to UNESCO, which in turn will provide appropriate information to related countries.

Japan has a total of 14 world heritages as of 2008. Regrettably there are cases where discrepancy emerges between the buffer zone and the city plan of the local administration. The buffer zone means a peripheral environment surrounding the heritage site, as designated by the world heritage regulation. There was a case where a land developer wiped away a portion of the foot of a hill, which was included in the buffer zone for Ginkakuji Temple (Silver Pavillion) in Kyoto. It caused a serious conflict between the heritage-conscious community people and the city which insists on the legitimacy of the land development. The land project was aborted in the end. It's critically important that the preservation of the environment around a cultural heritage site be successfully coordinated with the municipal plans for land development and tourism promotion.

In Fukuyama City, Hiroshima Prefecture, local people organized a movement to preserve a historical harbor called Tomonoura. In this connection ICOMOS passed a resolution to ask the city to stop filling up the harbor and also negotiated four times. Many of cultural heritages have been the pride of local people, handed down for centuries, even if the assets had not been officially designated as preservation items. It is very important to understand and appreciate such pride and mentality of local people before applying for world heritage registration.

When ICOMOS specialists ask for cooperation from the local people to survey the site on application, they intentionally avoid using the word “survey.” Instead they’ll ask, “We are looking for nice places in this town,” so that local people can respond with pride and give a guided tour. For the preservation of architectural heritages, the following three principles are important: (1) it is usable, (2) it has been kept clean, and (3) its value is visible.

For centuries Japan has been only a receiver of foreign culture and has not transmitted its own overseas. Japanese culture has matured during the period of its isolation. In retrospect, foreigners who visited Japan toward the end of the Tokugawa shogunate and the start of the Meiji Restoration, were greatly impressed with Nishikie art pieces, greenery in Japanese estates, and people’s love of small plants placed along alleys, among others. They sent back to their homelands messages, reporting on the high cultural level of Japanese people. In the future we should be more active in fostering our own culture as well as in transmitting it internationally to establish a cross-cultural two-way street.

Dr. Miwa: We would like to invite a 5-minute comment from each panelist about the presentations.

Mr. Inoue: It is a challenge to preserve our heritages so that they will continue to be highly evaluated internationally. We would like to transmit our image as a sanctuary of Japan. We are aware of the mounting difficulty to preserve our assets in the face of an increasing number of tourists. Amano Hashidate with its scenic beauty attracts annually about 2.6 million tourists from all around Japan. It is our sincere wish to preserve the spectacular landscape of our local pride for the future generations.

Ms. Hiwatashi: I have proposed to our mayor to turn Minato City into an advanced model community of good environment and welfare. He is well aware of the environmental challenge and has enacted unique initiatives, such as the Citizens’ Forest. A most imminent challenge is how to design a community where high-rise buildings can coexist peacefully with residential areas of low-storied houses. We want to set a successful model in this effort. We also have a proposal to turn the whole city into a park. This is a reflection of how much our citizens are concerned about environment and greenery.

Professor Nakami: I was impressed to know from Ms. Hiwatashi’s presentation that Minato City has so many resources in store. Mayor Inoue’s talk on how the local efforts to preserve the cultural asset gave rise to a movement toward environmental protection as well as people’s awareness of shared objectives, was also very moving. Mr. Maeno’s presentation enlightened me about the fact that it was due to the connection with the last war that Japan lagged behind in its ratification of the world heritage treaty. I renewed awareness that Japan and its people are blessed, and thought that there must be many ways for us to help with the preservation of cultural assets of less blessed countries.

Mr. Maeno: The original meaning of the Japanese word “Kanko” is not pleasure trips. “Kan” means “To see things with your heart” and “Ko” means “the virtue of things.” What should be the right policy in tourism? I think it is for us to create something from which foreign tourists can learn. If we succeed in it, it means we could be a transmitter of culture. From this viewpoint, it is only detrimental to construct a fancy

road. It is far more important to foster well-qualified guides. Japan's economy has been based on the value of land, not on the market value of the architecture or assets built on the land. We must correct this mentality. It is important to learn life-styles of different communities. For example, Yanaka has been a community of a very low crime rate with good reasons. Because there are plant terraces along the alleys, people engage in conversation looking at the flowers. They always say hello to their neighbors, clean the street in front of their own houses as well as their neighbors', look after their neighbors houses when they are out, and do not tone down their voices in conversation. We should learn from and revive such way of life in the "alley community."

Q&A with the floor:

Q: Tokyo Mayor Ishihara has been an enthusiastic proponent of a next Tokyo Olympic Games. Almost all of senior citizens I know in the community are against it. There must be many other issues which should receive higher priority. May I invite Ms. Hiwatashi's opinion about this?

Ms. Hiwatashi: I'm personally against the Olympic plan. We should be very cautious in assessing merits and demerits. One concern is a possible damage to environment. In a way I'm optimistic because it is not clear yet whether Tokyo will win the nomination.

Moderator (Dr. Miwa): Mr. Maeno mentioned the importance of plant terraces along alleys. I've been of the same opinion. The Meiji Jingu Forest was created from planting of different trees brought by youths representing different villages and towns from all over Japan. Decades later, in certain areas in Tokyo, people faced intimidating "jiaige" violence of land sharks. Alley plants and trees were thrown away. What a big loss! The Odaiba reclaimed area could have been used as a place to accommodate the neglected alley plants and trees with the hands of senior citizens and their grandchildren. I proposed this idea 30 years ago as a member of the Minato City's town design committee. If the idea were adopted then and enacted, there must have been a splendid "Senior Citizens Forest" which grandchildren would have admired.

On another topic, I've been disappointed in the negligence I've witnessed in the street environment at the Takanawa residential area as well as the gate vicinity of the Sengakuji Temple. I also want to point to a wrong character used in the explanation about the Christian martyrs in Edo, inscribed on a metal plate, which was erected by the Tokyo Board of Education. While it takes a long time before any administration changes its behavior, we can change right away. Let us cooperate with grass-roots power.

Q (Mr. Matsumoto): I understand that Amano-Hashidate is categorized into cultural assets, not natural assets. In the viewpoint of world heritage, how do you differentiate natural and cultural assets, Mr. Inoue?

Mayor. Inoue: Natural heritages are supervised by the Ministry of Environment. Because Amano-Hashidate has been preserved by human hands, we wanted it to be accepted as a cultural heritage. The idea was approved by the Agency of Cultural Affairs. Likewise Mt. Fuji was also included in the tentative list of cultural heritages last year. People often think of Kyoto as a symbol of Japanese culture. However, the Tango area boasts a history of 2,000 or 3,000 years. We want to present our city internationally as a successful model of an environmentally sustainable world heritage.

Dr. Miwa: I'd like to give a few comments to each of the panelists. Mayor Inoue, are the pine trees along the scenic seaside akamatsu (red pine) or kuromatsu (black pine)? Pine trees are not inherent in Japan. These and other questions should be explained well if people want to preserve your landmark as a world heritage. Ms. Hiwatashi, please ask the Tokyo Metropolitan office to correct the wrong character in the commemorative monument plate. Mr. Maeno said that Japanese people are yet to transmit their own culture. I for one think that we Japanese do not necessarily have to transmit since modesty has been an embedded virtue in our society. If foreigners visit Japan and find something worth bringing back home, that's fine. Professor Nakami's presentation provoked a viewpoint that if China, Korea and Japan share similar thoughts on folk arts and if something were jointly created through trilateral interactions, there might be a possibility that such created asset be recognized as a world heritage just like the way the fortresses built in three European countries during the period of the Roman Empire countries were collectively registered as a world heritage.

Ms. Hiwatashi: Please look at the photo which shows the historic relic of religious persecution to which Dr. Miwa referred. During the shogunate years of Iemitsu, Japanese Christians were persecuted and a total of 50 believers were burned to death here at Takanawa. It is today a spot of tourist attraction. Concerning the wrong character issue, I will certainly talk with the local people to work out a bottom-up way for a solution. We in Minato City will follow suit of what Miyazu citizens have done.

Mr. Maeno: I'm fed up with the monetary calculation behind the applications for world heritage registrations. People should be aware beforehand of the greater importance of how to protect their own culture or the pride of the local community. That's why I started not to use the word "survey" in my evaluation work. If I ask "Where can I find a place of your town's pride?" any of the local people would respond quite cooperatively. The "Chochin" lanterns made in Gifu Prefecture are popular throughout the world. This attests to the fact that good designs, nurtured in traditional industries and still alive today, have a potential for international popularity.

Ms. Hiwatashi: There remains in the Shibaura section an old and unused public hall, an architecture characterized by modern Japanese design, which was built in 1936. In September 2006, at the request of the community people, the Minato City Assembly submitted to the Tokyo Metropolitan administration a proposal for the preservation and meaningful utilization of the hall. We are yet to receive a response.

Professor Nakami: It seems that young people as well as middle-aged people today are just too busy with their work. Unless they can slow down their life style, it must be very difficult for them to pay attention to the preservation of cultural heritages. Therefore, I hope that respectable senior citizens who have more disposable time and energy would undertake the preservation job. At the same time, I hope that the life style of young people will change for the better, including their attitude toward the preservation of cultural heritages.

(Written by Y. Miyashita, Standing Director, the Science & Culture Committee, and translated by S. Tanahashi, Standing Director, the PR, Bulletin & Internet Committee)

The 3rd MUA Cross-cultural Awareness Workshop 2008
(Endorsed by Minato City Board of Education)

“Chinese Media Now”

Date: February 20, 2009

Place: Minato City Life-long Learning Center

Our speaker for this workshop was Mr. Yosuke Watanabe, Associate Editor, Foreign News Section, Kyodo News. Mr. Watanabe joined Kyodo News upon graduation from Sophia University in Tokyo back in 1983. He has been mainly responsible for the coverage in China and the United States. After accomplishing his four year assignment in Beijing, during which the Beijing Olympics were held, he returned to Japan only three months ago. Before the assignment in Beijing, he was engaged in reportorial duties in Washington, D.C. for four years.

We enjoyed hearing very interesting and informative stories on the latest circumstances surrounding Chinese media. Below is the summary of his lecture.

Introduction

I was given an opportunity to take a close look at the latest media circumstances in China during my almost four years of assignment in Beijing from December 2004 to October 2008. It was a great opportunity for me to think about the intrinsic function of media as well as the role it has to play in the society, by comparing the largely changing Chinese media and the Japanese.

Today, I would like to talk to you on the direction Chinese media is heading toward, how it is currently regulated, what challenges it faces, and how it may be reformed in the future. I would also like to touch on the aspect that the way Chinese media is operated today has to change in the wake of globalization.



My Ties with China

I stayed in Beijing for one year from 1991 for the study of Chinese language, followed by two years stay in Shanghai, and about one year thereafter in Hong Kong under British rule. Thus, I ended up living in China and its mandated areas for eight years in total, including the most recent four years stay in Beijing. During my stay there, I was involved as a news reporter in covering such historical events as the transfer of sovereignty of Hong Kong from Britain to China in 1997, anti-Japan demonstration of April, 2005 triggered by the deterioration of Japan-China relationship, riot in Tibet of March 2008, deteriorating earthquake in Szechuan in May 2008, and Beijing Olympics of August 2008. You may be well aware of the big change China underwent during the early part of the 90's. Some experts say that they have never seen any country which experienced a cosmetic change in such a short period of time. I lived in Beijing after an interval of about ten years or so this time, and found that those streets with the traces of the 90's had disappeared and the scenery of the district where I lived had totally changed.

Media Industry of Japan in Tempestuous Period

I first would like to refer to the media industry of Japan. I can say that it is in tempestuous period as well. Due to a steep decline in the advertising revenue affected by the penetration of Internet as well as low birthrate, the local newspaper companies recently abolished the issue of evening papers one after another, which resulted in the decrease of total circulations. Younger people are more and more getting away from newspapers. TV industry also has been seriously damaged by the decline of advertising revenue. It is often pointed out that TV viewer rate has been decreasing. Both newspaper and TV, which are deemed to be traditional media, are in low-spirited in short. On the other hand, the future image of the Internet is not clear enough as a new media. Many people voice questions whether the Internet will play a vital role as a public institution. In today's Japan, the role of media is greatly questioned, and media itself is searching a self-image best suited for survival in the future.

Media Industry of Today's China

In short, it can be said that there are hundreds of media and they are all full of energy and vigor. Let's take a magazine just as an example. Newspaper stalls in Beijing showcase a variety of colorful magazines. There you can see Chinese version of "National Geographic" and "Cosmopolitan" of the U.S., and "Vogue" a French women's magazine. Next to these, you can also see such Japanese magazines as "Ray" and "ViVi". As for books, Haruki Murakami is a best-selling writer whose book sold over three million, and "Ieyasu Tokugawa", a work of Sohachi Yamaoka sold over two million. Junichi Watanabe is also quite popular. As for TV programs, high quality family dramas are aired, and news shows take up a variety of social issues. Younger people in urban areas use the Internet as well as mobile phones better than those of Japan.

Thus, the entire China is filled with the dynamism and upward momentum generated by a rapid social and economic development, and the media takes part in it. Chinese society has been throwing off the old totalitarian atmosphere since the 90's and is on its way to liberalization. I would like to point out that the media is no exception; i.e. we see the liberalization and diversification of the media as well.

Regulation over Media in China

In view of Japanese and world criteria, Chinese media is not really free. As you all know from press report, it is institutionally regulated in various manners.

"Reporters Without Borders", an organization of international journalists headquartered in Paris, released in October 2008 a chart which lists countries of the world in the order of the degree of freedom of media. Northern European countries were ranked highest, China ranked 162nd which was the 6th from the bottom, and Japan ranked 42nd (*note). In a word, the degree of media freedom in China was assessed the lowest among the major countries in the world.

The role of media in today's China, according to the definition given in the "The Outline for National Cultural Development" announced by the authorities in September 1996, are to propagate all in all the affirmation of the Communist Party in a proactive manner, and to lead the public opinion to the right direction, thereby definitely establishing itself as the "throat and tongue" of the Party. This clearly shows that the policy established at the foundation of the country has been firmly maintained since then, in which the role of the media is defined as the due guidance of the public opinion and the propagation of the Communist Party. Therefore, the revelation of the truth which is highly valued in Japanese, European and the U.S. media, the monitoring of and criticism against the government, and the provision of a fair vision on the international disputes are not given highest priority in China.

Observing the basic policy of the government, the coverage and writing of Chinese journalists are restricted in various ways. First, they are not allowed to criticize the Communist Party and the Central People's Government. Especially, they are strictly forbidden to pose any question about the one-party regime by the Communist Party. Number of persons killed by the natural calamity has not been made public for a long time because it is considered to have a negative effect on the stability of society. Criticism against the patriotism or heroes that the Central People's Government admires as ideal, or any description that may alter the perception of history, no matter how many centuries it goes back, are restricted as well.

The express statement of the restriction, however, is not necessarily provided for. Being well aware of the restrictions, journalists of China have been maneuvering around them based on their long experience. Even experienced journalists are not quite sure where the separator line of restrictions exists. Journalists and researchers in China figuratively describe this as "pitch a very close ball." It is the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee that imposes such restrictions. Sport journals, among Chinese papers, offer very objective and good coverage, I believe. (*note: Ranking as of April 2009. For your information, Germany was 11th, France 19th, U.S.A. 22nd, England 28th and Italy 39th.)

Regulatory Issues surrounding Media

I would like to cite three issues here.

1) Absence of "a canary in coal mine"

A canary in coal mine chatters first when oxygen is lost. This should be the role of media. With the strict restrictions on media, however, incidents become much more serious as the warning can not be triggered. (Example: melamine-contaminated foods)

2) Recognition of society by general public is largely distorted or blanked

By reading news, people are not only getting acquainted with incidents but would be able to store knowledge selected from various kinds of information, which would eventually lead to the growth of an individual. If the essential fact was not informed, however, people's recognition would be distorted. For instance, the slaughter in Cambodia (which was in a cooperative relationship with China), Tiananmen Square incident and accidents in coal mine were not informed to public in general.

3) Non-existence of outlet for complaint destabilizes the social order

When people of Japan were unduly treated by an enterprise or government, or face massive illegality, they first contact either police or court. Should this act never solve the problem, then, they may run in the media for assistance. Thus, media makes itself an important equalizer of the society. If this kind of social system can not be made due to restrictions, then people are not provided with the outlet for complaint. (voice of victims of massive quake in Szechuan)

Measures against problems inherent in Chinese Government

When Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao emphasized the necessity of political reform in the interview of CNN TV of the U.S. last year, he also emphasized that he would promote the democratic electoral system gradually and strengthen the monitoring function on the government as well as improve the transparency of the government, and that the media should especially play an important role for all these to happen.

In a country with a vast land and a huge population as well as numerous government officials like China, there virtually exists no other body than media that performs monitoring function on the government, and fair eyes of media are indispensable. It seems that high officials in the government well understand the problems caused by restrictions on the media.

In the meantime, current restrictions on the media range from simple criticism of the government to the perception of history, the way people look at the history, and domestic policies, foreign affairs, historical and statistical data. Therefore, if the government decided to allow somewhat free news reports, it should be very troublesome to determine where to draw a line for relaxing restrictions. Thus, while the emergence of objective media was deemed necessary, it is quite difficult to realize it. There shouldn't be any other ways than moving forward step by step. I would be keeping a very close watch on how well the government leads the way.

Impact of Globalization

It is worth pointing out that the advancement of press freedom becomes possible, or even becomes reality, with such an external factor as the infiltration of globalization deeper into a country. It is a change induced by an external influence or pressure. For instance, deregulation to overseas media was effected from January to October 17th last year for the Beijing Olympics, which seems to have been a part of the entire reform and openness policy of Chinese government. It was intended to be a temporary statute until October 17th, but was eventually extended beyond the initially set term. In short, this statute essentially allowed overseas media to enter any part of China freely except Tibet Autonomous Region, and it largely helped our news gathering activities.

The access to the websites of BBC and CNN were restricted and shut down from the eyes of Chinese public. However, the access was suddenly allowed a few weeks prior to the opening of the Olympic Games. Access to most homepages other than a few exceptions became possible, and it was a very big movement toward deregulations. While the access to the websites of BBC and CNN were again restricted after the Olympics were over, it was a good example of advancing the liberalization of media in China even temporarily with the external pressure.

Moreover, during the course of responding to the globalization, a wide variety of administrative institutions became involved in the management of media. As the tug-of-war among these institutions escalates, the liberalization of media advances. It can be said that such an internal factor possibly advances the liberalization of media as well.

The Future of Media

It is a fact that traditional news report and media cannot stand as an industry any longer in Japan, Europe and the U.S. which are considered to be advanced countries in terms of media. Just by carrying out the function of monitoring the government, they can not stand as an industry. The government is starting to protect the newspaper industry in France.

Under such circumstances, what ideal image of media might China likely to pursue? It should be a great challenge for the Chinese government. I would like to see with particular interest how it develops.

During the post-lecture Q & A session, various questions were asked one after another, which clearly showed the audiences' increasing interest in China.

(Written by M. Takai, Vice President, and translated by Y. Suda, Vice Chairman, the PR, Bulletin & Internet Committee)

What I've learned from a solo cycling trip in Africa.

Date: March 18, 2009

Place: Minato City Life-long Learning Center

For this workshop, we invited as our speaker Ms. Mio Yamazaki, a cyclist who has published an interesting book titled “Mango and a close-cropped head – a 5,000km- long cycling trip in Africa.” Ms. Yamazaki achieved the first Japanese woman’s cycling tour in Africa for a total length of 5,000km visiting eight countries along the way. Her initial motivation was to see the wide world with her own eyes. During the trip she encountered various cross-cultural shocks, had a surgical operation without anesthesia on the swollen foot, suffered from high malaria fever. But first and foremost she enjoyed face to face interactions with poor yet warm-hearted local people. In short, she said that it was a trip of “Discover myself.” Her exciting travelog was full of interesting slides and heart-warming episodes.



Brief resume of Ms. Yamazaki:

1982 Born in Ikeda, Osaka

2001 Entered Osaka University of Foreign Studies, Swahili major

2004 Accomplished a 6,000km all-around-Japan cycling trip on leave from the university. Started in August on a solo cycling trip, the first as a Japanese woman, across eight African countries, from Kenya to South Africa.

2005 Completed the African trip in January. Graduated from the university in April and started a business career. Later she quit the job and became a cyclist. Accomplished a cycling trip around Taiwan. Visited Cuba for cycling.

2007 Was invited to Eritrea in November as a goodwill tourist ambassador and joined a cycling event.

2008 Joined in May in an event called Middle East Peace Cycling where a total of 300 women participated from 30 countries. As the representative from the Japanese branch, she cycled across Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine. In September she participated in a Cycling Safari Tour held in Tanzania.

2009 Made in January a cycling trip in Vietnam.

Today Ms. Yamazaki is a representative of an organization called “Kogu-way” which sends different messages to society through cycling-related activities. She also represents the Japan-Africa Youth Network. The following is a summary of her presentation.

How I planned a solo cycling trip in Africa

I've been interested in pursuing a future career in the field of international contributions. While studying about developing countries, I started to have an increasing interest in Africa. This motivated me to enter Osaka University of Foreign Studies and major in Swahili. While at the university, I made two trips to Africa with classmates. In the first trip, we traveled as ordinary backpackers. Second time, we

joined a student cultural exchange program and stayed in Kenya for one month. It was a study which enabled us to visit Japanese NGO's and business companies operating there and study about Africa with local students.

During the stay I met a Japanese woman who had been helping poor people in slums as an NGO member. I was awakened by her outspoken remark – “You are like a baby. You have never been exposed to hardships.” I also became aware of the far distance between myself as a foreigner and the local people.

I wanted to make friends with them because I was studying Swahili. When I advanced to a junior student in spring, I hit upon an idea to make a solo cycling trip in Africa. I thought that it would enable me to move around in Africa at my own pace, and that it would provide a good opportunity to look closely at local people's way of life from a plane viewpoint.

Purchase of a mountain bike and cautious preparations

I made up my mind to take a one-year temporary leave from the university as a senior student to visit Africa, following an elaborate 18-month preparation. The first step was to purchase a mountain bike and get used to riding it. My grandfather endorsed my ambitious plan and presented me with enough money to buy one as a birthday present.

As it was critical to acquire a versatile skill to repair any problem with the bike, I asked for an on-the-job training at the bicycle shop where I bought it. Finally, I became competent enough to assemble all separate components into a bicycle. I started to commute by bike to the university every day over a 12km distance. I also interviewed those who were knowledgeable about Africa and those who had made cycling trips there. Although a majority of my friends were concerned and critical of my daring plan, I steadily accumulated necessary information and prepared myself against contingency. After completing the junior-year curriculum, I filed an application for a one-year leave from the university, in which I explained that the objective was to study Africa firsthand for my dissertation. It was accepted.

To persuade my parents by accomplishing an across-Japan cycling trip

The greatest challenge for me before starting on the planned cycling trip in Africa was how to persuade my parents. To demonstrate a feasibility of my plan, I decided to start in April 2004 on an across-Japan cycling trip over a two-month period. This trip would also provide a good opportunity to look at my homeland with my own eyes so that I would be able to tell about Japan with confidence once I arrived in Africa.

I was not aware how much it would cost to make such a cycling trip in Japan. I dared to write a letter of request for sponsorship to the president of a nationwide fast food chain, enclosing details of the plan and my objective attached with data on dietary requirements for a cyclist. To my great joy, I received a phone call in a few days from the president himself, saying that the company would support my plan, and that they would offer free meals at any of their chain restaurants during the cycling trip. Other food companies also offered portable products. For lodging I stayed at the home of my friends, railway stations, health gym facilities, etc. All in all, I could accomplish this trip with the cost of only ¥30,000.

When I returned to Osaka from this trip, the Asahi shimbun carried a supportive article titled, “She did it! Next objective is an across-Africa trip.” Thanks to cooperation from many friends, I could finally persuade my parents. Frankly my

mother was persistently opposing my plan whereas my father told me, "You may go if you have taken every possible caution and are confident of your security during the trip." I promised them that I would come back safe and sound with lots of fond memories, in reciprocation for all the people who had supported my plan. In August 2004, I finally left Osaka with the mountain bike to accomplish the 5,000km-long cycling trip across eight African countries - from Kenya to South Africa.

It was a "Discover me" trip in Africa

The eight African countries where I visited southbound on bike were Kenya (Nairobi was the starting point), Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia and South Africa (Cape Hope was the goal). After departure from Japan, I first arrived in Cape Town in the Republic of South Africa. While in Japan, I already prepared a route map and collected necessary information on lodging facilities along the route. However, I wanted to be most cautious before getting started on the cycling trip. For this reason I decided to travel northbound up to Kenya, mainly by public transportation such as bus and railroad. I thought it would enable a reality check, including the societal security of each country and the condition of roads.

First I joined an overland tour by truck, departing from Cape Town and arrived in 20 days at the site of the Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. A total of 20 youth participants from Germany, Holland, Japan, Switzerland and the U. S. spent together a camping life along the way. Once in Zimbabwe, I wanted to catch northbound bus and train to reach Nairobi, Kenya, carrying my bike all the way. It was my policy to retire from the ambitious plan once I was exposed to any serious danger to my life.

While in Zimbabwe, I entered a local barbershop and had my hair close clopped to look like a young male. This marked my committed start of the cycling trip and determination not to return home before accomplishing the objective.

I made it a rule to keep up a positive attitude, demonstrate visible friendship, and interact with local people as often as possible throughout the trip. For security reason, I disguised myself as a male. Before leaving Japan, I purchased a false mustache and chest hair, men's shirts and long pants, along with an alarm whistle.

The bike was loaded with a whole range of life items, including clothes, repair kits, medicine and insect repellent, a diary and stationery, camera, a sleeping bag, a tent, and a water bottle, among others. I ate what local people eat. For main meals at lunch and dinner, I ate dumplings of boiled floured corn and rice with stew and other side dishes. Mango trees were grown everywhere and you could pick and eat fruits as much as you wanted. Incidentally I published a book on mango and myself after accomplishing this cycling trip. Sometimes I even ate fried moth larva caterpillar to promote friendship with local people by sharing same food.

The following is an overview of what I have experienced in each country:

Kenya: Nairobi, the state capital, was the starting point of the cycling trip. It is a large city with many high-rise buildings. Once you are away from Nairobi about 30km, you'll be in savanna where the Masai tribe lives. Modernized Masai youths hand cell phones from the neck and walk along the street listening to hip hop music. When they see tourists, they approach them, hide the modern gadgets, and ask for money for commemorative photos together. However, there are Masai's who adhere to the traditional way of life.

Tanzania: I saw a villager riding a wooden bicycle. Every component, from the wheels to brake, was neatly made of wood. They cannot afford expensive bicycles imported from China or India. I was truly impressed with the way African villagers work out a way to produce what they want from available materials, without giving it up. When I was cycling across another village, I was caught by a rainy season squall. I felt depressed because I was forced to stop the trip. To my surprise, I saw children of the village jumping around with great joy in the heavy rain. They taught me the importance of changing the state of mind into positive thinking.

Malawi: When I was about to take photos of Lake Malawi, children came close to me and asked, "Are you Jet Lee or Bruce Lee?" as they posed like Kung Fu practitioners. Because China-made DVD's of action movies are extensively sold in Africa, local people call any Asian China and are preoccupied that any Asian must be a Kung Fu master.

After I dipped my feet in the water of Lake Malawi, I had a painful swell in the left foot, due to bacteria infection from a leech. When I visited a hospital in the nearby village, the doctor cut the swollen portion for about five centimeters without anesthesia. Exhausted pus filled a cup. I felt depressed because I was forced to stay here for ten days for treatment and recovery.

A 15-year old boy, who served me at the lodging, encouraged me by presenting mango, papaya and milk. How generous he was! His monthly income must be very small. Even today I maintain my interaction with him by telephone and postal mail. Marietto, who was handling telephone service at the lodging, was a cheerful and healthy-looking woman. She also encouraged me while I was recovering. Two years ago, I was saddened at the news that she had passed away because of AIDS. The disease is a serious challenge to the country as people do not have enough awareness of the threat. Every evening the villagers invited me for dinner to encourage me. This experience changed by stereotype image of Africans as poor and helpless people. I became ashamed of myself and took precious lessons during the stay.

Mozambique: Because this country was formerly a colony of Portugal, it has received a lot of Portuguese influence in its culture. People are very fond of spaghetti and egg tart. I cycled for 300km across the country in three days.

Zimbabwe: People are suffering not only from a hyper-inflation after the national economy collapsed last year but also from cholera which spread nationwide. Many people started to seek refuge in other countries due to famine. Before leaving Japan, I had studied the prices at available hotels and restaurants but they were six times higher than expected. To save expenses, I was forced to sleep in my tent at safe places such as a space next to a police station. Initially I was questioned in detail by a policeman but later he became increasingly friendly

Zambia: When I saw the Victoria Falls on Christmas and New Year's Day, I was totally overwhelmed by the enormous mass of water. I got soaked wet as if I had taken shower while I was looking at the magnificent scenery from the spectator's stand.

When I came to a border checkpoint facing Namibia, a military officer with a gun took me to a room and checked my belongings thoroughly. This strict attitude was quite a contrast from other checkpoints which often looked like highway toll gate offices, and where officers gave OK stamps on my passport in a generous manner.

Namibia: This desert country is known for Namibu Desert. The road stretched ahead in the midst of sands. Sometimes the road was covered with sands and when you get off your bike, the only sound you hear is the whistling sound of the wind. There was almost no shade on the desert. Even if you see a tree which provides a shade, it's dangerous to stand under it because an extremely poisonous snake, which lives high up in the tree, may jump down at you.

Thus I could not help having a rest under the scorching sun, with the temperature rising as high as 54 degrees C. Bread stored in a basket in the front was almost baked and water in the bottle became hot enough to fix tea. It was imperative that I take 500ml water every 30 minutes to survive the lonely battle with the relentless nature.

South Africa: It was in January 20, 2005 when I returned to Cape Town after the long cycling trip. The city is commercially developed and has modern and colorful streets to please tourists. You can enjoy tasty food, cool beverages, and shopping at malls. It was a sea change from the scenery and way of life I had experienced during the cycling trip. On the following day, I made a final stretch of cycling to the goal point – Cape of Hope.

This place is counted among the world heritage sites and boasts unique plantations as well as rare birds and animals. Everything I saw looked so fancy and bright that I almost felt like being a heroine in a fairy tale. The African cycling trip made me become aware of my blindness to the simple fact that I had been leading a bright and affluent way of life in Japan. It also taught me a lesson that I should correct the aforementioned stereotype perception of Africa.

Return to Japan

I was welcome back to Japan on January 30, 2005, with shouts of “Okaerinasai!” at the airport, from my family, friends, media people, and others. It was with deep emotion that I uttered “Tadaima!” after the long African trip where I had been vulnerable to a risk of danger to my life. I was aware that the successful accomplishment of the solo-cycling across the eight African countries would not have been possible without the generous support from countless number of supporters in Japan. I also owed the success to the goodwill of local people at different villages along the route. I reiterated my hearty thanks to all of them for enabling the 109-day, 5,000km-long trip.

It was a great opportunity to discover myself, too. I learned so many lessons from the experience. I wish to be continuously involved in the interaction with Africa in my own way. Key words in my motto for the future will be “Thankfulness,” “Commitment,” and “Fun to live.” In the foreseeable future, I want to visit different countries to participate in cycling events. I will utilize my friendliness as the best tool to be understood by local people and look forward to sharing my experiences with Japanese people.

(Written by T. Watabe, Standing Director, the Cross-cultural Awareness Committee, and translated by S. Tanahashi, Standing Director, the PR, Bulletin & Internet Committee)

The 2009 MUA Annual General Meeting

With an Attraction to Promote Japan-Armenia Friendship

Date : Saturday, April 25, 2009

Place: Minato City Life-long Learning Center

The 2009 MUA General Meeting was held for one hour from 13:00 on Saturday, April 25th, at the Minato City Life-long Learning Center, with some 50 people present including Ms. Mori and Mr. Fujisaki in charge of MUA activities from Minato City Board of Education as well as Mr. Osaka, Head of the Life-long Learning Center.



Prior to the meeting, all the attendees offered a silent prayer for Mr. Kohei Ohba, ex-Vice President of MUA, who passed away on the 3rd of March 2009. Dr. Miwa, President of MUA, gave an opening address, focusing on MUA's history and activities. He also touched on the history of Armenia. It was because the previous day (April 24th) was a very special day for Armenia to observe a very sad incident during WWI. In concluding his speech, Dr. Miwa expressed his wish that MUA would continuously contribute to global society with the spirit of friendship. Then, all the agenda of the meeting were presented and unanimously endorsed by the attendees.

Following the meeting, there was an attraction to promote Japan-Armenia Friendship, which was held from 14:00 in the same room. The attraction started with a speech by Mr. Masaaki Takei, Minato City Mayor, featuring the community's international cultural exchanges and MUA activities. There was another speech by Mr. Tsuchiya on behalf of Mr. Kaoru Yosano, MUA Director. The main event of the party was Armenian traditional songs and dancing performed by an Armenian mother, Suzanne, and her daughter who were both clad in their hand-made traditional folk costume. They seemed very happy to answer a lot of questions about their country raised by the attendees without a break. Time ran out quickly.



(Written and translated by T. Mizuno, Vice Chairman of the PR, Bulletin & Internet Committee)

(Continued from Page 1): If Only Your Eyes Meet

chased away into the desert to the west. It began on April 24, 1915. This date is an unforgettable national day for the contemporary independent state of Armenia.

For us in Japan too, there are unforgettable national days like Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But they are a consequence of the war we ourselves started. Therefore they are different from the Armenian national day of April 24 commemorating the racial atrocity which is identified as the same in nature as the Jewish Holocaust. I believe there are many Japanese who console themselves by saying that the Japanese war guilt was served right.

It so happens that on the following day of this memorial day, our Minato UNESCO Association hosts an event of Armenian woman and her young daughter's ethnic singing and dancing. Honoring the tragic historical past, let us try to learn a historical lesson while in some parts of this human world deathly struggles are rampant between peoples. Let us learn tolerance toward different cultures and respect for them, and on the basis of mutual trust, try to open up the way to coexistence and co-prosperity. The first step toward this goal must lie in the heartfelt communication of the eye contact. (April 9, 2009)

World Cooking Workshop

Swedish Cuisine, Once Again!

Date: February 21, 2009

Place: Minato City Gender-free Center

We had the pleasure of having Ms. Marianne Wilson Kuroda, a consultant to foreigners in Japan, as our instructor again in this workshop, following the one in November 2008 presented as “Swedish Christmas Cuisine.” The last workshop was so popular that the number of applicants was far above the capacity of 30 people.



Day's menu:

- Cod au gratin with mashed potato
- Pancake
- Stuffed egg
- Potato soup

Ms. Kuroda picked up a recipe for gratin using seasonal codfish from northern seas with voluminous potato as today's main dish. According to the questionnaire after the workshop, many participants said the codfish au gratin tinted red with tomato ketchup was quite delicious. Today's workshop seemed to have deepened our knowledge about Sweden and made us to feel more interested in Sweden.

Not only the cooking but also her talk attracted much attention of the participants. Her grandmother is not in good physical condition now, though she is longing for the days coming back when she will spend in the kitchen and is still keeping a refrigerator off the power and bundled dishes at home. In Japan, this is beyond our thought.

“You cut a birthday cake equally for all the attendees in Japan. It cannot be in Sweden. The star of the day takes as much as he/she likes first, and then others take as much as they need. This is the Swedish style.” We were all surprised.

According to Ms. Kuroda, a public-opinion poll showed that 98% of Swedish people were satisfied that they had been born in Sweden, from which I felt something about quality of life in Sweden. Perhaps I need to change my life style.

I do appreciate Ms. Marianne Wilson Kuroda for having accepted the instructor of the workshop two times successively in spite of her busy daily life. The workshop committee is committed to continue offering you opportunities to enjoy talks by instructors from all over the world as well as to learn cooking of the other part of the world.

(Written by H. Komatsu, ex-Chairperson, the World Cooking Workshop Committee, and translated by T. Mizuno, Vice Chairman of the PR, Bulletin & 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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