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The Death of *Tokko* Pilots and the Nobel-laureate Novelist Kawabata Yasunari

Kimitada Miwa, MUA President Emeritus



I have a memory of writing an essay about my experience during the years I studied in the U. S. It concerned a Jesuit priest Professor's judgement lectured in the class of special ethics. I cannot recall whether a written essay was contributed to this newsletter. The case in question was about the so-called "*Tokko*" or go-for-broke aircraft attack operation which was introduced by the Japanese military toward the end of the Pacific War. The Jesuit professor asked the class, "Should the death of the Japanese *Tokko* pilots be regarded as suicide or should it be perceived just like any other type of death on battlefields?" Students as young as upper-teenagers were in the class of Georgetown University located within Washington, D. C.

Most of the students were Irish Catholic boys. It was the zeitgeist for boys then to behave like a macho. Suicide is a grave sin in Christianity and those who commit it is bound to fall to hell. No Christian funeral can be officiated for those who have committed suicide. Indeed the dead body of such a person used to be buried in a crossroads of the locality of his/her living quarters. Thus the sinful person who has committed the grave sin of suicide will be stamped by passers-by who happen to come along.

As for me, the death of a *Tokko* pilot was a "heroic death." In my perception, against the backdrop of the masculine culture prevalent in the U. S. then, such a death must be counted as a "brave one's honorable death." There is an intriguing episode in the U. S. navy which seems to validate such a perception. When the dead body of a *Tokko* pilot was thrown out on to the deck of a U. S. aircraft carrier, her captain concluded that the dead pilot deserved the same honorable treatment as granted to the dead U. S. soldiers, and ordered that the body be wrapped with the Japanese national flag, most likely the rising-sun flag worn diagonally across the pilot's upper body, and buried courteously at sea.

The ethics which motivated the captain's response was based on the same logic as I learned at Georgetown University. The interpretation, which supported the logic, was that "The *Tokko* death is not suicidal because the objective of the *Tokko* pilot was to hit and sink the enemy battleship. As a means to fulfill his objective, the pilot steered his aircraft to crash into the enemy ship's deck. Death was anticipated as a result of such an action but it was not his objective."

I attended the ethics class during the 1950's when the masculine culture prevailed under the stereotype macho image. The aforementioned ethical judgment sounded to me like a typical sophistry partly because I was yet to be completely severed from the education I had received during the militaristic years.

(To be continued on P. 6)

The Second 2018 Cross-cultural Awareness Workshop
Sound and Acoustic Effect

Speaker: Dr. Akihiro Nakajima, Conductor and Composer
Doctor of Architectural Acoustics

Date: October 30, 2018

Place: Minato City Life-long Learning Center

Dr. Nakajima talked about the interesting experiences he had during four years spent for study at Universität Mozarteum Salzburg in Austria in the Cross-cultural Awareness Workshop back in July 2016 which was favorably received by the audience. He spoke on the sound and acoustic effect, his another specialty, for the Workshop this time.



• **Fundamentals of sound**

- From the viewpoint of a musician, sound brings about some emotional change in a person who hears it. It becomes more profound as you get to know it more.
- From the viewpoint of an engineer, it is the sound wave or the wave motion. It propagates by compressional wave which is generated by the vibration of particles in the air.

There are two kinds of wave; vertical wave and horizontal. If you image the water surface, it moves vertically while wave spreads horizontally. On the other hand, sound is the compressional wave that is propagated by the vibration of the air. This is one of the vertical waves. With the effect of some vibration in the air, the area where the air is dense and the area where the air is thin are created. Condensed or pressed air makes the adjacent air dense when it restores to a normal state. We acknowledge what is propagated by the movement of such air as sound.

• **Tone color**

Three elements of sound:

- Volume: It is the magnitude of the air vibration.
- Pitch: It is the number of air vibration per hour. The higher the frequency is, the higher the pitch of tone becomes. Human beings are said to identify the sound between 20 and 20000 hertz. Most of the adults, however, can only identify the sound of less than 20000 hertz.
- Tone color: Sound consists of the fundamental tone and various pitches of tones with various volumes. Differences in the combination of pitches and volumes of tones creates various tone colors. Waveforms are different as well.

• **Chord**

Three or more musical tones sounded simultaneously. When two or more musical sounds occur simultaneously, it is called “concord”. When it does not occur that way, then, it is called “discordance”. It sounds more beautifully when sounds at such low frequencies as 2, 3 or 4 octave are piled up on a fundamental frequency level of sound.

• **Acoustic**

It is defined as the repetition of a sound caused by reflection of sound waves, the reflection of transmitted radar signals by an object or a soft repetition of a musical phrase. Musical instruments of classical music are designed based on the premises that sounds created by the instruments come with echoes. The combinations of sounds and echoes create music and the place where music is created is the music hall or theater.

- Acoustic quality in a music hall

Open-air theaters back in ancient Rome did not have roofs but had excellent sound effects. The word “orchestra” is derived from Greek which indicated the semicircular space between stage and audience seats where the choir sang songs or delivered their lines.

Musical entertainment gradually expanded from aristocracy layer to ordinary people after 1700 years. In horseshoe-shaped theaters in Milan, as those seats located just beside the stage were assigned solely to the aristocracy, they were easily seen from the ordinary audience seats.

Opernhaus Leipzig (Gewandhaus) opened in 1781 originally was a warehouse or a market of fabrics. People in early days utilized building structures that can accommodate larger number of people as music halls rather than attaching importance to better acoustic. Gewandhaus was rebuilt in 1884 when the number of seats increased from 500 to 1500 with better acoustic quality.

• Design of a music hall for better acoustic quality

Musical halls are designed in many ways to attain better acoustic quality. Carvings on walls or pillars are effective in diffusing sounds in all directions. In a music hall, “direct sounds” reach the audience first and, then, “reflection sounds” that were reflected by various structures of a hall. A superior music hall can be defined as such that the mixture of “direct sounds” and “reflection sounds” generates excellent harmony.

Any classical music designated to be played in a music hall is composed taking acoustic effect well into consideration.

< Questions and Answers >

Q: What is the difference between a concert hall and an opera house?

A: An opera house is designed to have less acoustic effect. You can hardly identify the words spoken out in a place which is equipped with an excessive acoustic effect. In European countries purpose of use for facilities is explicitly defined, whereas many multi-purpose halls like civic hall are built in Japan which acoustic quality is not good enough for playing and listening classical music.

Q: Which music hall is the best in Japan?

A: Either of Tokyo Bunka Kaikan or Suntory Hall. Tone color in Tokyo Bunka Kaikan shall never disappoint you. Each and every tone in Suntory Hall sounds beautifully. It eventually depends on individual taste.

At last, I dare to touch on a TV program broadcasted back in early January this year on the concert of a Japanese blind pianist Mr. Nobuyuki Tsujii in Iceland. He was paired up with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra conducted by the world famous conductor Mr. Vladimir Ashkenazy. When they practiced in the gymnasium, Mr. Tsujii stated that he was disappointed by the quality of acoustic effect there which he did not think was good enough. Then, Mr. Ashkenazy added that the quality of acoustic effect in a music hall apparently affects the motivation of a player. Their performance later at the Harpa Concert Hall in Reykjavik was applauded by the audience with standing ovation. As I saw this TV program after the lecture by Dr. Nakajima, I could understand the words Mr. Tsujii threw out on the quality of acoustic effect of a hall quite well.

(Written by T. Isobe, Standing Director, and translated by Y. Suda, the PR & Internet Committee Associate)

The 2nd MUA Japanese Speech Contest

Date: Saturday, December 1, 2018

Place: Minato City Life-long Learning Center

A total of 76 people, including 12 speakers, attended the flagship annual event. This was an event subsidized by Minato City, supported by the ESD Activities Support Center and the Kanto Area ESD Activities Support Center, and held in cooperation with Tamagawa University and Keio University's UNESCO Club. The program proceeded in the following order:

1. Opening remark by MC & MUA VP Y. Miyashita
2. Welcome speech by MUA President H. Nagano (right photo)
3. Introduction of the 12 speakers



MUA Pres. Nagano

Part I

4. The speech session

The following 12 speakers introduced themselves in turn, and started to deliver respective speeches on selected subjects:

- ①Ms. Karen Lee (Australia & Taiwan), Sacred Heart International School student
“Japan, Taiwan and Australia”
- ②Mr. Jake Chon (Korea & USA), International School, 7th grader
“Three things I found interesting about Japan”
- ③Ms. Park Junyeon (Korea), Lawyer
“Tokyo, the Univ. of Tokyo, Shimbashi and me”
- ④Ms. Liu Fen (China), Sakushin Gakuin Univ. 3rd grader (Faculty of Human & Culture Science)
“Encounters are treasures, friends are assets, and days spent with friends”
- ⑤Mr. Cliff Yoon (Australia), Nishimachi International School, 2nd grader
“Japan is best! I like Doraemon!”
- ⑥Ms. Choe Yoon (Australia), Nishimachi International School, 5th grader
“What I was impressed most in Japan and what was funny”
- ⑦Ms. Anjana K.C. (Nepal), NPO representative
“Japan as I observed as a foreigner with disability”
- ⑧Mr. Basir Ahmad Hamdard (Afghanistan), 1st Secretary of the Afghanistan Embassy
“Unforgettable memories while in Japan”
- ⑨Ms. Maria Lourdes Santos (Philippines), Esthetician
“Japanese people should be more assertive in their own interest”
- ⑩Mr. Ye Marn Aung (Myanmar), International Institute of Japanese Language student
“Rahmen peps me up. Japanese language encourages me to think by myself”
- ⑪Ms. Nurova Gulizor (Tajikistan), Musashino University (Student sent from the Tajik National University, Faculty of Language Studies)
“What is kindness?”
- ⑫Mr. Ly Chea Chheng (Cambodia), Musashino University (Exchange student sent from the Royal Phnom Penh University)
“Three subjects I took interest in”

5. Break

Part II

6. Evaluation by judges

While the judges started their evaluation in a separate room, the speakers were divided into three groups and interacted with the attendees. Under the guidance of Professor Kobayashi of Tamagawa University, the Keio University UNESCO Club members, who are concurrently MUA Youth Committee members, worked as facilitators in each group. Major topics, shared by the speakers and attendees in a frank atmosphere, included “Difficulty the foreign students encountered in Japan,” “Perception of Japan and the Japanese language,” and “Future outlook of Japan.”



Professor Kobayashi



Speakers & attendees in group discussion

7. Announcement of the evaluation result

Ms. I. Tsuboya, head of the judge panel and the Chair of the Tokyo International School, (left photo below) announced the top three award recipients (right photo below) as follows:

- Excellent Award: Mr. Ye Marn Aung (Myanmar student. Stayed in Japan for seven months)
- MUA President Award: Ms. Maria Lourdes Santos (Filipino esthetician. 8 yrs. in Japan)
- Special Award: Mr. Cliff Yoon (Australian student. Stayed in Japan for 14 months)



Ms. Tsuboya



From left: Yoon, Aung and Santos

8. Commendation ceremony

MUA President Nagano presented a merit certificate, a cup and a commemorative gift (Wajima-lacquered pair chopsticks) to each of the top three winners. He also handed merit certificates, plaques and the Wajima chopsticks to the other speakers.

9. Words of thanks from the speakers

10. Wrap-up of the program

11. Closing remark by MUA VP K. Kikuchi

12. Commemorative photo shooting of all the speakers (photo below)



• Comment from Ms. M. Tsutsui (The 6th Representative of the Keio University UNESCO Club and concurrently Chairperson of the MUA Youth Committee):

I very much enjoyed listening to the speeches presented by non-Japanese speakers, representing different countries and age groups. In particular, I could re-discover what is nice with Japan, of which I've been unaware in daily life, from the findings through the outsider viewpoints of the speakers. During the speakers & attendees discussion session, I worked as a facilitator and had a lot of fun interacting with speakers who come from different countries. For example, I enjoyed learning directly from the speakers about festivals held in their home countries, traditional native costumes, national characteristics, etc. of which I've been unaware. From our dialogue, I could conclude that Japan is a much more attractive country than we usually think, and that I should be more proud and thankful to be born and raised here in Japan.



Our thanks also go to the Keio University UNESCO Club members who volunteered to work at the reception desk (right photo: Ms. Karin Yamada and Ms. Miu Hirashima).

(Written by K. Hirakata, VP, and translated by S. Tanahashi, the PR & Internet Committee)

(Continued from P. 1) The Death of *Tokko* Pilots and the Nobel-laureate Novelist Kawabata Yasunari

However, I felt relieved in the class to know that the *Tokko* pilots' death was not categorized into suicide in Christian ethics. My mindset would not tolerate such an idea as that the *Tokko* pilots, who gave up courageously their youthful lives for the sake of their country, be recompensed by a hell-bound destiny. Indeed I felt as if I were saved by the ethical logic.

Decades have passed since then. The proposition of "Was the death of the *Tokko* pilots suicidal or not?" had sunken into the corner of my old memory. Strange to say, however, the proposition recently surfaced to my consciousness all of a sudden.

It was triggered when I found a novel passage where the author Kawabata Yasunari, the first Japanese Nobel laureate in literature, referred to the death of the *Tokko* pilots. To me his logic seemed vulnerable to the labelling by some intellectuals as "Jesuitical," an adjective often used in English to imply a scornful sophistry. The novel, titled "*Seimei no ki*," or tree of life, was included in the July issue of the *Fujin Bunko* published in 1946, a year after Japan's defeat. In the novel, Kawabata let the protagonist, a young woman who worked at the *Tokko* airbase in Kyushu, give the following remark;

"It was seemingly a death in a forced, produced or performed manner. But I don't think that, in reality, it could be categorized into death as normally perceived. It was the result of *Tokko* pilots' action that led them to their death. Their action in itself meant death. Still, death was not the objective of their action. Therefore, their death was not suicidal." (P. 96, *Collection of short novels published during the post-war occupation period, 1945 – '46, Volume 1*, Fujiwara Shoten 2007)

As mentioned earlier, I was a student at Georgetown University between 1952 and '55. That is when I learned in the special ethics class that "*Tokko* pilots' death was not suicide." It was the logical conclusion of Jesuit Professor Hugh. His logic turned out to be totally identical with that of Kawabata's which was expressed in the aforementioned novel published in 1946, a year after Japan's defeat in the Pacific War. Kawabata, who later would win the Nobel Prize in literature, was 46 years old at that time.

(February 9, 2019)

(Translated by S. Tanahashi, the PR & Bulletin Committee)

The World Cooking Workshop
Typical Home Dishes in Colombia

Date: Saturday, November 2018

Place: Minato City Gender-equality Center

We had the pleasure of having Ms. Camila Furuhashi as the instructor for this workshop. Camila-san is originally from Bogota, the capital city of Colombia. Here in Japan, she runs a cooking class at her home. She married Mr. Hiroyuki Furuhashi 31 years ago and came to Japan. She later accompanied her husband on his overseas assignments and has lived five years in Brazil and one year & three months in Mexico. During her continued stay in Japan, she wished to introduce Colombian dishes to Japanese friends and started to hold the cooking class.

Before we started to learn cooking, Mr. Furuhashi gave a brief audio-visual presentation on the Republic of Colombia. The country is located at the northern part of South American continent, facing the southern edge of the North Panama Canal. Bogota, the capital city, is located at an altitude of 2.6 km above sea level. The geographic distance between Colombia and Japan is 14,400 km. The country has a territory of 1,139 thousand km², almost triple the size of Japan's. It has a population of 48.65 million which breaks down ethnically to mixed race (75%), European (20%), African (1%) and the native (1%).

Colombia is well known in Japan for its coffee production. As Colombian farmers always plant banana trees inside coffee plantations, the production sites of banana and coffee are identical. Leaves of banana trees are often used to wrap lunch food. Typical Colombian dishes, in addition to the day's menu, include Puchero (beef, pork and abundant vegetables) and Posta Cartagenera, a Caribbean dish. The Furuhashi couple also introduced additional home dishes. After the attendees received the orientation about the national profile of Colombia and its traditional dishes, they started to cook in a cheerful atmosphere.

The day's menu included the following four items:

- ① **Ajiaco** (chicken & potato soup)
Soup of chicken, seasoned with salt and garlic, and potato. Add coriander and long onion, sided with fresh cream and avocado.
- ② **Arepas de choclo con Guacamole**
Combine corn with wheat flour and egg, and bake it. Side it with Guacamole (mixture of long onion, coriander, red pepper and avocado).
- ③ **Ceviche de langostinos**
Mix scalded shrimp (Ceviche) with mango, onion, minced coriander, along with orange juice and vinegar. Keep it in a refrigerator before serving.
- ④ **Bananos al horno** (Baked banana)
Sprinkle cinnamon and sugar over banana and bake it with butter. Add fresh cream and cheese and bake it in an oven. Eat it while still hot. You may side it with rice mixed with almond & coriander.

Needless to say, the Furuhashi couple's romance beyond the national border was an enviable incentive to enrich the cooking workshop.



(Written by K. Matsuzaki, Standing Director, the World Cooking Committee, and translated by S. Tanahashi, the PR & Internet Committee)

History of Shibaura and Canal Cruising in Azabujuban

Planned and Implemented by MUA Youth Committee

Date: December 16th, 2018

Time: 10:30 am ~ 4:00 pm

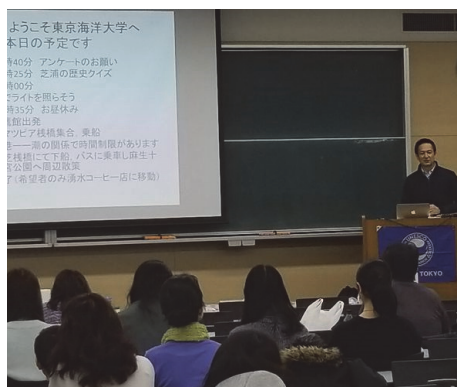
Forty-seven people from Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology (TUMSAT), Keio University, Roppongi High School, Mita High School and four elementary schools in Minato City participated in this brand-new event.

Program:

1. Opening Remark by Miss Mako Tsutsui, Chairperson of the Youth Committee
2. Greetings by Mr. Hiroshi Nagano, President of MUA
3. Lecture by Mr. Tsuyoshi Sasaki, Professor of TUMSAT
 - Fishes and living things in Shibaura area
 - Experiment on producing battery from sludge
4. Canal cruising on a boat starting from Yamatsu Pier
 - Demonstration of fishing with a throw net by Prof. Sasaki
 - Presentation by JR East on Takeshiba Waterfront development plan
5. Walk around a pond in Arisugawa-no-miya Memorial Park
6. Tasting of coffee brewed by spring water



Chairperson Tsutsui



Lecture by Professor Sasaki



Children participating in experiments

«Greetings by MUA President Nagano»



I am very grateful that young members of the Youth Committee planned and implemented this new event, with a great support by TUMSAT, having a good number of participation from Keio University UNESCO Club and those UNESCO schools as Mita High School and Roppongi High School. I am confident that this activity by young members surely will bring about a “revolution” in MUA.

《Words of thanks & future expectation from Prof. Sasaki》

I am very glad to have an opportunity to plan and implement this event through a great cooperation with the Youth Committee members of MUA.

There was a meeting of Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO located in

Venice, Italy back in December 2017 to discuss the ways to attain SDGs set by United Nations when Aquatic Marine Environmental Education Program of TUMSAT was taken up as an advanced example. It is widely understood that SDGs do not stand separate from efforts on ESD. TUMSAT has been conducting Aquatic Marine Environmental Education Program which is basically ESD activities closely connected with forest, river and ocean through cooperation with Sanriku ESD Heigawa University located in Sanriku area where I originally come from.

Japanese people have long cherished forest. Forest brings up lives and provides human beings with clear and cold water. Furthermore, water runs into ocean and generates fishing grounds. Such connections with forest, river and ocean have been supporting the sustainable life style and developing the dietary culture of us Japanese. Through learning and understanding the connections with forest, river and ocean as well as the sustainable life style that has been developed over 10,000 years, we can move forward to attaining SDGs eventually.

I contacted the secretariat office of MUA upon my return from Venice and was provided an opportunity to meet officers of MUA. Then, a meeting was actually set on March 20 this year with a group of people headed by Mr. Nagano. Taking this precious opportunity, I earnestly explained that the connection with forest, river and ocean is the spirituality which had been inherited from generation to generation in Japan; and that I have been involved in the development and maintenance of the connection with forest, river and ocean in Miyako City of Iwate Prefecture and I recognize the trace of same connection here in Minato City as well; and that people have been making livings by maintaining a connection with ocean since Jomon Period and there are many fishermen even now who live on fishing at the mouth of Furukawa River that runs just beside Azabujuban. I fortunately received favorable comments back from Mr. Nagano, Ms. Hirakata and Secretary General that taking good care of land is equivalent to taking good care of ocean, and it shall be quite important for the people in Minato City to understand this.



My sudden visit to MUA secretariat office became the very beginning of preparation toward the canal tour in Azabujuban. I also had a great cooperation and support from the Youth Committee members as well. Members from Keio University UNESCO Club took the trouble to design a flyer of this event and also worked as a moderator. Students from Mita High School UNESCO Club participated proactively in this event. I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all of them. This event was implemented as a part of Aquatic Marine Environmental Education Program of TUMSAT. Students of TUMSAT visited from the mouth of Furukawa River all the way up to Meiji Shrine by bicycle. Spring water comes out in the depth of dense forest which can hardly be identified to be artificial. They further visited Shinjuku Imperial Garden where the artificial hatching of salmon was done for the first time ever in Japan. We conducted an environmental research between Shinagawa and Furukawa Bridge on kayaks.

Now I am giving you a report on our activities here at this event. It is quite important for the maintenance of environment to gain a correct understanding of the current environmental status around water area and inform as many people as possible. I sincerely expect that this activity could develop as a part of UNESCO program.

As you are all aware, UNESCO is the international organization which promotes the peaceful world and better social welfare through various activities in the field of education, science and culture. We can touch on the importance of the connection with forest, river and ocean handed down by our predecessors by way of studying the history of Shibaura and participating in the canal tour. I would like to continue to provide an opportunity to learn the connection with forest, river and ocean as a continuous MUA program, and, thereby, contribute to the development of sustainable society as a model of SDGs.

《Production of a flyer by Miss Karin Yamada, a member of the Youth Committee》

I tried my best to make the flyer attractive and understandable by using a striking contrast of colors as well as a clear map of the sites.

《A Word from Miss Tsutsui, Chairperson of the Youth Committee》

We at Youth Committee all worried whether many people participate in this event or whether participants would enjoy this event, as this was the first event we planned, prepared and implemented. We were all relieved to see more participants than expected. In spite of a harsh weather with cold temperature and freezing rain, we safely reached the destination while enjoying the transition of scenes observed from the boat. Participants all enjoyed the lecture given by Prof. Sasaki on the boat and positively joined in the experiment and quiz. Children trying to produce a battery from sludge under the instruction from Prof. Sasaki looked very enjoyable and impressive. We had such experiences as observing a pond where spring water came out and enjoying a cup of coffee brewed by the spring water which we cannot experience in our daily life. I personally expect to continue planning this kind of event as Youth Committee and, thus, expand UNESCO spirit to young people.

《A Word from Mr. Shigekatsu Mineo, Director of MUA》

I participated in the event of Youth Committee for the first time in a while, and really enjoyed it thanks to the efforts extended by all the members concerned.



All attendees enjoyed the canal cruising

(Written by K. Hirakata, Vice President, and translated by Y. Suda, the PR & Internet Committee Associate)

The Hands-on Calligraphy Workshop

Date: Saturday, December 8, 2018

Place: Minato City Life-long Learning Center

A total of 31 people participated in this program, including eight non-Japanese attendees and four MUA staff. As usual, we had the pleasure of having Kanada Suimu-sensei, a member of the Mainichi Shodo Association, as our instructor. We could learn a lot about calligraphy, a typical traditional Japanese culture, from her kind guidance and lecture.

The workshop proceeded as follows:

- ① Explanation about the calligraphy tools
- ② Exercise of writing Kanji and Hiragana characters, copying the model written characters.
- ③ Fair copy on the Shikishi square cardboard.

Major comments from the participants:

- I could write beautiful characters, thanks to the instructor's coaching.
- In each try, I could feel my improvement.
- It was difficult but I'd like to try it again.
- The last time I exercised calligraphy is 40 years ago when I was an elementary school pupil. I enjoyed the unusual tension.
- It was great to concentrate on calligraphy in a quiet atmosphere.
- I look forward to another opportunity.

Comment from MUA staff:

We are very happy to know that all participants truly enjoyed this calligraphy workshop. Our thanks go to Ms. Kanada for her seasoned tutorial guidance.



(Written by K. Hirakata, VP, and translated by S. Tanahashi, the PR & Internet Committee)

The 3rd Cross-cultural Understanding Lecture
Rakugo won laughter from overseas audience
Speaker: Kanariya Eiraku Shisho

Date: Tuesday, January 22, 2019

Place: Minato City Life-long Learning Center

MUA President Nagano kicked off the program by delivering the following welcome speech:

“Kanariya Eiraku Shisho (Master) has internationally demonstrated the humorous nature of Rakugo, a traditional funny story-telling in Japan. We chanced to invite him as a special guest to MUA’s 2018 New Year’s Party. His English Rakugo won tremendous laughter from us and that’s why we decided to invite him again for this lecture series to let more people know about the charm of English Rakugo.”



Profile of the speaker:

Eiraku Shisho runs the Canary English Rakugo Class. Once off stage, he teaches at Kanda University of International Studies and Komazawa University as a professional educator of English. He has taken a great interest in traditional Japanese culture, including Rakugo and Hogaku music. He has performed in English various Rakugo pieces and Japanese songs here in Japan, often in workshops for elementary school kids and university students. He has also performed English Rakugo overseas at local universities and JICA-related facilities. He joined the Tatekawa Rakugo school immediately after Tatekawa Danshi started the organization in 1983.

Summary of Eiraku Shisho’s Performance:



He started his performance by singing Maki Shinji’s “Mandan” comic chats, in both Japanese and English, as he played the ukulele. He sang, “The red light means stop, green light go, and yellow light caution. That’s a traffic signal. It changes all the time but what doesn’t change is a red of our housekeeping account.” He continued with another chat, “The U.S. and Canadian governments are fighting square against the tobacco industry. Why can’t the Japanese government do likewise? Because it’s the largest shareholder of the JT Corporation.”

There are two kinds in Japanese jokes: one that can be understood when translated into English, and the other, generally called “Dajare” or cheap jokes, which cannot make any sense when translated into English. Likewise there are two kinds in Dodoitsu (ditty) songs which started to be performed during the 19th century. In vaudeville theaters in Tokyo, various entertainers including cross-talk comedians, magicians and top-spinners give their performance on top of Rakugo stories.

There is a very famous Dodoitsu song which was allegedly produced by Takasugi Shinsaku, a well-known reformist samurai who was active during the late Edo period. It’s interesting to know that this song is included among the 70 pieces translated into English by Lafcadio Hearn. Hearn was born in Greece, his mother’s homeland, and was educated in Ireland. Then he went to the U.S. and worked as a newspaper reporter. At age 40, he came to Japan and started a career of an English teacher. Later he married a Japanese woman and naturalized in Japan as Koizumi Yakumo. He became famous by publishing Kwaidan Stories among others. His English translation of the Takasugi’s Dodoitsu piece goes as follow; “This is my desire. To kill the crows of three thousand worlds, then to repose in peace with the owner of my heart.” We notice that the English translation provides more information than the original Japanese lyrics.

Eiraku Shisho’s Overseas Activities:

Last year Eiraku Shisho and his company gave English Rakugo performance in Arizona and Calif-

ornia in February and in Laos in late April. In Arizona, they participated in a Festa event, focused on the introduction of Japanese culture. In Laos, their performance was held at the National Laos University and at a JICA-facility. This year they plan to perform in Astana, Kazakhstan and Tbilisi, Georgia in March. Kazakhstan is an Islamic country where alcohol is prohibited. Georgia is the country where wine originated, and where people believe in the Georgian Orthodox. Depending on the characteristics of host countries, Eiraku Shisho gives modifications to the Rakugo stories so they sound appropriate to the local people.

Regular Presentations of English Rakugo

His company gives English Rakugo presentations regularly at the Oedo Ryogokutei theater, in March and September. Eiraku Shisho also regularly performs at the Seven Garden, a lodging facility for foreigner tourists, located in Asakusa, on the third Sunday of each month from 4pm. Thanks to the broadcast of the “Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju” program addressing overseas audience, there has been an increasing number of foreigners who take interest in Rakugo today. For further details on their performance schedule, please log into the website of the Canary English Rakugo Company.

Who started English Rakugo?

The first Rakugo-ka who took up English Rakugo is Osaka-based Katsura Shijaku (1939 – 1999). When Eiraku Shisho heard Shijaku’s live performance of English Rakugo in 1990, he made up his mind to start English Rakugo. In the book titled “Shijaku’s Action English Workshop,” Shijaku gives an intriguing account of the linguistic and cultural issues which emerged when he translated Rakugo into English. For example, mimetic expressions in Japanese are difficult to translate. Also challenging is the difference in table manners; Japanese people don’t mind making slurping sound when they eat soba noodle whereas it’s totally unacceptable in the West.



Japanese “Dajare” Humor

At the bottom of Japanese humor is “Dajare” or cheap jokes. People have acquired this joke-cracking habit since childhood. Adults often combine it with riddles. There are “Dajare” counterparts in English as well but most are based on funny contents. The following is a typical English version of cheap jokes for the New Year:

- A: I have made two New Year’s resolutions. From January 1st, I will start a diet and stop eating sweets.
B: That’s great!
C: From January 2nd, I will stop lying.

Rakugo and Western Literature

Rakugo stories are often based on folktales or funny stories which originated in Japan or China. However, there are Rakugo pieces adapted from Western tales. At this workshop, the following two Western-originated stories were performed jointly by Kanariya Osora-san, a Canary Class member (left photo) in Japanese and by Eiraku Shisho in English.



1. Zoo

This piece is based on a British story. The protagonist looks for a part-time job and ends up working for a zoo. He wears a tiger’s body suit and undergoes funny experiences. First, Osora-san, performed the Rakugo story in Japanese and then Eiraku Shisho followed it up with an English version, inviting vibrant laughter from the whole floor.

(To be continued on P. 15)

The 2019 New Year's Party of MUA

With our special guest - Noh player Ms. Miki Miyauchi,

Date: Thursday, January 24, 2019

Place: Shiba Club of NEC Mita House

For the 2019 New Year's Party, we invited Ms. Miki Miyauchi, a Noh player, and asked her to demonstrate to us the attraction of the traditional performing art of Japan. Noh is registered as a UNESCO non-tangible cultural heritage.

Profile of Ms. Miyauchi:



Born in 1971 to the Tokugawa family of Mito. She studied at the University of Tokyo and also at the Tsuda University (graduated with top honor). She entered the Science & Technology Agency. At age 32, she saw a Noh play and was totally fascinated. Three months later, she quit the job and started a live-in Noh trainee life. Eight years later, she applied for and received an official qualification to be a Noh player. Ever since, she has performed mainly on the Noh stage but has also given offering plays at the Ise Jingu and other shrines and temples as well as at facilities in the natural disaster-stricken areas. She is also making efforts to publicize Noh to children

and foreigners (in English and French). For further details, please look into this website (<http://www.shuuseikai.jp/>).

Why has the “Takasago” been traditionally chanted at celebration gatherings? What is a Noh chant? What are the contents of the Noh-gaku (Noh and Kyogen) as registered in the UNESCO intangible cultural assets? Ms. Miyauchi started her lecture by providing answers to those frequently-asked-questions in the context of Noh's history.

She explained that the Noh-gaku embraces Japanese people's aesthetic sense, physically acquired sensitivity, respect for the sun and the moon, fear of the natural phenomena, and worship toward Mother Nature which offers protection. Also embraced are other values which have been inherited since approximately the Jomon period.

The Asian continental culture and entertaining performing arts, which originated in the ancient Greek mask plays, travelled to Asia via Middle East and India and were brought to Japan by the “Kentoshi” or envoys to the Tang Dynasty. These elements were added to the underlying Japanese mentality which had been based on their worship of nature.

The fusion of these elements as a whole formed the foundation of the Noh-gaku which developed into the basis of the traditional Japanese performing arts. During the following years, Noh stages were installed inside temple or shrine premises and ordinary people started to feel very close to the offering plays dedicated on the occasions of worship or entertainment.

During the Kamakura and Muromachi periods, the Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu met Zeami and highly praised him. Yoshimitsu often assigned Zeami to entertain the Empero and court noble families with his performing art on behalf of the Shogunate. Noh originally addressed the faith and entertainment among the commoners and was later modified reflecting Yoshimitsu's intention. This is the way the Noh world as we see it today had been shaped. Historically renowned samurai lords, such as Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Kato Kiyomasa, were aware of the Bushido spirit embraced in Noh plays and patronized the performing art enthusiastically.

Tokugawa Ieyasu even designated Noh as a required element in the samurai's ritual music and dance. Perhaps, Ieyasu perceived Noh as an optimal tool to organize people because the performing

art included the core moral values of the Bushido, on top of the people's faith in nature, Buddhism, Shinto and In-yodo. After the Meiji Restoration, the Noh-gaku was re-evaluated highly as a world-class performing art and received patronage from the Zaibatsu industrial combines the prewar Showa period. However, during the postwar years, Noh performers were influenced by various societal changes and put to hardships. One way for Noh players to seek solution in difficult time was to hold "Okeiko" workshops to teach the Noh art directly to ordinary citizens.

At the very end of her presentation, Ms. Miyauchi demonstrated the Noh play "Takasago," reviving the way the Noh players used to perform regularly at the Edo Castle at the start of new years to entertain the Tokugawa Shogunate. All the attendees were enchanted by her clear, resonant voice during the demonstration. We also chanted the Takasago under her guidance.

All of us are very thankful for Miyauchi-san's intriguing presentation about the Noh-gaku which seems to embody Japan's cultural heritage. I hope that the attendees will start to see the Noh plays performed at the Noh-gakudo stages, and that they will pursue an opportunity to participate in "Noh and Shimai" workshops someday.



(Written by T. Kobayashi, Standing Director, the Membership Committee, and translated by S. Tanahashi, the PR & Internet Committee)

(Continued from P. 13) English Rakugo Lecture

1. Death God

This Rakugo piece is taken from a story in the Grimm's Fairy Tales. The protagonist father, who is poor with many children, meets Death God and learns a knack to get away from poverty. Osora-san recited the original Grimm's tale in Japanese, followed by Eiraku Shisho's English Rakugo version.

For this Rakugo workshop, a nice stage was provided to produce a genuine Rakugo theater atmosphere for the attendees. The ukulele "Mandan" comic chat and Rakugo stories put the whole audience into big laughter. It is said that Rakugo has recently gained renewed popularity as an original source of Japanese humor. We sincerely hope that Eiraku Shisho and his company will continue to give English Rakugo performance overseas, thereby promoting cultural exchanges with foreign audience.

(Written by K. Okumura, VP, and translated by S. Tanahashi, the PR & Internet Committee)

The Hands-on Tea Ceremony Workshop

Date: Saturday, January 26, 2019

Place: Minato City Life-long Learning Center

For this workshop, we had the pleasure again of having Ms. Soko Matsumura (Instructor of the Ura-Senke tea school) to teach the traditional Japanese culture to a total of 32 participants, including those from Argentina, Canada, Thailand, Turkey and the U. S.

The program proceeded as follows:

- ① Explanation of the history of tea culture in Japan.
- ② Explanation and exercise of the right way to bow, walk, receive sweets and drink weak tea.
- ③ Demonstration of the formalized manners by the instructor.
- ④ Trial of the partial manners by each attendee.

Major comments from the attendees:

- I enjoyed the leisurely atmosphere.
- I'd like to seek another opportunity.
- It's a totally refreshing experience.
- I learned a lot from the program.
- It was a great fun.
- I appreciated the rare chance to know about tea culture.

Comment from MUA staff:

The presence of a 3-year old girl from Argentina and an 8-year old Japanese boy helped heighten the friendly atmosphere. The taste of the "Hanabira Mochi" sweet, available only during this time of the season, renewed my awareness of the New Year.



(Written by K. Hirakata, VP, and translated by S. Tanahashi, 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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