

TEMAN BARU

ISSUE **105**

April - May - June 2019

Upcoming Programmes

The Weekend Japanese Film Show

"Built Environment" Exhibition

Survival Japanese

Japanese Language Course (May 2019)

BUILT ENVIRONMENT : AN ALTERNATIVE GUIDE TO JAPAN



The Honshu-Shikoku Bridge Project
© Photo by Takuya Omura



THE JAPAN FOUNDATION, KUALA LUMPUR



JAPAN FOUNDATION
国際交流基金

WWW.JFKL.ORG.MY

Exhibition: “Built Environment: An Alternative Guide to Japan”

The exhibition features 80 examples of buildings, civil engineering works and landscapes, etc., from all prefectures in Japan, introduced through photographs, text and video images. It presents a rarely considered aspect of Japan, taking the built environment in various of regions of a country that is geographically diverse and often struck by natural disasters, with the aim of examining how Japanese people have engaged and struggled with the natural environment and how they have carried on and created locality.

Come join us to experience “an alternative guide to Japan” when the travelling exhibition arrives in Malaysia this June.

REXKL

12th June - 7th July, 2019

80, Jalan Sultan, City Centre, 50000 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur

Any future updates will be posted on our Website and Facebook Page.



Moerenuma Park
Isamu Noguchi



Onagawa Station and Yupo'po
Shigeru Ban
© Photo courtesy of Onagawa Town



Nagaoka City Hall Aore
Kengo Kuma
© Photo by Mitsumasa Fujitsuka



Koyaguchi Elementary School
© Photo courtesy of Hashimoto City, Wakayama Prefecture



Hiroshima Naka Incineration Plant
Yoshio Taniguchi
© Photo by Toshiharu Kitajima



Hokusai Dam

Staff Greetings from Japanese Language Department



Apa Khabar? Selamat Berkenalan
Minasan, Hajimemashite!

I am UMEEDA Masako, the new Head of Japanese Language Department, succeeding Mr. Yoshitake Nakagawa. I started working here late January this year, and was lucky enough to experience the lively Chinese New Year soon after.

I have been with the Japan Foundation for 18 years, and this is my third overseas appointment; first was Bangkok as head of Arts and Culture, and second was New York as head of Intellectual Exchange. I believe my range of experience will help me adapt to the environment here in Malaysia.

Enjoying travel, I have been to over 40 countries so far, and I found Malaysia is one of the most successful multicultural countries. Thanks to that, foreigners can enjoy a diverse and very dynamic culture here.

Unfortunately, I feel not so many Japanese know much about this country, compared to the keen interest towards Japan here. Thus, I hope I can help not only Malaysians but also Japanese toward better mutual understanding.

Yoroshiku Onegai Shimasu!

UMEEDA Masako

サバイバル・ジャパニーズ CRASH COURSE FOR TRAVELERS SURVIVAL JAPANESE

Do you love travelling? Are you afraid that the language barrier would hinder your overall experience in Japan?

No worries! We're here to help!



Entry Requirement	No prior knowledge of Japanese language is required
Date & Time	15th, 17th, 19th April 2019 (10:00am-16:00pm) Lunch Break: 2 hours (12:00pm-14:00pm)
Venue	The Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur, Northpoint, Block B, 18th Floor.
Fee	Free of charge (You are required to attend every session)
Capacity	20 students

Focus Areas: Conversational Japanese at the airport, shopping mall, hotel, restaurant, train station and tourist spots.

Application deadline is on **9 April 2019**
Application form: <https://goo.gl/ESC111>

For inquiries please contact:
rafaad@jfkf.org.my
03-22847228



NOTE*

1. The crash course is free of charge but you must attend every session.
2. Age limit is capped at 7 years and above. However primary school students must be accompanied by an adult (13 years and above).
3. Acceptance into the course will be on a first-come-first-served basis.
4. Sometimes, email notification may be delayed due to unforeseen circumstances. Your patience and understanding would be very much appreciated.
5. Those who already participated in last December's crash course are not advisable to apply.

The 16th Malaysian Japanese Speech Contest For Secondary Schools (2019)

第16回マレーシア高校生日本語弁論大会

Theme:

Me,
after
10 years ...



NATIONAL LEVEL

Date : 20 April 2019 (Saturday)

Time : 1:00 pm ~ 5:30 pm

Venue : The Japan Club of Kuala Lumpur

General Enquiries:

The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur Tel: 03-22847228 Email: nihongo@jfkf.org.my Web: <http://www.jfkf.org.my/events/jsc2019/>

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Organized by:

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Japan
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NPO法人 **E-G-G**
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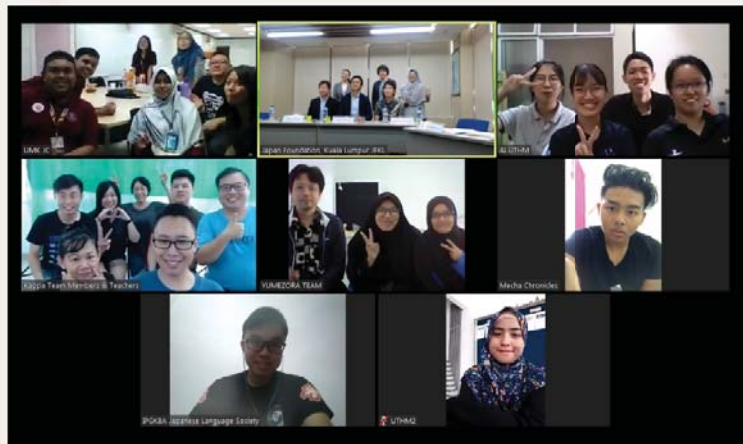


JAPANESE SKIT CONTEST 2019

Theme: "中"

The application for Japanese Skit Contest 2019 will be accepted from May 1, 2019 to October 31, 2019!

Show your creativity and talents in creating new memories and experiences with the theme "中" and discover the fun way in learning Japanese language!



2018 Skit Contest Finalists



JLPT Malaysia 2019 (July 7)

Application Period: Mar 18 – 31, 2019

N1 (RM150)

N2 (RM150)

N3 (RM150)

N4 (RM110)

N5 (RM110)

ONLINE REGISTRATION: www.jlsm.org

If you are unable to register online, please contact the following regional test centre.

KUALA LUMPUR

Test Centre

The Japanese Language Society of Malaysia

www.jlsm.org

jlsm.enquiries@gmail.com

(03) 6259 7180/ 6241 3105

PENANG

Test Centre

Penang Japanese Language Society

www.pjls.org

casee343ster@gmail.com

(04) 226 5908 or 010-399 1903

Irasshai!

Welcome to JFKL Library, Your Gateway to Japan

The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur (JFKL) Library is your gateway to Japan. We welcome you to experience and explore the beauty and magnificence of Japanese art, culture and language. A world of new experiences and splendid moments await you as you venture into our facilities and participate in our activities, specifically created to enhance your awareness and understanding of Japan.



Manga Collection in a Tatami space



Washitsu – Japanese Room



Entrance of the Library

Our JFKL Library offers you a wealth of information related to Japanese arts, culture, Japanese studies and language. We have:

- A good collection of books in Japanese, English and Bahasa Melayu on various aspects of Japan.
- JLPT, EJU, Japanese Language Textbooks and reference materials for teaching.
- Free Wi-Fi access in our JFKL Library.
- A comfortable Audio Visual (AV) corner that helps you to enjoy Japanese films ranging from famous classic to current films, documentaries on Japanese traditional and contemporary culture, lifestyle, food, places and more.
- The latest selection of Japanese magazines and comics (*manga*).
- Children reading materials.
- Pamphlets and travel brochures on Japan, studying in Japan and more.

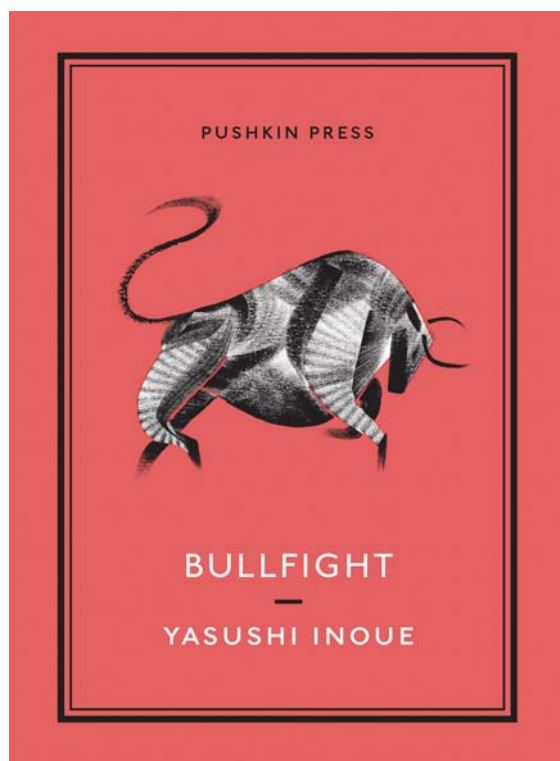
The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur Library was first opened to the public in May 1992. The collection of books at that time was only about 5,000 compared to the current collection of approximately 14,000 materials. We are currently using an Integrated Library System, the VTLS OPAC, allowing a greater convenience in searching for materials.

*Operation hours: Tuesday to Friday (10:30 am - 6:30 pm) / Saturday (10:00 am - 6:00 pm)
Closed on Sundays, Mondays and Public Holidays.*



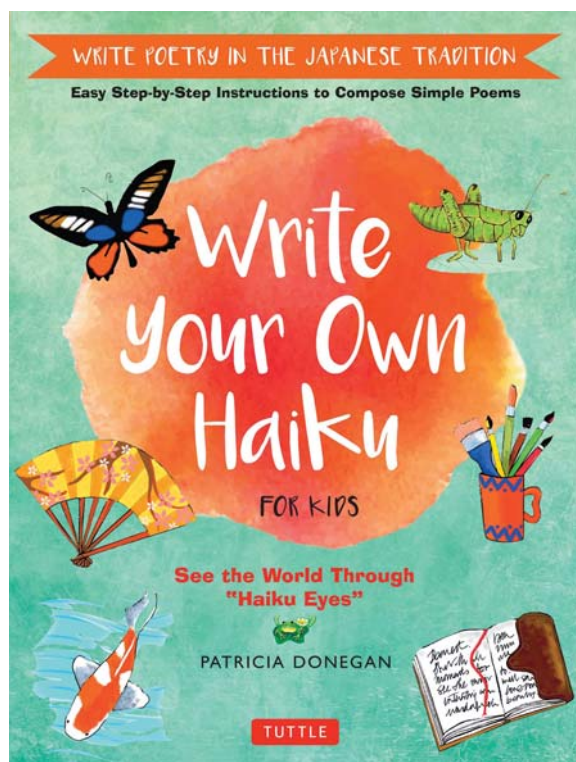
Library counter

Recommended Read



Bullfight is an English translation of a debut novella by the major and incredibly prolific Japanese author, Yasushi Inoue. Tsugami is the editor-in-chief of a newspaper in war-scarred Osaka, and he agrees to sponsor a bullfight. This bullfight gamble consumes him for months, making him wary and combative as if he was in the ring himself. He becomes more distant from his lover Sakiko, unsure if she wants to see him succeed or be destroyed. Inoue won the prestigious Akutagawa Prize with this novella, establishing him as one of Japan's most acclaimed authors. He crafts an intensely memorable, compelling tale through Tsugami's struggle, focus and solitary existence.

[Bullfight] / Yasushi Inoue translated by Michael Emmerich. Pushkin Press, 2013. Library Call No. **(895.635 INO)**



Haiku is a uniquely Japanese form of poetry that uses vivid words and imagery to capture a feeling or a moment in just three lines. Short but powerful, haiku poems are easy and fun to write and share with your friends. Haiku has become increasingly popular in school curriculums around the world, particularly among teachers introducing students to the art of poetry, as well as Asian history and heritage. The activities in this haiku-for-kids book will show you how to create original haiku and help you to think up meaningful words and images with which you can write beautiful poetry.

[Write Your Own Haiku For Kids] / by Patricia Donegan. Tuttle Publishing, 2017. Library Call No. **(808.8141 PAT)**

- We regret to inform you that the book lending service will be discontinued from 1st April 2020. Changes regarding library services are as follows:
 - ❖ New registration and renewal of membership will be available until 31st March 2019.
 - ❖ Upon request, new registration and renewal will be accepted from 1st April 2019 onwards, but the membership will only be valid up till 31st March 2020.
 - ❖ Other services such as browsing of materials, audio visual and reference service etc. will still be available as usual even after 31st March 2020.
- For further enquiries and assistance, please call the JFKL Library at 03 2284 6228 (ext. 401/402/403)

The Japan Foundation & Asia Center Support Program

Grant Program for Promotion of Cultural Collaboration

This program is designed to generate new cultures together within Asia. Grants are provided to successful collaborative projects conducted by organizations and professionals in Japan and ASEAN countries.

Eligible Applicants: Organizations based in ten ASEAN countries or Japan.

Eligible Projects: Collaborative projects which involve ASEAN countries and Japan participants.

Duration: Projects that commence between October 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020, and which are expected to be completed by September 30, 2020.

Deadline: No later than June 3, 2019

Link:

<https://grant-fellowship-db.jfac.jp/en/cultural-collaboration/>

The Asia Center Fellowship Program

This fellowship program is designed to encourage joint or cooperative projects that cross national cultural borders among individuals in a wide variety of fields. The fellowships will be offered to successful individuals who plan to pursue their research and activities outside their home countries, and who seek to develop further in their field(s).

Eligible Applicants: Residents of Japan or one of the ten ASEAN countries.

Eligible Projects: Joint or cooperative research that are toward forming networks/platforms in the arts and culture, sports, and intellectual exchange.

Deadline: No later than June 3, 2019

Link:

<https://grant-fellowship-db.jfac.jp/en/fellowship/>

Japan Foundation Japanese Studies Fellowship Program

This program provides preeminent foreign scholars and researchers in the field of Japanese Studies with opportunities to conduct research in Japan, with the aim of supporting them and promoting Japanese Studies overseas.

Eligible Applicants: Applicants must hold nationality in countries that have diplomatic relations with Japan.

Eligible Fields Of Research: Humanities and Social Sciences.

Deadline: No later than June 3, 2019

Link:

<https://www.jpf.go.jp/e/program/intel.html>

For any inquiries, please contact us at 03-2284 6228 or email grant@jfkf.org.my

The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur (JFKL) Visit

The JFKL Visit is open to schools and institutes interested in getting to know the Japanese culture and language through Japanese Language Studies and cultural activities.

Exciting activities available during JFKL visits are Japanese class session for Japanese Language Studies, Japanese cultural activities such as *Washitsu*, *Yukata*, *Origami* and *Furoshiki* and JFKL Library tour.

JFKL Visit Requirements:

- Visits from Tuesday to Thursday with a durations of 2 hours per visit;
- Maximum of 40 participants per visit;
- A choice of *Washitsu* OR *Yukata* session and *Origami* OR *Furoshiki* session for each visit.
- *The activities are all free of charge.*

For further information on available slots for visit (from August onwards), arrangement of activities and other inquiries, please contact Ms. Sakinah at sakinah@jfkf.org.my or 03-2284 7228.



Furoshiki session



Japanese Class session



Origami session



Washitsu session



Library Tour



Yukata session

ARTWORK BY:

Afwan Puang

2019 // THE 14TH EDITION
BORNEO JAZZ FESTIVAL
 JULY 19-21, 2019 MIRI, SARAWAK, MALAYSIA
 BORNEOJAZZFESTIVAL.COM

Jazz | Hip Hop | Neo Soul | Rap
 Food | Arts | Crafts | Socially Responsible Festival

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Borneo Jazz Festival 2019

The Borneo Jazz Festival is one of the longest running Jazz festivals in the region, and the 14th edition will take place from July 19th to 21st at Coco Cabana in Marina Bay, Miri, Sarawak. Borneo Jazz Festival has evolved to emphasise social responsibility towards recycling within the local community. In 2018 the festival introduced the Borneo Jazz Talent Search as part of their musical outreach programme. This year the festival's music outreach will expand to include the Borneo Jazz DJ Search.

The 14th Borneo Jazz Festival will include a stellar line-up of international and local artists, highlighting 15 bands, DJ's, as well as a special Jazz & Comedy feature over three days. The 2019 line-up includes internationally acclaimed artists from USA, Italy, Japan, Austria, and some of the region's best. The on-going objective of the Borneo Jazz Festival is to continue to promote music tourism for Sarawak and to collaborate with the local communities to showcase Borneo through its exotic cuisine and wide array of indigenous arts & crafts.

Evelyn Hii, festival co-organiser, artistic director and founder of No Black Tie, Kuala Lumpur's Premier Jazz Club explains that "The Borneo Jazz Festival is intent on connecting audiences through music and by celebrating the diverse and rich cultural heritage of Sarawak. Our social responsibility within the community is a key driver for our festival this year."

Website: borneojazzfestival.com

Facebook: Borneo Jazz

Instagram: Borneojazz

JSA ASEAN INDONESIA

Reported by Mohd Sazni



Steering Committee of JSA ASEAN

On December 2018, the 6th JSA-ASEAN International Conference 2018 was held in Jakarta, Indonesia. Organized by The Indonesia Association for Japanese Studies (ASJI), Universitas Indonesia (UI), and The Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) under the plenary theme "Global Dynamics Impacts to JAPAN-ASEAN relations", this conference gathered renowned academia and young scholars to discuss about the said theme, particularly due to emerging domestic and global political issues that are happening around the world.

The conference aims to highlight the dynamic and progressing relationship between ASEAN members and JAPAN which began more than four decades ago. The signing of Memorandum of Understanding in terms of ASEAN-JAPAN Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) marks the latest achievement of ASEAN-JAPAN relationship. To support this initiative, The Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur (JFKL) has offered funding support for scholars from Malaysia who has decided to attend and present their papers in the conference. Five successful grantees are Mr. Maszeli Wee from University Malaya (UM), Dr. Ikbal Huda and Associate Professor Dr. Roslina Mamat from University Putra Malaysia (UPM), Mr. Bemen Wong from University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) and Mr. Sulatan Ibrahim, a local researcher.

The first day of the conference kicked-off with welcoming remarks from a high profile figure in the ASEAN-Japan community followed by Prof. Julian Aldrin Pasha, a prominent academia from Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Indonesia and also one of the steering committees of JSA ASEAN stating that ASJI, an important organization of Japanese Studies in Indonesia has engaged with various communities and stakeholders in Indonesia and conducted multiple programmes to promote Japanese Studies. H.E. Kazuo Sunaga, Ambassador Mission of Japan to ASEAN presented his lecture entitled 'Japan-ASEAN Strategic Partnership:

Present and Future' and shared various successful efforts and a brief overview of ASEAN-Japan relations over the years. According to Dr. Ikbal's report, two regional challenges that we must face was stressed; China's strategic rise to become new politic and economic hegemon, and US's assurance to East Asia, and these issues must be discussed among ASEAN members and any coordinated actions must be carried out efficiently.

Dr. Dipo Alam, Cabinet Secretary of the Republic of Indonesia for the year 2010-2014 then took over the podium for the first Plenary Session, making remarks on the global situation as he stressed upon the spirit of 'non-bloc' where any particular countries are not officially aligned with or against any major power bloc. This is a very important notion since there is an increase of right wing movement and populism around the world as it has been exemplified in most of the western countries. He also observed recent trends in terms of global dynamics – disruptive digital technology, disruptive foreign policy and major site of production that will either stay or shift to China; which are some of the big highlights that will take place in the future. In explaining disruptive digital technology, numerous start-ups and young entrepreneurs are keen to align themselves with this as it is proven to be successful with minimal intervention from bureaucracy, physical space and most importantly, the need to have big capital injection from its early inception. Businesses like *Grab*, *AirBnB*, *Amazon*, and *Agoda* start small and then succeed in competing with big and traditional companies in the free market. According to him, there are few challenges and also opportunities that need to be addressed in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) if we want to move forward. We need to strive for high productivity, avoid corruption that has been manifesting in all levels of society, avoid middle-income trap, good management in conflict resolution, good disaster management and pool any necessary resources for the emergence of digital technology of Industrial Revolution 4.0.



H.E. SUNAGA Kazuo (Ambassador Mission of Japan to ASEAN) present his lecture entitled 'Japan-ASEAN Strategic Partnership: Present and Future'



Mr. Maszeli Wee presenting his research on Hemp Industry in Japan

Thus, cooperation from everyone in ASEAN countries is needed to achieve this objective.

Later during dinner, participants were entertained with local performances, courtesy of the organiser and some of the participants were invited on stage to dance together. One interesting point of the Indonesian culture is they are not only proud their culture and heritage, but in order for it to be known, the embodiment and sharing must be done extensively, not just to visitors, but for younger generations to also know and experience their own culture, which is also a practice that takes place globally. A notion that was shared in the Culture panel sharing session is that local culture and heritage have been replaced by the virtual simulation of social media and games, as our real life has been colonized by technology.

Associate Prof. Madya Roslina Mamat said that she learned a lot, especially from Manga and Anime panel as it benefitted and helped her to explore a new research area of the memories of Japan colonial era in Malaya's comic, novel or personal diary. For Mr. Bemen, this conference has given him more content material that will help with his teaching as most of the presenters came from different countries and presented different case studies. In his report, Dr. Ikbal mentioned that the presentation by Prof. Kitti Prasirujuk entitled "25 Years of Japanese Peacekeeping Missions: Challenges & Way Forward" is related with his research. Prof. Kitti enlightened us on Japan's diplomatic effort to global peacekeeping. Although subjected to scepticism, Japan is optimistic that this is the ideal way to keep the world at peace.



Ms. TSUKA Hiroko, Executive Vice-President of the Japan Foundation (second from left, sitting down) and Mr. TSUKAMOTO Norihisa, Director General of the Japan Foundation, Jakarta (middle right, standing) enjoying the local songs



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nasrudin from University Malaya, JSA ASEAN Steering Committee member giving his keynote speech

The last night was filled with performances played with an Indonesian traditional musical instrument known as *angklung*. Presenters were given the chance to test their skills, assisted by local committees and performers. We hope that JSA ASEAN Conference can help everyone in their own research and can serve as a platform for mutual discussion. After all, this is a golden opportunity to improve our scholarship thus help each one of us, be it personally or for the country to be a better place for the next generation.

TAMU 2018: A Tale of Two Cultures

Dr. Raudah Mohd Yunus & Hazman Baharom

Before going to Japan and experiencing the culture, most people imagine that Japan is a monolithic cultural bloc, defined by etiquette, traditional dress, and of course its affinity towards tea culture. However, when we delve deeper into the complexity that pervades its history, geography, and mythology, there is actually much diversity. TAMU 2018 has been a great program to immerse young Southeast Asian professionals, such as ourselves, from different fields in Japanese culture. The aim is to have a fruitful exchange of ideas and experiences in order to foster greater understanding between the two regions.

When we arrived in Japan, our first program was a series of lectures delivered by Professors Mitsuo Nakamura, Ken Miichi, and Toshiaki Kimura. They provided us with background knowledge about religions and religiosity of the Japanese people. An important part of this lecture was the emphasis on the syncretic nature of Japanese spirituality—usually between the folk Shinto faith and the imported Buddhist religion. More importantly, the concept of “religion” (宗教) itself is problematic to the everyday Japanese psyche, and this has been the reason why, according to the statistics presented by Professor Kimura, the Japanese people don't usually claim to commit themselves to any religion.

The most important takeaway from the lecture series was the need for a more fruitful dialogue on concepts and the discourses involved in them. The traditional Japanese belief in *kami* (神, or god), on a deeper examination, cannot be compared side-by-side with the Abrahamic god believed by the Muslims, Christians, and Jews. The conceptual meanings and metaphysical connotations differ between the concepts, making it impossible to understand traditional Japanese religion and culture without recognizing this point. I believe a more productive theological dialogue can be achieved in the future, if we start from this point of difference.

Next, we moved to Yokohama on the second day to attend Professor Okawa Reiko's class on Islamic culture. Two of our friends, Faizah Mohd Salihin from Singapore and Fatily Sa from Cambodia, presented at the class. It was attended by mostly final year undergraduate students who are completing their dissertations. At the university, discussions were on the role and status of women in Islam, common controversies around Muslim women, and history and cultural practices of the Cham Muslim minority in Cambodia. The audience learnt about the various misconceptions around Islam and Muslim women, the negative representation of Muslim women in media, correct Islamic teachings regarding women's status and role, and the identity and cultural practices of the Muslim community in Cambodia.

It was a refreshing experience, exchanging ideas about their own writing and our experiences as Muslims living in Southeast Asia. This helped to deepen our understanding of the attitude of young Japanese researchers who are open-minded and eager to know about real day-to-day realities of Muslims in our region.



Sharing Session at Meiji Gakuin University, Yokohama

In the evening, we went back to the Asia Center office to have a meeting with Muslim youth living in Japan. They came from diverse backgrounds, and we thank the Japan Foundation for making the session possible. Some of them were first generation Muslims, some were second generation from Japanese Muslim parents, and some were of mixed parentage. Here discussions revolved around the challenges faced by the Muslim minority in terms of finding halal food, raising children, and youth identity crisis. Participants exchanged views on how to cope with, and overcome, these difficulties. They also attempted to find ways to help Japanese Muslim youths reconcile their Japanese and Muslim identities so that both could be seen as complementary and self-enriching, rather than conflicting. As Malaysian Muslims who form the majority of the population, this was an invaluable exposure for us, and we started to understand the complex issues related to religious-cultural diaspora within the Japanese society.



Sharing session with Muslim youth living in Japan

On the third day, we went to Waseda University to attend Professor Ken Miichi's class on Religion and Politics in Asia. There, two program participants presented, namely Hazman Baharom from Malaysia and Norma Sari from Indonesia. It was a postgraduate class attended mostly by PhD students doing their dissertations about Southeast Asia. The presentations were followed by intense

discussions about politicization of religious ethics in Malaysia and the activities of Muhammadiyah in Indonesia, especially among the women's wing, Nasyiatul Aisyiyah. In addition, discussions revolved around questions like how religion affects the political system, misconceptions around “Islamic law” (term usually used for *sharia*), Muslim women's role in social movements, ethics, gender equality and many more. Here, students and TAMU participants explored different perspectives on political systems across Southeast Asia, and attempted to find a common ground on which consensus could be built. The class enriched our understanding about how the international community discusses Islam and its manifestation in Southeast Asian.



Discussion at Waseda University. TAMU participants are divided to cater for different group of graduate students

After the session at Waseda, we went to the Masjid Otsuka, one of the most important mosques in Tokyo. We were introduced to Mr Harun Qureshi, the chairman and one of the founders of the mosque. One interesting story that he told us was when the mosque was raising funds for the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. The people living in the surrounding area showed such willingness to help out that there was virtually no space left in the mosque for donated items. In retrospect, this generosity and attitude of kindness is exactly what is found in the life of Prophet Muhammad, which is currently practiced by the Japanese. Here, Muslims could embark on their own journey of self-reflection and learn for from the attitude of the Japanese people.

Next, we went to Izumo Taisha (出雲大社), one of the most important Shinto shrines in all of Japan. Izumo is known as the birthplace of the Japanese genesis story, where Okuninushi no Mikoto had an agreement with Amaterasu. Because of the agreement, Amaterasu becomes the founder of the bloodline of Japanese emperors throughout history, and Okuninushi was enshrined at Izumo. There, we learnt much about the etiquette of entering a Shinto Shrine, how mythologies are important to the Japanese psyche and culture, and the living tradition of respecting and worshipping *kami*. The intertwining of faith and culture was displayed clearly by some of the tributes at the shrine given by big corporations such as Sony, Toyota, and others. This trip helped us better understand and appreciate the Shinto tradition and its social manifestations.



At the entrance of Izumo Taisha, visitors wash their hands and mouth. It is typical practice at Shinto shrines

On Thursday night, we went to watch a live performance of Iwami Kagura. *Kagura* (神楽) literally means “entertaining the *kami*.” One important aspect of Japanese spiritual tradition that we learnt from watching the *kagura* was the differences in meaning attached to the performance. Some people were there not because they believed in the faith, but because it was a community gathering. Even the persons directly involved in the ensemble were not all of the Shinto faith. The multiplicity of reasons underlying their involvement in the *kagura* shows that a social gathering originating from a faith does not subsequently retain the same meaning.



The Iwami Kagura. This is a scene that depicts the fight between Susanoo no Mikoto against Orochi

The next day, we went to Yamaguchi Prefectural University. We participated in discussions with Professor Amy Wilson’s debate class students. Three TAMU participants presented there, namely Raudah Yunus from Malaysia, Rossanee Kaesaman from Thailand, and Hazimi Jaidi from Brunei. The title of the session was “What Does Islam/Religion Means to me?” The sharing session was excellent and the ensuing question and answer session were refreshing and filled with important insights. Among the issues raised were how individual Muslims perceive Islam, and how religious teachings affect their lives on a daily basis. Participants exchanged views on the concepts of inner peace, spirituality, balance, pursuit of knowledge, social justice and others from Islamic perspectives. Three of the university students presented on Buddhism, Shintoism and Christianity, which further enriched the discussions. We did learn a lot on how

Japanese students understood religion, and what they saw in other religions. This was a great starting point for fruitful exchange and dialogues in the future.

After Yamaguchi Prefectural University, we stopped by Ruriko-ji Temple. Ruriko-ji is a Buddhist temple and pagoda located also in Yamaguchi prefecture. It attempted to copy the architecture of Kyoto about 600 years ago, when it was the capital of Japan. The setting and layout of the pagoda is typical of the Buddhist idea of reality, manifested in the natural constellations around it, the small body of water, trees around it, and the pagoda itself. The pagoda compound inspired us to reflect about life and reality. The first word that came to the mind of a fellow participant upon entering the Ruriko-ji compound was the Malay word “*abadi*,” which means “eternal.” As we understood it, the Buddhist ethos inferred by the architecture, is an attempt to exemplify the macrocosmic reality in a microcosm, which is the temple compound. That is, behind the cycle of apparent realities, such as life and death, men and women, generation and corruption, and other similar dualities, there lies an eternal, ultimate reality encompassing all existences. This ultimate reality is something which possesses the attribute of *abadi*, incorruptible and transcending time and space.

On Saturday, we went to Hagi. The most important visit in Hagi was the Museum of Japanese Industrial Revolution, which was formerly the Shokasonjuku Academy. It was here that the thinker and teacher, Yoshida Shoin, formulated his idea to turn Japan into an industrialized nation in order to face real military threats from European and American powers. As a low-ranked samurai, he was not taken seriously by the elites. However, his students, known retrospectively as the “Choshu Five,” went to study in London against the official travel ban. Through them, Japan succeeded in laying the foundation of an industrialized nation. Upon to Japan, they contributed in numerous areas such as the mint, railway industry, foreign policy, and iron industry. Their story greatly inspired us to work harder for the advancement of our society.



We visited the Shoin Jinja in Hagi. A shrine dedicated to Yoshida Shoin, the ideologue of the Japanese industrial revolution

Finally, after going back to Tokyo, we had a final sharing session on Monday at Sakura Hall, Japan Foundation headquarters. The final session was attended by public servants, policymakers, academics, and foreign diplomats from ASEAN countries. Three of our TAMU participants, Fadlan

Nasurung from Indonesia, Saiful Anuar from Singapore, and Monaliza A. Mangelen from The Philippines led all other participants to share our experiences and aspirations after our 10-days stay in Japan. During and after the session, we gathered much feedback from the public, and we experienced a meaningful exchange with important Japanese stakeholders.

We also discovered that among the interesting features of Japanese society was the fact that it was never colonized by a foreign powers, and that many cultural practices and beliefs remain intact to this day. These two qualities, to a great extent, have contributed to a strong Japanese identity among its people. This uniqueness does not exist in many other parts of the world, especially in regions where western colonization occurred and erased much of the indigenous people’s cultural heritage and identity. However, the world today is a small village, interconnected and interdependent. The way forward for a country like Japan is to embrace this reality in a positive manner, and allow itself to be enriched by diversity and multiculturalism.

Furthermore, what was new to TAMU participants were not only Japanese culture and religion that they did not know before, but also the culture, language and practices of every participant in the program. Despite being Muslims, TAMU participants came from different countries, cultures, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Plus, as Muslims learning about Shinto and Buddhist practices and belief within the Japanese contexts, we have come to realize that the knowledge exchange and sharing session we had were extremely valuable. They helped us understand new perspectives, challenged our own prejudices, and reinforced our belief in inclusiveness and inter-religious harmony. We are now more aware of the importance of open dialogues, cross-regional collaboration, respect, mutual understanding and tolerance in building a better future and a more peaceful world. Most importantly, TAMU 2018 has taught us compassion and the value of human bonding!

Finally, Japan and Southeast Asia have a lot to benefit from a cultural exchange programs such as TAMU. We have a common history spanning hundreds of years, and in the modern world, our individual problems are becoming more similar to each other’s. From this kind of intellectual and cultural exchanges that we can find similarities, understand and appreciate differences, and build a stronger future together. We strongly recommend that this program is continued, because such a cultural exchange has a lasting impact on the minds and hearts of young people, who will be future leaders of their respective countries. TAMU 2018 has been extremely successful in achieving its intended objectives. We therefore congratulate the founders who initiated this program as well as the Japan Foundation for supporting such a noble and exceptional project.

Noh Masterclass

By Haruka Tanji (Cultural Affairs Department) 25th – 28th February 2019



After the final presentation

The Noh Masterclass was conducted by two Noh masters, Mr. HAYASHI Soichiro and Mr. MATSUNO Hiroyuki over 4 days from 25th to 28th February at Rimbun Dahan surrounded by a beautiful green forest.

A Noh actor's expressions consist of movements (dance) and chanting.

16 participants who had more than 3 years of performing arts experience attended the Masterclass to learn 3 different Noh pieces; two to learn the movement and the other for the chanting.

On the first day, Mr. Hayashi gave a lecture on the history of Noh and the synopsis of the 3 pieces to be learnt in 4 days. Later, the participants were divided into 2 groups and started learning the movements of *Kokaji* (Swordsmith) and *Hagoromo* (Celestial Feather Robe) respectively. On the second day, they continued practicing the pieces in the morning and presented in the afternoon. During the 4 days of masterclass, they had to make presentations every day, which made the participants a little nervous but also heightened the tension during the practice sessions. In between the movement practice, Mr. Matsuno introduced the chanting of *Takasago*, which is one of the celebratory Noh masterpieces. Mr. Hayashi explained that "although the dancing always attracts our eyes, the chanting is the most important essence of Noh." He also said that Noh was not made for an audience but was originally a prayer to Gods. The chanting is not considered as a voice but a sound which resonates in the chest to send the performer's emotions and energy directly from their heart to the Gods. After the chanting practice, the participants switched pieces and practiced on it till the 3rd day. And then finally, they chose one piece for the final presentation and to deepen their understanding. On the last day, every one of the participants gave an incredible presentation.

One participant commented, "I think contemporary dancers and actors should join this masterclass! When we practice contemporary or modern type of performance, we tend to focus on the physical skills too much but once we are on the stage, those performances look flat. I learnt how to be aware of the energy inside of me, and how to use it in the performance. This is a very important awareness for a performer." The Noh masters said, "We were so impressed and surprised at how much they learnt and improved in such a short period. Their sincere attitude towards practice and respect for the Noh culture moved us greatly. We would love to come back, and hope to perform on the same stage with the participants next time!"

As a wrap-up of the masterclass, the masters invited all to chant *Takasago* outside, to celebrate their incredible work over the 4 days. The two masters and 16 participants chanted in unison, imagining the ancient Noh performers who danced and chanted under the sunlight, feeling the wind and hearing the sounds of nature instead of houselights and square indoor stage.



Demonstration of Kokaji by Mr. Hayashi



Mr. Matsuno assisting one of the participants in wearing the mask for the Hagoromo



Takasago presentation surrounded by greenery in Rimbun dahan



Japanese Traditional Music Demonstration

By Haruka Tanji (Cultural Affairs Department) 28th – 31st January 2019



Mr. Motonaga, a *shakuhachi* player and Ms. Yamano, a *koto* player, stayed in Malaysia from 28th to 31st January. They have been coming to Malaysia repeatedly since 2015 for Japanese traditional music performances and cultural exchanges through music. This time, JFKL organized 3 events in 2 cities, Kota Kinabalu and Kuala Lumpur.

The first event was a workshop targeting students of the music programme at the Faculty of Humanity, Arts and Heritage, University Malaysia Sabah (UMS). A total of 37 students attended to experience playing the Japanese bamboo flute and long Japanese zither with thirteen strings. One of the many technical questions from the students was the difference between the tuning of traditional Japanese and Chinese music which made the workshop lively and interactive. The students were particularly excited to find out that the musical score was vertically written in unknown notations, with *kanji*, *katakana* and also numbers. (Even the score for the *shakuhachi* was different from that of *koto*!) More than 170 people attended the demonstration on the following day, including students from local secondary schools and also Japanese residents in Kota Kinabalu.

The third event was a public performance organized at Pasar Seni Station, in conjunction with the Arts on the Move by thinkCITY, KL. Around 300 people enjoyed the sounds of Japanese traditional

music, woven by the 2 musicians who suddenly appeared in the midst of their daily commute. A Japanese commuter said that the music reminded him of his life in Japan and the beautiful Japanese nature, which almost moved him to tears, while a Malaysian audience remembered her favourite Japanese anime since Japanese traditional instruments are often used in anime and games these days. Music has a power to bring us somewhere far from here, by reminding us of forgotten memories and images. It makes one wonder what kind of daydreams the 300 audience had when they heard the sounds of *shakuhachi* and *koto*. Mr. Motonaga said, "I think the opportunity to introduce Japanese traditional instruments and Japan in a totally different setting was very meaningful, targeting a different type of audience. Also, I felt like we could raise more interest in Japan through music, which may take us to the next level for an even better future."

2019—YEAR OF 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE JAPAN FOUNDATION, KUALA LUMPUR

The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur (JFKL) was established in 1989. Since then JFKL has dedicated itself to developing mutual understanding between the people of Japan and Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and other ASEAN countries by organizing various cultural events related to Japan, supporting Japanese language education, and Japanese studies as well as intellectual exchange among experts in the fields of arts, culture, humanities and social sciences.

Presently, there are more than 9,000 subscribers signed up for our newsletter. In recent years, close to 100 students have attended our Japanese language courses annually, and the number of registered users of our library has risen to more than 1,700. Over the past few years, Japanese Film Festival, one of our main annual events, has grown to attract a total audience of almost 10,000 people each year. Many groups visit our Center through JFKL Visit programme to learn about our activities and experience Japanese culture, and large crowds have gathered at the cultural events held not only in KL but in various regional cities as well.

This is the result of the keen interest Malaysians have in Japanese culture and language, and we'd like to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude for your interest in JFKL activities and pledge to continue organizing high caliber cultural events as well as providing Japanese language education and Japanese studies assistance.

We thank you all once again for your support over the past 30 years and ask for your continued warm patronage in the years to come.



JFKL Holiday Notice:

Library:

1st May 2019 – Labour Day
22nd May 2019 – Nuzul Al-Quran
4th – 8th June 2019 – Hari Raya Puasa

Office:

1st May 2019 – Labour Day
20th May 2019 – Wesak Day
22nd May 2019 – Nuzul Al-Quran
4th – 6th June 2019 – Hari Raya Puasa



JAPAN FOUNDATION 国際交流基金

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*Please refer to footnote on page 7.

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