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JAPAN AND AFRICA:
STRENGTHENING BONDS

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THEME FOR JULY:
**JAPAN AND AFRICA:
STRENGTHENING
BONDS**

With TICAD7 due to be held in Yokohama at the end of August, Japan's commitment to African countries through human resource development, science and technology, and innovative private-sector engagement will come under the spotlight again. In this month's Feature we take a look at some of the ways in which Japan's public and private sectors have worked to foster social and economic development with partners in Africa.

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ON THE COVER
Japan and Africa: Strengthening Bonds
Photo: Courtesy of Shinichi Kuno/JICA

PRESIDENCY PRESS CONFERENCE BY PRIME MINISTER SHINZO ABE FOLLOWING THE G20 OSAKA SUMMIT



The press conference by the President of the G20 Osaka Summit

ON June 29, 2019, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe held a Presidency press conference at the G20 Osaka Summit. The Prime Minister stated:

It was a great pleasure to welcome leaders from around the world to Osaka and host the G20 Summit in Japan, which held the G20 presidency for the first time.

“The world can unite.”

I made my best efforts as President of the summit with such conviction. It is difficult to find instant solutions to various challenges. Nevertheless, at this year's Summit, we were able to demonstrate to the world the strong will of the G20 countries in many fields.

I was focused on one thing: to lay out a sustainable growth path towards future which is beneficial to all countries.

The world economy still faces downside risks due to trade tensions. The G20 shared the determination to take further actions and lead strong economic growth while paying attention to such circumstances.

Amid deepening globalization, concerns and dissatisfaction over the rapid changes are generating even interstate

conflicts. In response to concerns over the precarious postwar free trading system, we need to firmly set out principles that will guide the world economy going forward.

Free, fair, non-discriminatory. Open markets, level playing field. At this G20 Summit, we were able to explicitly confirm such fundamental principles of free trade.

Meanwhile, the reform of the World Trade Organization (WTO) is unavoidable. It is the reality that the WTO has not necessarily been able to adapt to recent developments, including globalization and digitalization.

In an era of rapid evolution of Big Data, artificial intelligence (AI), and the fourth industrial revolution, we need to create new rules on data—a source of added value. This was an important theme at this year's summit.

At this Summit, we declared the launch of the “Osaka Track,” a process that aims to promote rule-making under the “Data Free Flow with Trust” concept.

We will speedily advance international rule-making to ensure cross-border data free flow while protecting privacy and security. This will no doubt breathe new life into the WTO reform process.

Marine plastic litter is another issue which cannot be resolved by some countries alone. Under such circum-

stances, the fact that the G20 was able to unite and share the “Osaka Blue Ocean Vision,” which aims to reduce additional pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050, represents a major step forward towards resolving this issue.

We also agreed on a concrete implementation framework for achieving this vision. Japan will fully leverage its technologies and experience to support waste management and human resources development in developing countries and contribute to the global efforts to address this issue making the most of its characteristics.

While globalization supports economic growth, it also in turn widens disparities. The G20 must address this squarely and ensure that the fruits of growth reach all corners of society.

Education enhancement is the greatest key to sustainable economic growth. I confirmed with the other G20 leaders our determination to aim for a world where all girls can have access to quality education for at least 12 years.

In this world where emphasis tends to be overly placed on confrontations, we look for common ground and points of agreement. Under an approach unique to Japan, at this Osaka Summit, the G20 unites and sends a strong message regarding global issues. This has provided a major impetus towards concrete actions.



The Prime Minister attending the group photo session



Japan and Africa: Strengthening Bonds

The theme of the Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD7), to be held in Yokohama from August 28 to 30, is “Advancing Africa’s Development through People, Technology and Innovation.” In this month’s Feature, we look at examples of Japan’s commitment to Africa in these fields, from education at schools and medical research to human resource development and innovative private-sector engagement. “The entry of numerous Japanese companies into Africa and the advancement and expansion of their businesses in Africa are vital to the future of Japan and Africa,” says Shigeru Ushio, Director-General of the African Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (pp. 6-7). In this issue we show how Japan is strengthening bonds with African countries and boosting development on the continent.

Photo: Courtesy of Smiley Earth Co., Ltd.

TICAD7: Private Sector to Lead the Way



Shigeru Ushio, Director-General of the African Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

THE Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD7) will be held in Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture, from August 28 to 30. We interviewed Shigeru Ushio, Director-General of the African Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, about the significance of TICAD and the discussions to be conducted at TICAD 7.

What do you think of the current situation in Africa?

The annual average growth rate in Sub-Saharan Africa between 2000 and 2017 was 5.1%, exceeding the global average of 3.8%. The population of Sub-Saharan Africa was 1.25 billion in 2017, but it is projected to reach 1.7 billion by 2030 and even to exceed 2.5 billion by 2050. The African market is expected to expand, and an increasing number of companies are predicted to make inroads into the African markets from around the world. In Africa, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), which is aimed at creating a single market, went into effect in May this year, and investment and trade are expected to be revitalized even further.

In addition, major cross-border conflicts have broken out in many parts of Africa in the past. Such conflicts have now reduced in number and scale, however. Nonetheless, the economic gaps are widening among different African countries and domestically, and poverty is still a serious problem.

Japan held TICAD I in 1993. What role has TICAD played in African issues since then?

In the early 1990s, immediately after the end of the Cold War, the international community's interest in Africa faded. In this situation, TICAD provided an opportunity to renew the international community's interest. Currently, development forums on Africa are being established in a range of countries and regions. It can be said that TICAD pioneered these forums.

Photo: Tadashi Aizawa

TICAD's major characteristics are its inclusiveness and openness. Japan takes the initiative in holding this conference, and it is organized jointly by the Japanese government, the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the African Union Commission (AUC). International organizations, partner countries, private companies and civil society organizations as well as African countries can participate if they wish.

TICAD has placed emphasis on realizing the basic philosophy of African ownership and the international community's partnership; that is, support for African self-help efforts. This philosophy is pervading Africa and the international community as a result of more than twenty-five years of TICAD.

What will be the main themes of the discussions conducted at TICAD7?

One of the themes to be discussed is the promotion of private investment and human resources development through the collaboration between the public and private sectors. Initially, TICAD focused on development assistance, conflict and refugee issues. Investment and trade have been major topics since TICAD IV in 2008, however. Many Japanese companies participated in TICAD VI, which was held in Kenya in 2016. At TICAD7, companies will commit themselves more deeply to it as leading players of TICAD.

Another important theme to be discussed is the health area, and in particular how to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC) so that all human beings have equal access to medical and health services. UHC is not sufficiently available in Africa, and there are outbreaks of infectious diseases, including Ebola virus disease. At TICAD7, the participants will also have a wide range of discussions about disaster damage control, education and women's empowerment.

The third theme to be discussed is the promo-

tion of peace and stability. In recent years, Africa has handled peacemaking and conflict prevention by itself. In 2018, Ethiopia and Eritrea, which had been in conflict for many years, signed a peace agreement. In addition, in Central Africa and South Sudan as well, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional organization in East Africa, acted as a mediator, and Africa has been implementing initiatives for achieving peace by itself. Japan supports this peace process through IGAD. At TICAD7, the participants will have discussions based on the concept of supporting Africa's own proactive efforts for peace and stability.

Please tell us about the support that the Japanese government will provide to Africa in the years to come.

By promoting human resources development and quality infrastructure development, we will encourage private companies to make inroads into Africa. With regard to human resources development, the African Business Education Initiative for Youth (ABE Initiative), which Japan has implemented since 2014, is evaluated highly by African countries. In addition, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) provides support for vocational training centers in many countries. Nurturing industrial human resources will lead to boosting private investment, which creates jobs. Moreover, African peace and stability are also essential to facilitating the stability of business activities. It is necessary to support the construction of systems, including legal systems, through human resources development. The entry of numerous Japanese companies into Africa and the advancement and expansion of their businesses in Africa are vital to the future of Japan and Africa. The Japanese government will back private companies' advances into Africa. 

Interview by OSAMU SAWAJI

National Unity through Sports

Daisuke Kanamori (center) participates in a “Tug of Peace” in South Sudan during the NUD “Peace and Culture Day,” which is designed to facilitate interactions among youths and with the public

South Sudan promotes national unity for peace through National Unity Day (NUD) with the participation of athletes of various ethnicities.

OSAMU SAWAJI

SOUTH Sudan achieved independence from Sudan in 2011. But in 2013 political confrontation between the president and then-vice president developed into ethnic confrontation, which caused armed conflict to break out. The situation remained unstable. Amid this situation, the South Sudanese Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports planned NUD aiming at promoting national unity and exchange among young people of different regions and ethnicities and requested the Japan International Cooperation Agency’s (JICA)

cooperation. In response to this request, JICA began providing support for NUD in 2015.

Daisuke Kanamori, who works in the JICA South Sudan Office, says, “The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports has developed trust with JICA, which has carried out support activities in a wide range of areas, such as infrastructure development, education and health, since South Sudan won independence. I believe this is what prompted the Ministry to ask JICA for cooperation.”

As Ministry officials did not have enough experience in holding major events like NUD, JICA provided administrative support, such as drawing up a written plan, meeting with local governments, and contacting sports groups. In addition, JICA also provided support for fund-raising from international organizations, including the United Nations, foreign governments and private companies, as well as supporting expenses, such as costs for venues and accommodation, meals, and transportation of players and coaches.

In this way, in January 2016 the first NUD was held

The NUD soccer final attracted a large crowd

The NUD women's 800-meter final



in the capital Juba with the participation of about 350 athletes from nine regions across the country. Sports events, such as soccer and track events including short-distance sprints and relay races, were held for about a week. The areas used for the event were put into good condition by the Japan Self-Defense Forces, sent as a part of United Nations peacekeeping operations, and Japanese private companies, who built bridges and water-supply systems.

Subsequently, NUD has been held annually, and in the fourth NUD in 2019, about 320 athletes participated in soccer, track and field, and volleyball. NUD's annual presence as the only nationwide sports event in South Sudan has caused it to build greater publicity. In the latest event, NUD received equipment and material support and funding from twelve organiza-



Action from the NUD soccer final

tions and groups, including UN organizations, the Swiss government, and private companies, as well as JICA. In addition, a total of as many as about 55,000 citizens gathered to enjoy the event.

During this sports event, workshops on peace-building, HIV/AIDS, gender, and fair play were held at the Juba Multi-Service Training Center, where players and coaches stayed. About 400 participants, including players, coaches and government-related officials, participated in these workshops to listen to lectures and discuss many issues, such as the prevention of conflict and the eradication of gender-based discrimination.

NUD brought great changes to players' awareness. According to questionnaires targeted at players, many of them had been hesitant to interact with

players of different regions or ethnicities before the event. But their answers indicated that they had developed a feeling of mutual trust and exchange after the event. Significant reasons for this, players noted, were "working hard together in a game" and "eating and sleeping together in the same accommodation."

Kanamori says, "Most players want to make it widely known that they were able to make friends with players of different ethnicities back home. It can be said that NUD has been a good opportunity to promote domestic peace. Citizens also found it significant that they were able to enjoy watching sports events without fighting and welcomed the improvement of the country's chances for peace through NUD."

Players who had excelled in the fourth NUD participated in international competitions held in Rwanda and Tanzania as South Sudanese national team members. Good performance in international competitions means a stronger possibility of competing in the Olympic Games. In this sense, NUD is an important athletic competition for athletes who aspire to compete on the world stage.

In the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, we may be able to see great performances from athletes who took NUD as their opportunity to launch out into the world. 



At a workshop on peace-building, participants write personal messages of peace

All photos: Courtesy of Shinichi Kuno /JICA



Continuing the Legacy of Dr. Hideyo Noguchi

A Japanese expert and researchers
at the Noguchi Memorial Institute
for Medical Research

Photo: Courtesy of Akio Izuka/JICA

The Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR), located in the Republic of Ghana, conducts research and examination of infectious diseases requiring a high level of technology and knowledge. It is highly esteemed internationally, and makes a great contribution to the control of infectious diseases in West Africa.

OSAMU SAWAJI

IN 2006, the Japanese government established the Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize to publicly honor individuals and groups with prominent achievements in the areas of medical research and medical services to combat infectious and other diseases in Africa. This prize was awarded to two people at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in 2008 and to two more people in 2013. Another two people will be awarded the prize at TICAD7.

Dr. Hideyo Noguchi, for whom the prize is named, is a bacteriologist who is very familiar to Japanese people for his portrait on the obverse of the current 1,000-yen note. Dr. Noguchi, born in 1876 to a poor farmer in Fukushima Prefecture, Japan, studied very hard, became a doctor, and went to the United States in 1900. He achieved many breakthroughs in the study of syphilis and yellow fever at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, and was nominated several times for the Nobel Prize. But Noguchi died

All photos: Courtesy of JICA

of yellow fever in 1928 at Accra in the British-colonized Gold Coast (currently Ghana) in West Africa, where he had moved to research the disease.

Accra is home to the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR). The NMIMR was founded as a biomedical research facility at the University of Ghana in 1979 through Japanese grant aid. The institute has nine departments, including virology, bacteriology and parasitology, and currently has about 400 staff, including about 50 researchers.

“The institute staff respect Dr. Noguchi deeply and they have a strong sense of pride in working in the institute,” says Aya Yagi of the Human Development Department of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Since the establishment of the NMIMR, JICA has provided extensive support, such as the construction of laboratories, provision of research equipment, sending Japanese experts, and offering training programs for Ghanaian researchers in Japan, in cooperation with the Ghanaian government. Currently, the NMIMR is regarded as a center of excellence in infectious disease control in West Africa, and also within Ghana. When the Western African Ebola epidemic spread throughout West Africa in 2014, the institute examined about 200 suspected cases of infection inside and outside the country. In addition, the institute’s researchers were sent to Guinea as technical officers of the World Health Organization (WHO), and contributed to contain the epidemic in the country.

The NMIMR is also highly esteemed internationally for its research achievements, conducting collaborative research projects with many organizations, such as the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and also Japanese organizations.

Currently, backed up by JICA and the Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED), the NMIMR is conducting a collaborative project for strengthening a disease surveillance system aimed at containing unknown infectious diseases and preventing epidemics of known infectious diseases (cholera, meningitis, etc.) with Japanese research institutes, including the Institute of Medical Science at the University of Tokyo. In this project, the NMIMR distinguishes the pathogens of patients with symptoms of diarrhea collected from project target areas and also analyzes intestinal bacterial flora. Intestinal bacterial flora are said to be closely associated with infectious diseases and related research is being conducted around the world. Along with this basic research, the NMIMR grasps the conditions of the outbreaks of infectious diseases and strengthens a surveillance system of shared information in collaboration with the Ghana Health Service (GHS), the organization under the Ministry of Health of Ghana, which has jurisdiction over and implements hospital treatment and disease control. The project is aimed at constructing surveillance system models so that



Participants in the inaugural training program for infectious disease control at the NMIMR, held January to March 2019
Photo: Courtesy of JICA

Ghana will be able to establish a system for perceiving signs of an infectious disease epidemic without delay and for urging the nation to be vigilant.

In March 2019, Noguchi Advanced Research Laboratories opened as a new research facility within the NMIMR through the support of JICA. The NMIMR, which is forty years old, was facing a shortage of research space and the obsolescence of facilities. But world-class experiment facilities and equipment



Opening day of the Noguchi Advanced Research Laboratories (right), March 2019
Photo: Courtesy of JICA

were established in the new research center, which enables researchers to execute advanced research using state-of-the-art research equipment in an environment safer than anything seen before. In particular, the NMIMR is expected to be a hub for research on infectious diseases, infectious disease control, and training for capacity development in West Africa. From January to March 2019, the NMIMR implemented its first training program for clinical examination technicians in four countries, including Sierra Leone and Liberia, for infectious disease control in West Africa. The new research center will implement the training programs for clinical examination technicians engaging in the diagnoses of infectious diseases in the same four countries by 2021.

Yagi says, “The knowledge and insights obtained through the NMIMR, such as an infectious disease surveillance system, can also be used extensively for infectious disease control in Japan. Forty years after its foundation, the NMIMR has become Japan’s research partner.”

The legacy of Dr. Noguchi, who devoted his life to researching infectious diseases, will be handed down to future generations. 



A classroom discussion at a public school in Giza that is implementing mini-tokkatsu

Tokkatsu Taking Root in Egypt

In recent years, an increasing number of schools in Egypt have introduced Japanese-style education, notably *tokubetsu katsudo*, “special activities” known for short as *tokkatsu*.

OSAMU SAWAJI

JAPANESE elementary schools, junior high schools and high schools conduct educational activities called “special activities,” known in Japanese as *tokubetsu katsudo*, or *tokkatsu* for short. The Courses of Study, the public educational guidelines, stipulate that effective group activities aim at the well-balanced development of mind and body and the encouragement of individuality. More specifically, these special activities involve student activities such as classroom discussion (*gakkyu kai*), in which students discuss a range of topics including school events and class issues, one-day classroom coordinators (*nichoku*), who clean the blackboard and make announcements before and after classes, and cleaning classrooms, corridors, and school grounds. These are a characteristic part of Japanese education.

Recently, there has been an increase in the number of schools in Egypt that have introduced elements of Japanese-style education, including *tokkatsu*. An element behind this is the so-called cram school

All photos: Courtesy of JICA

education. Because Egyptian schools conduct strict examinations for promotion and graduation, classes emphasizing rote memorization and examinations are quite common. That is why there was growing concern that schools did not provide sufficient opportunity to foster social and emotional skills, such as cooperative mindsets, discipline, and morals.

Amid this situation, Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi’s attention was drawn to Japanese education, which fosters cooperative mindsets and discipline. This triggered an Egyptian request to Japan for cooperation in introducing Japanese-style education. In 2016, the Japanese and Egyptian governments signed the Egypt-Japan Education Partnership for jointly promoting an introduction of experience and know-how from Japanese-style education into Egyptian schools. In 2017, based on this partnership, projects for introducing Japanese-style education were implemented by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), starting with twelve public elementary and junior high schools in Cairo and its neighboring prefectures being designated as pilot schools, and experts in school management and *tokkatsu* being sent from Japan.

Taro Kakehashi of the Human Development Department of JICA says, “In addition to support for *tokkatsu*, such as classroom discussion and one-day



Students clean a classroom at EJS Hadayek October



Students brush their teeth after lunch at EJS Hadayek October



EJS Hadayek October is one of thirty-five EJS schools in Egypt and has about 400 students

classroom coordinators, in the pilot schools, we also provide support for meetings with principals and other teachers, which are rare in Egypt, and school management, including teachers' mutual observation of each other's classes. The word 'tokkatsu' has been generally adopted by Egyptian educators since the project began."

In 2018 the Egyptian government opened thirty-five Egypt-Japan Schools (EJS) by making use of the experiences obtained from the pilot schools and first and second-year kindergarten students and first-grade elementary school students were enrolled in the schools in the first year. EJS conduct tokkatsu, including classroom discussion, one-day classroom coordinators, cleaning, and ten minutes quiet study time before classes. In addition, classrooms are larger in area than conventional public schools and a desk and a chair is prepared for each student. Furthermore, facilities, such as practical training rooms for practical subjects and teacher rooms, which are not common in public schools, are also prepared for use. EJS have attracted parents' attention even before their opening, and, on average, received about three times as many applications as they had room for students.

To train and nurture the human resources who teach Japanese-style education, JICA has

implemented one-month training programs in Japan for a total of about eighty teachers including teachers of the pilot schools and EJS and trainers who instruct teachers to this day. The Egyptian government plans to open several new EJS this September and aims to found 200 model schools, including EJS, in the next few years to promote Japanese-style education across the country.

The pilot schools and EJS are evaluated very highly. Parents and principals note many changes in the attitude of students. The children learned to actively help parents clean their homes, for example, or began to act more calmly at school than before. They learned to respect and be considerate of other students. In addition, looking at students during classroom discussion, some teachers noticed their ability to think and act on their own and came to listen to their opinions even more.

Starting from 2018, activities such as classroom discussion and one-day classroom coordinators were included in a new curriculum for first-grade elementary school students implemented in about 18,000 schools nationwide, called *mini-tokkatsu*.

"Currently, Egypt is working on a range of reforms to improve the quality of education. We would like to contribute to boosting those reforms by introducing Japanese-style education," says Kakehashi. 

Cotton Connections: Uganda and Japan

Tatsumasa Oku with farmers of organic cotton in Uganda

An Osaka-based manufacturer imports quality cotton from Uganda to produce ultra-organic towels. The business, which has continued for two generations under father and son, now deeply connects two distant countries.

MAO FUJITA

UGANDA, which is located in the East African Highlands right on the equator, enjoys fertile soil and extensive rainfall. More than 70% of the Ugandan population is engaged in agriculture, with the nation's main farming products including cotton, tea, tobacco and coffee. Ugandan cotton is organic and of high quality. However, because the textile industry was previously undeveloped, cotton was exported as a raw material, which did not lead to the production of products with high added value or to improving farmers' incomes. In addition, the market was overflowing with inexpensive imported textile goods, which prevented the Ugandan textile industry from becoming internationally competitive. In this situation, a Japanese company collaborates with the Ugandan government to provide additional value to organic cotton and improve farmers' incomes and quality of life. This Japanese company is Smiley Earth Co., Ltd., which is headquartered in Senshu District, Osaka, the origin of towel manufacturing in Japan.

All photos: Courtesy of Smiley Earth Co., Ltd.

The company imports organic cotton produced in the Gulu District in northern Uganda, manufactures environmentally friendly towels without any chemical drug treatment and sells them on the Japanese market.

The business was initiated by Ryuichi Oku, the father of the current president, Tatsumasa Oku. Behind their decision to use Ugandan cotton were two events that shook the local industries. First, a sharp increase in imports of cheap towels from other Asian countries in the 1990s forced many traditional towel manufacturers in Izumisano City to close their businesses. Second, the water pollution of the rivers running through the city became the worst in the country from the late 1990s to the early 2000s, when Izumisano City's towel production peaked. The decline of towel production and civil actions led to improvements in the level of water contamination. At the time, however, Ryuichi decided to resolve the issue of factory wastewater, which was one of the causes of the pollution, and to make towels that no one could imitate with links to Africa, which he loved so much.

A journalist living in Africa who was aware of Ryuichi's challenging plan introduced him to Yuichi Kashiwada, who had lived in Uganda for more than thirty years, ran a cotton textile factory there and was known as the "father of Uganda." In 2006, Ryuichi visited Uganda and was impressed by the cotton,

which was cultivated without using agricultural chemicals or chemical fertilizers. He made a proposal whereby his company would make towels with the cotton. In response to this suggestion, Kashiwada promised to provide organic cotton on the condition that Ryuichi would never waste the time and efforts that the Ugandan farmers had put into cultivating the cotton without pesticides.

This is how, in 2007, Ryuichi completed a new factory that would enable him to consistently handle every operation from twisted yarn-spinning to twisted yarn-processing on his own on the site of his company after two years' construction work. In addition, he dug a well to avoid the chlorine in tap water, produced Ugandan-made shea butter soap in his own factory and developed unique refining techniques for washing cotton fiber. As a result, the amount of chemical drugs used was reduced to less than four hundredths of what it had originally been, which enabled Ryuichi to make towels with a reduced environmental load.

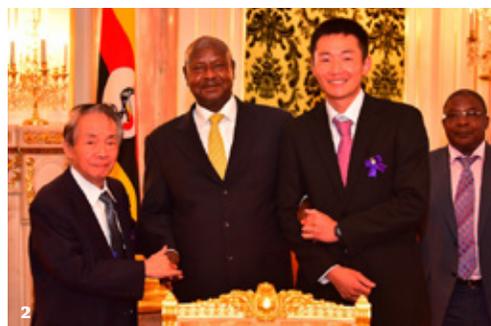
In 2013, Tatsumasa experienced a three-month internship program at Kashiwada's company in Uganda and assumed the second presidency of that company after returning to Japan. Even now, Tatsumasa visits Uganda several times a year and communicates with the partner farmers in the Gulu District, eating and sleeping alongside them.

Tatsumasa says, "In the past, we received cotton whose quality was inferior to what we wanted. We cannot say that everything went smoothly. But as we had more dialogues and built relationships of trust, cotton farmers began working seriously on cultivating quality organic cotton."

In 2015, Tatsumasa was recognized by the Ugandan government as the successor to Kashiwada, who had returned to Japan due to old age, and now supports farmers aiming to expand their organic cotton production and markets and works as a coordinator to support the friendly exchanges that link Japan and Uganda behind the scenes.

Tatsumasa also played an important role as a bridge-builder when Izumisano City became a partner city with Gulu in 2017 and when Izumisano City and Tateshina Town, Nagano, were registered as the host towns for the training camp of the Ugandan team for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Cotton and towels have created a broader linkage between Uganda and Japan. 🌱



- 1 Ryuichi (right) and Tatsumasa Oku receive Seventh Monodzukuri Nippon Grand Award, January 22, 2018
- 2 Yuichi Kashiwada (left) and Tatsumasa Oku with President of the Republic of Uganda Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, August 2015
- 3 Cotton picking
- 4 Organic cotton towels made by Smiley Earth Co., Ltd.



Improving African Quality of Life through Business

A Japanese company has been contributing to sustainable industrial advancement and quality-of-life improvement in Africa by dealing sincerely with African counterparts for more than fifty years.

MAO FUJITA

ABOUT forty African countries face the sea, and water-related industries thrive along the coast of these countries. Fishing is also an important industry on Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika in eastern Africa, as well as on the Nile River.

The outboard motor plays a significant role in fisheries in these areas. In the past, hand-rowed and sail boats were the most common forms of boats in Africa, making the range of fishing limited. Attaching outboard motors to boats has expanded fishing ranges and increased the size of fishermen’s catch. Yamaha Motor Co., Ltd., headquartered in Iwata City, Shizuoka Prefecture, has made great contributions to the development of fishing in Africa.

Shin Iwasaki, Senior Supervisor of the PR Group of the company, said, “We introduced outboard motors

All photos: Courtesy of Yamaha Motor Co., Ltd.

in Africa in the 1970s. At that time, African fishermen had no funds to purchase outboard motors. But we thought that if we could improve fishermen’s income by supporting the development of African fisheries, our efforts would lead to outboard motor sales.”

Subsequently, Japanese official development assistance (ODA) triggered the expansion of business. Yamaha also worked on maintenance education as well as outboard motor sales. In addition, in 1977 the company started to publish an English-language magazine named *Fishery Journal* (partially in French and Spanish) containing information about fishing methods they had investigated in many parts of Japan, how to keep fish fresh aboard ship, and methods of processing and selling fish, using an abundance of illustrations and pictures. Yamaha distributed copies free of charge for people engaging in coastal fishing in Africa.

But in Africa people need to operate outboard motors for many hours on boats with a heavy load, and fuel is also of poor quality. In addition, people often use outboard motors in muddy, gravelly waters, frequently causing them to break down. The company worked not only to develop products that were



Small-sized water-purifying equipment



The water-purifying equipment makes drawing water easy and reduces disease

more durable and easier to repair but also to train and nurture the local mechanics who do the maintenance and repairs in an effort to build after-sales service networks for dealing with breakdowns quickly.

PR Group Manager Takashi Mibu said, “Because the breakdown of outboard motors could be fatal, it is important to build a local maintenance system. We recruited local people who had experience in car maintenance and trained them as outboard motor mechanics.”

Yamaha contributes to the independence and sustained development of African fisheries by providing the variety of services and expertise that meet the needs of the local people, in addition to selling products.

The company also provides technical support for the local manufacturing of fiberglass reinforced plastic (FRP) boats. The shift from previously common wooden fishing boats to more durable FRP boats reduced the use of lumber for wooden boats, which eventually led to a reduction of deforestation. This also contributed to the safety of fisheries and created jobs.



The English-language magazine *Fishery Journal*

In Mauritania, where seafood, including octopus, is an important export commodity, Yamaha responded to a request in 2011 for technical support from a local government-affiliated company. The company provided support for the construction of a boat-building factory for coastal fisheries in Nouadhibou, a port city in the northern part of the country. Yamaha offered advice on factories, equipment and tools necessary to build FRP boats and provided know-how related to the models of boats, indispensable for mass-production, as well as production and manufacturing techniques, factory management, and quality control. The first boat was completed and launched in 2014.

In addition, the company cooperates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in popularizing a small-sized water-purifying device. The device has a simple structure based on a natural water-purifying mechanism and is distinguished for needing neither a large amount of electric power nor maintenance by a professional engineer. The water-purifying device can supply 8,000 liters of purified water per day (enough for about 2,000 people) from river or lake water, and as of the end of June 2019 twenty-one units have been set up in eight African countries. The technology improves people’s lives by reducing disease and saving women and children the work of drawing water.

Yamaha is also making future plans for developing new businesses, such as a logistics system project using IoT (Internet of Things) technology. The products and services of a Japanese company are steadily changing the lives of people in distant Africa. 



A seminar at Toyota Kenya Academy

Cultivating Human Resources in Kenya

A Japanese general trading company has established a center for the study of vehicle after-sales services and other skills in Kenya, and provides support for cultivating human resources able to realize Africa's autonomous development.

KUMIKO SATO

THE Nairobi Declaration was adopted at the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI), held in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, in August 2016. This declaration cited human resources development as a major issue for the realization of economic structural reforms through economic diversification and industrialization, one of three priority areas.

Based on the Nairobi Declaration, the Japanese government and private companies have stepped up work on the development of human resources who support the African economy. One of the companies conducting such activities is the Toyota Group trading company, Toyota Tsusho Corporation.

Toyota Tsusho's business initiatives in Africa started with cotton imports from eastern Africa in 1922. The trading company entered into a capital participation agreement with CFAO, a large trading company in France and a key player in Africa,

All photos: Courtesy of Toyota Tsusho Corporation

in 2012. Toyota Tsusho made CFAO a wholly owned subsidiary in 2016, and has expanded its business in Africa. In 2017, the company established an African Division, the first time for a division of the company to manage a particular region.

A representative of the African Division says, "Toyota Tsusho Corporation is committed to developing business through the long-term perspective by growing together with local people under the 'With Africa, For Africa' philosophy. Industrial diversification and job creation meet the needs of African governments. We focus on cultivating human resources with the goal of helping raise the awareness of safety and skill development, and in doing so contribute to regional growth."

Toyota Tsusho manages and operates Toyota Kenya Academy, a human resources cultivation training center, as part of these initiatives. The Academy was founded by expanding the facilities and services of the former Training Centre that Toyota Kenya Limited, a subsidiary of CFAO, has used to up-skill technicians and other Toyota authorized distributors and dealers in Eastern Africa at the time of its relocation in 2014. The Academy also offers courses to the public, especially young people, women and people with disabilities, to contribute to the development of skills to enhance global human resources as espoused in Kenya's national vision.



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The representative of the African Division, which manages and operates the Academy, states, “We plan and provide a wide range of programs based on the main pillars of safety, health, education and the environment. In particular, courses in the automotive area enable young technicians to acquire rudimentary and Toyota standard skills. This program has been very well accepted and its popularity and benefits have seen very many young people apply, way above the number that Toyota Kenya Academy can handle.”

Aside from courses in the automobile area, *kaizen*, or continuous improvement, which is widely known as one of the core principles of the Toyota Production System, are taught together with Total Quality Management and PDCA by Toyota-certified trainers to realize effective and productive working places and organization of participants. Toyota Kenya Academy also plans education programs in areas where knowledge and experience is limited in cooperation with the Japanese Government and United Nations organizations. For example, Toyota Kenya Academy has implemented training sessions for operating and

Toyota Kenya Academy provides a wide range of training sessions and business programs, including (1) automobile repair, (2 & 3) agricultural and construction machinery operation and repair, and (4) *kaizen* continuous improvement.

repairing construction and agricultural machinery with the support of instructors from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) attached to the Toyota Kenya Academy. In addition, Toyota Kenya Academy implements business programs on leadership and management for those aspiring to become entrepreneurs or corporate managers.

According to the African Division representative, “We have trained over 1,500 people through the courses offered at the Academy. Some of the trainees have even started their own car maintenance businesses. We believe Toyota Kenya Academy helps Kenyans to develop independent and autonomous mindsets which leads to social contribution.”

Other African governments are paying keen attention to the activities offered at the Academy. These are great examples of Japanese initiatives for cultivating human resources to continually support African autonomous development and economic structural reforms. **■**



Supporting a Brighter Future for Tanzania from Japan

Fidea Kobayashi, a native of Tanzania who lives in Nagano Prefecture, supports women and orphans in Tanzania, in cooperation with her family and the company where she works.

Fidea Kobayashi brings a smile to guests' faces at a wedding reception held in the restaurant where she works

Photo: Courtesy of St. Cousair Co., Ltd.

KUMIKO SATO

ST. Cousair Co., Ltd. sells wines, jams and other products from its headquarters in Iizuna, a town in northern Nagano Prefecture. Its flagship store sits within the company's own winery, on a small hill overlooking a countryside landscape of apple orchards, for which the region has long been known. Wine and jams produced by the company are sold in the winery's store. Amidst numerous products in the store, displayed with ordinary, unassuming package designs, there are several varieties of jams with bright, colorful labels that stand out in one corner of the store. These "Fidea jams" are popular products, not only because of their labels featuring beautiful patterns inspired by *kanga*, a traditional Tanzanian cloth, but also because the jams clearly express the unique nuances of the fruits from which they are derived, including blueberries, strawberries and oranges. The recipes for these jams took inspiration from Fidea Kobayashi, who works in the winery restaurant, and is from Songea, a town in southern Tanzania, and

some of the proceeds from sales are donated to the support of Tanzanian orphans.

In Tanzania, Fidea met and married her husband, Kazushige Kobayashi, a Japanese man working for the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV). In 1996, she came to his home in Nagano, and she discovered for herself the life of a Japanese apple farmer. At first, Fidea helped with agricultural work, but soon began to work part-time in the St. Cousair factory in 1998 through the introduction of an acquaintance.

Fidea lived in comfort in Japan. Because of this comfort, she found herself gradually becoming more concerned about the women and children struggling in Tanzania.

Fidea says, "Because my mother supported widows for many years, I lived in Tanzania surrounded by their children. My mother protected and raised children abandoned at our front door. I remember every day those children crying, begging me not to forget them when I left for Japan."

Many children lose their parents to illnesses in Tanzania, and the issue of children who are abandoned due to poverty is also serious.

- 1 On a trip to Tanzania, Fidea Kobayashi teaches children a Japanese song
 - 2 Fidea visits an orphanage in Tanzania
 - 3 “Fidea jams” on display in the St. Cousair store
 - 4 Fidea with her husband Kazushige in the Nagano countryside
- Photos: Courtesy of St. Cousair Co., Ltd. (1, 2); Kumiko Sato (3, 4)

In 1999 Fidea had a discussion with her mother and elder sister and decided to establish the Songea Women and Children Care Organization (SWACCO), an NGO devoted to supporting the self-reliance of women struggling with poverty and to fostering orphans, with her home in Songea being the center of her activities. Fidea contributed some of her income and money from lectures and fund-raising campaigns to SWACCO, and supported its activities from Japan.

In order to better support orphans, SWACCO embarked on a plan to build an orphanage on a 12-hectare lot in 2005. “When the then president of my employer (currently the company’s chairman) learned of this, he said, ‘This is not something you should do by yourself,’ and said that his company would support my activity. I am still wholeheartedly grateful to him,” says Fidea.

Subsequently, Fidea became a full-time waitress in the restaurant and continued her activities, including lectures, supported by her coworkers. Collection boxes were placed in stores directly managed by St. Cousair all across Japan. In 2010, Fidea founded Mwangaza Foundation, an NPO, with her home at the center of her activities, to even more strongly support SWACCO’s activity for supporting orphans in Tanzania from Japan. The word *mwangaza* means “light” in Swahili, symbolizing her wish for Tanzanian children to live, keeping sight of the light of hope. Two wells and two residential buildings have been completed on the lands bought by SWACCO and currently, about eighty orphans live there. Fidea and her coworkers dream of expanding and building a clinic and a school within the site.

Fidea is now an employee her company cannot do without. When she appears in the hall of the restaurant, the place is filled with bright smiles. Many regular customers come all the way from distant places to see Fidea, who encourages them, saying, “Look to the future!” even when they are facing saddening situations.

Fidea’s own smile for all who see it in Japan suggests the future for Tanzania is bright. 





A JOCV member teaches a science class in Rwanda for selected students with good grades
Photo: Courtesy of Kenshiro Imamura/JICA



Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD7)

TICAD7 will be held in Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture, from August 28 to 30, under the theme “Advancing Africa’s Development through People, Technology and Innovation.”

OSAMU SAWAJI

THE Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) is a summit-level international conference on Africa’s development initiated by Japan in 1993. TICAD is co-organized by Japan, the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the African Union Commission (AUC) and discusses a range of issues affecting Africa with the participation of leaders of African countries and representatives from international organizations, development partner countries, private companies and civil society organizations. Starting with TICAD I in 1993 until TICAD V in 2013, the conference was held every five years in Japan. From TICAD VI in 2016 onwards, the conference is to be held every three years, hosted alternately in Africa and Japan.

TICAD VI, held in Kenya, was the first TICAD in Africa, and attracted more than 11,000 participants.

At this conference, promotion of structural economic transformation through economic diversification and industrialization, resilient health systems for quality of life and social stability for shared prosperity were discussed as priority themes. On this occasion, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced that for a period of three years from 2016 to 2018, Japan would invest approximately 30 billion US dollars for the future of Africa under public-private partnership, including human resources development for 10 million people.

The African Business Education Initiative for Youth (the ABE Initiative) is the core of Japan’s support for human resources development. The ABE Initiative is a program for developing African industrial human resources and those who can support Japanese companies’ businesses related to Africa. This program invites young individuals such as government officials and businesspeople from Africa to Japan and



A member of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) provides training in car maintenance in Ghana
Photo: Courtesy of Takeshi Kuno/JICA

provides opportunities to receive a master's degree education, principally in English at a Japanese university, and to intern at Japanese companies.

Roughly 1,400 program participants from about fifty countries have come to Japan since the program began in 2014.

TICAD7

TICAD7 will be held in Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture, co-organized by Japan, the United Nations, the World Bank, UNDP and AUC from August 28 to 30. At this conference, participants will discuss a range of subjects, focusing on economic transformation and improvements in business environment and

institutions through private sector development and innovation, the promotion of resilient and sustainable society for human security, and peace and stability.

During TICAD7, the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) will hold the Japan Africa Business Forum & Expo. The Business Forum portion of the program will include speeches by political and business leaders from both Japan and Africa, and sessions on the development of business through collaboration with African startups and companies from various countries. At the Business Expo, the Japan Fair will be held to introduce Japanese companies' products, technologies and services to top officials and business leaders from Africa while the Africa Lounge will feature exhibitions by African countries and provide opportunities for Japanese businesspeople to interact with visitors.

Aside from these events, JETRO, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and UNDP will cosponsor the Africa Japan Startup Pitch where twenty African companies and about ten Japanese companies that provide innovative solutions to Africa's social issues will pitch their ideas. At the venue, networking space for participants will also be set up. 

On October 6, 2018, the singer MISIA was appointed as TICAD 7 Honorary Ambassador at the TICAD Ministerial Meeting reception in Tokyo. In addition to her work as a musician, MISIA has visited a number of African countries and has been making contributions in Africa for more than ten years such as by supporting children's education, distributing mosquito nets and raising awareness on water issues. In her speech at the reception, MISIA said:

“There is an African proverb, ‘Mountains don't meet, people do.’ I think the message is: that we meet and keep on building relations. Life is going on and on. I trust that our meeting through TICAD will lead us to a better future!”



MISIA delivers her speech at the TICAD Ministerial Meeting reception, October 6, 2018
Photo: Courtesy of MOFA

JAPAN AFRICA BUSINESS FORUM & EXPO

An event introducing African countries' investment environments, and also the products, technologies and services of more than 150 Japanese companies.

Organizer: JETRO
Date: August 28–30, 2019
Venue: PACIFICO Yokohama Exhibition Hall D

AFRICA JAPAN STARTUP PITCH

A stage to pitch ideas for startups business to solve African social issues through technologies and innovation.

Organizer: JETRO, JICA, UNDP
Date: August 30, 2019
Venue: PACIFICO Yokohama Exhibition Hall B

A New Energy Society that Uses CO₂-free Ammonia

In October 2018, a Japanese research group announced their success in the world's first gas turbine power generation experiment fueled by CO₂-free ammonia from manufacturing to power generation. This method is expected to be the first step toward constructing a CO₂-free energy supply chain.

TAKASHI SASAKI

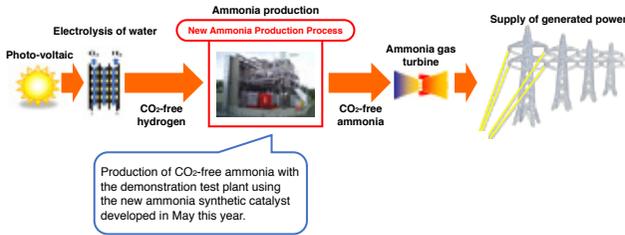
IN recent years, ammonia has attracted attention as a future energy source that can replace fossil fuels. Ammonia can be transported in massive quantities, and the significant reason for this is that ammonia does not generate CO₂ when it burns. In 2018, a Japanese research group succeeded for the first time in the world in synthesizing ammonia (renewable energy-synthesized ammonia) from hydrogen manufactured by using renewable energy (renewable energy-synthesized hydrogen) and in generating power fueled by that ammonia under the “Energy Carriers” technology development program, a part of the Cabinet Office’s Cross Ministerial Strategic Innovation Promotion Program (SIP).

Yasushi Fujimura, Chief Engineer of JGC Corporation’s R&D Center, has played a central role in this research and development.

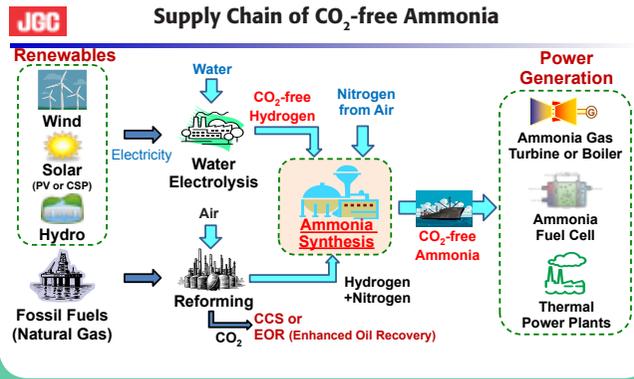


Yasushi Fujimura
Photo: Takashi Sasaki

The Energy Chain Utilizing CO₂-Free Ammonia Tested this Time (Utilization of the New Ammonia Synthesis Process)



Courtesy of JGC Corporation



Fujimura says, “It is currently said that around 40% of CO₂ emissions in Japan are from thermal power plants that burn fossil fuels, and how to reduce these emissions is a social challenge. People now have great expectations for hydrogen as a clean energy source that can replace fossil fuels. However, hydrogen is extremely difficult to transport and store. In response to this situation, we invented a method of manufacturing renewable energy-based hydrogen by electricity generated by solar and wind power, of synthesizing renewable energy-based ammonia that is easy to transport and store from hydrogen, and of generating power fueled by the hydrogen.”

Ammonia has been produced for industrial purposes, such as for fertilizers and for manufacturing synthetic fibers, for more than 100 years. Means of transporting and storing ammonia were established, and it can be carried safely by tanker and tank truck. But because hydrogen, the raw material, is made with natural gas in the current process, CO₂ is inevitably produced in the stage of manufacturing ammonia.

According to Fujimura, the key to synthesizing ammonia using renewable energy-based CO₂-free hydrogen was the development of a new catalyst.

Fujimura says, “Originally, we used high-temperature, high-pressure hydrogen made using natural gas in synthesizing ammonia. But because we need another form of energy to convert hydrogen created by solar and wind power into a high-temperature, high-pressure state, CO₂ will inevitably

be produced during that process. This is why we took four years to develop a catalyst using an element called ruthenium and developed techniques for synthesizing ammonia efficiently, even in a low-temperature, low-pressure state.”

In addition, during approximately the same period, another research group of the SIP “Energy Carrier” was developing a new technology for burning ammonia to generate power in a clean manner. By combining these two new techniques, in August 2018, the Fukushima Renewable Energy Institute, AIST (FREA) succeeded in synthesizing ammonia using CO₂-free hydrogen and gas turbine power generation fueled by that ammonia.

This success shows a steady step forward toward realizing a low-carbon hydrogen society in which people generate power in a land with a rich pool of solar and wind power energy, transport renewable energy-based ammonia synthesized from that power in safety to thermal power plants in suburban areas and use the electricity generated by this fuel. This research result is incorporated into the framework of the government-driven Society 5.0¹ as an important means of constructing a new energy value chain and an advanced low-carbon smart community.

With growing interest in foreign countries, joint investigation and research projects for constructing a CO₂-free ammonia supply chain are already under way. We will also pay careful attention to cooperation in international practical applications from now on. **11**

1 Society 5.0 is the society that is committed to realizing innovations that boost productivity dramatically, such as artificial intelligence (AI), robots and Internet of Things (IoT), with the realization of the productivity revolution. (<https://www.gov-online.go.jp/cam/s5/eng/index.html>)

Kristen and Kenji Shinozaki at the entrance to their *unagi* eel restaurant



The Eel Restaurant *Okami* from America

Starting from scratch, Kristen Shinozaki has succeeded the role of *okami* at an *unagi* eel restaurant in Hachioji, Tokyo that is a local bastion of traditional Japanese cuisine.

KUMIKO SATO

UNAGI Shinozaki is an *unagi* restaurant that has been in operation in Hachioji City in western Tokyo for over eighty years. Kristen Shinozaki, from Massachusetts, USA, is the *okami* (proprietress) of this restaurant, which is loved by many regular customers. *Okami* is a position with heavy responsibilities, entailing not only serving

customers but also directing the management of the kitchen and employees, all the while protecting the tradition of the restaurant. Kristen says with a smile, “I became *okami* to work with and help my husband who took over the restaurant business immediately after we got married. Actually, it turned out that my not knowing much about the job of a restaurant

manager worked in my favor. If I had known how much responsibility that position had, I would have been under a lot of pressure. Because my mother-in-law, the previous okami, was gentle and kind, I was able to become a manager without hesitation.”

The house in Boston where Kristen was raised had many Japanese visitors in connection with her father’s job. She majored in Japanese language and business at university and studied at a Japanese university in her final year. After graduation, Kristen continued to stay in Japan, and having found work for a trading firm in Omotesando, central Tokyo, chose to live in the city’s western outskirts, in Hachioji. Subsequently, she met Kenji Shinozaki, the head chef at his family’s eel restaurant, and married him. Kristen has now lived in Hachioji for over twenty years.

Kristen says, “Mount Takao is close by, and we can feel nature all around us. Hachioji thrived in the past with its textile industry. But now it has many universities and is an attractive city overflowing with youthful sensitivity.”

Kristen is also a kimono enthusiast. Hachioji still has many kimono fabric shops. She and a friend who manages one of these shops organize events in which people enjoy wearing kimono casually. When her friend teaches students the proper way of wearing a *yukata* (informal cotton kimono) at a girls’ high school in the city, Kristen goes to support her. Of course, she is always dressed in a kimono when working at her restaurant.

Kenji’s grandmother started to operate Unagi Shinozaki as a small dining room. By the time Kenji’s father became head chef, it had become an unagi restaurant. The restaurant keeps the live eels in well water for two days after receiving them. As this removes a smell from the eels, some customers say that after they ate unagi at the restaurant, they came to enjoy it for the first time. The chefs cut and trim the eels in preparation for cooking, steam them after receiving an order from a customer, baste them in a sauce that has been passed down from Kenji’s grandmother, and grill them over a charcoal fire. In addition to preparing the eel fillets in this way, the chefs



Grilled *unagi* eel classically served in a lacquered box alongside a bowl of clear eel liver soup

prepare the eel’s internal organs for use in soup, grill and soft boil the head and fins as side dishes, and deep fry the bones into crackers. They use almost all the whole eel.

Kristen says, “Many customers say with tears in their eyes that they are happy that their beloved family members were able to eat unagi before they passed away or that they were disappointed that they could not give those family members an opportunity to eat unagi. I think that unagi is a special food to the Japanese.”

That is why Kenji and Kristen are always aware of working with scrupulous care. Unagi Shinozaki invites a Buddhist monk once a year to hold a memorial service for the eels. After the monk finishes chanting Buddhist sutras in a tatami room adorned with flowers and fruit, they go to the Asa-kawa river, which runs through the middle of Hachioji, and release dozens of eels.

As the manager of the unagi restaurant, Kristen speaks about her aspirations, saying, “We follow the wishes of my father-in-law, who was proud of running a restaurant specializing in eels that were getting rarer and rarer year by year. Our generation will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the restaurant’s founding.”

The Japanese have the custom of enjoying unagi for nourishment on the Midsummer Day of the Ox, which falls in the dog days of summer. It’s then when Kristen will see the arrival of the busiest season of the year. 🍱

High school student dancers
Ikki Yanagida and Rino Matsuki



From Classroom to Ballroom

Ballroom dancing originated in Europe, but there are many ballroom dancers in Japan. We talked with two young people for whom ballroom dancing has already become a way of life, and to their experienced instructors.

ROB GILHOOLY

IT'S early evening, and Ikki Yanagida has already exchanged his school uniform for slick black slacks, silky shirt and shiny shoes.

With back bolt upright, he holds out his arms and with steely concentration steps, swerves and twirls through a routine until sweat drips from his immaculately coiffed jet black hair.

Soon those seemingly unmovable arms are occupied by his dance partner Rino Matsuki, and the two glide around the floor to the appreciative applause of onlooking students, Matsuki's poppy-red dress twirling away like some free-spirited car on a fair-ground Waltzer.

The pair, who are both high school students, are in

the midst of preparing for their next national contest in shako dansu – literally “social dance,” but more widely known as ballroom dancing.

Having competed in the Japan International Dancing Championships in June, their next challenge is another national event in August for high school enthusiasts.

“I practice every day for about three to four hours,” says Yanagida, who started ballroom dancing as an elementary school first grader at the prompting of his dance fanatic grandfather. “A couple of weeks before the contest, we are really put through our paces.”

The pair forgo post-school club activities and hanging out with friends to travel considerable distances and rehearse under the guidance of instructor Yoshiaki Uchida, who, along with his wife Yoshiko, operates a dance studio in western Tokyo.

The Uchidas know all about ballroom dancing. After teaming up as teenagers in the 1960s at their university's dance circle, they spent decades wowing dance fans at professional contests around the globe.

This year, their school celebrates fifty years in

Top, Dance school owners Yoshiaki (left) and Yoshiko Uchida; bottom, Students rehearse at the Uchidas' dance school in western Tokyo

operation, though ballroom dancing enjoys a much longer history in Japan, according to Yoshiaki Uchida.

What are today “standard” ballroom dances, such as the Viennese Waltz, were first introduced to Japan in the 1880s via an institution known as the Rokumeikan, a vast two-story building in central Tokyo that was constructed for high-ranking Japanese to mingle with visiting foreign dignitaries and immerse themselves in aspects of Western culture, including ballroom dance, he explains.

“The idea was to understand and practice Western culture, so Japanese could better equip themselves to engage with their foreign counterparts,” says Uchida, who is also vice-president of the Japan Ballroom Dance Federation. “It wasn’t until the 1940s and 50s that dance halls started to become commonplace, though they were not for ballroom dancing.”

The dances enjoyed there were more American types such as the jitterbug and be-bop, but as the Japanese economy grew and interests broadened, ballroom dancing started to find an audience among regular people, adds Uchida, who himself was first taught to dance as a 7-year-old by staff at his uncle’s bar.

That vogue gradually grew, reaching its zenith following the release of the 1996 Japanese film *Shall We Dance*, which tells of a life-weary salaryman’s trials and tribulations at a dance school he first notices as he waits for a commuter train at a Tokyo station.

Interestingly, the school in the film was based on Uchida’s own studio, which until relocation a few years ago was visible from the local station’s platform, he says. Film crew visited the school on several occasions, and some of Uchida’s students even made appearances, he says.

“In those days we only offered one-on-one lessons and after the film’s release we started getting long lines of people waiting for classes,” Uchida says. “It was the same everywhere. There simply weren’t enough instructors.”

Today that void has been well and truly filled. Uchida says there are 6,500 qualified instructors in Japan and around 1,600 dedicated ballroom dance schools. Meanwhile, according to government figures, the number of ballroom dancers aged 25 and



over in Japan totaled some 1.25 million in 2016. Some accounts suggest as many as 1.5 million Japanese dancers annually participate in contests, Uchida says.

These include high school student dancer Yanagida, who says his dream is to repay his revered instructor by competing on the international stage and then joining the team of instructors at the Uchidas’ school.

“Ballroom dancing is tough, not just learning the steps and all the dances, the waltzes, the rumbas, and so on, but the artistic expression that augments the music and moves the audience,” he says. “I can’t do that yet, but that’s my goal. I can’t think of doing anything else. For me, it’s no dance, no life.” 

The Train for Slow Life and Slow Food

The Tenhama Line skirts the shores of Lake Hamanako
Photo: Courtesy of Tenryu Hamanako Railroad

Tenryu Hamanako Railroad



Ride Tenryu Hamanako Railroad, which runs across Shizuoka Prefecture, and enjoy local specialties cultivated in a rich natural environment, such as tea and grilled eel, while relaxing in the calm, peaceful scenery.

OSAMU SAWAJI

TENRYU Hamanako Railroad, commonly known as the Tenhama Line, runs 67.7 kilometers through western Shizuoka, connecting Kakegawa Station, a Tokaido Shinkansen stop in Kakegawa City, to Shinjohara Station in Kosai City. It takes about two hours to travel the length of the Tenhama Line. Following a partial opening in 1935, the entire line opened in 1940. This railroad line is currently operated by Tenryu Hamanako Railroad Co., founded mainly by local governments along the line, including the Shizuoka prefectural government. One feature of the Tenhama Line is the thirty-six national registered tangible cultural properties, such as station buildings and bridges evocative of the time of its opening, that stand along the entire line, enabling passengers to indulge in nostalgia as they travel.

The Tenryu Hamanako Line takes its name from the Tenryu River, which begins in adjacent Nagano Prefecture and runs south across Shizuoka Prefecture,

emptying into the Pacific, and Lake Hamanako, one of the largest Japanese brackish lakes. The areas along the line are surrounded by abundant nature and there are many scenic spots where beautiful flowers, such as plum blossoms, hydrangeas and Japanese bellflowers, can be viewed in their full glory.

Yoshiji Omura, Administration Manager of Tenryu Hamanako Railroad, says, “If you take the Tenhama Line, you can enjoy a relaxing trip enjoying the variety of local agricultural products and seafood, as well as feast your eyes on the natural scenery.”

One of Shizuoka Prefecture’s specialties is tea. In this prefecture, where tea cultivation began to spread in the Edo period (1603-1867), unused lands were developed into tea fields on a large scale in the Meiji period (1868-1912) and the prefecture became a major Japanese tea producer. As of 2017, the prefecture was nationally top ranked in cultivated area and production. From Kakegawa Station, you can take a train ride through the countryside, and in about 30 minutes, tea





- 1 [Tea is served at Ota Chaten](#)
Photo: Courtesy of Satoshi Tanaka
- 2 [Tadayoshi Yamada holds a grilled eel boxed lunch at Shinjohara Station](#)
Photo: Courtesy of Satoshi Tanaka
- 3 [A Tenhama Line train passes through tea fields \(foreground\)](#)
Photo: Courtesy of Tenryu Hamanako Railroad

fields will come into view from the windows and you will reach Totomi-Ichinomiya Station in Mori-Machi, one of many production centers in the prefecture. Nestled in low hills, Mori-Machi is home to numerous tea factories, retail stores and Japanese-style confectionery stores. Ota Chaten manufactures and sells teas using leaves picked in selected tea fields and you can enjoy free samples. At the café in the store, you can also enjoy sweets, including Japanese-style confections and cakes made using the tea leaves.

“The taste of tea differs with the tea field and according to how long it has been left to stand after harvesting. Considering these differences in taste, we provide the most delicious tea for each season, all year round,” says Eiko Ota, the store’s manager.

The town of Mikkabi, on the shores of Lake Hamanako, is known as a major mandarin orange producer. From the windows of the Tenhama Line, you can enjoy the beautiful view of the orchards bearing mandarin oranges from October to December. You can disembark and pick mandarin oranges at a number of sightseeing orchards along the line.

Many of the Tenhama Line’s thirty-nine stations have restaurants serving delicious food inside the station buildings. At Guriru Yagumo inside the Nishi-Kiga Station building, a national registered tangible cultural property built in 1938, you can enjoy

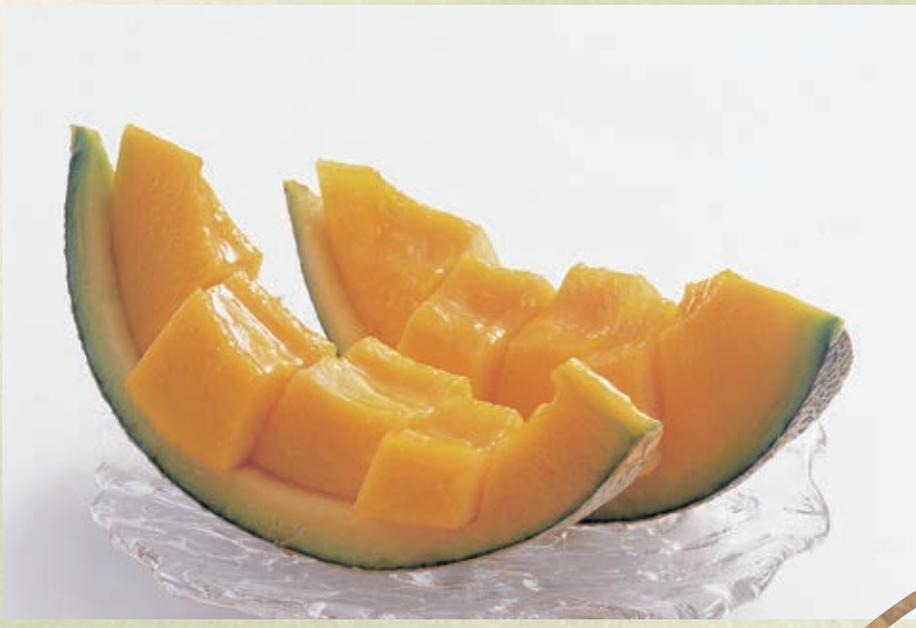
French cuisine made with locally grown vegetables. At Granny’s Burger & Café inside Mikkabi Station, whose building is also a registered tangible cultural property, hamburgers using locally produced beef are popular. Yamayoshi, a Lake Hamanako grilled eel restaurant, operates in Shinjohara Station, the Tenhama Line’s terminal.

Japanese eel cultivation began from a culture pond that was made on Lake Hamanako in the late nineteenth century. Eel fry inhabited Lake Hamanako in large numbers. There was an abundance of underground water necessary for cultivation on the shores of the lake, and the Lake Hamanako area became a major cultivated eel producer. Tadayoshi Yamada, the manager of Yamayoshi, was the third-generation manager of an eel cultivation business handed down from his grandfather, and, during his boyhood, helped cultivate eels. The company started to sell grilled eels at stations in 1990 and now customers come all the way from different areas all across the country. In 2000, they withdrew from the eel cultivation business, but still always serve locally produced eels at the restaurant. There is only space for ten customers in the restaurant, but take-out is available, so many customers eat grilled eel boxed lunches on the train.

“Running a restaurant at the station, I feel like I am connected to people all over the country through the railroad. I always like to serve the most delicious locally produced grilled eel for customers who have come all the way from distant places,” says Yamada.

If you travel on the Tenhama Line, you will enjoy the satisfying blessings of nature and the natural scenery. 

Courtesy of JAY UBARISHI



GI JAPAN PRODUCTS

MELON

Yubari Melon

Yubari is a small city in Hokkaido surrounded by mountains and hills. Having a wide temperature difference between day and night, low rainfall, and volcanic ash-based soil offering excellent drainage, the location is very well suited to the farming of melons. Techniques for the cultivation of melons in Yubari have been refined and handed down over the years to ensure that each “Yubari King” melon produced is perfectly formed. Seeds are selected and seedlings grown from the previous season’s most exquisite melons, and each new melon is lovingly cared for on a daily basis. Pleasingly round Yubari Melons have pale green skin with an intricate “net” pattern. Their bright orange flesh is soft, fragrant, sweet and juicy. The staggered planting of seedlings in greenhouses means this most meticulously cared-for and thus expensive of Japanese fruits can be widely distributed from the end of May through September.



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