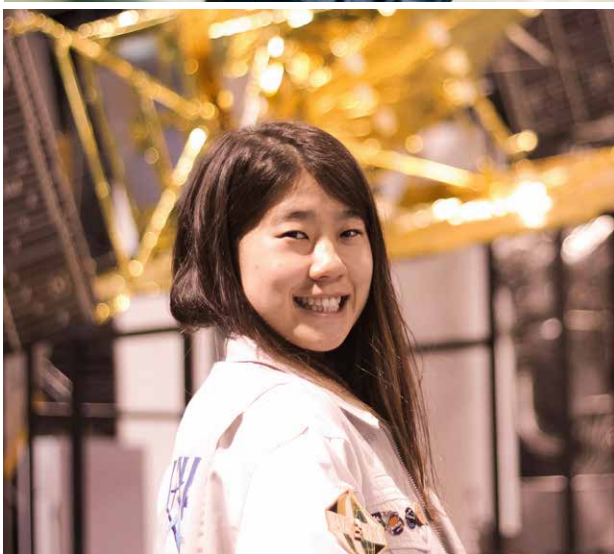


KIZUNA

Winter
2022

Linking Japan and the World



Female Pioneers Advancing
Gender Mainstreaming



JAPAN GOV
THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN



KANAZAWA SHOKO
Calligraphy Artist

Born in Tokyo in 1985, she started learning calligraphy from her mother when she was five years old. One of the notable young calligraphers of today, her solo exhibitions have been held throughout the world, in cities such as New York, Singapore, and Prague. She was selected as one of the official poster artists for Tokyo 2020.

Welcome to KIZUNA, the official magazine of the Government of Japan.

This bold work of calligraphy is 絆 (*kizuna*) written in Japanese. *Kizuna* means the enduring bonds between people—close relationships forged through mutual trust and support.

Originally describing the rope used to tether domestic animals such as horses and dogs, the meaning of *kizuna* has evolved over the years. A passage in *The Tale of the Heike*, compiled in the 13th century, uses the term to refer to the bonds of love between a father and his children. More recently, *kizuna* has gone beyond bonds tying together family and close acquaintances; it is now used in a broader sense of human ties and connections. Of particular note is the *kizuna* born among people during natural calamities, which fosters feelings of solidarity and serves as the underlying strength to overcome hardships.

Similarly, the *kizuna* cultivated among the countries of the world has the power to deepen cooperation for a better future. By reporting on a wide variety of topics concerning Japan, we hope that this magazine will provide opportunities for Japan and the rest of the world to connect and build strong *kizuna*.

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KIZUNA

Winter 2022

COVER

(Clockwise from top left) IMADA Miho, president and master brewer of a sake brewery in Hiroshima*; Dr. SAITOU Marie, an evolutionary biologist at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences**; KOBAYASHI Miai, a social entrepreneur based in Fukushima and Tokyo; and KONAKA Mina, a researcher at the Paris Observatory.

Photo credit: *MAE KOSUKE;
**LISA MARIE BAUGE FJELLSBØ

IMPROVING WOMEN'S STATUS CREATES AN EMPOWERED SOCIETY

Japan will host the World Assembly for Women (WAW!) this December to increase momentum toward achieving gender equality and empowering women. With extensive experience in developing corporate talent, ACHILLES Michiko—selected by the American magazine Diversity Global as one of the “2017 Top 10 Influential Women in Global Diversity”—talks about Japan’s efforts and the challenges involved.



The Government of Japan is accelerating its actions toward gender equality and women’s empowerment to create a society in which everyone’s individuality and diversity are respected, regardless of gender. In December,

the sixth World Assembly for Women (WAW! 2022) will be held in Tokyo. The conference invites leaders in different fields from around the world for discussions on gender issues in Japan and other countries.

According to the World Economic Forum’s index of national gender gaps, Japan still has a long way to go. However, the country is making steady steps toward solving its issues. In June, the Kishida administration announced the Intensive Policy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2022 (the Basic Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2022), which focuses on involvement by both men and women. The measures advocate for women’s economic independence through diverse lifestyles. One of the specific actions is the requirement that companies with 301 or more employees disclose their gender pay gaps.

ACHILLES Michiko, a member of the WAW! advisors and Japan’s G20 EMPOWER co-chair, recognizes the policy as “a major step forward.” She adds, “Governments and corporations are both taking action in a



ACHILLES Michiko is Senior Advisor of HR Strategy at SAP Japan. She joined the APEC Women and the Economy Summit from 2010 to 2012 as Japan’s representative. Also representing Japan at G20 EMPOWER, an international alliance, she has worked to expand women’s involvement among corporate decision-makers.



Left: Women foreign ministers from seven countries joined the fifth WAW! in March 2019. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai (far left) was among the speakers. Bottom: Achilles was a speaker and on the host committee for the 2017 Global Summit of Women.

positive direction. That includes real efforts to address gender gaps within organizations and also among employees at the same job level. The next challenge will be to accelerate this drive.” Gender statistics and their disclosure are also essential from an ESG perspective, and the disclosure of Japan’s female manager ratio in the G20 EMPOWER 2020 report—in line with International Labour Organization (ILO)-standard statistical methods—is another step forward.

Japan is meanwhile putting effort into developing female talent in digital technology. In 2020, the modal (most common) age of death for Japanese women was 93. As we enter a time when many people live for 100 years, economic independence for women is absolutely essential. Japan has a three-year plan to focus on developing female tech talent to encourage women—many of whom have been employed in lower-wage industries—to work in digital fields. This is a promising measure to heighten women’s value in the labor market.

Achilles appreciates that the policy also focuses on men. She says, “In addition to supporting women’s careers, it’s important to change men’s behavior and encouraging men to take childcare leave is one way to do that. It would get men involved in their families and communities, letting married couples build their careers together.”

According to Achilles, Japan has designed several excellent systems that mark it apart from other countries, such as generous leave and financial support for childbirth and childcare, as well as public and private childcare centers with affordable fees. Achilles is enthusiastic about WAW! 2022. “It will be a great opportunity to have a deeper discussion about the priority policy measures and common global challenges and to learn best practices, such as family support policies,” she notes. “It is important to show our commitment to promoting women’s empowerment and their economic independence.”

Further promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment



will help build the foundations for accelerating diversity and inclusion in Japan. Throughout history, Japan has developed while taking in ideas from various cultures. Achilles cites Sony—which has emphasized and respected employee diversity while producing numerous innovations—as a good example of being proactive about adding various perspectives to their decision-making. With a smile, she says, “Besides, it’s more fun to work with different people with different perspectives, isn’t it?”

Women’s empowerment leads to growth for society and companies, and Japan will push to achieve that empowerment. ●



Dr. KIJIMA Rie leads discussions about challenges in educational equity and inclusion in her undergraduate course, Education in a Global Context, at the University of Toronto. WMIAN XIN SHU

USING DESIGN THINKING TO CULTIVATE GLOBAL STEAM LEADERS

Dr. KIJIMA Rie and SKY Labo have developed experiential workshops using design thinking as a pedagogical tool, with the intention of cultivating women STEAM leaders for the global stage. Girls have a new toolset for changing the world.

Many adolescent girls think of science and technology as fields that are far removed from their own experiences and interests. However, the girls who participated in a three-day workshop for junior and senior high school students—conducted by an education non-profit organization, SKY Labo—came away with stronger interests in the STEAM fields.

This year, SKY Labo collaborated with Kyotango City, in the northern part of Kyoto Prefecture, the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University (OIST), and PwC Japan, a global consulting firm, to implement the workshop. The workshop's theme this year was sustainability. Youths were placed in a team of four people and one design coach (a college or graduate student), then interviewed “users” (business leaders or university faculty members) to understand their needs. Each

group brainstormed a solution to solve these user's needs and created a prototype to visualize their solution. They presented the prototype to the users for feedback, which led to further improvements. Participants gained first-hand experience of SKY Labo's “design-thinking” process that emphasizes the importance of thinking out of the box, failing forward, and bias towards action.

Today, there is a great need to create more opportunities for youths to pursue STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) in order to tackle the complex, global challenges our world faces. SKY Labo aims to cultivate the next generation of women STEAM thinkers by emphasizing the importance of human inquiry, or the Liberal Arts, and combining it with STEM. Through rigorous evidence-based research, they show that this results

in a notable change in the participant's perceptions towards STEM, a higher level of creative confidence, heightened prosocial tendencies, and an increase in future aspirations and career options.

Dr. KIJIMA Rie, the co-founder of SKY Labo and assistant professor and Director of Initiative for Education Policy and Innovation at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy at the University of Toronto in Canada, mentions that the uniqueness of SKY Labo activities lies in the utilization of design thinking to promote STEAM learning. "We want youths to think out of the box, explore different ideas, and work collaboratively in a more human-centered way. That is what we want the youths to take away at the end of the workshop," she says.

Kijima's focus on education has roots in her own career: after earning an M.A. at Stanford University, she worked for the World Bank and was involved in improving access to education and the learning outcomes of children and youths living in developing countries. There, she helped devise monitoring strategies to ensure that progress can be measured for various education projects. Upon returning to Stanford for her Ph.D., she gained more research skills

Kijima received a Ph.D. in international comparative education at Stanford University. What drives Kijima is the desire to help girls acquire creative confidence and break down the social barriers to studying the STEAM fields.



and learned about different theoretical frameworks that help us understand issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in education.

Driven by a strong desire to create a bridge connecting research, practice, and policy and to address the large gender gap in Japan, Kijima co-founded SKY Labo in 2016. To date, more than 300 youths have participated in their workshops. At the OIST workshop mentioned above, for example, one of the groups tackled the issue of sustainability and conceptualized the idea of cultivating young children's love of nature by building a school under the sea, surrounded by translucent walls.

"In Japan, there is a narrow and leaky pipeline into the STEM fields for young girls and women. Research also shows that young girls in Japan have a lower sense of self-efficacy and self-concept, and are less motivated in science and mathematics compared to their peers in other OECD countries," Kijima reflects. "There are various social forces that influence girls to think that they should not pursue the STEM fields." Kijima thinks that we need to create a system where we empower youths so that they can break down the barriers to pursuing STEM. This desire, more than anything else, is what motivates Kijima in her efforts.

"Girls who were initially hesitant about voicing their opinions begin to feel more comfortable sharing their ideas as they make more progress during the workshop. Our job is to provide them with an opportunity to fail forward and to create a safe learning space for them to imagine what it is like to pursue their interests in STEAM," she says.

Kijima's message seems to be reaching them. As one workshop member noted, "The world is so much bigger than I had ever thought. My greatest takeaway is that now I think that maybe, I can change the world." ●



Top: Design coaches guide the youths at the workshop. At OIST, a doctoral student engages and collaborates with them using the human-centered approach.

Bottom: Kyotango City in Kyoto Prefecture is a center of the machine-metal industry in Japan. The students learned about how community leaders in Kyotango tackled the issue of sustainability in their region and designed prototypes that meet their needs.

DISCOVERING THE UNTOLD STORIES OF EVOLUTION: ONE WOMAN'S CHALLENGE

Evolutionary biology has made great strides in recent years through advancements in technologies such as DNA analysis. Working actively at the frontlines of this headline-making field is Dr. SAITOU Marie of the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. Here she speaks about the fascination of using science to unravel the mysteries of life and the new challenges she plans to take on.

YUICHIRO CHINO/GETTY IMAGES

Evolutionary biology employs the vast power of science to answer riddles about how living things have evolved since time immemorial. It is a field of intense interest, having made significant advancements in recent years due to innovations in technologies such as DNA analysis. Dr. Svante Pääbo, an evolutionary biologist who was the first in the world to successfully sequence the Neanderthal genome, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2022. Ambitious research is currently underway around the world, and one Japanese researcher working actively on the frontiers of this field is Dr. SAITOU Marie, principal investigator (equivalent to assistant professor) at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. "Since we can now analyze DNA contained in ancient bones, we are gaining a deeper understanding of extinct plants and animals. The true joy of evolutionary biology is to use this data to discover the unknown stories behind evolution," she says.

A study on Neanderthals published in 2021, based on research Saitou carried out during her postdoctoral period in New York, focused on the fact that analysis of DNA contained in their ancient bones exhibited a mutation of

"Genome sequencing and editing technologies are making advancements day by day, so I have to keep on learning. I often exchange opinions with researchers from other countries, who give me insights into their knowledge and expertise," says Dr. SAITOU Marie of the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. LISAMARIE BAUGE FJELLSBØ

the growth hormone receptor gene, which is associated with metabolism and growth. A study was conducted on children with malnutrition in Africa, where many people today carry this mutation, and it was found that a lower percentage of those children with the mutation had developed serious symptoms than those without it. Meanwhile, in a test in which both genome-edited mice with the same mutation and regular mice were fed a low-calorie diet, the male genome-edited mice became smaller



than the regular mice, and the females larger. Those results led Saitou to the conclusion that a similar phenomenon may have occurred in Neanderthals' bodies, increasing their chances of overcoming starvation, with men becoming smaller to save energy and women storing energy more efficiently to get through pregnancy.

Though analytical techniques are constantly advancing, such research still involves the ongoing process of trial and error. According to Saitou, "We often get results that were totally unexpected. But it's fascinating to see our studies develop in directions we had never imagined."

Saitou became interested in evolutionary biology when she was a college student. "I've always loved literature and the natural sciences, and I thought evolutionary biology had the double appeal of being a field of scientific study and one that looks at evolution as the long story of life." After earning her doctorate from the University of Tokyo, she went to the United States to pursue her studies further. Her research on Neanderthals and other endeavors were highly appraised by the Norwegian University of Life Science, and in 2020 she established her own research group there.

Since she had always been shy and not particularly adept at English, Saitou never dreamt that she would be active on the global stage someday, but she is now leading



Joining Saitou (sixth from left) are researchers from her research center at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences hailing from such countries as Jamaica, the U.K. and South Korea. In addition to managing a research budget and recruiting talent for her research team, Saitou lectures in a graduate course attended by some 80 students. "Although it's hard work, it is also very rewarding because I can make various decisions at my discretion." DOMNIKI MANOUSI

researchers from around the world in her team to take on new challenges. "Since I regularly interact with people of different nationalities and backgrounds, my horizons have broadened both personally and research-wise, and I have become able to think more freely."

She now plans to expand her research to include the study of life forms other than human beings, such as salmon. Understanding the evolution of living things can benefit a wide range of fields, from medicine to the environment. "Cancer cells, for example, develop from mutations. Evolutionary biology could be very helpful in elucidating their mechanisms and causal factors. In such a way, I want to contribute to industry and society," says Saitou. "I wish to continue using modern technology to unlock long-unsolved mysteries. And someday, I hope to discover facts that have never crossed anyone's mind." ●



In 2022, Saitou (front row, far right) was awarded the Recognition Prize of the First Marie Skłodowska Curie Award, which was established to contribute to the further advancement of female Japanese researchers. "This kind of award is very significant as the first step in promoting women in the sciences. I hope there will be more awards that put a spotlight on a broad range of people—not only those in academia, but also dedicated researchers in companies and those in outlying regions of the country."

EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND IN JAPAN



When working as a postdoctoral fellow in the United States, Saitou studied under Professor Omer Gokcumen (right) at the State University of New York in Buffalo, where she immersed herself in her research, including the study of Neanderthal DNA. Behind her is a poster describing the results of her research.

ONE WOMAN LAUNCHES HERSELF INTO SPACE EXPLORATION IN THE NEW ERA

Sending humans to the moon again—worldwide momentum is currently building toward that goal, which will usher in a new era of aerospace development. Here, KONAKA Mina, a researcher at the Paris Observatory who is setting her goals into space, speaks about the importance of space exploration and what drives her toward her dream.



KONAKA Mina's aspiration to explore space was triggered when she was 11 years old. She happened to notice a public campaign to suggest a name for a new lunar explorer that Japan was launching. Almost immediately, she submitted the name "Kaguya," after a famous Japanese fairytale princess from the moon. "Six months later, having completely forgotten about it, I received a commemorative badge from the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) and a certificate stating that my suggestion had been chosen," says Konaka, currently a 26-year-old researcher at the Paris Observatory, a French research institute. "It made me aware, for the first time, of the existence of a national space agency and professions related to outer space."

Since that time, she would secretly feel proud whenever she saw news reports regarding Kaguya, and began to wish that she could go to the moon as well. This feeling grew ever stronger, and starting in her middle school years or thereabouts, she began to



KONAKA Mina has worked at the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) since 2020, where she worked on satellite development and other projects. She says that although Japan is prone to natural disasters, she feels well-protected by aerospace technologies that monitor changes on Earth. "Space may seem very far away, but aerospace technology actually supports our lives in many ways." PICTURE PRESS/AFLO

immerse herself in English, math and science studies, with the goal of becoming an astronaut. When she was 15 and in the United States to study English, a friend's parent, who was an engineer at National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)



At Tohoku University's Graduate School, Konaka (center) immersed herself in research on lunar exploration rovers and small satellites under Professor YOSHIDA Kazuya, who is involved in a number of international space projects. SPACE ROBOTICS LABORATORY, DEPARTMENT OF AEROSPACE ENGINEERING, TOHOKU UNIVERSITY

invited her to the Goddard Space Flight Center. “After the tour, the engineer kindly took the time to give me one-on-one answers to my many questions. Until then, NASA had felt like something out of a movie. It was a big realization for me to learn that ordinary people like me were working there.”

After graduating from the Department of Aerospace Engineering at the Tohoku University Graduate School of Engineering, Konaka worked as a satellite system engineer at JAXA. Wishing to hone her expertise by cultivating knowledge and perspectives not just in engineering, but in astronomy as well, she has been studying since 2021 for her doctorate while working at the Paris Observatory. “For me, a job related to going into space combines seven professions: engineer, scientist, diplomat, doctor, educator, pilot, and also artist who conveys the appeal of outer space. In that sense, it brings together all kinds of knowledge and experiences,” says Konaka.

Although the number of women in the aerospace industry is still quite limited, she has never wavered from her path and keeps surging forward. That owes much to the role models she encountered while studying for her master’s degree. “When I participated in a program in the Netherlands, which was organized by the International Space University, I met many women whom I would like to emulate. While my career choice might seem unique from the outside, those inspiring role models really did help me get through.” Wishing to do her part in supporting younger generations, Konaka participated in 2021 as a mentor in Space4Women, a project sponsored by the United Nations to promote the empowerment of young women. For one year, she gave study and career advice to female students worldwide who aspired to

explore space. Even now, after the end of the project, she stays in contact with them.

Konaka says that she will continue to explore the universe in various ways. With the recent surge in momentum for lunar exploration, and the emergence of ambitious projects around the world, both public and private, the opportunities awaiting her are sure to expand. In the course of gaining experience in the aerospace industry, which has always been her dream, her thoughts toward space have also changed. “I no longer want to go to the moon simply to satisfy my own interests or aspirations. It is a mission more important than such personal concerns,” says Konaka. “Unlike the Apollo mission 50 years ago, lunar explorations now mean an ‘expansion,’ since they assume that some people aspire to inhabit the moon and vicinity in the future. This is a challenge that has never been taken up in human history. As a person involved in aerospace development, and as a representative of Japan, I would like to contribute to such an endeavor.” ●



Konaka stands in front of the “Great Dome” at the Paris Observatory, where she currently works as a researcher. “Although astronomy—the study of celestial bodies and the universe itself—differs significantly from engineering, which is mainly concerned with technological development, the two fields are deeply interrelated. I wish to develop perspectives in both those fields,” she says, adding, “In France, many people including those working in the aerospace industry value their private lives, but work hard when they are on the job. I want to learn about such an outlook on life as well.”



Because girls who give birth at a young age are expelled from school and often find themselves isolated, Dr. SHIMPUKU Yoko focuses on efforts to educate adolescents on pregnancy and reproductive health.

MIDWIFERY EDUCATION OFFERS A POSITIVE CHILDBIRTH EXPERIENCE IN TANZANIA

Dr. SHIMPUKU Yoko, a professor at Japan's Hiroshima University, contributed to the creation of Tanzania's first midwifery master's degree program, and is also committed to upgrading the quality of childbirth care in that country. Midwives educated in this program physically and emotionally support expectant mothers, enhancing their childbirth experience and leading to a decrease in mortality rates among both newborns and their mothers.

It was a chance encounter that took a young Japanese midwife to Tanzania for the first time. After working in Japan, Dr. SHIMPUKU Yoko went to the United States for a doctoral course in nursing at the University of Illinois Chicago. An anthropology class on breastfeeding and human evolution brought her into contact with a professor who invited her to participate in a research project regarding maternal and child health in Tanzania. Shimpuku had been drawn to Africa by photographs that she saw during the course, so she agreed to join the project without hesitation. The next year, 2008, found her in Tanzania.

The focus of the project was a farming region six hours from Arusha, the country's second largest city. There, Shimpuku witnessed the harsh conditions surrounding childbirth in Tanzania, and the experience changed the course of her own life. "The healthcare environment was not adequate at all: pregnant women often died en route to facilities.

There was nothing we could do, and it made me feel so helpless," she recalls sadly.

Much of the problem lay in the paucity of medical staff. Doctors tend to be concentrated in large cities, whereas in rural areas, a single midwife may often be responsible for a disproportionate number of births. If increasing the number of doctors was too difficult a hurdle to overcome, Shimpuku thought, the only option was to train specialists in midwifery—leaders of the profession who could pass on their specialized knowledge.

After returning to Japan, Shimpuku became an assistant professor at St. Luke's International University in Tokyo, and through exchange programs involving Tanzania and her university, she helped develop a midwifery program that would form the basis for educating the country's future leaders in the field. Then in 2014, Tanzania's first midwifery master's program came into being, at the Graduate School of



Midwives receive training for fetal ultrasonic examinations.

Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, located in the country's biggest city, Dar es Salaam.

Shimpuku's emphasis has not only been on saving lives, but also on providing pre- and postnatal care that focuses on women's feelings. Many women of the region traditionally choose to give birth at home because care offered in medical facilities is far from satisfactory, with many hospital beds lined up in a row, for example.

Given those circumstances, Shimpuku was gratified to see how midwives learned the importance of pre- and postnatal care and acted assertively to improve the childbirth environment at hospitals by taking such steps as installing curtains around the beds for privacy and listening to and empathizing with the individual pains of expectant mothers.

She also co-produced a tutorial smartphone app that aids self-education in midwifery in Tanzania. "The app is based on WHO guidelines, and we added illustrations and videos to make it more useful for clinical practice," she explains. The app also features an interactive function with which participants can share techniques and experiences. Midwives praise the app as a means of support.

In recognition of Shimpuku's efforts in Tanzania, WHO and other organizations named her as one of the world's "100 Outstanding Women Nurse and Midwife Leaders" in 2020.

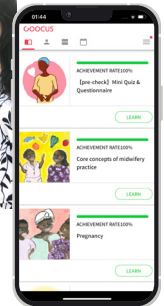
Shimpuku, who currently serves as vice president

for international public relations at Hiroshima University and as a professor at its Graduate School of Biomedical and Health Sciences, says that her long years of aid work in Tanzania have given her a new awareness of the respective merits of giving birth in Japan and Tanzania. "I confirmed my belief that Japanese midwives are conscientious about making birthing mothers feel at ease. Healthcare is not merely a matter of treatment and procedures—emotional care is also important," she asserts.

She continues, "On the other hand, there is not much support for women in Japan after childbirth. One wonderful aspect of Tanzania is the way in which large families and the wider community come together to support women in childbirth and childcare. We should emulate the merits of both societies and make childbirth a positive experience for as many women as possible. This is what I consider to be my mission." ●



Midwives can use the app, co-developed by Shimpuku, for self-study on their smartphones and tablets. The app is based on WHO guidelines for childbirth care and has been enhanced to make it more applicable to clinical practice.



HIROSHIMA'S ROLE IN THE PURSUIT OF PEACE

Hiroshima University, where Professor SHIMPUKU Yoko serves as one of the vice presidents, is located in the first city in human history in which an atomic bomb was dropped and holds the pursuit of peace as its guiding principle.



SHUTTERSTOCK

The Center for Peace, Hiroshima University originated from the first academic research body in Japan to conduct peace studies, which was established in 1975. The institution is distinguished by two pillars of research focus: Hiroshima peace research, studying the effects of the A-bomb, post-disaster reconstruction, and nuclear disarmament and abolition; and global peace research, covering peacebuilding, human rights, and structural and environmental violence.

In recent years, the center has been actively establishing networks with other organizations working on peace studies in Japan and abroad. Aiming to apply the results of its research in society, it also devotes efforts to planning and operating peace education programs, including lectures open to the public.

The world is now in turmoil, and we have reached a watershed moment. The Center for Peace will further deepen its research and provide opportunities to rethink the meaning of peace.

THE COSMETICS GIANT CHAMPIONING FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

While making great strides as a global company, the Shiseido Group also acts as a pioneer in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. Behind those efforts is a corporate culture that has been passed down since the company was founded 150 years ago.

The Shiseido Group, a Japanese cosmetics giant, has more than 40,000 employees globally, with business operations in about 120 countries and regions. While it is, on the one hand, a venerable company that celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2022, it is also a pioneer that has taken the lead in promoting gender equality and female empowerment by positioning

diversity and inclusion as pillars of its management strategy. Though many Japanese companies are on their way toward the goal of having 30% of their management positions filled by women, Shiseido has already gone beyond that, with women making up more than 37% of the company's managers in Japan and more than 58% of their managers globally.



“As our business expands globally—though the circumstances surrounding female employees differ from country to country—we come to see that we all share the same fundamental challenges, including the lack of role models and the existence of mental hurdles,” says IMAIZUMI Chiharu, director of the People & Organization Development section of Shiseido’s People Division. “There is no one solution. We will continue to provide various kinds of mechanisms to resolve those challenges by all possible means.”

“Providing opportunities for women and others in diverse positions to develop their careers contributes to our organization’s growth and innovation,” says IMAIZUMI Chiharu, director of the People & Organization Development section of the company’s People Division. “We also hope that our actions will help create a change in society.”

Shiseido started working wholeheartedly toward promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment in the early 1990s. That was triggered by the fact that even after Japan’s enforcement of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act in 1986, which prohibited discrimination against workers on the basis of sex, many women were still resigning from the company after getting married or having children. To address that situation, Shiseido introduced various new systems, including shorter workdays and workplace daycare, and carried out more detailed support measures such as allocating extra staff during peak evening hours, enabling beauty consultants raising children to balance work and childcare more easily. Thanks to such efforts, today more than 99% of women in management and career-track positions, and more than 92% of beauty consultants, return to work after taking parental leave.

From 2017, the company also began to focus on cultivating new female leaders, such as by starting a leadership program for those with notable potential. The program not only instructs these women in the skills necessary for upward career progression,



A scene from “Speak Jam,” a mentoring program in which female employees in various areas—from sales to production and R&D—can speak directly with female executives of the company. According to Imaizumi, “Some in the company say that although there are many female employees, finding a role model is difficult. We want to provide them with the opportunity to create a patchwork of role models by matching individuals with a variety of senior employees.”



Shiseido has continually endeavored to provide women with an environment in which they can work to freely demonstrate their abilities, in accordance with the times. Back in 1934, when few women in Japan belonged to the workforce, the company created a staff position known as “Miss Shiseido” (left), who was the forerunner to Shiseido’s beauty consultants of today. In 2006, the company introduced a system of allocating extra staff (right) during peak evening hours to enable beauty consultants raising children to balance work and childcare more easily.

but also includes lectures and mentoring by female Shiseido executives. Its primary aim is to sweep away biases regarding senior positions. According to Imaizumi, “There are unconscious biases relating not only to gender, but also to position. Many capable women believe that they don’t have what it takes to be a leader because of their stereotypes about leadership positions. By recognizing those biases and letting go of them, these women can breathe new life into and re-ignite their original visions and dreams. Since they are all very competent, once that fire is kindled, they will be able to master whatever skills they need on their own. The key is how much of that fire can be kindled.”

Behind such efforts is the corporate culture that has been passed down over Shiseido’s long years of history. Imaizumi explains, “Since our company started as a private dispensing pharmacy, at our foundation has been the desire to create a better society in which everyone can lead healthy lives, both in body and in mind. That is why, in every era, we have been actively engaged in developing human resources and finding solutions to social issues.”

In the early days of the company, employees were sent to night school to study whatever they were interested in, and in the mid-1930s, the company created “Miss Shiseido,” a staff position that became a coveted career option for women, and that was the predecessor for Shiseido’s beauty consultants. In the future, the company aims to achieve a 50:50 ratio of men and women in managerial positions in Japan. Also, in the fall of next year, it plans to establish the Shiseido Future University at its head office in Ginza, Tokyo, to develop the next generation of global leaders. “There is still much that can be done. We will continue to take on new challenges from multiple angles.”

EMBRACING MUSIC AS AN INDISPENSABLE TOOL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

HIROTSURU Sumire is not only an accomplished violinist, but also a next-generation leader addressing social issues through music. Here, she reflects on the qualities necessary for musicians in the new era, as well as how she has been leveraging her music through what she learned at Harvard College.

There is a saying that goes, “If you chase two rabbits, you will catch neither.” Yet, violinist HIROTSURU Sumire has proved herself to be the exception to the rule by pursuing varying goals with great success. Graduating with honors from both Harvard College and The Juilliard School—a private performing arts conservatory in New York—now, at the age of 29, she is fully demonstrating her talents as a musician, while also wearing the hats of educator and entrepreneur, among others. “As a child, I hated to lose. When it came to studying, I felt wholly compelled to achieve perfect scores, and if I was in a music competition, I just had to win first prize. It’s that simple,” she laughs. But underlying her broad range of activities is a distinctive sense of identity and perception of music.

“I want to become a violinist who not only pursues new heights in music, but also uses music as a tool to find solutions to social challenges and takes on initiatives that will benefit others.”

Hirotsuru’s values were largely influenced by world-renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma, who is also a Harvard graduate. She first performed with him and his multicultural musical ensemble Silkroad Ensemble during her time at Harvard College. “While one of the world’s top musicians, he has contributed to a wide range of causes. These include his involvement in the making of a film—featuring musicians of Silkroad Ensemble from diverse backgrounds and his performance at a refugee camp—and educational projects. He has not stopped at merely giving

Besides her socially oriented work, violinist HIROTSURU Sumire has been taking on new challenges in music as well, such as improvising music for YouTube distribution and performing game music. One of her future goals is to find ways to break away from the conventional form of classical concerts, such as incorporating audience interaction within performances. TETSUO OHARA





Left: A backstage shot with world-renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma (center) in 2015. Ma addresses social challenges through music, and her encounter with him changed the way Hirotsuru (far right) perceives music. Right: Hirotsuru graduated from Harvard College in 2016. At first, she didn't seriously consider attending the world-class university. However, at age 16, while on tour in the U.S. including a performance at Carnegie Hall—as a reward for winning the grand prize at an international competition—she had the chance to visit the university, and sensed something in common with the Harvard students, namely, their passion for both their studies and such extracurricular activities as theater and sports.



performances, but also has a great mission going beyond that, and this has left a very large impression on me,” Hirotsuru recalls.

Inspired by Ma, she became determined to pursue a professional career in music and entered the master’s program at The Juilliard School to hone her musical sensitivity and skills. After graduating, she steadily built up her career as a musician flying around the world giving performances, while also finding the time to found a music consulting company in New York as the first step in her social endeavors. Using the business perspectives and connections that she had developed at Harvard, she supported musicians who were highly skilled as performers but not quite so adept at promoting themselves. According to Hirotsuru, one of the key elements of success for today’s musicians is the power of words. “It’s not enough to just provide good music, because people are exposed daily to vast amounts of information, and their attention spans are short. Musicians need the ability to put a story behind the music and their own thoughts and feelings into words, and convey that to others.”

Since transferring her base of activities to Japan, Hirotsuru has been investing energy into education. In addition to serving as a member of the Council for the Creation of Future Education, established by the government of Japan, and as a university lecturer, she has been operating a summer school program, “Summer in JAPAN,” in her hometown of Oita on the island of Kyushu, since 2012. For the program, foreign college students—mainly from Harvard—are invited to teach elementary, middle, and high school students a wide range of subjects, including essay writing, computer science and critical thinking. The student teachers also perform in concerts together with Hirotsuru. Behind the program is the hope

that direct contact with students from prestigious universities will encourage children to become interested in studying abroad, no matter their background, and to balance an energetic pursuit of both their studies and non-academic activities.

Hirotsuru believes that such initiatives have a positive impact on her own music as well. “At Juilliard, I was very impressed by the fact that many of the more accomplished musicians, in addition to music, valued activities outside of the field. I felt that in order to stride forward musically, it was crucial not only to hone our musical skills but also to learn through various experiences.”

One incredible musician achieving this goal is Yo-Yo Ma. Although he will always be an aspiring role model for her, Hirotsuru says that she does not want to simply copy him. “Since the situation and norms of the world are always changing, you will fall behind the times by just imitating someone else. That is why I want to carry the torch of people such as Yo-Yo Ma, passing along the core of his and others’ work, while carving my own path.” ●



“Summer in JAPAN,” organized by Hirotsuru, provides children with the opportunity to directly engage with college students from overseas—mainly from Harvard—through a two-week program.



KADONO Eiko began writing at the urging of her former university instructor. Her debut work in 1970 was based on her experience in Brazil. It was then that she realized the joy of writing.

FINDING YOUR MAGIC:

A WORLD-RENOWNED AUTHOR REVEALS HER SECRET

KADONO Eiko, the author of children's literature known around the world for Kiki's Delivery Service, has created many works in reaction to a childhood experience that was constrained by the harshness of the times. Her works have magically empowered readers across generations and borders, but what was the inspiration behind her works?

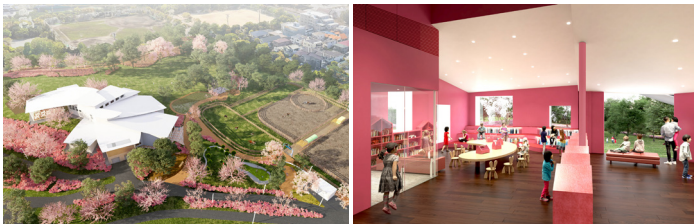
Japanese children's book writer KADONO Eiko believes that "everybody has a magical ability." She said, "All people have something they're good at or that they want to do. To find it, you have to do something you like every day. When a person does something they like, they shine

and they can lead a life that is vibrant, not boring."

Kadono's magical ability is undoubtedly writing stories. When she made her writing debut, her daughter was still little, so she wrote on a drawing board hanging from her neck while engaged in her daily childrearing. "Writing

for me gave me time to relax and be myself amid the daily grind of taking care of my child. I realized I'd found something good." In the half-century or so since she began writing at the age of 34, Kadono has published over 250 works.

Kadono was born in 1935, and therefore experienced war as a child. After the fighting ended, she was enamored of new foreign cultural influences and decided to major in British and American literature at university. After graduating, she worked for a publisher, then married and emigrated with her husband to Brazil, where they stayed for two years. They traveled around Western countries using the money that they had saved from



Edogawa Ward in Tokyo, where Kadono lived as a child, will open a museum in 2023 where visitors can learn about the author's achievements, see the worlds of her works, and experience the wonder of children's literature. Its nickname is "Kiki's Museum of Literature." The museum will house around 9,000 works of children's literature. Kadono focused on selecting short stories because she wants children visiting to have the experience of reading a whole book.



working in Brazil. Reflecting on her youth, when she hopped around the world looking for new places to explore, Kadono said, “During the war, we didn’t have enough food and we lived with all sorts of restrictions. Being freed from that was such a great joy.”

She added, “It’s not that I dislike tradition. What bothers me is having to go in one direction that somebody else has chosen against my will. I want to be the one making the decisions about myself. I guess most people who experienced a time of war when one couldn’t speak one’s mind probably think the same way.” In Kadono’s definitive work, *Kiki’s Delivery Service*, a young witch named Kiki leaves home and finds her own way as a witch, occasionally butting heads with tradition. When the book was adapted into an animated feature film, the story crossed the seas and gained worldwide recognition.

Surprisingly, Kadono has only recently produced works dealing with the subject of war. “I had

wanted to write about the war I experienced, but I didn’t want to force an adult’s point of view on readers.” This is why she decided to write her first book about the topic, *Tonneru no mori 1945* (*Tunnel Forest*, 1945), from the perspective of a 10-year-old child (Iko) living through a war. The follow-up story, *Iko Traveling 1948-*, was an autobiographical novel about the character’s life after the conflict.

Kadono’s books are always surprising, engaging, and empowering. She won recognition for her achievements in 2018, when she received the Hans Christian Andersen Award for Writing, which is also considered the “Little Nobel Prize.” A girl trying to start a career as a witch, a ghost of a little girl who wants to go to school, a girl who lives through the calamity of war, an old woman who travels on a motorcycle ... such women and girls, who take action and have a positive attitude, frequently appear in Kadono’s works, and



Top: Kadono’s most celebrated work, *Kiki’s Delivery Service*, has been translated into 17 languages, and has found loving readers across the world. “Every person who reads the book feels something different. I don’t stress my themes in my works, because I want readers to be free to interpret each theme as they wish.” Bottom: Kadono decorates her home with witch-themed ornaments she has picked up on her travels across the globe.

their stories overlap with the author’s own.

Jumping into the wider world, untethering yourself, following your ambition, and finding the magic within you—helping readers across generations and borders find magic in themselves in such a way is the magic of Kadono’s works. ●

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HOW A HIROSHIMA SAKE BREWER REVIVED HER FAMILY'S BREWERY

A sake brewer in Hiroshima Prefecture, located in western Japan, is capturing the world's attention. Working out of a small, generations-old brewery, she has created new sake with global appeal. What daring challenge did she take on that catapulted her to success? And how suited is Hiroshima's climate to producing this aromatic and flavorful sake?

Sake brewing season begins in late September, during the harvest of its main ingredient: rice. From then on, brewers work nonstop through the following May. Producing sake involves working with microbes, so “you have to pay attention 24 hours a day, seven days a week, because you are growing living things.” That’s according to IMADA Miho,

president and *toji* at Imada Sake Brewing Co., Ltd. in the city of Higashi-Hiroshima’s Akitsu-cho area.

The *toji*, or master brewer, leads the team of brewers and is responsible for all of the brewing processes and the final product. Although Imada was born the eldest daughter of the family that runs Imada Sake Brewing,

she initially had no intention of being part of the family business. She went to university in Tokyo, and after graduating, stayed in the city pursuing work in businesses associated with culture. It was a fulfilling life.

However, a turning point for Imada came when, at 33, due to a souring economy, she lost her job. Looking back on that time, she said, “I didn’t want to get married and dedicate myself to someone else because I wanted to be my own boss. When I was considering how I could provide for myself, I thought of trying my hand at the family business.”

When Imada returned to her family home in 1994, regulations on sake brewing were loosening up and new types of brews were being developed at a rapid pace. Her father, the company’s previous president, thought, “We have to change our sake and the way we brew it, otherwise there is no future.” His daughter felt the



IMADA Miho prepares sake for brewing. It requires attention 24 hours a day because the rice's temperature and water content affect the sake's flavor. The entire process is grueling, but Imada says she enjoys it because it puts her in touch with nature's beauty and there is no correct answer when it comes to sake brewing. MAE KOSUKE



Left: Ears of *battanso*, a revived variety of rice. The rice grain's low water absorption is among the reasons for which it has generally been considered unsuitable for brewing sake, but this is exactly why it results in a uniquely refreshing, dry flavor. MAEKOSUKE

Right: Fukucho, Imada Sake Brewing's signature brand, is brewed with soft water via a technique created in Hiroshima. Another brand, Seafood—pronounced *shifuido* and using kanji for "sea" (*shii*), "wind" (*fuu*), "land" (*do*)—uses white *koji* mold that produces plenty of citric acid. It has a lemony flavor that pairs well with Hiroshima's famous oysters. MAEKOSUKE

The Akitsu-cho area where Imada Sake Brewing Co., Ltd. is located. It is a small port town facing the Seto Inland Sea. In the 19th century, brewers from this area established a method of producing sake with soft water, which had until then been considered ill-suited to the task. The pioneering spirit and technical skills of craftsmen who created new approaches in the face of adversity, as well as the sophisticated palates of the inhabitants of Akitsu-cho developed by the abundant natural bounty of the local seas and mountains, have improved the flavor of the town's sake. MAEKOSUKE

same way, and became involved in production.

One of the company's new sake brewing initiatives began in the early 2000s: reviving *battanso*, a local variety of Hiroshima brewer's rice, which had not been cultivated in over a century. The idea was that producing Hiroshima sake from brewer's rice grown in the local climate, and which no one else was growing, would have high value.

However, bringing back *battanso*, which had yet to undergo selective breeding, was quite a challenge. Since it has long stalks with heavy ears, a typhoon could easily knock down and ruin the crop. It also has a low yield per stalk, making it an inefficient variety for production. Furthermore, originally, the rice could not be cultivated at a constant quality, so the brewers could not tell whether the sake they would brew with it would have the authentic flavor. These were problems the brewery struggled with for years.

So what was their reason for persevering with the cultivation of *battanso*? "Because we couldn't make a good product," explained

Imada. She added, "Quitting without having learned anything about *battanso* was not an option." After much time spent selecting the right *koji* mold and yeast to bring out the rice's potential and studying brewing management practices, they finally produced a sake with an acceptable flavor. That was in approximately 2014, 10 years after they had first started growing *battanso*.

With the revived *battanso* rice, the company produced a brew with the traditional Hiroshima method of *ginjo* brewing, which employs heavily polished rice grains and brews at a low temperature. They named it Fukucho Hattanso Junmai Ginjo. Classified as *junmai* (meaning "purely rice" in Japanese) as it is brewed without neutral spirits and only using rice, it has a smooth mouthfeel with plenty of umami flavor, plus a dry aftertaste. In 2017, the sake won the platinum medal in the Junmai category at the Kura Master sake contest in France. It then became the brewery's flagship product, with orders coming in from around the world. When demand for sake

in Japan plummeted during the COVID-19 pandemic, overseas buyers saved the company.

Imada said, "I find it fascinating that sake can create connections across the globe. I'll keep doing what I can so that even more people are able to enjoy the flavor of sake produced in Hiroshima's climate." The brewery's sake continues to be shipped out from Hiroshima to lands across the sea, bound for connoisseurs worldwide. ●



After finishing university, Imada worked in a department store's culture division and at an association that promotes Noh theater. She started working at Imada Sake Brewing in 1994. In 2020, the BBC selected her as one of the 100 most "inspiring and influential women" around the world—the only Japanese person to make the list. MAEKOSUKE

FINDING NEW VALUE IN FUKUSHIMA'S DORMANT RESOURCES

Business trips took KOBAYASHI Miai to Fukushima, where she encountered bountiful nature and lifestyles that changed her perceptions and led her to become an entrepreneur. There, she devised a way to distribute so-called substandard fruit, then developed a femtech (female-technology) product using kaki (Asian persimmon) peels that are normally discarded. Dormant local resources came to life through her magic, linking urban and rural areas and pointing to a future in which society shares its wealth.

“It was a tingly feeling—the kind you get when you meet someone you want to spend the rest of your life with. In any case, it felt like home.” That is how KOBAYASHI Miai describes her encounter with Kunimi, a small town of around 9,000 in Fukushima Prefecture, where she launched a startup called “Hitobito”—a name that combines the Japanese words for “sun” (*hi*), “and” (*to*) and “people” (*bito*, sequentially voiced as *bito*). Kunimi Town is a place of fruit growers who welcomed Kobayashi with open arms, leading her to establish a business

based on agricultural produce that is normally discarded.

Kobayashi was once a gung-ho career woman in Tokyo. Harboring a strong desire to serve society, her first job after graduating from college was at the House of Representatives Research Bureau, which undertakes the research and document preparation needed for legislation in the lower house of the Japanese National Diet. In March 2011, toward the end of her first year with the bureau, a giant earthquake (officially termed the Great East Japan

Earthquake) struck the northeast of the country. She then took a leave of absence to engage in volunteer rubble-clearing work in post-disaster Tohoku (a hard-hit region in northern Japan), but collapsed from exhaustion and became painfully aware that the only way to be of any use to the region was to “do something [she is] really good at.”

Four years later, Kobayashi switched careers and started working for a consulting firm, where she could assist regional businesses on the ground in finding solutions. She actively began

Kaki peels are said to contain substances with excellent deodorizing and moisturizing qualities. Although they are normally discarded during the *anpo-gaki* production process, Hitobito has used them to develop feminine-care products.





The people of Kunimi say that “work means working for the family” and that “children aren’t supposed to be raised; they grow up naturally.” Such words motivated Kobayashi to rethink her own ideas about work and life.

volunteering for jobs involving post-disaster reconstruction in the devastated areas of Fukushima Prefecture. Visiting the prefecture on a regular basis, she eventually decided to launch her own business. “I can do more for Fukushima,” she reasoned. “I can do something the region really needs, on my own initiative.” She was confident in the skills that she had gained through her work with the government and the consulting firm.

The place that she chose was Kunimi, a town where she felt at home. She spoke with the farmers there to learn about their problems, and began by focusing on the distribution of peaches, a major product of the region. Ordinary distributors do

not accept substandard produce: that is, fruit of the wrong size or shape, or with slightly blemished skin. Kobayashi bought such peaches directly from farmers, she then devised a system that made the fruit available to city consumers at a reasonable price, together with messages from the producers and other pertinent information. Her next focus was on “*anpo-gaki*” (luscious semi-dried persimmons), another well-known product of Kunimi. The fruit is peeled before drying, with the peels normally being thrown away, but Kobayashi learned that these peels are endowed with deodorant and antiseptic qualities. She then spent three years developing *kaki*-based skin-care products for women’s intimate areas, and successfully brought them to the market in January 2020. It was an idea that came to her because she herself had been prone to skin problems and had irregular periods whenever she felt emotionally or physically stressed by her formerly irregular lifestyle.

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) recognized Hitobito two years in a row for a subsidy initiative known as the Demonstration Project for Femtech and Similar Support Services. This autumn, Hitobito is set to launch an “active-learning” demonstration project aimed at business enterprises, with the goal of removing unconscious biases regarding women’s minds and bodies. “I think femtech will be the trump card for achieving diversity and inclusion,” asserts Kobayashi.



Top: KOBAYASHI Miai now shuttles between her two bases, Tokyo and Fukushima, sharing childcare tasks with her husband. She stays balanced by remaining receptive to the issues surrounding regional resources and city needs, as well as to different sets of values.

Bottom: A husband-and-wife team in Kunimi producing both peaches and *anpo-gaki* provide the *kaki* peels for Hitobito products. Warm-hearted and conscientious, they are vital partners for Kobayashi and Hitobito.



The name of the feminine-care products Kobayashi came up with is “Tomorrow I will climb a *kaki* tree.” It exhorts women to live their lives at their own pace, choosing their own way.

“New femtech products will give people the chance to learn together about women’s health issues, and we plan to focus on awareness-building, letting both men and women think more about their own health.”

“We want to build an environment in which all women can cherish the balance of their own minds and bodies and make their own choices,” she adds. Kobayashi believed in her own potential and cleared a path for herself. Her energy is as bright as the sun and lights the way toward a shining future for women in Fukushima and in Japan as a whole. ●



DEMON-LIKE DEITIES

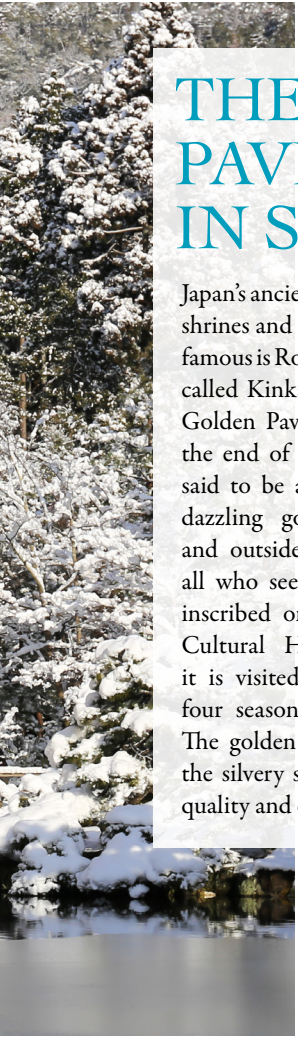
Residents disguised as deities from another world visit homes, driving away evil—a folk custom passed down through the generations in many places in Japan. In 2018, “Raiho-shin, ritual visits of deities in masks and costumes” was inscribed on the List of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The *namahage* of Oga City in Akita Prefecture are particularly distinctive. On New Year’s Eve, “*namahage*” wearing demonic masks rebuke the laziness of humans. While fusing with other rituals and traditional arts, it is gaining popularity as a “hot” festival during the cold northern winter.



YAMANASHI MASANORI/AFLO

THE GOLDEN PAVILION IN SNOW

Japan's ancient capital, Kyoto, is full of shrines and temples. One of the most famous is Rokuon-ji temple, popularly called Kinkaku-ji, the Temple of the Golden Pavilion. Originally built at the end of the 14th century, it was said to be a paradise on earth. The dazzling gold leaf applied inside and outside the building captivates all who see it, and in 1994, it was inscribed on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List. Although it is visited by many people in all four seasons, winter is exceptional. The golden pavilion nestled against the silvery snow radiates an ethereal quality and dignity.



WINTER— A CHANCE TO DISCOVER A NEVER- BEFORE- SEEN JAPAN

The winter scenery in Japan is an impressive sight, as much so as spring's cherry blossoms and autumn's colors. Unusual snowscapes, traditional rituals suited to the northern region, and the blessings of a generous climate. In winter, there is more to Japan than you know.



AFLO

Facing the Seto Inland Sea, Hiroshima Prefecture enjoys warm weather, with citrus cultivation flourishing since long ago. Lemon cultivation began early on the island of Ikuchijima in Onomichi City, and today it is called "Lemon Island." An area known as "Lemon Grove," with spreading lemon orchards, has become a tourist hotspot. Bridges linking the mainland and Shikoku via a series of islands form what has become a popular cycling road, welcoming winter visitors to the island full of ripe, yellow-colored lemons.



SUCCESSFUL JAPANESE INNOVATOR GIVES BACK TO AMERICA

Dr. Hiroyuki Fujita, a Japan-born physicist, entrepreneur, and innovator, became a successful industrialist in the U.S. after founding the medical equipment company Quality Electrodynamics in Cleveland, Ohio. Here's how his beliefs led him to success and respect in the U.S. community.

On January 24, 2012, Dr. Hiroyuki "Hiro" Fujita, a Japan-born physicist and entrepreneur living in Ohio, found himself in the First Lady's box at the U.S. Capitol, listening to President Barack Obama extol American manufacturing during his State of the Union Address. As the founder and CEO of Quality Electrodynamics (QED), an engineering healthcare innovations company, Dr. Fujita was being acknowledged for his role as an

immigrant entrepreneur and for contributing to high-tech exports. He was honored to be sitting with Michelle Obama, Jill Biden, and other dignitaries listening to the president discuss income inequality, tax cuts, and new energy sources.

The rare and special distinction of attending the State of the Union represented a significant milestone in the success that Dr. Fujita had achieved in his adopted homeland, and it came at the end of a long road that began when he first moved to the U.S. as a college student in 1988. Born in Nara Prefecture, in Japan's Kansai region, Dr. Fujita originally wanted to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather and uncle, who were both diplomats. But while he was studying at Waseda University, he also took a summer course at the University of California San Diego, and was impressed by the academic freedom that students enjoyed. He decided to enroll at Monmouth College in Illinois to benefit from smaller classes and focus on his language skills.

"I was too young even to know what I wanted to do at the time," says Dr. Fujita. "But my attitude

was that I would do all I could, given all the opportunities I saw, to learn something new. So, I studied physics and math, and kept improving my English skills."

Dr. Fujita then earned his Ph.D. in physics from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. His thesis focused on the modeling of radiofrequency (RF) coils used in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanners. Upon entering the industry, he continued his MRI research, focusing on hardware and generating multiple patents. However, he wanted to have a greater impact and realized that to do so he needed to be involved with management decisions. Such an opportunity came when he was persuaded to join a startup that was soon acquired by General Electric Company.

At this technology giant, Dr. Fujita enhanced his management skills while working with technology teams internationally. Eventually, however, he decided he wanted to establish his own business based upon the philosophy he had developed over the years.

"My philosophy is that everything comes down to people and trust," says Dr. Fujita. "I wanted to build a company culture in which everybody is united in mutual trust and respect, with a common goal, which is to make a difference in our society no matter what we do."

In 2006, he established QED



Around 170 associates work at QED in Ohio. Dr. Fujita sends a letter to them every New Year delivering a message that they should never lose the entrepreneurial spirit of the company and never be satisfied with the status quo.

in Ohio as a healthcare diagnostic imaging technology company. QED specializes in RF coils for MRI scanners. These devices are essential in detecting the changes in the body's induced magnetic field during scans, allowing the creation of detailed anatomical images. What makes QED's RF coils unique, says Dr. Fujita, is their higher signal-to-noise ratio, which provides clearer, high-resolution imagery. Dr. Fujita attributes the successful development of the RF coils, as well as the business itself, to personal relationships. As proof of QED's success, and only three years after the company's establishment, it was named by Forbes as one of America's top 20 most promising companies.

Dr. Fujita has met many great people throughout his career but cites 94-year-old Albert Ratner, a prominent and acclaimed giant in the U.S. real estate industry, as a role model and mentor. This respected veteran community leader introduced Dr. Fujita to other influential businesspeople who joined QED's board of directors. With that group of talent, QED was able to expand its business significantly.

In 2019, Canon Inc., well known

for its camera and office equipment businesses, added QED to its holdings as part of its long-term business transformation strategy. The acquisition helped the Japanese multinational corporation to boost corporate diversification in healthcare imaging and radiology. Dr. Fujita now also serves as chief technology officer of the CT-MR Division at Canon Medical Systems Corporation based in Japan. "Japan is definitely one of the leading countries in the whole world in terms of craftsmanship," says Dr. Fujita. "I thought I could add some unique values and contributions to the business knowing both the American and Japanese culture deeply."

Mr. Ratner also instilled in Dr. Fujita the importance of community involvement, not only in Ohio and the U.S. but internationally. The CEO has since taken on numerous roles in public and private groups, enhancing his prominence as an industrialist. He is a member of the Board of the Greater Cleveland Partnership, the U.S.-Japan Council, the Cleveland Council on World Affairs, The Cleveland Orchestra, and the Board of Governors of the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University (OIST) and serves as the first Asian chairman of The Ohio State University's Board of Trustees in its long history of more than 150 years. Dr. Fujita is also the chair of the Cleveland Clinic Hillcrest Hospital Board of Trustees as well as inaugural Honorary Consul of Japan in Cleveland.

In taking on such roles in the U.S., Dr. Fujita has also had to work



Dr. Fujita received the President's "E" Award in 2013 and the President's "E Star" Award in 2019 for contributing to U.S. export growth.

in an environment with different social issues than those in Japan. For example, he is often the only board member of Asian descent, and has worked to increase the visibility of fellow Asian people in America. His goal is to change how other people see Asians by making them more prominent and more involved worldwide in a more visible way.

"I want to make a positive difference, and I want people to know that we are also a great part of society," says Dr. Fujita. "To that end, Asian people have to get more involved, because if people do not see what we do, the perception is that we do nothing, and the perception becomes a reality. I want people to know about our contributions. I care about the community and I'm part of the community too. And then I want younger Asian people to recognize that. They will say, 'OK, this guy's doing that. Why not us?'"

Dr. Fujita's positive attitude, his willingness to challenge himself, and his commitment to people have enabled him to succeed in business while becoming a pillar of the community. His belief is that one must have ambitions, and these ambitions will form strategies for success. With that mindset, he's sure to achieve whatever goals he sets for himself. ●



Dr. Fujita also serves as a governor of OIST, highly regarded worldwide for its interdisciplinary approach. He is shown here attending the OIST Board of Governors meeting held in Okinawa in September 2022.

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Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	https://www.maff.go.jp/e/
Ministry of Defense	https://www.mod.go.jp/en/
Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry	https://www.meti.go.jp/english/
Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology	https://www.mext.go.jp/en/
Ministry of the Environment	https://www.env.go.jp/en/
Ministry of Finance	https://www.mof.go.jp/english/
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	https://www.mofa.go.jp
Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare	https://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/
Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications	https://www.soumu.go.jp/english/
Ministry of Justice	https://www.moj.go.jp/EN/
Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism	https://www.mlit.go.jp/en/
Digital Agency	https://www.digital.go.jp/en/
Reconstruction Agency	https://www.reconstruction.go.jp/english/
Nuclear Regulation Authority	https://www.nsr.go.jp/english/

JapanGov (<https://www.japan.go.jp>) is your digital gateway to Japan. Visit the website and find out more.

JapanGov, the official portal of the Government of Japan, provides a wealth of information regarding various issues that Japan is tackling, and also directs you to the sites of relevant ministries and agencies. It introduces important policies that the government is addressing, such as economic growth, innovative technology, and diversity, among others, with many videos and infographics.

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You'll also find the official web magazine "KIZUNA"
(<https://www.japan.go.jp/kizuna/>).

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