

通風

Vol. 06

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Hard data, quality education, and the secret to happiness

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Passing on the lessons from disaster

SPECIAL FEATURE

"Universities have always been international"

社會科學系圖書館
Library for Social Sciences



Kobe insights

Backstreet shrines bring good luck

As any visitor to Japan will know, even the most modern and bustling of Japanese cities are home to many shrines and temples, nestled between the modern shopping streets and apartment blocks. Kobe is no exception. The city center is named Sannomiya (三宮), which can literally be translated as “third shrine”. So what happened to shrines number one and two? Actually there are eight shrines in Kobe with this naming pattern, from Ichinomiya (first shrine) and Ninomiya (second shrine) all the way to Hachinomiya (eighth shrine). They all fall under the umbrella of Ikuta Shrine, the largest in Kobe, with a thousand-year long history.

Legend says that these eight shrines are numbered in the order that Empress Jingu visited them in ancient times during a pilgrimage. They enshrine three female and five male deities, who were born when goddess Amaterasu-omikami and god Susanoo-no-mikoto exchanged a jewel and a sword. Each deity is responsible for a different aspect of life, from good harvests, traffic safety, and exorcism, to performing arts, marriage and land development.



Ichinomiya Shrine



Ninomiya Shrine

Visiting all eight shrines is said to help drive out evil spirits and bring good fortune. Traditionally, the best time to do this is on the day before spring according to the old Japanese calendar (February 3, known as “Setsubun”). But don’t let that stop you from visiting at another time – the shrines are open all year round, accessible by public transport, and can easily be seen in one day. They are not that well known, even among Kobe residents, so it is a good way to avoid the crowds and get to know more of traditional Japan. The Kobe Tourist Information Center provides a pamphlet with details of how to get to each shrine, including spaces to collect special stamps from each location.

Why “Kaze”?

There are two main concepts behind the title “Kaze”, meaning “wind”. Firstly, Kobe University’s goal to innovate, creating a wind of change. Secondly, our location at the foot of Mt Rokkō, an area known for the invigorating wind of Rokkō-oroshi that blows down from the mountain range.

The calligraphy on the cover of “Kaze” was created by Professor Emeritus UOZUMI Kazuaki, a researcher of calligraphy at Kobe University.



Cover photo for Kobe University Magazine “Kaze” Issue 6:
Students entering the Library for Social Sciences, Rokkodai 1st Campus

Kobe University Magazine “Kaze”

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SPOTLIGHT

Dementia prevention and intervention through community-based programs

Dementia is a huge social issue, with the number of sufferers in Japan predicted to reach 7 million by 2025. Kobe University established the Dementia Prevention Project Office with the aim of contributing to society in a field where existing treatments are insufficient. With “prevention” as the keyword, the team are transforming research into social impact. This is an interdisciplinary project with participants from the Graduate Schools of Health Sciences, Medicine, Human Development and Environment, System Informatics, and the Office for Academic and Industrial Innovation. First, Professor Hisatomo Kowa introduces his program.



Hisatomo Kowa, MD, Ph.D

Professor, Graduate School of Health Sciences

Basic drugs needed for treatment

What's the status of dementia research in Japan?

Prof. Kowa: Firstly, there are drug-based treatment schemes that aim to achieve the pattern of “Symptoms appear, visit hospital, treatment begins based on diagnosis, symptoms vanish, cure successful”. Research on dementia is quite advanced, and regarding Alzheimer's disease, the most common type, we now have a good understanding of the process leading up to onset. Research is also progressing for a drug that removes the “senile plaque” that builds up in the brains of the patients. Mouse experiments have shown that when we administer an antibody for the formative proteins of senile plaque, the plaque is removed to some extent. This is almost certainly valid for humans too. However, after 10 years of clinical trials, the effectiveness of this treatment after symptoms develop is unproven.

Is it too late after symptoms appear?

Yes. Patients come to hospital after developing symptoms, when it's too late to start treating them. The only option is to find people in pre-clinical stages (senile plaque has started to build up in the brain, but with no symptoms), and dose them before symptoms develop. But you can't do that with conventional medical schemes.

Senile plaque buildup can be detected using an amyloid PET scan. By scanning many elderly people, we can find people who respond positively to treatment. However, the scan costs several thousand US dollars each time, so it's not realistic. We need to be able to monitor groups of elderly people for medium to long-term periods, use a screening process to implement the amyloid PET scan, and administer the drug to those who test positive but haven't developed symptoms.

So at the same time as drug-related research, you'll also develop a treatment scheme for using these drugs in the future?

That's right. To achieve this, we need to facilitate the understanding of elderly people, and we need to create an opportunity for regular check-ups of their cognitive functions. That's why I'm implementing dementia prevention classes.

Cognitive care for Kobe citizens

What are dementia prevention classes?

The classes combine exercises and cognitive training with lessons about risk of illness and improving our lifestyles. We implement a program called “Brain Health Class” that incorporates various approaches considered effective in prevention. It was designed by Kobe University researchers and includes regular aerobic exercise, dual-tasks such as exercising while playing word games, and maintaining social connections. The participants join the program, we measure various markers for cognitive functions once a year, and tell the participants the results of our tests.

This initiative also helps by establishing a framework to evaluate changes in cognitive functions. To detect changes before symptoms develop, first we need data for the normal natural time course of cognitive functions – normal aging values. By analyzing participants' data and calculating the normal time course of cognitive changes in the aged, we'll be able to evaluate each individual by comparing them with the average.

When did the program start?

In July 2018, we began with 20 participants over 75 years old in a care home for the elderly in Kobe's Kita district. It's a 60-minute program once a week. The participants can engage in aerobic exercise and dual-task activities and receive advice about dietary habits etc. The nature of the facility allows us to monitor them long-term, and we aim to continue for 10 years.

From October 2019 we have held yoga-based special classes at the Kobe Culture Center. The participants are aged between 53 and 89, and the yoga instructor incorporates dementia prevention techniques. In the next stages we'll introduce new options such as dance, creating a program that participants can continue without getting bored.

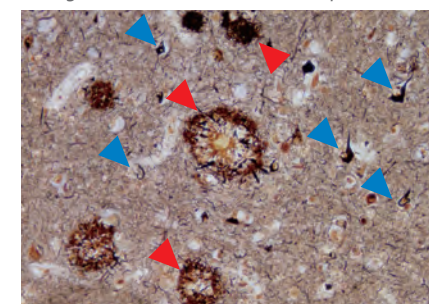
What's the next step?

We're collaborating with gyms and cultural centers as venues for these classes, in order to provide programs for elderly people who live at home as well as those in care facilities. We are also preparing a program with the prefectural hospital. We're considering offering classes in hospital facilities, focusing on patients admitted for dementia risk factors like high blood pressure and diabetes. It would be ideal if we could work with local authorities to disseminate information about the classes.

A project involving the entire University

You're also planning to make the classes a business?

Changes in the brains of Alzheimer's patients



Red arrows: senile plaque
Blue arrows: changes in neurofibrils (phosphorylating tau)



“Brain Health Class” to prevent dementia. Photo: class at the Kobe Culture Center.

To prevent dementia you have to engage long-term or it's meaningless. It won't benefit society unless we can continue without depending on research funds. We're getting advice from Kobe University specialists on how to generate the minimum necessary funds to meet management costs – it's not a commercial enterprise.

You're involved in dementia prevention with Kobe City too?

Based on the April 2018 ordinance to create a city adapted to dementia patients, and in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO Kobe Centre), Kobe City is creating an index to calculate the risks of developing dementia. It's a large-scale project targeting over 40,000 people, and respondents who develop dementia will be verified using the certification level of long-term care insurance provided by Kobe City..

Can graduates and current alumni of Kobe University participate?

In November we started a class for alumni. For current students, we're preparing a curriculum about dementia, with the

additional aim of having them participate in research to clarify dementia risk factors. Pathological changes in senile plaque, a cause of dementia, occur over 20 years before symptoms present, so there may be risk factors that cause buildup of senile plaque based on our lifestyles when younger. We're asking current students, faculty and staff at Kobe University to fill out questionnaires and contribute blood samples for this research. When aiming for long-term evaluation of risks, it's important to frame it as dementia education for the whole University. By raising awareness and understanding among everyone in the University, including staff and students, I want us to become a pioneering organization in preventing dementia. This is a truly worthwhile interdisciplinary topic that encompasses the whole University.

Members of the University working together for everyone's benefit. It's a great endeavor.

Advancing our studies while organizing programs that benefit society is very meaningful. I want students to proactively participate too - if you join us with a positive attitude, you can connect with the whole University.

Different approaches to dementia prevention

Early detection using IT

Casually observing changes in cognitive functions in the everyday lives of the elderly, and linking this to early detection of dementia – this is the system at work in dementia prevention classes. We use AI speakers, and when elderly people talk to them the sensors pick up information such as voice condition, rhythm, conversation topics, movements, gestures, expressions and line of sight. We use this data to estimate the level of cognitive functions.

This is adapted from a system that formed part of my previous research on autism in children. We had a computer analyze children's voices when they play: voice patterns, differences in pitch, inflection etc. If you can tell a child is autistic before they start school, you can provide education to fit their needs.

We've only just started applying this to dementia prevention. All the class participants are healthy, and we don't know if they will develop dementia. We collect as much data as possible, and if symptoms develop after a few years, we'll start the difficult task of verifying that person's past data. However, many people are resistant to screening cognitive functions, so a system that can "casually" observe is very significant.



Tetsuya Takiguchi, Ph.D

*Professor, Research Center for Urban Safety and Security
Graduate School of System Informatics*

I also dream about creating a system to support the recovery of people with dementia. Communication with dementia patients can be difficult, and if we make a system supported with AI and robots, maybe they can enjoy talking more with those around them. I believe that conversation gives people a reason for living, so this is very important to me.

The importance of human networks



Narihiko Kondo, Ph.D

*Professor, Graduate School of Human Development
and Environment*

In 2015 we set up the Kobe Active Aging Research Hub. We're engaged in research from the three perspectives of mind, body and society, with the aim of tackling issues in an aging society. I approach the dementia issue from a social sciences viewpoint - social networks can function to prevent dementia.

We're involved in promoting communication at the Tsurukabuto

Danchi housing complex in Kobe's Nada district, and analyzing the effects. There are many elderly people living in Tsurukabuto Danchi, and some young people too, but various problems arise from lack of communication between the generations. Our project to strengthen links between neighbors has revealed the power of community. For example, the data underlines that connecting with others is more important than anti-obesity, no-alcohol and no-smoking policies when promoting health among residents. An increased sense of security within the local community can increase birth rates too. Communities are the key to solving many problems.

Data shows that dementia incidences decrease when there is a strong social network. We are incorporating this into dementia prevention classes by creating name tags, having people call each other by name, making time for conversation and holding events. We're also cooperating with the Graduate School of System Informatics to analyze how these social networks change.

We're gaining an understanding of the daily lives of participants, and through the accumulation and analysis of this data, I think we will be able to suggest a concrete way of life that can decrease dementia risk. I want to look at prevention methods from this perspective too.

Research at Kobe

Hard data, quality education, and the secret to happiness



Kazuo Nishimura

*Project Professor, Center for Social Systems Innovation,
Research Institute for Economics and Business Administration*

A team at the Center for Social Systems Innovation led by Project Professor Kazuo Nishimura surveyed 20,000 people in Japan and revealed that self-determination has a stronger influence on happiness than income or academic ability.

During the 1980s Professor Nishimura taught economics in the United States, carrying out data-based research of the role of human capital in economic growth models. While in the US he also researched psychology, and recently he has been working on empirical research into the accumulation of human capital from a multidisciplinary viewpoint. "Human capital can be accumulated through experience and education" he says. We interviewed him on the research that could impact Japan's education system.

Quality of education affects Japan's economy

Tell us about your multidisciplinary research

Prof. Nishimura: My main research uses data models to analyze how human capital affects economic growth. However, you cannot show the contents of education with data models. If we use multidisciplinary and empirical approaches, we can look at concrete issues, not just abstract debates.

For example, what sort of issues?

Low labor productivity is an issue for Japan's economy. The root of this problem is that Japan's education system is not producing

results. This can only be solved by raising the quality of education in Japan. First, we needed to survey students' academic abilities. As introduced in our book, University students who can't solve fractions, in 1998 I collaborated with Professor Nobuyuki Tose (Keio University) to test the mathematical skills of first-year students who had just entered top universities. We were able to reveal the truth of the falling academic standards hidden in the abstract education policy of teaching "the ability to live".

Starting with that survey, I began to use empirical research to verify concrete facts with data. When we compared humanities graduates who had chosen mathematics as part of their university entrance exams with those who didn't, we found that graduates who chose mathematics had higher incomes and an advantage when changing jobs.



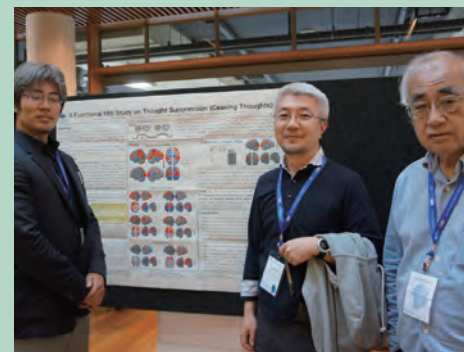
Submitting signatures to the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology towards rethinking Yutori Education, 2005



Receiving Doctor Honoris Causa in France, 2007



At an international conference on mathematics with renowned chaos theorist Professor Sharkovsky, 2007



Presenting at an international conference on consciousness at Queensland University, 2015



Hosting an international conference on education in mathematics, science and technology, with Nobel Laureate in Physics Professor Makoto Kobayashi, 2016



Attending an international conference in Paris, 2017

At that time, there was also a theory that humanities graduates had higher incomes than science graduates. When we tested this theory by comparing the incomes of both groups, the results showed that science graduates had higher incomes, especially physics specialists. After publishing this research, the trend of belittling science and mathematics courses slowly started to change.

So by revealing the truth based on empirical data, you had a positive impact on education.

Children's happiness influenced by their upbringing

You also research the impact of upbringing.

In Japan there is this idea that ethics are more important than academic skills. In order to find the core that forms the basis of our ethical codes, I looked at what children were told by parents and others around them in early childhood. I arrived at four main principles: don't lie, be kind to others, follow the rules, and study. People who were brought up to follow these four principles tended to have high incomes and strong academic abilities.

You've recently published a very interesting study on upbringing and happiness.

In every era, parents want happiness for their children. You could say this is the goal of child-rearing. However, happiness takes many forms. I surveyed over 20,000 people to identify the elements

people need to feel happy, and found that aside from health and human connections, self-determination had the biggest impact on happiness. In a survey on types of upbringing and social success, children who received a supportive style of upbringing that encouraged independence were most successful in adulthood. These results are very consistent. Children who can make their own choices are more motivated and feel more satisfied with their achievements. This connects to higher happiness levels.

In the international ranking of the UN's World Happiness Report, Japan's happiness levels were not that high. Looked at as a whole, Japan scores low for "freedom in life choices". So people in Japanese society with high self-determination are likely to be happier.



Front right: University students who can't solve fractions, the book that rang the warning bell about the drop in academic abilities. From left: Let's learn math! series, praised for cultivating cognitive skills in mathematics.

“Children who can make their own choices are more motivated and feel more satisfied with their achievements.”

Empirical data supports education reform

Your research topics all appear to be connected.

I feel that in today's society both parents and children worry about the right thing to do in education and child-rearing. I would like people to use the data I have numerically verified in order to make judgements about education. In the long term, I want to create a series of education models.

Could these research results be applied to society as part of reforms to the education system?

It is not easy to influence policies. However, that's what I'm aiming to do. At the moment I'm working as a consultant for the Osaka City Board of Education, which is building initiatives around two essential targets: improving safety and academic ability.

Regarding safety, at the end of the 2014 academic year incidences of violence in Osaka's elementary and middle schools were three times higher than the national average, the highest in Japan. In the three years leading up to 2017, this fell by four-fifths, and halved again in the following academic year. It is now lower than the national average.

That's extraordinary. How did they do it?

In November 2015, Osaka City distributed "School Safety Rules" to every public elementary and middle school in the area. These specified in detail what not to do, such

“In the future, I would like to prove that every individual has a different learning style. If we frame it like this, I don't think the concept of children with learning difficulties would exist.”

as "truancy" and "leaving other children out". They aimed to encourage children to learn to discipline themselves based on awareness of which actions were bad. The contents was common sense. The important thing was to spell it out.

What about raising academic ability?

We are working on raising teaching standards to enable children to effectively study the subjects that I have empirically shown to be essential. First, I presented the key elements in learning Japanese and mathematics, and used this as a basis to make proposals for lesson improvements. Based on my proposals, the Board of Education has created manuals for teaching Japanese and mathematics, and veteran instructors have used these to instruct teachers in 30 of Osaka's schools. The feedback was very good. Teachers felt more confident, and the children enjoyed and understood the lessons. In the future, I would like to spread this initiative from these 30 schools to all public elementary schools in Osaka.

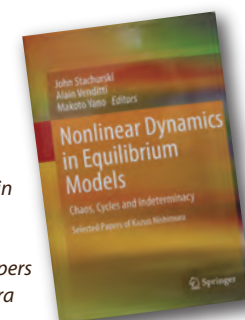
What are the issues in realizing these goals?

There are not enough veteran teachers to lead the instruction. Hiring them costs

money, but from the perspectives of both skills and time, I'm looking into asking retired teachers to help out. As well as Japanese and mathematics, I'm also preparing to start teacher instruction in sciences from April 2019.

In the long term I would also like to work on improving the academic skills of children with learning difficulties. We have had success in boosting the abilities of children with learning difficulties as well as their classmates by using the Let's learn math! series in Tokyo and Kyoto. I would like to realize this in Osaka too.

In the future, I would like to prove that every individual has a different learning style. If we frame it like this, I don't think the concept of children with learning difficulties would exist, and the whole education framework would change as well. It's a big step, but ultimately I want to promote independent learning.



Nonlinear Dynamics in Equilibrium Models (Springer, 2012) a collection of key papers by Professor Nishimura on chaos, cycles and indeterminacy.

Education for Sustainable Development



Koji Matsuoka
ESD Program Coordinator
Professor, Graduate School of Human Development
and Environment

The Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) course provides an opportunity for students from all faculties to work together to look at sustainable development from a broad perspective, including issues such as the environment, poverty, peace, human rights, welfare, and health, and to nurture the ability to promote sustainability in its many forms.

What sort of program is Education for Sustainable Development?

Prof. Matsuoka: Actually that's a very difficult question. What is sustainability, and what does this program involve? It can be interpreted very broadly.

Of course sustainability is important for the Earth's resources and our current societies, but it's not only that. We can't just think about our own countries, and we can't forget about living creatures other

than humans, and unborn lives. There are people with disabilities, and people who live in disaster zones. The movement known as "sustainable development" aims to create sustainable societies for all living things.

In 2015 the United Nations established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ESD is a hard concept, so they established 17 concrete goals, such as ending poverty, protecting land and sea resources, and ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all. The idea is that if we all pick a goal and work together, we will realize sustainable development. However, many of these goals end up conflicting, and if one is promoted others will fail. For example, when developing countries advance to end poverty, other living creatures in those countries may lose their habitats. Of course the UN knows this. But most people aren't at the stage of worrying about these conflicts, so first we want people to act on their chosen SDG.

ESD practice becomes important when these conflicts occur. The "Education" part of ESD enables people to gradually change by interacting in a community. When people with different values study together to build a sustainable society for all forms of life, your way of thinking changes almost without you noticing. ESD is about creating a new balance in which we accept contradictions and conflicts.

Tell us what makes the ESD course different.

In the ESD course, fieldwork comes first. We visit people practicing ESD in various contexts, and the students look for problems. We don't want students to be satisfied learning things that someone else discovered, we want them to ask themselves, "Can I find the seeds of knowledge and theory myself?" In the ESD course, to begin with teachers don't give the students any answers or key phrases. Teaching from the top down, textbook-style, is not ESD. In practical

classes, students bring questions they have found, and students and teachers from various faculties work together to look for answers. Different people gather to think about one issue. If students and professors from all faculties combine their powers in a comprehensive university like Kobe University, what will come out of it? That's another thing I want to study through this course.

Interestingly, when students start to think about the issues they have identified using their initiatives, they make time outside designated classes and start to act more spontaneously. The ESD course also aims to help students gain confidence in their own ability to act and take the initiative.

What kind of students would you like to take this course?

People who are interested in a variety of disciplines and issues. If you think there's something odd about the current era or our society, that perception is definitely right. Those small doubts become the power to change societies. Let's work with people from different backgrounds to create a system with new ways of learning, a new balance, and the power of small doubts to change societies.

Second-year students from the Faculty of Global Human Sciences (from left):

Nana Monden (Global Cultures)

Kaede Takasu (Global Cultures)

Shuuto Takamatsu (Environment and Sustainability)

Takaaki Asakura (Environment and Sustainability)



ESD Course *Student Voices*

What fieldwork have you participated in?

Monden: A facility for people with disabilities called "Enpitsu no Ie" made a deep impression on me. I learned that it provides a community for people with disabilities, but it's hard to make connections with local people. Even though they are close neighbors, not many locals try actively to connect with them, and the community is isolated.

Asakura: I taught Japanese and other subjects to non-Japanese children at the Kobe Foreigners Friendship Center. There are children who can't go to school because of economic difficulties, and children who can't keep up with their classes because they have difficulty with Japanese, but the schools don't support them enough... I also learned that they are sometimes judged more harshly than Japanese people when it comes to manners, and I realized that this sort of prejudice and discrimination exists.

Takasu: It's good that we have so many opportunities to go out in the field. There are lots of options for ESD Study Tours. There's a fieldwork calendar on a portal site with something going on almost every day, so you can participate in many programs.

What sort of classes are you taking now?

Takamatsu: Now I'm doing ESD practicals. We choose a topic, have a free discussion with the teacher, and take action. We're thinking about the issue of how to raise awareness about ESD, but it's really tough [laughs].

Takasu: "What is ESD?" is often a topic of discussion, but it's hard to find the answer.

Monden: Teachers from various faculties come and talk about ESD as it relates to their fields, but sometimes when I listen to them I think, "These things are conflicting" [laughs]. However you look at it, "correct" ESD isn't possible, so it's important to understand that conflicts exist.

Asakura: ESD is so broad and hard to interpret. Even if we can't say "this is ESD", it's important that we each think about our own interpretations of ESD.

How do you want to use the skills gained on the ESD course?

Takamatsu: ESD has given me opportunities to interact with people I've never talked to before now. I want to spread the word about ESD, and first I need to learn more, so I want to connect with more different people and make this our topic.

Takasu: Learning about ESD I've come to think, "Even if one side is ok, the other side isn't". I'm involved in fair trade activities, but even this has environmental costs. We can't just consider one way, we need multiple approaches.

Monden: I've realized that it's so important to listen to people speaking from different viewpoints, and think about things from their perspective. You have to go out and do fieldwork or you won't understand, so I want to continue actively joining ESD field trips.

Asakura: When I'm thinking about volunteer activities, or planning projects after I start working, I want to try and understand why people think differently from me, and empathize with their position. I want to act based on the merits of myself and others, and the effect it will have on the people around me, society, and the environment.

ESD classes



Fieldwork experience



International voices



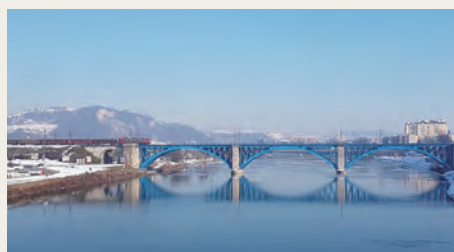
Sara Ferčal

Research Student at the Graduate School of Intercultural Studies

Originally from Slovenia, she is a member of the Kobe University theater group Hachinosuza. She enjoys manga, anime, and cosplays her original character "Heartbreaker".



A republic located in Central Europe with a population of 2.07 million. The capital is Ljubljana. There are beautiful natural surroundings, including lakes and mountains such as the Julian Alps; it is a popular international hiking and skiing destination.



Slovenian landscape

Student theater, cosplay, and other new challenges

What's everyday life like for you at Kobe University?

Presently, I study Japanese while preparing for the graduate school exam. I'd like to research the translation process of Japanese translators. I'm interested in what kind of translation strategies Japanese translators employ. I was also an exchange student at university in Nagoya, before coming to Kobe University because I'd like to be mentored by a professor in the Graduate School of Intercultural Studies.

Aside from studying, I'm also a member of the theater group Hachinosuza, I love manga and anime, and I participate in cosplay events.

Why did you join Hachinosuza?

When I had just arrived at Kobe University, there were various clubs handing out flyers for new students. I got a flyer about Hachinosuza, which said they performed plays. It sounded interesting so I went to see them. I assumed that the performances wouldn't be that great because it's a student club, but when I saw them I was very surprised. There was a proper stage set, and the actors were very skilled. I didn't think students could put on such a high-quality performance. That made me decide to join this theater group.

I performed in the show for new students. It was a very difficult script - my role had a lot of lines, and one of them was really tough because it was all kanji (Chinese characters). In English it's something like, "Criticism of pure reason, criticism of practical reason, metaphysics, and criticism of speech judgement" [laugh]. I'm preparing for a new performance, and this time I'm on the costume and makeup team.

So you like manga and anime?

Yes, I really do. To be honest, I'm a huge otaku [laugh]. I even do cosplay. There are cosplay events in Slovenia too, and I participated in them a lot. In Slovenia there still aren't many people who cosplay, so I became quite well known. Not many people used to know about Japanese anime and manga, but recently there are more fans, and some bigger events.

Tell us about your goals for the future

My first goal is passing the exam for graduate school. I don't know how my everyday life will change if I get accepted, but I want to continue Hachinosuza. I also want to go to more cosplay events in Japan. To be a well-rounded person, you need to experience many things. Of course, studying and research are important, but I want to enjoy lots of other things as well.



Cosplaying Heartbreaker



Hachinosuza activities

Approximately 1,200 international students from countries around the world are currently studying at Kobe University. In this corner, our international students introduce their native countries and offer some insights on studying abroad in Japan.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Passing on the lessons from disaster

Office for Earthquake Recovery and Disaster Science Research

In December every year the Japan Kanji Aptitude Foundation announces a kanji (Chinese character) of the year, voted for by members of the public. The kanji chosen to represent 2018 for Japan was "disaster" (災 pronounced wazawai or sai). This is not surprising, as a string of natural disasters hit Japan in 2018: strong earthquakes in Hokkaido, Osaka and Shimane, typhoons, torrential rains that caused flooding and landslides, and a record-breaking hot summer.

Kobe was also stricken by disaster in 1995 - the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, which left over 6,000 people dead or missing, destroyed 80,000 houses, and damaged industrial structures to a cost of about 7 trillion yen.

We cannot stop natural disasters from occurring, but we can prepare for them, lessen the damage, and aim for swift relief and recovery. We can also learn from past experiences. The Kobe University Library has archived materials about the 1995 earthquake in the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Disaster Materials Collection, and in 1996 the University established the Research Center for Urban Safety and Security. Thanks to initiatives like this, University members were able to use the community's hard-earned knowledge to contribute to recovery efforts in the aftermath of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, dispatching medical teams, student volunteers and emergency rations to the area.

Now Kobe University has teamed up with other disaster-specialist institutions to create something positive from their experiences. Tohoku University and Kobe University concluded a comprehensive agreement in the area of disaster science in October 2011, and in January 2012 Kobe University established the Office for Earthquake Recovery and Disaster Science Research. Working closely with universities and local government in the Tohoku region of Japan, the Office provides support for groups involved in disaster recovery efforts and disaster science research activities.

Kobe University President Hiroshi Takeda is very clear about the Office's goals, saying, "I believe that it is the University's mission as a higher education institution to use our accumulated resources and

(Below) A February 2018 art exhibition as part of The Popoki Friendship Story Project, which uses art-making in disaster support, community building and disaster awareness education



2013.12



2017.12

(Above) Working with high school students in Iwate to document the progress of reconstruction after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. Images ©Iwate Kenritsu Otsuchi High School Study Group for Disaster Recovery and Kobe University Graduate School of Engineering Tamiyo Kondo Laboratory

knowledge to respond to the common issues in disaster recovery and mitigation faced by humanity".

The Office is strengthening the network between disaster-specialist universities, libraries and related institutions, and providing partners with Kobe University's repository of knowledge gained from analyzing disaster-related documents. Its members are active in many fields. They support town rejuvenation efforts through exchange activities with students in the affected areas. They have contributed to cultural heritage preservation by organizing miniature reconstructions of disaster-hit towns before they were destroyed. From a business administration perspective, they assess the impact of aid on business recovery, and carry out surveys of local government budget planning related to post-disaster reconstruction. The Office also organizes academic events in Kobe to share information and raise awareness.

"We will continue to work with affected areas to pinpoint their needs, deepening our collaboration with other universities and local government both in Japan and overseas, in order to provide long-term and sustainable support", asserts Office Director Professor Kazuro Sugimura. "To achieve this task, we hope to gain cooperation from all over the world."

"Universities have always been international"

Masahiko Yoshii
Executive Vice President in Charge of International Exchange and Evaluation Professor, Graduate School of Economics

Hiroko Masumoto
Vice President in Charge of International Education and International Collaboration Professor, Graduate School of Humanities

From April 2019 Professor Masahiko Yoshii (Graduate School of Economics) and Professor Hiroko Masumoto (Graduate School of Humanities) will take on challenging new roles in Kobe University's top administration. We spoke to them about their experiences abroad and the vital relationship between universities and globalization.

To start with, could you introduce yourselves and explain your new roles at Kobe University?

Prof. Yoshii: I was born and raised in Kobe, but I don't speak the local dialect because I lived in Tokyo for a while. In 1976 I began studying at the Kobe University Faculty of Economics, and since 1985 I've been a teaching member at the Faculty and Graduate School of Economics. My original field was Russian socialist economics, but from 1990 to 1992 I worked at the Embassy of Japan in Romania, and my research interests broadened to include Central and Eastern European economic systems. After coming back to Japan, I began working for the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Then in 2005 the EU Institute in Japan, Kansai (EUIJ-Kansai*) was established, and I've been involved in Kobe University's collaboration with the EU ever since. After experiences as Dean and Vice-President, now I will take on the role of Executive Vice President in Charge of International Exchange and Evaluation.

The former Executive Vice-President's initiatives have increased our partner universities dramatically in Europe, East Asia. Following his policy, I will also make efforts to expand or establish collaboration with other areas such as North Americas and ASEAN countries.

Prof. Masumoto: Doing all that work by yourself is superhuman, I'm very impressed. As for me, I was born in Hiroshima, and the first time I left home was to study abroad in Germany during graduate school. I began work at Kobe University in 2007. I served as the Dean of the Graduate School of Humanities, and from April I'll be the Vice President for International Collaboration and International Education to support Executive Vice President Yoshii. International collaboration includes academic exchange and research collaboration, while international education is about initiatives like the Global Studies Program, which sends all students from the new faculty abroad. Part of my mission is to look at all the university-wide international education programs.

Why is international exchange important for universities?

Prof. Yoshii: Firstly, it's become far easier to study abroad, and with the Internet it's easier to connect with the wider world, but that's not happening. Instead, people are becoming more insular, and our societies are becoming fragmented. Through international

exchange, by visiting other countries and accepting visitors, we can interact with different societies and cultures. This gives us an opportunity to reflect on and reconsider our own ways of living.

Japanese students at Kobe University have good English skills, but most of them aren't planning to be linguists – they want to use other languages as a means to an end. Different languages are linked to different thought patterns, and students can expand their worldviews by asking why people from different countries express themselves in these ways.

Secondly, scholarship in Japan used to be "import-focused". In my research the works of Soviet scholars were interpreted for a Japanese audience. But the conversation ended in Japan – we couldn't send our responses to Soviet scholars. Now times have changed.

I've been involved in Kobe University's exchange with Europe, and as a Dean I also engaged with Asia, so I can say that in the past ten years Kobe University has expanded and evolved in its international exchange. Having said that, we are still missing links with the US, ASEAN and African nations, so I'd like to fill those gaps. Of course we can still expand and develop our relations with Europe, but we need to create more links with other regions too. That's what I'll be working towards for the next two years.

Prof. Masumoto: My research focus is German literature. To be more specific, German-speaking Swiss literature. This bases me in Europe, so when I'm asked "why do universities need international exchange?" I think about the origins of European universities in the middle ages, and I conclude that the answer is, "because universities have always been international". Scholarship has always demanded internationality. In order to pursue knowledge, you have to be on the front lines. Even if you study really hard, if you don't communicate with the outside world, you may end up reinventing the wheel. Universities should be places at the cutting edge of knowledge – they can't be closed off from the world.

The internationalization of scholarship is

not a recent phenomenon. In the middle ages it wasn't just Italians attending Bologna University – the top minds of Europe taught there, and people gathered there from all over Europe. It's been happening in Japan too, since our envoys to China in the 7th century. Chinese was a type of scholar's lingua franca in this region, just as Latin was in Europe. These languages were important tools needed to access the forefront of knowledge.

So as far as I'm concerned, a university without international exchange isn't a university. With world-class professors teaching and doing research at Kobe University, people who want to learn from these professors will come from all over the world. In the Bologna University of the middle ages, there probably wasn't anyone from China. But now our horizons have broadened, so when we think about international universities by today's standards, the ideal is a Kobe University where students and professors come and go on a global scale. This is already happening to some extent, we just need to be more deliberate about it and make it our mission.

You both focus on other countries as part of your research. Why did you first become interested in other cultures and societies?

Prof. Yoshii: Firstly, because I love trains, and secondly, because of the 1970 World Expo in Osaka. Someone gave me the USSR pavilion leaflet, and I became interested in Soviet socialism. In the summer of my second year at university I took the Trans-Siberian Railway. Of course I was thrilled by the trip, but I saw the negative parts of society too. On the first day I looked out of the train window and saw farmers' houses lit by a single bare electric bulb. In the seventies farmers in Japan were very prosperous, so the contrast was striking. I thought about it for the whole week until arriving in Moscow.

In Moscow I stayed in a hotel right next to the Kremlin. It was 1978, and at the time Japan didn't have vacuum tube televisions any more, we had changed to transistors. I

saw vacuum tube televisions lined up in the windows of the department stores. Of course in some ways Russia was doing better than Japan, but my general impression was of a lower standard of living. My dreams of socialism were destroyed. Why had their policies failed? I wanted to learn more.

Then in 1989 the Berlin Wall fell. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited me to work in the Embassy of Japan in Romania, and I expanded my research to include Central and Eastern Europe. Then EUIJ started, and I began to teach European economics. So my sphere of study has gradually expanded from East to West ... in ten years' time it will probably sink into the Atlantic Ocean [laughs].

How did your experiences working in the Embassy influence your career?

Prof. Yoshii: Hmm ... it changed my style. Before the Embassy, I lived in a world of academics. It's common for academics to write long, tricky sentences, and I was probably influenced by that pattern, but for embassy memos I had to write short, punchy pieces that anyone could read. In my two years at the Embassy the writing style of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was hammered into me. After that experience my sentences began a lot shorter.



Russian stamps featuring the USSR Expo 70 Pavilion



Illustrations from Hans Christen Anderson's *The Snow Queen*

Prof. Masumoto: My interest in other countries started with books. There was a popular series, "Collected Works of World Literature for Boys and Girls". It had about fifty volumes, and my parents bought one every month for my older brother. I was three, and my parents wouldn't let me read the books – they said I'd get them dirty. I was dying of jealousy. When I started elementary school I could finally read them. I read and reread all fifty volumes, I don't know how many times. My brother wasn't interested in them at all [laughs].

The series was organized by region, starting from Greece and Rome, then to France, England and Germany, and so on, ending with Asia. So the first ten or twenty volumes were all Europe. Of course I read the Asian stories too, but the impact was bigger at the start of the series. This was probably what sparked my interest in Europe.

I'm often asked why I chose German literature. One big reason is a book of Hans Christian Anderson's *The Snow Queen* I received on my sixth birthday. I still have the book. It made me fascinated with northern Europe. I used to think, "When I'm grown up, I'll go to Lapland". But Hiroshima University didn't have a Scandinavian Literature option – the closest was German Literature. German culture is similar to northern Europe, it's close to Denmark, and their original myths and legends are linked to the Icelandic myths, so my instinct wasn't wrong.

But the main root of my interest, the reason I became a scholar of German literature, is because when I was three my parents told me, "You can't read these yet, you're too young and you'll just get them dirty".

Do you have a message for students - of all nationalities - studying at Kobe University?

Prof. Yoshii: My homepage says "Think, and Think differently" at the top. As you probably know, I took this from IBM, and Apple's slogan of "Think different". The concept is the same for people everywhere – we must think deeply about various topics, then reconsider them from different perspectives. For example, I do comparative economic theory, so I try to imagine how people in other countries would look at a certain economic issue. I want Japanese students to consider an issue and then ask "how would people from other countries view this?" And for international students who study in Japan, I want them to compare what they learn in Japan with their original thoughts, and question the differences between cultures. I hope Kobe University can become a center for this sort of thinking.

Prof. Masumoto: I want students to learn many different languages. I've already talked about a lingua franca, but we need more than that. For example, the EU's model. The EU realized that we have to preserve diversity, and they made the main languages of almost all the EU states into the EU's official languages. There's a policy of multilingualism - they are consciously educating children so that each person can speak multiple languages fluently. They invest in training professional interpreters and translators so countries that speak minority languages are not at a disadvantage.

There is no downside to learning another language - they are windows that open to the world and to society. If you only speak Japanese, your world is limited to Japanese. If you can speak English too, a window opens so you can access the world in English. Of course, the more windows are open the better. Then you can see how wide and full the world is. You realize how narrow your world was before, you can make different friends, and have new experiences. To live a fruitful and enjoyable life, I want you all to learn lots of languages. Universities offer many chances, you can learn a lot in four years, and I hope you will.

***EUIJ-Kansai (the EU Institute in Japan, Kansai) is a consortium of three universities: Kobe University (coordinator), Kwansei Gakuin University and Osaka University. It was established with financial support from the European Commission in order to strengthen the ties between Japan and the EU via academia.**



International Collaboration



Europe

9th Kobe University Brussels European Centre Symposium

On October 24, 2019, the 9th Kobe University Brussels European Centre Symposium was held in Brussels, Belgium under the title "Smart Cities, Secure Societies: Breakthroughs in EU and Japan Research Cooperation". The symposium was attended by over 120 people including Japanese and EU government officials, researchers, students and businesspeople. Sessions presented examples of successful cooperation in highly topical areas, including 'Security challenges in a changing world' and 'Disaster-resilient societies'; 'Smart Cities' focusing on sustainable energy, robotics and intelligent mobility; and 'Between Orient and Occident' covering issues of cultural memory and cultural transfer. In the afternoon, participants attended intensive workshops for discussions on the three themes.



9th Kobe University Brussels European Centre Symposium

Richardson, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, for talks on further collaboration. Kobe University has conducted the 'Kobe-Oxford Japanese Studies Program' every year since 2012, accepting all students who study in the Department of Japanese Studies for a one-year period. President Takeda and Mr. Will Hutton (Principal of Hertford College) renewed a memorandum of agreement between Hertford College and Kobe University, marking a milestone for collaboration between our institutions.

Memorandum of Agreement with Hertford College, University of Oxford

On October 22, 2019, Kobe University President Hiroshi Takeda led a delegation to the University of Oxford and met with Professor Louise

Asia



President Takeda meets the Alumni Association in Cambodia

Collaborative Academic Forum with Royal University of Phnom Penh in Cambodia

On December 7, 2019, the Kobe University-Royal University of Phnom Penh Academic Research and Education Forum was held. This Forum covered the fields of Engineering, Natural Sciences, and Social Science, providing an opportunity for development of academic exchange and joint research between both universities. After the forum, the Alumni

Association in Cambodia gathered and met with President Takeda. Kobe University and its partner universities have contributed to the academic and business world in Cambodia by cultivating talented individuals. The Alumni Association in Cambodia was established in 2016 as a network for these Kobe Alumni to strengthen their ties.

Forum for Presidents of Chinese and Foreign Universities

Kobe University concluded an academic exchange agreement with the University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in February this year, and we are strengthening our cooperation and exchange in education and research. On October 14, 2019, as part of the event commemorating the 40th anniversary of UCAS, a Forum for Presidents of Chinese and Foreign Universities took place under the theme of "Fusion of Scientific Research with Teaching and Nurturing of Innovative Talents". The event was attended from Kobe University by Professor Matsuto Ogawa (Executive Vice President in Charge of Research and Industry-University Cooperation).

Americas

3rd HOKU (Honolulu Office of Kobe University) Symposium

On November 16, Kobe University held the 3rd HOKU (Honolulu Office of Kobe University) Symposium, "Agricultural Science for Sustainable Global Development and Healthy Society". The event was organized in collaboration with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). The symposium was composed of three sessions, on human health science, agricultural economics, and plant pathology, with the aim of establishing joint research. Kobe University and UNL concluded an MOU on September 7 and the symposium was the first chapter of collaboration between the two universities under this MOU.



3rd HOKU (Honolulu Office of Kobe University) Symposium



KOBE UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1902

4 campuses | 10 faculties | 15 graduate schools



CAMPUS NEWS: PHOTO CONTEST

To commemorate the one-year anniversary of University mascot Shindai Uribo, we hosted a photo contest on Instagram. We received 299 submissions, and after much deliberation the judges awarded three prizes for each of the two categories, "Campus Scenery" and "Shindai Uribo". From the campus cat and the Offshore Sailing Team to a romantic view from Centennial Hall and research in the lab, these winning entries offer tantalizing snapshots of the many facets of campus life at Kobe University. You can see all the competition entries under the hashtags #kobeuniversityphotocontest and #神戸大学フォトコンテスト. Keep snapping!

Campus Scenery

1位



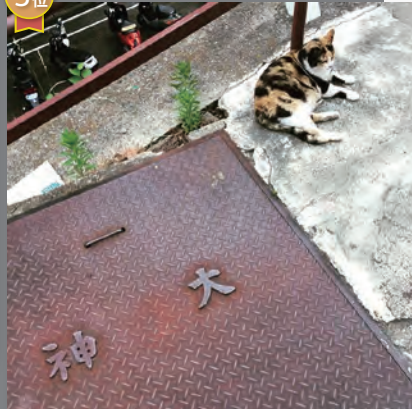
by Zhang (@yizhangyu)

2位



by riko (@rikotail)

3位



by Gucca (@galor_weil)

Shindai Uribo

1位



by Chisa (@sailing_cam)

2位



by tucme1996 (@tucme_photo)

3位



by Y. Tony (@dohdodododohudo)

kobe_university



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