

KITAKYUSHU

BRIDGES



Kokura Castle 400th Anniversary

Can you believe it has been four hundred years already? Last fall, the citizens of Kitakyushu celebrated the four hundredth anniversary of Kokura Castle with a weeklong series of exciting events. Among these was a display of a traditional theater form called Takigi Noh (appearing above). There were also lectures on the history of the castle, parades, and a mock-duel between two descendants of

famous swordsmen. Traditional events were not the only ones: there were concerts featuring many styles of music, as well as appearances by cartoon characters and a tug-of-war that gave kids something to cheer about. But the historical events were the definite favorite; the highlight of the week was a display of mounted archery, or “Yabusame,” which was attended by a throng of spectators.

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History of Kokura Castle



Kokura Castle in Springtime

Kokura Castle was the center of life in the area for the entire Tokugawa period (1600-1868). Castles were vital to the military, administrative, and economic well being of the domains they controlled by virtue of their location and the security they provided. The Hosokawa family built Kokura Castle in 1602, surrounding it with high stone walls with strategically designed gunports as well as a large moat to withstand possible sieges by the gun-totting armies that had become a fact of life in the Warring States period (1467-1600). Following the construction of the castle, the Kokura area increased in population and importance in the region.

Located at the northern tip of Kyushu, Kokura Castle was important not only to the security of the region, but also to the Japanese political economy as a whole because the island of Kyushu was home to domains disloyal to the government. Of particular concern to the leading Tokugawa family was the Choshu domain, ruled by a feisty and independent-minded clan. So the Tokugawa family stationed the Hosokawa family, highly trusted vassals, in Kokura castle to keep an eye on the unpredictable samurai. The leader of the Hosokawa clan, Tadaoki Hosokawa, is credited with establishing Kokura's Gion festival (described in the last Bridges) in 1618. In 1632 control of Kokura Castle was handed to the Ogasawara clan, which controlled Kokura Castle until the end of the feudal era.

This period was one of political stability for Japan and also a time when Japan was largely closed off to the rest of the world. In 1798, Tadamitsu Ogasawara built a mansion and garden adjacent to the main castle tower, creating a scenic and relaxing escape from the warlike keep. An 1837 fire destroyed the keep, which was rebuilt in 1839.

Throughout the Tokugawa Period, the Ogasawara clan remained loyal to their Tokugawa superiors, even as the leading clan's power declined and opposition voices became stronger. In 1854, foreign powers began forcing the Tokugawa clan to sign unequal treaties, opening the country to trade with, and the threat of domination by, western powers. In 1864, the dam finally broke and the Choshu clan led a (successful) revolt on the Tokugawa clan. The Tokugawa clan ordered the Ogasawara forces to quell the rebellion, but in 1866 they were defeated, and set fire to the Kokura Castle keep as they retreated.

In the following years, the grounds of Kokura Castle were occupied by military forces of the Japanese government, and by American Occupation forces following the end of the Second World War. In 1958, the citizens of Kitakyushu moved to have the castle rebuilt; seeing the landmark once again stand over the city helped them recover psychologically from the trauma of the war.



Samurai Parade during the 400th Anniversary Week

Yabusame



An archer performs Yabusame

Yabusame is performed on a two hundred meter sand track lined with three wooden targets on one side. Archers mount their steeds and charge down the track at full speed, firing arrows in quick succession at the targets while giving a loud shout. Officials record the number of hits and misses for each archer, and other participants retrieve the arrows and replace the targets. Usually, three to five archers take part.

Yabusame, which evolved out of military training drills, reached a pinnacle in the Kamakura period (1192-1333). Mounted archery, rather than swordsmanship, was the backbone of military power in Japan for most of its history. The ability to fire arrows accurately and in rapid succession while controlling a charging steed with one's legs was the most important skill a warrior could possess. Eventually, it became an important ceremony regularly performed in the presence of the Shogun (military dictator), which is why Yabusame archers appear in colorful ceremonial dress from the Kamakura period to this day.

Yabusame died out as a court ritual in the Muromachi period (1334-1467) as the Shogun found other sources of entertainment. A small but dedicated following has kept the practice alive ever since it experienced a revival in the sixteen hundreds. Although there is an element of competition in Yabusame, it is not a sport in the modern sense. These days, Yabusame is only rarely performed, and even then usually only at a few special temples; having the chance to see it in Kitakyushu was quite a treat.

Inside the Castle Today

There is plenty to see inside Kokura Castle every day, not just every four hundred years. The surrounding walls and moat are gone, but visitors to the current castle/museum can observe suits of armor, weapons, and other artifacts of medieval warfare up close. The Castle also features depictions of everyday life for both commoners and samurai in the Edo period, including an intricately detailed diorama of the Kokura area circa 1600. Ascending to the top of the castle, visitors look down on the traditional Japanese garden and the castle surroundings, including Katsuyama Park and the new "Riverwalk Kitakyushu" theater and television studio.



A diorama of the Kokura area circa 1600

In the mansion and garden tea ceremony events, tours, and lectures on the history and performance of the tea ceremony are held, which also has permanent exhibits on the history of Japanese culture and manners.



A performance of the tea ceremony

Kitakyushu Profile



Seizo Watase

Seizo Watase is a *manga* (comic book) writer and illustrator, yet his art transcends the usual for Japanese pop art. Indeed, few comic book writers can say that they have been invited to display their work in Tokyo and Los Angeles, or created television programs. Born in Kobe in 1945, Seizo Watase moved to Kitakyushu at a very young age and spent his childhood here. After graduating from Waseda University in 1974 with a degree in Law, Seizo decided to make his living through drawing. Last October, he opened the “Seizo Watase and the Ocean” gallery in Kitakyushu’s Mojiko Retro District.

What inspired you to become a comic book artist?

Well, the truth is that ever since I was young, when I lived in

Kitakyushu, I had been drawing comics and had wanted to become a comic book artist. But along the way I decided to become a novelist instead, so set up a meeting with Michiko Nagai winner of the [highly renowned] Naoki Literature Prize. I wanted to bring an example of my writing to show her, but since the meeting wasn’t going to be very long, it didn’t seem like a good way to make an impression. So instead I took some examples of my drawings. Seeing these, Ms. Nagai said, “Wouldn’t you rather become a comic book artist?” and I did.

What do you remember about Kitakyushu and what do you think of it today?

I was born in Kobe, but lived in Kitakyushu until I was eighteen, which means that I lived in Kitakyushu during my most impressionable period, so Kitakyushu had a general influence on my work and personality. One of the things I remember is the warmth of the people of Kitakyushu. If you think about it in terms of DNA, then the DNA of Kitakyushu developed in me while I was here, has matured since, and comes out in my work.

I moved to Tokyo the year Kitakyushu was formed [by the incorporation of five smaller cities], so when I was here I lived in Kokura City. During that era of rapid growth in Japan, Kokura was a major commercial and industrial center. Kokura was extremely lively, and Yahata, Wakamatsu, Tobata, Moji, each had their own character, and we were all waiting to see how impressive it would be when they became one city. I thought that it would be a great town, but it turned out to be much smaller than I expected.

A lot of people really don’t know the history of the town they live in, and you can’t love your town if you don’t know it; when you have a pride in your town, living there becomes fun.

Gold Cup Results



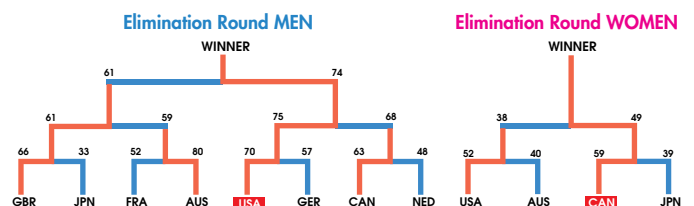
A game between the Japanese and Australian women's teams

Last August, Kitakyushu was proud to play host to the World Wheelchair Basketball Championships, or the “Gold Cup.” Bridges readers will remember that the “Challenge Cup,” featured in last spring’s issue, was the qualifying tournament for Gold Cup. And just like the qualifying tournament, the Gold Cup was a roaring success that exceeded everyone’s expectations. In fact, the tournament brought capacity crowds of spectators, drawing over eighty thousand people over the ten days of competition. The tournament even received a visit from Prince and Princess Akishinomiya. All those spectators had plenty to cheer for as the twenty participating national teams

battled hard to decide the winners. In the end, the Canadian, American, and Australian women, and the U.S., British and Canadian men earned gold, silver and, bronze medals, respectively. Off the court, players had a chance to judge Kitakyushu’s efforts at eliminating mobility barriers for the handicapped for themselves, and players, volunteers, and fans had ample opportunity to make new friends during various events and tours.



Members of the Brazilian and South African men's teams





A 1992 Seizo Watase Work

Kitakyushu has natural beauty, the Kanmon Strait, and the ocean. Because it has these things I think that people will gather here if people make it an energetic town. If people make this town a comfortable and fun place to be, then the city will become lively again.

Your work obviously has a very strong connection to the ocean, when did this begin?

When I was in my mother's belly. My mother was born and raised in a port town called Muroran in Hokkaido. My father was raised in Kokura, and could see the ocean from his house. So my northern mother and my southern father met in the middle of Japan in Kobe, which is also a port town, and fell in love. [After we moved to Kokura,] I could always hear the steam whistles of ships in the strait where I grew up. So it developed into a relationship where I can't live without the ocean.

What is the concept behind your "Seizo Watase and the Ocean" Gallery, and what are your plans for it?

I wanted the theme of the gallery to be "warmth," so I tried to design it so that a warm feeling would come through. Mojiiko is connected to Shimonoseki by the strait, and by the ocean to the rest of the world. I wanted the people who see my work in the gallery to come into contact with me through my pictures. For the first year I'm displaying some of my early works that show my impressions and images of Americana, which I think is clear if you take a look at the gallery. After that I'm thinking that it would be good to display some of my current works showing my impressions of Japan including Moji and Kitakyushu.

Museum of Natural and Human History



The main hall of the museum

Kitakyushu's world-famous Spaceworld amusement park has a new neighbor, the Museum of Natural and Human History. Opened in November of 2002 in Kitakyushu's Yahata Higashi Ward. The museum's impressive collection puts on display the diversity of life on Earth and the scope of human history. For an organizing theme, the creators of the museum chose Kitakyushu itself; although the collection includes animal specimens and fossils from various parts of the world, all sections of the museum display the flora, fauna or civilization of the Kitakyushu region through millions of years of evolution and change.

An interesting feature of the museum is its layout, which provides no set route through the exhibits. You are free to view it chronologically, beginning with explanations of the formation of the Earth, all the way to O-mikoshi (portable shrines) still used in Kitakyushu's yearly festivals (which appeared in our last issue), or you can simply go wherever your curiosity takes you.

In the natural history portion of the museum you find fossils, skeletons and stuffed specimens all around: towering over you, soaring above you, even under your feet! The focus of the museum's approach is on creating an impression of these animals and the world in which they lived or live rather than on providing cold facts and information, making it fun for children and adults alike.

A trip through the most exciting part of the museum, the Time-Traveling Room, begins with a walk up a dark, rocky tunnel. "The lack of light and sound make people feel like they are leaving the modern world behind," says Hiroaki Kubota of the museum. Emerging into a large chamber, you are surrounded by life-like animatronic dinosaurs in a Jurassic landscape. The dinosaurs are sometimes quiet, eating leaves and stalking prey, and other times they roar noisily, creating quite a raucous.

In the human history section, a recreation of a house from the Jomon era (8000-300 BCE) sits next to a recreation of a typical 1950s Japanese shataku (company-housing), highlighting both the changes and the constants of Japanese history. Filling in the gap between these two extremes are many different media and artifacts including dioramas of famous battles and examples of Buddhist statuary, and a detailed account of Kitakyushu's history.



The Time-Traveling Room

LETTER FROM KITAKYUSHU

H

allo,
I am Peter Goessner, one of very few Germans here in Kitakyushu, Japan. Before coming to Kitakyushu, I worked with a professional theater company in Germany. I tried my best there, although circumstances were extremely difficult. It was hard to continue my theater work after finishing a full workday as a university teacher. After living in East Germany



for twenty-eight years, then four years in the reunited Germany, I, with my wife and daughter, moved to Kitakyushu. We have now spent ten years. Our daughter, having grown up in this city, speaks almost better Japanese than German. We now think of Kitakyushu as our second hometown, but it was not exactly love at first sight.

After eight years of hard work here, I have put together a theater group that I can be

proud of, the Uzume Theater Group. Our group has really blossomed, especially in the last three years, and has been presented with “Best of the year”-awards from national papers. Our first years here were hard, but once you get settled in, develop a sense of the behavior of the Japanese and begin to find your own rhythm, you can make friends who have warm hearts and a temperament similar to that of Southern Europeans (especially when you make driving mistakes). And of course, there are many people with their very own ways of thinking, living their own lives and having fun in Kitakyushu.

This city developed as an industrial center, which was hard on its environment. The city’s economic situation has also had its ups and downs. But the citizens of Kitakyushu have done their best, and changed their city over the course of twenty-five years into an award winning “environmental city” that even has a hot spring where the center of industrial pollution once was. Kitakyushu is also doing its best to foster research and new economic fields.

Like everywhere in Japan, tradition and modernity flow together in the city of Kitakyushu. It is a city where everyone is welcome, but you need a good grasp of the culture and some perseverance in order to live here. For instance, the city is proud of its Bushido- (Samurai-) education—none of the classrooms in public middle schools have heaters even though in the dead of winter the temperature sinks to 0-5 degrees Celsius. Remember, my samurai-like daughter is used to this...

Yours Truly,

Joerg-Peter Goessner

International Friendship City News: Busan, Republic of Korea



Mayors Ahn and Sueyoshi at the Signing Ceremony

We are renaming this section, formerly know as the Sister City News, to the International Friendship City News section. This change comes in recognition that the City of Kitakyushu has many types of relationships with many cities throughout the world. For this issue, we are happy to welcome Busan, Republic of Korea into our ever-growing circle of friends.

A bustling and energetic city of approximately four million people located on the southeast coast of the Korean Peninsula, Busan is a large port and fishery city. Our two cities recently concluded a Business Partnership Agreement. The City of Kitakyushu concluded a similar agreement with

the U.S. city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 2001, which makes the process of setting up business relationships and the exchange of ideas and information between business simpler and more direct. Since Busan and Kitakyushu are so close geographically, it is expected that this new partnership will foster very strong links between their businesses. Several different fields are actively taking part in the new partnership, with special focus on the important growth sector of Information Technology.

The completion of the Business Partnership agreement came at an exciting time for Busan and the rest of the world: right in time for Busan’s hosting of the fourteenth Asian Games. Almost ten thousand athletes from forty-four nations participated in thirty-eight events to make the Busan Asian Games the biggest yet. The eighteen-day event saw intense competition on the field and friendly cultural exchange off the field, including demonstrations of traditional Japanese dance by volunteer groups from Kitakyushu.



Opening Ceremony of the Busan Asian Games



Johannesburg Conference on Development and the Environment

J From August 26 through September 4, 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa, the “United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development” was held. The gathering saw heads of state, members of cabinets, and leaders of local, national, and international organizations all meeting in one hall to discuss the environment, development, and the shape of global society in the twenty-first century.

Among the participants was Kitakyushu’s own mayor, Koichi Sueyoshi, who traveled to the conference as a representative of the Japanese government and as the representative of the City of Kitakyushu. The mayor was very busy, participating in an ICLEI (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives) discussion on Inter-/Intra-governmental cooperation, and on a discussion on energy source development before the main assembly.



Main Assembly of the WSSD

The mayor participated in the Summit as a leader experienced in dealing with environmental pollution, and made a presentation detailing the City of Kitakyushu’s twenty-five year campaign to clean up its air and water during the “Japan Day” event. In recognition of the City of Kitakyushu’s achievements in environmental recovery and sustainable development Mayor Sueyoshi was honored with an Earth Summit 2002 Sustainable Development Award.

Other Summit participants from the Kitakyushu included representatives of the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women. Researchers and leaders from the Forum shared their opinions with other groups on the important role played by women in realizing sustainable development, and in evaluating the progress made internationally in reducing the “constitutional, legal, administrative, cultural, behavioral, social and economic obstacles to women’s full participation in sustainable development and public life” set forth in Agenda 21 of the 1992 Rio Summit.

The most important event of the conference for Kitakyushu was the adoption of the Kitakyushu Initiative. Kitakyushu has been sharing technology and envi-



Mayor Sueyoshi receives a Sustainable Development Award


ronmental expertise with various Asian cities struggling to overcome rampant pollution through the Initiative for many years and its adoption by the Summit means that it will serve as a model for similar programs worldwide. Reflecting on the events of the Summit, the mayor expressed his hope that a dedication on the part of all participants to move from debate to action would be among its lasting results. It will now be up to the various governments, organizations, and, of course, all of us as individuals to make sure that the goals articulated in the Summit Declaration become a reality by reducing waste, consumption, and doing our part to aid the under-privileged.



Members of KFAW take part in a rally and march

A Glimpse of Japan

Kawachi Onsen

 Onsen are Japanese hot spring baths, and are one of the Japanese people's favorite ways to relax. They always have a traditional atmosphere and often feature beautiful natural vistas. Kitakyushu's own onsen, at Kawachi, was built two years ago on the slopes of Mt. Sarakura and combines these characteristics just a short shuttle ride from downtown Kitakyushu.

The high concentration of minerals in onsen water is said to be good for the health, and the waters of



Outdoor bath at Kawachi Onsen



A Family/Wheelchair-Accessible bath

different onsen are said to have unique healing properties. Kyushu is particularly renowned for its onsen, and many are high on the list of any onsen tour. Such trips are best done in the company of good friends, and are especially popular in winter. Go with friends or family, enjoy a dip, relax in the break room, and finish off the evening with a traditional Japanese meal in the upstairs restaurant.



Population:

1 million; 11th largest city in Japan, 2nd in Kyushu Region

Climate:

Temperate; Mean temp: 15

International Facilities and Events

Environmental— Japan International Cooperation Agency Kyushu International Center; Kitakyushu International Techno-Cooperative Association

Academic— The International Centre for the Study of East Asian Development; Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women; FAIS

Cultural— International Music Festival; Center for Contemporary Art Kitakyushu; Kitakyushu International Association

Convention/Trade— Kitakyushu International Conference Center; West Japan General Exhibition Center; International Food Fair in Kitakyushu

International Recognition

UN Global 500 Award for Environmental Clean-up; UNCED Local Government Governmental Honors for Environmental Education ; Earth Summit 2002 Sustainable Development Award.

Industries

Traditional base— steel & metal, ceramics, machinery, chemicals, shipping
New industries— computer software, environmental technologies, robotics, assistive technologies

Local Life:

- *Park lands per capita 2nd among major Japanese cities
- *Summer season of exciting festivals
- *City of mountains and waterfronts

Current Projects:

- Riverwalk Kitakyushu Media & Cultural Complex (Spring 2003)
- "Kaikyo Drama Ship" Museum (Spring 2003)
- New Hibiki Port (open in 2003)
- New Kitakyushu Airport (open in 2005)

Website: www.city.kitakyushu.jp/~english/



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