

The 2009 SCJ Culture Program: Report, Analysis and Suggestions

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The 2009 Culture Program of the Summer Courses in Japanese (SCJ) was well received by participating students. All activities and lectures were well attended and provided an important counter-balance to the academic work done in the regularly scheduled classes. A debt of gratitude is owed to ICU faculty and student club members, as well as visiting teachers and performers and those who provided experiences for the SCJ students off-campus. No less important to the success of the Culture Program (CP) was the support provided by Atsuko Handa, Director of Summer Courses in Japanese, and Ikumi Ozawa, Head of the Language Program, the SCJ staff, the CP assistants and participating ICU student volunteers. The dedication, commitment and expertise of the faculty, staff and ICU students, both paid and volunteer, made it a distinct pleasure to serve as head of the Culture Program this year.

This document provides reflections on the 2009 program, beginning with an overview of the main components of the program: the lecture series, on-campus activities, off-campus trips, and the Culture Program Lounge. It concludes with a number of recommendations for further improvements of the program.

I. The Lecture Series

Three lectures were offered in a series this year, two provided by ICU faculty on topics related to ICU and Japanese history, and one was by a master of calligraphy, a former ICU graduate. Each is briefly described in the section that follows. Following the descriptions are suggestions for improvements on this part of the Culture Program.

Lecture 1: July 14, 1:30-3:30pm

“ICU Underground: Japanese Material Culture and Campus Archeology”

Professor Richard Wilson, ICU

Dr. Wilson started his lecture in the Yuasa Museum on campus. This setting was quite salubrious, with the 33 students and two student volunteers attending comfortably seated around the professor in the front hall of the museum as he explained the ongoing archeological work being done on the ICU campus. Moving from the front hall the professor guided the students through an inspection of items dug up from sites on the ICU campus rich in artifacts from the Neolithic, Jomon, and Yayoi periods. Students displayed a high level of interest and frequently asked questions of the professor, leading to more in-depth explanations. After the lecture and discussion were concluded, Dr. Wilson invited interested students to join him at an on-campus archeological site to try their hand at digging up artifacts. A dozen students walked with Dr. Wilson to the site, stopping at one of the archeological labs to pick up necessary

implements. Students were able to learn how to recognize artifacts in the soil as well as properly dig them out for preservation and cataloging.

Lecture 2: July 17, 1:30-3:30pm

“Making Fun of the Revolution: Political Cartoons in the Meiji Restoration”

Professor M. William Steele

Using a more traditional lecture format, Professor Steele provided students with an overview of the political situation and major figures in Japan in the Meiji Period. He then went on to explain how commoners in Edo satirized the political movements of the late Tokugawa to early Meiji period by embedding hidden messages and jokes in cartoons. After the conclusion of the lecture interested students were invited to accompany Dr. Steele to the Yuasa Museum to view genuine Tokugawa period political cartoons. Approximately 50 students participated in the lecture.

Lecture 3: July 29, 1:30-3:30pm

“Let’s Enjoy Rhythmic ‘Sho’”

Master Eishi Sakata, Naniwa Sho Association

In this event Master Sakuta introduced his concept of the spirit of dynamic calligraphy that he calls “Sho.” Included were a brief lecture, performance, and workshop designed to allow students to experience producing “sho” as directed by Master Sakuta. A maximum of 30 students were able to participate in the workshop due to space limitations, but as many as 20 others joined as observers taking in the presentation by Master Sakuta as he and his assistants demonstrated how express oneself with rhythmic brush strokes. For the workshop student participants were provided with sets of ink, brush and paper, and shikishi cards to practice kanji and create an example of their writing to take home as a gift or souvenir.

Suggestions for the Lecture Series

All of the above listed lectures were of great value in rounding out the attending students’ general knowledge about Japan, its culture and its history. The Culture Program wishes to express its collective gratitude to the talented experts who generously gave their time and energy to making these important contributions to the program. As points to consider in future program planning, I offer the following:

Maintain a high level of interaction in relation to presenting information:

In fact, in two of the lectures offered there was a high level of interaction, involving active discussion, frequent questions by participants, as well as “hands-on time” in which students could physically work with materials and in real conditions to experience for themselves what the lecturers explained. This direct experience is invaluable in cementing information and concepts gained in the lectures into the knowledge base of the students. The one lecture that took a more traditional one-way, teacher to student format of presentation, that discussing political cartooning in the Meiji Period, could have benefitted from

sacrificing some of the content for more time spent giving students the opportunity to try their hand at interpreting cartoons themselves as a way of relating the lecture information to their own experience.

More interaction among audience members:

This remains a valuable idea. As quoted in last year's report on the Culture Program, "In addition to listening to a presentation of key ideas, participants would most likely appreciate opportunities to discuss the topic with people around them. At the beginning and the end of the lecture, small group discussions could generate questions or opinions about the topic, which could then be addressed or commented on by the lecturer" (Christianson 2008).

A greater variety of topics and a greater variety of formats:

As also was mentioned in last year's report, lectures that offer general introductions to major aspects of Japanese culture could be as valuable as the highly specialized lectures offered by some invited lecturers. Previous suggestions have included such topics as "An Introduction to Japanese Religion" or "An Introduction to Japanese Education." This was reported to have been done in past programs, and could well be done again. Additionally, a new type of format mentioned in the previous year's report should also be piloted, that is to "focus some sessions entirely on discussion (in English or Japanese as the medium of communication, as appropriate) rather than lecture" (Christianson 2008). The amount of preparatory reading that could be assigned beforehand is an open question, as students have an admittedly heavy burden of assigned homework. Class instructors and academic program organizers could be consulted to investigate possibilities of more closely linking CP lecture discussions with work done in class to get double duty out of the reading students are doing by building some CP lectures around class topics. If a discussion format is adopted for some lectures, this opens up additional opportunities for ICU student volunteers to actively participate in "exchanging questions and viewpoints about Japanese culture with foreign students" (2008). A final suggestion could be inviting ICU student volunteers to make presentations on general aspects of Japanese culture such as the presentations done in some ELP Sophomore English courses dealing with modern Japanese Society. To more practically utilize the time available for such presentations and make possible more tightly focused, information-rich content, the lecture time could be divided between two or three individuals or groups presenting on different topics within one lecture period. Discussion and question and answer sessions should be included, and such presentations would have to be screened for quality of presentation, organization, and content prior to acceptance.

A more efficient way to collect audience reactions about the lectures:

This point was also raised in last year's report. The consensus at that time was that the greater response rate of survey forms filled out in class outweighed the disadvantage of truncated answers hurriedly written down within a limited amount of time at the end of a scheduled class. While response rate tends to decline

with the use of an online form filled out by request at a time of the student's choosing, the depth and quality of response is often far greater than that obtained on the in-class form due to the greater amount of time students can spend formulating answers. Coupled with the greater ease of manipulating the data in an electronic form, the above mentioned advantage mitigates for an online approach to gathering feedback from students concerning their views of the extent to which the CP met their perceived needs.

II. On-Campus Activities

The following seven activities were offered on campus. For each, a summary of the activity and some recommendations for improvement are given.

1. Campus and Local Tours, July 6, 2-4pm

SCJ students were escorted around the campus by ICU student volunteers in groups of 10 to 12. In total about 60 SCJ students went on the campus tours, going from the former cafeteria, past D-kan and the chapel, to the Yuasa Museum, the sports complex, and to Taizanso. Unlike previous years, no walking tour to Musashi Sakai Station was scheduled.

As in previous years, organization was a bit problematic in that there is no way to know how many SCJ students would be interested in going on such a tour. That the amount of participating SCJ students was greater than last year can be taken as a positive development. The number of ICU student volunteers, on the other hand, was easier to predict due to having had the volunteers indicate their interest in participating in the Campus Tour on an online sign up form created on Google and sent out through the SCJ volunteers mailing list. This method for determining interest in taking the tour could be extended to SCJ students through the same means using the SCJ students' mailing list. More thought should be given to explaining to volunteers beforehand what they will be expected to do. The mailing list or sign up form itself can serve this function.

2. *Nihon Buyo* Japanese Traditional Dance, July 13, 1:30-3:30

Dance masters Mizuki Waka and Mizuki Kadzuma in cooperation with six members of the ICU *Nihon Buyo* group instructed by Ms. Waka provided a well-prepared, well-organized performance/participatory exercise for a group of 34 SCJ and seven ICU student volunteers. Held in the D-kan multipurpose room, the ICU students presented several pieces, including Okinawan Dance featuring contemporary music and traditional pieces. Both dance masters each performed a representative dance selection illustrating the use of ribbons of cloth and wooden geta to accentuate the dancer's movements. Students were then instructed in the proper way to wear yukata, with yukata being lent to students who had not brought their own. When all interested students were fully attired in yukata, Ms. Waka instructed them in basic dance movements and led a mixed group of SCJ students and ICU students through a dance set to the famous song *Sakura*. Though held in previous years, this event was not held last year, but should be considered

for inclusion in next year's program. It is an excellent opportunity to understand and experience the visually compelling art of Nihon Buyo.

3. Ikebana Flower Arrangement, July 15, 1:30-3:30pm

Master Sousho Tsukamoto with her assistant, Eisho Sato, demonstrated the basic techniques of *ikebana* through the construction of four distinct pieces, each illustrating some important concepts of *ikebana* as practiced in the Sogetsu school. The 23 participating SCJ students were then led through creating their own flower arrangement utilizing a basic pattern of arrangement. Nine ICU student volunteers helped with setting up, taking down, and cleaning vases, *kenzans*, scissors, and water basins. This activity can be repeated as is. It is a highly engaging, very exciting participatory activity. As was suggested in last year's CP report, some basic information could be given out to participants prior to the event. One idea would be to distribute the teacher's handout when students pick up their event ticket and pay the fee for materials.

4. Rakugo & Koto Club Performance, July 20, 1:30-2:30pm

This year the ICU *koto* club provided a brief concert performance of two pieces, briefer than in past years due to all but four members being unavailable. This would have been almost too brief to justify reserving a room and making time in the program schedule except for a fortuitous request by ICU students interested in presenting *rakugo* in English. This performance also was quite brief, but piggybacking the *rakugo* performance on the *koto* presentation not only made a program of suitable length to justify the arrangements, but more importantly provided a chance for SCJ students to experience *koto* and enjoy the humor of *rakugo* together in one variety-show-like event. Both of these art forms are engaging and should continue to be offered next year. Earlier recruiting of groups such as those who participated will improve chances of boosting the number of group members who may participate.

5. Sado Tea Ceremony in Taizanso, July 21, 1-2pm and 2:30-3:30pm

The ICU tea ceremony club, guided by masters Tomiko Amitani and Ieno Chieko, this year again invited two groups of 15 students (30 in total) to experience the tea ceremony in scenic Taizanso. Due to strong interest among SCJ students, the CP staff requested and received a third session, increasing the amount of students who could participate to 45. A debt of gratitude is owed to the two to three *sado* masters who teach the ICU student members who put on this event and supervised the making of tea behind the scenes during the CP event. It should also be noted that the demonstration of the tea ceremony and the explanation of various aspects of the implements and conduct of the ceremony by ICU students was very well organized and very effective in introducing this art form to SCJ students. No improvements are necessary for this event. It can be done next year exactly as it was done this year with highly satisfactory results.

6. Wagakki Japanese Traditional Music, July 30, 1:30-3:30pm

Wagakki, Japanese traditional music and instruments, or more accurately *gagaki*, court music as played in a traditional way little changed since the Heian Period was performed and explained by Masters Satoko Takahara of the *sho*, Hitomi Nakamura of the *hichiriki*, and Maya Sakai of the *ryuteki*. This performance and lecture were both very well-prepared and very well attended by more than 50 SCJ students. To quote from last year's culture program report, "The power of the instruments was breathtaking, pulling the audience into another world instantly" (Christianson 2008). In a survey done last year, students expressed a desire to see more types of instruments, and fortunately, with this year's addition of Master Sakai on *ryuteki*, this could be done. No particular improvements are necessary for this event if it is scheduled for next year's program.

7. Zori Making, August 3 and 4, 1:30-4pm

As was done last year, an enthusiastic team of 12 *zori*-weaving instructors led by Ms. Sumi Tanaka taught 23 SCJ students how to hand-weave a pair of cloth *zori* sandals in two sessions taking place over two days. Unlike last year, no ICU volunteers assisted with communication, but this did not seem to present a problem. It can be noted that two SCJ teachers also took advantage of last minute cancellations of students to participate in this activity. Their inclusion was particularly welcome. There are no improvements to be recommended for this particular activity, and by all means, it should be included in next year's program.

III. Off-Campus Trips

As was done in 2008, five official off-campus trips (all on weekdays) were arranged for SCJ students this year. In addition to the official events and activities there were a number of unofficial events arranged independently by ICU and SCJ students on weekends. All events and activities seemed to have been well-received and no significant problems were reported for any of them. As is always the case some events could be improved in various ways, but all official events and activities should be continued in the 2010 program.

1. Osawadai Elementary School Visit, July 9, 1:30-3:30pm

With the permission and support of Principal Shoji Kawabata and Vice Principal Toshiei Sawara, the largest group yet of SCJ students and volunteers, more than 50 people, visited nearby Osawadai Elementary School to see first hand some of what goes on in a typical elementary school here in Japan. The main activity of the visit was to put together pairs of SCJ students with pairs of Osawadai 5th graders and have the elementary school children take the college age students on a tour of the elementary school campus. In the process, the SCJ students had an excellent opportunity to try out their Japanese language skills with the children, few of whom can speak more than a few phrases in English. While there initially may have been some apprehensions about how to communicate on both sides, these apprehensions soon

disappeared as the children proudly showed the college age students their classrooms, play areas, and favorite games. The tours were followed by a period of play in the gym, including ball games and hoola hoops. When it became time for the 5th graders to go home, goodbyes were said, and the Vice Principal Sawara offered a question and answer session about Japanese elementary school education. This event was delightful for all and should be done again.

2. Kabuki, July 10, 5-10pm

A group of 55 SCJ students, four ICU student volunteers, two student program assistants and the program head traveled by bus and train to the National Theatre to watch a kabuki performance which featured an demonstration and explanation of kabuki for beginners and excerpts from two of the most famous kabuki plays. The 90 minute performance included scenes from the plays *Ya No Ne* and *Fuji Musume*, both of which were not only spectacular, but very entertaining. During the demonstration two SCJ students were invited up on stage to help show some basic gestures used in performance, much to the delight of all in attendance. Following up on a recommendation made in last year's program report, earphones were rented for all participants to provide English commentary, which was essential in understanding both the demonstration and following the storyline of the scenes from the plays. It should be noted that the number of students participating makes using mass transportation problematic in that it's very difficult to move a group of that size without potentially losing some group members while transiting between trains. Although the event is quite popular a smaller number of student participants could be considered to ease the difficulty of guiding them to and from the National Theater in a timely and effective way.

3. Ghibli Museum, July 16, 1-4pm

As was done last year, 45 SCJ students, two culture program assistants, and five ICU student volunteers went by bus to see the Ghibli Museum which displays exhibits of Hayao Miyazaki's popular anime films. Again, as is the case every year this activity is offered, this event was very popular. The sign up for tickets went very quickly, and more could have been sold. If possible, student interest could be surveyed prior to arranging for the number of tickets to see if more than 45 should be obtained.

4. Jindai Soba and Pottery, July 22, 1:30-4pm

This year the biggest group yet, 25 SCJ students, participated in this combination event which included a soba lunch at the restaurant Yatabeya and then pottery making at the pottery shop and studio Jindaijigama. As was done last year, participating students were picked up at ICU's bus rotary by a 28 passenger minibus sent by Yatabeya and returned by the same bus after the pottery session. The pottery session commenced immediately after the soba lunch and started with a brief explanation of how to start off a piece using the fingers and thumbs. Students proceeded to make a variety of pieces such as types of cups and bowls, figurines, and ashtrays. In contrast to previous years, and to avoid having to have students return for another session at a later date to glaze their pieces, students choose a lacquer glaze on the day of

the event and left their pieces with the shop staff to be glazed and fired. The pieces were picked by a the head of the culture program a little more than a week later and brought them back to the CP Lounge to be picked up by the students. Those students who finished their pieces before the others were encouraged to take some time to explore the scenic Jindaiji Temple area. Even those students who finished last were given time to stroll around the temple area, soak up its atmosphere, and take photos.

Making this a one day event and asking the shop staff to do the glazing for the students greatly simplified doing this activity because it removed the necessity of transporting students to and from the pottery studio, which would have required at least 15 students to once again eat at Yatabeya, as well as saved the students the time and money that would be spent going back to the studio and restaurant a second time. It's highly recommended to this next year as a single day event.

5. Zen Meditation, July 24, 1:30-7pm

In the eighth repetition of this event, 29 SCJ students had a half-day Zen experience at Kannon-in Temple near Musashi Sakai station, including a temple tour, a lecture on basic Zen principles, training in how to eat a meal in the style of a Zen monk, were guided through 45 minutes of meditation, ate a vegetarian Zen style dinner, were given the opportunity to ring the temple bell, and had a Q&A session. The five hour program seemed to go very quickly and was well received by the participating students. This is chiefly due to the very gracious and friendly treatment given to the students by the temple master and head monk Shogyo Kuruma and his staff. Some SCJ students expressed interest in going back for longer meditation sessions and to learn more about Zen. This is an excellent experience for participating students, and no recommendations for change are being made here. As was mentioned in last year's culture program report, some study of relevant vocabulary would be helpful for the program head, student assistants, or student volunteers who interpret for the temple master.

Unofficial Off Campus Events: Culture program assistants and ICU student volunteers arranged excursions for SCJ students to various places in Tokyo such as Asakusa or Roppongi, or to events such as fireworks or summer festivals. In addition to above mentioned activities, and in response to strong interest among SCJ students, the professional travel company H.I.S. was invited to campus to talk directly to students about going to Mt. Fuji on a two-day hike. 45 SCJ students eventually contracted with H.I.S. do the Mt. Fuji hike on August 1st and 2nd. In past years, Mt. Fuji trips were planned by students themselves. The use of a established company offering professional guidance and a preplanned itinerary was felt to be a way to ensure greater safety and satisfaction for participating students, and in fact this turned out to be the case with nothing more than a few lost clothing items and sore muscles reported as problems. Such unofficial weekend events open up a wider variety of avenues for SCJ students to experience aspects of Japanese culture and should continue to be encouraged by the culture program. While these activities have many merits, the culture program should consider obtaining signed waivers from SCJ acknowledging that ICU bears no responsibility for what occurs during unofficial events.

IV. The Culture Program (CP) Lounge

As pointed out by Frehan, The CP Lounge functions as "a meeting place and a 'cafe' for the course participants, especially during the morning hours" (2001). The main functions fulfilled by the culture program (CP) lounge were the following:

An air-conditioned space for SCJ students to talk with other students

A convenient place to buy food such as onigiri, drinks, and snacks

A place to obtain information about and sign up for culture program events

A place to ask the cultural program staff for information about traveling in Japan.

All of these functions were fulfilled by the 2009 lounge. The three culture program assistants actively participated in the management of the lounge and the selling the snacks and drinks. It should be noted the amount and variety of food items for sale in the CP Lounge was substantially scaled back from what was provided in 2008 due to the fact that the cafeteria located 2 minutes walk from the Honkan building was operating from 10 a.m., and therefore could provide a far greater variety of food and drink items, making a wide selection of food and drinks beyond 10 a.m. in the CP Lounge redundant. The CP Lounge did remain the one accessible place where students could obtain food between 8:15 a.m., the opening time of the lounge, and 10 a.m.

V. Some Recommendations for the Culture Program in General

Below are my recommendations for how to improve the culture program in the future.

New Events:

Generally speaking, the line up of activities is acceptable as is, and the amount of events should not be expanded further to avoid competing with the academic work load. The team of three program assistants seemed appropriate to meet the needs of the program with regard to monitoring and managing events, and should neither be increased nor decreased. A wider range of ideas for on-campus or off-campus events would be welcomed, particularly among the unofficial events. Some ideas for future substitutions include:

- 1) Visits to *dojos* or sumo stables or other sports facilities;
- 2) A visit to the Edo-Tokyo Open Air Architectural Museum
- 3) More events connected to ICU clubs such as the Taiko Club;
- 4) Events for learning traditional games such as *shogi* or *igo*;
- 5) Events related to food and cooking such as a sushi class at a cooking school in Tokyo

Surveying SCJ student interests and requests for activities in advance:

Surveying student interest in some events prior to their arrival by using Google Forms would be useful to know how many SCJ students are interested in going to certain popular off-campus events such as the Ghibli Museum or Kabuki before the reservation arrangements are made. This was done for the Mt. Fuji hike and helped the program determine whether there was sufficient interest to merit inviting a

professional travel company to meet with students to arrange such a trip. This same form of surveying could also help the program plan more effectively by more accurately matching the number of tickets obtained for off-campus events to the number of interested students.

Improvement in CP Lounge food sales accounting:

While the CP did not lose money on the sales of food and drinks in the lounge, much the excess money left over from the previous year had to be used to make up for shortfalls in the money taken in for food and drink sales versus the money spent to buy those items. Exact accounting is unavailable due to insufficiently detailed record keeping, but much of the shortfall is probably due to simply giving away food and drinks, notably onigiri, a highly perishable item, offered to faculty members at the end of the working day. It is known also that some amount of drinks and snack items were given away at various times, including tea for all members of the shodo lecturer's group, and other outside lecturers invited to participate in the CP. Responsibility for this rests primarily with the CP staff in that sufficiently strict procedures were not followed concerning proper accounting. This problem can be effectively solved by returning to accounting procedures followed in the past. An excellent example of day to day accounting can be found in the CP Lounge food sales log book from 2005. This log should be a model for accounting for the 2010 culture program.

Event sign up online through the use of google forms:

Two event sign up processes were done this year as a way of piloting the use of google forms for on line sign up. These two events were the visit to the Kannon-in Temple and the tea ceremony event. The advantages of doing on line sign ups include more accurate records of who has signed up, including legible contact information, easier data sharing concerning sign ups and waiting lists, and 24 hour access to sign up forms and information resulting in alleviation of the necessity for students to line up during precious break times before or between classes. For those events that are limited in the number of participants, students who sign up on time but change their minds about participating for whatever reason can consult a shared form and see contact information for students on the waiting. Those students wanting to back out can systematically contact students on the waiting list to see if they are interested in taking their place and buying the tickets or reimbursing for participation fees to the first student. Such shared documents would be available on a read-only basis. Additionally, if students who have signed up on time do not come to the CP Lounge to pay for and receive their event ticket or voucher for having paid participation fees, those students can be notified that they have forfeited their place in the event, and their open place can be readvertised to those students on the waiting list. In conclusion, I would like to suggest that the Culture Program can be run more smoothly with the improvements suggested above. Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Handa, Dr. Ozawa, the staff of the SCJ, the student participants of the SCJ program, and the culture program assistants for making the 2009 Culture Program a documented success.

References

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