

# Asian Breeze



KOKURA GION FESTIVAL, Kitakyushu City  
About 100 gorgeously decorated floats parade the streets to the accompaniment of rhythmical drum beats.

1st KITAKYUSHU CONFERENCE ON ASIAN WOMEN  
WOMEN TODAY  
DOMESTIC AND OVERSEAS INFORMATION  
OFFICIAL OVERSEAS VISITS  
THE FORUM WINDOW

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**KFAW**

JULY 1991 **No. 2**

## ENCOUNTERS

**Hisako Takahashi**

President, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women

There are various ways for people to meet one another unexpectedly, excitedly, sweetly, bitterly, and so forth ... "A meeting" is a door to the unknown filled with rich potential. People come to a forum to look for meetings and to start new adventures.

Through my present job, I have a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the differences and similarities which characterize Asia. For example, in Asian countries there are many religions such as Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Confucianism, Shintoism etc. which are deeply connected with women's positions in society. And of course the climate and other natural circumstances are different. There are also diverse industrial and political systems.

It is often said, and I believe it is true, that in understanding one another, respect and acceptance are the most important factors in enduring relationships.

The misunderstandings and irritation caused by lack of knowledge can make difficulties. I hope the various meetings and exchanges that the Forum, which was founded in October of 1990, provides and will provide will be positive steps towards understanding each other and forming warm relationships.

The 1st Asian Women's Conference, held March 9-10, 1991, was a channel for frank discussion on women's issues. All panelists made enthusiastic speeches about women's rights. Seven groups participated in the Conference's workshops. The workshops provided a place to exchange opinions in a friendly atmosphere. Strangers became good friends and talked with each other like old friends. One person was so moved by stories of life in an unknown country she decided to change her own way of living.

Through these conversations, we found out that the problem of women's status is universal and exists worldwide regardless of the national system, class, religion, customs of living and so forth. Since the International Women's Year, women's status has improved. However, there is still room for much more improvement.

The past as well as present problems between Japan and Asian countries were highlighted in several speeches at the Conference. Japan in her relationships with these countries cannot avoid those issues. As Japanese, however, we must establish good relationships with our Asian neighbors based on mutual understanding, or our children and grandchildren will have to bear the burden of the past.

Looking outside, the fresh green trees are beautiful and a bracing breeze is blowing between the young leaves. In May, the breeze is fragrant. I hope that the "Asian breeze" will bring its fragrance from country to country, town to town and person to person.

## 1st KITAKYUSHU CONFERENCE ON ASIAN WOMEN

### <OUTLINE>

The main activity of the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women is to broaden and encourage exchanges and research on women. To further these aims, this Forum plans to hold a Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women every year. On March 9-10, 1991, the first conference was held in the Kitakyushu International Conference Center. Approximately one thousand people participated.

### <PANELISTS>

#### ●Open Symposium

Panelists :

Ms. Zhu, Chuo Shun (Associate Professor, Beijing University of Education)

Ms. Mahmuda Islam (Associate Professor, University of Dhaka)

Ms. Yasuko Muramatsu (Professor, Tokyo Woman's Christian University)

Mr. Kazufusa Morooka (Professor, Kyushu University)

Ms. Jung, Young-Hae (Lecturer, Hiroshima Shudo University)

Coordinator :

Ms. Chizuko Ueno (Associate Professor, Kyoto Seika University)

#### ●Group Encounters

**Group One** : Relations with Asia and Japan

Ms. Chizuko Ueno (Associate Professor, Kyoto Seika University)

Ms. Yasuko Muramatsu (Professor, Tokyo Woman's Christian University)

**Group Two** : China

Ms. Zhu, Chuo Shun (Associate Professor, Beijing University of Education)

Mr. Koichi Yokota (Professor, Kyushu University)

**Group Three** : Bangladesh

Ms. Mahmuda Islam (Associate Professor, University of Dhaka)

Mr. Kazunori Akaishi (Researcher, Institute for International Education, Towa University)

**Group Four** : Korea

Ms. Jung, Young-Hae (Lecturer, Hiroshima Shudo University)

Mr. Kazunobu Hayashi (Professor, Kyushu International University)

#### ●Closing Session

Coordinator :

Ms. Masami Shinozaki (Chief Researcher, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women)



▲Open Symposium

### <CONTENTS>

#### — The Present Situation of Asian Countries —

In Korea in 1990, the Family Law revised the succession system which will positively affect Korean families.

In Bangladesh, the Constitution declares equal rights for men and women. But this is not practiced enough in health, education, work, and employment etc. The government is working hard to improve women's affairs with its 4th, 5-year plan.

In China, there are equal rights for women. Women, for example, have advanced in many fields and have attained a better social status.

#### — Noteworthy Points —

- In Asia, there are highly developed to developing countries, but in almost all women's social positions are lower than men.
- In Asia, there are growing generation gaps. Without understanding these rapid changes in behavior, we will fail to truly understand Asian society.
- Religions in Asia also affect the position of Asian women. These religions continue to emphasize the superiority of men in society.

#### — Japan's Relations with Asian Neighbors —

One important point made at the Conference concerned Japan's economic support to Asian countries. Often this support is principally allocated towards large scale projects and does not reach the people. In the future, Japanese aid should be sent to help Asians become more independent. Japan should also support activities at the grass-roots level through non-governmental organizations. In addition, Japan through its aid, must encourage Asian men and women to look for best solutions to their problems.



▲Group Three: Bangladesh



▲Workshop—BPW(National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Japan, Kitakyushu Club)



▲Workshop—OASC(Our Asian Seminar Circle)



▲Workshop—GMC(Global Mates Club)

## WOMEN TODAY



Keiko Higuchi

Professor, Tokyo Kasei University.  
Critic

In 1988 a forum on women in the Pan Pacific area was held by SIGI and female members of the Philippine Parliament. SIGI is a world famous feminist group. I was invited to attend as a representative from Japan.

During my stay, women's problems concerning both the Philippines and Japan were discussed. One issue was that of women working overseas, especially in the sex industry, and the other, the problem of brides from the Philippines. Last year, the Philippine government introduced a law which will regulate the "Mail Order Bride" and "Bride Introduction" industries.

Japanese villages are suffering from a decline in population and a lack of brides. Because of this, local Japanese governments sometimes organize tours to the Philippines to facilitate group arranged marriages. Many brides have already come to Japanese villages from the Philippines and other Asian countries. Some of them were the subject of fraud and some marriages ended in divorce.

Before leaving for the Philippines, I took part in a symposium on "International Marriage in Farm Villages" which included local Japanese government officials who welcome brides from Asian countries. The comments of a concerned local government official still remains in my mind: "They (the brides from Asia) have a femininity which graceful Japanese women used to have. We should adopt these brides into the community." He also repeated many times: "We will do our best to help them become one of us."

I understand that there are some generations who feel nostalgia for the word "YAMATO-NADESHIKO." "YAMATO-NADESHIKO" refers to the ancient traditional virtues of Japanese women. The image which I connect with this word is that of docility, obedience, and acceptance of women's destiny as that of being conveniently taken advantage of by men.

By asking the Philippine brides to be "YAMATO-NADESHIKO" we are not being fair and this is not internationalization. We can't just ask others to adapt. Japanese who accept brides also have to make an effort by trying to learn Tagalog, Philippine dishes as well as

absorbing Philippine culture. And the brides themselves should try to master Japanese and learn about Japanese culture.

In the Tohoku area of Japan which has many Asian brides, I visited a house which had been vacant until a short time ago. It was occupied by a young Philippine woman. She told me she had one child, and was now pregnant with a second. She was earning a small income by putting pads on blouses. About a month before, she had had a big row with her mother-in-law. Both of them had gotten so angry and upset, the young woman ended up biting her mother-in-law's arm. As a result, they are now living separately to cool off. The Philippine woman was not allowed to take her child with her, and the child remains with her parents-in-law. Fortunately, her husband left with her and they are living together.

She explained the reason for the dispute, sometimes in fairly good Japanese and sometimes in English, as follows:

"N, my sister-in-law, always brings her children to me and makes me take care of them and clean them. She should do this herself."

"Both my income from a part-time job, and all of my husband's income were taken away from us by my parents-in-law. We were only given a small amount of money. That is unreasonable."

"I agreed to live with them. I took it for granted that my parents-in-law are one family and that my husband and I and our children would be another. I also thought that we two families would live together, but independently. However, they believe that it is one big family with themselves as the center. Isn't that absurd?"

I couldn't disagree with her strong argument.

One day she and her mother-in-law started quarrelling because of the latter's unfair attitude towards the former's child, compared to that of her treatment of her own daughter's children. She was not yet fluent enough in Japanese to express her accumulated resentment, so, in exasperation she had bitten her mother-in-law on the arm.

She says they were very angry with "the cruel bride who hurt her parent." However, the action she took, I believe, is quite reasonable.

The same Philippine woman thinks nothing of doing difficult agricultural work and doesn't mind the cold Japanese climate or the food. She says that is because she loves her husband and child. What she cannot stand is the Japanese family system in which a bride is not treated as an independent individual.

## JAPAN INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER CENTER (JVC)

In February of this year the JVC, the Japan International Volunteer Center, celebrated its eleventh anniversary. During the first eleven years, the JVC greatly diversified the range of services it offered. Assistance is now provided to help countries in need of emergency aid for reconstruction, redevelopment, environmental problems etc.

JVC's wide sphere of activities extend far beyond Asia into countries such as Africa and the Middle East. Since its start, more than one-thousand youths have participated in a variety of JVC activities. Currently JVC has forty-two permanent Japanese staff members as well as thirty five foreign staff members stationed in various locations throughout the world including Tokyo.

Over one half of the volunteer staff working for the JVC is female. These female volunteers cooperate closely with mothers who, JVC feels, play an important role in improving life styles and living conditions.

In Thailand, the JVC is presently offering technical training and has opened schools to teach the Japanese language to refugees within refugee camps. A library has been erected in one of Bangkok's slum areas. Development assistance and a scholarship fund have been implemented in a farming village. In addition, JVC, in an effort to improve the environment, has started an agriculture and reforestation project.

In Kampuchea, the JVC has established technical training schools and is giving health care guidance to mothers and their children.

In Laos, the JVC is training and assisting Laotians in an effort to first improve and then maintain their new standard of living. In addition, JVC has been able to successfully help farmers by locating fresh sources of water and digging wells.

In Japan, the JVC offers guidance and support for refugees. The JVC holds activities and supports events which promote international understanding.

The unique characteristic which distinguish JVC from programs offered by the government is the commitment of individuals, adults, youths, housewives and students. These individuals unite their skills and talents to actively support and participate in the planning of meetings, lectures and charity events.

JVC believes that true international understanding and cooperation stems from citizens regardless of age, gender or nationality and so on.

For more information regarding JVC activities, please call 03-3834-2388 (JVC Tokyo headquarters, Tsukamura or Shibata). (Yasufumi Tsukamura researcher )



▲Laotian mothers working together to dig a well for fresh water

## 1991-1992 ASIAN BREEZE FOREIGN COLUMNISTS

Congratulations to our new 1991-1992 Asian Breeze Foreign Columnists. Through them, we hope to bring a fragrant breeze to our readers. Look for their impressions in Asian women in our upcoming issues.



Ms. Wang Jing, from China, is presently a textile dyer at a textile factory in Shanghai.



Ms. Luwarsih Pringgoadisurjo, from Indonesia, is a researcher, at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, Centre for Social and Cultural Studies.



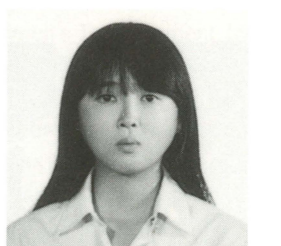
Ms. Machiko Nakama, from Japan, is presently residing in Malaysia with her Malaysian husband and their 4 year old boy.



Ms. Elena L. Samonte, from the Philippines, is an associate professor of psychology at the University of the Philippines. She is presently teaching about the psychology of the Japanese.



Ms. Noriko Yamaguchi, from Japan, is presently residing in Singapore with her Japanese husband and their three children. She is a Japanese language teacher and a hot-line counselor for women.



Ms. Mariko Kato, from Japan, is presently a foreign graduate student in social development at Khon Kaen University in Thailand.

## OFFICIAL OVERSEAS VISITS

In January of this year, a Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women delegation visited Thailand and Indonesia to collect and exchange information.

### 1. Program (Schedule)

January 16 (Wed.) - January 23 (Wed.) 1991

### 2. Visitors (See photo on next page)

**Hisako Takahashi** (President, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women)

**Mitsuko Horiuchi** (Cabinet Councillor and Director, Office for Women Affairs, Prime Minister's Office. Councillor, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women)

**Masami Shinozaki** (Chief Researcher, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women)

**Satoko Kanzaki** (Manager, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women)

### 3. Sites

#### ● THAILAND <Bangkok>

■ ILO (International Labor Organization)

■ ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific)

- UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women)
- UNDP (United Nations Development Program)
- Women's Affairs Section Office of the Permanent Secretary, the Prime Minister's Office
- Department of Labour Ministry of Interior
- Chulalongkorn University

#### <Chiang Mai>

- ILO Project
- YMCA Chiang Mai

#### ● INDONESIA

##### <Jakarta>

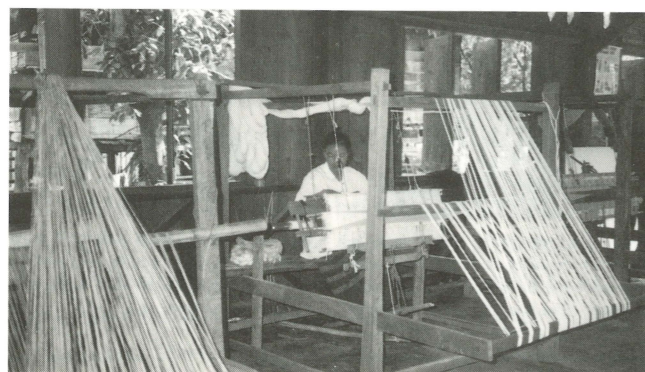
- Office of the Minister of State for the Role of Women
- The Indonesian Women's Congress
- Centre for Scientific Documentation and Information, Indonesian Institute of Sciences
- The Family Welfare Movement (PKK)
- The Family Welfare Movement Project
- Bluebird Taxi

## THAILAND

One of the important goals of this visit was to observe the Rural Women Workers Program, which was established with the aid of the ILO.

Since 1987, the ILO has been involved in this program in Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. Total donations for the Rural Women Workers Program in these countries amounted to US\$765,122 in 1990. Through the Rural Women Workers Program, the ILO is organizing the growing numbers of domestic workers. It is also establishing sales systems to help improving the living standards and working conditions of these workers.

We visited Chiang Mai, a northwestern city in Thailand. During our visit, three young staff members of the YMCA showed us around a recently opened bazaar and a center where communal looms were in use.



▲ Weaving center



▲ A woman weaver from Ban Pah Tung Village

#### Ban Pah Tung Village

We visited the bazaar which opened in August of 1990 at the Ban Pah Tung Temple. Since this temple has a much revered monk, many people visit it from various parts of the country. To these worshippers, the bazaar sells cotton textiles, embroidery blouses and dolls which are made by the women of the village. At this bazaar run by women volunteers, we saw women weaving the traditional designs of the Northern Mountain people into textiles for clothing.

#### Ban Tan Nua Village

Ban Tan Nua, a small cotton weaving village about 100km northeast of Chiang Mai, has a center where there are six looms at which women weave at their convenience. At Ban Tan Nua, a two hour drive from Ban Pah Tung, they are trying to develop new weaving patterns as well as preserve the traditional ones.



▲ Staff of Indonesian Ministry of women issues and Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women Representatives with Minister of State for the Role of Women (ctr.)

## INDONESIA

The politics of Indonesia adheres to the following five principles:

1. Faith in god
2. Social justice for the whole nation
3. The unity of Indonesia
4. Democracy led by a conference of national representatives
5. Fair and civilized humanitarianism

Indonesia is a large country in South East Asia consisting of 14,000 islands both large and small. Its population is 180 million. It would appear to be difficult to develop such a country in unity. However, because of Indonesia's five basic principles and the people's desire to live by them, I think it is possible.

In addition, ninety percent of Indonesians are Muslim. In fact, Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world. Their religion is the basis of social unity and development.

In Indonesia where there are approximately 30 million people living in poverty, the Family Welfare Movement (PKK) plays a major role in promoting the policy of unity and human development. PKK, a joint body of government and private businesses, is managed by women. In each village and district, twenty to a hundred small groups called "cadre" have been organized. Each "cadre" has about 10 people. According to some opinions, this "cadre" originates from Tonarigumi (neighborhood community groups) or Fujinkai (housewives' groups) which were set up during the Japanese Occupation Period (1942 - 1945).

Through the "cadre" as the basic unit of PKK, many activities are taking place; i.e. the education of uneducated and illiterate women, the cleaning-up and beautification of areas, as well as the promotion of mother-and-baby health care and family planning, cooperative activities and income management to help people become more economically independent.

We were shown around a working "cadre" in East Jakarta. There we found that those who support the public officials of the wards and initiate the PKK activities were active volunteer women. I was very much impressed by these women's activities.

## THE FORUM WINDOW

### CROSSROADS

It has been nearly seven months since the Forum was established. Foreigners from various walks of life and over thirty nations, primarily from Asia, have paid visits to us. These visitors are not only university professors, administrators, specialists, executive officials and staff members and delegates affiliated with organizations such as the United Nations and the Women's Liberation Organization, but also leaders of grass-roots movements, housewives, artists and foreign students who are studying in Japan. The Forum, in the literal sense, has become a crossroads for many different cultures.

Mr. Hwang Jung Hyun, an extremely courteous young student at Kyushu International University, is one of such visitors. Besides teaching us Korean once a week, he also helps us to attain a much clearer understanding of the views and opinions expressed by younger generation Koreans. We discuss many different topics including Korean food, movies, the housing situation, as well as the demonstrations recently mounted by students in protest against the government and the unfortunate suicides which followed these demonstrations.

The sharing or exchange of culture is not a one way street. Mr. Hwang has told me that the more he learns about the purpose of the Forum's activities, the more he is contemplating the situation of women in Japan and Korea. He is also discussing with his female friends the problems of women in Korea. Through his teaching of Korean culture, Mr. Hwang has discovered "women", whose culture has been forcibly hidden.

Since last autumn, I have frequently visited Korea. I am now involved in a joint research project with members of Korean Women's Development Institute.

Together, we are making a comparative study on the changing family consciousness in Korea and Japan. Our research section's theme for the next five years will be "Women in Development." One of our tasks will be to study the role of women in development and how this will affect women's status, role and consciousness within the family unit. This study will take place in several countries throughout Asia. The first has just started in Seoul, Korea. In our second year, we plan to conduct intensive interviews in more rural areas within the country. By shifting the sites where our studies are conducted, we hope to collect samples which reflect the diverse and rapid changes occurring in urban and rural areas. I am thankful that the Korean Women's Development Institute is interested and has chosen to cooperate fully with our research.

Our purpose is also to explore and unveil the fundamental differences and similarities which exist between Japanese and Korean women. Both countries are characterized by ties to Confucianism and by remarkable economic growth in their economies which makes this endeavor all the more interesting.

**Masami Shinozaki**

Chief Researcher, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women

# INFORMATION

## ●THE SECOND ASIAN SEMINAR

A positive attitude towards women's development is needed to raise their social status. In this case "development" includes every aspect of our development as human beings, i.e., political, economics, social, cultural etc.

In order to foster such attitude, the Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women will hold its sixth series of open seminars to help citizens to better understand Asia.

Throughout this seminar we shall be exploring and discussing the circumstances in which Asian women live, and also their role in the overall development of Asian countries.

We hope many people will participate in this upcoming seminar. For more information, please call us on : 093-551-1220

## ●MS. ASIYO-REP. UNIFEM SPEAKS OUT

UNIFEM is an organization which supports underprivileged women in developing countries. In March 1991, the UNIFEM's first goodwill Ambassador, The Honorable Phoebe Muga Asiyu, came to Japan. She has encouraged the development of women's involvement in the foundation. Our Forum invited her to speak.

Ms. Asiyu previously worked for the independence of Kenya. Formerly, she also was a teacher, a social worker, and the director of a woman's prison. She has served as a Delegate to the United Nations General Assembly and is now a consultant to the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

Ms. Asiyu during her speech explained that UNIFEM gives economic aid, plans and executes development projects as well as endeavors to involve women in them. Ms. Asiyu also emphasized the difficulty and the importance of women's present role in developing countries. She also talked about the need at grass-roots level for all of mankind to cooperate in the future to make these efforts successful.

## ●THE SECOND KITAKYUSHU CONFERENCE ON ASIAN WOMEN

December 1-2,1991, the second Kitakyushu Conference on Asian Women will be held. Our topic is going to be "Women's Participation in Decision Making."

## ●"Asian Breeze" SUBSCRIBERS' DRIVE

The "Asian Breeze" is published every four months. It is distributed free at the Public Relations Section of the City Hall of Kitakyushu and Citizens' Consultation Room in every ward. If you would like us to send you a copy, please contact us. Our telephone No.: 093-551-1220

## EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

Without studying our own problems and situations, we are unable to understand the wider issues of underprivileged Asian women. In successive conferences on Asian women, we, along with many participants, can receive the gentle breeze of enlightenment about our Asian sisters.



## Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women

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