

Encounters between Colombia and Japan: A Tribute to One Hundred Years of Friendship

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Alvaro Uribe Velez

President of the Republic

The celebration of the first centennial of friendship relationship between Colombia and Japan is a precious opportunity to renew with new spirit the ties weaved in this perennial brotherhood.

On the 25th of May of 1908, diplomatic, commercial and cooperation ties were established for the first time through the Friendship, Commerce and Navigation Treaty with Japan. In this treaty, shared visions of the Japanese Ambassador and the President of Colombia, General Rafael Reyes, were met. Both States declared that economic cooperation and the strengthening of political relations was their purpose

The governments of his Majesty and President Reyes were aware of the importance of fostering, under some regulation, the migration of Japanese citizens to alleviate the economic crisis of the beginning of the century, the food scarcity and overpopulation of the Nippon country. That decision turned into an important contribution to Colombian qualified labor and the modernization of the agricultural sector. As a result of the enforcement of this policy, in May 1923, Samuel Kiyoshi, Adolfo Akira, Antonio Tokuji, Taro Matsuo and Katsumi Tadano, traveled from the Yokohama Port to Buenaventura, keen to work and live in the fantastic land that Jorge Isaacs called "the Paradise". Once in Valle del Cauca, these five young men started working in the town of Jagual, in the municipality of Corinto, thus becoming pioneers of the Japanese migration to Colombia.

In 1954, after the interruptions to diplomatic relations due to the Second World War, the Japanese mission was established in Bogota, and the Colombian mission in Tokyo started to operate in 1955. Two years later, accredited missions in both countries were raised to the level of Embassies. Then in Japan, the National Federation of Coffee Growers was opened, and the External Trade Organization Office was inaugurated, whereas Jetro and the Japan International Cooperation Agency- JICA, were opened in the Colombian capital city.

These have been one hundred years of constant and flowing conversations, keeping common positions in the core areas of the international agenda, such as

the fight against human trafficking, the protection of environment, banning the use and manufacture of anti-personnel mines, the need for more efficiency from the United Nations Organization, the international accountability in the fight against drug trafficking, terrorism and organized crime.

Japan is for Colombia an intelligent speaker who understands our efforts for peace, democratic security, welfare and sustainable development. We admire their ancient culture and their beautiful paradox: value-loving people, who have taught a lesson to the world for their sense of sovereignty, and at the same time, open to the new trends of modern days.

We have received from Japan a generous support in many different circumstances and aspects: providing attention to vulnerable populations, mainly in education; building nearly one hundred and fifty schools and almost one hundred libraries to strengthen our National Reading Plan and Libraries; in the field of healthcare, in training, and infrastructure and by performing more than four hundred human security projects.

Japanese cooperation has also been prominent through the Grand Cultural Donation that since 1982 has granted scholarships from the Government of Japan and the Japan International Cooperation Agency- JICA, to more than 3200 Colombians who have been able to take undergraduate and graduate studies in the Nippon country, along with specialized training in Japan and other countries of the world.

It is important to highlight the setting of the *Grupo de Notables* (Group of Notables) that has analyzed, within the framework of this centennial, the evolution of bilateral exchange in the economic, social, political, cultural and cooperation fields; the factors that have made this development difficult and the convenience of signing agreements for reciprocal investment promotion and protection (BIT), to avoid double taxation (ADT) and of economic association (EPA), in order to deepen our relations.

Japan is our gateway to Asia Pacific, our great trade partner, our constant ally and friend. First Minister Yasuo Fukuda has repeatedly displayed solidarity and understanding. Colombia will enjoy a great opportunity through the support it will receive from Japan upon joining APEC (*Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation*) in 2010. This is our chance to join the greatest association of world's economy which will reinforce the strength of our cooperation and will make the ties of what in 2008 became a secular friendship, even stronger.

Congratulations on the edition of the memorial of the first century of Colombo-Japanese diplomatic relations, published with dedication under the initiative of the Prisma Network and the Embassy of Colombia in Japan. Here we find a collection of the main topics of our relationship, the experiences of our fellow citizens in Japan and the photographic testimonials of what has been the celebration of our centennial relationship.

Let the past and the present be the premonition of things to come in the future: a close relation of friendship and collaboration.

Presentation

PATRICIA CARDENAS

Ambassador of Colombia to Japan

One hundred years of bilateral history between Japan and Colombia deserved a tribute and that is exactly what we wanted to do with this publication: to honor the centennial and set a reference to continue consolidating the future of our diplomatic relationships.

This project came up from the initiative of the Promotion and Research Record Network and the Members of the Academic Community in Japan and PRISMA, who ventured to suggest a tribute to the centennial through a publication. The idea happened to be so pertinent that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of Colombia in Japan decided not only to support it, but to give it a wider dimension. Thus, this book was created: a witness of our bilateral relations.

Though not comprehensive in history, and it does not pretend to be, it is indeed a contribution to the historical diplomatic ties and a good prediction for their future. Ministers, businesspeople, students, artists and dozens of other people who have contributed with articles, essays, and photographs to share the greatness of what Japan has always given us.

It is difficult to embrace in these pages the minor details of the relations weaved over these one hundred years. To do so, would be pretentious. The inheritance of an ancient culture that nurtured our roots mixed with our race during immigration times deserves more than a book.

These pages will probably fail to entirely convey our deep gratitude for the Japanese people. These are, nonetheless, a taste of the commitment we have for a country that boosted technology in our fields, which has supported the development of our infrastructure, our academic updating for researchers, and technical training for experts, cultural projects and above all, our vision of a Colombia in peace.

In 2008, we had enough reasons to celebrate and we did. In the streets of Tokyo, we could feel the vitality of the Barranquilla Carnival; we honored our Nobel Prize Gabriel Garcia Marquez; we recalled the mysticism of pre-Columbian times with

the most exclusive pieces of the Gold Museum; we echoed the *Mapalé* rhythm shown by the Ballet Company of Antioquia and we could admire the architectonic legacy of master Rogelio Salmona. These activities reached other cities as well. In Osaka, for example, we flooded the air with the aromas of the flowers from the Medellin Fair.

The agenda covered a dozen of events, including an exhibition of four well-known Colombian photographers who captured images during their visits to Japan and today, such images add life to some of the pages of this book.

Here, we remember some of those moments. The real valuable thing in this project is how it celebrates the path that seems clean, wide and full of options for our bilateral relations. This is an opportunity to recall our achievements, and even more, what we still have to accomplish.

This is our motivation to engage even harder in assuming the challenges that the future may bring and continue working for Colombia, so it remains the eternal paradise described by the writer Jorge Isaacs, and that Japanese searched for one hundred years ago.

Aesthetics of Indetermination

JAIME BARRERA PARRA

Professor - Universidad de los Andes

During his speech to the VIII International Congress of Industrial Design in Kyoto, October 1973, the Director of the Institute of Ethnology of Japan, anthropologist Umesao Tadao stated that “historically, the Japanese have always worked better when empirical and practical impulses are present (...) rather trying to operate with “definite prognosis” and “deliberate intentions”. Umesao called this trait “aesthetics of indetermination”. In his opinion, “this is something indispensably Japanese that constitutes one of the biggest differences between the Japanese and western cultures”.

This book gathers fifteen different essays about “encounters” between Japan and Colombia during these first one hundred years of “friendship, trade and navigation”, as stated in the treaty signed in 1908. Two or three of these essays select fragments from this century that set some cooperation points in the academic, commercial migration or financial areas between the two countries that are part of a history that has just started to trace in freehand sketches. The strokes of personal accounts of most of the contributions suggest certain deepness that will need good work to create a story. The collection includes the experience of two Japanese who came to Colombia, attracted by the existence of a species of poisonous butterflies from the Snowy Mountains of Santa Marta. The purpose of this preface is to suggest a Japanese trait of “aesthetics of indetermination” as the clue to interpret the meaning for the future writing of one hundred years of history through the clues supplied by the stories contained in this book. Paradoxically enough, this purpose implies to identify the Japanese notion of Professor Umesao Tadao in the “empirical and practical impulses” of those Colombians who started these relationships with Japan, “due” to the opportunities offered by the formalities of a “treaty”. I believe it was a hidden fascination for this “aesthetics of indetermination” the one that moved the authors of these essays to “essay about Japan”. I also believe that is the appropriation of such aesthetics the one that enables a stronger “decision” and “deliberation” to our “predictions” and future “intentions”.

In 1944, during the annual meeting of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, PECC at Kuala Lumpur, the formal admission of Colombia as member of the organization took place. In my journey back to Colombia, I transferred in Los Angeles from a Singapore Airlines Company plane to an Avianca night flight, destination Bogota. As we took off, I took from the seat pocket an issue of the *Avianca Magazine*. The last pages contained information describing the services provided by the airline: a plan of the distribution of the seats, instructions for emergencies, movies, music bands, addresses of offices and a map with the routes covered by the airline. The map was plain with no circular borders and framed by a square. It reminded me of the school texts forty or fifty years ago. Deserted lands colored in orange and yellow, fertile lands in different degrees of green and cold zones in white. Curved beams pointed the cities connecting Colombia with different places of South America, United States and Europe. In the left page, North America from north to South; in the right page, Europe, Africa, Russia and Asia; in the center, dominating the two pages was the Atlantic Ocean as in Columbus times. Suddenly I had a revelation that I found terrifying. The map of the right cut Asia as with a guillotine. It did not include the countries at the east of India. The "Far East" did not exist. No china, Korea or Japan, nor the Asian Southeast, Australia, New Zealand or Oceania. At the end of the 20th century the flag carrier of Colombia had excluded one fourth of the world out of the mind and heart of Colombians.

The omission has, however, an explanation that could be documented if we continue delving into the history of maps; a sequence of turns in the election of the cardinal point towards which the observer's eye is oriented.

Moving the orientation

The territories of the world in the maps of Strabo and Eratosthenes were symmetric but not at all accurate. There were no countries or continents larger or smaller. The world was parceled in almost equal parts by lines anteceding meridians and parallels. The upper part, as in our maps, was the north, the "seven oxen" (*septem triones*) from the constellation of the "plough". The middle of it was crossed by column of mountains moving from right to left which ended in the Mediterranean Sea, At the east, laid naturally the "east or Orient" or the place of the "rising Sun" (*oriens*).

During the middle Ages, European maps changed 45 degrees counterclockwise. The east then rose to the former north and the center was placed at a disproportioned island of Crete, surrounded by a sort of lagoon or Mare Nostrum, the Mediterranean Sea. To stress the orientation role of the East, the Garden of

Eden was included within a walled garden and inside, there was a mountain that poured four rivers. As time passed by, and with the Christianization of Europe, the mountain was removed and instead, the images of naked Adam and Eve filled the spaces outside the Paradise with tiny cathedrals, convents, and castles.

Cartographers of the 16th and 17th centuries tried other “orientations”. In 1595, Linschoten moved the world again forty five degrees to the left. In the upper part he placed mid-day (*meridies*), the south. Europe disappeared in this representation and turned into the eye of a hidden observer. It seems to be stalking from outside. Asia seems to be then unrolling as a carpet before the feet of a Europe sitting in a faraway throne. The dominating center of the islands of spices, today Philippines and Indonesia happen to be disproportionately larger than the Asian continent itself. The remaining variation of these cartographic experiments is a strange Dutch map representing Central America and South America split from the north and places the west in the position where the history of maps had placed the north, then the east and finally the south. The map contains a series of innumerable clues of its purpose. Judging by the abundance of the names of current cities of the continent, we assume it was done in the late Colonial times. The details in the relief of the pacific coast show the presence of several navigation logs that helped to put it together. In contrast, at the inside of the Andes and the Amazon there is no definition- except for Colombia and Venezuela.- Instead of cartography there is only a vicuna drawn and some thick letters and the word “Peruviana”. It is not Brazil, or Argentina, but Peru and it embraces what the territory represents. Peru facing the Pacific, to the “east”, that in this case is far west. A map of this nature would have never been drawn by a *santafereño* (*person from Bogota*).

This map of South America facing the pacific from the inside to the subcontinent closed the cycle of cartographic tests that consisted on moving the horizon of the observer forty five degrees to the left. Gerardo Mercator, however, did something more. He accomplished something indeed revolutionary: to fade the view based upon the dominance of one of the cardinal points, placing the observer contemplating the world from a polar star. Mercator’s map contains a spherical map which center is the Artic pole, “a black and very tall mountain” that appears to be small among the huge lake where the four rivers of the Garden of Eden flow. In the upper part, a channel of water divides the “parts of Asia” from the “parts of America” which descend until fading below a curved shape that does not allow seeing “beyond”. The experience of the observer is that of an aesthetical “conversion”. A recent map of Mauricio Obregon illustrates better and in a simpler way such effect. His book, “*La primera vuelta al mundo*” (*The first trip around the world*) gathers the idea of Gerardo Mercator and traces a map without the religious mythology of ancient maps and distributes evenly the five continents on a two-

dimensional plan, making them turn as if in a curve. The result is amazing. The Pacific Ocean occupies almost half of the planet and Colombia is at the Antipodes of Singapore. The conclusion is inevitable: with any aerial or maritime circumnavigation arch used, from the Colombian coast to the “extreme east”, the straight trip of a Colombian to one of those regions happens to be the longest on earth.

Nonetheless, some have tried it and this book compiles accounts of their trips. Not only from Colombians but also of Japanese citizens who made the trip all the way around. Every story traces the curve of a different trail, not simply a round of the cardinal point where the sight is oriented but something that Mercator did not dream of: decentering.

Changing the Center

One of the best books about Japan is “The Compact Culture”, written by O-Youn Lee, awarded novelist, playwright and literary critic. Attended school during the Japanese occupation and became a prestigious intellectual, minister of culture and member of the executive committee of the opening and closing ceremonies of the Seoul Olympic Games. In one of the chapters, a short poem of writer Ishikawa Takuboku (1886-1912):

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Tōkai no | In the East Sea |
| Kojima no iso no | at the cove a tiny island |
| Shirasuna ni | on the White sand |
| Wara wa nakinurete | soaked in tears |
| Wara wa nakinurete. | I play with a crab. |

This is a literal translation by line. Nevertheless, it does not reproduce the grammatical effect of the Japanese particle “no” that comes from concentrically from the periphery of a circle towards the interior of a center in which a sentimental “I” plays with a “you” represented by a crab. Lee thinks that the poem, grammatically and in literary terms reveals a way of thinking “focused” on the detail of the small things. The anthropologist Joy Hendry suggests, instead, that the order of the poem lines shown the way in which a present is unwrapped in Japan. Within the context of the different considerations, I think, though, that there is room for a third interpretation and a historical note.

The poem was written, most probably between the end of the 19th century to early 20th century. Back then, a village of peasants and local merchants who had lived

their whole life in the island was now being exposed to the harshness of the “opening” to a “western” world. “West” though, is “east”. And the east for Japan, the country of the “rising sun” is not the orient of the merchants or the European sailors, but an unknown sea. This “opening” to another world and its horizon should have been suffered as an experience of solitude and self-absorption. What is wonderful is that the history of Japanese modernization, the impetuosity of its imperial expansion towards Asia, the massive migrations, to North, Central and South America, its modest experience in the colony of Jagual in Colombia, its postwar Americanization, its insertion in the market, all this happened against a deep feeling of attachment to their own land. How did they do it? My friend Fernando Barbosa often repeats that the Japanese are like us: peasant people. Implicit in the essays of this book underlies the story of an answer from Colombia to that question. The structure of the poem contains a key approaching to that new center from indeterminateness, without dispersing, but through concentric circles that close upon a focus of determination. In my view, this process happens to be the way of being of the one called the “master”, as explained through the Chinese script that make up the word *sensei*. Master is “the growth (*sei*) that precedes us (*sen*)”.

Becoming a Master

Through an invitation made to me by Artesanías de Colombia I had the opportunity to watch the behavior of a Japanese dyer while preparing indigo. Industrial chemistry produces indigo by synthesizing indoxyl by in the fusion of sodium phenylglycinate in a mixture of caustic soda and sodamide. The traditional production is based on finding the substance that produces the digestion of bacteria under certain conditions of shadow, moist and temperature. A *sensei* master needs between ten and twenty years to dominate the traditional extraction technique.

Artesanías de Colombia invited a group of artisans to learn the procedures of this Japanese master. In a yard, a big clay pot was placed in which the dyer had put some plant leaves of the indigofera species. The training consisted on observing in silence the behavior of this master, who, from time to time got near the pot, removed the lid and observed for a long time. He would bend the head to smell the odor, stir the leaves, and spread his fingertips with the excrement to check its consistency, almost tasting and flavoring it.

A master does not impart instructions; does not transmit doctrines; Teaches, as in the sense of letting other see-him, it exposes himself and the disciples watch what

he does, they imitate by sharpening the senses; they listen, smell, watch, feel, taste. During the fermentation stage of the indigo in the membrane of infinitesimal bacteria, the master virtually becomes clay pot, green leaf, bacteria, digestive viscosity, rottenness, odor and indigo. Meanwhile, the disciple has started a long way of learning, starts to become, literally, gaze, nose, ear, hands, mouth, posture, attitude, the master's mood.

This learning process by sensorial assimilation may also be seen in material and mechanical processes. The closest example is the invention of the Japanese bicycle.

Substituting Thoughts

During the modernization process that took place in Japan by the end of the 19th century, the country had to find solutions to the problem of displacement in cities, importing bicycles massively or building national bicycle factories. After numerous studies, estimations and discussions, the conclusion was that imports were the most convenient solution. The country then got flooded with bicycles. With time, bicycles got old and broken and mechanical garages started to open in Tokyo, which used parts of the discarded bicycles to repair broken ones. Sometime later, mechanicals learned to manufacture some of the pieces that were in more demand. Later, less important parts were manufactured. At last, someone had the idea of buying the parts that were produced in garages and start to assembly bicycles. Local products could not be compared with import goods. At the beginning of the 30s, Japan had started to export bicycles to china and other Asian countries. It is important to say, though, that the emphasis of this illustration is not placed upon the "substitution" but on the sequence o substitutions where links define a prior determination which as happening, relationships emerge and condition each other and the next step may be aesthetically appreciated.

This is the gradual emergency of the aesthetics of a weaving dramatically described by Japanese novelist Kawabata Yasunari.

Narrating Sequences

It is common knowledge that Kawabata was awarded the Literature Nobel Prize for his novel *Koto*. The English translation with the name "The Ancient City" stands close but not fully to the Japanese title. The Spanish *Kyoto* neglects the fact that this name was recently given to an old imperial city *Heian*, when in 1868 it was no more by moving to Tokyo "the city of the east". In fact, the story is not about Kyoto, but about *Heian*, the ancient capital.

Before a book, the story had been a series published in the *Asahi Shinbun* newspaper of Tokyo and Osaka between October 1961 and January 1962. This literary practice of turning into series a novel on a daily basis, allows Kawabata to create a series of frames and get closer to the center of the old city by means of successive approaches. Consequently, *Koto* becomes an example of the aesthetics of indetermination. In the series Kawabata, the purpose was to leave a poetical record of the most representative places of a city that in his opinion was fading under the uncontrollable impulse of modernization. In his own words, a traveller of the future could go back and rebuild with the imagination the way Heian looked like for almost one thousand years.

In an apparent secondary development of the plot, there is a story that narrates the way in which a frustrated artist becomes the bow of the belt (*obi*) of the main character's kimono.

There are four characters in this episode. A merchant of fine traditional fabrics, Sada Takichiro and his friend Otomo Sosuke, a weaver of great taste and skill; Hideo, Sosuke's son, a sullen adolescent, heir of his father's art and relentlessly intolerant to the most minimal distraction from his work and Chieko, Kichiro's daughter, to whom his father wants to give a fabric designed by himself.

To imagine the fabric, the merchant retires to a monastery, accompanied by his lacquer box with his drawing instruments, two stretchers with samples of calligraphy and a book of copies of Paul Klee that his daughter had given him. For three weeks, Kichiro fights against himself. His early vocation for design returns, which had been frustrated by his father's business. His imagination goes and comes among the thick traces of calligraphy and Paul Klee's bright colors in which he thinks he has seen the "spirit of the old Japan". At last, he believes he has conceived something original. He returns to the city to his weaver friend so he can appreciate and weave them. The design moved away from the classic Japanese drawings and in fact, they have nothing similar to Klee. It is something new and original. It has been painfully created.

Sosuke, however, after unrolling the sketches on the mat and admiring them silently, calls his son Hideo and suggest him who is younger, healthier and strict to turn them into fabric. But Hideo does not seem to show much interest. Even worse, he shows disgust for the artist's work; he remains silent. Takichiro feels offended; he thinks the weaver despises him and in an outburst of anger slaps him. Hideo apologizes. He says he deserves another slap with the hardened hands of an artisan and begs to allow him to weave the obi the artist imagined for his daughter.

When Takichiro rebuked him saying that is “just what he is there for “ but would like to know why the initial silent disgust, so Hideo confesses that “the drawing is precious, stunning, an exception, an exceptional novelty (...) dazzling, interesting... but it lacks the warm support of the heart. I don’t know, there is something artificial, sick... In the monastery, you enjoyed sublime loneliness. Fine. But is it possible to have been bewitched by foxes and weasels?

With those words, Takichiro goes pale. He quivers. He snatches the drawing. He looks at it for a long time and says: “Indeed, you have given me a great lesson, despite your youth ... amazing! Thank you. I will think about it slowly and I will create a new design”. Hideo then tries to recover the drawing with an attempt of an excuse: “it is precious as it is (...) once weaved with the color of the fabric y will have another air(...)”. Takichiro then answered with bitterness: “Thank you so much, perhaps Mr. Hideo you would like to instill in the design the warm colors of your feelings for my daughter Chieko”. And with those words he leaves the house of the weavers and once in the street he makes a ball with the sketches and throws it to stream of water that flows to parallel to the street. The episode is not over yet. After several distractions of the story in other stories, Hideo reappears a rainy afternoon while Takichiro waits for Chieko to take her to a traditional ceremony in Kyoto. Hideo carries a package under the arm: “At last, I have weaved an obi for the lady”. When Chieko starts to unroll the fabric, a simple glance is enough for her to exclaim: Oh, father! This has Klee’s style. You drew it while you were in the monastery, isn’t it? It is so pretty!” Meanwhile Takichiro is immobilized by her astonishment. Hideo had weaved by heart the design he had thrown to the river. He then remembers the criticism of the artisan and he asks his daughter: Do you think there is harmony in this *obi*? Warmth, heart...?” Heartbroken, Chieko lets the fabric fall and asks: How come? Harmony? (...) Harmony is given by the kimono and the person who wears it”. And standing, she rolls up her hips in the fabric as an obi, as she looks at him radiantly. The face of the father enlightened and Hideo, the rough artisan could no less than exclaim “Ms. Chieko, This is your father’s creation!”

The “masterpiece” only reveals at the end of a sequence that is not only technical but social in an undetermined story.

Documenting Stories

A recent monograph of a student from the School of Administration of Universidad de los Andes, Javier Fernando Navas Rodríguez, about Exports to Japan, analyzes in detail the behavior of Colombian exports to Japan between 1992 and 2006 using an innovative methodology. Research allows us to end this

presentation with a series of suggestions that complete the application of the “aesthetics of indetermination” in regards to the one hundred years of relationship between Colombia and Japan and helps to value the essays of this book.

In the monographs about this “one hundred years” the sequence of the story is often reduced to the fragile and mild common thread of the export and import figures between 1928 and 1941. These statistics tables do not fill half a page; they reproduce a ritual in the yearly updates carried out periodically and that show no significant variation. In 1990, however, two students of the Jorge Tadeo Lozano University, Nazli Barreto and Alvaro Lamprea wanted to pick up the “commercial history” thread and add something else from the Colombian side to dynamize the relationship: potentially exportable products. Their research was their graduation work “Potentially exportable products to Japan”. (1990). Nazli Barreto and Álvaro Lamprea,

In the monograph, Javier Fernando takes the work by Barreto and Lamprea and studies the search for Colombian exports in the Japanese market during the following fifteen years (1992-2006). The study may be considered an extension of the former research and its usefulness and importance is undeniable. Javier Fernando, however, introduced an important methodological innovation.

He examined thoroughly one by one the tariff codes added to a one statistical digit, in order to compare later the volumes in aggregated categories. The procedure allowed the young researcher to differentiate, from a statistical behavior, six classes of products, as follows:

1. Sporadic products
2. Products of the 90s.
3. Products that revive and have been interrupted.
4. Continuous products with interruption at the end.
5. Continuous products.
6. Products of the future

On this basis, Javier Fernando dares to ask discretely the causes, to formulate hypotheses, to propose initiatives. The causes are unknown. The research can only suggest hypothesis. The initiative will depend on the creativity of future young researchers. Each of the groups found, however suggests “undetermined” images but on which is not difficult to perceive certain aesthetic intention. Thus, the data found became leads for a different kind of search. Javier Fernando proposes the need for case study. In the variations of the statistical behavior, underlie “stories” of “ideas” that replicated the facts in other latitudes; about “fantasies” that happened

to creative people; about “initiatives” of entrepreneurial youngsters; of “essays” that embraced limited but important risks; about “companies” that acted with cautious. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of an inventory of these companies and people.

Almost 20 years ago, though, Professor Enrique Ogliastri recorded more than 300 hours of interviews with Colombian and Japanese individuals, both in Japan and Colombia. The fruit of that work was a book that may well be considered a “classic”: *The Japanese system of Negotiation. The Latin American Experience*. This approach is not restricted to commercial relations but embraces the political, academic and cultural links from “narrative” experiences that allowed professor Ogliastri to identify a series of cultural behaviors in the relation between Colombia and Japan, which oppose contradictorily, but at the same time show, in a curious way, the coincident elements and the points of encounter. The book has the merit of compiling terms and creating a language that enable us to focus our attention, ask questions, suspect answers, understand processes, and dare to hypothesize.

Professor Ogliastri’s study had a well-defined purpose: how to negotiate with the Japanese? Its procedure, therefore, is the one of an academician: designing a method, gathering thousands of observations, proposing a series of considerations with general approach. The essays gathered in this book have an approach even more undetermined than the question: how was the interest for Japan born? Both procedures, however, fall into one observation stated by Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics*, which summarizes the steps of the “trail” of the “aesthetics of indetermination”. A free version of this observation would be that “human knowledge can be compared to that of a collector who, from the experience of a series of sensations can create one sole memory; from several memories, can reach an experience; and from a series of experiences, gets closer to a more universal principle where to draw conclusions from”.

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POEMA DE LA PAGINA 24 EN JAPONES

| | |
|---------|---------------------------|
| 東海の | In the East Sea |
| 小島の磯の | at the cove a tiny island |
| 白砂に | on the White sand |
| われ泣きぬれて | soaked in tears |
| 蟹とたはむる | I play with a crab. |

FOLLOWING JAPAN'S FOOTPRINTS

Japan: My Vital Adventure

Fernando Barbosa

He has been associated with Japan since 1973 through the private sector, the government, diplomacy, journalism, international consulting and the academy. He worked as director of the Commercial Office of Colombia for Asia, and was also an adviser to the Colombian Embassy in Japan. Today he is mostly dedicated to research.

Since 1973 every day of my life has been tied to Japan. Without a doubt, I would say that all the good and the bad in me have to do with this attachment. In 2008, year in which we commemorated the signing of the Friendship, Commerce and Navigation Treaty between Colombia and Japan, I find myself with an overwhelming reality: these 35 years of personal experience represent 1/3 of the journey of these relations, they have happened in the most dynamic period and they have been the axis of my vital experience.

Through this *zuihitsu*, as they say, an essay in the Japanese style, I expect the pencil to carry away freely, without any type of pressure or pretense. Therefore, I will let memory be the guide of the text. I suggest the reader, to take the content as a reference to reflect upon the past, with its good and bad choices that will light our way in building a brighter future.

Some time ago, after a conference for elementary children at a renowned school in Bogotá, some questions were asked about the topic of my intervention. What called my attention the most were the questions raised about the things I had not spoken about. The questions that reflected the most enthusiasm referred to what samurai looked like and how do the ninjas live.

As I tried to remember what my notion of Japan was as a child, I found that it was the land of heretics where the priests who belonged to the order of my school were sent on a saving mission, as we were told. But there were other sources of information that nourished my imagination: Japan, a country of warm and beautiful islands spread through the Pacific filled with dangerous and terrifying men. As you can see, I was influenced by the distortions that result from the American films of the time that made an apology of the courage of the victorious and the cruelty of the defeated, and located the war in the South Pacific. About the bombardment of

Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or the occupation, very little was left in my memory. Just as well, I could have asked, as the children did, did Japanese kill Christians or how could they bear so much heat throughout the year with so little water? There were and still are distortions of the imaginaries created by society and the media.

The lack of knowledge, the disinformation and distortions, as the ones I just mentioned, are the immense barriers that one finds when reaching the unknown, the new, for the first time. I say barriers, because despite the truth and reality, some things stay with you, insistently blocking or isolating you. It's not easy to overcome the unconscious stage where your self-assurance is put to the test, the profound convictions, your own truth, and where all sort of vulnerabilities are generated and we feel our ground shifting.

And that is what happened to me, when I ended my college education and began to work for Sumitomo Shoji Kaisha Ltda. Just the name brought on a few difficulties. My friends couldn't bring themselves to pronounce it so they decided to call it Sumimoto. As they explained, Sumimoto was a renowned family name that had begun their commercial empire with a copper mine in the 17th century. Kaishia meant company. But Shoji became a challenge, even to the Japanese, to translate. To sum this up, it was a *sogoshosha*, term that has come a long way and that is no longer translated, for an equivalent word is not available in the west: those very particular types of commercialization firms that are common in Japan.

The next challenge was to differentiate the names and the faces of the four Japanese with whom I worked. Names and faces were undecipherable. I managed with the features of the general manager, whose assistant I was, but I would have to rack my brains with the others. All this was just the beginning of what would be a vital experience that began then and up till now, remains wonderful and enriching.

Despite my curiosity to know that whole world, the lack of guidance and overbearing parade of ambiguities and uncertainties that I was subjected to, almost suffocated me. On the first day on the job, my boss entrusted me with several deals that added up to three million US dollars. His instructions were clear and precise: "Continue with these." My reaction was "to do" and my boss's was to let me do, without entirely abandoning me, a discrete surveillance.

So much novelty and inexperience did not allow me to decipher the process and the contradictions. Years later, as I was promoted, everything began to become clear to me. I understood the characteristics of a model of formation based on "doing": *on the job training*, and the supremacy of action over thought, that shifts the theory with the *praxis*. All of this was a supreme effort similar to that of

swimming against the current. This process could be described as crawling backward up a waterfall. The rational training of our educational system made silence unbearable as an answer, or a “no” as an indicator to change direction.

As my confusion increased, and the impossibility of finding answers among the Japanese and the lack of books that would help me with what Japan was about, I ended up –adding up luck and personal inclinations – becoming a haiku and Noh theater enthusiast, two literary forms very much embedded in the Japanese soul. In the Noh I found certain echo with the *Autos Sacramentales* of the Spanish Golden Age, that my teacher Rafael Maya had led me to in his courses at Universidad de Los Andes. With the haiku, I reencountered those short poems back in 1961. With these precious jewels it’s worthy to note that they became very effective tools to create relationships. Since I wouldn’t miss a chance to mention my keen interest in them when speaking to any Japanese that I happened to meet, it was no coincidence that during one of the visits that a board member of *Sumitomo* made to Colombia, I was not introduced with the current title of my position, which was the usual, but with that of my hobby. This character, who later became president and chairman of the board, gave me the nickname of Mr. Haiku. That allowed me to become closer to him during my stay in Tokyo, in a way that would otherwise have been impossible. In time, the works of Japanese writers such as Hagoromo, Genji, Heike, Norinaga, Shiki, Yosano, Takamura, Soseki, Tanizaki, Akutagawa and so many others ended up being of more importance than numbers and arguments, at the moment to move along in negotiations.

Japanese Presence in Latin-America

The decade of the 70’s witnessed a change in the strategies of Japanese businesses in Latin America, developing expectations of the region towards a growing market for imports. On the export side, the offer of raw material resulted not only attractive, but also indispensable at a time when the Japanese economy was growing at rates never before seen. Within this tendency, it was logical that other firms would join in the venture as had been done by Mitsubishi Shoji, in the decade before. That is how Sumitomo, Mitsui Busan, C. Itoh and Marubeni came to be, and would be followed later on by Nissho Iwai, Nichimen and others.

For the Japanese the outlook was partially clear, but on the other hand, not so much for the Colombians, who eyed the new arrivals with distrust and skepticism. They were faced with the lack of knowledge, with fear that all the Japanese products would invade all the global markets, or that they would copy our secrets. With the exception of brands such as Nissan, Toyota and Sony that were linked with cars and radios, the Japanese machinery and equipment were looked upon with suspicion. Therefore, the road to follow was focused on chemicals and steel.

In these sectors, Japanese competitiveness surpassed the rest of the world. The tragedy of the war left them without infrastructure, without factories. But the reconstruction, guided by leaders with amazing vision of the future, prevented them from restocking their industries with old fashion machinery and it equipped the country with the latest technology. This meant a great advantage that placed the Japanese production in unbeatable conditions in both quality and price facing Europe and the USA. With the exception of these basic products, intermediate and final goods had to wait for better moments to come.

A clear case to illustrate the difficulties was that of Toyo Kogyo Ltd., (Mazda as of 1985). At some point in 1974 we received a request from Tokyo to take a closer look at the automobile industry, not only for the market of importing cars but for a future local assembly line. There already existed three assembly lines, and the interest of headquarters did not seem at all strange. The search gave no results of importers that would be interested, the contract of the existing assembly lines were studied and the government was consulted about the possibility of establishing a new plant, idea that was definitely discarded through conversations with the Ministry of Development. In early 1975, it would be known what was behind this movement. Indeed, in December 1974, the Sumitomo Bank, facing a virtual bankruptcy of the firm belonging to the Matsuda family, had decided to impose as executive vice-president one of their high executives, Mr. Murai. The company had been going through a critical period because of the growing amount of problems that triggered the oil crisis of 1973 and it had no other choice than to accept the takeover by its greatest creditor, that was hand in hand with two other banks: Sumitomo Trust & Banking and the Bank of Hiroshima.

The process of recovery of Mazda reached a breaking point in 1978 when the president, Mr. K. Matsuda resigned to be replaced by Mr. Yamasaki. At that time, with great success, the models 323 had been launched in Europe and the model 626 and RX7 were advancing with relative success as well. The branch in Bogotá received instructions to reactivate the assembly line and sales project; then again we were faced with the skepticism of dealers and the lack of interest from the government. Nevertheless, the effort continued.

Open Market Opportunities

In 1979 I made my first trip to Japan. I attended two seminars and gave a conference at the main office about public procurement and during five weeks I visited an important number of companies. From that trip I have many memories and impressions well embedded, that gave me a better understanding of the country and its culture, and also allowed me to have intellectual experiences of great value. From those, I remember meeting Professor Donald Keene, the great

Japanese expert from Columbia University in New York, whose lectures I had read while at the Colegio de Mexico and his small book about literature published by the Fondo de Cultura Economica.

It was a great surprise not to see any Mazda cars on the streets, or Sony TV sets in the stores. Then I learned of their emphasis on foreign markets and not in the highly competitive local market. Now, in my day-by-day living, since I was already somewhat familiar with the Japanese mentality and the cuisine, I wasn't hit like most other foreigners are, when they come to these faraway lands. The great novelty to me was the communal bathrooms, where not only do you share amiable small talk, but also nudity. I would get used to this gladly, later on when I lived for some years in this land.

Upon my return we managed to agree on the terms of the negotiations with the Urrea family (owner of the Panauto Company) for the distribution of Mazda and the first cars arrived to Bogota in 1980. The restructuring of the Urrea businesses made us change the dealer: De Lima y Cia. They were second at the time. The business would peak in 1982 when the contract between Fiat and Compañía Colombiana Automotriz, CCA, expired. That allowed us to come in contact with them and to join the Colombian market on our own two feet. The negotiations did not take more than six months, but the planning, as you can see, lasted almost a decade. At the same rhythm as the cars, new opportunities were open for other Japanese products. Generators, high voltage transformers, equipment for substations, transmission lines, heavy machinery, construction machinery, stereos, electronic equipment, gas and oil pipelines, began to be recognized for their quality as well as for their accountability and compliance from all the Japanese firms.

But the effort and interest of the Japanese companies not only relied on imports. The export of Colombian products was also a permanent objective. Nonetheless, the conditions of the local market and of the country would work against these wishes. One of the first products that I managed to place successfully abroad was wood from the area of Tumaco and later the moldings from the same origins. Once the business got started, the first problem arose with the cancelation by the Flota Mercante Grancolombiana of their route Tumaco- Saint John (Canada), which was our destination. With the shipments all set, the last minute notice of the cancelation of the route brought upon us huge setbacks. It was necessary to transfer the cargo in Buenaventura, dispatch it to Baltimore and transport it to Toronto by truck. The decision of the government to prohibit the export of raw wood led us to look for another alternative in moldings with little success as we were in no shape to compete in prices and deliveries with other international competitors.

Another frustrated attempt happened with a contract of 20.000 tons of beans that we had agreed on with growers from Valle del Cauca. The sudden government ban on food exports meant significant complications, especially with the farmers that had joined in the venture. After much local dealings, and considering the impossibility of selling the beans in the local market, the growers managed to solve the problem by exporting the product to Venezuela, Central America and Brazil.

Flowers emerged as a new and interesting project. It fell upon us to do the first export of carnations to Japan. The first obstacle we had to overcome was that of transportation. We made contact with Pan Am, Braniff, Boac, Lufthansa, Iberia, Avianca with no positive outcome, always the same negative answer. Finally, Air France opened a possibility to use their pacific route: Bogotá-Lima-Papeete-Tokyo. So, with so many transfers and the inadequate handling on the ground, we managed to reach Japan's market. The demand for imported flowers was not that big but it was growing. The demand for imported flowers was not significant but was increasing. Along with other exporters, carnations managed to cover 25% of the Japanese imports. At that point, a few airlines approached us to offer their services through Los Angeles, New York, Madrid, London and Frankfurt, alternatives that were welcomed. Unfortunately, the opening of the European markets, more lucrative and less hazardous for the exporters, diverted the interest of the flower growers from a more demanding Japanese market.

In those years, you would communicate with Tokyo through telex. In the second half of 1973 we received instructions to travel to Cucuta to meet, in the next three days, with President Carlos Andres Perez's mining adviser. The purpose was to explore the possibilities to exploit the coal mines in Tasajero, which had been identified by Chevron. After clarifying with the engineers all the technicalities we came to the issue of logistics, which was crucial. The problem consisted in how to move the coal from the mine to the port and the only viable solution was Maracaibo. The real issue, which solution was more political than technical, took a back seat until the time that others were able to attain the objective. The lesson learned was interesting and it led us to explore coal mines in Cundinamarca, Antioquia and Valle, and to also look for transportation alternatives that went from building a railroad through the Magdalena Medio to a trans-amazon with the cooperation of Brazil.

A few years later we sought for opportunities to develop the copper sites in the high Atrato, but the exploitation, which was carried out in a very anti-ecological manner, discouraged the Japanese interest. Later on, when I found myself in another city as a commercial representative for Colombia, I would cooperate in the development of that project, which later on would be interrupted, yet again because of public unrest.

In August 1982, at the onset of President Belisario Betancur's administration, he launched the approach of the nation to the Pacific as one of his administration's goals. The construction of the Naval Base of Bahia Malaga and the opening of the Commercial Office of Colombia for Asia, with headquarters in Tokyo resulted from this initiative. At the end of that year, the then director of Proexpo, Jose Vicente Mogollón, offered me the post of Director of that new office. I accepted it at the beginning of January 1983, and as the negotiations regarding Mazda between CCA and Sumitomo came to an end, I quit my current job and moved to Japan.

My Encounter with Japan

My stay in Japan would last until the end of 1990, and has been by far the most intense and vital experience, both at a professional and personal level. It was the period in which I would improve my knowledge of myself and my country. The contrast between what was mine and what was foreign defines in black and white the silhouettes of the differences. The knowledge that I had acquired was more profound and keener to the sensitivities. I remember when just a few months had passed by and both the perfection and the punctuality of the Japanese were already suffocating me. One day, when one of the paper suppliers for our office made a mistake, I was about to throw a party to celebrate the incident.

I have an anecdote about punctuality that perfectly illustrates the differences. One day, as I left the office I noticed a shadow looming by one of the columns inside the office, someone was hiding. As I came back I noticed the same shape and I went forth to investigate and see what it was about. As it was, there was the Director for Latin America of the Foreign Office, whom I had met because he had been living in Bogota as a diplomat. I had also been a political consultant to the Japanese Embassy in Colombia, and he, as the Minister Counselor had been in many conversations with me. As we met I invited him to a cup of coffee which he declined, for he was waiting to attend a meeting with the Latin-American ambassadors in a conference room next to my office, and he didn't want to be late, he wanted to arrive on the dot.

Regarding the future plans I had for my current position in Japan and based on the experience that I had, I defined the following priorities: reactivate the export of flowers and sesame, foster interest in coal, seek for alternatives for the copper project, and explore the market for bauxite and open new spaces for ferronickel.

With the bauxite the results were not positive, for even though the prices were high for aluminum, the costs of energy used in treatment, and the strategic location of the foundries, made the initiative unviable. Regarding ferronickel, we manage to establish a market share in the General Preference System, SGP, which enabled

our product to move in even despite the tariff-related disadvantage that we had versus Dominican Republic. In the case of sesame, we managed to capture the interest and therefore were able to make a few shipments until the offer that came through the Canton Fair, with prices as low as half of ours, which put an end to our efforts in that sense.

Flowers, coal and manufacturing present in Japan

With the flowers, the whole experience was surrounded by all sorts of circumstances. I had the opportunity of meeting Mr. Goto, president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tokyo and whose family owned various businesses including a railway, real estate and a department store with the same name. Interested in contributing with the opening of businesses in countries such as ours, he gave me a contact in one of the biggest stores, Shibuya. We began exchanging information, contacts, references but nothing came of it at the time. Since we were not getting anywhere, I looked into the *honno*, the most intimate side of the business man where the truth lies, out of the rigid barriers established by the official standing in an organization.

Out of the office, in a more relaxed environment, I can say now, 25 years later what he revealed to me: he had been pressured by the local flower suppliers who threatened him with cutting their supplies if he did business directly with us. Therefore, we only had one alternative; to use the public auctions system, where our exporters were also at a disadvantage. One of the practices among many others people used was to leave the imported flowers last and competing with fresh local produce. This translated into lower prices or leftovers.

The effort continued. Missions of flower exporters were taken to Japan to get to know the market's demands, and the buyers, in turn, were invited to Colombia to visit the growers and make direct contact with them. Little by little interest grew and the quality of the Colombian flower was recognized, reaching its peak at the Osaka Fair in 1990. The event lasted 6 months and required more negotiations with Colombians than with the Japanese. The proposal that I put together was to reduce our presence to only the first week in order to take part in the carnation contest, which was our strong point. We found much resistance but finally we got what we wanted and things went our way.

Certainly, the total budget of the Colombian government to participate in international trade shows was of \$ 3 million dollars, and some of the Japanese firms were spending several millions in their stands alone. It was clear that even spending all the available resources this competition was extremely fierce. Finally, we managed to organize our presence in two sessions: one week at the beginning

and one week at the end. The carnation display was recognized and awarded many medals, gold, silver and bronze, and the designs of the Colombian pavilion were awarded the gold medal as well. From that moment on with the enthusiasm of the exporters and the Government, the Colombian participation has been increasing.

Coal was tied to the quotas established by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, (MITI). With the cooperation of future importers, negotiations began to reach a favorable decision from the Agency of Natural Resources and Energy from that Ministry. Local producers and the traditional exporters worked against us. In the meantime, in 1988 a meeting about energy in the Pacific was being held. I managed to get invited by saying that our country belonged to the Pacific area. Against their will, the Japanese finally accepted. In that context, I met the Minister of Energy from Indonesia who enquired after my real interest and at telling him we were interested in new opportunities for our coal he offered to become the mediator and introduced me to the director of the energy Agency. Doctor Subroto, who was not only the director but the general secretary of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting countries – OPEC - as well, introduced me to the director and asked that our aspirations be recognized. The negotiations reached an agreement in the *onsen* (thermal water bath) of a *ryokan* (typical Japanese hotel) and concluded with a quote of a million tons per year. Unfortunately the issues with logistics in transportation and the engagement with western partners came in the way of taking advantage of this opportunity.

With the manufacturing industry we had an enriching experience as well in 1989. We gathered a mission and invited a group of Japanese people. There were nine people in the group, including the major buyers of clothing and producers that had their production facilities outside Japan. We visited the best and biggest factories in Bogotá, Cali, Barranquilla, Medellín and Pereira. We met in Bogotá at the end of the tour to establish the possibilities of immediate and potential deals. Their response was discouraging, and at the same time it taught us a lesson. None of the factories could meet the standards of the Japanese market. In their view, our success in the exports of this area was due to the fact that the market we reached didn't have such high quality standards. They warned us that unless the work force experienced firsthand what excellent standards in manufacturing meant, we would not be able to advance in that area.

This coincided with the experience in the shoe industry. We invited an important factory that produced shoes for Christian Dior and other famous brands in Japan, Hong Kong and Hungary. The conclusion they reached was that a worker needs at least seven years to reach a high level of knowledge in the art of shoe making. The data they collected revealed the reason of the poor quality of the final product in

shoe making. According to their interviews, the average time a Colombian worker stays with a factory before retiring to set up their own shop, is about a year and a half.

Banana, mango and shrimp tie the knot

Three products that were promoted by both importers and exporters, were banana, mango and shrimp. The latter was backed up by Proexpo at that moment, but had little acceptance in the Japanese market because of the black stripes, a characteristic of the species; Colombian shrimp was then punished in prices and relegated to second class restaurants.

Bananas, though, deserve a longer explanation. Banana growers who made part of the delegation that went along with the minister of Foreign Affairs, Augusto Ramirez Ocampo in his visit to Asia back in 1985, settled a deal with China for 20.000 tons and another for 10.000 tons with Japan. Multiple incidents followed this deal. When the cargo ship had left Colombia, the wholesalers announced that they would not receive bananas from that origin. It was necessary to have the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, MITI, intervene to contain this campaign. More problems came up when the retailer followed suit. Once these obstacles were overcome, with the help of MITI and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, new threats surfaced with the ripening houses; just a week before the ship would reach port the dockers decided not to handle the cargo. The short notice forced me to report, with the assistance of the importer, the improper actions of the Philippine banana importers, who supplied over 90% of the market at the time, as they seemed to be the ones behind all these actions. Regardless of responsibilities, one or two days before reaching port, all the problems were resolved.

The mango case was very significant. At the end of 1983, I received a call from the Maekawa Seisakusho firm. They let me know that they were in the refrigerating business; I assumed they would be asking for information about needs of the Colombian market for their products. They were actually looking for ways to increase their sales in Japan and to do that they needed to increase the market demand. Along those same lines, they had already invested in the production of mango in Mexico and they wanted to explore the supply of Colombian fruits for that market. Proexpo sent around 150 kg of a variety of fruit that included *carambolos*, figs, *papayuela*, papaya, *pitaya*, mangos, avocados etc. Their interest was focused on the mangos and a bit in the *pitayas* that were unknown. Quickly they made an order of mangos that was dispatched from the area of Apulo. I went with the importers to receive the cargo at the Narita airport and recorded the satisfaction of the Japanese with pictures. One of the pictures was published both in a local newspaper and in *El Tiempo* in Bogotá. The most important part of all this is that

from then on Colombia stopped being a faraway land for Japan, and the same happened with Japan for the Colombians. This psychological factor that enabled advancing in the opening of the markets of perishable goods that unfortunately had to close down for a decade due to phytosanitary problems.

The repercussion of the arrival of the Colombian mangos to Japan served as foundation to develop the Shogun project, which was promoted from the Ministry of Commerce while I was part of it. The purpose was to identify and create if necessary, a product that could have a multiplying effect in the mind of the importers as well as the exporters on both sides of the deal; a product that would open new roads, new expectations. The unions of producers and exporters were called upon as well as the *sogoshosha* established in Bogotá and Jetro, to contribute with their input. They all opposed to the idea of a unique product. Therefore, proposals matured into lists ranging from ten to one thousand products. When I retired, the list continued to grow, up to a point where interest was lost and the list finally disappeared into the participants' desks.

At this point, I still believe that if we had found one such product that would interest the Japanese market, which possessed these characteristics, the future would lighten up and the "Urdaneta Syndrome" would be overcome. As can be recalled, in 1934, Colombia denounced the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation signed in 1908. The reason given for this action was the imbalance in the transactions between the two countries, Colombia buying too much and Japan too little. Minister Urdaneta, who was then the Minister of Foreign Affairs, wanted Japan to tell us what their markets would be interested in so that we could improve our sales in that direction. That mechanism of giving the other party the responsibility of deciding what we should do is what I call the "Urdaneta Syndrome". Even now and with very few isolated success stories, we tend to blame Japan for our chronic commercial deficit.

Market Myths

Before I finish, I would like to refer to two myths of the market and the Japanese negotiation system, and the lessons that I learned from a notorious Japanese.

The first myth I want to refer to is about the high standards of quality of the Japanese market. After living in Japan for nearly 8 years, I was able to prove that there are tastes and budgets for everything, as anywhere else. It is expected that if you pay \$3,000 dollars for a handbag, you will make sure that even the smallest detail is done to perfection. But if the price is \$30 dollars, there will be more tolerance for defects. But for both handbags there are buyers. Summing up my experience that still holds true, the problem we face with Japan is that the price-

quality relationship of our products is not competitive. They are not that good, nor are they cheap.

The other myth I would like to refer to is the one about the slow speed with which negotiations are done with the Japanese. In 1984 I received a call from our ambassador, Jose Maria Villareal, in which he asked me to attend a dinner with the Japanese Foreign Minister, Shintaro Abe in the Okura house. The dinner's objective was to inform the Latin-American ambassadors of his immediate trip to México and Brazil. During the presentation of his travel itinerary, I thought that a stop in Bogotá, that at that time had a leading role in the group of Contadora, would be very productive for both governments. Towards the end of the dinner, when saying good night, I asked the Minister if he would be willing to include Colombia in his tour. He said he would give it some thought. I understood that as a yes. On my way home I reached the ambassador, who in return got in touch with President Betancur and Foreign Minister Ramirez. The next day, in the morning, the invitation was made officially and it was arranged: the highest ranking member of the Japanese government was to be received in Bogotá. The message I want to convey is that in Japan, as anywhere else, opportunity is crucial.

At a meeting in the Roma Club I had the opportunity to talk to one of the most brilliant Japanese I have ever met: Doctor Saburo Okita, one of the brains behind the creation of the concept of Asia Pacific and its promoter while in office as the Foreign Minister of the government of Prime Minister Ohira. I asked him about the Japanese postwar model and his answer can be put into the following words: with the war over, the international technocrats suggested that Japan should concentrate its efforts in industries that were heavy in hand labor. It was the only thing available, because both factories and infrastructure were in ruins.

Prime Minister Yoshida and his team back then, understood that the competition from regions like Latin America, with labor available and enormous natural resources, which Japan didn't have, would then become their natural competitors. Upon this, they decided against what had been suggested: to develop the industries that were intensive in capital and technology. It was a political decision in which all the help of the technicians would be needed. With time, when I had the chance to talk with leaders from China and Korea, I would find the same traits: the big decisions that change the course of a nation, come from the political vision of its leaders and how they are implemented by the technicians.

Positive Outcome

In the course of a century of Colombo-Japanese relations, with its ups and downs, come and go, failures and successes, the outcome is a positive one.

Both countries have benefited without a doubt. Today, you can drink Colombian Coffee in Tokyo and you can enjoy sushi in Bogotá. The universities have opened their doors to share our experiences; same with the media.

However, and not ignoring the progress made in its real dimension, we cannot ignore the fact that potential possibilities from each side have not been fully explored yet and there is a long way to go in getting to know each other. There is hope in the sense that it clears the way to make decisions that will allow building a better and broader range of actions with improved results in this new century. This is the challenge that current generations of Japanese and Colombians must undertake in a world that is about to be built, the responsibility for which falls into their hands.

Japan and Colombia: “Dainamizumu nai kankei”

RODRIGO LLORENTE

He held the positions of Minister of Treasure and Public Credit, Minister of Development, Representative of the Inter-American Development Bank in Europe (Paris) and was several times member of the Board of Directors of the Bank of the Republic. Throughout his different activities he has been attached to Japan in the commercial and financial fields; in 1993 he was decorated by the Emperor of Japan with the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Sacred Treasure. Currently, he is part of the Board of Directors of the Colombo-Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

A century ago, formal relations between the governments of Japan and Colombia were established. As the title of this article reads, it has been “a dynamic relation” (“*Dainamizumu kankei*”). In the development of these arrangements during the 20's decade of the 20th the first Japanese immigrants came to Colombia, mostly rural families, moved by the economic crisis of the time; in successive waves they settled down in the surrounding areas of Palmira, Valle del Cauca. Attracted by the romantic descriptions of the novel, *Maria* by Jorge Isaacs, that takes place in the farm of El Paraíso, Valle del Cauca, several hundreds of Japanese families came to Colombia, settling a quite homogeneous human group that applied improved agricultural practices for cotton, sesame and tomato crops, that have had global developments in the modernization of crops in this rich western region of the country.

Many of these immigrant families stayed in Colombia and many of them have had economic success and have contributed to the development of this rich region. Florida and Pradera housed most of these farmer immigrants, who through time and success have diversified to other economic activities, especially in the business and finance sectors and the creation of transformation industries such as

“Ceramicas del Valle” a company that operates in Yumbo and produces tableware and other products that use clay and limestone as raw materials.

This first group of Japanese immigrants mixed easily with the people of Valle and some of them, as the son of Mister Tanaka, one of the leaders of the first group of immigrants, became a languages teacher in some schools of Cali and I knew him because he was my English teacher at the Berchmans School. It has been a human group with a great capacity to adapt to the environment and has contributed with effort and honesty to the development of this region.

First credits

As Minister of Treasure I obtained and managed a long term credit for the amount of seventy million dollars from the cooperation agency of the Japanese Government to finance the important project of Salvajina for the irrigation and exploitation of these agricultural lands, which have contributed in a very positive way to the modernization of the agricultural sector of the Valle del Cauca region.

The first credit operation with Japanese banks took place back in 1971. In the IDB governors meeting held in Quito the same year, I met Mister Yoh Kurosawa. He was 1.90 meters tall, had pale skin and an unusual samurai gesture. He was the director of the foreign department of the Industrial Bank of Japan and was interested in making contact with the authorities of the Colombian Government to open the Tokyo financial market, gaining then great importance in the world financial operations.

Personally, I was very impressed with Mr. Kurosawa, because of the experience he displayed in this type of operations and the interest of his bank, the Industrial Bank of Japan, to connect different Latin American sectors to Tokyo's market. He studied the Colombian case very professionally, expressing no preferences different from making a first class banking operation.

Upon my return to Bogota, after the IDB meeting, I met Mr. Kurosawa again requesting appointments to start studying a possible credit operation for the Government of Colombia. In that first visit to the country I connected him with the Bank of the Republic and the main Colombian banking entities as Banco de Bogota and Banco Cafetero. Two months later, by the end of July, 1971, he returned to Colombia after handing in his first report on the credit capacity of the country and in his new visit he made contact with the business groups of Bogota, Medellin, Cali and Barranquilla.

In our preliminary conversations, he thought that the most appropriate thing to do in order to open the Tokyo's market to the country was to study the possibility of a twenty five million dollar-credit, syndicated by his bank and a group of the ten biggest banks of Japan. In the month of October I received a formal message signed by Kurosawa informing me that the ten most important banks of Japan had approved this syndicated loan and was ready to be signed, as soon as the Colombian Government agreed.

At that time, we were in the approval period of the Budget Law and of other economic and financial statutes in Congress; we agreed the loan would be signed in Tokyo in early January, 1972.

Finally, on January 7 we signed it, and the operation represented for Colombia an important opening to the global financial markets; also, with the support of the Industrial Bank of Japan we issued the first bonds in New York to reestablish the loan through the use of this instrument in the first financial market of the world. We issued twenty five million dollars and perfected it fifteen days after the syndicated credit operation for twenty five million dollars with the group of the ten Japanese banks.

Once establishing this relation with the market of Tokyo, we were able to work with official entities of the Japanese financial cooperation to obtain a few months later, the long term credit for seventy million dollars to finance the project of Salvajina.

A financial relationship is consolidated

With the support of the Corporacion Financiera Colombiana (*Colombian Finance Corporation*) credits were granted successively and long term investments were made for the creation and expansion of transformation industries, particularly in the sugar sector; through these mechanisms, sugar mills and biofuels companies were financed, such as the recently created ethanol plants.

For the improvement of the port facilities of Buenaventura, important international loans have been obtained, which have notoriously improved the storage capacity and urban development of the main port of the country on the Pacific. Through the free trade and commercial zones of Cali and Buenaventura several industrial development projects have been financed.

Through substantial credits, several important infrastructure projects have been financed, such as roadways to the Department of Valle, as well as hydroelectric

and thermoelectric projects that are already making use of the coal reservoirs, as well as the electric generation capacity of the region.

Trading companies have been an efficient instrument used by Japanese companies to promote important export and import businesses. Brands as Mitsubishi, Mitsui, Marubeni, Sumitomo and others have connected with Colombia to promote the country's foreign trade activities. They channel the credit resources and also with the contributions of capital made by the great Japanese companies, they have promoted the exports of Colombian products to different markets abroad. The use of these companies has greatly influenced fostering of imports and exports in which the Japanese economy has interest. Thanks to the variety and the skills of these trading companies, the growth of Japan's foreign trade in the world has developed notoriously. Trading companies move huge amounts of resources of their social capital, as well as credit resources from the financial entities.

The Japanese banking network is one of the strongest and most diversified in the world. At certain times in our recent history, Japanese banks have been at the top ranking for the volume of resources committed on funding Colombia's foreign trade and to cover the investment needs of the public and private sectors of the country.

In recent years, Japanese banks have held a prominent place in Colombian funding. For example, the Mizuho Bank, number one in Japan for credit volume, was also number one in Colombian external funding during the second decade of the 90s. This was the result of a merger between three giants (the Industrial Bank of Japan, the Fuji Bank and the Dai-ichi-Kangio Bank), thus creating the Mizuho Bank. Nowadays, Colombia's long term funding by Japanese banks are at the first place among the international banks committed with the external funding of the country. The agility and variety of these credits have given Japan a position of great importance and influence in Colombia.

Through financial corporations, some of these banks have joined directly in Colombian projects by means of their capital resources. Such was the case with Mizuho Bank, which took active part in the recent merger of the Corporacion Financiera Colombiana and the Corporacion Financiera del Valle.

The capital market of Tokyo is the most important in the world after New York's. However, there have been years in which the participation of Japanese banks has been in first place due to the magnitude of the resources engaged. Having reestablished bond issues in the market of Tokyo for the Government of Colombia and in favor of some of the official entities of the country has been of great

importance, especially when issues were reestablished in 1971, after being interrupted by the international financial crisis of the thirties. This is the reason why the bond issue for the Government was very important, reestablished first by the Industrial Bank of Japan when Mister Kurosawa was its president, who died sometime after being decorated three times by the Colombian Government for being a great promoter of the relations between the two countries.

The Mizuho Bank has had great influence in the country's long term funding, and in the last visit of President Alvaro Uribe Velez to Japan, the Bank made arrangements to grant important funding by issuing bonds of the Government of Colombia for an amount of two hundred million dollars and a seven year-term, thanks to the intervention of the bank, now presided by Mister Hiroshi Saito.

I was honored in 1993 with the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Sacred Treasure, decoration granted to me by His Majesty, the Emperor of Japan.

(Photograph: Gilma Suárez)

The president of the Mitsubishi Company, Mr. Kojima, has been leading the positioning of Colombia in Tokyo. This was the first Japanese company to have commercial operations with Colombia, mainly with coffee that followed the exchange model.

Commercial relations are consolidated

Currently, Colombian exports to Japan have grown. Besides coffee, flowers and tropical fruits are also sold, among which the *pitaya* has been important despite the many problems that emerged with the African fly.

In 1988, a group of one hundred and fifty businesspeople from the two countries created the Colombo-Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which has strengthened the commercial, social and economic relations between the two nations. The President of the Board of the Chamber is Jaime Roa and the executive director is Juan Carlos Mondragon.

In recent years, periodical meetings have been held between businesspeople of the two countries, sponsored by the Keindanrem, a kind of "super Andi" (National Business Association of Colombia) in Japan. Two meetings have been held between businesspeople of the two countries with the attendance of important

leaders of different companies. Jetro, the Japanese governmental entity has promoted effectively these meetings, fostering contacts between businesspeople.

The Japanese Government also relies on Jica, the technical assistance company of the country to promote contacts that enable visits of Japanese experts to support official entities and Colombian private companies.

Bilateral trade between the two countries has traditionally shown deficit for Colombia. In 2007, Colombia imported goods from Japan for an approximate value of 1 billion 230.8 million dollars, out of which almost half represented car parts and accessories for automobile assembly and 404 million dollars in machinery and equipment.

Colombian exports to Japan in 2007 reached 395 million dollars, most of them being coffee, ferronickel and flowers. In December 2007, Japan had an investment stock in Colombia of 165.7 million dollars, mostly in motor vehicle assembly companies of Japanese origin and in trading companies.

It is evident that commercial and financial relations with Japan have diversified greatly and there are mechanisms being used to make them more versatile and effective.

THE ORIGINS OF MY INTEREST IN JAPAN

MIGUEL URRUTIA

His interest in Japan has its origins in his academic activity, always connected to economic development aspects. In 1976, when he was the Director of the National Planning Department, he traveled to Japan for the first time to participate in a seminar on Japanese economy. He was Secretary General of the Ministry of Treasury between 1967 and 1969, and Minister of Mines and Energy in 1977; vice rector of development studies in the United Nations University in Tokyo; manager of the Economics and Social Department of the Inter American of Development Bank, and General Manager of the Bank of the Republic. Currently, he is a professor at the School of Economics of Universidad de los Andes, Bogota.

The origin of my interest in Japan goes back to 1959, when I took a course in economic development given by John Keneth Galbraith and David Bell at Harvard University. After a class in which the latter commented on the experience of development, I approached him to ask for references on the subject; professor Bell gave me a mimeographed article by Henry Rosovsky about to be published on the role of agriculture in the modern economic development of Japan (Rosovsky and Ohkawa, 1960). I got interested in the subject and decided to write my graduation paper comparing the role of agriculture in the development of Japan, Mexico and the Soviet Union. (Urrutia1961).

My growing interest in Japan led me to take the course given by Howard Hibbet, an international authority in Japanese literature. It was a delightful introduction to the culture of the country.

Back in Bogota after my graduation, my friend Julio Gomez, who was a teacher of a course on economic development at Universidad de los Andes invited me to give a class on Japanese development which seemed to have been interesting for him and his students.

That was how my relation with the School of Economics of Universidad de los Andes started and still continues after forty five years.

After this experience, I taught different history and economics courses, and in 1962, I became a tenured professor. I offered a course on comparative development, using Simon Kuznets' work on comparative economy and the experiences of periphery countries, with an emphasis on Japanese economy between 1868 and 1939.

In 1963 I was granted a scholarship from the Rockefeller Foundation for my doctorate studies, as part of the support program for the development of the School of Economics of the Universidad de los Andes. I had been working on the first unemployment surveys in Colombia, and wanted to study labor economics.

When I analyzed the programs offered by solid universities in this discipline I found out that the University of California in Berkeley had a strong school in labor and union studies, and also that Henry Rosovsky was a member of the School of Economics and was giving courses on economic history of Japan. This moved me to choose this University for my graduate studies. In Berkeley I took economic history courses with Henry Rosovsky, David Landes and Carlo Cipolla. I read articles and books about Japan's economic history and the development of unions, and my dissertation was a combination of labor economics and economic history published under the title of *Historia del sindicalismo en Colombia* (History of Unionism in Colombia).

With Gustav Ranis, director of the Economic Growth Center at Yale we discussed in several international conferences the surprising growth of the economies of eastern Asia and Japan, and the lessons of this phenomenon for Latin America. Perhaps, due to his reputation and being the director of the National Planning Department in 1976, I received an invitation to participate in a seminar held by him and Kazuchi Ohkawa, where a group of Japanese and western economists presented the results of an ambitious project they had created to research about the economic history of Japan. The papers analyzed, in quantitative terms, the history of the main sectors of economy and their role in the modernization of Japan. Eighteen papers were presented in the seminar, ending with final comments by Simon Kuznets¹.

¹ Work was published later in Kazuchi Ohkawa and Gustav Ranis editions (1985), *Japan and the Developing Countries*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.

I always mention one of his quotes in class: “We need to remember that economic development is also destructive”. He made reference to the fact that modernization improves general income and welfare, but it also destroys traditional jobs and ways of living. Kuznets, winner of the Nobel Prize, was responsible for essential innovations in the discipline, created the national accounts and was a humanist and an educated wise man.

This was my first trip to Japan and my first contact with researchers from that country. Elsa, my wife, and I were deeply impressed with the Japanese culture, but we thought it was unlikely for us to return. I remember we were staying at the Palace Hotel in a room with a view of the Imperial Palace gardens.

Many years later, as General Manager of the Bank of the Republic, I decided it would be important for Colombia to have a history of this kind, and I created a research group in the Bank to produce an account of the quantitative history of the 20th century.

Later, with Salomon Kalmanovitz and Adolfo Meisel, we planned some seminars about economic history of centuries 19 and 20 and these efforts have resulted in the following books:

1. Greco. (2002). *El crecimiento económico colombiano en el siglo xx*. Bogotá (*The Colombian economic growth in the 20th century*). Bogota: Bank of the Republic, Fondo Cultural Cafetero.
2. Robinson, J. and Urrutia, M. (2007). *Economía Colombiana del siglo XX: un análisis cuantitativo* (*Colombian economy of the 20th century: a quantitative analysis*). Bogota: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
3. Meisel, A. and Ramirez, M. T. (In print). *Historia económica del siglo XIX* (*Economic history of the 19th century*). Bogota: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

During that time, I remembered how Japanese development was obtained by increasing productivity of small peasants; this fact moved me to support with passion the DRI -*Comprehensive Rural Development Project*, one of the priorities of the Development Plan of President Alfonso Lopez Michelsen.

The Japanese adventure begins

After a period as Minister of Mines and Energy, my economist colleagues put me forward as a candidate for director of Fedesarrollo, a research center in Bogota. One afternoon I received a phone call from the rector of the United Nations University in Tokyo, who offered me the Vice-president's Office of Development.

Then he told me that he had asked for a Latin American candidate for the position of president of the Ford Foundation, David Bell; that same person had made me take interest in Japanese development and had guided me to the subject of my graduation paper. It had been the same person to suggest my name. My surprise with the call was enormous, and I told Elsa about it as a rare and fun anecdote, but she said to me that I had already been a long time studying and insisting on the subject of Japan, and suggested that we should go. I had an interview with Sodjamoco, the New York's rector –an Indonesian thinker and politician– and in 1981 the whole family began the Japanese adventure.

I used to think that I knew something about Japan, but in the four years we were there, every day we had a surprising experience. When we travelled back to Colombia, I knew less about the Japanese culture than when I arrived.

Being there I began writing a column for *El Tiempo* the most important Colombian journal, and it was very successful. The readers were curious about the East, and on the suggestion of Hernando Santos, I made short columns. Shortness was an attraction for readers, since columnists of the time used to write lengthy articles.

We travelled a lot around Japan and we were eager with the art of engraving, the traditional Ukiyo-e as well as modern engraving. We also visited ceramics exhibitions and the towns where traditional kilns from the different ceramics schools are located. The other passion we had were gardens. The whole family travelled to Kyoto in the different seasons to see the gardens dressed in different colors.

Our children benefitted from the cultural contrast and the high quality of Japanese education in Japan, even at international schools since they had to compete with the quality of the national education system. They also enjoyed the great freedom of living in a city with great personal security.

One of my irresponsible actions, caused by these experiences, was to take charge of the curation of an exhibition of Japanese engravings from private collections in the Luis Angel Arango library in September in 2001. The sample called *Ukiyo-e and the legacy of Japanese engraving*, had quite an audience, mostly due to the

elegance of the museology of Luis Fernando Ramirez, the museologist of the Bank of the Republic.

An interesting result of the exhibition was that the Bank acquired and received in donation some of the engravings for its permanent collection, and today Japanese art is present in the museum of the Bank of the Republic.

Lessons of Japan for Colombia

My interest in Japan rose from the conviction that the economic development of the eastern country from 1870 that led the nation to close the gap with England and the United States –the most industrialized countries in the middle of the 19th century has lessons for Colombia.

One lesson is that the leaders of the Meiji transformation in the 19th century had the goal of adopting technology and improved production practices of the West by protecting the Japanese culture. They were not ashamed to copy what was useful from the Western culture, in technology as well as in the institutions. They sent missions to study the organization of the French navy; they copied codes of commerce, German medicine and the industrial technology. But they adapted them to the practices of a very rich traditional culture. The lesson is to choose carefully what to copy and adapt it to local cultural traditions.

Before 1868, the ratio of literate population was relatively high, but the economic modernization was accompanied by a great progress in the education coverage the good reputation of teachers. Nowadays, Japanese primary and secondary education has one of the world's best coverage and quality, and very soon imperial universities were created as centers of excellence.

But the usefulness of this educational effort was profitable in economic terms because the public and private sectors always showed appreciation for higher education at the recruitment processes, and this contributed to the technological capacity of companies and the effectiveness of the state administrative sector.

Another interesting phenomenon is the flexibility of the economy. The national production gradually changed in structural terms according to the changes in the internal and the international demand. For example, after the Second World War, the coal production sector was one of the greatest employers. The low prices of oil during the postwar period caused the closure of costly mines and the workforce was transferred to the most competitive industrial companies in international terms.

Perhaps the only traditional sector that was subsidized, partly because of its importance in the cultural tradition, was agriculture. But the subsidies did not benefit the rich because of the radical postwar agrarian reform.

This is another interesting phenomenon of the Japanese experience. The rapid economic growth of the last half of the 20th century was accompanied by an improvement in income distribution making it more equitable if compared with a country as the United States. The agrarian reform has had a role on this, but also the tradition of companies to reinvest their profits instead of sharing them out and the cultural rejection for conspicuous consumption.

One thesis, which I am sure will not be generally accepted, is that despite the Japanese patronage-inflicted political system, the country has grown with equity. Maybe patronage systems do not create insurmountable barriers for growth, but perhaps what minimizes its vices is the existence of public officials recruited by academic merit and with a tradition of honesty.

But one of the things that I learned in Japan is to not make generalizations about this country. I may end this article by transcribing one of my few columns *El Tiempo* published during the time I lived in Japan.

Poetry and the photographic industry

(August 1983)

You never see a Japanese tourist in Bangkok, Bruges or Bogota without a camera. In Japan, if you invite a family to your home, the wife arrives with presents (in plural), and the husband with a camera to take away a souvenir. Even in work meetings someone takes a picture. This immense demand for souvenirs caused the domestic Japanese market to become the largest in the world for photographic devices, and nowadays, Japanese producers control the world market.

Why the huge demand for cameras in Japan? Probably for the Japanese aesthetics is centered on capturing the instant.

Beauty, sadness and happiness are transient, and art sometimes captures the moment.

Japanese Haiku poetry is photographic. Two examples:

Autumn arrives:

The sea and the fields have

The same green (Matsuo Basho)

A fallen flower?
Returning to the branch?
It was a butterfly! (Arakida Moritake).

The Difference between the development of Japan and Colombia (1985)

The United Nations University has organized the series of conferences “*The great social transformations of the 20th century*”. Experts from China, Japan, Mexico and the Soviet Union have analyzed the revolutionary processes in these countries within a comparative framework. Recently, the second conference of the project was held in Mexico and I presented a comparison between the processes of industrialization and economic development of Japan and Colombia.

For the case of Japan I chose the period between 1885 and 1940, and for Colombia I chose the years 1925 to 1980. That means that I compare the first fifty five years of industrialization in the two countries.

The comparison brought several unexpected results. The national production *per capita* grew similarly in the two countries. The national production per inhabitant was multiplied by three in Japan, and by 3.3 in Colombia in those fifty five years. The agricultural work force moved from 70 percent in both countries to 45 percent in Japan and 31 percent in Colombia in the periods studied and in both countries, most of the industrial labor worked in small companies, 60 percent in Japan in 1909 and in Colombia in 1945.

Social welfare indicators also have a similar evolution. Child mortality decreases, life expectancy increases, and the less favored social classes obtain access to public utilities. At the beginning of industrialization, income distribution in Japan was probably better than Colombia’s in the same period of time, but towards 1935 the distribution had worsened, and probably was similar to Colombia in 1951 or in 1976.

The great difference between Japan and Colombia is evident in the field of education. While in Japan illiteracy was eliminated in the first thirty years of economic development, in Colombia thousands of children still do not have access to complete primary education. In Japan most of the population receives education, and universities were created with researchers capable of developing own technologies. In Colombia, after fifty five years of industrialization, it still has not been possible to offer primary education to all the children, universities have not

been able to generate their own ability for technological innovation and have a weak research tradition.

The educational backwardness in Colombia can make it difficult for the country to keep the development rates it achieved in the past, since once overcoming the first fifty five years of industrialization economic growth begins to rely more on the ability of its people to generate a technological change, permanent increase in productivity and efficiency in its workforce.

The Meiji restoration: a little-known revolution (1984)

The French Revolution has influenced the history of many nations. The Russian October Revolution changed the course of the history of the 20th century and also influenced deeply the theory and the practice of politics in the world. The Meiji Restoration of 1868 that transformed Japan, today the third economic world power, had little intellectual influence in the rest of the world, and the history of that transformation is internationally unknown.

However, in a sense, the Meiji restoration transformed life and the institutions of the Japanese people more deeply than the French Revolution changed the life of the average citizen. The same as in France, the Meiji transformation abolished feudal institutions, delivered the land to the peasants and eliminated the legal privileges of nobility. Besides, the changing process that began in 1868 transformed the daily life of the average Japanese.

The universities that existed before 1868 were devoted to teach Confucius and Buddhist masters. New universities instead, focused on teaching languages to enable in students learning western philosophy and science. Hairdressers' salons were opened, and the imperial family and the samurai abandoned their hairstyles, their way of dressing and even their diet (they began to eat meat and bread). The country's arts, literature and music were different in 1890 compared to what they were in 1868.

Some of the Revolution slogans reveal the magnitude of the transformation that the leaders of the Meiji government were searching for. Fukuzawa, the founder of the Keio University, today the most prestigious private university of the country and an intellectual leader of the time, proposed to "abandon Asia, and look towards the West". Other slogans were "eastern morality, western technology", and "Japanese spirit and western knowledge". Ideologist Nakae Chomin even proposed "the creation of a European Island-State in the East". Finally, the youngsters of 1868

declared: “For us, there is no history. Our history begins today”. In summary, the Meiji leaders proposed the deepest Cultural Revolution in history.

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The 1908 Treaty between Colombia and Japan and the immigration*

INÉS SANMIGUEL

She has been living in Tokyo since 1976, where she is a professor at Teikyo University. During her long academic and research career, she has been connected with several institutions in Colombia, Japan, Mexico, the United States and England. She is the author of several articles and books, among which stands out for its uniqueness: Japan's Quest for El Dorado: Emigration to Colombia. She has been a visiting professor at several universities: the Andes and the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Colombia; Durham, in England; Chuo, Aoyama Gakuin University, Kanagawa in Japan.

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Since the beginning of the XVII century until mid XIX, for nearly two hundred and fifty years, Japan adopted a policy of voluntary isolation; it was not total isolation, since it had commercial bonds with Holland, China and Korea. There were also attempts to approach Japan with ships devoted to whale hunting and Russian, English and North American commercial and military ships. On some occasions, they wanted to reach Japan with the excuse of disembarking Japanese castaways rescued in the journey. There were adventurers and merchants who after leaving Japan and shipwrecking, could not return by the strict law set by the Shogun military Government that forbade leaving the country, and going back would have meant death penalty.

Something that ship commanders intended by taking castaways back was to gain the right to trade, and also, to ensure a basis for loading supplies. As an answer to their request, the Shogunate issued laws expelling foreign ships and in 1825, they completely banned their entrance. Nevertheless, upon notice of the Opium War taking place in China, the Government realized it was impossible to enforce the policy of isolation. In 1842, it gave up the ban on the entrance to foreign ships returning Japanese castaways and authorizing them to load fuel, water and supplies.

Japan's reopening to the outside world took place in 1853 upon the arrival of the ship squad commanded by Commodore Perry and the pressure of opening the country to commercial exchange. Since then, Japan started diplomatic and commercial relations by signing treaties with the most important powers of the world: United States, England, Holland, France and Russia.

Peru was the first Latin American country to have diplomatic relations with that country. The reason for this stemmed from a problem with the ship "Maria Luz"². The ship carried Chinese workers from Macao to Peru and was set off course by a storm, forcing them to tie up in the port of Yokohama to get water supplies and fix the damages caused by the bad weather. While repairing the ship, one of the Chinese escaped and reported the abuses that he and his mates were victims to.

An investigation was conducted and evidence was found about the abuse and the slavery conditions under which people were transported. The captain of the ship, the Peruvian Ricardo Herrera (or Herreiro) and the Colombian Nicolas Tanco Armero were called to respond; the latter was in charge of the recruitment of Chinese manual workers, and was represented by the captain due to his absence. In the documents used for the trial in Kanagawa, his name appears as *Mr. Armero de Macao, Spanish subject*³.

During the arbitration of the case, which was taken to court and lasted six weeks, the incident was handled from a humanitarian approach. Japan could be seen as a defender of human rights, and therefore, Japan received the support of England and the appreciation of other countries that had diplomatic and commercial relations with it. At the end of the process, the workers could choose to continue with the journey or return to their destination. All of them chose the latter. This event, in which workers were transported under conditions of slavery, alerted Japan regarding the migration of its workers to foreign countries. Throughout the period of migration to foreign countries, and until it was officially terminated in 1984, the Government always insisted on not allowing any unfair treatment to its citizens.

The Signing of the Treaties

² For a detailed description of the incident of *María Luz*, see Gardiner (1975: 2-19), Stewart (1970: 152-8 and 11-12), Yanaguida and Rodriguez del Alisal (1992: 60-1 and 171-2), Andrade Lleras (1995: 8) and Sanmiguel (2005: 83-4).

³ Banco Armero was born in Bogotá. His family was from Cuba; in the time that the island belonged to Spain, probably he enjoyed dual nationality.

During the second half of the 19th century, Japan had an infrastructure of maritime transport in the Pacific; it had developed its industry to trade with some Asian and European countries and the United States, and was seeking to expand into Latin America. Besides its need for raw materials for its growing industry, Latin America offered the opportunity for capital investment and trade, being a potential place for future migrants. Therefore, it was important to open relations by means of friendship, commerce and navigation treaties. However, once these agreements were initiated, both, people and goods traveled in a single direction: from Japan to Latin America and not in the opposite direction. Comparative data of Japanese exports are normally calculated in millions of yen, in contrast with imports, which are in thousands of yen.

Mexico was the first country with which Japan signed a treaty of equality and reciprocity. They needed work force and were interested in bringing workers from Asia (Ota Mishima, 1985: 35; Yanaguida and Rodriguez del Alisal, 1992: 72-73).

They began to show their interest in getting closer to Japan when they requested Japan's participation at the Mexican International Exhibition held in 1880. During 1888 they signed the treaty in Washington, with which Japan established the foundation that would be used as pressure on its desired reform to unequal treaties.

This country, well-aware of the disadvantages of signing unequal treaties, could finally obtain a revision of the treaties signed with western countries and get treaties of equality. But when Japan signed treaties with countries that represented less commercial interest, the treaty was not established under conditions of equality and reciprocity.

Japan was the party taking the initiative to start diplomatic and trade relations with Colombia. The first document found regarding this issue, is a communication of the Japanese Minister in Washington addressed to the foreign affairs representative of Colombia, dated February 10, 1898, which mentions that they are waiting to ratify a treaty with Argentina, and therefore forwarded a copy, which would be the model for a possible agreement. There is a note appended to this document that says that the Colombian Government gave no explanation, but was not interested⁴.

A decade passed by before they ever spoke of the matter again. The old draft of the treaty with Argentina was used as a model, and an agreement was reached

⁴ Archive of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, *Tokyo*, Japan.

between the two parties in May 1908 and ratified in December of that same year. The document specified free trade between the two countries, reflecting the possibility of Japanese migration. Japan had an interest of establishing relations with those countries that could ensure a place for exports, and for its immigrants. Economic prosperity and the end of internal conflicts in 1868 at Meiji's administration had led to an increase of the population, which presented the need to find places for people who wanted to migrate.

Diplomatic and Commercial relations

Several years went by after the signing of the treaty and before the two countries initiated formal relationships, or after Japanese ships in their path to South America docked at Colombian ports to leave or collect people or goods. It was only until 1919, when Colombia established its first consulate in Yokohama, while Japan waited until 1934 to open the Japanese delegation in Bogotá. The most complete and accurate written data corresponding to the first session of relations between Colombia and Japan are from the time Carlos Cuervo Borda served as general consul in Japan, from 1927 to 1935. It was then when the Japanese agricultural migration started arriving to the southern regions of Colombia, and when a greater trade between the two countries took place (Sanmiguel, 2002: 85).

Through Japanese and foreign trading houses, the country exported to Colombia articles such as cotton, silk, porcelain, pottery, glass and wood; toys, buttons, insecticides, paper towels, mats and straw slippers; brushes, camphor and menthol. In contrast, exports of Colombia towards that country were minimal. Cuervo Borda, in one of his reports sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated September 26, 1928, showed that during the first nine months of that year, exports to Colombia surpassed \$800,000 dollars, "while Japan had not purchased a single penny". Cuervo Borda elucidates the cause of this situation:

And in the case that we had something that they would like to buy, it would be impossible, because in this country they have the most rigorous protectionist system, and every foreign article is taxed with a 100 to 300 percent on its real value.

The consul was concerned about the situation of inequality in trade between Colombia with Japan. In the mentioned communication, he suggested that Colombia should review the treaty signed in 1908, stating the preferential treatment in favor of Japan, appearing as the most benefited nation, which prevented a balanced fair trade between the two nations⁵.

⁵ National Archive of Colombia, Foreign Affairs, Bogotá.

Six years after Cuervo Borda's forecast, on October 30th, 1934, Colombia resigned to the treaty. Japan received the news with surprise. A statement of the Colombian secretary in Japan sent to Bogotá mentions that the Japanese Foreign Minister was shocked, and he considered this an unfriendly attitude from Colombia. Recently Japan had expressed the desire to hold a satisfactory trade arrangement for both parties and for such purpose it had sent the Shudo Mission⁶.

This trade mission, known by the name of the mission leader, had visited Colombia with the intention of taking measures to adjust the disproportion of the trade. As can be seen in documents that had been kept in files, they thought about the possibility of establishing Japanese agencies in Colombia to buy coffee, leather and other items to export to other countries and Colombia would consider these purchases as made by Japan for the purpose of adjusting the trade balance. Coffee was mentioned as a possible import product under the warning that "Consumption will increase slightly and very slowly". Cuervo Borda had tried to interest Japan in purchasing coffee and had distributed samples sent by the president of the Coffee Growers Federation, Mariano Ospina Perez. Finally, no agreement was reached. The conclusion of this and of other trade missions that visited Latin American countries disagreeing with the trade imbalance with Japan was always the same: it was very difficult to meet individual demands of the different countries because they were seen as an area, with the disadvantage that they offered the same products and Japan could not change quotas or commitments already established.

The amount of Japan's exports to Colombia was not that high, but the commercial deficit was obvious, due to the fact that what Colombia sent to this eastern country was very little in comparison to what it received. After the six months that Article 12 of the treaty provided for the case in which one of the parties could terminate the contract, Colombia proposed the establishment of a *modus vivendi* during six months, starting May 1935 while a new treaty was being set. The license for Japanese products was fixed at a maximum annual amount up to \$1,372,856 Colombian pesos. This figure was deducted by annual average of Japanese exports between 1928 and 1934.⁷

⁶See J. Carreño Mallarino statement, Secretary of the Legation in Tokyo, to Foreign Affairs, dated November 8 1934, Archive of the Embassy of Colombia in Tokyo.

⁷ Modus Vivendi: an agreement that allows the parties in conflict to coexist pacifically for an indefinite period of time or until reaching a new agreement. *The English Oxford Dictionary*. See the communication of the minister of Foreign Affairs to the Legation of Tokyo, April 1, 1935. Archive of the Embassy of Colombia in Tokyo.

Time passed without reaching any settlement. Trade between the two countries continued with comparatively higher figures for Colombia exports to Japan, although lower for imports from Japan and lower than the ones mentioned during the *modus vivendi* period, peculiarly, always with a deficit favorable to Japan⁸. On the other hand, immigrants traveling to the agricultural colony of Cauca, departing in 1935, had some difficulty in obtaining a visa due to the lack of a treaty between the two countries, a situation that was restored in their favor with a message sent from Colombia to the consulate of Tokyo.⁹

After the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 relations were interrupted. They were reestablished again in 1954 and have continued to date without the need of another treaty to replace the one of 1908.

Immigration

The first mention of Japanese workers in Colombia appeared in the newspaper *El Mercurio* in 1905. In this newspaper article, the writer suggests that once the relationship between the two nations started, Japan was expected to become interested in the opening of an inter-oceanic channel through the *Atrato* and *Nipipi* rivers, in the settlement of Japanese immigrant colonies in the Pacific and the establishment of direct routes of sea trade towards the Colombian ports (Salamanca, 1905:2). It is likely that an approach between Japan and Colombia with the purpose of opening a channel would not be endorsed by the United States after Panama's separation in 1903.

The second proposal to bring Japanese workers to Colombia came from Antonio Izquierdo, who visited Japan and other Asian countries on a journey of commercial and observation nature.

When he returned to his country, he informed the government that he had signed contracts in Japan for future immigrants who would come to work in agriculture and in railway construction.

They are only waiting to sign the trade treaty between Colombia and Japan to send commissioners to study Colombia and see if they could foster migration, added Izquierdo in his report (Izquierdo 1910:73).

Certainly the introduction of Japanese labor represented an important point in the negotiation of the agreements. The signature of the treaty and the visit of

⁸ Statistical Data can be seen at Sanmiguel (2002:87 and 182)

⁹ From the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Consul. July 26, 1935. Archive of the Embassy of Colombia in Tokyo.

Izquierdo to Japan occurred during the administration of general Rafael Reyes, who apart from appreciating Japan and its people, as he showed in several of his writings (Reyes, 1920), was considering the possibility of opening a large trade area in the Pacific basin from the Patagonia to Colombia and Panama, which eventually would extend towards Asian countries, including Japan. His dream and ambitions were far ahead of his time.

There were plans in 1925 to transfer to the Atlantic coast around 25.000 Japanese who lived in the United States. From the documents that were found in the files, it could be seen that a project like this one alerted the North American government. A large Japanese settlement might constitute a threat for the security of the canal, particularly in times of war.

Reading the existing documents about Japanese immigration projects to Colombia, one can infer that the interests of the United States, particularly those regarding the protection and security of the Panama Canal had priority over programs that would bring social investment prosperity to Colombia. It is true that Colombia did not attract immigrants because of political instability and the continuous civil wars after the independence from Spain; the sheer size of the country, which was scarcely populated and poorly communicated; the ownership of the land in the hands of few privileged families; the lack of a diversified agriculture with the predominance of coffee crops and a legislation that only in paper was favoring international migration. The interference of the United States in the internal matters of Colombia cannot be discarded either. After the 1903 incident, Colombia not only lost control over the isthmus and the eventual benefit resulting from the construction of a transoceanic channel, but its political independence was also violated in favor of the security of the Canal (Sanmiguel, 2002: 33-37 and 44-48).

Despite the fact that the number of immigrants was minimum in comparison to other countries like Brazil and Peru, the notoriously positive result of the treaty between Colombia and Japan one hundred years ago, is the successful migration of Japanese citizens to Colombia (San Miguel 2002: 91-133). Immigrants were successfully engaged in growing beans, sugar cane and flowers. They introduced technology to the Valle del Cauca region and since then, have contributed significantly to the development of the southwest of the country. Likewise, those who independently migrated to the Atlantic Coast, to Bogota and other regions have contributed with their work, responsibility and discipline to the development of Colombia.

Currently, the descendants of those emigrants are working in Japan, who together with many other descendants of Japanese people in Latin America have travelled

to the country of their ancestors looking for a life for them and their families, contributing in this way to the improvement of social and economic life of Japan. This has been the long term result of the human investment made in the past by Japan to Colombia and other places where the Japanese immigration took place.

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New horizons have opened in the Economic bilateral relationship

Juan Carlos Mondragón

His connection with Japan started in the academic field, when he travelled to that country to participate in a Master's Degree Program in International Relations at the International University of Japan. Between 1990 and 1994 he worked at the Colombian Embassy in Tokyo as commercial attaché. There he worked as first secretary of Economic and Financial Affairs and also he was a member of the coordination team of Commercial and Economic Strategy of Colombia for Asia and the Pacific. His proximity to Japan is mainly in the economic and commercial field. Currently he is the Executive Director of the *Colombo Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry* and he is an advisor of the Trade, Industry and Tourism Minister.

One hundred and fifty years ago Japan opened to the world and started a significant effort to reach the levels of development of the western powers. The Meiji government took office in 1868, which immediately led the country through the pathway of fast industrialization, always trying to increase productivity levels through the virtuous combination of educated and industrious workforce and the intensive use of technology in its productivity.

Later on, by the end of the Second World War and through the implementation of an economic model oriented towards exports, Japan reached sustained periods of high growth rates which led it to become the second economy of the world, after the United States, by the eighties,.

In 1985, as a result of the agreement signed at the Plaza Hotel in New York, the Yen's value increased dramatically and the result was that Japan became a great creditor and global investor establishing world production networks in the automobile and electronic sectors.

One hundred years of formal relations

The diplomatic relations between Colombia and Japan formalized on May 25, 1908 by the signing of the Friendship, Commerce and Navigation Treaty. That event, of great importance for the bilateral relations between the two countries, was signed in Washington "in the hopes of establishing long-lasting and firm trade and friendship relations". Colombia and Japan, two worlds so distant culturally, have

been working since then to consolidate mutual understanding that will allow them to strengthen the economic, political, and cultural and cooperation bonds.

During the decades which followed the signing of the treaty, the relations between the two countries evolved slowly, due to the geographic and cultural distance of a young relation, framed in times of global turmoil.

After the decade of the seventies when a change of era reshaped humanity, i.e. globalization, the economic relations between the two countries started to consolidate. Today, Japan is one of our main world partners and a great ally in the Asia-Pacific region, currently the most dynamic of the world. It was in those years when the diplomatic missions of the two countries strengthened, when Japanese companies were established in Colombia and when the business and academic exchange started. Knowledge transmission also took place at the same time through adventurers like *Maestro* Gonzalo Ariza and young entrepreneurs like the former Ministry of Finance, Rodrigo Llorente, who visited Japan and came back to tell everyone about the wonderful world of a nation that was flourishing amidst its millenary and sophisticated culture, to become a world power.

In the decade of the eighties and nineties, various visits of Colombian presidents to Japan took place and of Japanese dignitaries to Colombia. The Colombo Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry *and the Comité Empresarial Colombia – Japon* (Colombo Japanese Parliamentary league and the Colombia Japan Business Committee) were fostered by the Association of Japanese Entrepreneurs - Keidanren. Since then, relations have been improving considerably in terms of trade, investment and cooperation, amidst of a mutual effort to obtain an increasing cultural knowledge.

Commercial Relations

Even though the political relations with Japan started at the beginning of the 20th century, commercial relations with that country really started at the end of the fifties with the establishment of the Flota Mercante Grancolombiana and in the sixties, with the arrival of The National Federation of Coffee Growers to Tokyo, where coffee sales had a considerable increase and by the mid- nineties. Japan became our second market in the world for that product and its derivatives - around 65 percent of our exports to that country, rate that is kept up to date –. Other Colombian products traditionally part of our export basket towards that country are ferronickel, flowers and seafood.

By Japan, exports to Colombia have been of value added products and with an important technological component as is the case of automotive industry goods, machinery and equipment and metallurgic goods. The large Japanese trading companies have been the leading commercial vehicle on the Japanese side.

The trade balance has been historically in deficit, but given the enormous dimension of the economy and the Japanese market, a great effort from our part is required to increase the Colombian exportable offer towards that lucrative market.

Investment in Colombia

Despite the focus given to the Japanese Foreign Direct Investment FDI towards the world to favor its industrial transformation process, Colombia did not become a priority target for the Japanese investors. Only until the nineties, the flows of Japanese FDIs started to increase concentrating in the car industry. For 1997, the accumulated of foreign investment excluding oil, was of 60 percent for car assembly, amongst which the Mazda and Sumitomo projects stand out. Later on Mitsubishi Motors, Isuzo and Suzuki joined the project and the participation of Nisho Iwai, NEC Mitsui, Sumitomo, Fujitsu and Itochu in the electric and telephony sectors¹⁰.

Between 1994 and 2007 the Japanese investment *stock* in Colombia reached 165 million dollars, occupying place 23 amongst the countries with highest investment in the country. In 2007, the Japanese FDI represents the 0.2 per cent, that is equivalent to 9,2 million dollars from a total of 3.771 million dollars received by Colombia (without taking into account the investment in oil or profit reinvestment) occupying place 22, according to the figures reported by the Bank of the Republic.¹¹

At a sectorial level, between 2003 and 2007, the Japanese FDI was directed to the car industry following the same trend, with a 67,6 participation of the total positive flows, corresponding to the investment of Hino Motors a truck assembly company and to the investment of Mitsubishi in expansion projects for 86,000 million dollars. The expansion of Ricoh, a company specialized in office and desk electronics, was also considered. In 2007 Japan invested 39 million dollars in Colombia, mainly in the transportation equipment sector according to the Ministry of Finance of that country.¹²

¹⁰ Cárdenas P. Colombian Ambassador to Japan, 2008.

¹¹ Proexport. "Sectores de Interés para Colombia en Atracción de Inversión Japonesa", June 2008

¹² Proexport. "Sectores de Interés para Colombia en Atracción de

Japanese FDI in Colombia is still mainly for the automobile and the metal mechanic industry as follows:

Mazda Motor Corporation to Compañía Colombiana Automotriz, CCA (car sector)

Yamaha Motor Co., Ltda. to Incolmotos Yamaha S. A. (car sector and other transportation means)

Mitsubishi Corporation to Mitsubishi Colombia Ltda. (machinery and equipment)

Suzuki Motor Corporation to Suzuki Motor de Colombia S. A. (car and other transportation means)

Matsushita Electric to Panasonic de Colombia S. A. Industrial Co. (machinery and equipment)

JFE - Steel Corporation, to Hojalata y Laminados S. A.

Metal One (Holasa and metal mechanic) Ricoh Corporation to Ricoh Colombia S. A. (Machinery and equipment)¹³

The FDI has also been an instrument of great importance for the transference of Japanese technology. Japanese investment in Latin America and the Caribbean and specifically in Colombia, has been proportionally very low and quite focused on the transport sector. Colombia has given priority to attracting Japanese investment, above all to sectors identified as world class, as basic tool for technological transference. To that purpose, there are plans to negotiate in the near future a promotion and investment protection agreement as well as an agreement to avoid double taxation.

Inversión Japonesa", June 2008

¹³ Ibid.

A promising future

On occasion of the commemoration of the first centennial of the diplomatic, friendship and cooperation relations between Colombia and Japan in 2008, a group of dignitaries was constituted with representatives of the highest levels of the public, private and academic sectors of the two countries. The Colombian group was chaired by Gabriel Silva, president of the National Federation of Coffee Growers and of the Nippon Keidanren-Colombia, and the Japanese group by Yorihiro Kojima, president & CEO of the Mitsubishi Corporation and the Nippon Keidanren-Japan.

The objective of the group was to analyze the evolution and current situation of the bilateral relations and the factors that are limiting it; examine the real possibilities to strengthen the relations, particularly in the economic, commercial and investment areas and to study the convenience of endowing the relations with new instruments that will allow to project them with more strength and dynamism towards the future.

The *Grupo de Notables* carried out a series of activities throughout 2008 which allowed them to achieve the proposed objective. Amongst the activities, the accomplishment of a company survey in each country to identify the obstacles and bilateral trade restrictions and of the direct foreign investments is worth mentioning, together with the accomplishment of various academic studies to analyze the current conditions of the relations and the expansion opportunities, to suggest some suitable instruments that will allow to strengthen the relation.

Amongst the instruments that were mentioned on the discussion table are the DAT -Double Taxation Agreement-, the BIT -Bilateral Investment Treaty-, the FTA -Free Trade Agreement- and the EPA – Economic Partnership Agreement- with which a stronger, enriched and diverse relation may be consolidated with a clearer and concrete framework for the bilateral cooperation. Based on the results of the group, negotiations were initiated for a promotion and BIT bilateral investment treaty, at the beginning of 2009. This decision was made after the meetings between President Alvaro Uribe Vélez and the Japanese Chancellor Hirofumi Nakasone, during his visit to Colombia in November 2008 and with the Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso, during a meeting in Lima on that same month.

The initiation of the negotiations regarding a DTA is expected soon as well as the economic association. These economic cooperation instruments will open new horizons in the bilateral economic future, meaning a promising future for the relations of the two nations.

Living in Japan

LUIS GUILLERMO PLATA

He started his professional career in the Commercial Section of the Colombian Embassy in Japan, as Second Secretary. At the age of twenty five he was the director of the Proexport Office in Tokyo. During two consecutive years he was one of the world leaders in the Economic World Forum in Davos (Switzerland). He has broad experience in the business and foreign relations fields.

After WWII, Japan emerged as one of the nations that in a short term would become a world power. This, and the fact that they arose from the ashes left by the fire, motivated me to delve into this culture and try to discover what made the Japanese so successful.

At the end of the eighties, Japan was in its economic boom, and thinking about the opportunities that this could bring me in the future, I decided to study the Japanese language.

After two years of study, I considered that the best option to continue learning was to live in Japan. Through a college friend I found a place to live in with a Japanese family, located in the outskirts of Tokyo. With a place to stay at least during the summer and one thousand five hundred dollar in my pocket, plus a round-trip air ticket in case things did not go well, I left for Japan.

Far from being a wealthy student I had to work to survive and also to accomplish the dream of learning Japanese. I arrived at the house of a family where the father was an unusual Japanese, because he was not employed by a large company, but the owner of a company, specialized in products for heavy steel structures. His wife, an excellent woman, apart from helping in the family company, was also a housewife. She was a person who made me feel at home; she was worried about me and made me feel like a son. I specially remember the nights that we shared as a family, where she strived to prepare different typical dishes and we used to make a toast with beer, sake, whisky or even cognac.

With her I spent many afternoons at the supermarket after my Japanese classes, moments that I used to practice the language. Nevertheless, this generated an inconvenience that I had to sort out: I learned the language as spoken by the

women, which is very different from that spoken by men, but after a while the problem was solved.

This is how, in the midst of this pleasant family, I learned the rudiments of the Japanese culture and the first words in a language that uses around ten thousand characters.

With this family I also learned how to cook some exquisite typical dishes, very different from the traditional sushi that we all know.

I started to feel that learning the language with a peasant family was not enough and that I should find a way to be able to pay for my studies of the Japanese language. In this process I discovered that in the same way in which people from the west were interested in eastern languages, they wanted to learn English, and it was in that way that I started to work as an English teacher, with a Colombian passport and competing with Canadians, Americans, British and Australians all English speakers, who like me, were eager to find a job.

The day came when I knocked on the doors of the Colombian Embassy in Japan, looking for a more stable work opportunity. After the only job offer as a “volunteer”, some months later I was appointed second secretary. After a year at the Embassy, when I was twenty five years old, I was given the opportunity to manage the Proexport Office in Tokyo. I started to work in trade issues and to look for new trade and investment opportunities between the two countries, which still today, as Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism continues to be my obsession.

I stayed in Japan for three years, which gave me with a good knowledge of the language, learning that in Japanese the words “crisis” and “opportunity” are written with the same linguistic characters, and I realized that the emphasis on details that reveals the Japanese nature was the key to survival for a country that was virtually destroyed by the war and became a world power in less than thirty years.

Japan also opened my vision of the world. It taught me that in order to succeed, we must look beyond the immediate; and that companies can and must evolve. My years in that fascinating country changed my way of understanding and seeing things.

Definitely, I fell in love with Japan slowly and forever.

A Glance from the University to Colombo-Japanese Academic Exchange

Father Gustavo Andrade J.P.

He joined the Society of Jesus in 1946 and in November 1955 he offered to work as a volunteer in Japan, country where he lived from 1956 until 2001. He studied theology in the University of Sofia in Tokyo and in 1962 he was ordained as a priest. In 2001 he was honored as professor emeritus of University of Sofia after forty five years of service in Japan, year when he returned to Colombia. Currently he works at the graduate programs of the School of Political Science and International Affairs at the *Pontificia Universidad Javeriana*.

I arrived to Yokohama on February 29, 1956. After two years of studying Japanese in the place where in the past the Japanese submarines base was located, I was sent to teach at the Inter-diocesan Seminar in Tokyo, which at that time belonged to the Jesuit University of Sofia, funded by express desire of the Holy Father Pius the X in year 1913.

From its creation, the University has been an international entity. The first Jesuits who joined it were: the German priest Joseph Dahl man, who had a deep knowledge about the cultures of India and China; Father Henri Boucher who had been a teacher for a long time in China and father James Rockliff from England who had worked for many years in the United States. The first rector was father Hermann Hofman, a German philosopher. To this list we have to add the first Japanese Jesuit after the persecutions of the 17th century, Father Paulo Tsushiashi, mathematician and astronomer who died in 1965, at the age of 95.

I am mentioning all these details because I find them important to emphasize on the international identity as the beginning of the Colombo Japanese Exchange.

Latin-American Studies in Japan

The Institute of Spanish American Studies of the University of Sofia was opened on April 1, 1964. I was its director from April 1968 to 1995. As an important event during those years, on December 3, 1989 president Virgilio Barco decorated me with the Cross of Cultural Merit. When I reached the age limit, I became a researcher at the institute until 2001 and when I turned 70 I was appointed Professor *Emeritus* of the University.

Before describing more accurately my work at the Institute and the Colombian and Japanese connected to the Institute, it is important to talk about the library and the close relationship with Colombia, being this one the most important Latin-American library in Japan and perhaps worldwide, except for some North American universities. It has over 36.600 volumes of which 32.816 are texts in foreign languages. Also, it has 819 magazine titles (742 in foreign languages) and 116 books donated. Affiliated users are more than 1.260.

As curious data, the library of *Institute of Spanish American Studies*, with an economic aid of the Ministry of Education of Japan and the University of Sofia, in equal parts, were able to obtain Jaime Posada's collection of the *America* magazine and the collection of Colombian literature published by Daniel Samper Ortega. Similarly, five hundred volumes of Colombian history from Guillermo Baraya, a book collector from Bogotá were obtained. Not to forget, twelve books that belonged to General Francisco de Paula Santander including the *Masonic Catechism* and the new laws of New Granada from the Convention of Cucuta of 1821 and the "*Genealogies of New Granada*" written by Ocariz.

At the library not only faculty and students of University of Sofia may develop their research, since it is open to the public in general. Amongst the regular scholars, professor Tsunekawa, who carried out his research about the Cuban revolution of Fidel Castro. Until recently he was a professor of Latin-American politics at the State University of Tokyo. Currently he works for an Institute of the Matsushita Foundation.

I can also name professor Futamura, from the State University of Nagoya, amongst the personalities that I guided during his studies about Latin America and who is at the moment one of the ten experts in Colombia in Japan, whose counterpart exists in Colombia. Professor Futamura is also President of the Association of Studies about Latin America in Japan. He is a specialist in Colombian politics.

Mathematics professor Yu Takeuchi, pensioner from *Universidad Nacional of Colombia* was awarded the Military Order of the Cross of San Carlos by the former chancellor Fernando Araujo may be added to the list of academics together with professor Noriko Hataka who studied at University of Sofia, obtained a master's degree at the State University of Tsukuba and had recently obtain her doctorate degree in a British university being her specialty, the Social Policy of Bogotá. She has published several books, one of them with *Universidad Externado de Colombia*, a co-authorship with professors of that academic center and with Luis Mauricio Cuervo, who was at that time connected to *Universidad de los Andes* and

is now living in Santiago de Chile where he works with the *Cepal* (Economic Commission for Latin America).

In this field of academic exchange between Japan and Colombia it is important to mention the two seminars that have taken place. The first one took place in March 1986 at the *Ibero- American Institute* and its core subject was Japanese investments in Latin America; this event was sponsored by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The seminar was attended by various personalities, amongst them, Carlos Sanz de Santa Maria one of the ten wise men of the OAS. For Japan, the president of the multinational Mitsubishi and Okita Saburo, who upon returning from the Manchuria railroad devised along with other specialists the ways for postwar reconstruction. Father Robert Ballon J.P., expert in administration and Japanese business was also invited.

For the five hundred years of the Discovery of America, a seminar was organized with the participation of various lecturers, amongst them Carlos Castañeda, secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Mexican Government; Enrique Iglesias, director of the Museum of the City of Havana and Jaime Bernal Villegas from Universidad Javeriana of Colombia, who carried out a genetic research about our native indigenous people, the afro descendants and Spanish descendants. He is currently the director of the Genetics Institute of *Universidad Javeriana*.

Upon my return to Colombia in 2001, a television conference took place with the participation of Father Francisco José de Roux from Colombia and Linda Grove of University of Sofia for Japan and also a guest professor from the University of Illinois.

Colombians at the University of Sofia

Among the Colombians who studied at the University of Sofia, Manuel Londoño Capurro, from Cali, is worth mentioning. He studied his career at the English section of the University between 1970 and 1974 and Luis Amadeo Hernández, who studied a doctorate.

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that this academic exchange has involved entities that have made it possible, such as the Colombian Alumni Association of Japan, made by alumni who have obtained fellowships from the Japanese Ministry of Education, of the Japanese Foundation or from the JICA – Japanese International Cooperation Association. The scholars go for one year or for a shorter period to carry out research.

Another important entity in this academic exchange between the two nations has been the Asia and Latin America Research Institute of the University of Sofia. Professor Pío García in charge of the Asian Section at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, carried out his research there and is nowadays a professor at *Universidad Externado de Colombia*.

A Colombian professor that has to be mentioned is the anthropologist, Inés Sanmiguel Camargo; her thesis is about the Japanese immigration to Colombia and the opposite movement in the 70's: Colombian migration to Japan.

The first Colombian Jesuit in Japan was Fabio Villegas, who studied Japanese for two years, then education and theology at the University of Sofia. After his was ordination in Bogotá, he worked in Honduras for a while and he retired from the Society of Jesus to settle down in Medellín.

After I left the university, Father Javier Osuna Gil J.P. who is now living in Bogotá was posted to Japan; and Jaime Barrera Parra, professor of Japanese culture and Japanese language at *Universidad de los Andes*, who retired from the Society of Jesus when he was professor of psychology at *Pontificia Universidad Javeriana*. The third one was Father Luis Javier Palacio J.P., who is currently the Archivist of the Province of the Jesuits, in Colombia. The three people mentioned, studied Theology and the University of Sofia. As interesting information and regarding the relations that we have been talking about, in 1994 he organized a survey in order to learn the opinion of Latin Americans about Japan. This survey was conducted by a professor of economics at the University of Sofia, former member of the Institute of Statistics of the Japanese Government. With the help of the Ministry of Education of Japan, which donated 50 percent of the funds and the rest was donated by the University, various Jesuit Universities in Latin American were chosen. The result of the survey was presented at the Felix Restrepo conference room of Universidad Javeriana. Several researchers of that University including Rafael Campo participated as researchers.

Finally, I have to say that the bonds between the University of Sofia and our country have continued to strengthen. In fact, one of the most significant events in 2008, the year of our centennial celebrations, the Vice-president of the Republic, Francisco Santos visited the University during his visit to Japan. In that opportunity he met with the directors and gave a conference about Colombia, with an important participation of students, academics and experts in American studies of Tokyo.

Prisma Network

Friendship Networks

CAROLINA BLANCO-ZABLONSKA

Prisma Network Director

Japan

The Promotion and Registration of Research Network and the Members of the Academic Community in Japan PRISMA-Japan, was born from an initiative for the strengthening of the relations of Colombians abroad, led by the Colombian government and in our particular case, by members connected to academic circles, through different programs of study offered in Japan. Also, it promotes Japan and Colombia, as academic destinations of mutual interest in specific areas of knowledge.

As of September 2006, PRISMA Network has been structuring an independent virtual community using the advantages of Internet; it tries to facilitate the exchange of cultural, academic and general interest information for all its members in a decentralized, fast and non-profit way. Besides, it responds to specific concerns from students and young researchers interested in finding out the possibilities of studying in Japan or research centers.

Due to the importance of the celebration of the first centennial of bilateral relations – after the subscription of the Friendship, Commerce and Navigation Treaty between the two nations – it was in one of the virtual meetings, when various cities separated by hundreds of kilometers were connected, that one of the students who live in Sendai suggested the idea of preparing a publication, where the members of PRISMA could make their contributions beyond our network. This idea evolved and later on, with the support of the Colombian Embassy in Japan, it was decided that an open call should be made to invite the Colombian and Japanese communities to write their impressions, memoirs and stories about both countries, framed within the hundred years of friendship and bilateral relations.

At the closing of the call, many photographs, poems, essays, stories, interviews and specially testimonials of people who have had the opportunity of comparing their own culture in an experience that for many of them changed the course of their lives were included.

The selection was not easy, but finally they chose the seven pieces with highest scores, according to the jury chaired by the Ambassador of Colombia to Japan, Patricia Cárdenas and Maria Claudia Parias, the then director of Cultural Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, and professors Shigeru Kochi of

Aoyama Gakuin and Fumi Noya of the University of Tokyo, who had to assess work presented in Japanese. I had the opportunity to participate in the evaluation of the Spanish works as the general coordinator for authors and I carried out the coordination work for the first chapter, where the thematic authors participated.

This part of the book is the result of the call mentioned before and it presents the winner text of mechanical engineer José Luis Vanegas Nova who lives in Bucaramanga; the second place was given to journalist Claudia Lucía González, who lives in Bogotá, and the third place for the text written by electronic engineer Julian Villegas who lives in Aizuwakamatsu. It also includes the works selected by the jury for publication and honorable mention for authors John Quintero, Iván Enrique Poveda, Wada Kideki and Mayumi Takahashi.

Kirei desu ne

José Luis Vanegas Nova
Mechanical Engineer
Bucaramanga, Santander

When I was a child I wondered what the color of the sky was, the shape of the clouds, the smell of the wind and the smile of those who were at the other end of the sea; it was also difficult to understand how, at the same time, while sunset was taking place here, there, at the other end, dawn was occurring. In those years while I was looking at the sky during sunset, I could see in the clouds, in the highest ones, the reflection of sunlight; those brief instants of light made me travel to the most distant place I could imagine.

Once, when I was an adolescent, while I was standing on the beach of the Gorgona Island and when the fog and the haze were thin, I could see the high seas of the Pacific, open and plain, and when I looked westward over those warm waters, I wanted to imagine that if the vast ocean was shallow I would be able to reach the horizon by walking. Fortunately it can be easier and possible for sea turtles, some sharks, dolphins and the guest whales of this archipelago. If we have enough time and one day we can decipher the language of these beloved cetaceans, reptiles and fishes, they will tell us about the adventure that we are missing. Back then, I thanked Pacha Mama for this legacy in the Pacific and continued to enjoy the splendid view and dreaming about reaching the “far East” in Japan from the “far West” in Colombia.

Fifteen years later, when I was enjoying my favorite food, *tempura shrimp*, in Takahagi, Japan, I looked at the Pacific Ocean and remembered my dream and my childhood and the questions of my adolescence. Not only was I able to perceive the color of the sky, the shape of the clouds, the smell of the wind and the smile of people, but I also could experience that the east and the west are not far away from each other. That we are connected by cooperation and friendship bonds and by an immense sea that becomes smaller thanks to Leonardo Da Vinci’s dream. But most of all, I discovered with perplexity that our phonics, the sound of the vowels and consonants, is similar, much more similar than Spanish to any other romance language.

I found one of those friendship and cooperation bonds at JICA – Japanese International Cooperation Agency-, which through a Technical Cooperation Agreement signed between the governments of Colombia and Japan, has implemented since 1980 the official assistance for development. In order to attain two of its four core goals, JICA has as its objective the transference of technologies and knowledge that can be used for the economic and social development and growth of developing countries.¹⁴

As they have done it with many other Colombians, during the fiscal year of the new century I was invited as a scholar to participate in a training program in Practical Production Management (Theory and Practice for the improvement of Productivity) at the city of Kitakyushu, Fukuoka Prefecture. We were eight participants from all over the world: Kenya, Egypt, Bhutan Thailand, Philippines, Tunisia and Colombia.

In this four-month immersion program the word *Kaizen* attracted my attention. This word comes from two Japanese ideograms: “*Kai*” which means “change” and “*Zen*” which means “to improve”.

So we can say that “*Kaizen*” is “change to improve” or “continuous improvement”, as it is commonly known. But *Kaizen* is ever so natural in Japanese life, as it is dancing Salsa for a Colombian. *Kaizen* is part of each instant of their lives, not only at the office or at the company but in life itself. Sitting at my desk during the first day of class, in front of my *sensei*, Mr. Horikawa san, I hosted a new dream: to transfer this way of life to my family, friends and to my colleagues in Colombia.

Kaizen is finding the cause or the root of a problem and take corrective actions and countermeasures to avoid recurrence. The summit of *Kaizen* or the ultimate achievement is to establish “error proof” actions, known as “*Poka Yoke*”. Although the practical applications of the “*Poka Yoke*” are used in manufacturing processes, we also see them present in management processes or in daily life.

We learned how important time is. In Colombia we underestimate it. I lived a very curious experience the first time I took a *Shinkansen* or bullet train. While I was on the platform I got distracted with another classmate who was taking pictures. It was unbelievable, but the train departed at 8:47 a.m., not before or after of what was announced. I will never forget the name of the train that left without me, *Nozomi*, which in Spanish means “hope”.

¹⁴ JICA. *Annual Report Colombia 2006*. Bogotá, Colombia.

Horikawa san told us in his conferences and leisure moments, that when he was a child he saw a rain of bombs falling from heaven and that it was a miracle that he did not fall in Hiroshima. I learned from him two important things in particular when you have people under your responsibility: “Check it yourself” and “you are always responsible”. I really appreciated his volunteer work of transferring his knowledge and experiences to us. Perhaps this selfless will comes from *terakoya*. Even though *terakoya* in its literal sense means “school temples” and was originated during the Edo period, it can be understood as “education for all”.

Back to Colombia

With a good amount of experiences, anecdotes and purposes, I returned to Colombia to put into practice the plan of action, my new dream. An excellent plan of action specially designed for the gutsy Colombians.

By then I took advantage of the annual invitation of a car company in Colombia that invites its suppliers to participate in the *Kaizen* Annual Convention of Suppliers to show its achievements in the continuous improvement processes.

I organized a group of participants and the group chose the name Nozomi, “hope”. Focused on the factors of fast delivery and productivity we used the *Kaizen* methodology we found a considerable waste of time in activities that did not add any value to one of its production lines. Supported on the point of view of the Seven Great Losses, such as unnecessary movements, transportation, re-work, waiting times and over production, the group achieved a 25 percent reduction in the time of the cycle. In the annual convention carried out this year, Nozomi was awarded the second place amongst thirty seven suppliers. I could not attend the awards ceremony because that day I was not feeling well, but I felt very happy for having completed the assigned task.

Time passed and one day I realized that I was an adult, someone who no longer dreamed or asked questions as openly as a child. I did not have time to think much either. Dreams became numbers to follow. Suddenly my concerns became cycle times and percentages.

My professional development had a positive change when I had the opportunity to return to Japan, but this time not as a student but as a lecturer. I was invited by the JICA to share with new participants my experiences on how to introduce *Kaizen* to the work place and to life in general. Transmitting these experiences taught me more than I ever imagined. That day, at the end of the conference, I felt

much more tired than with the trip itself, but my heart was bursting with joy and pride. Moreover, I felt very proud about that invitation. When I told my friends in Colombia that I had been invited to give a lecture about productivity, they asked me: ¿To give a lecture about productivity in Japan, the country of productivity?

For Colombians travelling to Japan without an American visa, we are forced to visit the many locations on the Pacific: Mexico, Canada or New Zealand and Chile. How fortunate I am for not having an American visa, I thought then.

The group that I gave the lecture to was from South America, all from the Southern Cone. While giving the conference I realized there is nothing wrong in making mistakes over and over again, but it is much better to make less and less mistakes every time. I also learned that nowadays, companies do not have many difficulties solving technical problems; the emphasis has to be made on human aspects such as trust, motivation and respect. We must practice more group work and get rid of “*urgentivitis*”. If we dedicate our time to what is important we will have time to enjoy things like nature.

Autumn in Japan marvels nature lovers. It is the time for colors and nuances contemplation. It knocks softly at everyone’s home door and travels from north to south; it is known as the fall front. I was fascinated by a tree with fan shape leaves that kept losing them to the floor forming a yellow carpet like sunsets in Colombia. With joy I leaned over to collect some of them and take them home. While I was collecting the best leaves I heard the voice of a sweet lady, who with the help of her cane told me gently as she kept walking, “*Kirei desu ne*”. “Beautiful, Isn’t it? Just like life”. In that moment language barriers and dispersed cultural legacies ceased to exist and we both understood each other.

The Japanese Trip to Valle Del Cauca

Claudia Lucia González Osorio
Journalist

The Japanese immigration to Colombia is a story of agricultures but also a legend of love. They were men and women who came from Japan ruined by the civil war of the twenties and attracted from the distance by the Colombian landscapes that surrounded *La María* by Jorge Isaacs. Translated by Yuzo Takeshima the novel was revealed before his torn eyes in the *New Youth* magazine of the University of Tokyo, where it was serialized; and as the best grower the professor sowed in the readers the seed of adventure. Almost unintentionally, he became the manager of the three immigrations of Japanese peasants that arrived to *Valle del Cauca* between 1929 and 1935.

His destiny has marked in the country and he was commissioned by the *Compañía de Fomento de Ultramar* (Ultramar Promotion Company), to look for lands apt for crops. Two years later, he found them in Corinto, Cauca. The future of the Japanese colony that he was in charge of founding started to take shape on a land that was divided into two hundred lots (6.400 m² each) at the township of El Jagual. A large extension that was divided as follows: one hundred and fifty lots for ten families and the rest was purchased by Takeshima to establish his own farm. This man who initiated the main productive force of the agricultural sector of the Valle region came with 25 peasants from Kyushu who sailed from Yokohana equipped with hoes and plows leaving Mount Fuji behind. Five families traveled during forty three days in the Rakuyo Maru vessel. The trip was not easy. During the first week they all experienced dizziness produced by the coming and going of the waves. Nevertheless when they passed Hawaii, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Mexico they were received by their fellowmen with festivities and loads of fruit. After having enjoyed a farewell party offered by the captain of the vessel on November 15, 1929 the day before the arrival to Buenaventura, they were ready to discover their new homeland.

The ship anchored outside the bay and after the sanitary inspection, they left the vessel in small canoes in groups of four. They did not stay very long at the port and they travelled by train to Cali and in bus towards Corinto and walked to the El Jagual colony, wondering if in that country where they saw black people for the first time was going to host them. After two more days traveling through the Valle, its

green color encouraged them and gave them strength to face the hard days of work that were expecting them. They took the risk to search for new opportunities and there was no turning back. They had sold everything and employments were scarce in Japan.

None remain of those who opened the way and prepared the land for two more migrations. Besides, there are very few who can tell first-hand, the story of the second immigration in 1930. About the third one, the one that arrived five years later in the Heiyo Maru vessel, men and women who came when they were children, are still living, and three years ago they celebrated their unforgettable experience.

More than half a century of tradition

On November 30, 2005 those Japanese located at Valle del Cauca celebrated seventy five years of tradition and work in the country side. Then, they threw a party which was no longer a farewell after a sea voyage but of memories and gratitude. They remembered with pride the times when the rice crops introduced by the pioneers failed and those fields became beans, corn, cotton, coffee, cacao, bananas and papaya plantations in the hand of the new group of immigrants. They don't forget the diseases, their houses full of mud in rainy nights and how scarce food was. They know that it was not easy and they have in mind, the great effort that this work meant to them which did not even give them time to learn a new language.

But after living during the first months crowded in a barrack hut with its wall covered with a bamboo mat and of having worked in rented lots, they were rewarded with the possibility of purchasing their own land. They progressed and the interest to have their children study more than the primary school, with which they came from Japan, scattered them around Palmira and Cali. Each family went to look for their own destiny and even though for many years they have not shared the same farm they live and work in the same land.

Photo:

The twenty three surviving Japanese of the last two immigrations celebrated for their life in Colombia.

Photo: César K-rillo.

The senior members of their community became the best reason to celebrate. With cups full of sake and seventy five years after the marvelous literary translation of Takeshima, they toasted for them, for the country that hosted them and the one where three generations of Colombians, with western names and eastern surnames have burned. Baptized and converted to Catholicism, some to enable legal procedures, others out of conviction. Grown with sushi and *sancocho valluno* (traditional soup from el Valle), with karaoke and *tiples*.

There is a beautiful display of these families. Three years ago Bertha Kaneko Tanaka also raised her cup and offered a toast and she did it in her language, because as many others who arrived with her from Japan, she never learned to speak Spanish. She said: “*Kampai*” and the images for which Lilia, Armando, Ofelia Gladis, Nelly Mariano and Julio, her seven Colombian children were so proud come to her memory. “For many years my parents could only think about farming. There was no money for any type of luxury – remembers Lilia, the eldest daughter – my mom made clothes for us with the fabric of her own skirts”.

Photo: Four generations met around Bertha Kaneko Tanaka in Cali, Colombia. Photo: César K-rillo.

The four generations of Tanaka sitting at their living room in the house built by their Grandparents thirty years ago, talked about their traditions. Even though there are no photos of the days when they arrived because “we were very poor and we did not have a camera”, their memories are always present. With an oriental accent, the matriarch described slowly and with short sentences her experience. When she could not find the words in Spanish that she never had the time to learn, she continued in Japanese. Anyway her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren understand it. She was fifteen when we disembarked in Colombia. “They send us to the scrubland in Corinth, Cauca and I cried every night because I had to work like a man” remembered Miss Bertha; but love also knocked at my door and I married Julio Yutaka Tanaka and the two immigrants from the third exodus worked side by side in rented lands. Only until the beginning of the fifties without the need of papers and with a verbal agreement, they purchased their first land in Rozo, Palmira Township. They will no longer have to work for others; it was the beginning of a future for their children.

The Tanaka family was divided into those who dared to cross the ocean and those who remained in Japan

Photo: César K-rillo.

Look at the flaring village.

Our second homeland; the land where we have grown our crops.

Time passes and people change.

The ideal remain in our hearts.

Looking at the moon and the stars, we exploit that land.

Let us praise the name of our land, where we have grown our crops.

Cauca, Cauca, Cauca, Cauca, Cauca.

While she talked, she realized that years had not passed in vain and consequently she had to use the memory of her eldest daughter. Lilia continued the story. She remembered her childhood at El Jagual without shoes; and later on when she was at the boarding school where everyone spoke Spanish and they told her the “story of Bochica, a mythological figure that she did not understand”. She preferred to talk about the present; about the crops and about tradition at the side of her brothers, in the land that they inherited upon his father’s death in 1969, “we continued to grow sorghum, soybeans, corn seed and sugar cane”, says the dentist, while at the same time, she recognized the importance of her parents work.

But tradition did not only stay in the country side. The new generations still greet each other in Japanese and make a bow “this influences in the respect toward the elders”, said Javier Minoru Shinchi, one of the sixteen grandchildren of the Tanaka family. “Family union is kept around the language”. He has always been convinced that the karaoke, the games and nursery rhymes, eating with chopsticks, drinking tea, taking a gift when you make a visit in sign of gratitude and cook Japanese dishes for the elder “which are those with greater nostalgia” are the best ways to remember and keep the customs alive.

A legacy that is difficult to be inherited by the new generations. Her cousin Irika Yabe says, that the children of the children of the Japanese immigrants, and even their great grandchildren, are only interested in their culture because of the world boom. “The problem is that they do not go deep into it, it is not enough to learn sushi or Ikebana. The best way to communicate with the elder is with the

language, but it is very difficult to encourage them to learn Japanese”, as difficult as it is for them to learn the song that their ancestors composed to El Jagual:

Look at the flaring village.

Our second homeland, the land where we have grown our crops.

Time passes and people change.

The ideal remain in our hearts.

Looking at the moon and the stars, we exploit that land.

Let us praise the name of our land, where we have grown our crops.

Cauca, Cauca, Cauca, Cauca, Cauca.

Visit to the sorghum plantation, at the Guanabanal township, Armando and Mariano Tanake remembered the story that their parents commenced in 1935 at the side of her sister Lilia and their nephews Jorge and Samuel.
Photo: César K-rillo.

Our small world and its mysterious ways

Julián Villegas

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My first impression was that the city was very cold. Tired, after more than thirty five hours traveling, I went to the first hotel I found when I left the station. I left my things on the floor, and wet as I was, I slept the first night.

My name is Travis – he told me. I was confused with the situation and could not understand why a person whose aspect was that of a goody gringo introduced himself while he was pointing at his nose with the right index and spoke to me in Spanish in a university that was surrounded by rice plantation in the middle of Japan. I am still sleeping, was what I thought.

Trying to sort things out but undecided I asked, “Where are you from and why are you speaking to me in my language?” Once he organized the words in his mind he answered “I am from Corpus Christ, Texas and I learned Spanish in Cali – Colombia a long time ago.”

To my surprise he added that he had gone to “learn how to learn”. I went to a course taught by a person lacking feet and arms who was a master in that art. In the very first class he taught me how to say: “My name is Travis and I want to learn Spanish. Would you like to help me?”

Travis continued with his story: - My professor also told me “this is all I am going to teach you. From now on you will visit all the bakery shops, the houses of your neighbors repeating these same words and when you have a group of friends who are willing to help you, you will visit them on a daily basis and for the rest of your stay you will learn Spanish from them”. I did that for several months, and I also learned to dance salsa, cry out goals during the *America* football games, eat *pandebono* (Colombian cheese bread) with Coca Cola and drink *Lulo* (Quito Orange) juice. I lived in the San Fernando neighborhood.

After a short silence following his explanation, Travis asked me: “Where do you come from?”

“I am from Cali and I lived in the San Fernando neighborhood...Do you happen to have a glass of water?”

I could not imagine this before I left Colombia. I knew that going to Japan without a scholarship was almost insane.

I was physically and mentally prepared; I kept telling myself every day that I had to fall upwards and always take the positive. I had doubled the hours dedicated to jogging and reduced my meals to half: that was because I was going to one of the most expensive countries of this planet, with a few savings in pesos, battered because of the exchange rate of the moment. I never could have imagined this, because the fear and anguish of the decision that I was making were so stunning they occupied my entire mind.

Travis was a counselor at the same university where I am now studying. After a short exchange of biographies and views of newcomers, we said goodbye with a promise to talk again, he learned about my economic difficulties and told me that he could help me with something.

Thanks to him, the week after we met I was washing dishes at the university kitchen. I worked at lunch and dinner time during two-hour shifts and the rest of the time I studied. The economic assistance that I received as research assistant was not enough. With that I only covered rent and services. Thanks to this new income, I was able to save a bit to get ready for the winter, call home and treat myself with things that would make days kinder. From my perspective, things were improving.

Being so busy during the first months was good. Time was passing at its own pace and one day I got the suspicion that finally, it was going to snow. To see the snow was one of the reasons that motivated me to leave Colombia. I decided to change my way to the “U” and pass by downtown. It is there where I recognize the faces of friends in the faces of strangers. With each slight breeze I felt that I was going to lose the fingers of my hands; it never happened before during the morning, but this was a polar cold. At each corner I discovered that certainty was not leaving place for doubt. I struggled with the wind for blocks on end and without realizing I found myself in the middle of the campus square surprised to feel that that certainty was not new. It was the same familiar certainty that will haunt me until the day I die. Suddenly, small white dots started falling.

First Encounter with snow

The first snowfall was the preamble of many more. I learned to love snow, to be afraid of it and to hate it, not in any particular order. Of the snowfalls of that year,

like the statues of the Archeological Park of San Agustin, I will never forget the first and the last one. The last snowfall arrived late that season. It took place at the beginning of May when I was expecting a bus to go to Tokyo, with a freezing nose. It was a five-hour trip and two more in train to Narita airport. Ursula arrived on that day to visit. Ursula arrived with spring.

While we were in Cali, sitting beside me at the corner of the bed, she took my hand and said "If it is important for you, it is important for me, I will wait for you". That conversation took place one year ago, six months had passed without holding her hand and now I was expecting her at the airport impatiently.

Ursula was Italian. She had travelled all over the world with her father who finally fell in love with an orchid grower in Colombia and decided to stay there teaching music. Having her at my side, this time on the *tatami*, reality overwhelmed me; here we were in the rural area of Japan, a Colombian and an Italian, listening to music composed by her friend from Burkina Faso.

Her visit lasted less than I expected, but she was also struggling for a dream and she should soon return to Colombia.

This time we said goodbye in a more tranquil way, perhaps because we already sensed that we were going to be friends for ever but that between my side of the bed and her side, a mighty river was increasingly growing, a river that was little by little diluting the shared dreams, the illusions of a common future.

Calls of hope

During her visit, apart from having enjoyed as a tourist the city where I lived and seeing through her eyes the differences between the two cultures, I did not worry about saving money and much less about the work. I discovered after winter that everything stops. I had no job washing dishes, almost everyone had left for holidays, and there I was with 7.000 yens on the table, wondering how I was going to live for the rest of the month, with that which was all my capital. I was tired of borrowing money. The infernal heat of those days together with the loneliness exacerbated by Ursula's departure, demolished without difficulty the strength of spirit which took me so long to build. For the first time I felt that everything was out of my hands, that I was facing something that went beyond what I could handle, that I was losing something and I did not know what it was. I was afraid and was

doubtful of what I was doing. Was such sacrifice worthwhile, was it worthwhile to risk so much?

In my anguish I did what they taught me at home *“full of confidence in you, I ask you to forgive my offenses and guide me, now that I need it most. Remember Oh Lord this son of yours and don't abandon me in the darkness where I am now”*. I prayed with open heart and tears in my eyes, thinking about each word with the most genuine faith that I have ever felt before.

I laid on the tatami and tried to sleep to appease my distress. I do not know how much time passed before I woke up. It was Travis of whom I have not heard news for months.

“Look” he started to tell me in English “I suppose that you have noticed that most of the Japanese are born as Shinto and die being Buddhists, but when they are about to get married, they like to follow the Christian ritual. Women in particular are fascinated with the ceremony with page boys, a choir and a piano and in particular, a foreign priest. Just as in the movies. It does not mean that they want to be converted

“I understand” I said.

“Fine”, Travis continued – “I want you to help a friend with that. I want you to be the priest”

I could not stop laughing on the phone. I doubted I could help him and said: I don't understand this matter very well.

Later on I discovered that he had been an active priest for many years and he explained that I should not be worried about the moral consequences of his proposal, that marriage is a sacrament where the actors are the couple, and the witness is only a witness. Therefore, anyone with faith and conviction could do the job. He added that if a real priest was willing to marry them, he could not do it without giving them other sacrament and most of them were not willing to do it. I asked if weddings for them were similar Elvis' at Las Vegas. After a short silence he told me he had never thought about that way and that even though he did not like the simile, I could very well use it.

Still not understanding very well, I told him that I trusted his judgment and that if he thought that I was a good candidate for that unusual matter, I was going to do it as best as I could. Without fully recovering from that shock I received a phone call from a lady that I didn't know.

They gave me your telephone at the university – she told me – the thing is that I have a job offer that may interest you. She asked me if I could teach English classes for adults on Friday nights.

I told her I was not a native English speaker but she said it was not important and asked me to go for an interview.

I arrived early to an unknown place, and since the Japanese addresses are complicated, I supposed that I had done something wrong when instead of an office, the coordinates coincided with a church: the oldest and only Protestant church in the city! I recognized the voice of the lady who had called me. Minutes later we had agreed to start with the classes as soon as possible.

Two years have gone by after those phone calls. I never went back to wash dishes for money and have always had three meals a day. I am still teaching English on Fridays at the church and attending the ceremonies that I now celebrate in Japanese or Spanish depending on what the couples want. I see them and I think about my wedding. One day I will be the one who accepts eternity, in company. Meanwhile, I am happy with their happiness and I pray that they will love each other for the rest of their lives. I see them and I think about the journey that they are about to start. I see how when we were young we make an effort to do things exactly in the opposite way of our parents without realizing that they proceeded in the same way of our family to perpetuate the cycle. We choose our family amongst strangers and seek company to our loneliness. This condition ignores age, gender religion and origin.

I am trying to remember a passage written by Richard Back where a group of creatures clinging to a rock fear that the current will drag them, killing them. Suddenly, one of them jumps into the current amidst the fears of the other creatures to discover that life is in the current and not on the cold rock.

Pilgrimage to Shikoku

JOHN QUINTERO

Foreign Relations Undergraduate
Tsukuba University

“Do not limit yourself to walk over the steps of those who are no more. Go in search of what they found”¹⁵

Kobodaishi

There I was, waking up before sunrise, my back was killing me, I was vaguely listening to the noise of cars getting closer and closer to the place where I had had to spend the night. Although summer had long come, the sticky moisture was not yet there, it was morning. What a way to start this trip. It is the first thing that comes to my mind, laying down on that narrow bench next to the parking lot of temple number 1, but I also remembered that it was precisely the promise of adventure and challenge what had brought me to Shikoku.

For years, hundreds of thousands of people had made the pilgrimage to Shikoku, by visiting each one of the eighty eight Buddhist temples, located around the perimeter of the fourth largest island in Japan. It is probably the most known and popular in the country, in spite of a 1,200 kilometer long distance that is at least a thirty to sixty hour- nonstop- walk through big cities and rice plantations; mountains, and woods of splendid beauty, as well as coasts, and deep colored landscapes that delight the imagination.

Currently there are just a few *henro* (name for those who undertake the pilgrimage) who really walk, since most of them travel comfortably by car, or those who travel by buses or taxis in tours organized by traveling agencies.

What you learn about yourself when facing challenges and difficulties is incredible. I only had to look at the signpost indicating the distance to cover before the next temple, or to hear a gentle pilgrim warning me about the difficulties of the ground, to realize that no time had passed since I had started this journey and I already felt superior to those that were making no physical effort to complete this pilgrimage.

¹⁵ Matsuo Basho's expression- Japanese poet considered a great master of haiku- quoted in Kobo Daishi's ancient words.

However, each year there are more and more people who disappointed by the tiresome rhythm of modern society, decide to make this hundred year-old trip in the traditional way like those who have tried to follow the steps of maybe the most renown Japanese Buddhist monk, Kobo Daishi.

And so it was that for little more than a week, eight hours every day I biked a short distance, resting only upon final arrival to any of the eighty eight temples I had to visit. So, that was the way in which, dressed in the traditional henro's white outfit and together with the words 同行二人 (two that walk together) engraved on it, I met not only the natural beauty I have only found in that rural island of Shikoku, but also the beauty of its people who upon seeing a pilgrim do not hesitate to offer him small presents like fruits, money, and lodging, hoping to be of assistance in his trip, and somehow to be part of it.

My own trip started in early August 2006, four months after my arrival to Japan. It was during my first year there at the Japanese family's house I shared that I learned about the pilgrimage. The family's grandmother had died and my host, my "mother", made use of any free time she had to travel to Shikoku and pray for her dead mother's soul. Her house chores and part time job did not allow her enough time to go on pilgrimage. Usually during weekends followed by holidays, and days of rest like Golden Week – a combination of four national holidays that usually goes up to vacation week- or during O-Bon – Buddhist event for the veneration of the dead- she traveled with her sister.

In search of the unknown

It was my first year studying Japanese, and I had decided to make the trip during summer vacation; even though it is considered wiser to travel during spring or fall since the weather then is fresher and nicer, but summer was my only chance.

I was greatly surprised when I told them about my plans; their reaction was a desperate dichotomy of wonder and happiness, towards a foreigner's interest in such a native traditional practice like Shikoku's pilgrimage. All at once my "mother" taught me everything I should know about the pilgrimage. She showed me maps, distance estimation, and other aspects, apart from explaining each single ritual's meaning to be done at each temple I might visit.

As a solidary gesture, my family gave me a mountain bicycle for my journey. I have to confess that in spite of my "mother's" great effort I could not memorize one of the most known sutras, "prayers", in Japan: Hannya Shingyo or Sutra of the

heart. So I chose to pray a Hail Mary, an Our Father, and some other prayers that my grandmother had taught me when I was a child in Colombia.

I bought all a *henro* might need at one of the temples, the one in whose parking lot I woke up. I bought the white suit that would identify me as a pilgrim, and differentiate me from the other tourists, a small handbag to carry the seals' book. This book would contain the seals and calligraphy I should obtain at each temple along the route. During the pilgrimage it is customary to ask for the seal of each temple you visit on the correspondent page; so when you have all the eighty eight seals, you can ask for a last seal at the temple where Kobo Daishi rests, which, by the way, is not located in the island of Shikoku, but on Mount Koya, in the prefecture of Wakayama.

Having visited the main altar, and Kobo Daishi's altar, and after having obtained temple 1, Ryosenji, seals and calligraphy I continued on my way.

Soon I discovered that I was not traveling alone, when I came upon a wonderful sight I had never imagined to find in modern Japan. There were dozens, even hundreds of people dressed like pilgrims, some walking, others biking, and some others on foot, by bus, motorcycles, or cars. Vanity at that moment loses all value, everyone was a *henro*. No matter if they walked, or took the bus, young or old, Japanese or not. From the first day I awoke the interest of Japanese, *henros*, and people from the area. They all asked me to pose near them for pictures to remember that moment. Even though the same situation was repeated almost every single day I stayed in Shikoku, I could never get used to the idea of receiving compliments just for being foreign. If it was not a photograph with the foreign *henro* to commemorate the unusual encounter, then it was very usual to be asked to walk a short distance with them, or at least share one of the day's meals which I could never have the opportunity to pay for.

Even if traveling with company can be a nice and constructive experience, especially if it is people you get to know along the way, there is a kind of pleasure in being alone with oneself and get lost in your own thoughts.

I remember the most difficult and physically demanding experiences served as prelude to the most beautiful and impacting ones. And, of course, someone a thousand years before had thought that pilgrimage temples should be built on high tops of mountains.

After long hours of bike riding, added to the time it took me to walk from the mountain foot to the temple's entrance, not counting the stairs I had to climb to finally arrive to the main altar, my attention was diverted of all formality and rituality.

My eyes were set on the valley I had come from, and I could observe at a distance the mountain peaks wandering towards the horizon subtly changing tones from blue to purple, and even black. Then I got lost inside that mirage where mountains lost all shape under the sunset ripping the sky.

The end of the road

Shikoku Island is made up of four prefectures: Tokushima, Kochi, Ehime, and Kagawa, which traditionally represent the four stages of the way to illumination. Because of money matters, and other reasons, my adventure came to an end after one week when visiting temple number 35 at Kochi. The softest part of the route was probably Tokushima, where I decided to return because of the promise of drums and dancing.

When visiting temple number 10, one night I was invited to take part in the preparations of what would become one of the most animated summer mid-August festivals in Japan: the Awa Odori festival. To the rhythm of drums, the festival exudes energy and frenzy, where groups from all over the city flood the streets of Tokushima to be part of the celebration that welcomes the spirits of the dead during the O-Bon season. That is why taking part in the festival marked the end of my stay at Shikoku. I had been absent from the material world for a week, and had come to a place full of magic and splendor.

On the ferry that was to take me back to my everyday life, I remembered the people I met, those whose smile was enough for me to understand that the greatness of a place is its people, and I wondered when I could come back.

Surprisingly, some months after arriving home from the pilgrimage, my birthday present turned out to be a trip back to Shikoku, together with all the family. This time it was by car.

As it would have been expected, the idea of the pilgrimage had a different meaning. Travelling comfortably in a car had undeniable advantages, but it killed simple pleasures like the adrenaline you feel when descending a mountain at the highest speed possible to arrive to one of the temples after a grueling physical effort.

However, to be welcomed into a family you do not originally belong to is incomparable. To put this experience into words would be to simplify a mother's love, a father's care, and a sibling's fraternity.

Near them I appreciated in detail things that I wouldn't be able to perceive out of the insufficient language, or lack of cultural knowledge. The trip was full of moments that seemed trivial but I cherish them.

When we arrived to the place where my book would be sealed, an old lady looked at me and complimented me on being a young foreigner, two unusual elements in a traditional *henro*. Besides, I had covered a section of the journey on a bicycle and now we were doing it as a family. Then I could see my "mother's" eyes full of pride. I will always be grateful for that.

To start a pilgrimage is to challenge life, and although one of the most intense experiences, it is probably one of the hardest I have ever lived. My only expectation is to go back to where my heart has remained, to finish what I have started.

A Heart between Two Cultures

IVAN ENRIQUE POVEDA

Assistant manager at the Nippon Budo Kan martial arts center, part of the Colombo-Japanese Association in Cali.

Social Communicator at the Colombo-Japanese Cultural Center.

“Cali is at the other side, as well as my parents, my family, and my friends; it just takes to go across that mountain, it doesn’t seem too high. It looks similar to Monte de las Tres Cruces. What a strange feeling, but it is what I’m feeling *Master*¹⁶. I don’t feel Colombia so far away, I feel it near me”.

That’s what I told my Aikido sensei, Jorge Silva, while we were looking at the mountains on the day we arrived in Tenri. I don’t remember the time very well, but I know it was in the afternoon. We were very tired after a twenty-four hour trip. The excitement was so intense that although I needed to sleep, I didn’t want to. Finally, I was in Japan! We had only been on Nippon land for about three or four hours and we already wanted to know everything, so we started walking the streets of that small city. It was a dream coming true.

“We are in Japan *Master!* Can you believe it?” I think I looked like a child with a brand new toy. It was extraordinary. We were kindly, nicely, and respectfully welcomed. I didn’t feel important, I felt cherished, as if all those people that were there knew me before. I felt at home.

When my Colombian friends used to hear about how the Japanese culture attracted me, they thought it was strange in many aspects. They wanted to know why. What is it with you? Do you want to become Japanese? Those were their usual questions. I knew they asked me with a certain teasing tone. I always answered with a convincing smile, without knowing why deep within I felt somehow Japanese, with no disrespectful pretensions of being one, neither forgetting the pride of being Colombian; the feeling had just always been there.

¹⁶ Familiar way in which teachers and students address each other at martial arts centers.

It's difficult to set a specific date to determine when I began to get interested in Japanese culture. Maybe it was in my childhood, when after coming back from school, my main concern was to watch the cartoons which became an inspiration for my "art pieces" later during my aesthetic education, and drawing lessons. I grew up with the first Japanese cartoon series that came to Colombia; in those days they were not identified by that name, they were simply the "Japanese comic drawings" that had become part our national television in late 70's and late 80's.

The magic of the Internet

Through the years, I had learned many things about that far away land's culture, which was available only on TV or films, or in some books. Until, the Internet came. What an invention! I could get closer to Japan. Then I could obtain more information, and make my first Japanese friends through the web.

I had started an important cultural exchange that crystalized even more when I found out that the main Japanese colony in Colombia was established precisely in Cali, my native town. The best part of it was that then I had a place where I could deepen my knowledge of the language, at the Colombian Japanese Alliance Center.

Sometime later I entered into an aspect that would determine my most important link with Japan: martial arts. I think martial arts are the best expression of such an extraordinary culture; through that practice I have come to understand the philosophy that has always characterized a nation that does not give in when facing adversity. It has overcome barriers, and left important footprints in the history of mankind.

Japan: A dream comes true

Two years later my dream came true: I would visit Japan. I had the opportunity to become part of a new religion, Tenrykiana, a belief that seduced me because of the simplicity and depth of its precepts regarding the approach to God; to explore cities and towns on my own: Tenri, Nara, Kyoto, Osaka, Iwama, Tomobe, Mito, Nigata, and the great Tokyo. I also had the chance to practice Aikido, right on the place where its founder, Morihei Ueshiba, better known as O'sensei gave his last teachings in Iwama.

It was something indescribable, to be training at that mythical dojo where you can still feel the good energy that senseis and practitioners have left through the years,

and also to step on the old and wasted tatami becomes an awesome experience that fills you up with the best ancestral spirit.

I remember during the time I stayed in Japan, I also had the chance to share with people from different origins and ages, and I could confirm the roots of my fascination for the Nipponese culture. I had always wanted to meet those eastern islands, and my wish was fulfilled; things happen by causality rather than by coincidence, as my sensei and friend has told me so many times, I don't doubt it. Maybe that is the reason for my eager interest in all that is Japanese. I was destined to arrive to Japan and my perseverance helped me materialize this dream.

Now I feel like a whole human being and I can say that it doesn't matter where you are born, neither the language you speak, what is important is to grab the best of a culture and honor it.

That's what I found in Japan. The Japanese were proud to see two Colombians practicing Aikido, a Japanese martial art, not very well known really, and there were many times when they acknowledged in our dedication the sincere love we felt for their land. I realized then that it was mutual; we met Japanese who were interested in speaking our language, dancing our music although they had never been to Colombia before. I was full of joy to see how excited they were and how they enjoyed doing typical things of my country. Their impeccable way of doing those things made me burst with pride for what I had so far away in Colombia! I could have cried to thank them for their interest and passion for my country.

Time has passed by, and two years after my encounter with the samurais' land, there is not a single day that I don't dream as I did before. But this time it is not about making a dream come true but to strengthen the bonds I have with Japan. I want to go back again, there's still a lot to be met, to learn. There are many things I want to show to my family and friends.

Now I am sure we are not so different from those people who live thousands of miles away across the immense ocean. We are really like waves, the same waves that come here and then go there.

I don't believe I'm wrong to think that focusing on the difference is inappropriate when two cultures wish to get together and become one inside someone's heart. I can't forget that what one day made some Japanese see our soil as a promised land, is maybe making us look towards the east today. It is there and it can't be concealed, a mutual fascination among peoples that share ideals for improvement, cooperation and devotion.

Enquiring into Friendship ties between the University of Shizuoka and Colombia

WADA HIDEKI

Laboratory professor of Geoscience from the School of Sciences, University of Shizuoka

University of Shizuoka, Campus Museum

The Campus Museum of the University of Shizuoka as explained by its name is an institution that opens the gate to a campus surrounded by a rich nature, and students; it is also an open window to society to see what the university has done, what it intends to do and the environment where students learn. In general terms, the museum shows old objects, landscapes of streets, animals, plants, rocks or minerals taken from places of difficult access or that do not longer exist. Lately, there are museums with specific-subject collections. At the museum of the University of Shizuoka, historical objects are also exhibited but the location of its campus on a special topography and its excellent nature enable the museum to be a place for people to see, feel and enjoy its richness.

Located at a southeastern hill of Nihondaira, its south side points the Suruga Bay, further from Omaezaki, that can be seen afar. The sea meeting the Pacific can also be seen and pointing the north you can see the silver Mount Fuji, shining in the winter air and the Alp Mountains at the South. At the exhibits room, you can learn about the history of the university thanks to the aids used in research and the equipment and machines used in education.

There you can see part of the efforts of our ancestors and the resources and documents stored and the equipment no longer used, due to the technological developments; you can also see through studies and experiments how science has advanced.

The place has many keys for every guest to enjoy it and understand it. Such is the case of the Colombian butterfly's exhibition, collected forty years ago by people from the University, not only for their beauty but for their meaning, as they can be compared to current samples, considering that the global environment is in the process of significant change.

At the University, different studies based on interests and opportunities of different times have been developed. Therefore, each of these materials is part of the human heritage

and it is the Museum's responsibility to record them, save them and take from them the best advantages.

Exhibition Plan

In 2007 an exhibition of butterflies and moths was organized with important material from the Campus Museum.

Colombian Butterflies and Moths

Nature of the Snowy Mountains of Santa Marta isolated from the continent. Special Exhibition of the Campus Museum of the University of Shizuoka 2007 Publication of the material of the Campus Museum of the University of Shizuoka between November 17 to 22, 2007 (including the University of Shizudaisai Festival).

Background of the Colombian butterflies and moths Collection

The first studying group from the University of Shizuoka focused on the Colombian Andes and was sent from June to September, 1967. It was sponsored by the private sector and was made up by two subgroups: the first research and studying group of geology, fauna and flora, led by Professor Ryuichi Tsuchi of the Geology Course of the School of Sciences; the second group was made up by members of the Mountaineering Association of Shizuoka, searching to reach the unconquered peak of the Snowy Mountains (Sierra Nevada) of Santa Marta.

The members of the Mountaineering Association had initially planned to conquer the Himalayas but the worsening of the international situation made them change the plan and get ready for the conquest of the Snowy Mountains of Santa Marta, Colombia, at the northern tip of the Latin American continent, near the boundary with Venezuela.

They reached Christopher Columbus Peak, the highest of the Sierra (5.775 m) and named it "Shizuoka Peak".

On the other hand, the research group focused its study on the relationship between Japan and South America, separated by the Pacific Ocean; this group had butterfly and moth experts. The three thousand samples collected are at the Campus Museum. This a high scale collection that includes valuable species as the *Morpho* butterflies, *rhodopteron*, with wings of magic colors: purple bluish and bright pink that shines with light.

These samples collected more than forty years ago have been beautifully kept by Mr. Mayumi Takahashi, alumni of the School of Science of the University and hold their entire splendor. This time, as former president of the Lepidopterology Society of Japan we could offer a six-day exhibition, including the days of the Shizudaisai Festival always held at the second half of November.

The samples kept at the Campus Museum of the University of Shizuoka are thirty-eight boxes of butterflies and four of moths collected by the first research and studying group at the Colombian Andes. Later on, Mrs. Takahashi conducted a study in Colombia to collect more butterflies. The samples collected this time were saved at Shimizu-ku, Shimizu-shi a private storage of a non-governmental organization: The Network for Shizuoka Prefecture Museum of Natural History.

Exhibition

The Exhibition is at the Rehearsal Room of the Campus Museum of the School of Sciences in the middle of the Shizuoka Campus. At the entrance we had a Colombian flag that we borrowed from the embassy of Colombia in Japan. Although the place is small, we could display almost all the pieces of the Museum. The exhibit of moths and butterflies and their photos and explanatory panels are all around the room. Those photos were taken from Mrs. Takahashi's collection who was a member of the studying group and Kinya Ota, graduate from the Science School and member of the mountaineering group.

Most of the photos taken more than forty years ago had faded and had a sepia color, but thanks to Akira Tsukagoshi from the University of Shizuoka and the color correction computer program, they would recover the lively color they once had.

Panels were filled with maps, birds' posters, flowers, natural landscapes, Colombian coffee, Colombian streets lent by the Colombian Embassy. We also had in our Exhibit Room folk music from four regions of the country: Pacific, Andean, Orinoco, and Atlantic. Thus, visitors could feel close to them a faraway and unknown country. The exhibition was held during the same days of the Festival. As the Campus Museum was located right in front of the central zone where the stage and the stores were placed, it had many visitors. A conference with professor Mayumi Takahashi was also held, aided with the pictures he had taken back in 1967 when he participated in the studying group. These samples were stored in a deposit of the University. This exhibit had the contributions of Takeshi Sugimoto, member of the studying group and Mr. Ota, member of the mountaineering group. Among the many visitors there were people who had visited the

first exhibition and recalled the emotion of the people going to the other side of the world to collect butterflies. I was one of those visiting the Matsuzakaya exhibition; I was trapped by the colorful beauty of the Morpho butterflies and I could not forget the *Nymphalidae diatheria* butterfly; in its wings you can see number “88”, an unbelievable product of nature. The *Pteronymia* Butterfly has transparent wings as a dragonfly, and could easily become a pretty brooch.

The beauty of nature is reflected in our heart and that of the animals is represented by flowers and butterflies; they have a magical strength that relaxes our souls and soothes us. Butterflies with these colors and shapes did not choose to be that way but were born according to their genes design. I enjoyed the beauty transferred from generations and the complexity of life.

A chat at the Museum

In this event we were given interesting facts about the Papilio butterflies. It is possible that human being do not include butterflies in their diet, but birds do. There are butterflies that release material disliked by birds that is how they avoid being eaten. Also some of them have similar prints as those of poisonous butterflies, although they are not really toxic, since their venom is not strong enough as to kill a bird. This is called mimesis, and is a common mechanism among animals.

Short time ago, a study on the hormone of the Papilio butterfly larvae was carried out to clarify the mimesis mechanism. Although poisonous but not enough as to kill the bird, the effect teaches a lesson: the bird won't try to eat a butterfly again. Therefore, other non-poisonous butterflies imitate the patterns to obtain the same results. If the mechanism was not efficient, the world would be infested by poisonous butterflies.

But nature is indeed more complex and diverse than the studies. These characteristics do not apply only to Colombian butterflies, but through the Colombian samples we could talk to new people and listen to their adventures and explorations and their interest for Colombia and its species. Thus, barriers are removed and we are filled with a sense of hope and freedom.

Shizuoka – Exploring Colombia

The Embassy of Colombia in Japan offered support to the Exhibition through Mr.

Raul Rincon, First Secretary of the Embassy. He knows about ancient precious and mineral rocks.

The research and study of the Colombian Andes was carried out four times in all, with the support of the Ministry of Education, culture, Sports, Science and Technology, broadening the object zones towards Ecuador, Peru and Chile.

Forty years ago, the first studying and research group was sent to Colombia from the University of Shizuoka. Back then, Japan had celebrated the Olympics in Tokyo (1964) and students had the time but not enough money to travel abroad. So, a university student who belonged to an exploration team, saved money and traveled to Kilimanjaro, Kenya, but once down, he was arrested along with other hikers under the suspicion of being a spy.

As a coincidence, a person who has been arrested under the same circumstances was released and could take a letter of the student to the Embassy and the student was released and taken back to Japan.

In regards to the exhibition held back then, there are not many records or documents of the research, and the few materials left were well kept thank to the passion and dedication of professor Takahashi, who acknowledged the importance of the samples. This is an issue of great interest particularly because 1967 is a year that is close to 1965 and 1966, the years when countries with nuclear weapons, such as the United States, the Soviet Union and France were experimenting with radioactive products causing an important increase of radioactive products in the air, reaching the highest levels of concentration.

Changes in the air remain in the trees as a change in the concentration of radioactive carbon. When analyzing tree rings, it is easy to evidence this phenomenon, but the most severely affected by this impact were butterflies. In the samples kept in the museum that secret may be kept. That is my motivation to start the study, for they are the heritage left behind by nature, true jewels for mankind.

Trip to Colombia: Taking part in two Butterfly-observation Scientific expeditions

Mayumi Takahashi

Researcher in the field of biogeography of butterflies. Graduate of the school of Humanities and Sciences of the National University of Shizuoka. His main research field is biogeography of butterflies. His main publications are *Butterflies, from the Fuji River to the Japanese archipelago*, 1979; as co-author of the *Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Biology of Japanese butterflies*; original colors i-iv, 1982-1984; *Biology and butterfly observation*, 1989. Former professor of Biology Sciences at the Shizuoka Secondary School, Japan. Former president of the Lepidopterology Society of Japan.

Preface

After retiring from secondary school teaching fourteen years ago, I am still devoted to butterfly biogeography research focusing on the area of Shizuoka where I currently live.

More than fifty years have passed by since I started researching butterflies and in that period I have taken part in two international scientific expeditions in Latin America thus visiting Colombia in the two occasions. The scientific results of some of my research have been published in specialized magazines on the subject. For the celebration of the one hundred years of bilateral relations between Japan and Colombia, I present in these pages a brief summary of the two trips to that country with the purpose of researching about the different butterfly species and some anecdotes.

I take advantage of this opportunity to thank the Ambassador of Japan to Colombia, the Mitsubishi Corporation and the people in that country who offered me support and cooperated in the expeditions carried out forty years ago, as well as the members of the expedition team with whom I shared valuable experiences.

Scientific Expeditions to Colombia

During approximately three months, from June until the beginning of September, 1967, I visited the mountainous zone of Santa Marta, the Santa Marta Snow Peak (Sierra Nevada). It is located in the northern part of the country, as a team member of the First Scientific Expedition to the Colombian Andes, organized by Shizuoka University in Japan (see the Colombian map related to the scientific expedition). At this time I conducted research regarding the distribution and ecology of butterfly species. By then I was thirty three years old.

Map of Colombia showing the places of the scientific expeditions

1. Bogotá
2. Barranquilla
3. Santa Marta
4. Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta
5. Quibdó
6. Buenaventura
7. Villavicencio
8. Sierra de la Macarena
9. Florencia
10. Mitú
11. Leticia

The scientific expedition team, led by Ryuichi Tsuchi, professor of geology and paleontology of the School of Science of Shizuoka University, was made up of eight people; three of them belonged to the scientific team, including the leader; the other five belonged to the mountaineering group, who tried to reach the Simon Bolivar Peak, the highest peak of the mountain chain, and other unexplored crests.

As member of the scientific team I was in charge of researching butterfly species in these highlands. Despite the short time for the expedition I was able to observe the existence of five hundred species. The research area covered Donachui river, located in the Southeastern side of the mountain to the Melloaca plain; San Lorenzo de la Sierra, located in the Northwestern side and its surroundings; El Mico mountains at the Southwestern side and the surroundings of Rio Piedras, at the Northern lower side of this mountainous land.

During this expedition I was able to collect for the first time a sample of *Morphidos*, a butterfly species in a town of the Arhuaco ethnic group. I had dreamed about it for long and I was very excited. Furthermore, this became a wonderful remembrance because it was the *Morpho rhodopteron*, a famous and rare species

in the world. However, the greatest excitement came upon knowing better the nature of a “species”, which I managed by observing the habitat of the *Satyridos* species.

After six years, in 1973, I participated in the Japanese expedition to the Amazon areas organized by the Andean Japanese Counsel and the Kyodo news agency. It was an excursion of a little over two months, from the beginning of July until mid-September, 1973. At this time I was thirty nine and newlywed.

This expedition travelled from Bolivia to Venezuela, from the South to the North in the upper course of the Amazonas River, the river with the greatest flow volume in the world. During the expedition we could study fauna and flora, as well as the ethnic villages. The captain was Ichiyo Muko from the Kyodo agency.

I had limited time to stay due to my working arrangement at that time and I thought about staying temporarily in Bogota, where I would wait for the arrival of the main team advancing towards the North from Bolivia.

But the truth was that the main team arrived quite late, and this forced me to go on the expedition by myself and I could not meet the main team until after the end of the scheduled period.

During this second expedition in Colombia I confirmed the existence of nearly six hundred species of butterflies in the upper Amazon areas, such as Mitu, Florencia and Leticia, and also in the Andean Pacific region, in Buenaventura and Quibdó. I left Villavicencio, a city located in the East, set as the base point of the expedition. I set myself a specific goal: to study the mimesis of *Heliconidos*, a toxic species. As a result, I could carry out my onsite study about the habits of these “species” of the tropical zone, focusing on their mimesis.

Encounters in Bogotá

Bogota is the capital of Colombia located in the high plateau of the Eastern chain of mountains where two butterfly expeditions, one in 1967 and another in 1973 have been organized. There, I visited the Embassy of Japan, Mitsubishi Corporation and other entities where I received recommendations and valuable information regarding butterfly species research and life in Colombia.

In Bogotá, I visited the homes of two Colombians, both of them butterfly enthusiasts and researchers, who were friendly and deserve to be mentioned over these pages.

The first person is Leopoldo Richter, a well known butterfly enthusiast who lives in the outskirts of Bogota. When I visited him in his home in 1973 he was about seventy years old. He lived with his wife Gisela, a 40 year old intellectual woman and their son, a primary school student.

I had met the Richter family six years before, in 1967, at their beach house near Santa Marta on the Caribbean coast and so we all enjoyed this longed encounter. Doctor Richter no longer collected insects, but he joyfully explained to me, with gestures and drawings several species living in La Macarena zone, in the Upper Amazonas. He had been a professor at Universidad Nacional de Colombia and when I met him he was already retired and enjoyed drawing all day long. He said life in Colombia was the best and therefore he did not want to go back to a hasty existence in his natal Germany.

Before leaving their home, his wife Gisela played the piano for me. It was Beethoven, Klavier Sonata in F minor Op. 2, No. 1-2, Adagio. Even now, when I listen to this second movement full of beauty and joy I remember the pleasant encounter with the Richter family.

Another person I remember a lot is Ernesto W.Schmidt-Mumm, who also lives in Bogota. He is a doctor in Engineering, a Colombian with German ancestors, who manages two eye glass stores called Optómetra and Óptica Alemana. Once in a while his name appears in South American butterfly documents.

Probably due to his German ancestors he is not an expressive person, but he received me kindly and with a discrete smile behind his glasses when I visited his apartment near the Embassy of Japan. He hated butterfly trade and he always said "I do not sell, I do not buy", in other words, he never took part in butterfly trade.

His butterfly collection had only Colombian species and he kept it at home. When I asked him why he only collected Colombian butterflies he answered: "It would be absolutely impossible to collect all the butterflies living in this country since there are more than three thousand species, so I cannot allow myself the luxury of working with butterflies from other countries".

The sample boxes were neatly organized in the corresponding shelf and each box had detailed data written on it. Therefore, I think there were at least two hundred medium-size boxes; among them, the collection of Colombian *Heliconidos* butterflies: the best part. A Longarena butterfly flutters at a considerable height and is so agile that it is difficult to trap, “almost like women”, he said with a smile.

Doctor Schmidt-Mumm had several bulky record notebooks, neat and organized by species. He said he wanted to publish a book about Colombian butterflies when he could no longer walk due to old age.

More than thirty years have gone by since our mail was interrupted. But in a book called “*Mariposas de Colombia*” (Butterflies of Colombia), published in 1991 in Bogotá, which I recently acquired, his name appeared as a collaborator, which brought back the memories of such a wonderful encounter.

Encounter with the Spanish language

If we talk about a foreign language in Japan, that is English. The foreign language studied in elementary and high school is English, except for some special schools. For the college admission test, English is mandatory. Not only the signs in the Japanese “*Shin Kansen*”, bullet train, but also the traffic signs are mostly written only in English, except for just some.

I wonder if there is any country among the many developed countries in the world that teaches any other language different from English at school.

However, the language spoken in most countries in Latin America is Spanish, except for Brazil. In this language many vowels are used, and pronunciation is more similar to Japanese, as compared with English, therefore for the Japanese, Spanish is easy to listen to and to speak.

Nevertheless, the verb changes depending on the person, for example in the case of the verb “*Cantar*” (sing), the infinitive is “*cantar*” and conjugation is done “*yo canto*” (I sing), “*tú cantas*” (you sing), “*él canta*” (he sings), “*nosotros cantamos*” (we sing), “*vosotros cantáis*” (you sing) What a Problem! And not only in the present tense but the conjugation also changes in the past tense depending on the person. In addition, the past tense has several times and modes: the indicative and the subjunctive. My God!

But being out in the street, and in order to practice, if one remembers two or three variations of the person, it is easy to hold a daily life conversation. Anyway, different from English where it is enough to learn the “third person singular in the present tense”, in Spanish, where verbs change with the person, the language is full of variety.

In the first expedition in 1967, while crossing the Pacific Ocean, I studied Spanish for one hour every morning, at noon, and every night with a textbook guide. When I arrived to the city of Barranquilla I tried to practice speaking the language while shopping. Since they did not understand me they asked again. I thought how come my Spanish is not understood? They corrected my mistakes with a smile. In some stores they even gave me discounts just because of that.

At that time, amongst the members of the team there was one who spoke English very well, but when he spoke in that language the environment became tense and the expression on their faces hardened. Later I was told that there is a trend among Colombians that prevents them from speaking English because many of them dislike the United States of America.

In 1973 when I visited Colombia again, I needed to speak Spanish to buy plane tickets and make hotel reservations using a small dictionary and my notebook. This is how I continued researching with my “home Spanish”.

Thanks to this effort regarding a foreign language it is easier for me to listen and speak Spanish than English. Spanish is a beautiful language. It is said that “German is the language of horses, English is for pirates, French for people in love and Spanish is the language of God”.

Furthermore, I had the experience of stopping suddenly on a street to listen to a radio speaker talking with a booming voice.

To become familiar with the foreign language leads us to know the feeling and the culture of the people of that country, not just the simple communication means. English is a convenient language, but as an international it is not omnipotent. In order to understand the feeling of the people in other country, the first thing one needs to understand is the language and its culture, regardless if it is spoken incorrectly. This has been a very valuable lesson I had during my two visits to Colombia.

To End

When I visited Colombia for the first time in 1967 it took us several days to clear our luggage out of customs. When we visited a government office they said it was late and that we should return next morning, or rather, to return on Monday because it was Friday and we would not finish all that work the same day. That was the work rhythm, therefore the expedition members arbitrarily thought “Why don’t they work harder? That is why the country is not developed”. All the eight members of the expedition agreed on this.

It should be true, because, in contrast, by those years Japan was inaugurating the bullet train; the Tokyo Olympics had been very successful; the Tomei highway had been built between Tokyo and Nagoya, among others. We were reaching a boom of “high economic growth”, where everybody continued working and focusing on one direction, embracing work as cargo beasts.

But in the ship back to Japan, after finishing the three and a half month expedition, it came to my mind that Colombia was fine the way it was. They were enjoying life, without sacrificing it, which is irreplaceable for oneself. What is the meaning of a cargo beast’s life? Japan’s common sense does not always fit everywhere.

Thinking about the current situation in my country, where working hours are extremely long for an industrialized country and in spite of having a high GDP and being significantly competitive at an international level, the emerging results are great social difference and poverty. It could be said that the experience I have had twice in Colombia has become an invaluable and important fortune as it concerns the concept of life and that of myself. According to these two experiences lived in Colombia I think about Japan’s history and again I ask myself: what is life for?

Photo Gallery

In order:

First Minister of Japan, Taro Aso and Álvaro Uribe Velez, President of Colombia.

El Colegio del Cuerpo in Japan, 2008.

Mitsubishi's President, Yorihiro Kojima and Colombia's Vice-president, Francisco Santos during their visit to Japan in 2008.

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Former Foreign Affairs Minister, Fernando Araújo Perdomo, in the exhibit of the Gold Museum in Japan, 2008.

Hirofumi Nakasone, Foreign Affairs Minister of Japan with Colombia's Foreign Affairs Minister Jaime Bermúdez Merizalde, during the visit to Colombia in 2008.

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In order:

Grupo Bahía and Japanese marimba player Nanae Mimura, 2008.

Former Foreign Affairs Minister Fernando Araújo and Sadako Ogata, president of JICA, Japanese International Cooperation Agency.

Former Foreign Affairs Minister, Fernando Araújo, awarding Hiroshi Saito, president of Mizuho Corporate Bank with the Order of San Carlos

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"Bamboo" Exhibit. Juan Bernal. Japan, 2008.

Hirofumi Nakasone and Jaime Bermudez Merizalde visiting San Carlos Palace in Colombia, 2008.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs