

## Request for Cooperation regarding the Global Culture Symbol "Koinobori" Project

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### 1 "Koinobori" swimming as a traditional event

In Japan, Koinobori have been displayed since the middle of the Edo period. However, it has its origin in "Tango no Sekku" (May 5<sup>th</sup>) from the Nara period. In the Nara Heian period, a court event was held to pray for a disease-free life by purifying evil spirits with plants such as irises and wormwood in the "Tango no Sekku." For example, irises and wormwood were inserted in the eaves, irises were displayed on the crown, and medicine balls were made from iris leaves and hung on pillars. In the Kamakura period, a homophone word of irises (菖蒲) was understood as "shobu," (尚武), which means martial arts, and especially in the samurai families, they began to give helmets and swords in hopes of a boy's success in life and the great fortune in battle. Furthermore, in the Muromachi period, a banner was erected at the tip of a log or stick with a mark to call on a god. In common people, customs such as iris baths, iris liquor, and iris pillows were popular. During the Edo period, samurai warriors, including the shogunate, held grand events with warrior banners, artificial spears, naginata, and helmets as important events for children in succession.

Common people set up a helmet and a banner depicting a hero, a military commander and the scene of a battle to celebrate the birth of a boy, too. In the middle of the Edo period, merchants began to raise windsocks against the samurai class's banners with pictures such as carp climbing a waterfall. Hiroshige Utagawa depicted the Koinobori scenery of "Suidobashi Surugadai" as an ukiyo-e print. In literature, it was used as an illustration for "Paper streamers swaying in the forest of withered trees" in "Haikai Zokukiyoganna" published in 1745. These traditions were transformed into the current Koinobori from around this time.

There is a picture of Koinobori in the collection about Japanese life at that time collected by Edward S. Morse (1838-1925) who came to Japan as a "hired foreigner" in the 10th year of Meiji. In the Meiji era, many houses elevated Koinobori of black carp and red carp. From this situation, it can be said that Koinobori have become established as a traditional Japanese event.

Furthermore, Koinobori of five colors of black, red, blue, yellow and green were made around the Tokyo Olympics which held in the Showa period for the development of postwar Japan. Koinobori activity continued from the 1955's to the 1965's as a Japanese traditional event. Recently, the number of Koinobori displayed in each house has decreased. They are displayed in local buildings, parks, valleys, etc. Koinobori displays are being carried out as a plan for forming a sense of solidarity among local people and for local tourism. As a typical example, Koinobori activity in Kazo City, Saitama Prefecture, can be pointed out. It has been

producing carp streamers since the Meiji era and has the highest production volume in Japan. A jumbo carp streamer is displayed on May 3 as a town revitalization project by citizens.

## **2 "Koinobori" swimming as an international exchange**

The beginning of Koinobori swimming in the world was the Vienna World Expo held from May 1st to October 31st, 1873. At the main building of the Expo site where the Meiji government first participated, ceramics (Imari, Seto, Kutani), arts and crafts (ukiyo-e, folding fan, cloisonne, inlay, gold and silver work), textiles and materials (Nishijin weaving, raw silk), paper Inlays (Kindai, Kamakura Daibutsu) were exhibited. A flag pillar was erected on the left side of the Japanese garden constructed on the site of this venue, and Koinobori were raised in display.

Furthermore, they were displayed in front of the Japan Pavilion at the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago from May 1st to October 3rd, 1893. This Japanese Pavilion was built to imitate Byodoin Phoenix Hall(平等院鳳凰堂). It had three buildings, with the front being a daimyo mansion from the Edo period, the left side being a noble mansion from the Heian period, and the right side being an architectural style that combines a Shoin and a Tea room from the Muromachi period. Koinobori were displayed on both sides of the front of the Daimyo mansion. Japan's participation in the World Exposition was also intended to promote exchanges with the countries of the world as a modern nation and to show the civilized Japan to the world with a view to abolishing the unequal treaty at the time of opening the country.

A notable fact about the world's Koinobori swimming was that Georges Clemenceau, then Prime Minister of France, hoisted them in the villa of Saint-Vincent-Chel-Jules around 1919. They were presented to him by Saionji Kinmochi (1849-1940) who participated in the Paris Peace Conference held to discuss the end of World War I from January 1919. Clemenceau liked Koinobori and displayed them on the pole which was purposely made in the villa. Since then, they have been displayed there until now. Saionji presented Clemenceau carp streamers for the following reasons. Clemenceau was his best friend at Sorbonne University, where Saionji was studying abroad from 1871 to 1880. Saionji knew that Clemenceau was very interested in oriental art, especially Japanese culture. Both of them became politicians representing their countries and reunited with a historic conference to discuss the realization of world peace after World War I. After the Paris Peace Conference, the League of Nations was established as an international peace organization. In that sense, Koinobori were displayed due to the human relationship between Saionji and Clemenceau, who intervened in a historical conference aimed at achieving world peace in the early 20th century. It can be said Koinobori would be a symbol of world peace and international exchange.

A notable fact in the history of Japan's Koinobori activities with a view to international exchange can be pointed out as the establishment of the "International Goodwill 'Koi-nobori'"

Society" in March 1934. The English booklet about the society was published, and it describes the purpose and content of the activities of this society, the meaning and history of Koinobori, the background of the society, the motives for establishing the society, etc. This society requests cooperation in peace-seeking activities. The idea and activities of Eiichi Doi (1909.9.17-1933.9.9), a student of the Faculty of Law and Literature, Tohoku University, drove the establishment of this society. Eiichi's father was Bansui Doi (1871-1952). Eiichi had been deeply interested in world peace and international friendship since he was a child. From junior high school, he enthusiastically studied Esperanto, an international common language created by Zamenhof in the hope of world peace. He began interacting with people from other countries by exchanging letters and information. It seemed to him that the sincere love for one's own country would inevitably create a love for humanity and peace. Furthermore, in the situation where the Manchurian Incident of armed conflict occurred between Japan and China after the Liutiaohu Incident on the South Manchuria Railway on September 18, 1931, he became keenly aware of the need for an attempt by the people of the world to correctly understand the true heart of the Japanese. In addition, his sister Teruko (1906-1932), who cooperated with Eiichi's international friendship activities, prayed for world peace before her death and advised on activities to send Koinobori to children around the world.

Eiichi's most familiar international correspondence friend was Johannes Schroder. He was the principal of an elementary school in Marbach, Germany. While deepening Esperanto exchanges with him, he sent Koinobori to his elementary school. The children were very pleased, displayed the Koinobori in the sky of Germany, and sent many letters of appreciation. He was impressed that the meaning of Koinobori, symbolizing the patience and courage to create children's growth and happiness, was also understood by them. He had a strong belief that promoting world peace through this exchange experience would require the spirituality common to the patience and courage symbolized by Koinobori.

Based on the social situation at that time and the activities of international exchange so far, He prayed for the establishment of the "International Goodwill 'Koi-nobori' Society" whose mission was world peace. However, he had been injured since junior high school and died of tuberculosis on September 9, 1933 while he was in school. The society was established in March of the year following Eiichi's death with the support of his father, Bansui who wanted to promote Eiichi's vision and activities permanently. The following people were participating as officers of the society: Yoshinori Futara (1886-1967) Member of the House of Lords, Chairman of the Scout Association of Japan, Masaharu Anezaki (1873-1949) Professor Emeritus of Tokyo Imperial University, Takakusu Junjiro (1866-1945) Buddhist scholar, Gunpei Yamamuro (1872-1940) Salvation Army officer, Eisaku Wada (1874-1959) Principal of Tokyo Academy of Fine Arts, Soichi Saito (1886-1960) General Secretary of YMCA, Yotaro Sugimura (1884-1939) Former Deputy Secretary-General of the League of Nations,

Ambassador of Italy, Sakusaburo Uchigasaki (1877-1947) Member of the House of Representatives, Yusuke Tsurumi (1885-1973) Writer and lecturer, Toyohiko Kagawa (1888-1960) Pastor and writer, and Kenkichi Yoshizawa (1874-1965) Former Foreign Minister. In this way, prominent politicians, educators, scholars, religions, writers, and others held many meetings at that time to discuss the establishment and activities of the society. Then it started an activity to give Koinobori as a message of peace to many children in the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and the United States.

Through these activities, letters of support for Koinobori activity and the promotion of world peace have been sent from all over the world. In the social situation where World War II occurred in the history of Japan, the "International Goodwill 'Koi-nobori' Society" was established to sustainably realize the idea of world peace and international exchange with the people of the world. The historical fact itself of the activity of sending Koinobori as a message of world peace to the world was a marvelous fact. In that sense, Koinobori activity of the "International Goodwill 'Koi-nobori' Society" had the significance of playing a cultural role as a symbol of world peace and international goodwill toward the world, which was based on traditional Koinobori events.

International exchange, including Koinobori activity, began to flourish after the liberalization of overseas travel in April 1964. Since the 1990s when Japan's economic development and cultural interest have increased, the number of Japanese traveling abroad has increased. The overseas expansion of Japanese companies has become prominent. In this way the exchanges with people from many countries have expanded and evolved. They have been promoted in various forms such as exchanges between individuals, families, schools, businesses, public organizations, and governments. Under these circumstances, Koinobori activities have also been carried out in a wide variety of forms. For example, in 1992, they were displayed in Antarctica by the 32nd Antarctic Research Expedition. In 1996 there was a Japanese designer "Koinobori" fashion show at the Paris Collection. In 1999 they were displayed in the Japanese garden of the Schönburg court in Vienna. In 2003 they were displayed in Paris as Koinobori activity sponsored by the "French-Japanese Cultural Center". They were exhibited at an exhibition of contemporary art held as a cultural exchange between Turkey and Japan in 2003, displayed at the Great Wall of China in 2007, displayed in Bhutan in 2012 with gratitude for support for the Great East Japan Earthquake.

These activities are divided into two activities. One is the activity of displaying Koinobori. The other is an activity of utilizing and designing a carp streamer. Therefore, Koinobori, the carp streamer activity, has been used not only for displaying Koinobori as a traditional culture but also for various purposes as a living culture.

Among such various Koinobori activities, the activities sponsored by the "Japan-France Cultural Center" can be praised. This activity was prompted by Sachiko Hattori who was the

Director of the French - Japanese Cultural Center in Paris. It had been held for the healthy growth of children around the world and world peace since 2003. She had worked with UNESCO to make the Koinobori day in Japan the Koinobori day in the world. The activity was a humanitarian and cultural project that wished for a bright future of children who would lead the 21st century. She had displayed Koinobori in Paris and French regional cities to introduce Japanese culture and carry out various activities for international exchange. Through such activities in which Koinobori were swimming in the sky of Paris from the Eiffel Tower, the word "Koi Nobori" has become the watchword of "peace" in France and has been recognized as an international celebration. In that sense, Koinobori is meant not only as an activity as a domestic traditional event, but also as an activity of cultural exchange and cultural creation in the world.

### **3 "Koinobori" swimming as a global cultural symbol**

The Association for the Wa Culture Education which has been carrying out the activity of "Let's fly Koinobori up toward the sky" which promotes the project of Koinobori as a global cultural symbol in the face of the corona infection problem since last year. We have been developing the activity of "Let's fly Koinobori up toward the sky" in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011. With the advice of former Chairman Tetsuo Yamaori, this activity asked, "What role does culture play in social crisis situations caused by natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis?" As introduced on the website of the Association, we have promoted displays of Koinobori at schools in each region in prayer for the regional reconstruction of eastern Japan and the vitality of children. (September 2011 Hakuho Award for Understanding Japanese Culture)

We have been carrying out Koinobori activities with Hyogo University of Teacher Education as a form of disaster recovery support in 2011, at Kwansai Gakuin University with "Wishing for Tohoku and the World" from 2013, and at the Expo '70 Memorial Park in hopes of promoting world peace and cultural exchange in 2019. There are several driving forces for this Koinobori activity. The first is the cultural power to recover from the earthquake. The second is the idea and activities of the "International Goodwill 'Koi-nobori' Society" in hope of promoting world peace. In addition to this idea, it is also a driving force that Koinobori was first displayed at the Japanese garden of the Vienna Expo in the world. After that, at the Chicago World's Fair held in 1893, it was displayed in front of the Japan Pavilion, which was built with the Byodoin Phoenix Hall as a model. Furthermore, Koinobori was displayed at the Osaka Expo held in 1970. Taro Okamoto also made Koinobori at the time of the Osaka Expo. Koinobori activity at Expo'70 Commemorative Park on May 1st, 1st year of Reiwa "Pray for world peace and cultural exchange in the sky" were carried out. We were planning to carry out Koinobori activity for "for children" with children on May 5th, 2020, too. However, due to the

problem of corona infection, Koinobori activity in the second year of Reiwa was canceled. The spread of this corona infection all over the world is the direct motive of the Global Cultural Symbol Koinobori Project.

The problem of the coronavirus is different from previous global issues such as peace, environment, disasters, human rights, poverty, and population. Every person in the world is directly involved. Furthermore, this situation is mainly understood from the perceptual aspects of personal actions such as death of patients, increases in infected people, business suspension and behavior regulation. This kind of understanding is different from the understanding of social and natural disasters that we experienced during the Great East Japan Earthquake. In that sense, there is little real understanding that the current situation should be regarded as a global crisis in which social and cultural activities based on human bonds are at risk of being destroyed by the coronavirus. Furthermore, it can be foreseen that the damage and obstacles caused by the invisible coronavirus are cultivated in the world of our own invisible hearts and the wounds of each heart suppurate and create a global crisis in various forms. This situation is particularly difficult for children who are forced to live at home because their education according to their developmental age is interrupted. There is a risk that their physical and mental growth will be distorted.

As a response to such a global crisis situation, it is possible to create, personally and socially, a future-oriented cultural creative engagement. It can be said that one of the activities of this cultural creative involvement is the Global Cultural Symbol Koinobori Project. It is significant not only for individuals but for every one in the world to create new social and cultural activities by stitching together the ties of many people through Koinobori activities aimed at the idea of world peace and cultural exchange.

The purpose of our project in the future is the following three goals.

① **Implementation at the Osaka / Kansai 2025 Expo.**

This activity is related to the involvement of cultural exchanges around the world and the ongoing activity development at Expo '70 Commemorative Park.

② **Implementation at New York United Nations Headquarters.**

This activity is related to the prayer for world peace.

③ **Implementation in schools in developing countries including Afghanistan.**

This activity is related to world peace and cultural exchange. Dr. Tetsu Nakamura had been working in Afghanistan with the belief that "Article 9 is the backbone". (My surname is the same as his surname. I was a member of the Peshawar Association and met him.) He was also interested in supporting school education. This goal relates to supporting many developing countries in the world, not just Afghanistan.

Furthermore, by promoting these activities, it can be expected that this project can take on the challenge of creating diverse cultures. This project has inherited the idea of "The

International Goodwill ‘Koi-nobori’ Society” proposed by Eiichi Doi and the various issues related to SDGs in the modern world. It can be said that there is significance in sustainably building the future world through the approach of cultural creation activities as a Global Cultural Symbol Koinobori. The activity at the beginning of this project which has such significance is an attempt to draw a future-oriented view of Koinobori from a personal and social perspective. The supporters of this project have received support and cooperation from many people, including Professor Tetsuo Yamaori, the first president of our association and Professor Eiichi Kajita, the second president of our association. Based on this purpose, this project is carrying out sustainable activities with the above-mentioned main purpose in mind.

We would like to ask for your support and cooperation in developing this project. If you would like to cooperate with this project, please support us by purchasing Koinobori as follows. If you send the created Koinobori to the secretariat, it will be posted at the Koinobori activities held at the Expo'70 Commemorative Park (Suita City) every May.

**Details:**

Project support Koinobori types and unit prices

- ① White carp streamer (70 cm) Domestic: 300 yen per streamer (including shipping)  
Oversees: \$3 per streamer (shipping fee not included)
- ② Color carp streamer (70 cm, blue, purple, green)  
Domestic: 500 yen per streamer (including shipping)  
Oversees: \$5 per streamer (shipping fee not included)

Please contact the secretariat by e-mail etc. with the type and number you wish to purchase. If you purchase 10 or more streamers, the shipping fee and unit price will be cheaper. For more information, we will contact the applicant.

Project representative: Tetsu Nakamura (President of the Association for the Wa Culture Education, Visiting Professor of Momoyama Gakuin College of Education, Professor Emeritus of Hyogo University of Teacher Education)

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