

## JENESYS 2018 Report

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Theme: History, Culture, and Peace-building, in Tokyo and Nagasaki.

The JENESYS Programme was a comprehensive survey of Japanese society and heritage. As a member of the History, Culture, and Peace-building group, I experienced a plethora of quintessentially Japanese sites and activities which have broadened my understanding of Japanese culture and contemporary lifestyle.

Our programme began in Tokyo, where we participated in our Orientation at the Olympic Centre, built for the 1964 Olympic Games and now used for facilitating youth programmes such as JENESYS. This inspiring session prompted students to consider our role as cultural ambassadors for our own country in Japan, and for Japan after our return home. The take-home message was that we, as future young leaders of the Pacific, have the potential, and the impetus, to work together to form interpersonal bonds despite cultural differences. This was followed by a visit to Toyo University, where we pondered questions about peace, international relations, and sports, in groups with students from Toyo university. The differing opinions of whether our countries were peaceful, and what needs to be done in preparation for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, revealed biases and caused me to reconsider my own stance on such issues in a thoughtful, reflective manner.

The following morning, our group flew to Nagasaki, the city globally associated with the second atomic bomb, dropped at 11:02am on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August, 1945, at the end of WWII. However, our first site visits in the city harked back to an earlier period in history, concerning the arrival of the Christian missionaries in the sixteenth century. These Christians, persecuted for their religion, were tortured and killed by the ruling Shogunate as the Edo period began, coinciding with the closure of the country to outside visitors. We visited the effigy of the twenty-six Christian martyrs who refused to reject their faith and were murdered. They were forced to walk, in winter, barefoot, from Kyoto to Nagasaki, and were then killed, for they would not renounce their faith. These religious atrocities are by no means confined to the ancient echoes of the past – the current crisis in the Middle East is born of, and continues to be defined by, religious extremism.

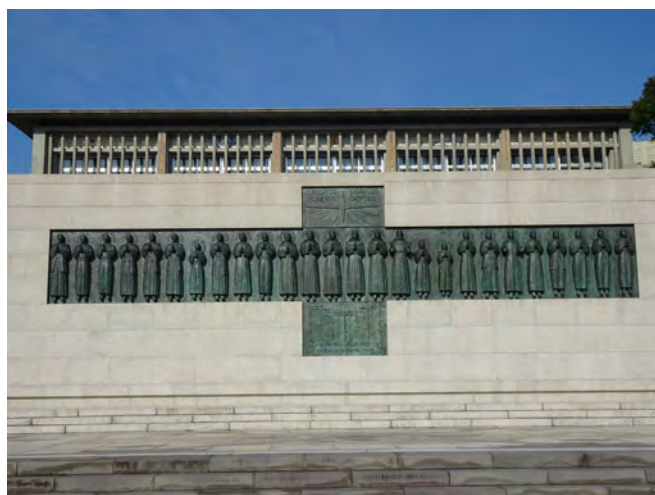
We visited Megane Bridge, named for its impression of a pair of spectacles when paired with its own reflection in the still waters of the



*The Olympic Centre, where the Orientation and Presentations were held.*



*A statue of the founder of Toyo University, Enryō Inoue.*



*The Twenty-six Martyrs of Japan are immortalised in this monument in Nagasaki.*

canal it spans, and learnt of the importance of the Chinese stonemasons who built it, and many other bridges along the oft-flooding river. These culminated in a statue of a dragon, the river, with a boy, representing China, and a girl, representing Japan, seated on its back, on the footpath beside the bridge.

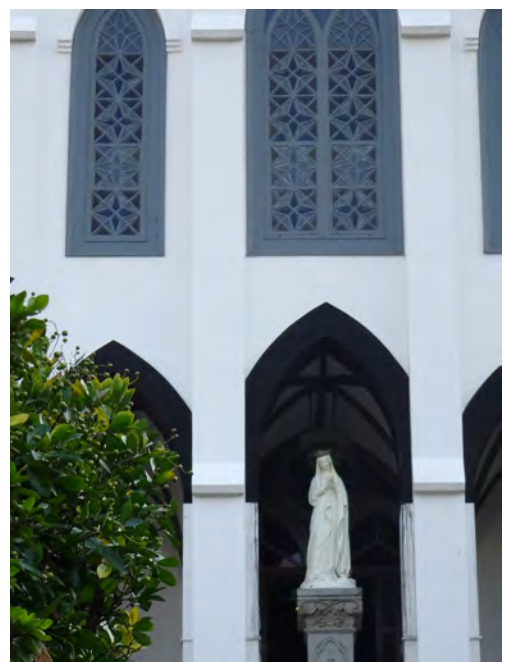
We then visited Oura Church, the first Christian church built in Japan (1865), and passed through the neighbouring seminary, now a museum. The church itself was of contemporary Catholic design, simply built to appeal to the small base of local Christians. Like the nuns we saw on pilgrimage, this visit was a journey in which we discovered the multicultural, and indeed, multi-theist, people and history of Nagasaki.

An early evening venture to Mount Inasa, famed for its spectacular night scenes of Nagasaki City, yielded a birds-eye view of the port city. This experience gave participants perspective on Nagasaki's current state as a major city on Kyūshū, with panoramic views as the sunset blossomed over the horizon.

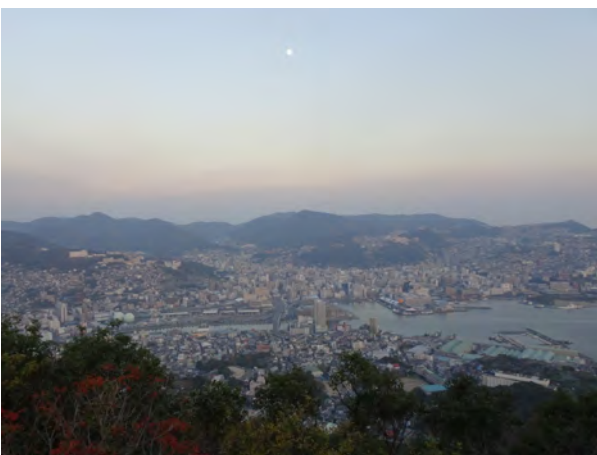
The following morning, we made the sobering visit to the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, the Hypocenter Park, and the Peace Park. The Japanese perspective on the plutonium bomb dropped on Nagasaki on that fateful day in 1945 is very different from the impression I had of the bombing. Previously, I thought the bombing occurred because of Nagasaki's tactical importance in being a major port city. However, the visit to the museum revealed that Nagasaki was not the primary target – the original target, Kokura, being obscured by cloud. This internal conflict was visible in the exhibitions of the museum, with mutilated religious icons, both Christian and Japanese in origin, being displayed side by side with mundane objects like clocks, clothes, and cookware. Above all, the message from the museum was



*Megane Bridge, built by Chinese stonemasons.*



*The entrance to Oura Church, including a statue of the Virgin Mary.*



*A view of Nagasaki City and Port from Mount Inasa.*



*Strings of cranes, representing peace, at the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum.*

that Hiroshima and Nagasaki should be the first and the last cities to suffer the effects of an atomic bomb.

We walked through the Hypocenter Park containing a section of earth, preserved with broken pottery through it, and a section of a broken cathedral wall erected as a monument to victims. Near this was a monolith, the stone pointing towards the heavens, marking the precise point, five hundred metres above, where “Fat Man” exploded. This monument, darkly coloured, serves as a stark reminder, in the middle of Nagasaki City, that the bomb’s utter devastation is inextricably linked to the city’s modern image and origins.

The neighbouring Peace Park welcomed visitors with a bright array of flowers, leading up the stairs, to an avenue along which different regions of Japan, and indeed countries from around the world, have donated statues representing their pledge for a peaceful world. The fountain at the top of the stairs framed the imposing Peace Statue of a man, poised, ready for action, at the end of the avenue. This inspiring park, built in remembrance of deceased and an earnest prayer for global peace, highlighted the international, uniting desires of goodwill, international cooperation and an absence of war.

This was the afternoon in which we met our host families. We were hosted in groups of three to five students, at families in and around the Nagasaki countryside. This retreat to peaceful solitude for two nights was a time for us to reflect on the busy sightseeing of the previous three days. With another host family, we were able to paint a plate and a cup each, in whatever design we liked. Our plates were later brought to us in Nagasaki hotel after being fired a few days later. Our host mother cooked wonderful meals for us, showed us around her garden and house, which her husband had built. During our full day with her, we walked the dog, Asahi, tasted homemade sesame cookies, visited the seaside and a small shrine on a rocky outcrop to a sea god, and enjoyed a lovely evening with our feet kept toasty warm by the *kotatsu*, a low table with a heater in the alcove below for people to place their feet in. There were tears when we farewelled our host families at the bus the following morning, and we sang a *waiata*, a traditional Māori song.

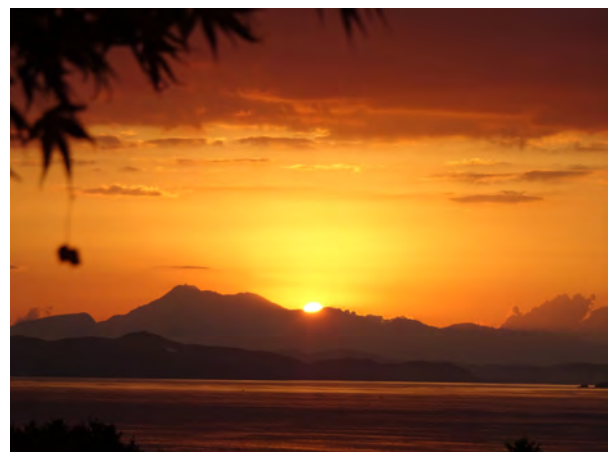
During the afternoon, we were fortunate enough to be able to make the most of a local town, Arita, famed for its exquisite porcelain. This excursion was not in our original plan, but on this particular day, traditional activities surrounding porcelain production were able to be views by the public. We visited a traditional, wood-fired kiln on the final



*Five hundred metres above this monolith, the plutonium bomb exploded above Nagasaki at 11:02am on the ninth of August, 1945.*



*The Peace Statue in Nagasaki's Peace Park, framed by the a fountain.*



*The sunrise from the veranda of our host family's house.*



*A signpost in Arita, a region famed for its porcelain production.*



*A traditional wood-fired kiln, lit and open for public viewing once a year, in Arita.*

day of firing, at approximately 1,300°C, where the flames were visible in the top chimneys and huge stacks of kindling lay ready to be fed to the flames. The hundreds of pieces of porcelain inside would become intricately painted works of art. The kiln is lit three or four times a year, but is only open to the public once a year. We continued our tour of the Arita porcelain district by visiting a painting workshop, where we viewed artists painting intricate designs on dozens of tiny plates, potters shaping vases and cups on wheels, and a selection of museum-quality porcelain in their shop.

This was followed by a visit to the origin of porcelain, to the local quarry where the Korean porcelain-makers chose to settle due to the high-quality clay found in the local area. This too, was open only on this particular day of the year, and we were able to walk down a four hundred year old earth bridge to view the tunnels from which the clay originated. The quarry was a remarkable display of Japanese industry, despite its humble and natural appearance, exuding an air of peace from the bustling streets of Nagasaki and Arita, which was currently holding a fair to coincide with the many open days of porcelain-related industries.

We then explored Arita itself, roaming the main street, and the traditional street running parallel to it. Many participants went shopping, and also made an excursion to the local shrine, where we observed a pair of girls visiting the shrine as part of the *Shichi-Go-San* festival (seven-five-three festival, where children visit the local shrine in traditional dress). This traditional cultural practice, still actively celebrated by many Japanese families, was wonderful to observe. It showed how important it is to maintain traditional festivals in an ever-changing world. The day ended with a visit to the Arita Porcelain Park, populated with German-inspired buildings. It was interesting to see



*A local shrine in Arita, viewed through the tori (gate).*



*A recreation of the Zwinger Palace (Germany), in the Arita Porcelain Park.*

how European architecture had been used in a Japanese fashion for entertainment purposes.

The following morning, we were able to discuss local history and culture with students of Nagasaki University, at the Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition. This unique department facilitated discussions between the students, and encouraged students to share their opinions in the form of a presentation at the end of the session. After a quick lunch in Nagasaki's traditional Chinatown, we visited Dejima, the man-made island where the Dutch and Portuguese traders lived during the Edo Period's isolation policy (1633-1853). These traders were under close supervision by the Japanese, and the reconstructed houses with mini-museums inside were fascinating. It was rather strange to be walking around a historical island surrounded by modern buildings, as the surrounding land had been reclaimed, leaving only a small moat around Dejima itself.

Having missed Glover Garden during our visit to the Arita region, we visited the park filled with early European houses from the late 1800s in the late afternoon. The serene combination of walking paths, laid out on the side of a hill and accessed via a moving walkway, with various historic houses holding information on the original inhabitants lives, was very peaceful as the sun slowly set. Thomas Glover, for whom the park was named after, and whose original property on which the garden stands, was an influential British trader who supplied munitions to factions during Bakumatsu period, and assisted Japanese youths to travel abroad to study.

The next day, we flew to Tokyo, where we visited Sensōji Temple, in Asakusa. This large temple, famed for its huge red lanterns at the gates, was packed with tourists. The smoke from the burning incense was cloying, and in the centre of a cluster of people, as it is believed to be imbibed with healing properties. With another New Zealander, I slipped down a quieter side street to go to the tourist information centre, from the upper floors of which a marvellous view of the surrounding area could be obtained, from the Sky Tree to Sensōji Temple and all the buildings beyond. We shifted off the beaten path to side streets less travelled, and found a variety of little local shops, rather than the brands aimed at tourists.



*A recreated house on Dejima.*



*Glover House, in Glover Garden.*



*The large lantern at the gate in Sensoji, Asakusa.*

In the morning, we prepared for our reporting session, where we shared our experiences as the History, Culture and Peace-building group, with the Sports, and Disaster Prevention and Recovery groups. This was an excellent way of summing up the programme, where we were able to think critically and reflect on all our experiences over the past week. In the presentation that afternoon, we shared our experiences on the trip, explaining Nagasaki's history and defined culture as a trade centre for centuries. The final section of the organised programme was to present our cultural performances in our three groups. Ours was a selection of songs and dances from around the Pacific, displaying each country represented by our group members and their traditional arts. We also enjoyed the other groups' performances.

On the day we were due to leave Japan, our coordinators had a surprise in store for us – they had planned a visit to Meiji Jingu, Harajuku, and Tokyo Tower, as almost all the students were leaving Japan in the evening. In the morning, we went to one of the largest, and most sacred, shrines in Japan, built to remember Emperor Meiji, who led the modernisation of Japan. After walking through the quiet parkland surrounding the shrine, we were at Harajuku, a small district in Tokyo famed for its outlandish fashion and youth culture. As it was a Tuesday morning, the closest we got to the fashionable youths were various shops along Takeshita Street selling goth clothing. The visit was short, as we were to have lunch before going to Tokyo Tower, the old radio tower. The Tokyo Tower was built in 1958, and many people bought televisions in order to see the wedding procession of the marriage between the current emperor, Akihito, and a commoner, Michiko Shōda, in 1959.

We said a tearful goodbye in the car park underneath the Tokyo Tower, with many hugs and a farewell song from the Rotuman members of the groups. The New Zealanders then boarded a bus to Narita Airport, Tokyo, and began their trip home.

The JENESYS 2018 Programme was a marvellous opportunity for students interested in Japan to engage with a variety of aspects of Japanese culture. University students, some majoring in Japanese, others with proven interest in Japan, benefitted greatly from the trip. We visited all manner of local and international attractions, gaining insight into Japanese culture, and benefitting from the local knowledge of our coordinator, translator, and even our bus driver! These personal connections we made, with our Japanese and Pacific friends, will endure for years, all founded on a wonderful trip to the Land of the Rising Sun.



*One of the inner gates to Meiji Jingu, with the shrine behind.*



*The Sky Tree, and on the right, the headquarters of Asahi, the beer brewing company.*