



Sino-Japanese Youth Conference 2015

Date: 24th July – 30th July, 2015

Main Venue: Li Po Chun United World College, Hong Kong

Author: Harry Chan

Photographs by SJYC organisers

Introduction

The Sino-Japanese Youth Conference (or SJYC) is an annual conference held in the Li Po Chun United World College in Hong Kong since 2009. This year's conference was held from 24th July to 30th July, bringing 33 participants in total, with 5 from Hong Kong, 13 from Mainland China and 15 from Japan. This year's topic is about fairness and equality. The week was tightly packed with lectures, sight-seeing and cultural experiencing. Although the activities were tiring, we enjoyed the time that we spent together.

The Application

It was one day on May when Miss Wong introduced this conference to me. I went on the Internet in order to learn more about it and downloaded the application form. Reading through it, I realised I had to answer a number of difficult questions such as 'Why do you think Sino-Japanese relations are constantly experiencing ups and downs?' Frankly, I was scared by these questions and I felt I could never do them justice. I sat on my chair for hours staring at the screen, having no idea what to do, and I even thought of not joining at all. After considering for a long time on whether or not to attend the conference, I took a deep breath and decided to try my best and complete the application by searching for information online. The results were horrible and I felt my answers were weird. I thought to myself, 'There was no way that I would be selected as one of the participants.'

On 12th July I received an incredible e-mail, which began with, 'Congratulations!' I was overjoyed when I received this e-mail; I can't believe I was selected to join the SJYC 2015!

Because I originally had no hopes of being part of the conference, I actually did not have many expectations on the conference. I was just looking forward to have some fun and meet some new friends instead of knowing other countries' cultures.

Highlights of SJYC

1. Opening Ceremony

This was the first official event in the seven-day conference. All participants were required to wear traditional costumes belonging to their country/region. The sight of Japanese men wearing kimonos were new and exciting for me. The organisers sang and danced, and even performed a dragon dance for us. We enjoyed their performances and had a great dinner with Chinese and Western food. As it was the first time we met other participants, we were mostly a little bit shy. One of the organisers then said "I am certain all of you will not be that quiet and shy at the end of the conference." The atmosphere eventually led us to start talking to each other and to learn more from them.

2. Cultural experiencing

We spent a whole day on experiencing others' cultures (cultures of Hong Kong, Mainland China and Japan). We found out that there are many cultural differences between China and Japan. For example, the number '8' is considered good in China in China but not in Japan. We learnt to play simple tricks in performing dragon dancing too! There was also a game which let us know more about both countries in different aspects, such as pop-culture, trivia, social life, and painting. I learnt many new things on that day and the knowledge I gained will stay with me forever.

3. Exploring Hong Kong

We spent another day exploring the city of Hong Kong as we split into groups. As I was the only participant from Hong Kong in my group, I acted as a tour guide. We had missions to finish in different places in Hong Kong. I introduced many different special places and food to them. I actually felt a little embarrassed because some of the places were not that familiar to me. Therefore, I have to search from the net to see where the checkpoints are.

4. Setting Up a Booth

On the second to last day, we went to Kowloon Public Pier and set up a booth to introduce SJYC to the public. We used coloured paper to fold many paper cranes and gave them to the public. We also drew a poster to show what we had learnt. Some of our group members even wore traditional costumes to introduce SJYC to people who passed by. We had set up some little games for them to know more about the cultural differences between China and Japan. This was challenging

because there were lots of people unwilling to stop their fast pace and listen to us in this busy city. Waiting for people to stop by really tested our patience.

5. Closing Ceremony

After 6 days in the conference, all the groups had to perform in front of all of participants and organisers. Our group decided to perform four dances, including Chinese and Japanese styles. There were also groups performing different martial arts, such as Tai Chi and Karate. It was the best night I have ever experienced. The atmosphere was bubbling with energy and we were reluctant to leave. As a result, we took photos and selfies with others. It has only been six days since we met, but we never want this to end; we asked others for their contact information, hoping to have a chance to meet again.

6. Spending the Nights in the Day-room

The Day-room, as the name suggests, is a room where the day would never end. We spent our time chatting, playing card games with others until mid-night. It was like an extra day for us to have fun with others. It was just like a little society; we brought traditional foods from our homes and shared with others. I learnt new games from Mainland China and Japan. It was another kind of precious experience I had during the conference. It helped us to know even more about each other's cultures. We missed each other so much; as a result, we spent our time in the day-room until 4 a.m. on the last night.

7. Farewell

The last day is actually for farewell. We accompanied the Japanese and Chinese participants to the bus station for their shuttle to the airport. This was the last 'event' we did, and we missed each other so much. I left the Li Po Chun United World College with other Hong Kong participants on the last minute. I stepped out of the gate, feeling a tinge of sadness as the knowledge that the conference had ended sank in.

Feelings of joining SJYC

SJYC has largely broadened my horizons. I saw more different kind of people. Many of them very smart, even smarter and more capable than I had ever imagined. In addition, there is a Japanese boy who knows about acupuncture. This surprised me because even a Chinese may not know much about it! He has also learnt Chinese for 10 years! I now know that just having a good result in school or even in DSE is

not enough, we should also learn some techniques, not for showing off, but for equipping ourselves for other challenges in life.

In addition, I was very happy to meet so many new good friends through this conference. If I had succumbed to my lack of assuredness and had not hand in the application, I would not have had these precious memories and good friends. All of us should treasure every chance and opportunity that arises, because who knows what might happen if you joined? Equipping ourselves fully, showing the best we have and treasuring every chance are ways that lead us to success.

In conclusion, I highly recommend the Sino-Japanese Youth Conference especially to F.3–5 students.