





Text: Vaida Tumosaitė

English language editor: Jaq Greenspon

Design: Judita Židžiūnienė

Photos: Jonas Petronis, Gintarė Sinkevičiūtė, Judita Židžiūnienė, students clubs.

VMU Centre for Asian Studies

V. Putvinskio st. 23-417/418,

Kaunas LT-44243

Lithuania

Tel: +370 37 331323

Page: asc.vdu.lt

© VMU Centre for Asian Studies, 2019



GREETING

Welcome to Lithuania
Kaunas
Vytautas Magnus University
Centre for Asian Studies!

Established after the reestablishment of Lithuanian independence, the Centre for Asian Studies at VDU is a small team of young researchers and administrators with a short history and limited possibilities. Nevertheless, we are proud of our small efforts and achievements. During 20 years of development, we have launched successful studies programs, created new, important resources, established close ties with dozens of East Asian universities, and become an important and visible part of Kaunas city life.

Our Centre's main object is to showcase Asia from the perspective of humanities and social sciences, with an emphasis on the modern trends of Asian politics, economy, society, and culture. At this time, we are concentrating on the East Asian region.

In our activities, we concentrate on the following five tasks:

- To conduct **research** in the field of East Asia studies, in cooperation with other foreign academic institutions, and to spread this academic knowledge through academic events and publications;
- To promote **cultural knowledge** on East Asian cultures among members of Lithuanian society through educational and cultural events;
- To **teach** the University's students the subjects of East Asian cultures, languages, society, politics, and economics through study programs and public lectures;
- To collect and expand **library funds** on Asian countries, located in the Centre's Asian Books Space;
- To develop and maintain a **network of international partners** in East Asia and Europe.

Sincerely, Dr Aurelijus Zykas
Head of the Centre for Asian Studies 2008–2019

HISTORY



1993–95 – Assoc. Prof. Dr Ryo Kojima taught Japanese language and a course on Japan's history, society, and culture at the University. He was the first lecturer from an Asian country to teach at VMU;

1996 – Japanese language education begun with the initiative of lecturer Arvydas Ališauskas;

2001 – The official establishment of the Japanese Studies Centre. It was moved to the historical building (Vaižganto st 30, Kaunas) of the Japanese pre-war consulate where Vice-consul Ch. Sugihara worked and issued visas for Jewish refugees in 1940. During that time, the main activities of the Centre were Japanese language and culture education;

2006–2016 – Academic periodical *International Journal of Area Studies* (until 2013 – *Regioninės studijos*) concentrating on different regions of the world was published by de Gruyter;

February 2007 – The first Introduction to Korean Language course held;

September 2007 – New Masters programme for *East Asian Region Studies* (political science) was launched with the cooperation of the Regional Studies Department of the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy;

September 2007 – A continuing Chinese language course was started;

Since November 2007 – Annual international academic conferences are being organised. The conferences have received financial support from different East Asia Foundations;

January 2008 – Dr Aurelijus Zykas appointed head of the Centre;

November 2008 – The *Chiune Sugihara Reading Room* (part of the VMU Library) was established on the premises of the Centre.

2008–2009 – Annual Summer Schools on Japanese and Korean culture were organised;

November 2009 – the Japanese Studies Centre changed its name to Centre for Asian Studies and became a part of the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy;

September 2012 – New Bachelor's degree programme in *East Asian Cultures and Languages* was launched;

March 2013 – Taiwan Centre was established with the cooperation of the Taipei Mission in Latvia;

October 2014 – *VMU Asia Week* was launched, becoming the biggest annual event organized by our Centre;

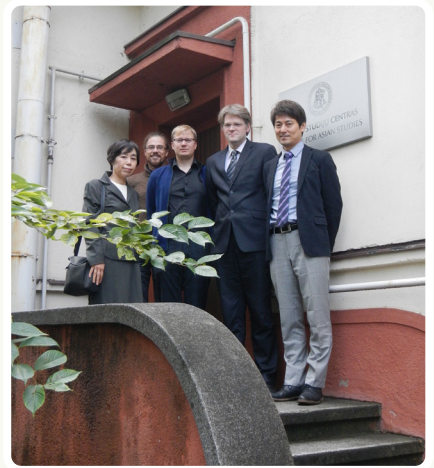
Since 2015 – Centre for Asian Studies has been carrying out R&D as well as conducting applied research for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Embassy of Japan, Embassy of Peoples Republic of China, etc.;

September 2016 – Centre for Asian Studies was integrated into the Faculty of Humanities and moved to new premises, the Multifunctional Centre of VMU (Putvinskio st 23, 419/420, Kaunas), where it is located at this time;

September 2016 – The funds of the 'Chiune Sugihara Reading Room' were moved to the VDU Main Library, where the 'Asian Books Space' (ABS) was created;

March 2017 – The Global Japan Office (GJO) was established in cooperation with Tokyo University of Foreign Studies;

October 2018 – The King Sejong Institute was established in Kaunas by the Korean Government.



RESEARCH

The research activities of the Centre for Asian Studies started in 2004 and consisted mainly of Japanese studies. Since 2008, Korean and Chinese studies have been gradually introduced, expanding the research spectrum of the Centre. The main topics of the Centre's researchers are concentrated on cultural and political processes in East Asia.



The Centre initiates and conducts numerous **research projects**, with the aim of creating an international research network, organise annual conferences and symposiums, and publish research results. Our biggest supporters are Toshiba International Foundation, Japan Foundation, Suntory Foundation, Taipei Mission, etc.

Since 2007, the Centre has been organising international academic **conferences** and symposiums. By 2018, the Centre had organised 12 international conferences, which place in the VMU Small Hall and attract scholars from all around the globe. In 2018, the 49th International EAJRS conference '(G)localizing Japanese Studies Resources' was hosted by our Centre.

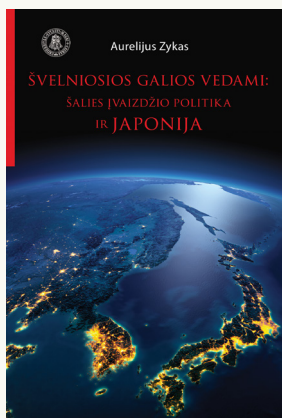
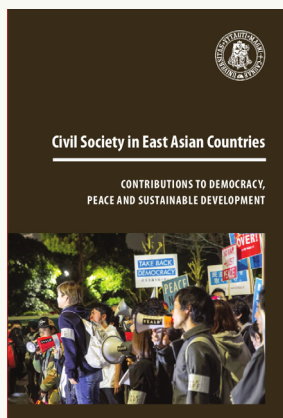
In addition, the Centre constantly issues **publications** related to its research activities and covering a broad range of topics, from politics to culture. Through 2018, our organisation has published:

- *Civil Society in East Asian Countries: Contributions to Democracy, Peace and Sustainable Development*, 2018. Chief editor: Dr Linas Didvalis;
- *Lead by Soft Power: Communication of country's image and Japan*, 2017. Author: Dr. Aurelijus Zykas;
- *East Asian Studies in Lithuania*, 2012. Chief editor: Dr Aurelijus Zykas;
- *Reception of Japanese and Korean Popular Culture in Europe*, 2011. Chief editor: Dr. Kyoko Koma;
- *Japan as Represented in the European Media. Its Analytical Methodologies and Theories – in Comparison with Korean Cases*, 2011. Chief editor: Dr Kyoko Koma;
- *Representations of the Japanese Fashion Designers in France and Japan – Through the Discourse Analysis of the French and Japanese Newspapers (1981-1992)*, 2009. Author: Dr Kyoko Koma;
- *Image of Japan in Europe*, 2008. Chief editor: Dr Kyoko Koma.

As our goal is that the results of our research have a wider reach in society, we sometimes create non-traditional resources that are more accessible and appealing. In this aspect, one of our newest developments is creating **documentary movies**. In 2018, the Centre for Asian Studies launched *Kaunas, the City of Sugihara and Japan*, a documentary which presents the results of long-lasting research. The history of Kaunas-Japan relations is portrayed through the point of view of four individuals who, prior to World War II, became bridges between the two countries. The movie was created by Dr Aurelijus Zykas, Dr Linas Didvalis, and Kristijonas Jakubsonas. 20 scholars and politicians participated in the shooting of the film in both Lithuania and Japan.

Partners and sponsors of the movie: Toshiba International Foundation, Global Japan Office, ProConf and Kaunas City Municipality.

More information: facebook.com/KaunasJaponija



INTERNET RESOURCES

The successful creation of new resources is just one of the achievements we are proud about. In our activities, we believe that now, in the 21st Century, even more emphasis should be placed on electronic resources. As we have a positive experience working with electronic resources, we think issues related to digitalisation, global access, e-publications, and adopting resources to local needs and environments should be actively discussed and solved.

Asianstudies.lt

The website *Azijos studijos Lietuvoje* (*Asian studies in Lithuania*), launched in 2012, is an electronic database, which stores and collects information about Asian studies in Lithuania. There you can find data about scholars, travellers, educators, and translators working in this field of study. You can also obtain useful information about various books, library funds, art collections, and dissertations related to Asian

countries. The latest news on academic and cultural events is also available via this website. The mission of this project is to promote Asian studies in Lithuania.

Page: asianstudies.lt/en

Facebook page: facebook.com/asianstudies.lt



Japonukalba.vdu.lt

The website *Japonų kalba VDU* (*Japanese language at VMU*), launched in 2012, offers free online Japanese language lessons, based on the widely recognised Japanese Language Proficiency Test standards (JLPT). The self-study lessons are ideal for beginners. They cover the basics of grammar, reading, writing, and listening. Each lesson

not only helps to expand one's vocabulary but also provides additional knowledge about Japanese culture.

Page: japonukalba.vdu.lt

Facebook page: facebook.com/japonukalba

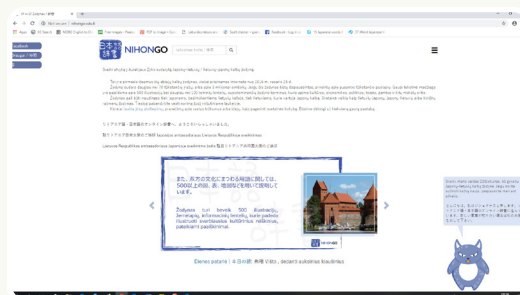


Jishokun.lt

The website *jishokun.lt*, launched in 2016, is the first ever comprehensive Japanese-Lithuanian/Lithuanian-Japanese dictionary, which is published online. The dictionary itself contains more than 70 thousand words. The provided material is complemented by approximately 500 illustrations and more than 100 tables of terms that systematise the fields of culture, economy, politics, law, nature, and other sciences. The dictionary is useful to both the Japanese studying Lithuanian language, and Lithuanians who use Japanese language.

Page: jishokun.lt

Facebook page: facebook.com/jishokun.lt

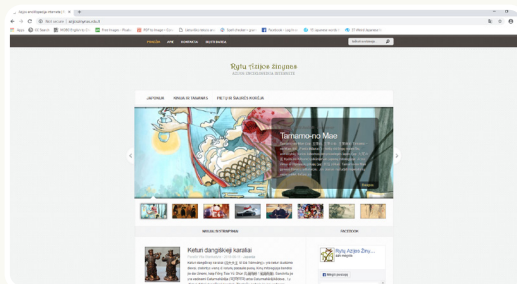


Azijoszinynas.vdu.lt

The website *Rytų Azijos žinynas* (*Glossary of East Asia*), launched in 2014, provides online encyclopaedic information about the region's social, cultural, political, and historical aspects. All articles are prepared by our students from the *East Asian Cultures and Languages* BA programme. We sincerely believe that the information provided in this glossary will become widely used and raise interest in East Asia amongst the Lithuanian people.

Page: azijoszinynas.vdu.lt

Facebook page: facebook.com/RAZ.VDU



EDUCATION

Centre for Asian studies offers two study programmes that focus on preparing specialists on East Asia. Students not only have an opportunity to study abroad, advance their language and cultural knowledge but also gain valuable experience during chosen internships that gives an advantage to their future career choices.



East Asian Cultures and Languages (BA programme)

The East Asian Cultures and Languages BA programme was launched in the autumn of 2012, together with the Department of Culture Studies. This is a 4 year program, focusing on Chinese, Japanese, and Korean history, religion, art, and folklore. Our students have an opportunity to analyse the cultural specifics of these countries and study thousand-year-old traditions. The students can also learn one of the East Asian languages at an advanced level and gain basic communication skills in a second language of their choice.

Students of the program are encouraged to spend at least one semester studying in an East Asian university.



East Asia Region studies (MA programme)

The East Asia Region Studies (EARS) MA programme was launched in 2007 together with the Regional Studies Department (Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy). It is the first, and only, graduate programme in Lithuania and the Baltic States that offers courses in English in the field of East Asian contemporary politics and society. The programme concentrates on the modern political, economic, social, and cultural issues of East Asian countries (Korea, Japan, and China) and provides students with the opportunity to study the region's history, traditions, and religions. EARS attracts students from all over the world who are interested in East Asian studies.

The learning of East Asian languages is not mandatory in EARS, however students will have the chance to use their credits for that purpose. All courses of the programme are taught in English. Research papers and master's theses are also written in English.





ASIAN BOOKS SPACE

The Asian Books Space (ABS) is a special space within the Vytautas Magnus University Library, located in the *Vaclovas Biržiška Reading Room* (K. Donelaičio st 52). The main objective of ABS is to fulfil the needs of the students of the East Asian studies programmes (both BA and MA level) and to systematically manage the Asian studies library funds at Vytautas Magnus University.

Systematic collection of the funds related to Asian studies started in 2007, when the collection consisted of only several hundred books. The 'Chiune Sugihara Reading Room' was opened in November 2008 at Sugihara House (Vaižganto st 30), however, because of the processes of modernization, in the summer of 2016 all of the funds of the 'Chiune Sugihara Reading Room' were moved to the central university campus.

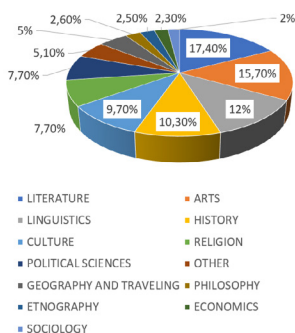
In 2018, the 'Asian Books space' consisted of 9,143 volumes (6,491 titles) in Japanese, English, Chinese, Russian, Lithuanian, Korean, and other languages. ABS covers a wide variety of fields. However, its core consists of books about Asian literature, arts, linguistics, history and culture.

Main supporters:

- Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation
- Japan Foundation;
- Embassy of Japan in Lithuania
- Cherry Blossoms Association (Japan)
- Embassy of The People's Republic of China in Lithuania
- Korea Foundation
- Romualdas Neimantas
- Jørgen Nielsen

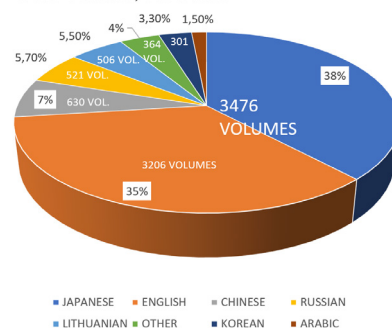


STUDY FIELD	VOLUMES
LITERATURE	1591
ARTS	1438
LINGUISTICS	1094
HISTORY	939
CULTURE	886
RELIGION	704
POLITICAL SCIENCES	701
OTHER	465
GEOGRAPHY AND TRAVELING	460
PHILOSOPHY	236
ETNOGRAPHY	230
ECONOMICS	206
SOCIOLOGY	193



ASIAN BOOK SPACE IN 2018

9143 volumes, 6491 titles



CULTURE

Popularisation of Asian cultures is an extremely important activity of our Centre. While pursuing this goal, we collaborated with our social partners: embassies, cultural institutions in Lithuania, and the student clubs: *Hashi*, *Hallyu*, and *Wu Wei*.

The Centre for Asian Studies always encourages students to improve their skills in Asian languages by organising numerous **speech and reading contests**. In March 2010, collaborating with Vilnius and Klaipėda Universities, we organised our first Japanese Language Speech Contest in Kaunas. In 2014, for the first time in Lithuania, Korean and Chinese language contests were also organised due to the overwhelming popularity of the previous Japanese language contest. The Centre maintains close partnership with Hiroshima University and in 2018, together with partners in Japan, organised a Japanese speech contest for the first time.

Time for Asia, organised since 2016, is a cycle of events which aims to present contemporary issues and topics in the fields of Asian politics, society, and economics through public lectures by guest scholars and opinion leaders. The main goal is to increase public awareness about contemporary China, Korea, and Japan, including the importance and role of East Asia in global affairs. The events take place during autumn and spring semesters and are open to everyone.

Our Centre is constantly organising a variety of cultural events, such as concerts, workshops, movie screenings, and art exhibitions, which present different aspects of East Asian cultures, such as ink painting, calligraphy, graphics, photography, Asian cinema, etc.





During the period of 2008-2009, the Centre organised the first three **summer programmes** dedicated to cultures of Japan and Korea. The participants listened to lectures delivered by Lithuanian and foreign specialists, learned about ink calligraphy, raku ceramics, bonsai, tea ceremonies, sword art kendo, samulnori drums, Korean fan dance, and the secrets of mask theatre talchum.

Since 2016, we have been organising **short term fellowships in Lithuania for our Asian partners**. In 2018, the Centre organised summer courses for the Hiroshima University “START+” project. Students coming from Japan studied English language intensively as well as different aspects of Lithuanian history and culture. They also had a homestay experience with Lithuanian families and an opportunity to get better acquainted with Lithuanian history, culture, and arts.



CAS IN Kaunas and LITHUANIA

We are proud to cooperate with a wide a range of institutions in our activities and to contribute to our city and country, thus creating a better society. We can achieve this only when working with our partners outside of the University. Together with our partners, the Centre for Asian studies organises various cultural events.

SoPaNet

SoPaNet (Social Partnership Network) encompasses various cultural, educational, sports, and research institutions, together with business enterprises, as well as governmental and non-governmental organisations related to East Asian countries. The Centre has agreements with all their partners to allow them to share relevant information, participate in various projects, and organise events. Some *SoPaNet* members provide internship possibilities for East Asian programme students, and some later employ them.

Dragon's Academy

Dragon's Academy is a network of formal and informal educational institutions that are positive to developing East Asian Studies. They coordinate their activities together with the Centre. The academy was founded in 2017 with the goal of spreading knowledge about East Asian languages and cultures. It mainly connects secondary and primary schools that are interested in East Asian cultures and their languages.

More information: asc.vdu.lt/our-friends/dragons-academy

VMU Asian Week

VMU Asian Week has been organised since 2014 together with student clubs *Hashi*, *Hallyu*, and *Wu Wei* and is the biggest annual cultural event. It has already become a tradition to divide the event into 5 days: Language (Words), Food (Tastes), Martial arts (Movement), Culture knowledge (Experience), and Career (Ideas). During Asian Week, our guests have the opportunity to taste Asian cuisine, test their strength in martial arts, get immersed into traditional and popular culture, all while trying on traditional clothing and participating in other activities.





Sugihara Week

In 1939, Mr Chiune Sugihara was appointed vice-consul of Japan in Kaunas, which was then the capital of the Republic of Lithuania. During a short period before September 1940, he managed to save the lives of at least 6000 Jewish refugees by issuing 'Visas for Life'.

Since 2017, the Centre for Asian Studies has been organising Sugihara Week together with our social partners. Its purpose is to perpetuate the memory of Chiune Sugihara and unify the Lithuanian, Japanese, and Jewish nations in Kaunas. During the event, concerts, symposiums, public lectures, exhibitions, workshops, and other events take place, attracting around 5000 people from Lithuania and Japan. Because of this, the city of Kaunas has recently become known as the city of Sugihara, or even as 'the most Japanese city in Lithuania'.



STUDENTS CLUBS

The Centre itself wouldn't exist as it is now without a group of enthusiastic students. Now, there are even more students like that, who gather into student clubs and actively organise or participate in various educational and cultural activities.



Hashi

Established in 2000, VMU Japanology club *Hashi* is based on the student clubs model in Japan and is managed solely by students. Nevertheless, the events organised by the club are open to the general public. The club seeks to present Japanese culture as well as help Japanese people visiting Kaunas to see more than what the usual tourists does. *Hashi* is a non-profit organisation, always open for new people and new ideas.



E-mail: info@hashi.lt

Page: hashi.vdu.lt

FB: fb.com/vduhashi

Hallyu

Established in 2010, the Korean culture club *Hallyu* united Korean culture lovers in Lithuania as it was the first Korean Culture club in the country. This club is willing to spread the wonderful and unique culture of South Korea. It provides Lithuanians with more knowledge about Korea's culture, history, film, music, etc. Additionally, the club is trying to provide a chance to communicate with Koreans who are studying and living in Lithuania.

E-mail: hallyuclublt@gmail.com

Page: [instagram.com/hallyu_vdu](https://www.instagram.com/hallyu_vdu)

FB: [fb.com/hallyuclub](https://www.facebook.com/hallyuclub)



Wu Wei

Established in 2013, the Chinese language and culture club *Wu Wei* aims to unite people who are interested in Chinese culture and to spread knowledge about China in Lithuania. The club organizes various activities such as lectures, games, movie nights, etc. during which people are introduced to both ancient and popular Chinese culture.

E-mail: wuweiklubas@gmail.com

Page: asc.vdu.lt/org/club-wu-wei

FB: [fb.com/klubasWuWei](https://www.facebook.com/klubasWuWei)





ASSOCIATED INSTITUTIONS

Global Japan Office

The Global Japan Office (GJO) in Vytautas Magnus University was established in 2017. It is coordinated by the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) and is the first centre of its kind in North Eastern Europe, and the fourth in Europe overall.



It is a place where Japanese language and Japanese studies classes and seminars are taught by visiting expert lecturers from TUFS. GJO offers a joint education programme coordinated by TUFS and VMU, as well as internships and volunteering activities for TUFS undergraduate and postgraduate students who have a focus on Japanese language education. Finally, GJO provides consulting services for Japanese students studying at external educational institutions and local students interested in studying in Japan.

More information: asc.vdu.lt/org/global-japan-office

Hiroshima University Lithuanian Centre

The Hiroshima University Lithuanian Centre (HULC) was established in 2017. HULC organises various events dedicated to both Hiroshima University students and Japan lovers here in Lithuania. The Centre organises summer schools and Japanese speech contests.

King Sejong Institute Kaunas

The King Sejong Institute in Kaunas (KSI Kaunas) was established in 2018. The institute seeks to promote Korean language and culture, not only in Kaunas, but in Lithuania as a whole by providing Korean language courses, organising Korean related events, and being a meeting place for all Korea enthusiasts. KSI Kaunas is a part of the global network of King Sejong Institutes, which were initiated by South Korea's government in 2005.



More information: asc.vdu.lt/org/ksi-kaunas

Facebook page: facebook.com/KSI.Kaunas

Taiwan Centre

The Taiwan Centre, established in 2013, is an organisation associated with the Centre for Asian Studies at Vytautas Magnus University and which carries out academic and cultural educational activities. The Centre aims to promote knowledge on Taiwanese culture and society in Lithuania. It conducts research in the field of Taiwan studies in cooperation with other foreign academic institutions. It also aims to strengthen the academic relations between VMU and Taiwan's educational institutions and collect and expand funds regarding study materials on Taiwanese history, culture, society, politics, economy, and various other topics.

More information: asc.vdu.lt/org/taiwan-centre

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

The first student exchange agreement with our East Asian partners was signed with Kansai Gaidai University in Japan in 1997. In 2005, we established our first relations with South Korean universities, in 2009 with Taiwan and in 2012 with China. Currently, VMU has almost 50 bilateral agreements with East Asian universities.



In the field of Asian studies, we also cooperate with the European universities of Turku, Stockholm, Helsinki, Bucharest, Ljubljana, Tallinn, Tartu, and Riga using Erasmus+ agreements.

VMU students participate in competitions and often attain scholarships from the Chinese government, the Ministry of Education (MEXT) of Japan, Taiwan, etc.

The student's exchange with Asian universities is coordinated together with VMU International Cooperation Department.

Here is a list of our partners in Asia (as of the end of 2018):

China (10)

Minzu University (2012)
Renmin University of China (2014)
Hebei University of International Studies (2015)
Lingnan University (Hong Kong) (2015)
China Foreign Affairs University (2016)
Beijing Normal University (2017)
Zhejiang Wanli University (2017)
China University of Political Science and Law (2017)
Huaqiao University (2018)
Changchun Normal University (2018)

Japan (22)

Kansai Gaidai University (1997)
International Christian University (ICU) (1998)
Waseda University (2001)
Chūbu University (2006)
Akita International University (2011)
Gifu National University (2012)
Meiji University (2012)
Osaka National University (2012)
Saga University (2013)
Bunkyo Gakuin University (2014)
Doshisha University (2014)
Yamaguchi University (2015)
Showa Women University (2015)
Kanda University of International Studies (2015)
University of Fukui (2016)
Toyo University (2016)
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (2017)
Hiroshima University (2017)
Sophia University (2017)
Nanzan University (2018)
Gunma University (2018)
Ochanomizu University (2018)

South Korea (12)

Chung Ang University (2005)
Kyung Hee University (2006)
Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (2010)
Dongguk University (2001)
Yongsan University (2010)
Soongsil University (2010)
Kangwon National University (2011)
Pusan National University (2012)
Sung Kyun Kwan University (2012)
Chonnam University (2013)
Seoul National University (2017)
Korea University (2018)

Taiwan (5)

Providence University (2010)
National Chengchi University (2012)
I-Shou University (2014)
National Dong Hwa University (2017)
National Taipei University of Technology (2018)

千里之行, 始於足下

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step

Laozi