

Symposium Marking the Germany in Japan Year 2005/2006
Urban Planning – Sustainable Cities

Taiphoon alert in Japan... torrential rain greeted our group as we arrived in Tokyo on September 11th, coming from Frankfurt. A bus got us smoothly through the rush hour traffic to the National Olympics Memorial Youth Center. Dinner and getting to know the other members rounded out a long first day.

The primary fixture in the Symposium was on September 12, the topic being: **Urban Planning – Sustainable Cities**. Speakers from both countries explained how economic development in urban areas can be made compatible with environmental sustainability (see separate publication).

The closing ceremony took the form of a reception complete with Japanese buffet with snacks and Japanese delicacies, followed by an interesting *chindon'ya* performance memorably introduced by Prof. Dr. Ingrid Fritsch.

The instrument known as *chindon* - consisting of two traditional Japanese drums and a small metal gong (*kane*) - gave off a sound which led to a whole profession being named after it.

Chindon-ya are “colourfully dressed street musicians employed for advertising purposes”. At various points in its checkered 150-year history, the profession has absorbed a diverse range of visual sources that include the circus clown and the *kabuki* actor; among the oratorical sources are the sumo referee, the street seller and the sideshow barker; and the musical scores draw on Japanese festival and theatre music, popular songs and even Dixieland jazz. Unsurprisingly, *chindon'ya* was banned during World War II. Its post-war resurgence was soon under threat again from new forms of advertising. It has been kept alive ever since by a few revivalists like Hayashi Kōjirō in Osaka. The performance of his group together with Takada Yōsuke and Kirakuya Sentarō from Tokyo was a triumph of enthusiasm.

Events like this give participants a chance to meet again former hosts, to exchange ideas in a relaxed atmosphere, and to build new contacts.

On September 13th with a temperature of some 33°C and a humidity of 80-90% we made an excursion to **Asakusa Temple**. Smoke from the large cauldron is said to be good for the health. Due to the heat we could not exactly believe this!

The legend of Senso-ji Temple runs like this: Several brothers who were fishermen discovered an image of Kan'on (the goddess of mercy) in the Sumida River more than 1300 years ago, whereupon they were inspired to place the precious image in a shrine. Its symbol is a large red paper lantern bearing the word *Kaminari-mon*, or “thunder gate”.

Our next stop was the **Edo Tokyo Museum**, which afforded a glimpse into the history of Tokyo and its culture. The Shogun's buildings plus the fruits of post-war reconstruction plus the Nihombashi Bridge are all on display in what is a fascinating window into the city's past.

Our well-informed guide outlined the importance of German exchange professors in Japan during the Meiji government - as we sped on our bus to the **Imperial University of Tokyo**.

First we had a look at the statue of **Oskar Kellner**. In 1881 he took over Edward Kinch's professorial chair in chemistry. Professor Kellner's contributions to Japan also included penning an introduction of the “Theory of Minimal Fertilizers” (these being suggested as a way of improving rice farming).

Another highlight of our excursion was the inner garden of the University's medical library, where bust sculptures of **Erwin von Baelz** and **Julius Karl Scriba** have been erected.

Erwin von Baelz was invited to Japan in 1876 to serve as a professor of internal medicine, a position he held until 1902. In his 26 years in Japan, he researched such diseases as scrub typhus (*tsutsugamushi* disease) and *beriberi* and also investigated the efficacy of Japan's hot springs. Baelz earned himself a name as a skilled physician and was a much trusted figure. Belying his stern demeanour, he developed the so-called “Baelz Water”, which was used to treat the chapped hands of maids working in Japanese inns. This “Eau de Baelz” is still available today.



As a token of the reverence in which he was held, a stone bearing an inscription in Japanese letters - "Japan's medicine has its roots in you, Erwin Baelz" - has also been erected on the University's campus in Tübingen (see pictures). Baelz had studied medicine at the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen, graduating at the age of 23.

Starting from 1881 **Julius Karl Scriba** taught surgery, dermatology, urology as well as gynaecology and optometry for a period of 20 years,. He and Erwin von Baelz were the leading professors of the day at the university's faculty of medicine.



Another famous German professor, **Gottfried Wagner**, was brought to our attention at the **Tokyo Institute of Technology**. They presented an exhibition about the development of porcelain-making, which Wagner gave significant impulses to when he came to Japan in 1868. His recommendation that Western techniques should be adopted to enhance, rather than replace traditional crafts would later become the official policy of the Japanese government. Active at the **Imperial University of Tokyo** from 1872 on, he also taught as a professor of German, as well as chemistry and physics.

A 10 minutes walk to Gottfried Wagner's Memorial rounded off our tour of inspection. The influence and success of all these famous German professors was tangibly borne out in so many different ways.

Not least, we were gratified by the charms of an elegant indoor setting for our last evening. This was at the Restaurant Hanezawa Garden, which does a mighty fine "barbecue": Hanezawa Garden is a secret tip, but you should know, if you're figuring on going there, everything there goes up in smoke!

All in all, the excursion was very well organized and it was a pleasure to participate
Renate Baumbach