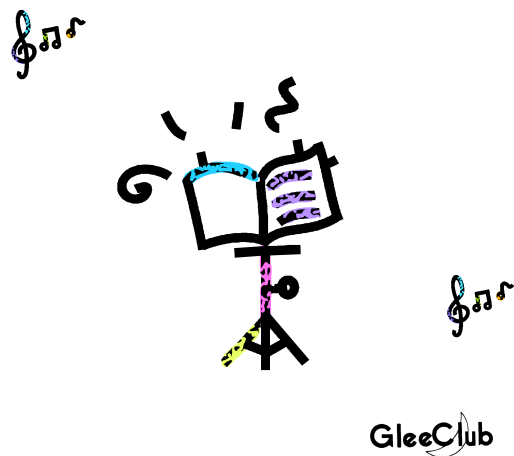


“U Boj, U Boj” and Kwansei Gakuin Glee Club

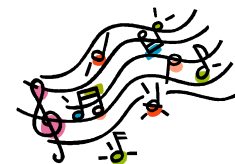


Jun Karube

Director (Files & Records) of Shingetsu-kai
1953 graduate of Kwansei Gakuin University (Law) and the Glee Club



Kwansei Gakuin Archives



“U Boj, U Boj”

and

Kwansei Gakuin GleeClub



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*Translated from the Japanese text by Takao Abe, Shingetsu-kai (1959, Economics)
~Special thanks to Chancellor Ruth M. Grubel for editorial assistance.~*

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Kwansei Gakuin Archives

“U Boj, U Boj” and Kwansei Gakuin Glee Club

Foreword

The year 2009 was the 120th anniversary of Kwansei Gakuin and the 110th for its male vocal society, KG Glee Club. Ours is the first University Glee Club in Japan which has sung the now legendary “U Boj, U Boj” for 90 years. This marching song had been given to KG Glee Club by Czechoslovak soldiers back in 1919, but the background of this song was unknown for decades, except that its title meant something like to “Move Forward.” Despite the dynamic rhythm of marching steps, its melody reflects the beauty of yearning held only by those who are soon to die and enter into eternity – the reason it has resonated with the singers of KG Glee Club, and has always moved the audience deeply.

After graduating from high school in Okayama, I (Jun Karube) entered Kwansei Gakuin University in 1949 and joined the Glee Club. Though I did have experience singing in a chorus previously, I was overwhelmed at the sound of the College songs, particularly “U Boj, U Boj” sung by the Glee Club. Ever since, the song has become my lifelong interest; initially for the purpose of unveiling the years-long mystery about this song and later, through the unexpected encounters unfolding one after another from inside and outside of Japan in relation to “U Boj, U Boj”

The First Episode

Traditionally, the ending song of the KG Glee Club’s concert has been “U Boj, U Boj.” Though it is one of the most popular numbers among Japanese male choral societies now, its background has been unknown for many years since it was handed down by Czechoslovak soldiers of World War I in 1919. This is the story of how the mystery has been unraveled through the labyrinthine paths the KG Glee Club trailed over half a century.



The microfilms of newspapers, *The Asahi* and *The Mainichi*, kept at their offices in Kobe revealed the fact that the Czechoslovak soldiers were in Kobe between September and October 1919 as their vessel was docked for repairs, and the same papers’ records in Kyushu and Moji added some more facts about the incident met by the s.s. *Heffron* briefly as follows:

“Amongst other U.S. ships with Czechoslovak soldiers relieved from Siberia that had left Vladivostok for Europe via the States, s.s. *Heffron* (7,906 tons) with 845 Czechoslovaks led by Lieutenant Colonel, Beneš with his 19 officers and 825 soldiers together with an American army doctor, Lieutenant Colonel S. T. Short and another doctor, nurse Mrs. Webb and five others as well as 64 crew, amounting altogether to 917 aboard took the course through the Sea of Japan. In the night of Day 2 (Aug. 15, 1919), she got into a severe Typhoon off Kyushu and before the dawn of the following day, stranded on the Ohmoji Rocks of Mutsure-jima, West of Shimonoseki. In response to the emergency call sent by the ship, several boats including the coast guard’s and navy’s came to the scene. After a close check made by the salvage boat, apart from the damage to her bow and bottom, *Heffron* was found seaworthy enough to be towed thanks to its double-skin. After a quick fix, *Heffron* was safely dragged off the rocks on August 20 at its full tide. After a brief stopover in Moji, *Heffron* was towed to Kobe for the permanent repair.”

According to the weather-related news at that time, numerous vessels were lost in the same typhoon including the naval oil tanker *Shijiki* which sank off Tanegashima and most of its 116 crew aboard perished. *Heffron* was an exceptionally lucky vessel surviving through the devastating windstorm with minimum damage.

In the meantime, after a short stay in Moji, on the morning of September 4, 1919, the Czechoslovak soldiers arrived in Kobe by rail to be met by the reception party including the U.S. deputy consul, Mr. Dohmann and Mr. West as well as the representatives from the local government offices. Soldiers were divided into three groups and settled in the makeshift barracks while Lieutenant Colonel Beneš and his

officers were accommodated in the Oriental Hotel, Kobe in the Concession area.

To make those officers and soldiers' stay comfortable, the local government's staff in charge was at a loss owing largely to the language problem. He then remembered his old friend Yoshitaka Shioji (*photo*) who was a student of Kwansei Gakuin who spoke fluent English, and asked him to come and help. So, Shioji started visiting their barracks every day talking mostly to Lieutenant Chloupka who spoke English well. Despite the battered attire of most of the soldiers, Shioji found them all quite cheerful and likable, looking forward to the safe journey home. A few days later, Shioji heard the sound of orchestra and choral singing. The instruments they had were weather-beaten and frayed after the 5 year toil in Russia when they had lost many players and singers as well. There still remained nearly 50 players and some 40 singers led by the officer conductors, Lieutenant Karlík and Lieutenant Bartůšek respectively. Shioji was overwhelmed by the bass vocals of the heavily built singers, as well as their well-developed sense of music. At that time the KG Glee Club (*photo*) had several dozen members, and Shioji was one of them. Immediately he asked the soldiers to come and sing for the KG Glee Club.

With permission from the school administration, on September 15, the Czechoslovak soldiers' orchestra and choral group visited Kwansei Gakuin to perform. Afterwards, both the Czechoslovaks and the KG Glee Club exchanged visits several times, enjoying singing as well as playing football and baseball together. In addition to their association with Kwansei Gakuin, the Czechoslovaks appeared in a variety of performances for the local community such as music, quadrille, gymnastics, dancing, poem recitation, tableau vivant, etc., all quite enjoyable and impressive to the audiences.

The KG Glee Club members found the Czechoslovaks' singing particularly attractive and overwhelming. *The Forty-Year History of Kwansei Gakuin Glee Club* compiled in 1940 described the awestruck



impression held by the Glee Club members at that time as follows:

“The Serbian war song sung by the Czechoslovak soldiers was really marvelous. Their deep voices in particular were tremendous. The lower note of F they sang delicately, yet with strength. When they sing in high tones, it gets so thunderous in the hall that one would rather wish them to sing in the open air. For centuries Czechoslovaks have been oppressed under the Austrian monarchy, and their Bohemian songs, particularly new Bohemians, invariably composed in minor, have a shadow of sad and sorrowful sentiments of the nation – *The Spirit of the Wanderers.*”

The KG Glee Club wanted to sing some of their songs and looked for copies of the sheet music. The soldiers were quite willing to offer any of their songs, though their copies were worn out and frail after so many years abroad. Shioji selected “U Boj, U Boj” and three other songs to be hand-copied clumsily, enabling the Glee Club singers to practice.

After the completion of repair work on *Heffron*, a farewell party was thrown by the KG Glee Club and they sang “U Boj, U Boj” and “Já ne-to ty.” The Czechoslovak soldiers were astonished to hear their own songs sung by the Japanese students and deeply moved, giving a thunder of applause after they sang. It was the end of rather a brief association between the Czechoslovaks and KG Glee Club. On October 30, 1919, the homebound vessel finally left Kobe, leaving the memory of the

Czechoslovak army firmly affixed to the KG Glee Club and many other people in Kobe. This is the history of how “U Boj, U Boj” became the legendary song of the KG Glee Club ever since.



The “U Boj” Odyssey

The foregoing is not the end of the story, as so much remained unknown and the toil and tribulation of unraveling the mystery were still ahead in the difficult times.



At first, nothing but the meaning of “U Boj,” which is to ‘move forward,’ or ‘to the battlefield,’ was known. What did the rest of the verse mean? Who wrote it? Where did it come from? Shioji and the others had been entirely “in the dark.” The earlier concert programs indicated the song to be a Serbian battle song, but in later years, it was described as a Czech folksong.

In 1949 Tetsuo Kobayashi, then a Glee Club member, happened to learn from his Czech pen friend that “U Boj, U Boj” was not actually a Czech song. The news puzzled them more deeply.

Eiji Shono (1915–1993), a scholar and ex-president of Tezukayama Gakuin University, wrote in the magazine *Friends of Music* (February 1972) as follows:

“I have been an enthusiastic fan of the KG Glee Club always trying not to miss their annual concert. Their programs are different each year, but there’s one particular song they always sing at the finale. The song is called “U Boj, U Boj,” which all the fans await patiently, applauding for an encore. The sound of this song, from its beginning to end, would make the blood of an old fan like me surge from deep within as it used to in my younger days. It drives me to the brink of running around wildly under the starlit sky. It lies within me all through the night making me feel like sobbing. Had I not been damnably tone deaf, I would have sung it out loud, time and again, shoulder to shoulder with everybody.”

Shono also wrote that he had been investigating any news about “U Boj, U Boj” making enquiries around various news agencies. In his own view, he denounced the Japanese troop’s campaign into Siberia as totally foolhardy. Nevertheless, he admitted, it led to the later incident of Czechoslovak soldiers’ unexpected encounter with KG Glee Club that was so strange an incident that it might have been designed long

beforehand.

“U Boj, U Boj” in the meantime, not only continued to be important as ever a song for KG Glee Club, but spread gradually to the other male vocal societies. In 1935 the KG Glee Club sang the song and won the first prize in the 9th National Choral Contest and they continued to win the following two years in a row. Thus, the KG Glee Club and “U Boj, U Boj” became known to the nationwide choral societies.

The year 1965 was an epoch making year for Kwansei Gakuin Glee Club, and its “U Boj, U Boj.” They were invited to the First International University Choral Festival at Lincoln Center, New York. At its reception luncheon at the Hilton Hotel, a group of students from Latin America started singing, and the KG Glee Club also sang “U Boj, U Boj.” To their astonishment, another group joined the singing, and they turned out to be students from Skopje University, Macedonia, Yugoslavia. They learned from these counterparts that “U Boj, U Boj” is actually sung in a well-known opera in Yugoslavia, but that’s all they knew. As the contemporary Yugoslavia was a mosaic state consisting of six socialist republics and two autonomous provinces, the people in Macedonia would not have been fully acquainted with the Croatian song.



After returning from the Festival, the Glee Club wrote to Mr. James Robert Bjorge, Director of the Festival, asking him to find any further details of “U Boj, U Boj.” Mr. Bjorge replied in 1972, including a copy of the piano score of the “U Boj, U Boj” part in the opera, which had been secured by his friend at the American Embassy in Belgrade.

In November 1975, Hisashi Watanabe, an alumnus, visited the Embassy of Yugoslavia in Tokyo and met with Mr. Sava Kršikapa, the Cultural Attaché. He showed Mr. Kršikapa a copy of the sheet music of “U Boj, U Boj” and asked for his help to translate the original verse into English. Then, we were finally able to understand exactly what the lyrics meant.

In July 1976, Watanabe once again met with Mr. Kršikapa, who had just returned from his home leave, bringing back a set of three discs of

LP records, the opera “Nikola Šubić Zrinski.” Watanabe borrowed them from Mr. Kršikapa, and all the details of the legendary Zrinski described in this drama became known to us. Afterwards, Watanabe continued to collect further information through Mr. Zeljko Baranović who succeeded Mr. Kršikapa in the meantime.

– The outline of the Opera “Nikola Šubić Zrinski” –

This is the story of how the legendary hero, Zrinski IV and his warriors fought and died in the Szigeth Castle during the last half month of the losing battle against the overwhelming Turkish onslaught in 1566. The opera is one of the most successful works written by Ivan Zajc, a highly regarded Croatian composer. The first performance of the opera conducted by Zajc was held on November 4, 1876, in Zagreb, whilst just the part of “U Boj, U Boj” had been written and put on stage in Vienna 10 years previously.

Back in 1529, the Ottoman Turk Emperor, Suleyman I, the Magnificent (1494–1566), had failed to seize Vienna, and in 1566 he amassed 30,000 troops for invasion once again. From the strategic point of view, he took the route via Szigetvár where a small but solid Szigeth Castle stood as a fort held by Zrinski IV and his knights. Zrinski was vastly outnumbered, as those in the Castle were 4,000, including women and children. On August 20, the Turks arrived and sent a messenger demanding their surrender. Zrinski refused and fought back fiercely, and the battle continued for half a month. On September 5, Emperor Suleyman I suddenly died of illness, and soon afterward, for fear of the incident dampening the soldiers’ spirit, the Turks’ second-in-command made a massive attack. Hours later, Zrinski and all his knights decided to go on the last fight and rushed out of the walls.

During the precious time Zrinski had bought in holding the Turks back, the Austrian relief army was assembled and came up from Vienna but arrived just too late. Following the fall of the castle, however, the Turks withdrew from Szigetvár as they had lost their

commander-in-chief.

The opera “Nikola Šubić Zrinski” is the story of how Zrinski and the others in the Szigeth Castle fought and died to the last soldier, including Zrinski’s wife and daughter in defending Szigetvár as above. “U Boj, U Boj” is sung at the finale of the drama as Zrinski and his soldiers are marching out of the castle for the last fight.



– Ms. Mirna Potkovac –

In 1978 through introduction by his friend at TBS TV, Karube met with Ms. Mirna Potkovac, an exchange student from Croatia, whom Karube had spotted on the TV news in which she appeared as an interpreter. She turned out to be a gold mine for Karube’s mission as she used to be a violinist for the Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra, and had come to Japan to learn the language. She has been very helpful to him ever since. A number of materials have been collected through her, including the complete piano score of the opera “Nikola Šubić Zrinski,” as well as copy of the program for the Centennial Memorial Performance in Zagreb, in July 1979.

In 1988 the KG Glee Club had a plan to visit Vienna accompanied by some alumni from Shingetsu-kai (The New Moon Choral Society) and in view of its proximity, they decided to extend the trip to Zagreb, the birthplace of “U Boj, U Boj.” The news was conveyed to Mirna who was living in Rijeka after her marriage, and she responded promptly, flying to Zagreb to reserve the concert hall, enabling the Glee Club to sing. Mirna also persuaded her old friend, Mr. Janko Kichl, director of the National Theater, to have the opera “Nikola Šubić Zrinski” performed during the Glee Club’s visit in Zagreb. Mirna had become acquainted with Mr. Kichl when she had been at the Zagreb Musical Institute. For those preparations Mirna traveled back and forth between Rijeka and Zagreb, a 180 km distance, several times either by rail or by her husband’s car, and she helped us out throughout the Glee Club’s stay in Zagreb.

– Homecoming of “U Boj, U Boj” in Zagreb –

After the charity concert at the *Musikverein’s* Great Hall in Vienna on March 16, 1989, when the KG Glee Club sang, accompanied by the *Slovak Sinfonietta Zilina* conducted by Kyoichi Kitamura, they flew to Zagreb. On March 17, nearly 100 Japanese from both the Glee Club and Shingetsu-kai were invited to the opera “Nikola Šubić Zrinski,” when Mr. Kichl arranged free seats for them in the theater balcony, insisting that those who had continued to sing the Opera’s song for 70 years in Japan deserved it. What kind hospitality he showed! On the following day, the KG Glee Club held a concert in the hall of Zagreb Musical Institute where Ivan Zajc served his time as the headmaster. At the end, the Glee Club sang “U Boj, U Boj” as always, but this time as a long-awaited homecoming of their legendary song.

“U Boj, U Boj” one of the most popular numbers in Japan

In earlier years the sheet music of “U Boj, U Boj” had been treated like a top secret by the Glee Club members, restricting the copy from getting outside, but since 1952 as the relationships between university choral societies grew, copies of the old version were made available for other choral societies as well. In April 1992, 3500 copies of the new version, including the updates were printed and made available for choral societies nationwide who sing “U Boj, U Boj.” Later in the year the Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra came to Japan. In the final stage of their concert in Osaka, the KG Glee Club and Shingetsu-kai were able to sing “U Boj, U Boj” which proved to be a delightful surprise to the audience whose standing ovation continued long after their singing.

Epilogue



The KG Glee Club’s library and archives called ‘Haus Bötzingen’ was built in 2000 with the donation from the villagers of Bötzingen in southern Germany. Earlier on, the KG Glee Club had an

association with the Bötzingen Male Choral Society through their overseas tours. In 1995 a devastating earthquake hit the Hanshin-Awaji area killing more than 6,000 people. One of the KG Glee Club members was killed and several others injured. Having learned the tragic news, Bötzingen Choral Society cancelled their annual tour and sent to the Glee Club a donation from their traveling fund. At the completion of the building, an opening ceremony was held on October 1, 2000, when the guests of honor from Bötzingen, Mr. Fritz Konstanzer, the chief of the village and Mr. Ekkehart Jenne, the head of the choral society were among those present.

The archives since then have been receiving visits and/or access from various news media and outside choral societies, and responding to enquiries largely regarding “U Boj, U Boj.”



Professor Isao Koshimura of a design school, Tokyo Zokei University, was one of those who accessed to the archives’ internet services. He had studied at Zagreb University years before, and when his old friend, Dr. Drago Roksandić, a professor of history at Zagreb University, came to Japan, they paid a visit to Kwansei Gakuin on October 1, 2007. Soon afterwards back in Tokyo, they dined with the Croatian Ambassador to Japan, H.E. Dr. Drago Štambuk and told him about “U Boj, U Boj” sung by the KG Glee Club for nearly 90 years.

In March 2008, Ambassador Štambuk personally visited Kwansei Gakuin and visited twice in the same year, once accompanied by Dr. Ivan Pavić, headmaster of Split University and his deputy, Dr. Roko Andričević. The formal association between Split University and Kwansei Gakuin was eventually established. In addition, through the Ambassador’s introduction, another possible relationship with Rijeka University, whose Rector Daniel Rukavina is an old friend of the Ambassador’s, is being considered.

Acknowledgements

It took me more than ten years to sort out the mystery of “U Boj, U Boj” from bits and pieces scattered over tens of years, and I owe a great deal to all the many people who helped me out so kindly. The late Mr. Yoshitaka Shioji, amongst others, was a great help to spare all his time whenever I visited him, either at his home or even at the executive’s office of Daimaru Department Store, Kobe. He always followed up by telephone or by mail on anything he discovered at a later date. Our close association continued after everything had settled. I can’t forget his big smile when he whole-heartedly enjoyed the concert of Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra with whom KG Glee Club and Shingetsukai sang “U Boj, U Boj” in Osaka. The late Mr. Shotaro Asano, ex-student conductor of the Glee Club when I joined in 1949, was the General Manager of the photography office at the Asahi Newspaper, Osaka and gave all his assistance in tracing the relevant old news about the Czech soldiers back in 1919, digging it out of the microfilms buried deep in their archives. Hisashi Watanabe, my younger colleague in the Glee Club, was also helpful by continuing to visit the Embassy of Yugoslavia whenever he had the opportunity to travel to Tokyo for business. But for those friends’ valuable help, as well as many other people’s co-operation, I wouldn’t have been able to solve the mystery of our legendary “U Boj, U Boj” successfully. My sincere thanks also goes to the Croatian Ambassador to Japan, H.E. Dr. Drago Štambuk, through whom Kwansei Gakuin has been able to extend remarkably its association with Croatian universities. The only pity is that many of my good friends, including Messrs. Shioji and Asano, to whom I owe so much, are no longer here. However, when I’ve joined them, I shall report to them what has happened since then and is still going on with this unending story of “U Boj, U Boj.” In the meantime, I’m hoping to see the KG Glee Club and Shingetsu-kai make their visit to Szeged at its “Zrinyi Festival” for one thing, and the other, that an invitation for the Croatian Opera to come to Japan would be materialized so that my dream to see the opera “Nikola Šubić Zrinski” here would come true.

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An enquiry was made to the Embassy of Turkey with a view to looking up the Turkish historical data on the battle of Szeged Castle in 1566, and professor of Turkish history, Naomasa Ohshima was introduced by the Embassy. Professor Ohshima helped us a lot and in his reply he quoted the Turkish record to the effect that Suleyman I, the Magnificent died early in the morning of the 5th (or 7th) of September 1566 and his 30,000 troops fought against the Habsburg’s army of 5,000 led by Count Nikolas Zrinyi. Count Zrinyi fought for six weeks (actually three weeks, though). His endeavor and brave death were praised also by the Turks.



• Appendix •

The Chronicle of “U Boj, U Boj”

(revised on Sept. 18, 2009)

- ◆1566 The Battle of Szigeth Castle (August 20 – September 7) currently located in Szigetvár, southern Hungary:
The Ottoman Turks’ Suleyman I, the Magnificent (1494-1566) came with his overwhelming army to seize the Szigeth Castle, which would be the critical fortress for him to invade the Habsburg’s Vienna. The Lord of Szigeth, Nikola Šubić Zrinski IV (1508-1566) waged a brave but losing battle against the Turks’ massive onslaught. Their tragic deaths, however, were not in vain as they bought the precious time enabling the relief force from Vienna to arrive and make the Turks withdraw. (Suleyman I, in the meantime, had died of an illness on September 5 <or> 7, 1556.)
- ◆1812 Theodor Körner (1791-1813), a German poet and writer and a famous playwright, lived in Vienna after he was expelled from the University of Leipzig as he had engaged in a banned duel. He wrote the play, “*Zrinyi*” in Magyar, based on the tragedy of the Battle of Szigeth Castle, which proved a great success, and he was made an honorable Court Playwright for the palace theatre. In 1813 Körner returned to Germany to join the German Liberation Army, *Luetzow Free Corps*, and died in the battle against Napoleon. After his death the book of his poems, “The Harp and Sword” was published in 1814. In commemoration of this great poet, in 1970 the Theodor Körner Award was created by the East German government.
- ◆1866 Ivan pl. Zajc (1832-1914), a Croatian composer wrote in Vienna the male vocal, “U Boj, U Boj” with words by Franjo pl. Marković (1845-1914). The first through to the third editions were made for the male chorus with solo parts, and in the fourth edition, it was re-written for mixed vocals and incorporated into an opera. The lyrics were partially altered as well.
- ◆1867 On January 14, the male vocal “U Boj, U Boj” was performed in Zagreb.

- ◆1876 The first performance of the opera, “Nikola Šubić Zrinski” (words by Hugo Badalić after Körner’s “*Zrinyi*”) in Zagreb, conducted by Ivan Zajc who composed the opera in 1874.
- ◆1914 On June 28, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated by a terrorist’s gunshot in Sarajevo which led to World War I (1914 -1918).
- ◆1919 The U.S./Japanese joint forces extracted the Czechoslovak soldiers from Siberia to board the homebound U.S. vessels from Vladivostok. Their third boat, s.s. *Heffron* with 845 soldiers aboard encountered a heavy storm in the Sea of Japan and was stranded off Shimonoseki (the western tip of Honshu) on August 15. The vessel had to be repaired in Kobe and the Czechoslovak soldiers came over on September 4 by rail. Yoshitaka Shioji, a member of Kwansei Gakuin Glee Club, acted as an interpreter during the Czechoslovaks’ stay in Kobe. On September 15, their military orchestra and singers visited Kwansei Gakuin, located at that time in the woods of Harada. Through their association, a copy of the sheet music of “U Boj, U Boj” and three other songs were given to the KG Glee Club. The ship’s repair was completed on October 29, and on the following day, they sailed out for their homeland which had become a sovereign state a year earlier. Since then the KG Glee Club has continued to sing “U Boj, U Boj” the legendary song at their concerts.
- ◆1935 At the 9th Choral Contest in Hibiya Hall, Tokyo, the Kwansei Gakuin Glee Club won the first prize and did so the following two years in a row. The optional song they usually sang was “U Boj, U Boj,” and it became widely known to the choral societies nationwide.
- ◆1939 – 1945 World War II
- ◆1949 A letter came from a Czech pen friend to Tetsuo Kobayashi, KG Glee Club, informing him that “U Boj, U Boj” was not their song but possibly the Yugoslav’s. This was totally “out of the blue” to the Glee Club as it had been known until then as a Czech folksong.
- ◆1965 KG Glee Club was invited to the First International

University Choral Festival at Lincoln Center, New York. At the reception luncheon when the KG Glee Club sang “U Boj, U Boj” they were stunned at the unexpected joining by the students of the University of Skopje, Yugoslavia, to sing together. Afterward, they were told that the song was from a well-known opera in Yugoslavia with no further details revealed at the time.

- ◆1972 Shingetsu-kai Chairman, Soichiro Sugita, wrote to Mr. James Robert Bjorge, Director of the International Choral Festival, asking for his help to investigate the roots of “U Boj, U Boj.” His friend at the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade was able to secure a copy of the sheet music of the piano score of “U Boj, U Boj” in the opera “Nikola Šubić Zrinski,” which was forwarded by Mr. Bjorge to the Glee Club.
- ◆1975 Hisashi Watanabe, a member of Shingetsu-kai, visited with Mr. Kršikapa, cultural attaché at the Embassy of Yugoslavia in Tokyo asking for his help to translate the lyrics of “U Boj, U Boj” into English.
- ◆1976 On his return from home leave, Mr. Kršikapa loaned LP records of the opera “Nikola Šubić Zrinski” to Watanabe and from its record jacket, we were able to learn the full details of the drama. The very year of 1976 happened to be the centennial of the first performance of the opera “Nikola Šubić Zrinski” in Zagreb.
- ◆1978 Jun Karube met with Ms. Mirna Potkovac, a violinist, who had been with Osaka Linguistic College as an exchange student from Zagreb, Croatia. Karube asked Mirna to collect any information and material relating to the opera “Nikola Šubić Zrinski.”
- ◆1979 Mr. Bjorge sent a letter to Yuichiro Hayashi, Shingetsu-kai Chairman, together with information about the Opera. In the meantime, Ms. Potkovac obtained copy of the centennial program of the Opera and furthermore, a copy of the complete score of Opera “Nikola Šubić Zrinski” with piano accompaniment.
- ◆1989 An invitation came to KG Glee Club from Mr. Janko Kichl,

Director of the National Theater, Zagreb to the Opera “Nikola Šubić Zrinski” on March 17. After the 90th Concert in February, KG Glee Club traveled to Vienna and sang at the *Musikverein’s* great hall on March 16. On the following day, they went to the Croatian National Theater to see the Opera specially programmed for their arrival. They also visited the Croatian Musical Institute where Ivan Zajc used to be the headmaster and held a recital at its hall. “U Boj, U Boj” was sung at the end of the performance as always but it was the long-awaited homecoming accomplishment. Later, several copies of the 500 limited edition of Ivan Zajc’s “Choral Works” compiled in 1982 in commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of Zajc’s birth were given to the KG Glee Club from the Yugoslav Composers Association, Belgrade.

- ◆1992 The sheet music of “U Boj, U Boj” with the guide for Serbo-Croatian pronunciations, together with the complete translation of the verse into Japanese was prepared for KG Glee Club and Shingetsu-kai, and an extra 3,500 copies were also made available for any choral societies interested in Japan. On November 13, the Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra held a concert in Osaka conducted by Kazushi Ohno, and at its finale, the KG Glee Club and Shingetsu-kai sang “U Boj, U Boj” accompanied by the Orchestra.
- ◆1996 On September 14, Mr. Yoshio Koga, a graduate of Kwansei Gakuin in 1941, who made his personal investigation of “U Boj, U Boj” for years, traveled to Szigetvár in southern Hungary and visited Szigeth Castle. The astonished local guide was so kind in introducing the legendary Castle to this visitor who had come all the way from Japan. Throughout the guided tour, the cassette tape of the Opera “Nikola Šubić Zrinski” was played continuously by the guide, said Mr. Koga happily. Had it been a week earlier, he would have been able to see the “Zrinyi Festival” as well.



• Notes •

- ◎ Szigeth Castle is located in Szigetvár, southern Hungary near the Croatian border and is preserved as a memorial museum of the legendary battle against the Turks. Armor and weapons from the Middle Ages are displayed in the castle. Zrinyi IV is regarded as one of the great heroes in Hungary and in Szigetvár, the “Zrinyi Festival” is held for three days from Friday to Sunday in the first week of September. Also in Croatia where they call him Zrinski, he is a medieval great hero who defended Szigetvár from the Ottoman Turks invasion. The opera “Nikola Šubić Zrinski” is performed at least 10 times a year at the Croatian National Theater, for which tickets are always sold out.
- ◎ In the 17th Century, Count Zrinyi VII, a poet and politician, wrote in Magyar an epic praising his great grandfather, Zrinyi IV. Unfortunately no new editions have been issued and those who are interested have to see the copy in the library in Budapest. In 2007, Professor Koshimura at Tokyo Zokei University found in Zagreb a copy of the said epic translated into Croatian, and a copy thereof was given to us.
- ◎ Szigetvár is also known as Zrinyivár locally. In Hungarian, the surname comes first followed by the given name, as in Chinese or Japanese. So, “Nikolas Zrinyi” is spelled in the order of “Zrinyi Nikolas.” The affix ‘vár’ means castle in Magyar.
- ◎ Ivan pl. Zajc is a highly reputed Croatian composer and Zajc’s hometown, Rijeka hosts the Croatian National Theater “Ivan pl. Zajc.”
- ◎ Yoshimasa Kadota, a graduate of Kwansei Gakuin in 1964 living in New York for years, traveled with his wife to Szigetvár to see the “Zrinyi Festival” in September 2009. He was warmly received by Mayor Paizs József, and was given

a ‘Zrinyi Memorial Medal’. The Mayor also took him to the reception where nearly 300 people were present and he was introduced to be the man from a Japanese choral society who had sung “U Boj, U Boj” for ninety years. The Mayor looked forward to Kwansei Gakuin Glee Club and Shingetsu-kai coming over to join the next year’s “Zrinyi Festival” to sing, and the Mayor’s assistant Ms. Éva Pandur assured Kadota of her every assistance in that case.

A Note on World War I and the Czechoslovak Army

On June 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated by a gunshot in Sarajevo and World War I broke out. Czechoslovakia was then a part of the Habsburg’s Austria-Hungary Dual Monarchy, and the Czechoslovak army was sent deep into Russia. Czechoslovaks who had been oppressed by Austria, however, were reluctant to fight for the German-Austrian Alliance and were initially willing to surrender to Russians so that they could concentrate on regaining their sovereignty.

In 1917 the revolutions took place in Russia overthrowing the House of Romanov and the succeeding USSR administration signed the ceasefire agreement with Germany and Austria in 1918. This put the 60,000 Czechoslovak soldiers in Russia into an awkward position as the USSR government requested they be disarmed. The Czechoslovaks refused and started fighting against the USSR, which turned to the German-Austrian Alliance. This paved the way for the U.S./Japan joint forces invading Siberia to rescue the Czechoslovak soldiers and extricate them from Vladivostok.

On November 11, 1918, Germany surrendered to the Allied Forces and WWI came to an end, resulting in a death-toll of 30,000,000 in all. The battle in Siberia, however, continued for a while but after extracting the powerful Czechoslovaks who once had dominated the Siberian Railroad, the U.S./Japan joint forces began to lose against the massive Soviet army and finally retreated from Siberia.



• Further acknowledgement •



After completing this report in 2009, leaving some details about the Czechoslovak army who came to Japan back in 1919 to be clarified if possible at all, a very good friend of mine, Mr. Martin Hošek, Assistant of the Institute of East Asian Studies, Charles University in Prague, took a great deal of trouble to look into various sources including the Military's Central Archives in Prague and dug up the old photographs as well as several officers' names and ranks. Those additional facts and material provided by Mr. Hošek have been duly recorded and filed in the KG Glee Club's library, 'Haus Bötzingen.'

(August 2010, Jun Karube)

The translator's note:

The hunt for finding the root of "U Boj, U Boj" was a 70-year Odyssey of the KG Glee Club and its ex-members, involving so many people inside and outside the school, including those in the States and Europe. Was its final outcome by a miracle? May be or may be not. But it seems to me more than that. Being one of the KG graduates, I'm inclined to believe the legendary spirit of "Mastery for Service" having turned into reality there.

(January 2012, Takao Abe)



Athletic Meeting at Kwansei Gakuin, 1919.

Shingetsu-kai, <http://www.kg-gee.gr.jp/index.pl/ob/> (in Japanese)
Kwansei Gakuin Archives, <http://www.kwansei.ac.jp/gakuinshi/ARCHIVESEhtm>
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