

Michel Lupant's Speech at the Opening Ceremony of ICV 23 Yokohama

Dear President of the Organizing Committee of the 23rd International Congress of Vexillology Yokohama 2009

Dear President of the Japanese Vexillological Association (Nihon Kishougaku kyokai)

Dear Delegates

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends.

Nine years after the founding of Nihon Kishougaku Kyokai (JAVA, Japanese Vexillological Association) in Tokyo on January 1, 2000, Kokusai Kishougaku Renmei, the International Federation of Vexillological Associations (FIAV) has accepted its invitation to organize the 23rd International Congress of Vexillology in Yokohama. It is an honour for FIAV to be present in Yokohama which celebrates in 2009 the 150th anniversary of its founding, the 120th anniversary of the commencement of the City Administration, and also the 100th anniversary of the adoption of its emblem.

We are in the country of the rising sun and we were among the first to wake up in this new day, day of the opening of the Congress. As FIAV President, I have the pleasure of addressing you these opening words to you.

Yokohama, which means the side of the beach, was a small fishing village until the end of the feudal Edo period, when Japan maintained a policy of national seclusion, having little contact with foreigners. From the mid-19th-century Japan began to open ports to foreign ships. One of these ports was built across the inlet in the sleepy fishing village of Yokohama. The Port of Yokohama was opened on 2 June 1859. Yokohama opened up to many Western influences which first reached Japan through the city. Yokohama quickly became the base of foreign trade in Japan. Recently great works have been developed in the city: construction of Minato Mirai 21 ("Port Future 21"), a major urban development project on reclaimed land which started in 1983. The 860m-long Yokohama Bay Bridge opened in the same year. In 1993, Minato Mirai saw the opening of the Yokohama Landmark Tower, the tallest building in Japan. The 2002 FIFA World Cup final was held in June at the International Stadium Yokohama. An early part in the commemoration project incorporated the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) which was held in Yokohama in May 2008.

Now, in 2009, the city welcomes FIAV and the Congress flag flies in Yokohama. This emblem associates harmoniously the symbols of Yokohama and FIAV together with the Japanese colours, white and red. This flag is an invitation to vexillologists from all over the world to focus in Yokohama. I congratulate Nozomi Kariyasu, the designer of the 23 ICV flag.

The Congress is a symbol of cooperation between all the vexillologists; it is the opportunity to gather all people interested in the study of flags from all the continents. The International Federation of Vexillological Associations unites these flag associations and institutions, of which there currently are 51.

Vexillology, the scientific study of flags, is universal and the International Congress is the symbol of the union of vexillologists in their diversity.

After Victoria (Canada), York (United Kingdom), Stockholm (Sweden) Buenos Aires (Argentina), and Berlin (Germany) to recall the most recent congresses, we are now in Yokohama, Japan, vexillologists travel a lot!

Each two years there is a migration, symbolic and pacific, of vexillologists from around the world looking for discoveries of the local vexillological heritage. In 1872 Jules Verne set Yokohama, which he had never visited, in an episode of his widely-read *Around the World in Eighty Days*, capturing the atmosphere of a fast-developing, Western-oriented Japanese city. Now FIAV has arrived in Yokohama to discover the city but more quickly than Phileas Fogg! We have accepted with a great pleasure the invitation from the Japanese Vexillological Association to gather in Yokohama.

We are fascinated by Japanese historical flags, Samurai banners that we have discovered through television series such as “Shogun”. These banners are unusual to foreigners, so strange and beautiful when they flew in the wind, worn by horsemen as in Soma city festival.

Every day we see flags on buildings, ships, and in the media. Flags are present in everyday life. We see them on television: during the official visit of a Head of State, on the car flags of authorities, during international congresses, in front of the United Nations buildings, at sporting events such as the World Cup in football held in Japan and Korea in 2002. More and more people are so proud to display their emblems in the stadiums and in the streets.

The Japanese flag (“Nisshoki” or more commonly used “Hinomaru”) symbolizes very well the name of your country, the Empire of the Rising Sun. It was widely used on military banners in the Sengoku (Warring States) period of the 15th and 16th centuries. During the Meiji Restoration the flag was officially adopted for use as the civil ensign on February 27, 1870 (January 27, Meiji 3 in the Japanese calendar). However, the flag was not adopted nationally until August 13, 1999, by the Law Concerning the National Flag and Anthem. We are celebrating in Yokohama the 10th anniversary of this official adoption.

Flags surge from all over, they are a means of communication, a symbol of unity, of identity, of membership of a community, a sports-club, or a political adherence. Flags unite all of us here, people from all part of the world without any distinction of race, religion, and way of life. Flags unite persons pursuing the same goal, the scientific study of flags.

I am a seasoned traveller and I can tell you that thanks to vexillology I have had the chance to receive a friendly welcome in all parts of the world. There is an increasing interest in vexillology, a word adopted in 1957 and which appears in many languages and dictionaries.

We are delighted to participate at the 23rd International Congress of Vexillology in Yokohama, Japan, and I hope we will work together these next days, in a good spirit, to develop vexillology and friendly relations under the kind glance of the rising sun, the symbol of your country.

FIAV thanks the authorities and the Band the of City of Yokohama Fire Department for their welcome. We especially thank the President and the members of the Organizing Committee of “Yokohama ICV 23” who have contributed their efforts to organize this Congress and invited us to discover Yokohama.

Welcome to Yokohama!

Willkommen Liebe Deutsche Freunde.

Bienvenue à tous nos amis francophones.

Doy la bienvenida a todos nuestros amigos de España y de America Latina.

I thank you