

Joint meeting of the Japan Society of Protistology and Korean Society of Protozoologists (Kobe2020)

Toshinobu Suzaki
Organizer of Kobe2020

Kobe2020 was held online on November 22-23, 2020, with Kobe University as the host base.

“Expect the best, plan for the worst, and prepare to be surprised (Denis Waitley).”

I chose this quote as the motto for the Japan-Korea Joint Meeting of the Protistology Societies (Kobe 2020) and displayed it on the screen at the entrance of SpatialChat, the venue for the online poster session (Fig. 1). This was the first ever meeting held by the Japanese and Korean

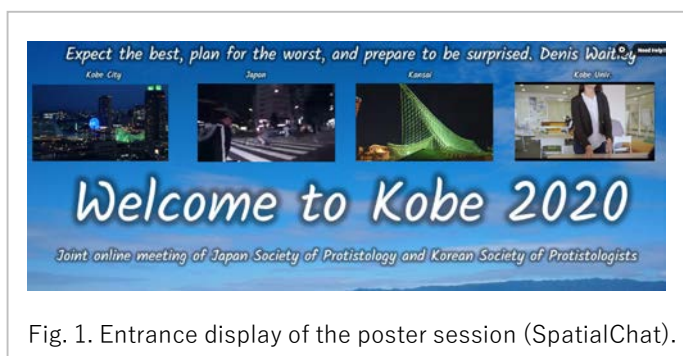


Fig. 1. Entrance display of the poster session (SpatialChat).

protistology societies as a whole. We, the Japanese members of the preparatory committee, have exchanged ideas with our Korean counterparts many times, and we tried to prepare for the event so that the participants can sincerely feel that it was a good meeting. Online conferences are still unfamiliar to both the preparers and the participants. We prepared as much as possible so that the participants would not get lost in the deep forest of online. However, there were some points that were not fully explained, such as the directions to the poster session room. We must make use of these as a source of reflection for the future.

Now, what did the participants think about "Be prepared to be surprised"? Participants may have had mixed feelings about it. The advantages and disadvantages of online do not need to be explained now. However, I think this conference was surprising in many ways, both good

Table 1. Participants of Kobe2020

Membership	
JSP (regular)	46
JSP (student/postdoc)	13
JSP (associate)	1
JSP (highschool student)	1
Non-member (Japan)	18
Subtotal	79
KSOP (regular)	20
KSOP (student/postdoc)	28
Non-member (Korea)	6
Subtotal	54
Other countries	18
Total	151

and bad. Our preparatory committee spent a long time and thought we had prepared enough. So, I actually thought that there would be no surprises now, but contrary to my expectations, the meeting was just a series of wonderful surprises when it started.

First, it was a most pleasant surprise that the number of participants was larger than expected and that there were participants from many countries (Table 1 and Fig. 2). There were 18 participants from countries other than Japan and Korea, including China, Bangladesh, Ukraine, UK, and the United States. It was also nice to see that there were many student participants. On-site meetings inevitably require travel and participation fees, but this year's online event was free of charge and could be attended from anywhere. There were also research presentations by first-year college students and high school students, and I felt the rise of young power in the conference.

Kobe2020 began with opening remarks by Dr. Terue Harumoto, President of the Japan Society of Protistology. Here, the brief history of the two joint symposia that the Japanese and Korean societies have held so far was presented.

Two plenary lectures and a symposium with six speakers, and 11 oral presentations were conducted using Zoom. There were some audio jumbles and some difficulties with screen sharing, but none of these were major problems and in the end all the

presentations went very smoothly. One of the highlights, I think, was when Dr. Ryo Hoshina, who had broken one of his legs badly two days before his presentation, gave a wonderful lecture from his hospital bed using a tethered smartphone. One of the great advantages of online is that you can easily participate and present from anywhere as long as you are connected to the Internet. I was incredibly surprised and pleased because I never expected that such a presentation would be possible at our conference.

The symposium was held under the keyword "diversity". Six people spoke on the diversity of protists and the diversity of researchers who study them. I was particularly impressed by the lecture of Dr. Katsuya Shimabukuro, who has been conducting excellent research with his students despite being visually impaired, and he gave us the courage to live our lives. I was also impressed when Dr. Jong Soo Park from Korea said after the lecture, "I want to tell and spread this story as much as I can to my students and to all the people I will meet". We all live with some kind of obstacle or difficulty in living. COVID-19 or breaking a leg would be one such trouble. However, the symposium made us feel that by sharing such problems with everyone, instead of holding them in one person, the power to live is born.



Fig. 2. Group photo of Kobe2020 participants.

Twenty-eight poster presentations were made using SpatialChat and LINC Biz. Since the LINC Biz site was launched a week before the congress and the posters posted there were freely available for viewing, a long and lively discussion took place via text chat. On the day of the conference, SpatialChat was used for a verbal explanation and Q&A. SpatialChat charges for the number of participants multiplied by the number of minutes used. An unexpectedly large number of participants stayed in the poster room for an extended period of time, which led to a lively discussion. As a result, the billing went way over budget. This was a less pleasant surprise from an accounting standpoint, but a very pleasant one for the convention. Our expenses for the conference came to about \$3,000, mainly for network-related use (subscriptions for Zoom, SpatialChat, and LINC Biz). This was about one-fifteenth of the estimated cost of holding the conference in Kobe that we had originally planned, and we also found that holding the conference online had significant economic advantages. In addition, the International Society of Protistologists (ISOP) provided us with approximately \$2,000 to subsidize our online hosting costs, as this was a joint international conference between Japan and Korea. We are deeply grateful for this assistance.

Sixty-four students or postdocs attended this meeting, which was 42% of the total number of participants. Fifteen of them applied for the Best Presentation Award (BPA), and after a preliminary screening, six were invited to give oral presentations. As a result of Zoom voting by all the attendees, three people (Yasuhide Nakamura, Yumeng Wan and Khaoula Ettahi) were awarded the BPA.

Kobe2020 was concluded with closing remarks by Dr. Young Ok Kim, President of the Korean Society of Protistologists. Dr. Kim thanked the participants and speakers from more than 10 countries who participated in the conference and the many staff members involved in organizing the conference. She was particularly impressed with the design featuring a conjugation of *Paramecium* (Fig. 3), which was created by the preparatory committee as the logo for the meeting. *Paramecium* will create a new generation by conjugation. Dr. Kim's words that this joint meeting will surely lead to the revitalization of the Japanese and Korean Protistology societies must have touched the hearts of all the participants.

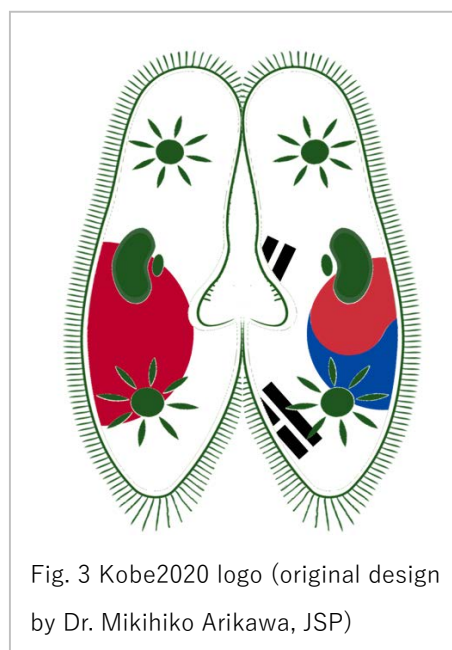


Fig. 3 Kobe2020 logo (original design by Dr. Mikihiko Arikawa, JSP)

The first ever Japan-Korea joint meeting was conducted with English as the official language. After the conference, I strongly felt that the time has come for young people in

Japan and Korea to be able to present and discuss in English with dignity and confidence. Our societies have finally taken a new step toward internationalization. In three years, the next joint meeting will be held in Korea. I am very much looking forward to seeing more and stronger young people at the next joint conference.

Finally, I would like to list the names below with sincere thanks to the members of the preparatory committee who helped in various ways in the preparation of this conference.

Organizing Committee (JSP team):

Toshinobu Suzaki (Kobe University), Terue Harumoto (Nara Women's University), Ryo Hoshina (Nagahama Institute of Bio-Science and Technology), Mayumi Sugiura (Nara Women's University), Mikihiro Arikawa (Kochi University), Madoka Kitakawa (Kobe University), Chisato Yoshimura (Kobe University), Kisaburo Nagamune (National Institute of Infectious Diseases), Masashi M. Hayakawa (Kobe University), Euki Yazaki (RIKEN).

Organizing Committee (KSOP team):

Hwan Su Yoon (Sungkyunkwan University), Jong Soo Park (Kyungpook National University), JunMo Lee (Kyungpook National University).