

**WELCOME ADDRESS ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT TO CALEB UNIVERSITY OF  
THE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF JAPAN,  
H.E. RYUICHI SHOJI, ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2012**

Your Excellency Ryuichi SHOJI, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Nigeria, Ms Sayaka OCHIDA, Registrar, Deans and members of the Management Team of Caleb University, Gentlemen of the Press.

I am most delighted and highly honoured to welcome Your Excellency to Caleb University, Imota, the premier degree-awarding private University in Lagos State. Significantly, this is Your Excellency's first visit to a Nigerian University since assumption of duty. It is also the first Ambassadorial visit to Caleb University. For the record, your equally distinguished predecessor, His Excellency Toshitsugu UESAWA, visited the Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos, where I was the Dean of Arts, to deliver one of the Faculty's Distinguished Lectures on July 9, 2009. His Excellency's memorable visit came a year after he invited me to the Embassy in May 2008. In addition to the lecture, he also graciously unveiled an iconic sculpture that we erected in front of the Faculty building facing the road to the Senate Building.

Though Ambassador Uesawa's lecture came months after that of the French Ambassador, it was his first at any Nigerian University. In your own case, today's visit is coming before the next Embassy-related event here at Caleb University, the US Embassy's Black History Month programme on February 28. I am, therefore, doubly honoured to be associated with these firsts by two successive envoys of one of the world's leading economic, technological and cultural superpowers.

I crave your indulgence to place on record my personal indebtedness to the government and people of Japan for hosting me and my wife between November 1993 and May 1994, when I was a Fellow of the Japan Foundation and, concurrently, a Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute of Developing Economies (known as Ajiken), then at Ichigaya in central Tokyo. My host institute published my 302-page research on Nigerian and Japanese ports, a copy of which will be presented today to Your Excellency. I have sweet memories of visits to Mashiko pottery city and the Tokyo Bay waste recycle and landfill site, participation in *ohanami*, the efficient underground rail system, the excellent research ambience and camaraderie at Ajiken, and the Emperor's Birthday celebration when the Embassy was still in Lagos. In all, the stint in Japan and my subsequent scholarly engagements with your great country have made significant contributions to my intellectual and overall development. The Japanese that I encountered, including the man who insisted on taking me to the institute all the way from Ichigaya station on my first

day and yet did not identify himself, the lady we met on a bus who insisted on buying our tickets and giving us extra ones, my research mentor, Professor Tomohei Chida, the leading expert on Japanese maritime history and my host, Katsuya Mochizuki, and Ms Tomoko Murai, who volunteered her lunch hour to teach us rudimentary Nihongo at Ajiken (only a few expressions of which I can still recall, such as “*Tokyo wa, okii machi desu!*”), confirm the assertion that: *Nihonjin wa, shinseitsu anahito desu.* (“The Japanese are nice people.”)

Caleb University was licensed to operate by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2007 and it duly commenced academic activities at its take-off site in Lagos in January 2008. The University relocated to its permanent site here at Imota on November 23, 2009, and graduated its first set of students in June 2011 – all on schedule. We offer thirteen degree programmes in three colleges: Pure and Applied Sciences; Environmental Management and Sciences; and Social and Management Sciences. Our maiden Convocation takes place on Saturday, March 10, 2012. Needless to say, we look forward to Your Excellency’s participation in the joyful event.

Your Excellency’s visit to Caleb University promises to deepen Nigeria-Japan relations by creating opportunities for positive collaboration in academic and cultural exchanges, institutional affiliation, technical assistance and capacity building. I recall that one of your predecessors donated a language laboratory to the University of Lagos some twenty years ago. Here at Caleb University, a private tertiary institution, characterized by a quiet and conducive environment for learning and reflection, far from the madding crowd of the megacity, with the rolling hills, lush vegetation and the birds and small game around us in their natural habitat, there is much scope for innovation in curriculum development. We are open to new ideas and willing to introduce courses in Japanese history, diplomacy or economic development in our International Relations programme (in lieu of History and International Studies) or sub-degree courses in Japanese language and culture. This may as well entail the setting up of a Japanese Language/Cultural Centre (on the model of Goethe Institute or Confucius Institute) that is domiciled on campus and affiliated with the University. In that event, we count upon the human and material resource support from your Embassy and home institutions. As you tour our facilities, it is possible that you might spot a preferred area of intervention in addition to the suggestions made above. Beyond this, Your Excellency could also consider delivering our 2013 Foundation Day Lecture, which takes place on January 21 of every year. This year’s lecture, which was also the Convocation lecture, was affected by the recent national fuel subsidy removal strike and will now take place on March 10. The previous one was delivered by a Professor from Harvard University.

Once again, we warmly welcome Your Excellency to our modest campus where we strive to produce highly-trained, globally competitive men and women of character and learning. Currently, our students are writing the first semester examination, which was not affected by the aforementioned dislocations in the wider society. We look forward to a most fruitful collaboration with you, and wish you a happy and productive stay in Nigeria. *Iraishamase!*

Long live Caleb University! Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!! Long live Japan!!!

Thank you and God bless.

PROFESSOR AYODEJI **OLUKOJU**, FNAL

VICE-CHANCELLOR, CALEB UNIVERSITY, IMOTA, LAGOS STATE

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