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THE 12TH INTERNATIONAL SAGO SYMPOSIUM IN RIKKYO UNIVERSITY, TOKYO, JAPAN

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By : Margaret Chan Kit Yok

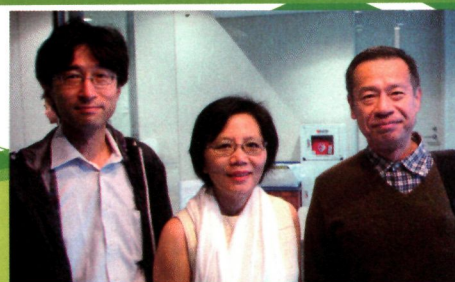
The 12th International Sago Symposium was held in Rikkyo University at Nishi-ikebukuro, Toshima-ku, Tokyo in Japan with the theme "The Sago Supports Human and Planet Welfare". Sponsored by the Sarwak Convention Bureau, the main task was to launch the 13 International Sago Symposium to be organized by Universiti Teknologi MARA in Kuching, Sarawak in September 2017. This was successfully conducted by Prof. Dato Dr. Jamil Hamali, the Rector of UiTM Sarawak on 16th September 2015 at the close of the symposium.

Associate Prof. Dr. Margaret Chan also presented a paper entitled, "Effect of Drainage and Fertilization on Mycorrhiza Colonization of Sago Palm (*Metroxylon sagu* Rottboll)" on the first day of the symposium. She was also appointed as a reviewer for the Proceedings of SAGO2015.

The post symposium tour brought the delegates to the Food and Agricultural Materials Inspection Center (FAMIC). The mission of FAMIC is to contribute to food safety through inspection of food and agricultural materials with two foci: firstly, ensuring the quality and safety of fertilizers, soil improvement materials, agricultural chemicals, animal feeds and feed additives and secondly improving the quality and labeling of agricultural, forestry and fishery products. After lunch, the tour continued to include the Sumida river cruise from the Hinode Harbor to Asakusa to the Sensoji Temple in downtown Tokyo passing under twelve bridges of different unique designs. Unfortunately Mount Fuji was not in sight due to bad weather.



Some of the Sarawak delegates with Prof. Dato Dr. Jamil Hamali and Associate Prof. Dr. Margaret Chan



On the right of Associate Prof. Dr. Margaret Chan is Prof. Masanori Okazaki of Ishikawa Prefectural University, the chair of the organizing committee

THE EIGHT INTERNATIONAL MYCORRHIZA CONFERENCE ICOM8, NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY, FLAGSTAFF, USA

By : Margaret Chan Kit Yok



Reunion with delegates from Prague and Mexico whom I met in 2010 at the VI National Symposium and III Iberoamerican Meeting on the Mycorrhizal Symbioses, Tlaxcala, Mexico



Privileged to be in the group with Professor Sally - Sarah Smith from the University of Adelaide, a specialist and a heavyweight in the mycorrhiza symbiosis research, on my left trekking down the Grand Canyon

The Eight International Mycorrhiza Conference (ICOM8) was held in Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona, USA from 2nd to 9th August 2015. My participation was partially sponsored by the Sarawak Convention Bureau to bid for the ninth session to be held in Kuching, Sarawak, but was not successful as the delegates voted Prague, Czechoslovakia over Kuching, Sarawak and Morocco. I was also accepted to present a poster paper entitled, "Land use change in tropical peat on vesicular arbuscular mycorrhiza of sago palm (*Metroxylon sagu* rottboll)". Indeed, it was like a reunion for me as I was able to meet other delegates whom I crossed paths at previous conferences on mycorrhizas and updated our research experiences and findings.

The whole journey from Kuching on the 2nd August 2015 via London to Phoenix took over 23 hours of air time excluding transit. From Phoenix to Flagstaff, using the Arizona bus shuttle took three hours, which was a breathtaking experience passing by the south western Colorado Desert with a landscape of jumbled decomposing granite boulders with sparse vegetation sprawled with cacti prominently protruding with the species cacti Saguaro. The landscape reminded me of the Road Runner in the Looney Tunes cartoons featuring the speedy-yet-flightless bird and his constant pursuer, Wile E. Coyote.

Flagstaff is a city named after a ponderosa pine flagpole made by a scouting party from Boston known as the "Second Boston Party" to celebrate the United States Centennial on July 4, 1876. Due to its proximity, the conference tour brought me to the spectacular Grand Canyon National Park.

On my way back to Malaysia, I went to the University of Minnesota Morris (one of the five campuses in the University of Minnesota system) to pay a visit to our collaborator, Associate Prof. Michael Ceballos, in the Indigenous America to Indigenous Borneo Programme. It was a four hours' flight from Phoenix to Minneapolis and another three hours' journey by land from Minneapolis to Morris passing by agricultural land planted with corns. We had

a brainstorming session at the university to review an article entitled, "Bioethanol: Feedstock alternatives, pretreatment, lignin chemistry and the potential for green value-added lignin co-products" for the Journal of Environmental Analytical Chemistry.

My trip home brought me from Minneapolis via Chicago to London, Kuala Lumpur and finally Kuching on 12th August 2015.



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