



THE STRENGTHENING OF THE INDONESIAN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY TOWARDS JAPAN THROUGH RUMAH BUDAYA INDONESIA

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Abstract

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology initiated the Indonesian Cultural House or *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* (RBI) to strengthen Indonesian cultural diplomacy. This program aims to promote Indonesian cultural diversity, strengthen the existence of Indonesian culture, and increase the impression of Indonesian culture in 19 countries. This article explains the government's efforts to enhance Indonesian cultural diplomacy towards Japan through RBI and its impact on increasing the positive impression of Indonesian culture on Japanese society. The researchers used the concepts of cultural diplomacy and nation branding. This article applied a qualitative methodology with a case study approach and is supported by primary and secondary data validated by triangulation techniques. The results prove that although there are challenges in strengthening Indonesian cultural diplomacy, including the Covid-19, RBI in Japan has succeeded in increasing the Japanese public's impression of the noble Indonesian culture. RBI chose to conduct cultural exhibitions with the face-to-face program named "Day" and "Workshop" before the pandemic and the Online "Visit" and "Workshop" during the pandemic. This article shows that the success of RBI in strengthening the Indonesian cultural diplomacy in Japan is supported by the enthusiasm and positive appreciation of Japanese citizens for various Indonesian cultures.

Keywords: Cultural Diplomacy, Indonesia, Indonesian Cultural House, Japan, Nation Branding.

INTRODUCTION

A large number of countries in the world today have carried out cultural diplomacy for nation branding, such as Japan through The Japan Foundation, South Korea through the Korean Cultural Center, and France through the *Institute Francaisd' Indonesie*.¹ These institutions play a role in disseminating their country's culture through cultural and language discussions, workshops, seminars, exhibitions, and other artistic activities.² Indonesia can do the same with the potential for diversity and abundance of cultural arts. As the largest archipelagic country with more than 700 different ethnicities, cultural diplomacy can be a means of nation branding abroad.³ That is why the Indonesian government took concrete steps by establishing a cultural program called the *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* (RBI) – which translates to The Indonesian Cultural House – in 2014. With this cultural house, the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology aims to promote Indonesian culture in partner countries. According to the Deputy Minister of Education and Culture (Wamendikbud) in the field of culture for 2011-2014, Wiendu Nuryanti, RBI is a program to respond to foreign cultural institutions in Indonesia.

The Indonesian government feels the need to do the same in establishing cultural centers in these countries.⁴ The government's wish was finally answered by presenting Indonesian Cultural Houses in numerous countries geographically close to Indonesia: Timor Leste, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Philippines, India, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand and China. RBI is also established in countries with close ties to Indonesia, such as the United States, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, England, and Egypt.⁵ The placement of RBI in these countries is also due to the category of "accredited countries" or trading partner countries where Indonesia places Trade Attaches and Trade Promotion Centers.⁶ This article will specifically discuss Indonesian cultural diplomacy carried out by RBI in Japan. According to the Indonesian Cultural and Educational Attaché in Tokyo, Yusli Wardiatno, RBI in Japan is the Indonesian government's response to The Japan Foundation's cultural institution, which was already present in Jakarta. *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* in Japan was launched in 2014 and finally inaugurated in 2017 at the Indonesian Embassy in Tokyo.⁷ The objectives of establishing this RBI are: (1) as a forum to provide understanding to the Japanese people about Indonesian culture, (2) as a forum that promotes Indonesian cultural diversity, and (3) as a forum that helps increase the positive impression of Indonesian culture on Japanese society.⁸

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¹Whisnu BagusPrasetyo, "Pemerintah Akan Bangun Rumah Budaya Indonesia," accessed from Beritasatu: <https://www.beritasatu.com/nasional/21793/pemerintah-akan-bangun-rumah-budaya-indonesia>, December 11, 2011.

²Yuliana, "14 Kegiatan Seru di Pusat Kebudayaan Asing," accessed from Rukita: <https://www.rukita.co/stories/kegiatan-seru-di-pusat-kebudayaan-asing/> December 9, 2019.

³Yusli Wardiatno, Imelda Coutrier, and Tini Kodrat, online interview through Zoom Meeting, March 29, 2022.

⁴Winda Destiana, "Indonesia Siapkan Rumah Budaya di 10 negara," accessed from Okezone: <https://lifestyle.okezone.com/read/2014/03/12/407/953968/indonesia-siapkan-rumah-budaya-di-10-negara>, March 12, 2014.

⁵Mohammad Wildan, "Pengembangan Rumah Budaya Indonesia," accessed from Kemdikbud: <https://kebudayaan.kemdikbud.go.id/ditwdb/pengembangan-rumah-budaya-indonesia>, March 7, 2017.

⁶Yusli Wardiatno, Imelda Coutrier, and Tini Kodrat, *loc. cit.*

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*

Therefore, this article aims to explain the strengthening of Indonesia's cultural diplomacy efforts towards Japan through RBI in 2017-2021 and how the impact of RBI in Japan increases the positive impression of Indonesian culture on Japanese society. It is called strengthening since this cultural diplomacy is carried out by the Education and Culture Attaché, who supports the performance of the Indonesian Embassy in accredited partner countries. This article is divided into seven parts, starting from the introduction, an explanation of RBI in Japan, efforts to strengthen Indonesia's cultural diplomacy towards Japan through RBI in 2017-2021, the impact of RBI in Japan, and closing with a conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural diplomacy is not something new countries are doing to achieve their national interests. Lucian Jora identifies cultural diplomacy with cultural propaganda and is as old as international relations. This diplomacy continues to develop from promoting the image of a country to communication through cultural values and attitudes.⁹ Ien Ang, Yudhishtir Raj Isara & Phillip Mar even emphasized that cultural diplomacy is not only driven by national interests and cultural relations and is practised by non-state actors. In this case, the government of a country must also be able to balance impartiality and seek recognition from other countries who have different ideas and imaginations about the country.¹⁰ That is why Japan has gone through five stages of cultural diplomacy change to show its seriousness in building a positive image of Japan through culture.¹¹ According to Kazuo Ogoura, the Japanese government is trying to change the perception that previously, it was a militaristic country into a peace-loving country. The first stage took place in the 1950-the 1960s when the Japanese government distributed many pamphlets and brochures showing places in Japan filled with flowers and the peaceful scenery around Mount Fuji. The second stage took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s. At this time, the Japanese government began to shift the view of a peace-loving Japan into an economically developed Japan. At this time, the Japan Foundation, which was tasked with carrying out Japanese cultural diplomacy, was founded, in 1972, to be precise. The third stage occurred in the 1980s when Japan had become an economically developed country. That is why Japan tried to build perceptions through more outstanding Japanese contributions and involvement through cooperation and cultural exchange. The fourth stage occurred in the 1990s when Japan experienced a slowdown in economic growth, and at the same time, countries in the world began to feel the wave of globalization. Finally, a change in Japanese cultural diplomacy occurred again in 2000, when Japan increasingly strengthened its existence to build peace through cultural exchange.

⁹ Lucian Jora, "New Practices and Trends in Cultural Diplomacy," in *Pol. Sc. Int. Rel.*, Vol. X, No. 1, pp. 43-52, Bucharest, 2013, accessed from https://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/pdf/research/articles/cultural_diplomacy/New_Practices_And_Trends_In_Cultural_Diplomacy_-_Lucian_Jora.pdf

¹⁰ Ien Ang, Yudhishtir Raj Isara and Philip Mar, "Cultural Diplomacy: Beyond the National Interest?" in *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 365-381, accessed from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10286632.2015.1042474>

¹¹ Kazuo Ogoura, *Japan's Postwar Cultural Diplomacy*, Center for Area Studies (CAS), Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, 2008, accessed from https://www.fu-berlin.de/sites/cas/medienordner/CAS-WP/cas-wp_no_1-08.pdf

From this, we can see that cultural diplomacy in Japan depends on domestic economic, social, and political conditions. The Japanese government's efforts to form a positive opinion from the international community are supported by solid and stable economic growth and a commitment to be involved in creating world peace. As noted by Ogoura, one of Japan's biggest challenges is changing the image of Japan, which previously became an aggressive actor in the second World War, into a country that loves peace and is willing to be involved in international peace. That is why diplomacy through introducing Japanese culture and traditions is a vital instrument to change that image. Similarly, the Chinese government carries out cultural diplomacy as a tool to support China's economic cooperation with countries in the world. China established the Confucius Institute to promote their language and cultural knowledge worldwide. Falk Hartig said that the effort was carried out by involving local stakeholders and experts who took advantage of the global demand for their interest in the Chinese language and culture.¹² Interestingly, international partners are co-funding China's cultural diplomacy and are involved in presenting China's global image. This partnership happened due to the advantages of increasing their ability to teach local audiences the Chinese language and culture and strengthening contacts with China. Covina Kwan sees that the Confucius Institute has become part of China's cultural diplomacy and soft power through university autonomy, as in Canada. This method provides a symbiotic and sustainable advantage, especially for universities there.¹³

Similarly, several pieces of literature look at Indonesian cultural diplomacy from various angles. Eirene Jusi Umboh, for example, sees batik as part of cultural diplomacy towards global fashion.¹⁴ Sabda Yamanolo Dachi sees wayang performances as a form of Indonesian cultural diplomacy in the United States.¹⁵ Heni Syintia Putri saw the role of the Indonesian Cultural House in introducing various Indonesian cultures, especially in South Korea.¹⁶ Cahya Putri Afika saw the Miss World Election as an effort of Indonesian cultural diplomacy,¹⁷ and Sintia Catur Sutantri saw Pencak Silat as Indonesian cultural diplomacy at UNESCO.¹⁸ The references show the importance of Indonesian cultural diplomacy through various forms. Therefore, this article mainly explains how *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* in Japan prevailed for nation branding to the Japanese society through on-site and online cultural exhibitions.

¹² Falk Hartig, "Cultural diplomacy with Chinese characteristics: The case of Confucius Institutes in Australia" in *Communication, Politics & Culture*, vol. 45, pp. 256-276, 2012, accessed from <https://search.informit.org/doi/epdf/10.3316/informit.546477597666355>

¹³ Covina Y.W. Kwan, "Cultural Diplomacy and Internationalization of Higher Education: The Experience of Three Confucius Institutes in Canada," in *Front Education China*, 2013, accessed from <https://doi.org/10.3868/s110-003-014-0007-x> dan <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF03397004>

¹⁴ Eirene Jusi Umboh, *Diplomasi Budaya Indonesia: Batik Sebagai Fashion Global*. Unpublished thesis, Jakarta: Universitas Kristen Indonesia, 2019.

¹⁵ Sabda Yamanolo Dachi, *Pertunjukan Wayang Sebagai Alat Diplomasi Indonesia*. Unpublished thesis, Jakarta: Universitas Kristen Indonesia, 2019.

¹⁶ Heni Syintia Putri, "Program Rumah Budaya Indonesia pada tahun 2009-2017," in *eJournal Ilmu Hubungan Internasional Fisip Universitas Mulawarman*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2020.

¹⁷ Cahya Putri Afika, "Upaya Diplomasi Kebudayaan Indonesia Melalui Ajang Pemilihan Miss World 2013," in *eJournal Ilmu Hubungan Internasional Fisip Universitas Mulawarman*, vol. 5, no. 4: 1-16, 2017. ISSN 2477-2623.

¹⁸ Sintia Catur Sutantri, "Diplomasi Kebudayaan Indonesia Dalam Proses Pengusulan Pencak Silat sebagai Warisan Budaya Takbenda UNESCO," in *Jurnal Ilmu Politik dan Komunikasi* vol. 8, no. 1: 28-47. 2018. doi: 10.34010/JIPSI.V8I1.876

METHODOLOGY

According to Djarm'an Satori and Aan Komariah, this article uses a qualitative methodology that can display various special social conditions by describing the truth factually. This factual description is based on collecting and analyzing connected data from realistic situations.¹⁹ The qualitative approach is more exploratory and descriptive to produce a discourse that describes, explores, and interprets the behavior of actors in social life.²⁰ The qualitative research model used in this research is a case study. Creswell recommends using case studies when the phenomenon is closely related to an in-depth understanding of a limited phenomenon, case, or system. The goal is to understand a program, event or activity, process, individual, or group of people.²¹ Therefore, the authors use this case study model to explain in depth the Indonesian cultural programs carried out by RBI in Japan, which were initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek). This article uses two data sources, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from authentic sources through interviews conducted with the Attaché for Education and Culture (Atdikbud) in 2020-present, Mr Yusli Wardiatno and two Indonesian diasporas who live in Japan, namely Imelda Coutrier and Tini Kodrat. This primary data is enriched with secondary data obtained from various books, journals, reports on the internet, and other credible sources. In addition, data were collected through a document study validated using triangulation techniques and analyzed following the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, as quoted by Sugiyono.²²

Concept and Theory

This article uses the concepts of cultural diplomacy and nation branding to analyze efforts to strengthen Indonesian cultural diplomacy towards Japanese society through the *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* during 2017-2021. Like the purpose of diplomacy in general, cultural diplomacy is used to achieve the national interest of a country. The only differences are the goals and efforts to achieve these interests. Cultural diplomacy is carried out by associating, informing, and influencing other nations through culture to increase recognition and understanding, promote a positive image, build mutual understanding and enhance the nation's image. Tulus Warsito and Wahyuni Kartikasari explained that cultural diplomacy is a country's effort to advance and fight for the national interest through culture, including the use of ideology, technology, politics, economy, military, social, arts, and relevant fields in the international community aspect.²³ According to Tulus Warsito and Wahyuni Kartikasari, the concept of cultural diplomacy can be carried out through exhibitions, propaganda, penetration, negotiation, and exchange of experts.²⁴ In this

article, we will look at the cultural diplomacy efforts carried out by Indonesia through RBI in Japan during 2017-2021, especially in exhibitions. One of the cultural diplomacy's goals is nation branding, also known as state promotion. A country needs branding to introduce and define its trademark so that other countries easily recognize the country. Simon Anholt first put forward this concept. He explained nation branding as a national effort to promote its country by identifying a competitive and attractive vision. *Nation branding* is a symbolic construct that emphasizes the positive, attractive, memorable, unique, relevant and quality qualities of a country to make it easier to communicate with other countries.²⁵ Anholt also explained the Nation Brand Hexagon, a representation, preference, and overall view that an individual represents when he thinks of a particular country.²⁶ The Nation Brand Hexagon covers six things: culture and heritage, tourism, society, government, exports, and investment. This concept shows the importance of building a positive image for a country. This article specifically discusses how the Indonesian government builds its positive image, mainly through culture and heritage that is recognized by the international community as having an intriguing diversity. The purpose of using the concept of nation branding in this article is to see whether Indonesia's cultural diplomacy efforts towards Japan through RBI can help strengthen and increase the positive impression of Indonesian culture on Japanese society.

Analysis

Rumah Budaya Indonesia in Japan

Since 2014, the Indonesian government, mainly through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), has been trying to promote Indonesian culture in the eyes of the world. This government effort is a mandate from the 1945 Constitution, especially Article 32, paragraph 1, which provides directions for advancing national culture amid world civilization by guaranteeing the people's freedom to maintain and develop their cultural values. At that time, it was announced that *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* needed to be established in several countries that were geographically close to Indonesia, such as Timor Leste, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, the Philippines, India, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand and China, and in other countries that have close bilateral relations with Indonesia, such as the US, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the UK, and Egypt.²⁷

The government selects RBI placements in these countries as these countries are accredited countries or partner countries that are potentially useful for Indonesia.²⁸ However, each country's provisions for the formation, inauguration and implementation of the RBI differ. That is why the actualization of RBI in partner countries is different. Although the initial establishment of RBI in 10 countries, namely the US, Australia, the Netherlands, Japan, Germany, South Korea, France, Singapore, Timor Leste and Turkey, was announced simultaneously by the Ministry of Education and Culture in

¹⁹ Satori Djarm'an dan Aan Komariah. *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Alfabeta, 2011.

²⁰ Norman Blaikie, *Designing Social Research: The Logic of Anticipation*, Second Edition, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010, p. 204.

²¹ John WCreswell, Preliminary Considerations. dalam *Research Design : Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. London: SAGE Publications, 2009, p. 14.

²² Sugiyono, *Memahami Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Alfabeta, 2005 and Sugiyono, "Metode Penelitian Pendidikan Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R&D," in Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R&D*, pp. 246-253. Bandung: Alfabeta, 2014.

²³ Tulus Warsito, dan Wahyuni Kartikasari, *Diplomasi Kebudayaan Konsep dan Relevansi Bagi Negara Berkembang: Studi Kasus Indonesia*, Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2007.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Simon Anholt, "Nations Brands of the Twenty First Century," in *Journal of Brand Management* 5, no. 6. 1998: 395-406. doi: 10.1057/bm.1998.30.

²⁶ Simon Anholt, *Brand New Justice. The Upside of Global Branding*. London: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2003.

²⁷ Mohammad Wildan, *loc.cit.*

²⁸ Winda Destiana, *loc.cit.*

2014, the inauguration and implementation took place between 2015-2019. It follows the regulations and agreement between the Indonesian government and their respective governments.²⁹ Likewise with the formation of RBIs in other countries whose inauguration and implementation must conform to legalization and agreements between the Indonesian government and local governments.³⁰

The existence of *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* in 19 countries is managed by the Education and Culture Attaché or abbreviated as Atdikbud.³¹ According to the Indonesian Education and Culture Attaché in Tokyo, Yusli Wardiatno, the Atdikbud assigned to RBI in various countries are expected to provide explanations regarding Indonesian arts and culture to the people in the accredited countries. In addition, the aim is for citizens of other countries to understand the Indonesian landscape, including the diversity of tribes, nations, languages, and cultures.³²

The explanation was carried out according to the Indonesian Cultural House's three functions, namely: first, as Indonesia Culture Learning, in which *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* (RBI) acts as a forum for preserving Indonesian cultural heritage, such as learning the Indonesian language, workshops on Indonesian fabrics, and culinary and Indonesian dances. Second, as Indonesia Culture Expression, where RBI performs a place to introduce cultural heritage such as art performances, cultural festivals, music shows, literature exhibitions, batik exhibitions, and wayang performances. Third, as Indonesia Culture Advocacy and Promotion, where RBI serves as a forum to improve Indonesia's image in the culture so that it is better known to the international community while at the same time strengthening international recognition of Indonesian culture.³³ One of the branches of *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* that performs these three functions is RBI in Japan. The RBI in Japan is resulted from the agreement between Indonesian and Japanese governments involving various stakeholders between the two countries.³⁴ When it was launched in 2014, RBI in Japan was only implemented in 2017 after direct guidance from the Director of Cultural Diplomacy, Nadjamudin Ramly, at the Coordinating Meeting for the finalization of the Ministry of Education and Culture.³⁵ The Attaché for Education and Culture (Atdikbud) in 2017-2020, Alinda F.M. Zain, implemented the *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* in Tokyo, which was then continued by the current Attaché, Yusli Wardiatno. RBI also involves two Indonesian diaspora or indigenous Indonesians living in Japan, Imelda Coutrier and Tini Kodrat, who have helped manage cultural activities since their

inauguration in 2017.³⁶ The Indonesian Attaché for Education and Culture in Tokyo, Yusli Wardiatno, elaborated that RBI in Japan is part of diplomatic efforts through cultural activities so that the relationship between Indonesia and Japan becomes more robust and closer. According to him, the easiest way to make someone from a different nation, culture, or language feel welcomed when they meet is through introducing culture, including language.³⁷ That is why one of the cultural diplomacy efforts carried out by RBI in Tokyo aims to promote Indonesia's rich and diverse culture.³⁸ The Indonesian government also applies this effort as a nation branding to increase the positive impression of Indonesian culture toward Japanese society.³⁹

The Strengthening of Indonesian Cultural Diplomacy through RBI in Japan

Imelda Coutrier, an Indonesian diaspora who lends a hand in managing the RBI in Tokyo, elucidates RBI's work programs throughout the years 2017-2021, as follows:⁴⁰

"We started RBI in 2017, to be precise, in August, starting with the Minang Day event. At the event, we, together with the Attaché for Education and Culture before Mr Yusli, thought it would be better if the next Indonesian Cultural House activities were held regularly with Indonesian "Day" Performances from each region of Indonesia. Then we also held what is called a Workshop. Workshops are activities that teach a dance or play traditional Indonesian musical instruments. However, in 2020 there was a pandemic due to Covid-19, thus limiting the operations of the Indonesian Cultural House. We had not found a way to resume RBI in March and April, so we took two months off. However, after we saw that Zoom could be used as a platform to hold the Indonesian Cultural House online, we decided to run it until now. We changed the name a little to the Indonesian Performance "Visit", for example, a visit to Bogor, a visit to Bandung, then yesterday a visit to Medan on March 19, where we introduced a city including its culture, then Ms Tini taught dances according to that city, and lastly, Ibu Ai teaches special recipes that are easy to teach."⁴¹

The explanation above shows that efforts to strengthen Indonesian cultural diplomacy throughout 2017-2020 in Japan through RBI were implemented directly with the Indonesia Day Performance and Training through Workshops. However, due to the pandemic, the form of RBI activities in Japan was shifted to online activities through the Indonesia Visit Show and Online Workshop Training starting in May 2020. Activities with the theme of the Indonesian Performance "Day" are activities that promote culture in an area. This performance shows the ceremony, dances, and culinary specialties of the region. Such as, "Minang Day" in 2017 was carried out by explaining Minang culture or in full Minangkabau from West Sumatra by performing traditional wedding ceremonies as well as dances to the presentation of Minang's mainstay food, namely rendang.⁴²

²⁹Mohammad Wildan, *loc.cit.*

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹"Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, Rumah Budaya Indonesia Tokyo menggelar "Selamatan" pada Giat Budaya ke-50," accessed from Kemdikbud: <https://www.kemdikbud.go.id/main/blog/2021/12/rumah-budaya-indonesia-tokyo-menggelar-selamatan-pada-giat-budaya-ke50>, December 7, 2021.

³²*Ibid.*

³³Nusba *Diplomasi Budaya Dengan Rumah Budaya Indonesia*, accessed from Nusba: <http://www.nusba.com/diplomasi-budaya-dengan-rumah-budaya-indonesia/>

³⁴Liputan6, "Indonesia Akhirnya Punya Rumah Budaya di Jepang," accessed from Liputan6: <https://www.liputan6.com/citizen6/read/2186422/indonesia-akhirnya-punya-rumah-budaya-di-jepang> March 15, 2016.

³⁵Atdikbudtokyo, "Peserta Rakor Atdikbud dengan Direktur Diplomasi Budaya," accessed from Atdikbudtokyo Kemdikbud: <https://atdikbudtokyo.kemdikbud.go.id/2017/08/07/peserta-rakor-atdikbud-dengan-direktur-diplomasi-budaya/>, August 7, 2017.

³⁶Yusli Wardiatno, Imelda Coutrier dan Tini Kodrat, online interview using Zoom Meeting, March 29, 2022.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²*Ibid.*

Table1.Indonesia Day Performances

No.	Date	Indonesia Day Performance	Form of execution
1.	19 August 2017	Minang Day	- Showcasing the diverse culture in Indonesia.
2.	2 December 2017	Jawa Day	- Showcasing the traditional wedding reception, provided with the traditional dances from Indonesia.
3.	17 February 2018	Sunda Day	- Performing a popular tradition in Indonesia.
4.	21 April 2018	Kartini Day	- Promoting traditional clothing from an area in Indonesia.
5.	30 June 2018	Batak Day	- Serving local delicacies from Indonesia.
6.	20 October 2018	Makassar Day	
7.	8 December 2018	Dayak Day	
8.	16 February 2019	Manado Day	
9.	6 April 2019	Ambon Day	
10.	24 August 2019	Nusa Tenggara Day	
11.	16 November 2019	Sekaten Day	
12.	7 December 2019	Performance at Niigata	

Source: Rumah Budaya Indonesia's official Facebook Account

Table 2. RumahBudaya Indonesia Workshop Activities

No.	Date	OfflineWorkshop Training Sessions	Form of execution
1.	23 September 2017	The Indonesian "Bahasa" Language Workshop	- Teaching the Indonesian Language
2.	18 November 2018	Betawi Folk Dance Workshop	- Teaching and training participants to dance traditional ethnic dances from regions in Indonesia.
3.	27 January 2018	Gamelan Workshop	- Teaching and guiding participants to play traditional musical instruments from varied regions in Indonesia.
4.	10 March 2018	Angklung Workshop	- Performing the traditional art of wayangkulit.
5.	19 May 2018	Tarian Bali Workshop	- Serving local delicacies from Indonesia.
6.	25 August 2018	West Javanese Gamelan Sunda (Degung) Workshop	
7.	17 November 2018	Wayang Kulit Workshop	
8.	19 January 2019	Balinese Gamelan Workshop	
9.	16 March 2019	Saman Dance Workshop	
10.	18 May 2019	Piring Dance Workshop	
11.	20 July 2019	Javanese Gambyong Parianom Dance Workshop	
12.	19 October 2019	Balinese Gamelan: Rindik Workshop	
13.	11 January 2020	Kolosal Dance Art Performance	

Source: RumahBudaya Indonesia's official Facebook Account

Image 1. Rumah Budaya Indonesia in Jepang on the 2017 "Minang Day" Event



Source: Rumah Budaya Indonesia's official Facebook Account

The Indonesian "Day" Performances that have been held by the Indonesian Cultural House in Japan throughout 2017 to 2019 are shown in table 1.

Indonesian culture promotion activities also held directly are workshops that provide introduction and training on Indonesian cultures. This training is meant to promote Indonesian cultures, such as folk dances, traditional Indonesian musical instruments, and the Indonesian language, by inviting Indonesian student associates, cultural experts, or notable

artists to teach and guide participants in practicing the lessons they have received firsthand. For example, during the 2019 "Bali Gamelan Workshop," participants were taught and guided to play the Balinese *rindik* musical instrument.⁴³

Image 2. Rumah Budaya Indonesia in Japan on "Workshop Gamelan Bali" 2019



Source: Rumah Budaya Indonesia's official Facebook Account

⁴³Ibid.

Various trainings through the workshop which *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* had implemented in Japan since 2017 are shown in table 2

Unfortunately, the execution of the concept of Indonesia Day – including the workshops – only lasted for three years. It was inaugurated in 2017 and stopped in February 2020, caused by Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19). Covid-19 caused critical impacts on every sector, including RBI's activities in Japan.⁴⁴The RBI implementation in Japan had to adjust to the situation, switching to online exhibitions in May 2020. The exhibition activities changed their names to "Visit" and "Online Workshop" and were carried out through the Zoom application. The concept of the "Visit" activity is almost the same as Pagelaran Day, which introduces cities in Indonesia, shows ceremonies, dances, and culinary specialties of the city, and gives recipes for participants to try at their homes. For example, "Visit Semarang" in 2021 was carried out by explaining to the participants about the city of Semarang, its historical places, dance performances, and songs, to culinary and unique dishes in the city.⁴⁵

Image 3. Rumah Budaya Indonesia in Japan on "Visit Semarang" 2021



Source: *Rumah Budaya Indonesia's* official Facebook Account

The activities of the Indonesian "Visit" Exhibition that have been held by *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* in Japan are shown in table. 3.

Indonesian cultural training activities are also transferred and held online, called "Online Workshop". The "Online Workshop" activity is the similar to the "Workshop" activity, which is carried out face-to-face, providing training and opportunities for participants to practice the training. The only difference is that the participants practice the lessons received

⁴⁴*Ibid.*
⁴⁵*Ibid.*

in their own homes. For example, the 2021 *Jamu Indonesia* Workshop was held to promote *jamu* as a traditional Indonesian drink. As explained by Ms Imelda, the participants were sent a sample of herbal medicine first so that during the explanation via Zoom, they could make and drink it too.⁴⁶

Image 4. Rumah Budaya Indonesia in Japan on "Workshop Jamu Indonesia" 2021



Source: *Rumah Budaya Indonesia's* official Facebook Account

Various "Online Workshop" training activities that have been held by RBI in Japan are shown in table 4.

Holding cultural activities through the Indonesian Cultural House in Japan did not escape obstacles or challenges. According to one of the RBI administrators, Imelda Coutrier, the challenges faced by RBI were different before and during the pandemic. Before the pandemic, the challenges faced by RBI were the weather and various community activities in Tokyo, Japan. Japan is one country that is prone to blizzards, especially in winter. In addition, Japanese people also have a variety of unique cultural ceremonies, including visiting graves at certain times. That is why, according to Imelda, it is essential to determine the right time to organize activities so that the Japanese can attend and not be hit by local community activities.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, RBI faced the challenge that there were participants who used to participate in face-to-face activities found difficulties when they had to operate the online media used by RBI. In addition, it turns out that there are still Japanese people who do not have computers, so it is difficult for them to participate in online RBI activities. Although, eventually, some participants used their mobile phones to attend the event, however, they complained that the screen was too small.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*
⁴⁷*Ibid.*

Table3.Pagelaran Indonesia “Visit”

No.	Date	Visit Exhibition	Form of execution
1.	12 September 2020	Papua <i>Day Online</i>	- Explaining the culture of cities in Indonesia with presentations.
2.	21 November 2020	Aceh <i>Day Online</i>	- Explaining historical places of cities in Indonesia.
3.	9 January 2021	<i>Visit Bogor</i>	- Dancing and singing performance from cities in Indonesia.
4.	13 March 2021	<i>Visit Bali</i>	- Showing culinary or special dishes from cities in Indonesia as well as giving recipes for participants to try at their respective homes.
5.	17 April 2021	<i>Visit Museum</i>	
6.	22 May 2021	<i>Visit Semarang</i>	
7.	12 June 2021	<i>Visit Jakarta</i>	
8.	28 August 2021	<i>Visit Yogyakarta</i>	
9.	16 October 2021	<i>Visit Malang</i>	
10.	27 November 2021	Selamatan Celebration	
11.	11 December 2021	RBI <i>Online</i> Christmas and New Year Celebration in Indonesia	

Source: *Rumah Budaya Indonesia*'s official Facebook Account

Table 4. RumahBudaya Indonesia Online Training Workshop

No.	Date	Online Workshop Practices	Form of execution
1.	30 May 2020	Introduction to Indonesian Literature	- Introducing the participants to Indonesian dance and literature,
2.	11 July 2020	Pop Music in Indonesia	- Introducing the participants to traditional Indonesian fabrics,
3.	22 August 2020	Indonesian Textile Showcases	- Teaching and practicing how to make Indonesian food and drinks at home.
4.	3 October 2020	Batik <i>Workshop</i>	
5.	5 December 2020	Pakarena <i>Workshop</i>	
6.	13 February 2021	Indonesian Chocolate Workshop	
7.	10 July 2021	<i>Jamu Workshop</i>	
8.	11 September 2021	<i>Tempe Workshop</i>	

Source: *Rumah Budaya Indonesia*'s official Facebook Account

The Effects of Rumah Budaya Indonesia in Japan

Despite having experienced challenges and change in activities due to the Covid-19 pandemic, RBI in Japan continues to introduce and promote the noble cultures of the Indonesian nation to Japanese citizens.⁴⁸ Two promotional models in the form of exhibitions conducted by *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* – offline and online – impact increasing Indonesian culture's positive impression. In an interview with Imelda Coutrier, it was stated that the enthusiasm of participants who want to watch cultural performances often exceeds the Indonesian Embassy in Tokyo, which can only accommodate 50 people. Due to the enthusiasm of the Japanese people in several activities such as Batak Day and Nusa Tenggara Day, RBI had to increase the participant quota to 60 people.⁴⁹

Image 5. Rumah Budaya Indonesia in Japan on "Batak Day" 2018 and "Nusa Tenggara Day" 2019



Source: *Rumah Budaya Indonesia*'s official Facebook Account

This addition is made so that Japanese people who are already interested in learning and understanding Indonesian culture can be accommodated along with workshop activities. The Indonesian Cultural House limits the quota of participants to 20 people with a one-week time limit to register. However, some activities took less than a week for the registration to close as they fulfilled the quota. This shows the interest and enthusiasm of the Japanese to learn Indonesian culture. The enthusiasm and appreciation of the Japanese people when participating in RBI offline was also seen when they brought new people, namely their friends and family, to participate in RBI activities.⁵⁰

Image 6. The Japanese’s Enthusiasm at RBI’s Offline Workshops from 2017-2020



Source: *Rumah Budaya Indonesia*'s official Facebook Account

Most Japanese who register to participate in RBI activities are those who had and frequently visited Indonesia. However, it turned out that some had just heard from a friend and were then invited to join RBI. Those registered for RBI activities

⁴⁸Ibid.
⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

also usually make an appointment to visit an Indonesian cultural exhibition every month due to their love for Indonesia.⁵¹ Supporting this statement, the Indonesian Cultural and Educational Attaché, Yusli Wardiatno also explained, "Imagine when we introduce Indonesian culture, and then people do not seem to care, they do not show enthusiasm, for example, they remain silent. I am grateful that the Japanese people are not like that; they respect and appreciate every Indonesian Cultural House programs."⁵²

Likewise, when the Indonesian Cultural House activities were carried out online, Yusli stated:

"An indication of the enthusiasm of the Japanese people to Rumah Budaya Indonesia activities is whether they will come again at the next program, which is carried out online, and the fact is that they come again, over and over, and even invited new people, who previously did not know there is an online Rumah Budaya Indonesia. So, from here, we see that the Japanese people are still enthusiastic about Indonesian culture even though it is held online."⁵³

Image 7. The Japanese's Enthusiasm Participating in RBI's Online Workshops



Source: Rumah Budaya Indonesia's official Facebook Account

One of the most visible impacts of RBI's online activities is the Japanese people's desire to learn Indonesian cuisine. According to Tini Kodrat, the participants seemed excited when they entered the recipe introduction session. Their enthusiasm for cooking Indonesian specialties is reflected when they try to do it themselves at home and share it on RBI Tokyo's Facebook page and Imelda Coutrier's Facebook page with positive comments about the Indonesian dishes.⁵⁴ In addition, Japanese people participating in RBI activities often upload photos of cooked Indonesian food to their social media and tag them with the Indonesian Cultural House. Various positive comments from Japanese citizens on RBI social media can be seen in the snippet below.

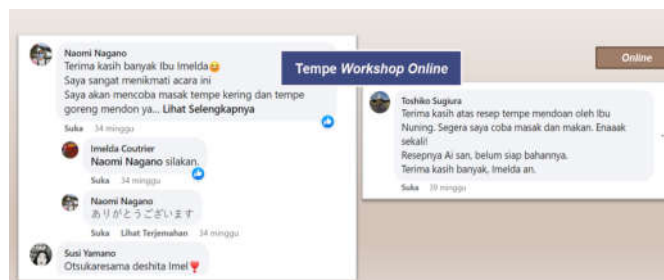
⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Image 8. Comments from the Japanese Community in RBI Tokyo's Facebook and Imelda Coutrier's Facebook



Source: Rumah Budaya Indonesia's official Facebook Account

Translation: Naomi Nagano: "Thank you very much Mrs. Imelda. I enjoyed the program. I will try to cook the dry tempe and tempe mendoan."

Toshio Sugiura: "Thank you for the recipe of tempe mendoan by Mrs. Nuning. I have tried it. It is very delicious. The recipe for Ai san is not ready yet. Thank you very much, Imelda."

Image 9. Appreciation and a Thank You messages from the Japanese



Source: Rumah Budaya Indonesia's official Facebook Account

Translation: Takao Shiga: "I learnt a lot of things, thank you very much."



Source: Rumah Budaya Indonesia's official Facebook Account

Translation: Machiko Watanabe: "It has been a great introduction to Indonesian Cultures, starting from the plan and has been continued for four years. I enjoy it every time. Thank you, and keep introducing Indonesian cultures."



Source: Rumah Budaya Indonesia's official Facebook Account

Translation: Machiko Watanabe: "Minagawa dan Imelda, thank you for your hardworking. The program has discussed Bali Culture. Hopefully, I can visit Bali soon."

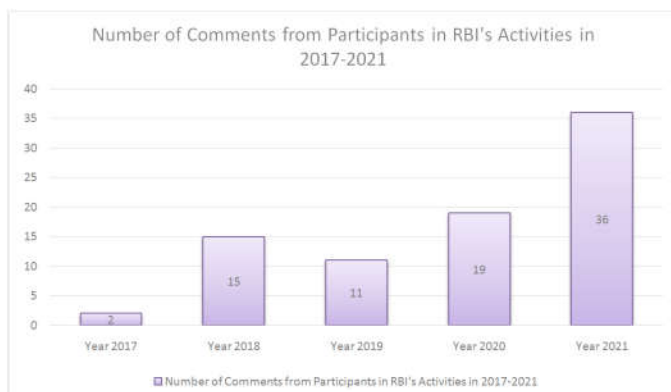


Source: Rumah Budaya Indonesia's official Facebook Account

Translation: Susi Yamano: "Thank you very much Imel, Mrs. Tini dan Ai. It was a very interesting discussion about Jakarta. I know the story about Jagaimo, but never heard about Jagung before. I have heard about the statue of Achi-chi too but was startled by the statue of 7up. Thank you Katsunuma and Hatano."

From the above statements, we can see that the enthusiasm of the Japanese people has led to an increase in positive impressions of Indonesian culture. Japanese people also appreciate Indonesian cultural activities, as seen in their comments on RBI Tokyo's Facebook. Below is an illustration of the number of comments from participants who participated in Rumah Budaya Indonesia activities in Japan during 2017-2021:

Graph 1. Number of comments from the candidates who participated in the RBI held in Japan



Source: Data processed from Ms. Imelda's and RumahBudaya Indonesia's official Facebook Account

This data displays that the number of comments from participants who took part in *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* in Japan offline from the beginning of 2017-early to 2020 has increased. For example, the number of comments in 2018 rose from the previous two to 15 comments. On the other hand, in 2019, there was a slight decrease to 11 comments. Meanwhile, participants' comments on online RBI activities, precisely from 2020-2021, have increased from 19 comments in 2020 to 36 comments in 2021. In addition to the increasing number of comments on RBI's social media in Japan, the RBI management also conducted several satisfaction surveys on the activities carried out. The results showed that the participants were always satisfied with the activities. However, RBI felt the need to improve its services; therefore, the RBI administrators often asked participants for suggestions about which Indonesian culture should be presented for the next activity.⁵⁵ The interesting thing is that, as mentioned by Tini Kodrat:

"Japanese people are very polite, yes, so when asked "Are you satisfied?" they will answer "Satisfied." So, it is not easy to know whether they are satisfied with the performance. However, from their responses, we can conclude that they enjoy and are satisfied with the activities of Rumah Budaya Indonesia. We have known so many until we know them very well since almost every month, they participate in RBI activities. For example, from acquaintance to acquaintance, to acquaintance again, finally we are like a big family of Rumah Budaya like that."

From the explanation above, we can see that RBI in Japan has successfully promoted various cultures in Indonesia, including traditional ceremonies, dances, clothing, tourist areas, and local food. RBI succeeded in strengthening Indonesia's cultural diplomacy and building positive branding about Indonesia and its various cultures as the Japanese people support them with a positive attitude, enthusiasm, and high appreciation for Indonesian culture. The enthusiasm and positive attitude of Japanese society make it easier for RBI runs its activities, both on-site and online. This can be seen clearly through the participants' comments on social media managed by RBI, such as Facebook, and surveys conducted regularly after the show.

Conclusion

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology strengthens Indonesian cultural diplomacy through the Education and Culture Attaché with the *Rumah Budaya Indonesia* program. One of them is RBI in Japan which started to organize exhibitions in 2017. The exhibitions are executed through the concept of "Day" and "Workshop" events. Unfortunately, cultural activities with these two concepts were stopped due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19). However, since May 2020, the concept of cultural exhibitions has been changed to "Visit" and "Workshop," which are applied on line using the Zoom application. Although there were several obstacles faced during the exhibition, both face-to-face and online, RBI Japan prevailed by determining the right time for the activities so that the Japanese people could attend and not collide with the local activities. RBI in Japan strengthens Indonesian cultural diplomacy and increases the positive impression of Indonesian culture successfully. This is mainly supported by the enthusiasm and positive appreciation of the Japanese people toward Indonesian culture. The positive

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

image of Indonesia and its cultural diversity can be seen through five things: first, the enthusiasm of the Japanese people who attended many RBI activities exceeded the quota of participants. Second, the enthusiasm and appreciation of the Japanese people when they bring new people, namely friends and family, to participate in RBI activities, both face-to-face and online. Third, appreciation and positive response to RBI activities were conveyed through RBI social media in Japan and surveys conducted. Fourth is the presence of the Japanese community in various RBI exhibition activities. They even join other exhibitions with new people. The last point is the desire of the Japanese people to learn Indonesian specialties and to cook local foods. This enthusiasm is shown by uploading photos of the food they cook to social media and tagging the *Rumah Budaya Indonesia*. RBI in Japan has succeeded in increasing the positive impression of Indonesian culture on Japanese society with the support of residents. For this reason, various RBIs in other countries can imitate it. However, the exhibitions still need to pay attention to socio-cultural conditions and the interests of the local community, so they gain positive support and appreciation from residents.

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