

Series: **My Favorite Kyoto**

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My Kyōto Adventures

I am a student at Kyoto University, majoring in Pharmaceutical Sciences. I am from the Republic of Benin in West Africa. I arrived in Japan last year and would like to tell you about some of my experiences in Kyōto*. Coming to Japan to pursue my studies has always been my dream since earliest childhood. That dream came from my passion for Japanese *anime*, especially my favorite one, titled *Naruto*.

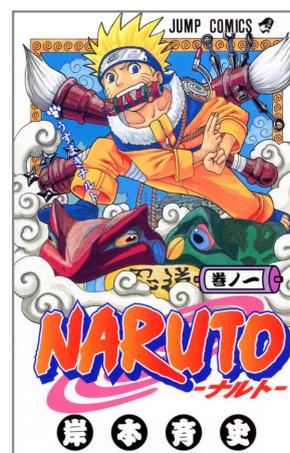
As a fanatic fan of the character Uzumaki Naruto as well as liking the spoken Japanese language, I followed the dream of coming to Japan, the land of the rising sun. But, why did I choose the city of Kyōto? It is known for being the peaceful, ancient capital city of Japan, and many shrines, temples, and tourist spots still remain. Once I was here in Japan, I can't describe my surprise when I saw the famous temples of Kyomizudera, Kinkakuji, and Ginkakuji; the Fushimi Inari Shrine; the Bamboo Forest; and so on.

Kinkaku and Ginkaku are character names used in my favorite anime, *Naruto*, so you can imagine my excitement to see the related Kinkakuji and Ginkakuji in reality! However, life in Kyōto is not limited to the beauty of the scenery and its temples, but also to the splendor and delight of its meals.

In fact, I could feast on the famous sushi, *rāmen*, *gyūdon* (beef and vegetables on rice), *yakisoba* (fried noodles), and others; but what I like most about Kyōto is the hospitality and wisdom of the people. It is unbelievable but true, that respect is wise in Japan. The hierarchy is respected and, moreover, if you need help with anything, just ask, and you get it with surprising enthusiasm from the Japanese.

Indeed, when I arrived in Kyōto, I was of course struggling to find my way in the city. Each time, the passers-by whom I asked for directions took me to the place I was going, stopping whatever they were doing, and this surprised me so much; I was stunned. You can try saying "*sumimasen*" and you will always see the reaction of Japanese people, that promptness to serve you without

DOUGNON
Tchetonnougbo
Godfried
(Republic of Benin)



Front cover of the first edition of "NARUTO" manga
Kishimoto Masashi, Scott/Shūeisha



April 2016.
At Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine,
just came to Japan

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* Pronunciation tip: any vowel with a macron over it (ā, ī, ū, ē, ō) has a "long" vowel sound, 1.5 to 2 times longer than the regular vowel sound

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Shōgi – the traditional Japanese board game

Recently, the winning streak of Fujii Sota, who is a rookie professional *shōgi* player became a hot topic, and has drawn attention to the game of *shōgi*. Nowadays, the number of people who enjoy *shōgi* using game software or playing on the Internet is increasing. It is estimated that about 10 million people play *shōgi* in Japan.

There are various strategy games that resemble *shōgi*, such as chess and the Chinese game xiangqi. It is said that the origin of all these games is “Chaturanga”, which was created in India. Among these, *shōgi* is different from the other games; there is a rule that the opponent pieces which you captured can be used again as your own pieces. This rule makes *shōgi* a more complicated and interesting game. Additionally, a unique feature of *shōgi* is the pentagon (five-sided) shape of the pieces.

Now, if you would like to actually learn *shōgi* and play some games with other people, I recommend that you visit a *shōgi* center (also called a *shōgi dōjō*). At the *shōgi* center, you pay a fee of 500 to 1000 yen, and you can play *shōgi* with the many other people who come there. Your opponent can be selected based on your skill level. In Kyōto, there are a number of *shōgi* centers, and recently, I visited one of them called “Higashiyama *Shōgi* Center” in the Higashiyama Ward.

I went there at daytime on a Sunday, and on that day there were about 30 customers, mostly elderly men. There were about twenty *shōgi* boards set up in the room, and the customers were playing games in a harmonious way, but with serious expressions. I heard that the Higashiyama *Shōgi* Center has over one hundred members, and they hold league matches with their own members. Though there were many older people on that day, three times a week the Center holds *shōgi* classes for children where about ten children participate in each one.

When I interviewed some of the customers, they said they began to play *shōgi* because they saw their parents or neighbors playing and it looked enjoyable. Some customers have been playing *shōgi* for a long time; one of them has playing *shōgi* for 65 years, since childhood. When I asked about the fascination of *shōgi*, one of them said, “Just like reading detective novels, I consider various ways to find the next move”, and an elderly man told me, “I don’t have to use physical strength, it’s good for dementia prevention”. Additionally, someone else said that making friends is also a pleasure.

Why not try out a game of *shōgi*? It is one of the historic Japanese cultures. It would be good to visit *shōgi* centers in a few different places, and you can participate in the *shōgi* classes for foreigners at kokoka (Kyoto International Community House).

Higashiyama *Shōgi* Center

Address: Kawaracho 658, Higashiyama Ward, Kyoto City

Telephone: 075-561-2615

Website: <https://higashiyamashogi.wixsite.com/higashiyamashogi> (Japanese only)



A *shōgi* board



The Higashiyama *Shōgi* Center

Kyoto Food Culture Museum: *Ajiwai-kan*

Experience the food culture of Kyōto by seeing, cooking and tasting it!

In this article, I will introduce the *Ajiwai-kan* Museum of Kyōto Food Culture, a place where you can learn about *kyō-ryōri* (Kyōto-style cuisine), foods that have a unique culture within Japanese cooking. The Museum has special exhibitions to promote the recognition of *kyō-ryōri*, the roots of *washoku* (Japanese food), registered as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO in 2013.

The museum is one block south of Gojo Street, between the JR Tanbaguchi Station (Sanin Line) and Kyōto Research Park. It is next to the Kyōto Central Wholesale Market No. 1, which opened in 1927, where fresh vegetables, fruits, and fish are sold.

When you enter the museum, you will see a large, free exhibition area, divided into Seasonal, Permanent, and Special Exhibitions. Seasonal vegetables and fresh fish, seasonal foods, Japanese sweets and pickled goods, and *kyō-ryōri* are exhibited as food samples, and their details are explained on panels throughout the exhibition area. Unique farm products of Kyoto Prefecture, and special local dishes from other areas of Japan are also introduced in panel exhibits.

The museum has a separate Tasting Room where you can enjoy trying various *dashi* (soup stocks), which bring *umami* (good taste) to *washoku*, and you can taste freshly made fruit juices.

The museum also has a small library where you can find out a lot about *kyō-ryōri* and *washoku*; you can also discover special dishes and foods from other countries.

In addition, at *Ajiwai-kan*, you can learn how to clean and cook fish, and how to make and then taste *kyō-ryōri* and Western food. This is taught by instructors in cooking classes held several times a month. Although these classes require reservations about a month in advance and charge a fee, they are very popular and have many applicants.

For those who are not only interested in *washoku* and *kyō-ryōri*, but also those who simply like making and eating good food, they can enjoy spending time at *Ajiwai-kan*. So, how about visiting the museum sometime and experiencing the food culture of Kyōto? For more information and contact details, please see below.

Websites: <http://kir021606.kir.jp/pdf/english.pdf> (English)

<http://www.kyo-ajiwaikan.com/> (Japanese)

Tel: 075-321-8680

E-mail: info@kyo-ajiwaikan.com

Address: Kyoto Seika Center 3F, 130 Chudoji-Minami-cho, Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto, 600-8813



Seasonal food display



Dashi sampling corner



Seafood of the season

MARUYAMA Toru, translated by KANAYA Chinami

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kokoka OPEN DAY 2017 “Let’s Play *Karuta!*” project

This year at kokoka OPEN DAY we will hold again our usual event using “Hyakunin Isshu” *karuta* cards. This time we will have an English *karuta* game, and *Karuta* Competition Experience. Adults or children – everyone will have fun!

When : Friday, November 3, 2017 (National Holiday) 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Where : kokoka Kyoto International Community House 3F Study Room

Free, no reservation required

Please refer to our homepage to check all the OPEN DAY events: <http://www.kcif.or.jp/>

A Kyōto cultural and historic treasure – the Komai Residence

If you walk north for about 15 minutes from Imadegawa Dōri (St.) alongside the cherry tree-lined *sosui* (canal) that comes west from Ginkakuji, you will come to a large estate with a unique 2-story house on it. This compound is quite picturesque in all four seasons, especially the views of the Higashiyama Mountains, primarily Mt. Hiei and Mt. Daimonji. The house and the grounds were considered to be unique in Kyōto for their architectural and cultural features and origins. This very likely was the result of the three special people who created, built, and furnished this property, now designated and registered as a “reserved cultural heritage” site by the Kyoto City Council.



The exterior of the Komai Residence

The owner of the property was Dr. Taku Komai, a well-known Japanese biologist and geneticist, and a professor at Kyoto University; he was 41 years old when the house was built. The designer of the house was Mr. W. M. Vories, an American without any formal architectural training, who came to Japan in 1905 to teach English and do missionary work. He started his own design company in 1908, and became well known as an architect, creating houses, churches, schools, hospitals, and other buildings. His connection to Dr. Komai was probably partly through their wives, who both graduated from Kobe Jōgakuin and were friends. Mrs. Komai appears to have had a strong influence in the furnishings, fixtures, and decoration of the house; she



The spacious living room

helped to integrate Japanese design and culture with the unique Spanish-American architecture, blending it with the traditional Japanese home interior style of the period. The outside appearance of the house is primarily Spanish style with American influences, and it seemed to fit the local atmosphere well, with the Higashiyama Mountains visible in the background. The overall setting was striking, and I imagined the estate as being shadowed by the majestic Pyrenees Mountains in Spain. The exterior was notable for the stucco finish and color; the arched, stained-glass windows; the fancy balustrades; the patio shade; and the chimney design; other Spanish-American features can be found on the main house and its surroundings. This building style could be found elsewhere in Japan, but was rather unusual for Kyōto, famous for its traditional, historic architecture.

Although the inside of the house is a mix of Western and Japanese styles, one could feel that the Komai family, and especially Mrs. Komai, put their hopes and dreams together, and those were carried out in every detail. One can imagine how much work went into developing the interior design to reflect the intentions of Mrs. Komai, and to carry out the construction work under her watchful eye. The inside of the house is large and spacious, and the rooms have windows that let in plenty of light; most of what you see in the rooms is as it was when the Komai family resided there.

This is a great place to experience some of the history and architecture of the 1920's in Kyōto. The Japan National Trust for Cultural and National Heritage and Conservation currently owns and operates the house, open to the public throughout the year. Why not come and enjoy this beautiful treasure for yourself? For more information about it, such as directions, open days, and hours of operation, please visit the website below.

http://www.national-trust.or.jp/protection/index.php?c=protection_view&pk=1490651710

FURUTA Tomiyoshi and Karl JANSMA

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Flea Market for Babies, Toddlers, and Kids plus a Tea Party by "Hot Chat" group

When: October 9, Monday (National Holiday) 2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Who: Anyone raising children in Kyōto, foreigners and Japanese; you can bring your kids, babies to 5 year olds. Limited to 40 families total.

Even if you don't have any items to give away, you are welcome to join the event!

Where: kokoka Kyoto International Community House

Special Conference Room

Make a reservation at: Kyoto City International Foundation

E-mail: office@kcif.or.jp TEL: 075-752-3511



Information * Okazaki Flea Market *

With the theme of "Pass on your unneeded items to people who want them", there are many flea markets held in Kyōto. Reusing things is always environmentally friendly, especially selling unneeded things, and as a buyer, you may find something you have always wanted.

Feel free to go and take a look, or register* to sell your stuff!

Where: Okazaki Kōen Park (south of Heian Jingū Shrine)

When: 10 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

November 12, Sunday (if rain: November 23, Thursday)

November 18, Saturday, November 19, Sunday, December 10, Sunday (if rain: December 16, Saturday)

Note: The flea market will continue beyond December as well.

There will be about 160 booths/spaces on Nov. 12 and Dec. 10, and there will be about 80 booths/spaces on Nov. 18 and 19

Organizer: Kyoto-shi Gomi Genryō Suishin Kaigi (Waste Reduction Promotion Conference of Kyoto)

Website: <http://kyoto-gomigen.jp> Tel: 075-647-3444

Supported by: Plus One Network Website: <http://ameblo.jp/kyoto-plusone/>

*If you want to sell something, please first go to the website below (Japanese only) to get all the details, and then call the phone number above (Japanese only) to reserve a space. <http://kyoto-gomigen.jp/works/25.html>

kokoka Kyoto International Community House Library

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Library Letter

 kokoka recommends this book

Photographic Kabuki Kaleidoscope in Japanese and English

Author:

KIMINO Rinko

Publisher:

Shogakukan, 2016



For those who are interested in *kabuki* (a classical Japanese dance-drama), you can really enjoy it by reading this book. It introduces a variety of things related to *kabuki*, such as *onnagata* (female roles), *tachiyaku* (male roles), support staff involved in *kabuki* plays, and various props to represent food and animals.

Unfortunately, the Minami-za Theater in Kyōto is temporarily closed. However, there are other *kabuki* theaters operating outside of Kyōto, so by all means, please try to go to a live *kabuki* performance sometime!

On Friday, November 3 (National holiday), we will have kokoka Open Day 2017! This year also, the kokoka Library will host a very popular panel exhibition project, called "Some Cheering Words from Foreigners in Kyōto". This project features foreigners' advice on a variety of questions and concerns of Japanese people. In addition to the exhibition, we will give out booklets that contain a collection of this advice and a list of library books recommended for reading. Please come visit us at the Library on Open Day!

The following items are also available:

Books for foreigners to help their daily life in Japanese, study Japanese, learn about Japanese law, visas, Japanese culture and sightseeing in Kyoto.

Books for Japanese to learn about foreign countries, overseas travel, extended stays, studying abroad, working holidays and volunteering.

Newspapers and magazines from all around the world.

Books are not available for check-out.

[Hours] 9:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Closed on Mondays & last day of every month

[Tel.] 075-752-1187 [Fax.] 075-752-3510

[URL] <http://www.kcif.or.jp/en>

expecting anything in return. Also, in Kyōto, public welfare is respected; the people are courteous, which helps to maintain the peaceful and smooth running of everyone's various activities.

I would also like to tell you about my first winter experience here in Kyōto. In my country, there are four seasons: a long and a short dry season as well as a long and a short rainy season. Therefore, I had never seen snow before last year. I was very put off by it, and the enthusiasm of the young and old people of Kyōto surprised me the most. It does not snow in Kyōto as much as it would seem; it has been two years since the last big snowfall. In my first snow experience here, people could not ride their bicycles, and the only choice was to walk or take a bus. The houses' roofs were all white, which created a marvelous spectacle. The famous Kinkakuji Temple was the site of a spectacular landscape, which I believe was interesting to see. On my way to the University, I saw old people throwing snowballs and building snowmen in front of their houses. For a first experience, it was very pleasant. Nevertheless, the cold was almost unbearable, with temperatures around 0 degrees or even lower!

Another episode of my life in Kyōto is a rather unusual subject, but when I arrived in Kyōto, I saw Japanese people wearing white masks covering their nose and mouth even on the street in public! I was surprised, but soon realized that in fact it was to protect themselves from hay fever and to prevent contaminating their surroundings with germs. Indeed, early April is the time when many Japanese suffer from this allergy, so please do not be surprised to see them wearing masks; they are not being unfriendly! Smiles!

Finally, I will talk about my little trip to some Japanese *onsen* (hot springs baths). Do you know about the seven famous ones in Kinokasa? They are not really in Kyōto but are fairly close, so they are easy to visit!

Indeed, you can take turns reveling in the heat of the hot springs, as well as eating the great food of Kinokasa. Dressed in *yukata* (summer *kimono*) and wearing *geta* (wooden clogs), my Japanese friends and I went from one *onsen* to another, but we got so tired that we couldn't make it to all seven hot springs! It was an enjoyable experience.

"I know" is not enough; "I've seen" is not enough; "I believe" is not enough; YOU MUST LIVE IT! So, I heartily recommend for everyone to come and experience Kyōto. In one year, I have not been able to experience much for sure, but there is still time remaining to explore the depths of Kyōto, and who knows, maybe I will have more to share then.



Kinkakuji (the Golden Pavillon)
in Winter time



During my trip to a hot spring
Kinosaki Onsen

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