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A Researcher's Life in Kyōto

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(New Zealand)

People usually visit Kyōto for its rich culture – not for research. However, when I first visited Kyōto almost 18 years ago, it was mainly to do research.

At that time, I had recently finished my doctoral studies, researching the use of memory techniques to help children with mathematics learning difficulties in remembering how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide. The technique I used in the study was based on one that came from the Ryoyo School in Kyōto. I had only read about the technique in a book that was published in English, so I was very interested in coming to Japan to visit that school, if possible.



Mr. Manalo (right) and his family

I managed to contact a professor from the Kyoto University of Education who very kindly hosted my wife and I during our visit. We visited the school, but found that they no longer used that memory technique, since the former principal who developed it passed away. That was somewhat disappointing; however, the professor also introduced me to other educational researchers – including some at Kyoto University.

My wife and I really liked Kyōto and enjoyed the time we spent during that summer. At the time, we never imagined that we would end up living here. We returned to Auckland in New Zealand, and to my work at the University of Auckland. A few years later, our daughter was born.

In the following years, I developed joint studies with some of the researchers I met during our visit to Japan. Six years ago, when I was offered a professorship at Waseda University in Tōkyo, we moved to Japan. Then, one and a half years ago, I was offered a professorship at Kyoto University. I was the first foreign researcher to be appointed to the Faculty of Education, and now we are living in Kyōto.

As I said at the beginning, people generally do not see Kyōto as a research destination, but it has a university that ranks with the top universities in Asia and in the world. Kyoto University is internationally famous, and attracts many international researchers every year. Since starting work

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Tanabata – the Star Festival



The Milky Way of Light (Horikawa venue)
Photo: Kyō no Tanabata Planning Committee

Look up at the stars scattered in the summer night sky. I remember from my childhood, on the night of the *Tanabata*, I wrote my wishes on a piece of paper (*tanzaku*) and tied it to a bamboo branch strung with handmade decorations. That was a long time ago, when even in the big cities, the air was fresh and the stars were clearly visible.

Nowadays in Japan, *Tanabata* is generally held on the night of July 7. There was an ancient Shinto ritual called *tanabata*, where people put onto the *tana* (altar) fabrics made on *hata* (weaving machines) as an offering for a good autumn harvest. Another theory has it that from the arrival of Buddhism in Japan, people did their preparations on the seventh evening of the seventh month of the lunar calendar for the Buddhist ceremony of *obon*. For this reason, the Chinese characters for “the evening of the 7th” were adopted, and the event began to be called *Tanabata*.

On one side of the Milky Way in the constellation Lyra (harp), is the star Vega (falling eagle), which is called *orihime* (weaving girl); this star represents the work of sewing. On the other side, in the constellation Aquila (eagle), is the star Altair (flying eagle), which is called *hikoboshi* (cowherd); this star is a symbol of agriculture. On the seventh day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, when these stars shine the brightest, Chinese legend says that only on this day the weaving girl and the cowherd boy can meet. Combined with the Japanese traditional ritual described above, it has developed into the current *tanabata* (star festival) when people send their wishes to the stars. Even though nowadays, people write things such as “I want to find a lover”, “I want to become rich”, or “I want to become a pilot” on *tanzaku* and hang them on bamboo branches, it is said that this custom started from an event in the Edo period aimed at the improvement of writing skills, and it became popular among common people.

You can try to make a wish to the stars while looking at the beautiful summer night sky.

Many places in Japan, such as the city of Sendai in Miyagi Prefecture, and the Shōnan district of Kanagawa Prefecture, hold special events/festivals (*matsuri*) for *Tanabata*.

In Kyōto, the event “Kyō no Tanabata (the *Tanabata* of Kyōto)”, which is famous for its fascinating illumination, will be held along Horikawa Street and on the bank of the Kamogawa River from Sat., August 6 to Fri., August 12 this year. I highly recommend that you go to see this.

"Kyō no Tanabata"

website : <http://www.kyoto-tanabata.jp/en/>

"Sendai Tabata Matsuri" (held from Sat., August 6 to Mon., August 8),

website: <http://www.sendaitanabata.com/en/>

IKUTA Minoru, translated by CHEN Muwei



Sendai Tanabata Matsuri Festival

Photo: Courtesy of Sendai Tanabata Festival Support Association



Lighted Wind Chimes (Kamogawa venue)

Photo: Kyō no Tanabata Planning Committee

Walking in nature: the foothill trails around Kyōto



Cedar trees in Kitayama on the Kitayama-West route



Long-nosed goblin in Kurama on the Kitayama-East route



(Once Around) Kyoto Trail
Illustration: MIZUE Kanako



Eizan cable car station on the Kitayama-East route



A signpost on the Higashiyama route

How about hiking around Kyōto on foot while enjoying nature with a picnic lunch and something to drink packed in a rucksack? The trail courses surrounding Kyōto are made up of four routes: Higashiyama, Kitayama-East, Kitayama-West, and Nishiyama; this is a trekking route with a total length of 74.1 kilometers.

The Higashiyama route, starting from Keihan Fushimiinari Station, reaches Mt. Hiei after passing through Mt. Otowa, the Canal Incline at Keage, the Yotsutsuji vista on Mt. Daimonji, and the Path of Philosophy, and has a length of 24.6 kilometers. The highest point on the route is its goal, the Cable Hiei Station at 690 meters above sea level. This route also passes through the Fushimiinari Shrine, which is famous for its Senbon Torii (thousand *torii* gates), goes through the Nejirimampo Tunnel close to kokoka, and climbs from there toward Mt. Hiei. There are lots of steep ups-and-downs on the route, so it is recommended that you schedule two outings to complete the course, and not try to do it all at once.

The Kitayama-East route goes downhill from the Cable Hiei Station, reaching Ninose Station via the Ōhara and Shizuhara areas; it has a length of 17.9 kilometers, and has a few upward slopes. This route would be suitable for people who do not have confidence in their lower body strength. There is also an outdoor *onsen* (hot springs bath) in Kurama close to the end of the route. You can renew your tired body by soaking in the bath, and wash the sweat away to feel refreshed before going home.

The Kitayama-West route begins at Ninose Station on the Eizan Dentetsu Kurama Line, ends at the Kinreikyō Bridge in Kiyotaki, and has a length of 19.3 kilometers. This hiking route offers the enjoyment of seasonal changes in the natural scenery, such as cherry blossoms, new green foliage, the colored leaves of autumn, and landscapes of snow. In addition, you can see the beauty of well-trimmed Kitayama cedars on the north side of the Takao area.

The Nishiyama route will let you feel the refinement of tradition and natural richness that can only be found in Kyōto. You will take a walk of 12.3 kilometers on a relatively flat trail from Kiyotaki to the Hankyu Kamikatsura Station by going through the old-fashioned townscape of Toriimoto. Then you pass the Adashino Nenbutsuji Temple, famous for its memorial thousand-candle lighting ritual, the Arashiyama Trolley Station, and the Togetsukyō Bridge.

Since there are road signs in Japanese and English at every crossroad on each route, you do not need to worry about losing your way. You can also buy a guide map for each route at any bookstore. Please go and enjoy the trail courses around Kyōto, and when you go, do not forget to bring a towel for wiping away the sweat, a plastic bag for carrying your trash, and tissues for the restroom.

NISHIMURA Makoto

Camellias in the Reikanji Temple

If you go south along the Philosopher's Walk from Ginkakuji Temple for about 15 minutes and go up the slope toward the Higashiyama Mountains, you will be at the Reikanji Temple.

Emperor Gomizunō founded the temple in 1654, and the daughters of successive Emperors were appointed as chief priests of the temple. Although it is usually not open, there are specific dates in spring and autumn when you can enter the temple. Some things worth seeing are the Camellia Japonica trees in bloom, which were much liked by Emperor Gomizunō. I visited the temple in the beginning of April in order to see those camellias. Since it is not part of any sightseeing tours, the temple was not very busy, and I was able to walk around leisurely.



White Camellia Flower



"Black" Camellia Flower

In the mossy garden, a variety of wonderful red, white, and "black" (darkest red) Camellia Japonica flowers were in bloom; these trees are said to be as much as 350 years old. The cherry blossoms were also in full bloom, and combined with the camellias, were beautiful. Additionally, some wonderful Japanese maple trees were in the same garden, and I imagined how nice their red foliage would be in autumn. In the name of Reikanji Temple, the "kan" (mirror) part, comes from the idea that if you pray to the mirror, your prayer will be heard. Many different things are exhibited in the temple, such as *hina* dolls, *gosho ningyo* dolls, *karuta* (decorated cards), Japanese sliding

door paintings by Eitoku Kanō and Oukyo Maruyama (outstanding painters of the Edo period), and furniture. It can be a lot of fun.

FURUTA Tomiyoshi

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kokoka Overnight Stay Evacuation Shelter Program 2016

When a serious disaster occurs, such as a big earthquake, kokoka will be an official shelter. How about having the experience yourself of: staying overnight at the kokoka shelter, doing a disaster drill with the Fire Department, and participating in a disaster preparation workshop, so that you have a better idea of what to do when a major disaster strikes?

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- Shelter Living Practice – one night

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- I can't understand Japanese!
- There's a fire! People are injured! So now what should I do?
- The shelter – what is it like?
- I really want to help people, too!

When: From 4 p.m. (Sat) June 18 to 10 a.m. (Sun) June 19

Where: kokoka Kyoto International Community House

Fees: Free. Dinner and breakfast (survival food) provided. Sleeping bags provided; you may keep yours when you leave.

Bring or wear: flat-soled shoes, long slacks/pants

Target Participants: non-Japanese residents/students; anyone who cannot understand Japanese

How to Apply: online at: <http://www.kcif.or.jp/HP/jigyosai/en/kunren/index2016.html>
or by phone: 075-752-3511

at Kyoto University, researchers from different countries, such as the US, the UK, Denmark, France, Singapore, and Mexico, have visited me to develop joint study projects.

Kyōto, with its rich cultural heritage in a modern city setting, provides some interesting results from research that looks at cultural similarities and differences. For example, our own research found that university students from Kyōto viewed “deeper thinking processes” as being important in their university studies, which students from Okinawa and Auckland (New Zealand) did not mention. In another study, we found that Kyōto students were similar to Auckland students: they were less dependent on each other (in a group) in their views, compared to students from Okinawa.



Mr. Manalo (center) and family

So, what do I like about living in Kyōto? Apart from the culture and the beauty of the place (which you can read much about elsewhere), Kyōto is a great place to do research. If you don't believe me, I suggest you take a stroll along the Philosopher's Path near Kyoto University for some insight or inspiration. And even if the insight or inspiration does not come, you can still enjoy the scenery that is beautiful all year round!

kokoka Kyoto International Community House Library

June • July 2016

Library Letter

 kokoka recommends this book

“THE YUKATA HANDBOOK How to Wear and Care for Japanese Traditional Summer Attire”

Text : YASUDA Takako

Publisher: Seibundo Shinkosha, 2015



Summer is just around the corner! And speaking of summer, we think of yukata (lightweight casual kimono). We will introduce here a book that teaches you the basics of yukata, such as how to wear one properly, how to choose the accessories, and how to care for them.

After you read the book and get a basic understanding of it, why not try on a yukata and go out into the street or to a summer festival? You will be the “Miss Yukata” or “Mr. Yukata” this year!

The next book is also about Japanese traditional culture, but a totally different kind. The Great Sumō Dictionary, 4th Edition (KANAZASHI Motoi, Gendai Shokan, 2015) is all about sumō (Japanese wrestling). By reading this book, why not familiarize yourself with sumō, the national sport of Japan? This dictionary has a large glossary of sumō terminology, and it may be a little difficult to read. But when you watch a sumō tournament on TV, it should be more interesting, having this book nearby. The next tournament will be in July, held in Nagoya.

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

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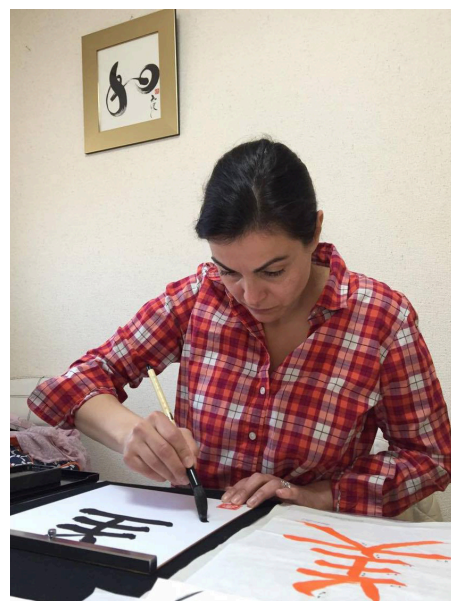
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A Calligraphy Experience in Kyōto

Have you ever taken lessons at a calligraphy school? At the “Calligraphy Kyoto Chifumi Shodo” school in Kyōto, you can experience calligraphy lessons in Chinese or English as it fits your schedule. I also attend this school, so I can look at my own calligraphy experiences there. One day when I went to the school, an American woman was having a one-hour calligraphy experience.

In the first part of the lesson, the teacher explained how *hiragana* (Japanese cursive characters), *katakana* (the simple, square characters), and *kanji* (Chinese-based characters) were developed. After that, she explained what calligraphy was, how to make the ink, how to hold a brush, and how to make the basic strokes. Then, she showed us how to draw a single character.

At first, the American woman practiced the *kanji* “和” (*wa*), which means peace and harmony, and then she practiced how to write her name in *katakana*. After that, she practiced her favorite *kanji*, which she chose from some examples made by the teacher. She picked the *kanji* “美” (*bi*), which means beauty. After practicing it several times, she drew that *kanji* and her



One-hour Calligraphy Experience
Photo: Calligraphy Kyoto Chifumi Shodo



A Family Calligraphy Experience
Photo: Calligraphy Kyoto Chifumi Shodo

name on a piece of colored paper. The one-hour experience was finished when that colored paper was returned to her as a gift.

Afterward, I asked about her impressions of the calligraphy lesson. The reason she wanted to try a calligraphy experience was that she was an oil painter herself, and so she became interested in calligraphy. Additionally, I got the impression that she felt the experience was awesome, even though it was difficult to hold the brush and keep it in the right position.

How about trying a calligraphy experience at this school in Kyōto? The school also has programs for experiences in wearing *kimono* and in tea ceremony. For details and reservations, please check their website below.

Website: <http://calligraphy.kyoto.jp/en/>

TripAdvisor: Search “Calligraphy Kyoto” for reservations and course reviews

KANAYA Chinami

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