

Series: **My Favorite Kyoto**

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From Italy with Amore*: Italian culture and Japanese culture in Kyōto

Federica Sgarbi (Italy)

Once upon a time in Italy, there was a little girl. She was from Bologna. She used to eat "pasta al ragu" and indulge in creamy tiramisu very often. Every day, she would watch "The Rose of Versailles", an anime created by Riyoko Ikeda, which was very popular in Italy in the 1980s. That little girl was impressed with the anime's poetry. That little girl was me...

I was exposed to Japan at an early age. "The Rose of Versailles" was my first encounter with Japan. "Madama Butterfly", the Italian opera created by Puccini and set in the magical Japanese atmosphere was my second.

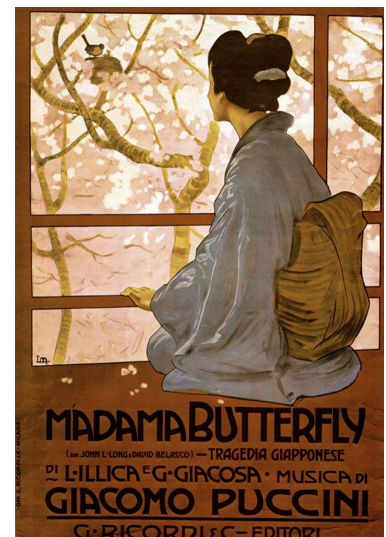
Fast forward 20 years or so, I moved to France to study at Sorbonne University where I got my PhD focused on Kant's ethics. In Paris, I also discovered Zen philosophy through D. T. Suzuki's works, "The ZEN doctrine of no-mind" and "Zen and Japanese Culture". I fell in love with Zen, and at that moment I decided to move to Kyōto* which Italians see as the center of Japanese culture.

After arriving in Kyōto, I was a little bit upset about daily routine. But, kokoka, Kyoto International Community House, became a very good resource for me because it offers free counseling and information services such as advice about social insurance, pension and visa. This inspired me.

Because I am a counselor, I started to offer a counseling service** where people can express their feelings and their worries freely about family or professional life difficulties. My approach is inspired by Psychoanalysis, which aims to support people through talking, not medicine. It is an unusual approach in Japan. This experience helped me to know many new people and understand the meaning of cultural exchange. Kokoka also offered me the chance to immerse myself in Japanese culture through the "COSMOS" project. Yasuo Imai sensei, a Kyōto artist, introduced me to Nihonga, to the grace of drawing peonies and to the peaceful feeling of Sumi-e. Step by step, I also discovered the silky sensations of yūzen, the surprising round window of Genkō-an temple and the beauty of the ceiling paintings of Ryōan-ji.



Federica at the Seimei-jinja shrine



"Madama Butterfly" brochure cover

*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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Goethe-Institut Villa Kamogawa

- Feel the German culture in Kyōto -

From Jingū-marutamachi Station of the Keihan Railway line, going north on Kawabata Street, along the Kamogawa River, and crossing the Kōjinbashi Bridge, you will come to see, on your right, a green signboard and a unique building which looks like being made with bricks. Here is the Goethe-Institut Villa Kamogawa, the place I'd like to introduce to you at this time.

The Goethe-Institut is a worldwide operating German cultural institute. Its Japanese offices are located in Tokyo, Yokohama and Osaka, as well as in Kyōto. They offer language classes in German, have a library and hold various cultural events to promote German language and introduce German culture. One feature of the institution in Kyōto is "the residency program", where German artists are invited to Japan for three months. During their stay, they are given the opportunity to realize their projects which are related to Japanese culture in various ways.

When I visited the institution in Kyōto for an interview, they were having an event of German-word-making game which I happily joined in. Guests for the game that day were nine Japanese people, including myself. A German trainee staff told us how to play the game in German, while a person in charge explained the game in Japanese. This game is played to make up German words by combining cards each having a German character, and lining the cards up to form a word. It was so fun for me, even though I was a beginner with the German language. Using a dictionary to make up words and thinking where to line the cards up, it was so interesting, I became addicted to the game. The staff at the institute told me that they are working to make many people from different countries, not only the Japanese people, to get to know more about Germany through these kinds of events and language classes.

In this building of the institution in Kyōto, there is Café Müller, offering lunch and dinner, where you can also enjoy authentic German beer and sausages. Why not enjoy the cultural exchange at the Goethe-Institut Villa Kamogawa, where you can experience an authentic German culture while living in Kyōto?

Web site: www.goethe.de/villa-kamogawa (German)

Tel: 075-761-2188

E-mail: info@villa-kamogawa.goethe.org

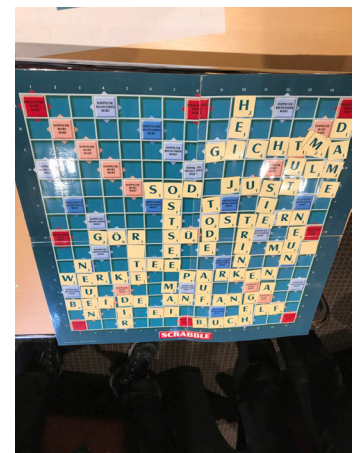
Address: 19-3 Yoshida-kawara-chō Sakyō-ku Kyoto-shi



Facade of the building



White wurst (sausage)



Game

MARUYAMA Tōru, translated by FUJITA Risa

kokoka news * * * Kyoto International Community House news * * *

Hot Chat: Exchanging Ideas about Raising Children

Christmas Party: Santa Clause comes to kokoka!



- ◆ Time and date: Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017 at 14:00 - 16:00
- ◆ Target audience: Foreign and Japanese parents with 0 – 5 year old children.
- ◆ Number of desired participants: up to 20 families
(Application in advance is required.)
- ◆ Entrance fee: adults—200 yen, children—free admission
- ◆ Where: kokoka Kyoto International Community House, 3F Seminar Room
- ◆ Contact information: Kyoto City International Foundation
TEL 075-752-3511

How about going to Kibune?

Kyōto is an ancient city well known for its myths and history. Centered around Gion-Yasaka Shrine area, Kyoto is crowded everyday with tourists from within Japan and abroad. However, what made me fall in love with Kyoto for the first time after I arrived, was not its downtown core, but it was Kibune, a place you can enjoy nature to the full. Kibune, just like the popular tourist spot of Fushimi Inari Shrine, is a place easily reached by train.

For a full enjoyment of scenic views along the Eisan Electric Train line, it's strongly recommended that you take its panoramic train named Kirara. Through the large glass window, you can enjoy the panoramic scenery of four seasons, cherry blossoms of spring, lush greens of summer, changing colors of autumn and heavy snows of winter. After you get off at the Kibuneguchi Station on the Kurama Train line, take a Kyoto Bus bound for the Kibune Shrine. At the Shrine, you often see sights of photographers taking pictures and tourists leisurely walking along the approach path. This is the very famous path of Stone Steps leading to the Shrine. During summer, red vermillion colored lanterns on both sides of the Stone Steps beautifully contrasts with deep green trees. Even during autumn and winter, lanterns are brightly lit up to make Kibune so much more colorful and beautiful.

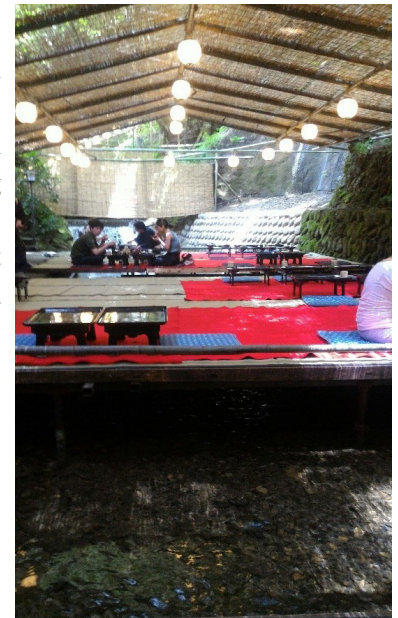


Stone stairs leading to the shrine

The Kibune Shrine is divided into three shrines, made up of the main shrine, the middle shrine (=Yuinoyashiro) and the inner shrine. At the main shrine, where a God who controls water, Takaokaminokami, is worshiped, there is a well-known fortune telling water oracle. In a corner of the shrine, you can see a bubbling spring called God's Water where, when you soak an oracle paper in the spring, fortune telling Japanese characters appear. What is more interesting is when you scan the QR code on the oracle paper, your fortune is translated into four languages. Also, in the main shrine, there is a notice board written about the origin of *Emaki*, wooden tablets of wishes. These are all fascinating things and must-sees in the main shrine.

The deity of marriage, Iwanagahime, is worshiped in the middle shrine, which became well known since the famous female poet in the Heian period, Izumishikibu, came and prayed for a happy marriage with her husband. The oracle paper at this shrine is green, unusual from the common white oracle paper.

Further, the inner shrine is very famous for a mysterious power spot where it's said there is a long mai* beneath the shrine. Also, inner shrine has another secret. During hours of the Ox (1AM to 3AM), it is said that some kind of a black magic ritual called *ushi no koku mairi* (Ox-hour Shrine Visit) originated here, where some women full of hatred would nail straw dolls on the sacred tree. You may have already read about such kind of black magic in the comic books, but don't you just feel heart pumping thrills when you find that they are actually real?



Kawadoko wooden floor

By the way, Kibune is also called The Inner Salon of Kyōto, a place famous as a summer resort, for special summer festivities. Every year, between June and September, along the coolness of the river bank, you can enjoy the very popular fine dining of delicate dishes and flowing noodles, sitting on wooden floors built on the river. Although it is quite expensive, it is a rare experience and a must-try.

*long mai: the route where the *chi* (energy) of the Earth flows (in Chinese concept)

LIN Hsiu Feng

Advertise your activities in the "Life in Kyoto" newsletter!

Why not advertise your event, restaurant, language school, workshop, services and so on in our life and culture information publication, "Life in Kyoto"? Please contact us now, and let us introduce you to our readers in the next issue!

Tel: 075-752-3511 ("Life in Kyoto" staff)
E-mail: office@kcif.or.jp



We are looking for new members like you !

Would you like to write, edit or translate articles?
Do you like to work on webpages?
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Let's create new things together! :)

Contact us now ! TEL: 075-752-3511 E-mail: office@kcif.or.jp

Japan taught by foreign tourists

On one summer afternoon, as I was walking near Ginkakuji Temple, three girls, one from Portugal and two from Italy, happened to ask me if they could get to an *Okuribi* site by continuing along that road. I told them they can and it will take less than an hour to get there. Coincidentally, I too was going to that *Okuribi* site, so I ended up joining them on their hike. The Portuguese girl seemed well informed on Japan's historical relationship with Portugal. She explained how guns were introduced to the Tanegashima Island of Japan in 1543 by the Portuguese. It is thought that this was the first



Sunset as seen from
the Mountain of Daimonji

occurrence of westerners coming to Japan. I hypothesized that the Portuguese came to Japan with an interest in expanding their gun trade.

She also spoke of Francisco de Xavier, a missionary who visited Japan and was the first to introduce Christianity to the Japanese people. With the guidance of Yajiro, a native to Kagoshima prefecture, Xavier landed in a port of Kagoshima and later he even travelled to Kyōto. *Nanbanji* Temple (a Christian church in Kyōto) is drawn in one of many *Rakuchurakugaizu* (historical paintings of Kyōto, and the surrounding area, made in the late 15th century and early 16th century) which shows how big of an impact Xavier made on the people. Even after all this time has passed since Xavier's visit to Japan, there are Portuguese words that are used to this day in Japanese society such as *karta*, *castella* and *kappa*.

After talking about Japanese and Portuguese history, we finally reached a burning site of the *Daimonjiyama* Mountain. I showed them where the fire wood is lit during *Daimonjiyama Okuribi* which got them very excited. Shortly after that, the Portuguese girl took out and began to assemble a machine. I asked her, "What is going on?" and she replied, "I am going to fly a drone." I warned her of the strict drone flying regulations in Japan, but she said, "I know, I don't use it when people are around." Since there was heavy rainfall earlier that day, there were only deer and kites—a type of hawk—in the area, so it was a perfect chance for her to use her drone. She took videos of the mountainous landscape with her drone while flying it vertically and horizontally, and seemed to be enjoying herself while doing so. While she was flying her drone, I pointed out the Imperial Palace and Osaka to the other girls from our vantage point on the mountain. They, however, were not interested at all. Instead, they asked me if they would be able to see the sun setting from the mountain. I answered, "Yes". This mountain chain is called Higashiyama Mountain. *Higashi* means east in Japanese and we are standing on the west side of the mountain. Being coupled with this fine weather, you will be able to clearly see the sun setting." After hearing this, they began to clap their hands in excitement. They then proceeded to apply suntan lotion and bath in the sun. Since I couldn't stay until sunset, I told them to enjoy and descended the mountain to go home.

Please take a note from my experience and talk to foreigners in Kyōto. You can learn so much from them and have a very good time while doing so. It helps to treat them as you would a friend.

FURUTA Tomiyoshi

Daikodaki—Kyōto's Winter Tradition

The cold winter has started and the season of longing for oden (steamed vegetables and fish dumplings in Japanese broth) has arrived. I like *daikon* (Japanese white radish) in *oden*. How about you? In Kyōto, event named “*daikodaki* (*daikon*-offering ceremony)” is held every winter.

Daikodaki is a ceremony held in various temples throughout Kyōto every year, to pray for preventing of various illnesses and for good health. Dates and origins of the ceremonies are different for each temple. In the following table, the dates and origins of *daikodaki* held in various temples during the months of December and January are noted.



“*Daikodaki*” ceremony
at Senbon Shakado Temple

Name of Temple	Date	Origins of Event
Sanpōji Temple	December 2 and 3 (First Saturday and Sunday in December)	Memorial service for the anniversary of Nichiren Daishōnin's (founder of the sect's) death.
Senbon Shakadō (Daihōon-ji Temple)	December 7 and 8	Day of Buddha reaching Buddhahood, and prayer for preventing of various illnesses and for good health.
Ryōtokuji Temple	December 9 and 10	Villagers offering meal of boiled daikon to Shinran Shōnin returning from Atagosan Tsukuniwa temple.
Myōmanji Temple	December 10	Same as Senbon Shakadō.
Suzumushidera (Kegonji Temple)	December 23 and 24	Memorial service to thank <i>jizō</i> (guardian deity of children) and to pray for next year's good health.
Takoyakushi dō (Eifukuji Temple)	December 31	Give thanks to this year's safe passage and pray for no calamities next year.
Hōjūji Temple	January 14 (Sunday close to January 15)	Pray for a year of good health to the fierce Buddhist deity.

Found a temple close to where you live? Recommend you try visiting a temple once.

KANAYA Chinami

kokoka Kyoto International
Community House Library

Library Letter

2017/12・2018/1

kokoka recommends this book

Japanese-English Bilingual Books Handbook of Japanese Cooking: Carving Techniques for Seasonal Vegetables

Author:

Shimatani Munehiro

Publisher:

Seibundo Shinkousha, 2015



Mukimono is decoratively cut food often found in Japanese cuisine, creatively enhancing the main dish's appearance. The stunning presentation forces one to take time to appreciate the food's appearance before eating it. This book clearly explains how to make more than 50 vegetable and fruit based dishes using various carving techniques. Why not try using this book so you can feel like a real chef?

In the Japanese language, there are many onomatopoeias used in everyday life, such as “uto uto”, “sakut”, “meso meso”. How many Japanese onomatopoeias do you know? With “ONOMATO PERA-PERA - An Illustrated Guide to Japanese Onomatopoeia” (edited by Mizuno Ryotaro, Tokyodo Shuppan, 2016) let's learn and master many onomatopoeias! The author uses *manga* strips with each onomatopoeia to help the reader understand the right time to use each onomatopoeia.

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>

Now, I teach Italian language and culture at Ritsumeikan University, and I recently, created an association called “Leonardo da Vinci”***. The association aims to promote workshops, lessons, museum and school projects concerning Italian culture. It also aims to create partnerships with any institution or people interested in Italy and its culture. By the way, we created a series of picturebooks in collaboration with Imai sensei: a storytelling event concerning it was held at the Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art in Kōbe (November 19th, 2016) and at the Yamaguchi Prefectural Art Museum (March 5th, 2017) on the occasion of the “Roman Wall paintings in Pompeii” exhibition with the patronage of the Italian Cultural Institute of Osaka. Another event was held at the Yutaka kindergarten (Osaka Prefecture, March 29th 2017) in Japanese and Italian. So far, the association has started collaborating with an art gallery in Gion, the Kyōto Gion Utsuki gallery. I really hope to increase this kind of partnerships in the future.

By the way, I recently started to run a “COSMOS” class at kokoka two times per month on Saturday morning: I introduce participants to Italian language and Renaissance art. During every lesson, it is nice to see students express an interest in my home country’s culture, being around them makes me feel lucky.

To conclude, Kyōto offered me many great chances to exchange and gain new knowledges. I am so grateful for it. The first time I met Japanese culture, especially Zen Buddhism philosophy, I felt a very special feeling. When living in Japan I confirmed it: here I found a new world, a new and exciting “COSMOS”.

That’s why I have decided that I will live in Kyōto. Forever.

*Amore means “Love” in Italian.

**Contact fedemorale@hotmail.com or visit <https://listeningtotheotherkyoto.jimdo.com/> for more information about the counseling service.

***Contact fedemorale@hotmail.com or visit <https://davinciatelier.jimdo.com/> for more information about the Association Leonardo da Vinci.



Logo of the Association “Leonardo da Vinci” - portrait of da Vinci realized in *nihonga* technique..
Project by Federica Sgarbi and Yasuo Imai



Kamogawa River

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