



# Life In Kyoto

2020 春  
Spring

Life & Culture Information Newsletter

Series: **My Favorite Kyoto**

Publisher: Kyoto City International Foundation  
<https://www.kcif.or.jp/en>

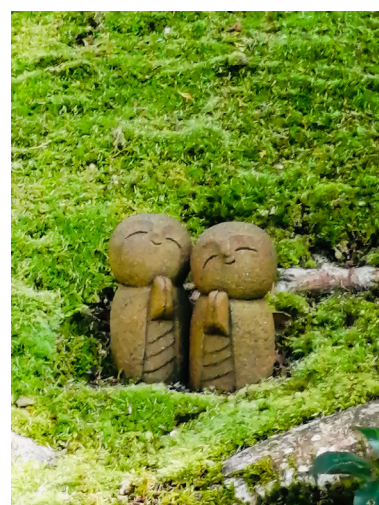
## Celebrating 20 Years in Kyoto

SOU Sou (People's Republic of China)

Twenty years ago, I came to Kyoto from China to study, and it is now the year 2020. I want to greet this year, 2020, as a number that is important to me. Many of my thoughts and dreams, from the past and for the future, are in my heart.

In the last 20 years, I have had three transitions in my life: going abroad to study, having an international marriage, and childbirth and parenting. I think that I have established myself in Kyoto, graduating from a Japanese language school, and going on to enter a university in Kyoto. While attending there, my way of thinking changed, and I then entered the Kyoto University School of Education.

After graduation, I wanted to work in Kyoto doing something related to tourism, so I spent four years studying to be an interpreter guide. I obtained the long-awaited qualification of Chinese interpreter - tour guide, but in recent years, the importance of sightseeing guide jobs has faded, due to the spread of tourist guide and translation apps and websites. I am currently working at the Kyoto International Community House as an administrative interpreter consultant in Chinese, and I am also involved in work as a translator and medical-related interpreter.



**Statuette of Healing *Jizo*  
Boddhisattwa  
(at Shisendo Temple)**

In Kyoto, where you can enjoy the atmosphere of the four seasons, when I was a student, I went to temples, shrines, and parks that I liked, walked along the Philosopher's Path, and went to retro-style coffee shops "Soile" and "Francois", on my school days. After I got married and had a child, I took my daughter to walk down the Philosopher's Path, visiting again Ginkakuji Temple, Honen-in Temple, Anrakuji Temple and other places near my house. Doing this, I found new feelings and made some discoveries.

Somewhere in the middle of the Path of Philosophy, there is a small temple called Mirokuin, where there is a "happy *jizo*" (smiling Buddhist statue), and I always thought of it as a happy temple. During my walks, I would always visit there, drink juice while sitting on the big stones, and just take a break.

continued on page 6

**ADVERTISE** your activities  
in the "Life in Kyoto" newsletter!!



We publish newsletter 4 times a year.  
**Advertising rate starts at 10,000yen!**  
☎ 075-752-3511 ✉ [office@kcif.or.jp](mailto:office@kcif.or.jp)

**We are looking for new  
members like you!!**

Our volunteer team has people from many  
different cultures, why don't you join us!

Contact us now! ☎ 075-752-3511 ✉ [office@kcif.or.jp](mailto:office@kcif.or.jp)



# Life with *Tatami*

In the past, every house had Japanese style rooms with *tatami* mat floors. We could walk barefoot or lie down on them. *Tatami* mats are also an important component of Japanese traditional culture, such as *sado* (Japanese tea ceremony) or *kado* (Japanese traditional flower arrangement). However, recently the demand for *tatami* mats has decreased because of the increasing use of wood floors. I took part in some “*tatami* workshops” to learn about the qualities and comfort of *tatami* mats.



**Some items made in the workshop**

The Muraki *Tatami* shop is just a few minutes' walk from Yamashina Station. Mr. Shigefumi Muraki is president of the shop; he taught me many things about *tatami*. *Tatami* mats are made from *igusa* (soft rush straw) in 2 major steps. First, we weave a rush rug or mat, called a *tatami-omote*. Then we wrap this over a thick *tatami* core. Most domestic rushes are grown around Yatsushiro City, in Kumamoto Prefecture. The farmers are very particular about things like the condition of the water, in order to produce high quality *igusa*.



***Igusa* cutting process at a local farm**

Good quality domestic *tatami* mats: help us feel cool in summer and warm in winter; clean the air of formaldehyde and nitrogen dioxide; maintain a comfortable humidity level; are moderately flexible and elastic, reducing injuries from falling; provide soundproofing, and dampen vibration; and have a scent that produces some aromatherapy effects, like improving concentration.

Although *tatami* mats are very nice, and quite useful, it takes about two years from preparing the rush seedlings to finally weaving the *tatami-omote*. In the past, the rushes were called “green diamonds,” and were grown by many farmers, but recently, many foreign-made *tatami* mats came on the market, so the number of Japanese rush farmers is decreasing.

After learning many things about *tatami* and *igusa*, I made a mini *tatami* mat and some *tatami* coasters. As it was my first experience, I was not able to do it well, but somehow, I managed to finish them. And through this workshop, I reaffirmed what I knew about the benefits of *tatami* mats. A *goza* is a rug made from woven rush straw; it can be spread on a wood floor. I hope all of you will enjoy a wonderful life with *tatami* mats and *goza* rugs.

◆ For more information, please see MURAKI Shigefumi's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/shigehumi.muraki>

NISHIKI Mie



# World Masters Games 2021 Kansai

This year there were high expectations for Tokyo to host the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. But unfortunately, they were postponed. If they had not been postponed, Japan would probably have been energized this year by this large international sports competition, just like last year with the Rugby World Cup. However, next year, another major athletic sports event, the “World Masters Games 2021 Kansai”, is coming to Japan.

The World Masters Games are the largest international lifelong sports competition. In 1985, the first Games were held in Toronto, Canada, and have been put on every four years around the world. The 2021 competition will be the 10th one, and is being held in Asia for the first time.

What makes this competition different from other sports events is that the athletes are not representing any countries, but anyone over 30 years old may participate in the contests. At the last competition, held in Auckland, New Zealand, over 2,900 athletes from about 100 different countries participated.

The World Masters Games 2021 Kansai will be held from May 14, 2021 through May 30, in 9 prefectures and 4 ordinance-designated cities within the Kansai area. The opening ceremony for the competition will take place in the Okazaki district of Kyoto City. The ceremony will be put on at the Heian Jingu Shrine, and a parade by the participants is also planned. The Kyoto City government is creating promotions and public relations activities for various events, using the slogan “Kyoto, where all things start - Be healthy through sports - Let's enjoy life”.

In the competition, 59 disciplines of 35 sports and 32 showcase sports will be represented. In Kyoto City, games will include athletics (track and field), badminton, *karate*, squash and the showcase sports of petanque (like bocce ball or lawn bowling) and Double Dutch (jump rope). The application period for the Games has already started, and runs until Feb. 28 of next year. Anyone more than 30 years old can participate and it is not just a dream that you could win a gold medal in an international sports competition. Additionally, you can participate as a volunteer (Japanese language skills required), if not as an athlete. As to entry application and more detailed information, please see the websites below.

“World Masters Games 2021 Kansai”

■Official Website: <https://wmg2021.jp/en/>

■Kyoto City Local Organizing Committee Office : <https://www.wmg2021.kyoto/en/>



SUZUKI Hidetoshi

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

## Visa Consultation and Legal Advice for Foreign Residents

Do you have any questions or concerns about legal or visa issues?

Twice a month professionals will help you to find a solution.

Interpreters will be available on request. All consultations are free of charge.

We will protect your confidentiality. Advance reservations are required.

Tel:075-752-3511

Yearly schedule:

<https://www.kcif.or.jp/web/en/support/counselling/>

# *Haru wa Akebono*

## (I Love Sunrise the most in the Spring)

“*Haru wa akebono, yau yau shiroku nariyuku yamagiwa, sukoshi akarite, murasaki dachitaru kumo no hosoku tanabikitaru*” (from the original classic Japanese text)

This is the famous sentence that appears at the beginning of the “Makura no Soshi” (The Pillow Book), the world’s first book of essays.

Written in the contemporary Twitter style it is: “I love sunrise the most in the spring. When the sky gets a bit white and the area around the mountains gets slightly brighter, the clouds, dyed in purple, are elongated and wispy. The gradation of sunrise is very photogenic scene. This would get many “Likes” on Instagram!”

The author is a 10<sup>th</sup> century (middle of Heian period) essayist, Sei Shonagon. Coming from a family of the lower level aristocrats who had been working on classical Chinese\* and *waka* poetry for generations, she was a talented woman who learned them in childhood. She was able to use written Chinese freely, which was uncommon for a woman at the time. The influential aristocrats of that time were competing to make their daughters Empress by marrying the *Tenno* (Emperor). For that purpose, it was necessary to possess not only good looks, but also have a high level of culture and education. When she was about 28 years old, her talents were recognized, and was chosen to serve under Chugu Sadako, Empress to Emperor Ichijō.

One day, Sadako showed Sei Shonagon a stack of blank white paper, suggesting,

”Why don’t you write a record of life in our *Koukyu* (Inner Palace), like the “Shiji” (“Records of the Grand Historian”)?” Sei Shonagon answered immediately: “Could I write it in a *makura* (pillow) style?”

“Pillow” was borrowed from “I sleep with books as a *makura*\*\*\*” a line from a poem in “Bai-Shi Wen Ji”, a collection of poems by the Chinese poet Bai Juyi. Sei Shonagon had a good knowledge of Chinese poetry, and was quick-witted. At a time when pure white paper was very precious, she wrote a sophisticated description of what she felt daily, living in the *Koukyu* Palace. This was the catalyst for the creation of the world’s first essay literature. From that point on, for 1,000 years, the bestseller, “Makura no Soshi”, continues to be read as a manual for *aruaru joshi* \*\*\* girls. It is humorously written, full of exciting love stories and dating etiquette, and so on, that have struck a chord with many women. Today, has been translated into contemporary Japanese and many foreign languages and published.

Why not take this opportunity to be a follower of “Makura no Soshi”?

\*Chinese writing was introduced in Japan around the 4<sup>th</sup> century (various theories exist), and those who could write and read in Chinese were only the elites, who dealt with official documents, Buddhist scriptures, Chinese poetry, etc. Furthermore, *hiragana* and *katakana* characters were likely created around the tenth century from simplified *kanji* characters. With the growth in popularity of literature by women writers such as Sei Shonagon, more people learned how to read and write.

\*\*The meaning of the original poem is: “I was reading a book one peaceful day, and without noticing, fell asleep with my books as a pillow”.

Makura, as used in the title, has come to mean heartfelt expression in writing, especially, with regard to daily events.

Additionally, “Makura no Soshi” is written in *hiragana*, easy for anyone to read, and contains illustrations.

\*\*\* *Aruaru joshi* are girls who share and empathize with what other girls have experienced.

There are many places in Kyoto associated with “Makura no Soshi”, where you can go on a “pilgrimage”.

Information: <https://merosu.com/seishounagon.html>

YAGI Takashi

# Plant Blooming Twenty-Thousand Flowers



**Echium Wildpretii  
bloomed twenty-thousand flowers**

In the Kyoto Prefectural Botanical Gardens, extending to the southern area of the Kitayama Station of the Kyoto Subway, there grows a variety of plants. The places of their origin are not just in Japan but are more global such as, in tropical areas, in high mountains, and in deserts. Among them, the most gorgeous is *Echium Wildpretii*, which grows in high mountains and blooms as much as twenty-thousand flowers in May. It is native to Tenerife island, one of the Canary islands, which floats on the Atlantic ocean northwest of the African continent. It is the islands, where Columbus, the first European to have had contact with the Americas, moored. My friend, who also landed there, wrote in his voyage report that he saw these plants grow high, here and there.

Above all, I admire the technology to reproduce growing the plant which is native to a place different in climatic conditions from Kyoto.

If you enter the gardens, you could meet many kinds of plants, and expand your imaginations of plants globally.

FURUTA Tomiyoshi

kokoka Kyoto International  
Community House Library

## Library Letter


2020/Spring

 kokoka recommends these books

### Because I Might Die Tomorrow, I Tell You Now

**Author: SATO Hiroshi**  
**Publisher: Shogakukan, 2018**



kokoka → 

The God of Death appeared suddenly in front of the main character, a husband, and told him that he was to die tomorrow. Death said to the husband, "You may write only one letter." The husband chose his wife as the addressee of his letter and wrote messages of love and gratitude for his wife. Then....

You really cannot read this story without being moved to tears. This is a wonderful, heart-warming picture book.

Please come to our library and read it!

※kokoka is the Kyoto International Community House's mascot.

### Similar English Words

(Author: OKABE Takashi, photographer: YAMADE Takashi, publisher: Tokyo Shoseki, 2015 )

I have a question for you about these English word pairs: "candy" and "lollypop", "garden" and "yard", and "road" and "street". Can you tell the difference in meaning between them? By the way, kokoka doesn't understand at all. Well, I give up! Let's read the book "Similar English Words." It should be refreshing to understand the difference in meaning of similar English words.

### 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.

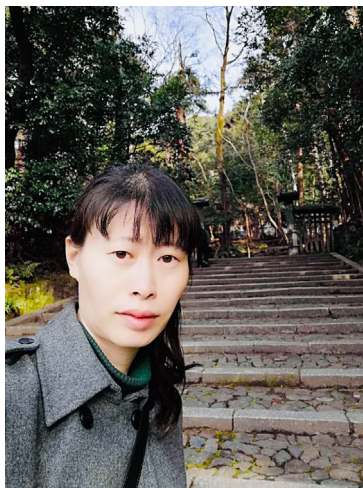
[Hours] 9:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Closed on Mondays & last day of every month

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

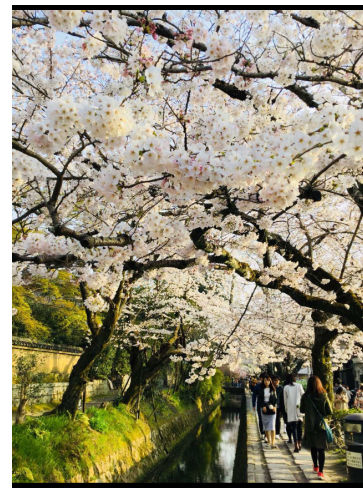
[URL] <https://www.kcif.or.jp/en>





**Author  
at Honen-in Temple**

At this temple, around May of every year, the tulips bloom beautifully; one year, I went for a walk to see the tulips. A girl who always played with my daughter in the children's hall came running out from a back room of the temple. That day, for the first time, I found out that she was the daughter of the temple's priest, and I thought about how small the world is. Why did I think that this was so unexpected? It was because this same girl attended a Christian kindergarten. These days, in a world where globalization is being called for, I thought it would be nice if religion could become globalized.



**Sakura in full bloom  
on Philosopher's Path**

Last year, in winter, I joined an orchestra group through an introduction by an acquaintance. I play the violin, and have been practicing with them for a community development/town planning concert to be held in April.

I have visited many temples and shrines, not only in Kyoto, but also in various other places, and I wanted to know more and read more about temples and shrines. So, last year I read the Tsutomu MINAKAMI novel "Wild Goose Temple", and now I am enjoying reading the book "Kinkakuji Temple", written by Yukio MISHIMA.

Finally, for me, twenty years seems like both a long and a short span of life, but I have spent as much time as I liked reading a lot of good novels, seeing many good films, and listening to a lot of good music during those twenty years. I hope that from this spring onward, using the knowledge and experience I have cultivated through living in Kyoto, I will be able to help everyone in this town who wants to learn and work.



**Visiting Honen-in Temple**

#### ■ Writers, Editors and Contributors

CHIKAMOTO Koji / FURUTA Tomiyoshi / IKUTA Minoru / KANAYA Chinami / Karl JANSMA/  
KAWASAKI Masashi / KUNO Taihan / LIN Hsiu Feng / MIKAWA Yurina/ NISHIKI Mie/ SATO  
Mina /SAWADA Atsumi/ SUZUKI Hidetoshi / TOKUDA Motoko/ YAGI Takashi / YAGI Toshiyuki /  
YUZAWA Kimio

■ On the WEB you can read LIK past issues →



#### ■ Publisher: Kyoto City International Foundation

TEL: 075-752-3511 FAX: 075-752-3510

E-mail: [office@kcif.or.jp](mailto:office@kcif.or.jp) Website: <https://www.kcif.or.jp/en/>

Torii-cho 2-1, Awataguchi, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto, Japan 〒 606-8536

6 min. walk North from [T09] Keage Station, Tozai Subway Line

