



Series **My Favorite Kyoto**

The country of my dreams, Japan

Huseyn Asgarov (Republic of Azerbaijan)



My name is Huseyn and I am from Azerbaijan, a small, post-Soviet country between Russia and Iran. My interest in Japan and Japanese culture was aroused about ten years ago when I started playing games on consoles such as PlayStation 3 and Nintendo 3DS. At the time, I liked the games called Street Fighter and Final Fantasy, and other games produced by famous Japanese game companies. Then, I got interested in anime and Japanese music as well. I wanted to learn more about Japanese culture, but the language barrier was a big obstacle to studying and understanding Japanese culture and Japanese people's way of thinking. So, I started to learn Japanese.

Time passed, and I managed to improve my Japanese skills to about pre-intermediate level; I was able to read simple texts, and understand conversational Japanese to some degree. It was a time when I wanted to experience living, studying, and working in Japan. I first applied for the Japanese Government scholarship program (MEXT) in 2016, but couldn't pass the interview. I didn't give up, and in 2017 I applied for the scholarship again. The lengthy selection process took more than six months, but I managed to win the scholarship, and in April, 2018, I came to Japan.

I enrolled at Kyoto University, my first preference, for several reasons. First, for its location in Kyoto, the cultural capital and so-called heart of Japan. Since I took interest in Japanese culture and the Japanese language, I was fascinated by the beauty of Kyoto, its nature, ancient temples, shrines, and the special atmosphere of old Japan. The



Author



The beauty of Kyoto

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Making Earrings of "Orizuru" (Origami Crane)

Do you like handicrafts? It's really fun, and time flies when we are absorbed in making something.

I've seen many times the phrase, "from entity-oriented consumption to situation-oriented consumption", in the news and newspapers these days. It means, it's not the material things in themselves, but to provide services of gaining experiences through material things, which are becoming popular among people both within and inbound from outside Japan. As a proof, I'm starting to see that there are not only various handicraft workshops taking place, but also various "experience style" events in different fields can be found more often.

I went to make very Kyoto-like Japanese handicrafts at the Sanei Craft shop in Shijo Karasuma. From among the various classes, I challenged the making of "Orizuru" earrings. Because they are made from *washi* (Japanese paper), they go very well with *wafuku* (Japanese clothing, *kimono*). In the summer, a lot of people go to festivals and see fireworks wearing these "Orizuru" earrings with *yukata* (cotton summer *kimono*), for which some people even from other prefectures come to this shop to make these earrings.



Inside of the Sanei Craft

How to make these earrings is first, we fold the Kyo-Yuzen *washi* paper. Then, we apply some coat of UV liquid resin and let it harden. I felt the *washi*'s color became more vivid after applying some coat of UV liquid resin. After that, we attach the metal fittings to complete it. Practicing once to attach it, we go to production. I finished making an earring of "Orizuru" within one hour. There may be some who has never made accessories not having confidence in how to use the tools properly. But, you don't need to worry, because the instructor will support you very well.



Earrings of "orizuru"

And, when we start making new handicrafts, we need to know what tools are needed and what to do. It may be difficult to gather together the tools from scratch, but those necessary tools can be borrowed when you take a class. Furthermore, we can learn what we don't know from the instructor, so, we can easily challenge ourselves in experiencing how to make new handicrafts. I hope that you can also make your own world's only original handicraft. Sanei Craft deals in many products. For more information, please see the homepage.

URL: <https://www.saneicraft.com>

NISHIKI Mie

* * * Counseling Day for Foreign Residents * * *

Do you have any questions or concerns regarding legal issues, visa problems, taxes, insurance, your pension, etc? Are you worried about something? Professionals in those areas can discuss any of these with you. Interpreters will be available on request. Advanced reservations are required. We will protect your confidentiality.

- ◆ When: Sunday, September 27, 13:00 - 17:00
- ◆ Where: kokoka Kyoto International Community House, 3F, Conference Room and Counseling Room
- ◆ Reservations: phone 075-752-3511

Name of Japanese People

I think you probably have some opportunities to talk with Japanese people in English. So, how do the Japanese say their names in English? The usual order for names of Japanese is “family name - given name”, but many Japanese, when speaking in English, give their names in the order “given name - family name”. This custom started in the Meiji period, when Japan was absorbing some Western culture; the Japanese government thought that using the “given name - family name” order would be easier for Western people to understand.

Reportedly, Japan is the only country which changes the name order in foreign languages. But recently, from the perspective of having respect for the culture of each country, the idea also spread that using the original order of “family name - given name” is good. In 2000, the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs gave the opinion that it was desirable to use the “family name - given name” naming order. Additionally, from January of this year, official documents from the Japanese government were changed to the “family name - given name” order. For example, the notation for the Prime Minister’s name was changed from “Shinzo ABE” to “ABE Shinzo”.

By the way, the use of family names started in Japan sometime during the Yamato period, from the 4th to the 7th century. At that time there were many “kingdoms” in Japan, and they were united as an empire governed by the Emperor. The origin of family name is the *uji-kabane* system; the Emperor gave a family name to each royal family in order to manage them. Under the *uji-kabane* system, the name of an individual was given as “Royal Family A’s Mr. B”. This may be why names of Japanese people are in the order of “family name - given name”. Later, in the Heian period, the aristocrats, and in the Kamakura period, the samurai started the use of family names, also spreading out among the common people. But under the class system established in the Edo period, only samurai and aristocrats could use family names. Later, in 1875, during the Meiji period, common people were required by law to attach family names, and that requirement continues to this day.

Speaking of given names, here in Japan, people often give a name using the ideographic *kanji* characters, therefore the meanings of characters are regarded as important. Also, the popularity of certain characters used in names can depend on the times. For example, in wartime, characters such as “勝” (sho / meaning ‘win’), or “勇” (yu / meaning ‘brave’) were in vogue. However, from 1980’s, the number of people who would decide the sounds first and then select *kanji* characters is increasing. It is thought that this trend came from the parents who grew up in the environment of 1960’s, when television began to spread and the opportunity for reading books decreased. But recently, this trend became extreme. There has been an increase of “kira kira” (glittery) name, which is foreign words and so on are assigned to *kanji* characters and practically impossible to read in usual manner. Therefore, the children named “kira kira” name sometimes feel inconvenienced in their daily lives.

Now, as was said in the beginning of this article, whether a Japanese person says their name in the order of “family name - given name” or “given name - family name” depends on the person. What you assume to be a family name may in fact be a given name. There are many naming customs overseas, such as the use of middle names, which are not found in Japan. I think it may be interesting to compare the various customs of names in different countries.



Kyoto “Iki Iki” Civic Centers

Do you know “Ikisen”, the Kyoto “Iki Iki” Civic Centers?

Kyoto has many civic centers called the “Iki Iki center”. “Iki Iki” is a term used to express lively, energetic feeling. These places called “Ikisen” are some of the most convenient places in Kyoto.

One of these centers is the Sakyo West *Iki Iki* Civic Center, located near my apartment. I first came to know about this place when I took a Capoeira class there. One interesting thing about this center is that there are various cultural classes attended by foreigners and locals alike. This center has staff who can speak English. When I joined the Capoeira class, a lot of woman foreigners were taking the lessons with their children, and sometimes tourists joining the classes. This West Ikisen is usually very lively, with classes such as Indian dance and Korean language classes. The center is also used for full-fledged orchestra and drama practice.

These civic centers are supported by the Kyoto city government and the surrounding communities. Room rental rates are just 100 yen per hour. These centers are very easy to use with little restrictions on who can rent a room. Anyone can sign up as an instructor to share their skills and talents. Within the walls of these civic centers, visitors are exposed to various learning opportunities, while at the same time, supporting the instructors. Apart from professional class use, visitors can rent a space for personal use to practice or have events. I often use the rooms for my children’s study sessions or dance lessons. It is affordable and very convenient for people who have various needs in life.

Wherever you live in Kyoto, there may be an “Ikisen” near you. Come share the “Iki Iki” feeling of Kyoto and its people.



Capoeira class in the Sakyo West *Iki Iki* Civic Center



Kyoto City Official Website
Iki Iki Civic Center page QR code

TOKUDA Motoko

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Let's use kokoPlaza!

What do you do when you have a problem in your life in Japan, when there’s something you don’t understand, or when you want to know more about something? You probably ask your friends or search the Internet; of course, these are good methods, but we also suggest that you look for answers in our new kokoPlaza, which we have renewed recently, as a place of communication and interaction, and as well as a great source of information!

At kokoPlaza there are many books that are useful for living in Japan, learning about Japan, studying the Japanese language, and so on. And we have a wide variety of books in English and Chinese, as well in Japanese. If you want to know, “What should I do to prepare for a disaster?”, or “How can I find out more about Japanese culture, like the tea ceremony and Japanese food?” there are books and other resources here that will answer your questions!

If there is a book that you would like to read, please request it. Your voice will help to create our new kokoPlaza together.

A Mountain Walk in Kyoto

There are many rivers flowing through Kyoto, and it is surrounded on three sides by mountains. In Kyoto, you can enjoy this beauty and the changes of scenery from season to season.

I will introduce here what it is like to take a walk on a mountain during a snowfall. The lockdown of Wuhan in China due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was already in place in early February, when a small group of us walked up Atagosan mountain amid a penetrating chill. Its steep sides rise to 924 meters, the highest in Kyoto, standing behind Arashiyama mountain, and at the top of Atagosan sits the Atago Jinja shrine, where the god that protects against fire is enshrined.

The Kiyotaki bus stop, 100 meters above sea level, is the starting point of a hard climb up the mountain. From that point onward, the air temperature dropped, the road surface became icy, and my thigh muscles became numb; it was a very tough climb. Nevertheless, it felt absolutely fantastic to walk in the clear air while it snowed, with sunbeams shining through the tree branches. We encountered a number of foreigners, among them a group of tourists from Thailand who took many pictures, as if they did not want to miss anything. I assumed that it was the first time they had seen snow. The mountains in Kyoto are very close by, so you can go there and back in a day. And you don't need to worry about the coronavirus.



Walking at Atagosan
in winter

How about enjoying the mountains in Kyoto throughout the year?

FURUTA Tomiyoshi

kokoka Kyoto International
Community House kokoPlaza 2F

Library Letter

2020/Summer
(July, August, September)

 books recommended by kokoka※

“Magic of Spices”

Author: Curryko Indo
Publisher: Shuwa System,
2019



This book introduces many dishes using 6 kinds of spices: cumin, coriander, star anis, turmeric, nutmeg, and cinnamon.

How about cooking some dishes using these spices?

kokoka wants to cook Dandan noodles with soy milk using star anis.

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

“THE ATLAS OF BEAUTY: Women of the World in 500 portraits”

(Author: Mihaela Noroc, publisher: PIE International, 2018)

This book is a collection of portraits of women from around the world, taken by the photographer Mihaela Noroc. The women in the portraits attract us with their nobility, gentleness, strength and beauty.

Please come to our kokoPlaza to read this book.

kokoka also wants to make kokoka's own book of portraits.

These items are also available at kokoPlaza

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.

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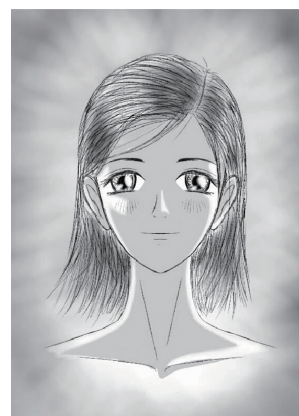
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second reason I chose Kyoto University was because of its high ranking among universities, and its numerous achievements in diverse areas of science.

It is now more than two years since I came to Kyoto, and I enjoy every day I spend here. One of my hobbies is to visit historic sites, temples, and shrines in Kyoto. I've been to many famous places, including Fushimi Inari shrine, Enryaku-ji temple, Toufuku-ji, Kifune shrine, etc. Also, I find it particularly interesting to experience the contrasting seasons in Kyoto. Each season has its own unique atmosphere and features. You can enjoy the beautiful momiji trees and red-yellow foliage during autumn, or the mesmerizing pink sakura cherry tree blossoms in early spring. However, summer may be a little bit harsh for those who have never experienced hot and humid weather. In my opinion, the best season in Kyoto is autumn. But Kyoto is not only about enjoying nature and the historical spots. For those who enjoy crowded downtowns, the central part of Kyoto would be the best destination to explore the many shopping areas, brand boutique stores, and restaurants, where you can try the local delicacies or any other delicious foods.

I also have to say how much I love Japanese cuisine. I have been enjoying Japanese food ever since I took an interest in Japanese culture in my home country. I can cook many Japanese dishes such as *gyudon* (beef rice bowl), *oyakodon* (chicken/egg rice bowl), *takikomi gohan* (seasoned mixed rice), *shoga yaki* (grilled pork/ginger sauce), and different types of *sushi*. I like the taste of Japanese food; you can sense freshness in the ingredients, many of which are seasonal; they add a specific flavor to each dish. There are all kinds of different foods, cookies and sweets which you can taste in Kyoto, and these are always available during one of the four seasons. When I am asked about my favorite Japanese food, I struggle to answer the question, as I love almost all Japanese dishes. Many people, especially Japanese, are surprised when they hear that I love *natto* (fermented soybeans).

I will graduate from the University in September, 2020, and after that, I plan to start working in Japan. I am not sure how long I would like to stay in Japan, but I think it is still too early to go back to my country or move to another country.



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