

Life & Cultural Information Newsletter

Life In Kyoto

Spring 2022

KOKOKO



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01 My Favorite Kyoto

Days of an Egyptian Archeologist in Kyoto

| Mohamed Soliman

Konnichiwa minasan!

My name is Mohamed Soliman, an Egyptian archeologist. I came to Kyoto two years ago as a JSPS postdoctoral fellow at Ritsumeikan University's Institute of Disaster Mitigation for Urban Cultural Heritage (DMUCH).

Living in Japan, an old dream of mine

I first heard of Japan when I was a student, which we associated with the "Country of the Rising Sun". Various TV programs made me obsessed with exploring the mystery and superior progress of that so far country "Planet World of Japan", so far away.

Daily life

As an archeologist, I often observed the harmony of Kyoto's cultural heritage with Japan's ultra-modernity through analytical eyes. Such experiences sharpened my skills and inspired my research field based on the superior techniques that I learned at Ritsumeikan University. Kyoto is home to hundreds of cultural heritage sites, including 17 UNESCO World Heritage sites. I used to visit many of them frequently, such as Nijo-jo, Ginkaku-ji, Kinkaku-ji, and Kiyomizu-dera. Actually, sightseeing is fantastic, but it is even more impressive in the eyes of an archeologist, as Kyoto's cultural heritage sites represent attractive examples of cultural heritage management, disaster mitigation, and touristic interpretations within an authentic framework.

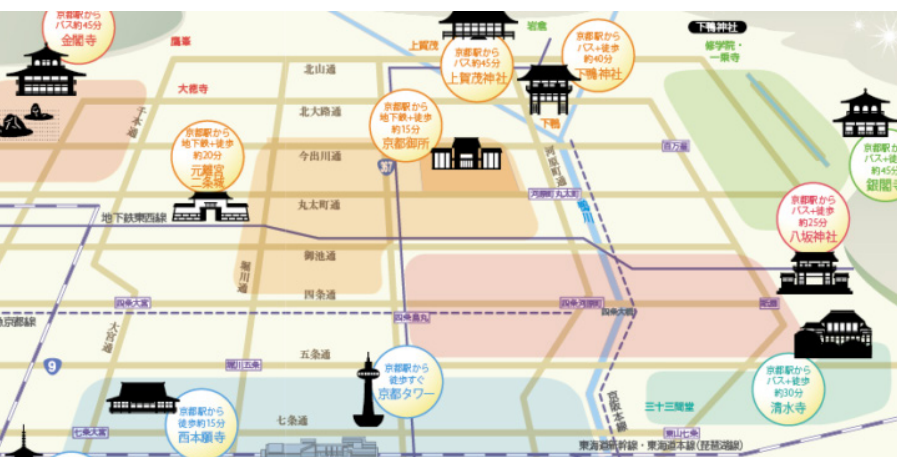
The variety of urban mobility options also reflects Kyoto municipality's policy of management and preservation. Although there were various

transportation options available, I preferred to have a bicycle, which was the cheapest and most convenient method of getting around for students and persons with limited income. Actually, I was surprised by the fact that bicycles are legally required to be registered, and it took time to register and sign-up for the related insurance as well. Bicycle maintenance is also available everywhere, but extremely expensive compared to just purchasing a used bicycle.

Covered shopping arcades (Shotengai), such as Teramachi and Nishiki Market that are dedicated for pedestrians are also a part of Kyoto daily life, serving traditional food products and Japanese cuisine such as sushi, udon, and ramen, alongside modern stores such as mobile phone shops, and 100 Yen shops. As Muslims have certain religious food restrictions regarding pork, beef, chicken and alcohol, it was a big challenge for me at first. Ever since I arrived in Kyoto, I was interested in Japanese cuisine compatible with Halal food culture that avoids the aforementioned ingredients, but can also include vegetables, sea food, and eggs. In my experience, sushi and tempura were ideal options, in addition to some udon and ramen types and some Asian restaurants that could offer Halal-type foods. One



In the end, I am grateful for my sincere Japanese friends, without whom my dream to live in Japan would have never become a reality.



03 Special Lecture by TABUNKO | NISHIKI Mie

kokoka Kyoto International Community House (nickname kokoka) held special TABUNKO lecture on “Raising children bilingual and the importance of the mother-tongue language” on Sunday, January 23, 2022. The guest speaker was Mr. Hosea Lee Baker. The lecture was one of the events hosted by KYOTO CITY INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION together with TABUNKO. TABUNKO is a group which provides support and resources, as well as safe and comfortable spaces for families to gather and exchange information with one another. Families of all ethnicities and diverse backgrounds who live multiculturally in Japan and many people who were interested in raising children bilingually attended this lecture. The event was really impressive. Everyone was in tune with each other from Mr. Baker’s lecture and his wife Tomomi’s breathtaking translation. Mr. Baker spoke of some realities of their bilingual educational experiences too. And Ms. Michi Ann Saki from TABUNKO hosted the lecture. The atmosphere was relaxed from the beginning to the end. And we got interviewed by The Kyoto Shimbun Newspaper Co., Ltd.



Mr. Baker was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His parents didn’t raise him bilingually, but he had a lot of experience interacting with foreigners when he was a child, which was why he thought it would be beneficial for him to learn many different languages. During the lecture, there were some small group discussions using some model cases. After that, Mr. Baker lectured about the importance of raising children bilingually compared with monolingually from a professional perspective. At the same time, he talked about common misunderstandings and concerns when raising children bilingually. He also spoke about the difficulty of raising children bilingually and some important points from the realities of his own experiences. During the Q&A session, he answered really discreetly based on his real experiences of multicultural families.

By the way, what percentage of people do you think is monolingual (speaking only one language), bilingual (ability to speak two languages), trilingual (speaking three languages fluently), multilingual

(speaking four languages) and polyglots (a person who can speak five or more languages) in the world? According to Mr. Baker’s document, monolingual is only 40%, bilingual is 43%, trilingual is 13%, multilingual is 3%, and polyglots are 1%. Globally, more than half of the population speak more than one language, so, people speaking only one language is rather less than half.

Personally, my parents are Japanese and I don’t have any experience raising children, but this lecture was really interesting for me, and I learned a lot. kokoka is planning to hold a lot of events in the future as well. Why don’t you plan on attending future upcoming kokoka events?



04 Glimpses of Japanese History

(2) Daitoku-ji : the statue of SEN no Rikyu

ISHIHARA Keiko



The main gate of Daitoku-ji

This, however, enraged Hideyoshi (TOYOTOMI Hideyoshi), the ruler of the time. Hideyoshi claimed that everytime he would walk through the gate it was as if Rikyu would step on his head. People were stunned and advised Rikyu to make excuses and beg for his lord's pardon. But he never did, nor gave accounts for his stand. So Hideyoshi had no other choice than order Rikyu to kill himself by *seppuku*.

Hideyoshi was very fond of Rikyu. Many interpretations have been given about this incident, which ended up in the death of Rikyu, but it is still a "mystery".

Rikyu was not only an authority in the world of tea, but was also well versed in political affairs. For a long time, in the quietness of a secluded tea room, he had given political suggestions to Hideyoshi while serving him a cup of green tea.

Had Hideyoshi been somewhat uncomfortable in his heart about the sharp political sense of Rikyu? Did Rikyu firmly mean to show his pride as a man of culture to Hideyoshi, a man of power? Be that as it may, the powerful TOYOTOMIs fell 25 years after this incident. But, the statue of Rikyu is still there, in Kyoto, carefully kept by his descendants in the world of *Sado*, the SEN family.

Sado or Japanese tea ceremony, is one aspect of the traditional Japanese culture, now well known worldwide. It was brought to perfection in the 16th century by tea master Rikyu (SEN no Rikyu).

Born as a son of a rich merchant, Rikyu was very much into practicing Zen and had a deep relationship with Daitoku-ji, a major Zen temple in Kyoto. As the temple was in need of funds to repair its main gate, Rikyu made a big donation. As a token of appreciation, the chief priest of Daitoku-ji ordered a statue of Rikyu to be made and placed on the balcony of the new gate.



The statue of Rikyu



TOYOTOMI Hideyoshi

05 kokoPlaza Letter

"Worksite Japanese - Basic Edition Japanese Communication for Working Foreigners"

Author: The Association for Overseas Technical Cooperation and Sustainable Partnerships

Publisher: Tokyo, 3A Corporation, 2021



The worksites have peculiar customs and manners which are different from schools or regional society. For the foreigners who are working or hoping to work in Japan, you can study Japanese needed in worksites. This book is also the study material which you can study the cultural knowledge and ability to work in Japanese companies.

You can also download and use video and audio study materials, so that you can imagine the scene of works and learn Japanese which you can use right away. This book also has the vocabulary list with translation in English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai, Indonesian. In the same series, "Advanced Edition" and "Wordbook" is also available. We recommend to use them.

kokoPlaza's introduction

In the space of books "kokoPlaza" on the second floor of kokoka, the books which introduce the culture of Japan or foreign countries, the books to know about life in Japan (law, visa, education, parenting, disaster prevention, etc.), the books for study of Japanese language and so on are available. We hope you will make use of them.

[Hours] 9:30 ~ 17:00

Closed on Mondays, last day of every month, new year holidays

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*Books are not available for check-out.

06 International Interaction Through Japanese Calligraphy Exhibition

FURUTA Tomiyoshi

The exhibition of Japanese calligraphy was held at kokoka Kyoto International House, jointly with Kyoto City International Foundation in the middle of last fall. Foreigners attended it as well.

The students, taught by calligrapher Mr. Mori, made calligraphy work and exhibited them to be appreciated. Among his students, there are foreigners



from Vietnam and the Philippines too. Taking this exhibition opportunity, they brought their work to the House, showing their daily practice result. We were specifically amazed by how they mastered and showed calligraphy principles, regardless of their short practice. Supposedly, they refrained from going outside because of COVID-19 all this while, but visiting the House with their family must have made them feel refreshed.

As many as 149 people totally visited. Practicing calligraphy is to form art, learn Chinese characters and calm our minds. It was transferred from East Asia to Japan and developed even to culture. Although many of foreigners who exhibited this time would someday return to their homeland, don't forget international interaction through calligraphy.

07 Seeking volunteers to proofread English articles

FURUTA Tomiyoshi

"Life in Kyoto", a division of the Kyoto City International Foundation, is currently seeking volunteers to proofread English language articles. The volunteers are expected to be interested in culture, life and nature of Kyoto and will be required to proofread English articles every three months. If interested, please feel free to contact us through the following QR code .



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