

外国人研究職員の 印象記

A sizzling summer in Japan, in IMS

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What a tricky challenge to summarize 6 months of full experience in Japan in IMS! Where to start?

My first time in Japan was already 4 years ago in Okazaki. I indeed had the chance to join Prof. T. Taira's group (IMS - Laser Research Center) from 2006 to 2009 for 3 weeks each year. So, when Prof. T. Taira told me about the opportunity to ask for a visiting scientist position in his group, I did not hesitate half a microsecond: I got a sabbatical half-year to experience 6 wonderful months in IMS, from June to November. Right now, just back to France, by writing this letter, my memory is still full of all the Japanese images I was immersed in during my stay.

Japan is an amazing destination for French people, not only because of the distance (about 10 000 km) but mainly because of its attractive culture. When I was at the high school, my French teacher called us the “Goldorak” (UFOロボ グレンダイザー) generation: this Japanese animated series was extremely famous in late 70's- early 80's among all the French kids. But, for sure, at this time, I didn't know that this animated series was Japanese, as well as so many other animated series that followed. In 6 months, you get step by step immersed in the way of life of the country you are living. In my case, I realized that some images I was seeing in Japan were familiar to me, putting me back to my childhood. Part of this Japanese atmosphere, actually promoted by animated manga from my childhood, was just coming to reality under my eyes. A few examples: the traditional Japanese clothes, the typical and tiny restaurants where you are face to face with the chef, the urban environment - sometimes mixing modern and traditional buildings-, the excitement of big cities - by comparison, Paris could just sound a village -, or the spectacular and fascinating spectacle of seasons and nature. A kind of summary of all these impressions was the “hanabi” festival, when Okazaki became a spot where so many people dressed in kimonos converged, making their path among all the booths stacked along the river, before to enjoy the giant firework.

This experience was enriched with some sightseeing. For instance, I had the chance to visit such gorgeous places like Miyashima, Nikko where temples and nature are just celebrated



altogether, or to do hiking in the sunny rice fields of Kibiji area (near Okayama) and in the hillside narrow streets of Onomichi. As a French guy, I cannot speak about Japan without mentioning its cuisine too: so rich in taste! So many wonderful experiences! It was just a pleasure to learn (and to taste) about the specialities that each region can offer to you in Japan. If I will always regret not to speak Japanese, I must confess that most of the Japanese words I learned for 6 months are related to Japanese food!

I would tend to say that Japan, as an island, has known over time how to preserve its culture, its specificity and its identity, despite the “tsunami” of the current globalisation. My only wish is that this fact will last as long as possible, that is to say, forever!

Beyond, these personal impressions, my professional experience was very rewarding and fruitful too. A visiting scientist is a privileged position, free of most administrative and educational duties, so that you can centre only on research. But IMS offers to you much more. As a mirror of Japan, everything is perfectly organized and the material conditions for work are just ideal. Moreover, in Prof. Taira's group, I only met nice, helpful and competent people. Secretary staff was always very swift to answer my everyday life questions, from administrative to social or cooking subjects! Researchers were always available to help me in my experiments and to give me invaluable advices: how much time I saved thanks to their help! Moreover, I had the chance to meet and exchange with researchers from many foreign countries: Romania, India and China. What an extraordinary melting pot to learn from each other! At last but not least, I size the opportunity of this letter to express my gratefulness to Prof. Taira for our discussions, his passion for research and his ability to motivate people and to pull them to their best.

Definitively, as you may guess, I have become a Japan lover! Even if I miss many people stayed in Japan, I want to communicate them part of this passion that animated me for 6 months: this letter is not a definitive farewell!