A Year in Okazaki: From Osaka to a Calmer Life

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In April 2024, I left Osaka, where I had lived for four years, and joined Professor Ehara's group at the Institute for Molecular Science in Okazaki. I have now been living in Okazaki for over a year. The contrast between these two cities has left a deep impression on me, both in terms of daily life and atmosphere.

Osaka is a vibrant, bustling metropolis full of energy and noise. Life there moves quickly—trains are always crowded, the streets are full of people, and even late at night, the city never truly sleeps. I enjoyed my time in Osaka very much, especially the convenience, food, and lively culture. However, after living in Okazaki, I have come to appreciate a very different kind of lifestyle.

Compared to Osaka, Okazaki feels calm and relaxed. The pace of life here is slower, and the environment is quieter. People seem to move with less urgency, and there is a stronger sense of personal space. It is easier to focus, reflect, and enjoy small moments in everyday life. For someone engaged in research like myself, this peaceful atmosphere has helped me concentrate more deeply on my work while maintaining a better balance with personal time.

One of the most memorable aspects of Okazaki is its natural beauty, especially in spring. In April, the cherry blossoms bloom all across the city, creating a stunning pink landscape. I was especially moved by the view around the Institute for Molecular Science, where I currently work. The path lined with Sakura trees near the research institute becomes a magical place during the Hanami season. The petals falling gently in the breeze give the area a dreamlike quality, reminding me to pause and appreciate the moment.

In addition to its natural charm, Okazaki is rich in history and cultural heritage. It is famously known as the birthplace of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the Edo shogunate. The city is home to Okazaki Castle, which is surrounded by a beautiful park that also becomes a popular cherry blossom viewing spot each spring. Walking through the castle grounds offers a quiet reflection on Japan's feudal past and provides a scenic escape in the heart of the city.

Other nearby attractions such as the Ieyasu and Mikawa Bushi Museum, the Daiju-ji Temple, and the river-side walking paths along the Yahagi River add to the city's peaceful yet historically rich atmosphere. Living so close to these places allows me to enjoy small weekend explorations that are both educational and relaxing.

During this time, I have not only adjusted to a new city and work environment but also received tremendous support from Professor Ehara and colleagues. Their guidance, kindness, and encouragement have helped me settle in smoothly, both in research and in daily life.

Living Simply, Thinking Deeply: My Life in Okazaki and IMS

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It has been two years since I left the snowy city of Sapporo and began my new chapter in Okazaki. Life here is remarkably comfortable—blessed with pleasant weather, efficient public transportation, and speedy delivery services. While winter in Okazaki lacks the dramatic beauty of Sapporo's snow-covered landscapes, the convenience of snow-free mobility allows me to move freely and easily. Living in Okazaki has also drawn me closer to the rhythm of Japanese society. Its geographic proximity to Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto opens up a rich variety of travel options and cultural exposure. Weekend escapes to nearby coastal towns like Gamagori have become small rituals—especially for catching sunsets by the sea.

Another rewarding aspect of life here is the international environment. At the Institute for Molecular Science (IMS), I've had the pleasure of working alongside researchers from countries such as France, Germany, Vietnam, Thailand, and India. Our cultural exchange is more than academic—we often gather at the Mishima Lodge for international potlucks, where we share meals, stories, and traditions from our diverse backgrounds. Weekly activities like badminton have enriched my social experience and offered moments of balance between work and life. Through these gatherings, I've made friends from other labs, which adds new color to my daily routine.

Since joining Professor Yamamoto's group two years ago, my research has focused on organic spintronics, particularly a newly emerging phenomenon known as **altermagnetism**. This third class of magnetism breaks time-reversal symmetry while maintaining an antiferromagnetic spin structure. As a result, altermagnets can host spin-split bands via exchange interactions, enabling the generation of spin currents without relying on spin-orbit coupling. This novel property places altermagnetism at the frontier of future spintronic applications. Under the kind mentorship of Professor Yamamoto and Assistant Professor Sato, I've gained a deep appreciation for organic spintronics and experimental spin detection techniques. My colleague Goto-kun has also played a vital role in helping me understand Japanese customs and in adapting smoothly to daily life here.

The life I've built in Okazaki and at IMS is not only scientifically stimulating but personally enriching. I'm grateful for the calm, simple, and intellectually vibrant environment that allows me to grow both as a researcher and as an individual. I genuinely feel that I'm living a fulfilling life—one where science, simplicity, and human connection coexist in quiet harmony.