



International Exchange Center
Kyoto Institute of Technology

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Towards Achieving Better Quality International Exchange and Research through Communication with Former International Students

KUNUGI, Shigeru

Director of the International Exchange Center
Vice-President

KIT has accepted over 1,000 international students from about 60 countries in the world. Most of them are still working and/or studying hard in their respective home countries, and some are playing important roles in their respective fields. At the same time, we have lost contact with some of our former international students. I am somewhat sad about this as all of these students are also important potential promoters of KIT worldwide. Their experience at, and opinions and evaluation of KIT are an important resource for our future international exchange programs.

In the light of the lack of contact with some former international students, the International Exchange Center has designed some new programs to ensure that KIT is promoted everywhere by everyone that has studied or undertaken research at KIT. One already successful program is this magazine. Former international students appear in every issue and our university e-mail address is shown on the cover of the magazine so that people everywhere can easily contact us. Another current related project is to establish a global international student/researcher network. Three years ago we invited former international students to come to Japan and form an assembly that discussed a wide range of KIT-related topics. Just after that assembly, we founded an office in Korea for our Korean international students. In addition, we have key stations in China, Vietnam, Thailand and Taiwan managed by former KIT international students. They mainly use the

internet to communicate with each other and to track down former students that we have lost touch with. We send these offices and key stations official KIT information regularly and they then send it on to people in their country.

In addition to this, KIT is an active participant in Japan Education Fairs, organized by JASSO (Japan Student Services Organization), through which we advertise the university to potential students. During these kinds of fairs we often meet former international students. We always ask them to help KIT by assisting us in the collection of information and opinions about what we do and offer.

We also think it is important to expand the field of exchange through research. At present, KIT sends teachers and graduate students to get involved with partner organizations through the Engineer Training and Research Innovation Program (ETRIP). As a result, participants in this program are often accepted at KIT as *international students*, and through this an industry-academic alliance is promoted with local company researchers. We would like to achieve a 'positive cycle' which is advantageous to everyone involved.

The International Exchange Center combines both international student communication and research exchange in such a way that the overall quality of international exchange at KIT is constantly being improved. In terms of accepting and caring for international students, KIT provides a level of personal attention to each individual student and an excellent educational environment that many larger universities are difficult to give.

KIT International Academic Exchange Club Key Station

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Our research is focused on the history of Japanese architecture. We are actively involved in the study of the technical specifications of architecture built in Japan's modern era, and the preservation and appreciation of historical Japanese architecture. The latter theme is the basis for the 'preservation of historical scenery projects' which are currently attracting much attention in Japan. Specifically we are creating materials to allow the average Japanese person to understand the value of old buildings and how to assess preservation methods based on local characteristics.

For example, we have worked on Tango Chirimen textile weaving household in Kaya Town (present-day Yosano Town), and a Funaya fisherman's house in Ine Town. Both buildings are in officially designated 'historical scenery districts' located on the Tango Peninsula in the northwest corner of Kyoto Prefecture.

Learning About Historical Japanese Architecture in Kyoto

HYUGA, Susumu

Head of the Undergraduate Program of Architecture and Design
Professor
Japanese Architecture Laboratory



The international students in my class are all highly interested in Japanese culture and they are keen students of the Japanese language. Their enthusiasm is reflected in their research themes. For example, a French student's research was focused on engawa (Japanese verandah). For Japanese people, the engawa is a special part of a traditional house. It is neither inside nor outside of the house and thus is very representative of the characteristics of Japanese

Japanese students except for problems related to language. I am occasionally surprised by international students that already know a lot about Japanese culture, and some have even acquired traditional Japanese manners and ways of speaking that are hardly used by the Japanese today. One student always carried their own chopsticks and never used disposal ones because it is 'mottainai' (a waste of resources). I am always extremely impressed with these kinds of behavior.

I would like to address one message to students who are interested in studying with us at KIT. And that is that Kyoto is the perfect place to study historical architecture. The city itself is a living library of learning opportunities and examples. Some researchers say that just walking in Kyoto results in learning. If you want to learn about traditional Japanese architecture, please join us at KIT. Let's walk through this city together and discover our personal interpretations of 'Japan'.





The Beauty of Spring and Summer in the Old Capital

The city of Kyoto, so long the Imperial capital of Japan, has long been home to a people that have created amazing beauty and also preserved so much tradition and culture from generation to generation. The seasonal beauty of the Old Capital and its extraordinary heritage has always made a big impression on heart of people. For hundreds of years, the people of Kyoto have been proudly offering their treasures, rituals and festivals to the world.

On May 15th, during the warm, fresh days of late spring, the wonderful stage for the Aoi Festival is set in Kyoto. This annual festival, one of Japan's oldest, is intimately linked to Kamigamo Shrine and Shimogamo Shrine. The history of the festival began in the late 6th century. The festival often appears in works of classic Japanese literature, like the Tale of Genji. For a long time 'the festival' in Kyoto referred to the Aoi Festival. Today, the festival is organized much in the same way as it was in ancient times. About 500 people wearing gorgeous Heian-period Imperial clothing form the procession. It travels along an 8-km route: from Kyoto Imperial Palace to Kamigamo Shrine via Shimogamo Shrine.

The other ancient festival, the Gion Festival, is said to be developed in in the Heian Period about 1,100 years ago. The festival lasts for one month starting from the Kippu-iri ritual on July 1st, and ending with the Nagoshi Festival on the 31st. The first ritual offers the prayer for safety of the festival, while the second is held to pray for health and good fortune in the second half of the year. The highlight of this grand event is the Yama-boko Grand Parade on 17th. The 32 giant floats called hoko or yama, are gorgeously decorated and rolled through the main streets of the city. On the nights before the grand parade (the 14th, 15th and 16th), the floats are lit-up with lanterns on the streets. Hundreds of thousands of people come to enjoy this summer festival and the sound of traditional festival music called Gion bayashi that can be heard everywhere in Kyoto's downtown area.



Let's Walk the Academic 'Silk Road' Together



Dr. Gu Guoda

Professor
Chief of the International Economics
Department, College of Economics,
Zhejiang University
(Graduated in 1995 from the Division of
Applied Science for Functionality,
Graduate School of Science and
Technology)

Life is like flowing water that patiently flows and turns and falls and finally ends its journey in the great ocean. My experience at the

Kyoto Institute of Technology (KIT) was absolutely the most shining period in my life flow. I am proud of my time in Kyoto, an ancient capital with a rich natural environment. And I am proud of the over six years I studied at KIT, a unique academic institution with over 100 years of history.

My opportunity to come to KIT began in July 1987 when my future teachers, Mr. Tsuguo MATSUMOTO and Mr. Minoru HAMAZAKI visited Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, China. When I met them, I was working as an assistant professor in the Sericulture Department. I told them that I wanted to study silk thread business management, and the Chinese silk trade from the standpoint of China's increasingly open market economy. They graciously accept my idea and, over time, paved the way for me to study at KIT, in April 1989, as a government sponsored foreign student of the Japanese Ministry of Education. For me, this is obviously the most important moment in my life as a researcher. It was just an accidental encounter but as a result I was able to study in Japan. I am very glad to have had this opportunity.

I have many good memories of the time when I was studying

in Kyoto. Even today, I often remember the annual international student study tour and the social gatherings hosted by the president of KIT. The annual international student study tour was really the best opportunity I ever had to learn about Japanese culture and social customs. In that connection, I would really like to thank Mr. Tsutomu YOSHII, who was in charge of international students, and the other staff members for their efforts. In social gatherings hosted by the president of KIT, we were able to strengthen our international relationships just as KIT had encouraged us to do. I really hope KIT continues these excellent events for many years to come.

During my six years at KIT, I studied at the Institute of Industrial Economics and Management. Thanks to the instruction I received from teachers and special access I had to the academic facilities of Kyoto University located next door, I was able to take advantage of a wide range of excellent academic knowledge sources. In those six years, I published six theses in different academic journals. Based on these theses, I was able to complete my doctor's thesis on 'An Economic Analysis of the Structures upon Supply and Demand on the Chinese Raw Silk Trade and the World's Raw Silk Market From 1842 to 1949'. Finally in March 1995, I received my PhD. This was the wonderful beginning of my academic 'Silk Road'.

Eleven years have passed since I graduated from KIT and returned to China. In the past eleven years the Chinese economy has leapt forward and so has my academic career. Largely due to the education I received at KIT, I am now the Chief of the International Economics Department, College of Economics, Zhejiang University, one of China's most exclusive universities. Today, I am still walking down my academic 'Silk Road' in the field of international economy and trading. At the same time, I continue to make great efforts to promote academic exchange and friendship between Japan and China, as well doing whatever I can do to make KIT an even better international institution. I hope I continue to have your sincere support in these endeavors. Thank you very much.

My 7 years in Kyoto



Muhammad Izham Bin Ismail

Division of Mechanical and System
Engineering, Graduate School of Science
and Technology

I began to think about studying in Japan when I was only an elementary school student. Actually I didn't know much about Japan at that time. Indeed, my fantasies about Japan were full of mistakes. However, I couldn't help thinking about Japan somehow and studied very hard every day. I didn't know if

I ever would actually make it to Japan or not, but I just didn't stop thinking about it. When I graduated from high school, I was able to enter a Japanese prep school that would help me to enter Japan without major difficulty. Slowly, the preparations I needed to do to visit Japan were completed. The classes at the prep school were very difficult. I studied the Japanese language 8 hours a day every day for two years. I can still clearly remember the day I arrived in Japan. It was really cold though it was already spring. One of my senior classmates told me I would get used to the cold in Japan but the cold is certainly one thing that I have never gotten used to.

The international students from Malaysia studying in Japan are usually Malay people and the Malays do not have any kanji characters in their writing system. Actually, many Malays don't know anything about kanji. Naturally, the first and biggest problem I had in Japan was the language. I was shocked that my hard days of studying at the prep school were nowhere near enough. From my first day in Japan, I began to study hard once more. I can not help admiring myself, when I look back now and remember how hard I studied. I would like Japanese people to realize how much effort international students make everyday when they are in Japan. I would like to ask them to acknowledge our tremendous efforts and to support us even more in our studies and daily life. I do not mean financial support. What is much more important is to support us by teaching us social manners and customs, including how to study in Japan, how the university system works, how to communicate well with teachers, and so on.

Studying in Japan has made a huge difference in my life. Everything I learned and experienced in Japan has really had a big influence on my life. Because of my father's business, my family often moved from place to place in Malaysia, and didn't stay long in any one place. I lived in Kyoto for 7 years, and this is the longest period I have ever spent in one place. I can say I know more about Kyoto than I do about Malaysia. In a way, you could say Japan and Kyoto are more like home for me. And I deeply hope, in my heart, that Kyoto will always be my hometown. So far, my memories of the Kyoto Institute of Technology, Kyoto, and Japan are the best memories of my life . . .



Cuisines of the World & Mochi-tsuki (rice-cake making) Day

On December 27th, Cuisines of the World & Mochi-tsuki Day was organized by the International Exchange Center at the KIT university cafeteria (Ars). The day was conceived as a way to deepen mutual communication between Japanese students and international students. During the course of the day, KIT international students tried making mochi (rice cakes) which is normally a special end-of-the-year event in Japan, while Japanese students enjoyed international cuisine prepared by international students from all over the world.

With the help of experienced staff members, many of the international students and Japanese students experienced making mochi for the first time. It looked easy but when they tried pounding the rice with the big wooden hammer, it wasn't so easy! In the end, good mochi was made and it tasted great.

The kitchen of the cafeteria was reserved on that day and students from Iran, China, Korea and Vietnam prepared a variety of their home dishes. Everyone enjoyed the great range of international dishes until the plates were empty and everyone couldn't help saying 'Yummy!' over and over.

Needless to say, the organizers took special care to ensure the conditions were hygienic, and they gave special instruction to all the participants to clean their hands before touching the food ingredients.

Over 120 people joined the event including international students, Japanese students, university faculty members and staff members, as well as the President of KIT and other executive members of the university. Everyone enjoyed this special day.



4 KIT Students Experienced Short-term Study in Italy by Scholarship from the Italian Government

The Italian Government Scholarship Program for Foreign Students is advertised every spring on the web page of the Institute for Italian Culture. This scholarship, which is based on a very flexible and unique study plan, requires the candidate of an Italian host institution to choose a period of study abroad and a research theme. Candidate selection is based on oral examinations of Italian (or English) language ability and technical readiness. In 2006, four students in their first year of the KIT Ceramic Physics Laboratory Master's program (Kazutake KITAMURA, Masayasu HIGASHINO, Naohide FURUKAWA and Takako MORIKAWA) qualified for the scholarship. These students spent about two months, in the autumn of 2006, studying at the Italian Research Center for Ceramics Science and Technology (ISTEC) in Faenza (in Italy's Emilia-Romagna region). This research center is part of the Italian National Research Council (CNR) in Rome. The CNR and KIT have established a joint laboratory project over the past several years, presently directed by Prof. G. Pezzotti. The research themes of the four students were all focused on ceramic physics and mechanics. However, in addition to their research, even during their short-term stay, students were able to enjoy a wide range of cultural exchange. For example, they visited many famous historical places and beautiful natural locations in Italy. During their stay abroad, these students may have also found a clear future direction for their work and life in the historical city of Kyoto.



Dance Lessons at the KIT International House (Marikouji Kaikan)

Since December 2006, international students living in the KIT International House (Marikouji Kaikan) and Japanese students have been taking dance lessons on Saturday nights. The teacher is a Vietnamese international student, Nguyen Trung Dung. He is teaching four kinds of standard dance styles, including the tango, and four Latin dance styles, including the samba. Most of the participants are residents of KIT International House. They are from many countries including Vietnam, Germany, China, Mexico, Thailand, Indonesia, Switzerland, Brunei, and Japan. The Marikouji Kaikan dance evening has been very successful as an international exchange event.

International Planning Division

This division deals with all the administrative aspects of the International Exchange Center. Please feel free to contact us.

Join the KIT International Academic Exchange Club!

This club is a global network for international academic exchange. Its members include current and alumni international students, researchers, and members of KIT academic exchange partner institutions. The club was founded for KIT to contribute to academic development and promote science and technology in international society. For detailed membership information, please visit the KIT website:

http://www.kit.ac.jp/english/01/01_080000.html