

Kyoto University Asian Studies Unit Program Completion Report [Student]

1. Report

Please write a report on your study experience, addressing the matters listed below. Your report should be more than 500 words in English. Matters to include in your report: (a) Academic outcomes (how participation in this program affected your motivation, university study and international understanding, and what interests and plans you developed for further study in the future); (b) Your experiences in Kyoto University; (c) The content of the program; (d) The impact of the program on your career plans.

The Logic of State-led Internationalization of Popular Culture and Soft Power: An Empirical Research on Youth Consumption of Japanese Popular Culture in East Asia

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Academic Outcomes

My short-term study program at Kyoto University culminated in a seminar presentation of my research work organized by my host professor. A number of studies on Japanese popular culture's impact on Japan's soft power seem to have a preoccupation with the agent-based interpretation of Nye's IR concept whereby policy level and popular discourses, state-industries partnership or intervention, and inventory of a state's soft power resources are mostly the subjects of analyses. My study digresses from this inclination by undertaking an empirical approach on the structure-based interpretation of soft power. The main objective was to draw insights from the recipient context of Japanese popular culture to gain a deeper understanding of its impact on soft power. Using the Asian Student Survey datasets of 2008 and 2013, cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses are employed to accomplish two things. First is to discern the contemporary trends and patterns of consumption of Japanese popular culture in selected East Asian countries in the context of emerging challengers of its dominance in the region. Second is to investigate the correlation of Japanese popular culture consumption (or lack thereof as argued by most skeptics) to the "realized" soft power, i.e., attractive power. Analysis reveals theoretical, methodological, and policy implications especially on how the impact of popular culture on soft power can and should be measured by scholars and policymakers alike.

Before the seminar presentation, the library resources of Kyoto University and Kansai-kan of the National Diet Library in Seika Town, Kyoto proved invaluable. The books, journals, and policy papers helped me develop further my review of related literature and kept me abreast with the recent policy discussions and scholarly works about the internationalization efforts of the government and the quest of scholars to investigate the relatively nascent concept of soft power and its relationship with contemporary popular culture. I was also introduced by my host professor to several scholars and graduate students who are also engaged in the field. I had the rare opportunity to discuss with them the trajectory of my research and to solicit their opinions and suggestions which helped me strengthen further the theoretical framework and review of related literature of my research. I also had the opportunity to visit key places in Japan popularly known as centers of youth subculture. These include Nakano Broadway, Akihabara, Harajuku, Shibuya, and Setagaya's

Ultraman Shopping Street in Tokyo. I was able to visit the Cool Japan Fund office in Roppongi as well. The establishment of the Cool Japan Fund Office can be considered a milestone in Japanese government's efforts to internationalize/localize Japanese popular culture. I also had the chance to visit Kyoto International Manga Museum and gained insights on the history of manga production in Japan since the Edo period.

My Experience in Kyoto University

I am deeply indebted to the following professors and staff of Kyoto University Graduate School of Letters and Kyoto University Asian Studies Unit for making my short-term study smooth and fruitful. To Professor Asato who arranged my participation to several activities (e.g., seminar presentations, field visit, engagement with other Kyoto University Professors); to Professor Björn-Ole Kamm who graciously allowed me to participate in his seminar class and spared time for me to discuss with him my research topic and provide insights, opinions, and suggestions to further improve my research; and to Ms. Mukai, Ms. Kurata, Ms. Kotoura, and Ms Hama of OPIX, Graduate School of Letters, JASSO, and KUASU who helped me with the necessary documentary requirements and flight arrangement prior to the commencement of my program. They also helped me beforehand to secure my temporary Kyoto University ID and Library Card. My transition period would have not been smooth if not for their excellent support. Because of their overwhelming assistance, I settled in quickly and was able to do the things I planned to do on the first week of my stay (e.g., start my library research work).

Content of the Program

The short-term study program under the Kyoto University Asian Studies Unit is designed for independent research endeavors. In other words, there were no required courses that I had to take and I had the much needed freedom to engage in activities that I see fit in completing my research work. Notwithstanding this, my host university professor, Professor Asato, had been very helpful in introducing me to professors and experts in my field of interest, and inviting me to seminars that were related to my research interests. I had the opportunity to participate in one of the seminar classes of Professor Björn-Ole Kamm which was about popular culture in Japan (convenience store as subculture). His students presented their research findings in class and I was able to share my insights on their topics. Migration and masculinity are also my research interests and I was very honored to have been invited to the field work at a junior high school in Kyoto to meet with Japanese Filipino Children (JFC) who are at their early integration phase. I learned about the school's integration program where JFCs are encouraged to treasure their Filipino heritage and look forward to their future as members of the Japanese society. Most of the days I stayed at the Kyoto University libraries and graduate student laboratory but I also had the opportunity to visit sites and places of youth subculture in Japan during my free time.

(d) The impact of the program on your career plans.

The short-term study program has been a very important reminder for me that the best place to study for an aspiring Japanologist is Japan. Experiential learning proves invaluable as I become witness to what I am actually studying. The program also helped me achieve progress in my thesis writing. Upon going back to my home university, I am of the opinion that I will be ready for my thesis defense.

*The information you provide may be included in Re-discovering Japan Project reports, or published in printed materials on our website in pages dealing with the outcomes of programs offered by the Asian Studies Unit and/or Kyoto University. Please ensure that your report only includes content which is publishable in light of privacy considerations and the need to safeguard personal information. Also note that depending on the publication format, we may need to edit parts of your report.