

Re-exploring Kyoto

**Chau Hoi Ching,
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
July 31st, 2016 – August 13th, 2016**

Japan is often perceived as an ideal spot for tourism and vacations. Especially for Kyoto, it is a place that full of modern and historical architecture and fascinating designs. It is an open secret that people love to travel to Kyoto during their vacations. When I departed on July, I even did not know the exact location of Kyoto University. However, this trip provided various perspectives of Kyoto, which made me perceive Japan other than a tourist spot.

We had five lectures about liberal arts subjects in Kyoto University. The professors came from different departments, and they had their own fields and interests. We have attended an introductory lecture about chimpanzees from Professor Tetsuro Matsuzawa, lecture about food, environment and agriculture industry from Professor Naoshi Kondo. We also understood more about Kyoto from history, art and relations between space and politics from Professor Shikiko Yukawa, Professor Niels van Steenpaal and Professor Souchi Naraoka.

On August 9, we went to visit Miyama Town. It was amazing to see the thatched houses in this ancient town. The tour guide told us that the roof of each thatched house was repaired every twenty years. Kyoto is long famous for its local vegetables, which is called Shojin-Ryori. We have picked spinach, carrots on our own, and even cooked them by ourselves. As being a girl grown up in a city, I would never imagined what a farmer's life was like. We also went to Shichijo-kanshundo (七條甘春堂), and made Japanese-style sweets with Kyoto University students. Once I started to pick up the sweets, I immediately understood that why Japanese sweets are expensive. Not only were they hand-made, but also with detailed and quality products. On other day we visited Nabel company. I really appreciated by the fact that the CEO of Nabel company Kunio Nambu, actually welcomed us in person. He even gave a presentation about history and career plan of Nobel company. I was so surprised at the same time flattered, when he gave us his business cards, and thanked us to be here. Mr. Kunio once said that, "We are not trying to make the biggest company, but the best one."

One thing impressed me the most is Japanese's passion and persistence for their lives. Many people might enter universities just to seek a high-paid job. Some would choose a major in order to get a secure job, rather than seeking their dreams. Yet attending the Kyoto University's lectures, lots of professors really focus on their passions, instead of following others' paths. Professor Tetsuro Matsuzawa spent his whole life studying chimpanzees, not because it will bring him fortune but merely based on his personal interest. Professor Naoshi Kondo studies agriculture industry due to his family background and passions, and he hopes to contribute the local agriculture industry. In Hong Kong, we often achieve something for our own sake, but not for happiness of others. Yet for Japanese, their motives are simple and straightforward. They merely want to study what they love. Majority had done the same things, but only those persists succeed. I think this life philosophy is very inspiring for my future career.

Meanwhile, I particularly enjoyed cultural exchange between students of Hong Kong, Japan, Beijing, Taiwan and South Korea. We often talked about differences between each place and university. And it was surprising to know that most of us had a lot in common, in terms of campus life, youth culture and so on. I remembered I had conversation with students from Kyoto University, Peking University and National Taiwan University. We talked about our cities, students' daily lives and even daily expenses. It was such a treasurable experience for me to comprehend their concepts of values, as well as stating my thoughts and doubts about them.

Although the summer school only lasted for 14 days, it deepened my understanding of Kyoto and Japanese. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Kyoto University. It was such a treasurable and fruitful experience for me to explore Japanese culture. Not only had it provided a basic knowledge of Japanese, but also wide varieties of subjects I have never encountered before. I would also like to thank students of Kyoto University for accompanying us throughout the trip. We even became friends, and still keeps contact through social media. I will always cherish the

time we spent together.