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京都大学
Paris and Kyoto

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As time passes, international exchange between different universities is increasing, and foreign students are becoming more commonly seen on campus. When I was a student on the 50s and 60s, we could not leave Japan freely and foreign countries were an unknown world. Today the world has become smaller. But the experience we get on the actual site of any foreign university makes us realize that a great distance exists between our university and universities abroad.

In 1959, I went to France for a few years on a French Government scholarship and studied at l’École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. The main campus of this school is located on the old site of the convent of the Petits Augustins on the left river side (rive gauche) of the Seine near to the Louvre. I was received in one of the workshops traditionally called “ateliers extérieurs”. This atelier was under the supervision of two patron-architects, Edouard Albert, a well-known architect of the University of Jussieu (Université Paris 7), and Jean Hervé and it occupied the fifth floor of a building situated on rue Jacques Callot in a very popular area filled with cafés, boutiques, and galleries. It was set apart from the main campus area, where there were “ateliers intérieurs”. Teaching methods were an authoritarian apprenticeship system, based on the seniority of the patron professors, atelier master, senior pupils down to new comers. It was a complete and radical training to form a person as an architect in full sense of the word. There was no geographically defined campus for this school, and its real educational environment coincided with so-called “Quartier Latin”, a well known student district of the “rive gauche”. After the visit student revolt of May 1968, the architecture department separated from l’École des Beaux-Arts and moved to the peripheral zones of Paris, and regrouped into eight “unités pédagogiques”, that is eight schools of architecture. The destination sites are each in the downtown center of diverse districts and they occupy mostly old buildings urgently rehabilitated. Most students and teachers from the atelier of Hervé-Albert went to 144 avenue de Flandre to establish the new school of architecture qualified as l’Unité Pédagogique n. 6, in the semi-industrial waste lands of 19th arrondissement of Paris, where originally there stood a church and two cemeteries. Not far away, the former location of a slaughterhouse and mills had been renovated. There is now the new vast modern urban park of la Villette. Nevertheless the district of Rue de Flandres still retains its popular atmosphere on the outskirts of Paris.

Without any geographically defined campus, all these newly established schools of architecture are located in isolated urban patches and function just as local urban facilities. Especially in the case of the architecture school of la Villette, the campus seems to function only as an educational meeting place between students, teachers, researchers, and architects. It probably represents an extreme example of a completely open school. The fact that the school site has a marvelous atmosphere gives a special character distinct from the neighboring quarter. In this environment, over the academic years, students often follow several advanced disciplines in different university institutions, such as history, archeology, geography, anthropology, sociology, town-planning, etc. in which some of them defend their doctoral thesis. This type of educational environment constitutes a kind of network all over the city and encompasses the daily life of students and teachers. It acts as another “Quartier Latin” at which all kinds of advanced university study and research takes palce.

The voluntary exchange of students and researchers between UP-6 and the Department of Architecture began around 1964 with financial aide from the Architectural Research Foundation (Kentiku-Kenkyû-Kyôkai). At that time after five years stay in Paris, I was employed as an assistant at Kyoto University. In March 1977, the official contract for an exchange of students between these two institutions was signed by Mr. Claude Thoret, the then-director of UP-6 and by Professor Ryôzô Tôei, dean of the Faculty of Engineering in Kyoto University. Every year the Japanese Ministry of Education is approached for scholarship funds. The purpose is to allow annual exchange of one student from Paris with one student from Kyoto. Until now, 23 students from the Department of Architecture went on to complete Masters or Doctorates. Sixteen students from Paris came to Kyoto University. The stay in Paris for Japanese students helped their advanced master or doctorate degrees. Some from UP-6 became teachers at UP-6 after obtaining their doctorate in Japan or in France and others continue to do research at CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique), etc. Some researchers benefiting from this exchange actively published in international seminars. The main interests of French students are focused on the principles of traditional Japanese architecture and culture; modern and contemporary Japanese architecture, which are well known to them; or landscape and environmental design problems, popular areas of interest between Japan and France. Students from Kyoto University are generally interested in historical city formation in France, works of modern European architects, methodology of urbanism, and historical studies of French architecture.

In 1985 Professor Philippe Boudon, one of the leading theoreticians in UP-6, invited me to attend an international

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What is it like, to live in a foreign country like Japan? That’s what I am usually asked when I return to Germany. The answer is simple: it’s not so different from home. One is got in his work, his salary, friends, hobbies etc., BUT... and then usually a long list follows, including all the apparent small differences compared with home. Things like ATM’s that take a "nap" during the night, the great variety in the meaning of the word 'yes', or just trains that really are on time, not to mention sales clerks who smile while saying ‘Welcome (Irasshaimase)!’. (In Germany, the customer has sometimes the status of a ‘disturbing event’). Of course, the biggest gap is the language. While one can more or less survive in Europe just by using English, it is unavoidable in Japan to learn the language, especially for those who are here for the long term. Just a little bit of Japanese goes far, an experience I especially learned during my first trip to Japan in 1995.

At that time, I was taking part in a student exchange program organized by the Department of Chemical Engineering, Kyoto University. I worked as a trainee at the R&D Center of Kuraray Co., a company located in Kurashiki, Okayama Prefecture. Though Kurashiki is a city of more than 400,000 inhabitants, it can be considered countryside. The first thing I noticed on my arrival was the near absence of any roman letters, therefore I worked on the Japanese alphabet and Kanji as well as some key sentences. The success was great: I didn’t mix up male and female toilets, but here in Kyoto... I feared this.

So you might suppose nothing could surprise me when I came to Japan a second time. Well, I already experienced those ‘first impressions’ you get when arriving in Japan, taking the Haruka-Express to Kyoto and just looking outside the window. Also, I already had eaten most of the exotic food in Japan you are served when your host wants to check you out... But for me, raw octopus makes me hungry rather than makes me disgusted. But nevertheless, studying in Kyoto was far different from working in the countryside. First of all, there is the city itself. While I was living in Kurashiki, meeting a foreigner was quite a rare event, but here in Kyoto, there are comparably many foreigners of different origin. Moreover, due to the beautiful riverside of the Kamo and the very special interpretation of traffic rules in Kyoto, the atmosphere is more ‘Mediterranean’ compared with a mostly industrial town like Kurashiki. But the greatest difference is work itself.

If there is something one cannot escape from in a Japanese company, it is safety control, condensed in the slogan ‘Anzen Dai-Ichi’ - safety first. Of course, in most companies there are those safety measure rules like ‘Never put your hands...”
in your pockets just in case you stumble! However, having a safety drill every morning was first for me. During roll call, we repeated the safety slogan in chorus while pointing with our index finger to the safety slogan. This safety drill was followed by a kind of road safety lecture. Everyday, a member of the office reported a ‘near-miss’-story he had on his way to work in order to warn other members to take care at certain dangerous spots. (Actually, as far I know, most work-related accidents in the chemical industry happen while commuting...)

Of course, research in academia and in business is different in every country; however, the difference seems to be much greater in Japan. Except some basic rules like ‘Do not smoke in the experiential room!’ the rule, “No complainant, no defendant” is applied. The other main difference is the presentation of results. In my company (ron-ban happyou).

So is the author of this article disappointed from the work at a Japanese university? Different opinions and problems can emerge everywhere during an academic stay in Japan or in New Year (chuukan happyou).

Japanese students are taught to learn about the difference in their first class. However, they are not taught how to study or what they should learn. In Japan, a student is expected to learn by himself and to take responsibility for his own learning. This is quite different from the way students are taught in Western countries. In Japan, students are expected to learn by doing, not by simply listening to the teacher. This is called “hands-on” learning. As a result, Japanese students are often seen to be more active in class and to engage more with their teachers and classmates. However, this does not mean that they are more independent or self-reliant.

In Japan, the government and schools are responsible for the education of all children. This is different from many other countries where parents have more control over their children’s education. In Japan, parents are not allowed to force their children to go to school or to decide what their children will study. Instead, it is the responsibility of the government to provide education for all children. This is different from many other countries where parents have more control over their children’s education.
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JRUAT) is located in the northeast of Nairobi, 35 km away from its downtown. The university originally started as Jomo Kenyatta College of Agriculture and Technology for diploma level education in the early 1980s after land was donated by the first president’s family. In conjunction with the Japanese Grant Aid Programme, buildings and equipment were provided.

In the late 1980s, it became a substituent college of Kenyatta University when B.S. level education was started, and maintained the support of the Japanese government. In 1993, it became the fifth independent national university after Nairobi, Moi, Kenyatta and Egerton, with a special emphasis on training more practical engineers necessary for the further development of Kenya.

The university is formed of the Faculties of Agriculture, Engineering, and Science; the Japanese government being solely responsible for the faculties of Agriculture and Engineering, and the department of Computer Science. The departments of Horticulture, Agricultural Economics, Food Science and Post-harvest Technology make up one faculty while Civil Engineering, Architecture, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical and Electronic Engineering make up the other. The diploma and B.Sc. graduates so far amount to 1200 and 563 respectively. JRUAT is becoming the most competitive university in Kenya, and this is owed to the continuous guidance of the support committee chairman. This causes chaos, grudges, and bickering (kitu kidogo). In a related manner, many brilliant young people have difficulties in finance and in getting promoted, and only pursue high class scores without understanding basic principles. Lack of books and literature also limits students because quite a large number of their teachers are not capable of teaching the content of the syllabus. It is our responsibility to provide opportunities that allow young people to be exposed to all sources of information for accumulating knowledge and eventual promotion.

The life in Kenya offers Japanese a refreshing change physically and mentally as well as providing an exciting exposure to a unique culture completely different from those of Europe and Asia. Visits to African Heritage Sites also brings one to the heart of Africa which is fascinating, and makes international cooperation easier. On the other hand, many Kenyans have studied abroad in recent years and have been exposed to foreign cultures, which has encouraged them to work enthusiastically. I believe that this is the basis for mutual cooperation among people from different backgrounds. To this end, I hope the harmony between nature and life becomes a reality in the future just like it was back before, and that JRUAT may play a significant part in the development of the 21st century.