Brief Impressions of Japan

By Chang Tang

On November 30, 1979, I arrived in Japan as the first Chinese visiting scholar to the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University. Kyoto City, the old capital of Japan, has a rich cultural background. It is also known as a center of modern science and culture. Here in this city, I not only saw a beautiful, snow-covered Kyoto and pretty cherry blossoms, but also made countless Japanese friends. I can hardly forget the warm reception they extended to me and their dedication to their work.

The Center provided me with good working conditions, and I was deeply impressed by the enthusiasm shown by everyone there toward furthering research in and about Southeast Asia. As a meteorologist, I was interested in learning the latest developments in Japanese meteorological science. Through the Center and assistance of Prof. Chotaro Nakajima of the Disaster Prevention Research Institute, Kyoto University, and Mr. Tetsuzo Yasunari of the Center, I was able to visit other universities and research institutes, among them the Institute of Geoscience, Tsukuba University, the Geophysical Institute, the University of Tokyo, Japan Meteorological Agency (Meteorological Research Institute, Meteorological Satellite Center, Computer Room, Forecasting Section, Osaka District Observatory, Osaka Airport Station), and Yodogawa River Dams Control Office. The discussion I had with Dr. Koichiro Takahashi, one of the most distinguished members of this field, was a most enlightening one.

In Japan great emphasis is placed on scientific research, training and education of useful men. Therefore, at all age levels in every field, there are
plenty of well-trained personnel. The range of subjects being studied also is quite wide. Furthermore, the exchange of information on the national, as well as international, level is promoted. As a result Japanese scientists can obtain information of recent developments abroad. At the Center information is collected and compiled rapidly for the convenience of researchers. It also distributes information through its quarterly journal and monograph series of publications.

All of these activities are enabling Japan to keep its level of higher education and its research equal to that of the other advanced nations in the world. I feel privileged to tell my Chinese colleagues about the prevailing situation in Japan.

In our country we must achieve "Four Modernizations." The modernization of science and technology and education of useful personnel is the most important. For example, in the field of meteorology, many young people are recruited to man weather observatories and give weather forecasts for the benefit of all the people. However, it is true that we do not have easy access to modern technology and equipment and a lot of improvements must be made on the ways and means of gathering scientific information. I am hoping the situation can be rectified in the very near future. What is important is to devote ourselves entirely for the sake of uplifting the standard of meteorological studies in China.

I hope from the very bottom of my heart that exchanges of science and technology between China and Japan, and the friendship and cooperation among university teachers and those who engage in scientific research will be increased and further solidified. (Visiting Scholar, 1979–1980, The Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University)