

Japan the Horned Islands

JSPS Nordic & Baltic Newsletter (1) 2008 Autumn

Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Stockholm Office

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Satoyama



Outdoor No-play

The newsletter can be accessed at the JSPS Stockholm homepage www.jsps-sto.com

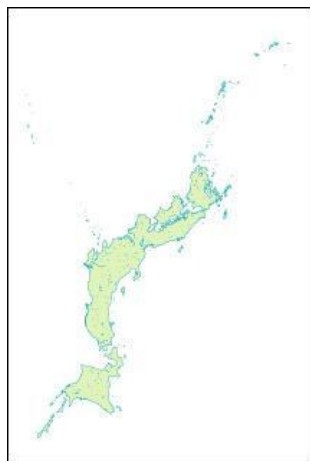
I. Preface

Horned Islands

by Hiroshi Sano

Many people living in Japan forget that their land is consisted of more than 3000 islands, stretching from tropical to subarctic zones between latitudes 24N and 46N. Looking at the four main islands on an atlas or from space, we realize that the coastline is quite indented with deep bays and capes. A British poet, James Kirkup, elegantly referred to Japan as the “horned islands” in his book published in 1962 (“These Horned Islands” Macmillan Co.). We would like to adopt this term for the title of a newsletter introducing Japanese science and culture to the people living in northern European countries.

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Since the 6th century, Japan has continuously cultivated arts and science, resulting in the development of specific techniques and a unique way of thinking. When the first worldwide “globalization” took place in the late 19th century, Japan had to

open the country to the world, and eventually exerted all possible efforts for modernization in life style, culture and science. In particular, Japan eagerly attempted to introduce scientific knowledge from the West, and established several national universities to facilitate research and education. Since then, the reliance on science and technology has become a national policy.

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Along this line, the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) was founded in 1932. In addition to functioning as the major funding agency, JSPS plays a critical role in promoting international communication

among scientists. To this end, 9 overseas offices have been set up including the Stockholm Office. The activity is variable and unique to each office depending on its location and situation.

The Stockholm Office takes charge of 8 countries in northern Europe; 5 Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland) and 3 Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). Its four major activities are: (1) mutually introducing current status of science in Japan and the above countries; (2) organizing scientific meetings to broaden scientific knowledge and to promote collaboration, particularly for young scientists; (3) exchanging information on culture and scientific administration, including establishment of bilateral collaboration system; (4) aiding the activity of JSPS alumni members, who experienced staying in Japan by JSPS fund.

*

The publication of a newsletter is categorized in item (3), and we have so far published 19 issues in Japanese since 2004. As Japanese readers appear to have appreciated update information on science and culture in northern European countries, we thought the reverse would also be informative. Consequently, we designed to publish similar newsletters in English for scientists in northern Europe.

Contents are independent from Japanese versions, handling diverse topics, which might be of great interest for non-Japanese readers. Articles on today’s science, history and culture, on daily life, and on many other topics will be offered in addition to ordinary information of the JSPS activity.

We hope that the readers will enjoy this newly published issue, and help us to continue its publication possibly four times a year. We welcome contributions providing useful information for ordinary readers, and particularly scientists, both junior and senior, who are intending to visit Japan in the near future. (Director of the JSPS Stockholm Office)

II. Reports

European Board Meeting and the French Alumni General Meeting in Paris 2008

by Ma-Li Svensson

On the occasion of the CNRS-JSPS colloquium on "Energy Supply and Demand in the 21st Century" which took place in Paris on 6-7 March 2008, the JSPS European board meeting was held at CNRS, followed by the Annual General Meeting of the French Association.

European board meeting was attended by Mr. Sato and Ms. Hiromi Moriguchi from the Tokyo Office, Ms. Inoue from the Strasbourg office, Prof. Menkhaus (chairman of the German club), Prof. Marie-Claire Lett (president of the French association), Dr. David (deputy president of the French association), Dr. Che Canon (board member of the UK association) and me.



Alumni General Meeting, Paris 2008

Mr. Kato reported that despite budget decreases, new alumni clubs were being established in South Korea, India, Egypt, Kenya and Uganda. He also announced that a new returning fellows programme was being planned, as well as a summer programme in which Sweden had not yet been included.

Prof. Lett reported that she joined the director of the Strasbourg office in visiting French universities, a total of twelve visits last year, to promote the JSPS

programmes. They also started a database with details of members on a voluntary basis.

Prof. Menkhaus spoke of their annual general meeting and symposium with different themes every year, and the "fellow invite fellow" event which was for ordinary members only. At the Hanover Fair they also rented a stand to advertise JSPS.

Dr. Canon said that the London office was moving house and that the only non-Japanese staff at London office was quitting. He also spoke of a new alumni support scheme which had just started, but he was uncertain whether it was going to be approved by the Tokyo Office.

I reported that the number of members in our club was increasing to 93, of which 35 are contact members whose contact details were on the web, that our board consisted of eight members, and that we arrange 2-3 seminars each year and produce 13 newsletters.

We also discussed the choices of badges for alumni members.

The AGM was attended by fewer members this year (see attached photo). Most of the planned agenda including re-election of the board members and president could not be followed. (Former Chairperson, JSPS Sweden Alumni Club)

JSPS Alumni Sweden General Assembly 2008

by Lisa-Mi Swartz

JSPS Alumni Club Sweden General Assembly at Stockholm, April 14, 2008

The General Assembly was opened by Chairperson Ma Li Svensson and Rumiko Mouri gave a progress report for the period since last GA. The club has now 93 members, of which 35 are contact persons, including the eight executive committee members. The club has gained 15 new members since the General Assembly in 2007. Four Newsletters of the alumni club have been published, the last in February.

The GA proceeded by election of officials. The suggestion of the same board, but with Jan Sedzik as chair and Magnus Larson as vice-chair, was presented and won the GAs acceptance.

Ma-Li Svensson and Carlos Rubio hereby stepped down as chair and vice-chair, but will remain as board members. The GA thanked Ma-Li Svensson and Carlos Rubio for these last three years and welcomed Jan Sedzik for the next period.

Jan Sedzik said that he would do his best to promote JSPS among his students. He also stated that he will safe

guard the free membership of JSPS Alumni, during his term. Ma-Li Svensson reported from the EAC meeting in Paris in March and Rumiko Mouri, JSPS, reported of the new JSPS Alumni Club in Finland, which had their first official meeting in Joensuu, Finland this April.

The General Assembly ended with a discussion on future JSPS Alumni Club in Sweden activities, where it was suggested that next Alumni meeting would be in another location than Stockholm. JSPS also presented the idea to call on the voluntary assistance of the Alumni members to introduce JSPS' scholarships, which is unfortunately too scarcely known.

JSPS Stockholm Director Hiroshi Sano informed the change from the Alumni Newsletter to an English JSPS Stockholm Newsletter, which this is the first edition of. The purpose is to reach a wider target group, and to also inform more about JSPS activities and Japanese topics of general interest. (Assistant, JSPS Stockholm Office)

After the General Assembly was closed, JSPS Alumni Club Sweden's science seminar started. The title was "Caffeine and cell-phone's impact on our health and environment". First speaker, Hiroshi Sano, whose Seminar abstract is included in this issue. Second speaker, Yngve

Hamnerius from Chalmers, who spoke about "Electromagnetic products and our life". The seminar was ended with a tea ceremony demonstration performed by Yuki Tanaka.



Hiroshi Sano



Yngve Hamnerius



Yuki Tanaka

Introduction of New Chairman of JSPS Alumni Sweden

by Jan Sedzik

Thank you for electing me as the new President of JSPS Alumni Club. From the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere and profound gratitude to the outgoing President Prof. Ma Li Swensson and Vice-President Prof. Carlos Rubio, the first leading officials after the Club was organized. Their competent stewardship during the "nucleation" phase and the growth of our Club was most valuable. I would also like paying tribute to former and present Director and Officers of JSPS Stockholm Office, who spend time, support and energy to see that the JSPS Alumni Club could be considered as a group within the KI Campus. This is important considering that the JSPS Stockholm Office is one of the 10 overseas offices around the world, promoting international research collaboration between Nordic and Baltic countries and Japan. As the new elected President, I will actively support and execute all projects and activities voted by of the Members of the Board of the JSPS Alumni Club, promote actively the bilateral cooperation between academia and industry, and increment the teamwork spirit between

Swedish and Japanese researchers.

And now, a few own personal words. It was in the late fifties, when Tokyo was hosting the Olympic Games that I heard about Japan, for the first time. My mother and I were listening to the radio about the performance of polish athletes. The speaker described in details the success of the Games. Later, in 1996 when I arrived to Tokyo, I felt at home, remembering the comments of that reporter and all the expectations from my childhood. Tokyo was a fantastic experience. I had planned to spend only 4 months in Japan, but I stay almost 4 years.

These 4 years were the best period of my life, focusing on my research. I wish everybody could experience a similarly good time in that Country, where I was able to enjoy the use of chopsticks, of cooking miso soup, sushi, shabu shabu, as well as of climbing Fuji, Rokko and Sumo mountains.

Once again thank you for electing me for a three years period to lead the JSPS Alumni Club (Chairperson, JSPS Sweden Alumni Club).



Outgoing and new elected President of JSPS Alumni Club

JSPS Alumni Finland General Assembly 2008

by Markku Hauta-Kasari

JSPS Alumni Club Finland General Assembly at Mekrijärvi, FINLAND, April 11-12, 2008

Speeding up Japanese-Karelian research co-operation

The general assembly of the JSPS Alumni Club Finland was held at the Mekrijärvi Research Station of the University of Joensuu on April 11-12. The place is located 80 km from the City of Joensuu near to the easternmost point of the European Union. The general assembly started with the introduction to the optics and color research at the University of Joensuu. The laboratory tour was held at the Joensuu Science Park, where the color research laboratory is located. After the tour, 1 hour minibus trip to Mekrijärvi was organized.

In Mekrijärvi, the general assembly started with the seminar, in which the topic was “Speeding up Japanese – Karelian research co-operation”. First, Deputy Director Rumiko Mouri gave a presentation from JSPS Stockholm office about the activities, funding possibilities and alumni club support from JSPS. Then the Director of InFotonics Center, Markku Hauta-Kasari from the University of Joensuu, gave a presentation on the Japan-Joensuu co-operation in the field of optics and color research. The co-operation started in 1988 and nearly 30 researchers’ years of researcher exchange have been realized in these fields until now. After these presentations, researchers who have been in Japan gave talks on their experiences, research themes, and funding during scientific research periods in Japan. Dr. Raimo

Silvennoinen, Dr. Oili Kohonen, MSc Juha Lehtonen and MSc Jukka Antikainen presented their stays in Japan and experiences related to the visits. Interesting presentation consisted of daily life issues, funding, work, and so on. This was good basis for the discussions in the evening.

After the seminar, we had dinner, in which we enjoyed Karelian style dishes. In the late evening, we entered to smoke sauna, which had been heated all day. The discussions continued in the sauna and after we had relaxed in the late evening together.

On Saturday, after the breakfast, the board meeting of the Alumni Club Finland was held and all people gathered together to have the closing of the general assembly. General things related to coming activities of the Alumni Club Finland were announced. After these, we started our return trip to Joensuu by minibus. From Joensuu, people started their trips back to home.

Totally 11 people participated the first general assembly of the Alumni Club of Finland. In conclusion, during the general assembly, nice discussions related to the visits in Japan were held, we shared each others experiences and got new information from each other. For the future, we got new thoughts for organizing the JSPS Alumni Club activities in Finland. (Head organizer of the first General Assembly & Member of the board, JSPS Alumni Club Finland)



The GA was held in nice nature, near the lake.



Participants of the first GA of the JSPS FAC.

Interview

With Laurence Romani

Dr. Laurence Romani obtained a PhD in management by submitting the thesis “Relating to the Others”. She comparatively analyzed the research situation by interviewing more than 30 researchers, who experienced studying in Sweden and Japan.

Q1: Can you briefly explain your current academic research?

A1: My main research is to study differences of management by comparing some countries in the aspect of hierarchy. And my current research is “How can Swedish and Japanese work together in Medical Environment”?

Q2: Did you know well about Japan before you started your research?

A2: Actually, I didn’t know so well. So, I started to read books on Japan, and to watch Japanese movie in order to know about Japanese society.

Q3: What is the most interesting thing on Japan for you, which you know through your research?

A3: I’ve heard that in Sweden, “good boss” is a person who is democratic and doesn’t force one’s subordinate to work. And in Japan, “good boss” is a person who can be democratic and, at the same time, can force one’s subordinate to work hard, this is very interesting for me.



Q4: What do you think differences between Sweden and Japan?

A4: Japanese people have more strong relationship between each person, and Japanese society has more strong hierarchy than Sweden.

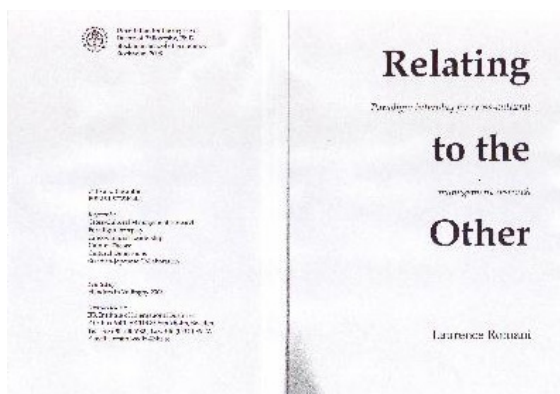
Q5: Website is a good tool in terms of giving information on Japan to people in Sweden. Do you think there should be more websites that have information on Japan for them?

A5: It’s better to have more, but I think it has been already enough website and information. So it’s more important for Japanese people to come to Sweden and talk about Japan with people in Sweden. That is, there should be more “visibility” like a face-to-face communication between two countries. (Japan and Japanese researchers are not very visible in Sweden, there is available information about Japan, but it is rather that many people don’t think about Japan because Japanese researchers are not very visible: we don’t meet them often or many of them).

Q6: Do you have any advice to Japanese researchers?

A6: We know Japanese researcher is very diligent and does excellent works. I think if they have a time, they can go out from their laboratory with colleagues and have a talk or meal. It would help and promote their researches. (Research associate, Stockholm School of Economics)

*Interviewer: Fumiaki Saruhashi.



III. Science & Culture

Space – the Final Frontier

by Anders Karlsson

Space research look into the skies to know about our origin and destiny, and looks down to earth to understand how to combat human induced climate changes.

In April 2008 Sweden's first astronaut Dr. Christer Fuglesang, ESA astronaut and affiliated professor at KTH – the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, Sweden, visited Japan to learn about the Japanese space program and to get the chance to meet Japanese researchers and students interested in space research and space travel. Among others Prof. Fuglesang visited Tanegashima Island south of Kyushu, Japans launch site for bigger satellites.

He also met his astronaut colleague, Dr. Mamori Mohri, now director at Miraikan – Japan's excellent museum of emerging science and innovation. At Miraikan Dr. Fuglesang gave a well attended public lecture on space travel and life at the ISS.

Japan has an extensive space program and actively participates in the international space station program – ISS. From February 2008, the three units of the KIBO (hope) experimental space module is under transport and assembly at ISS. Looking at various JSPS seminar, I can see that in quite a few there have been Japanese astronauts participating as lecturers, and JSPS has sponsored fellowships for space research.

Interestingly, when planning for the visit of our Swedish astronaut, our Japanese hosts were a bit worried – “the students have exams, maybe not so many will come to the lectures, don't expect to much”. I was also a bit worried – “Well, Japan has eight astronauts, is there any interest in a Swedish astronaut?” However, these worries turned out to be entirely unfounded. Everyone we met – children, students, professors and space industry people was enthusiastic about “meeting a real astronaut”. Lectures and meetings turned into autograph signing events. One professor told me – “Wow, I wish the students would be so enthusiastic when I lecture”.

So how come the universal appeal for astronauts, almost like “rock stars of research”? I suppose it is the combination of the extreme conditions in space, the dangers involved, and the fact that they can do these

things we ordinary people can only dream about.

However, I think there is a lesson for all researchers to be learned as well. Research is about expanding frontiers of knowledge; be it then astronauts, polar explorers, nano-scientists, or linguists. As researchers we could be better in telling the public about our enthusiasm and how fun research can be. Even though only a selected few researchers can show amazing pictures from space, I bet that from most research there are stories to be told. Not only about the research itself, but about the people behind it and their daily struggle. I believe that is also one of the reasons why we find human space travel so fascinating; it is not only the story of rockets and fancy instruments in space; it is equally much the story about the people flying there and operating the instruments.



KIBO by courtesy of JAXA

Anders Karlsson is Science Counselor and head of the Science and Technology Office, Embassy of Sweden, Tokyo, Japan. He is also professor of Quantum Photonics at the Royal Institute of Technology- KTH, in Stockholm, Sweden. In 1992 and 1998 he was a visiting scientist at NTT Basic Research Laboratories, Tokyo, Japan. As a young boy among his favorite TV programs were- guess what! Carl Sagan's “Cosmos”, “Star Trek”, and “Moonbase Alpha”.

Biotechnology – A story of caffeine

by Hiroshi Sano

Metabolic engineering of caffeine contents

Caffeine is produced by a variety of plants, including coffee, tea, kola nuts, guarana berries, Yerba mate and cacao beans. While caffeine is toxic for the majority of living organisms, mankind is relatively insensitive, perhaps because of high degrading activity, and has utilized these plants as sources of dietary stimulation. One of caffeine's pharmacological properties is to stimulate the central nervous system, often causing high respiration, high heart rate and diuretic effects. Overconsumption thus sometimes causes health problems, including insomnia, palpitation and increase in blood pressure. Caffeine is also shown to be effective as a repellent and pesticide for slugs, snails and insects. These observations suggest that the physiological function of caffeine is primarily to constitute a chemical defense system against pathogen attack and herbivores, including human beings.

In coffee plants, caffeine is enzymatically synthesized from xanthosine through three successive methylation and ribose removal steps. We have isolated all genes encoding the corresponding enzymes, and used them to engineer caffeine production to decrease the caffeine content in coffee plants to cope with occasional health problems caused by caffeine uptake. We also produced caffeine as an insect repellent in crop plants, originally not synthesizing caffeine.



Coffee plant

Decaffeinated coffee was obtained by suppressing enzyme activities using the RNAi technique, yielding a 70% suppression of the caffeine level in leaves of transgenic coffee plants. Caffeine over-producing tobacco plants were obtained by simultaneous expression of all enzymes, yielding up to 5 µg caffeine per g fresh weight of leaves. This amount of caffeine was enough to repel tobacco cutworms, suggesting the method to be practically efficient for construction of herbivore tolerant crops.



Wild-type

Decaffeinated

Up to 37% of world agricultural production is reported to be lost by herbivore damage. Pest control is therefore one of the most important and urgent measures for a stable supply of foodstuffs. The significance of the present study is therefore not only construction of decaffeinated coffee for beverage, but also providing potentially powerful method to create useful crop plants for worldwide food supply.

This article is the abstract of a lecture given at the Swedish Alumni Meeting on April 14, 2008 at Karolinska Institute. (Director, JSPS Stockholm Office and visiting professor, Department of Botany, Stockholm University)

The Samurai – Some Brief Notes

by Catharina Blomberg

Japan in the Heian period (784-1185) was ruled by an Emperor surrounded by court nobles who held hereditary positions in the government. Younger sons, even of illustrious families, had few opportunities for making a career in the capital, present-day Kyoto, or obtaining a suitable position at the Imperial court. In the provinces, however, they were able to live off the land as gentlemen farmers, setting up and maintaining guard forces for the subjugation of rebellious local chieftains and marauding pirates. They eventually developed into a warrior nobility, known as samurai or bushi, which gained in strength from the 10th century until they were able to defeat the Imperial forces in the Genpei War, 1180-1185. With the establishment of a military government, Bakufu, in 1192 under a Shogun, generalissimo, the Emperor's role became purely ceremonial. This state of affairs lasted for 700 years, and the samurai were not only the holders of political power but also the leading force behind cultural, ethical and religious developments.



The Kamakura Bakufu (1192-1333) was a feudal government where all bushi owed their allegiance directly to the Shogun as his personal vassals. With the decline of central power during the Ashikaga Bakufu (1336-1574) local bushi transferred their allegiance to their provincial lords, daimyo, who eventually challenged the Bakufu. These power-struggles led to a century of civil war, lasting from 1477-1574, before the country was unified under three successive warlords. Once the Tokugawa Bakufu had been established in 1603, the political power was strictly centralised with all the daimyo swearing a personal oath of allegiance to the Shogun and the promulgation of a system of legal codes regulating the lives of the bushi in minute detail. The 'Tokugawa Peace', which has been likened to a police state, lasted until 1868 when the Emperor regained political power.

The two dominant religions in Japan were Shinto, the indigenous faith, strongly connected with the annual cycle of the agricultural year, and Buddhism, imported from China via Korea in the 6th century A.D. The manifold schools of Buddhism provide scope for intellectual exercises as well as popular forms of piety, where the repetition of the name of the Buddha is sufficient to obtain salvation. Confucianism, brought over by Chinese merchants in the 4th century also became an important factor in the spiritual and moral life of Japan, as a philosophy of ethics providing a moral code and a model for correct behaviour, based on a strictly hierarchical system.

The samurai attitude to religion and ethics was characterised by a number of distinctive traits, which came to be known as Bushido, 'the Way of the Warrior'. Both Buddhism and Shinto forbid the taking of life, and the bushi exercised his profession knowing that instead of a favourable rebirth he could expect to become a demon in one of the Buddhist hells. Duty and loyalty towards his feudal lord were of paramount importance, and the vassal took an oath of allegiance for the duration of three existences. Every samurai was prepared to lay down his life for

his lord at a moment's notice, in battle or by committing seppuku, suicide by the gruesome and painful method of cutting open the abdomen. This was an honourable death, and considered a lenient form of punishment for a samurai convicted of a crime, as opposed to decapitation by the public executioner.

The sword was the bushi's chief weapon, and the last possession an impoverished samurai would part with. The wearing of a pair of swords, one long and one short, was a privilege exclusive to the samurai class, making a bushi instantly recognizable by his characteristic gait and silhouette, even at night and from afar. Every samurai male was taught swordsmanship from boyhood, and bushi women were trained to use a halberd to defend their homes, and carried a dagger about their person in order to commit suicide in an emergency. Many famous swords were reputed to have magical properties, and legendary sword masters were thought to possess a



sixth sense. Their training resembled that of Zen Buddhist monks, cultivating the concept of 'no-mind', i.e. cleansing the mind of all mental processes in order to act spontaneously, without "stopping to think". The privileges of the samurai also included power over the lives of commoners, who could be killed for being insolent, and although legally prohibited the custom of 'cross-roads cutting' persisted, whereby a samurai would test his new sword by cutting down a passer-by.

The Meiji Restoration of 1868 put an end to bushi dominance, and one by one the privileges were taken away, until the wearing of swords was prohibited and the samurai class abolished in 1876. Over the centuries the common people had admired Bushido, especially the loyalty and stoicism shown by the samurai in the face of adversity, and these ideals continued to spread throughout society. Even today they are regarded as typically Japanese qualities, and to say of someone that they are behaving "like a samurai" is praise indeed.

Dr Catharina Blomberg, M.A.(Cantab.)

Lecturer, Faculty of Oriental Languages, Japanese Department, Stockholm University For further reading on this subject see Blomberg, Catharina, The Heart of the Warrior, Origins and Religious Background of the Samurai System in Feudal Japan, Japan Library/Curzon Press, 1994.

Sado – Tea Ceremony

by Yuki Tanaka

茶道 (*Sado* or *Chado*, Tea Ceremony)

What is Sado?

Sado is established by *Sen no Rikyu* in the 16th century.

You might find a tea ceremony as “tea making performance with certain choreography”...yes, it looks like so, but that’s not true.

In the words of *Sen Soshitsu, Ura Senke* Grand Tea Master XV,

“*Chado*, the Way Of Tea, is based upon the simple act of boiling water, making tea, offering it to others, and drinking of it. Served with a respectful heart and received with gratitude, a bowl of tea satisfies both physical and spiritual thirst.”

What kind of tea?



Ryokucha, Green tea (extracted)



Matcha, Green tea (suspended)

How to drink it?

1. Greet your next person “*Osaki ni*.” (Excuse me for having before you.)
2. Put the bowl in the palm of the left hand and support it with your right hand. (Fig. 1)
3. Turn the bowl to the right twice (Fig. 2) and sip.

One **should make a slurping sound** on the last sip.

4. Wipe the place you sipped from with your fingers, and turn it to the left twice.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

There are many variations of *Temae* (procedures for making tea) for various occasions. The most simple demonstration is called *Chabako* (tea box), *hana* (flower) *temae*. *Chabako* is a portable box with all the utensils in it, and used for making tea during travel, outdoors and at a picnic.

Utensils for tea ceremony



Chawan (tea bowl)



Chasen (tea whisk)



Chashaku (tea scoop)



Natsume (tea container)



Fukusa (silk wipe)



Chakin (linen wipe)

If you are interested in tea ceremony

+Japan Fact Sheet at web-Japan site+

<http://web-japan.org/factsheet/>

“Tea Ceremony” section, you can find information about history etc.

+Etnografiska museet+

<http://www.etnografiska.se/>

The museum has Japanska Tehuset. Guided tours and tea ceremonies are held during summer time (May -October).

(Dr. Yuki Tanaka, Department of Genetics and Pathology Molecular Medicine, Uppsala University)

Obon

by Lisa-Mi Swartz

"Bon" or Urabon, The Festival of the dead, is celebrated in Japan especially by the Japanese Buddhists. Obon is an annual event for commemorating one's ancestors. It is believed that each year during obon, the ancestors' spirits return to this world in order to visit their relatives. Buddhist services are held at temples and private houses for ancestors, relatives and friends who died in the past, and particularly for those who passed away during the past year.

Traditionally, lanterns are hang in front of houses to guide the ancestors' spirits, obon dances (bon odori) are performed, graves are visited and food offerings are made at house altars and temples. At the end of Obon, floating lanterns are put into rivers, lakes and seas in order to guide the spirits back into their world. The customs followed vary strongly from region to region.

Obon is celebrated from the 13th to the 15th day of the 7th month of the year. Since the 7th month of the lunar year roughly coincides with August in the solar calender, Obon is celebrated in mid August in many regions of Japan. In 2008, the peak of will Obon take place between August 12 and 17.

The particular feature of Obon is the offering of various foods to the deceased. There are also special food prepared

to be served to invited guests and friends, all in the spirit of sharing your food with your fellow person.

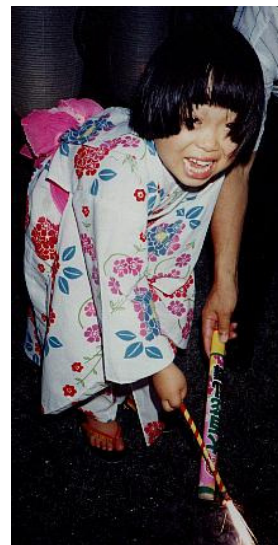
"Bon-Odori" or Bon dance, a religious folk dance, was originally given to comfort the spirit of the dead during the o-bon season. It is enjoyed by men, women, and even little children. It differs naturally according to locality, as each district has its own songs and styles of dancing. It is generally held in temple or shrine compounds sea or river shores or other convenient public places. A raised towerlike stand is erected and around the stand the people dance all night to the music.

Obon used to be an important social event, and for attending the family Obon service, such persons engaged in works away from their native places invariably returned home. For labourers Obon and January 15 were the only two holidays in the whole year, when they were permitted to return home to their parents.

"Toro-Nagashi" or lantern floating is the picturesque ending to the Obon service. To guide the ancestral spirits back to the other world, littel floats are lighted with candles and floated down rivers or on the sea. People eagerly watch them float down the river or carried by the wind far away from the shore. (Assistant, JSPS Stockholm Office)



For several consecutive evenings in the cemetery next to the temple, family members hang paper lanterns painted with the family crest to guide their ancestors' spirit back to the *ohaka* (family tomb). The air is heavy with the smoke and smell of incense.



The part of *obon* that the younger children enjoy the most is lighting *hanabi* (firecrackers/fireworks, literally "flowery fire"). There is a constant hissing, popping and cracking over the course of the evening.

Promenade (1) - Kyoto Higashi-yama Hiking

By Hiroshi Sano

“People, people, people.....”

Many Europeans visiting Japan tell that this is the first impression they have of the country. This is true in densely populated large cities like Tokyo, Osaka and many others. However, rural districts are much less populated, and in some mountain areas, one meets few people during a one-day walk. This guide will inform how to find proper hiking areas near cities.

*

The Japanese islands are located at the far end of the Eurasian continent, forming a dead-end zone for living organisms. Due to severe competition for survival, many species have been extinct in the main continent, while those which successfully reached Japan could survive such as the Japanese cedar (sugi; *Cryptomeria*), the giant purple butterfly (oh-murasaki; *Sasakia charonda*), and the rock ptarmigan (partridge) (raicho; *Lagopus mutus*). The rich biodiversity of Japan consists of 7000 species of plants, 23000 of insects, 500 of birds and 100 of mammals. Such abundance of life makes Japan a supreme place for naturalists.

*

To begin with, I would like to introduce an easily accessible hiking trail in Kyoto, which is one of the most famous sight-seeing locations in Japan. Kyoto is geographically located in a basin surrounded by hills in three directions, east, north and west. Each area is respectively named *Higashi-yama* (east mountains),



Azalea



Mushi (insects)

kita-yama (north mountains) and *nishi-yama* (west mountains). There, nature has been well conserved for a long time. In particular, the *Higashi-yama* area is known for conserving a natural forest, in which one finds many pleasant trails for hiking. When you have a half-day free time in Kyoto, you can try one of the many courses in *Higashi-yama*.

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Take the subway (East-west line, *Tohzaï-sen*) from the center, and get off at *Ke-age* station. Go towards *Himukai* shrine, and you will find a path at the backside leading to the hiking trail. There are many intersections, but the numerous indicators will show you the way to *Daimonji-yama*. The main road is in a forest of Japanese cedars, pines, miscellaneous deciduous trees and shrubs. In spring, you go through a tunnel of azalea flowers (*Rhododendron*), and if you are lucky, you can catch a glimpse of the rare papilio butterfly, *gifu-cho* (*Leuhdorfia japonica*). Arriving at *Daimonji-yama*, you will be surprised to see the whole city of Kyoto at your feet. After a small rest, follow the trail down through the open field used for fire-work in summer, and you will arrive at *Ginkakuji* temple (silver pavilion). The whole course takes approximately 3 hours (Director, JSPS Stockholm Office).

IV. News & Announcements

World Premiere Institutions

World Premier International (WPI) Research Center Initiative in Japan

“Which is the best university in Japan?” This is one of the difficult and frequent questions for JSPS to answer. In Japan, there are 756 universities, 434 junior colleges and several research institutions, and each of them has strong points. The Japanese government decided to set and fund high-level research centres, to which excellent researchers are invited from both Japan as well as from the rest of the world. This meets the recent trend of globalization. Consequently, according to the governments’s 3rd S&T Basic Plan and the strategy issued by the Council, MEXT* initiated the new program in the fiscal year 2007.

This new program is referred to as *World Premier International Research Center (WPI) Initiative*. WPI Initiative has two main purposes. One is to set up internationalized research environments in Japanese

universities and institutions in hope to stimulate researchers to collaborate with peers all over the world. A powerful management system, including a merit-based pay scheme is introduced. A research environment in tune with international standards is created through such means as making English the working language at the centres and introducing flexible support systems. The other important purpose is to cultivate novel seeds of innovation by forging scientific advances.

JSPS is commissioned to carry out grant selection from MEXT, and 5 projects were selected. (See table I.) The project duration is ten years, with a possible 5 years extension for projects producing outstanding results. The amount of grants are from 500 million yen to 2 billion yen annually per project (0.3million SEK to 0.1 billion SEK) (Rumiko Mouri, JSPS Stockholm Office).



(web) <http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-toplevel/index.html>

Table I, World Premier International (WPI) Research Center Initiative Selected Project

Tohoku University WPI Advanced Institute for Materials Research (AIMR)	By integrating Tohoku University’s fundamental research capacity in such fields as material science, physics and chemistry, methods are being developed to freely manipulate atoms and molecules. They will be used to produce new forms of matter and new materials—e.g. nano-patterned metallic glass with hardmagnetism and eco-model emission of light materials—with novel, highly advanced functions.
National Institute for Materials Science WPI International Center for Materials Nanoarchitectonics (MANA)	By introducing “nanoarchitectonics”—that is, a new system for arranging nanoscale units in an intended configuration—effort is being made to shift the paradigm of materials development. Being sought are new materials that can sustain the ongoing advancement of materials science. These include the development of revolutionary super-conductive materials, novel materials for advancing neural information processing, and innovative materials for fabricating photoelectric conversion devices.
The University of Tokyo WPI Institute for the Physics and Mathematics of the Universe (IPMU)	Research on dark energy, dark matter, neutrinos, the grand unified theory (e.g., superstring theory, quantum gravity) is being combined synergistically with knowledge derived from mathematics, cosmology and physics in an effort to elucidate the forces acting on elements and the relationship between time-space structure and the origin of gravity, and, in turn, to unravel the mysteries of the universe’s birth and evolution.
Kyoto University WPI Institute for Integrated Cell-Material Sciences (iCeMS)	An interdisciplinary field is being created that integrates material and cell sciences, with an emphasis on stem cells. It seeks to elucidate phenomena on the mesoscale of 10-100 nm, which cannot be predicted using empirical knowledge. Applications of this research will include environment-friendly, energy-saving chemical reaction systems, artificial photosynthesis, in vivo drug synthesis and detoxification technology, and world-leading regenerative medicine

Osaka University WPI Immunology Frontier Research Center (IFReC)	Advanced imaging technology is being developed to allow in vitro observation of in vivo immune cell behavior and inter-cellular communication. Using this technology to fully elucidate the dynamic immune system, breakthrough advances will be sought in the diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases, autoimmune diseases, allergies, and cancer.
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Source. MEXT | * Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and JSPS

Fellowship Information

If you are planning to visit and perform research in Japan, the JSPS Stockholm Office is ready to provide you useful information on the JSPS fellowship programs. The JSPS fellows are usually recruited in each fiscal year (beginning in April and terminating in March of the following year).

Two programs are available. The main program is to prepare application forms through your host researcher at the host-university or institution in Japan. The host will send all documents to the JSPS Tokyo Office. You can find the details on the web home page. The other program is to apply through nomination system in

relevant countries, where the applicant lives. In this case, the country must be assigned as the partner country by the JSPS. You can find necessary information through JSPS Stockholm Office, if you live in Nordic or Baltic countries (Note that not all countries are assigned as the JSPS partner).

In addition to JSPS supports, you can find some informative and helpful documents issued by the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), if you are an undergraduate university student, and want to study in Japan. Please feel free to contact us or to visit our office (Rumiko Mouri, JSPS Stockholm Office).

Program	Duration	Application Dead line(※1)	Commencement of fellowships (※2)
JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowship Programs http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-fellow/postdoctoral.html#long <i>For Young post-doctor etc.</i>	(Standard) 12 to 24 months	<1 st Call> 2008.September1-5	2009.April1 ~ 2009.September30
		<2 nd Call> 2009.May1-12	2009. September 1 ~ 2009. November30
	(Short-term) 1 to 12 months	<6 th Call> 2008.August 4-8	2008.December1 ~ 2009.March 31
		<1 st Call> 2008.October6-10	2009.April1 ~ 2010.March 31
Invitation Fellowship Programs for research in Japan http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-inv/main.htm <i>For Professor or mid-career Researchers etc.</i>	(Long-term) 61 days to 10 months	2008.September1-5	2009.April1 ~ 2010.March31
	(Short-term) 14 to 60 days	<1 st Call> 2008.September1-5	2009.April1 ~ 2010.March 31
		<2 nd Call> 2009.May1-12	2009.October1 ~ 2010.March31

※ 1 These deadlines are for the head of the host institution to submit the application to JSPS; the time frames for applicants (host researchers) to submit their applications are normally earlier.

※ 2 Successful candidates must start the Fellowship in Japan during these periods.

Colloquium - September 5, 2008

The JSPS Stockholm Office presents a Sweden-Japan joint colloquium on “Sustainability of the Natural Environment” at Stockholm School of Economics, KAW, Sveavägen, 65 on the 5th September 2008.

Program

8.30 – 9.00 Registration

9.00 – 9.05 Opening
Hiroshi Sano, JSPS Stockholm office

9.05 – 9.40 Sustainability issues
Yoshihisa Shimizu, Research Center for Environmental Quality Management, Kyoto University

9.40 – 10.15 Corporate responsibility and the Environment
Susanne Sweet, SuRe, Stockholm School of Economics

10.15 – 10.25 Coffee

10.25 – 12.05 Pharmaceuticals in the Environment
Hiroaki Tanaka, Research Center for Environmental Quality Management, Kyoto University

The Concept on wastewater management: “Don’t Mix” and “Don’t collect” and its application to water management
Naoyuki Funamizu, Graduate School of Engineering, Hokkaido University

Measuring the impact on the environment
Göran Finnveden, FMS, Royal Institute of Technology

Water in nature and society
Ulrik Lohm, Linköpings University

12.05 – 13.00 Lunch

13.00 – 13.25 Environmental Education in Japan and Asia for Sustainable Future
Fumiaki Taniguchi, Faculty of Letters, Konan University

13.25 – 15.00 Panel – Integrating sustainability in education”
Moderator - Anna Lundh, Swedish National Agency for Higher Education
Panelist - Lin Lerpold (Stockholm School of Economics), Cecilia Lundholm (Stockholm University), Anders Törnvall (Linköping University), Fumiaki Taniguchi, Yoshihisa Shimizu, Susanne Sweet, Hiroaki Tanaka, Naoyuki Funamizu

15.00 – 15.30 Coffee

15.30 – 17.30 Breakout + Poster Presentation

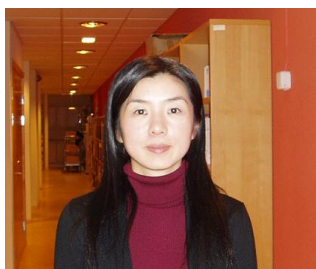
17.30 – 17.45 Plenary
Susanne Sweet, SuRe, Stockholm School of Economics

17.45 – Mingle

Introduction of JSPS Stockholm Office Staff

Hiroshi Sano (Director)

After obtaining a PhD in biology at the Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan, I worked as a postdoctoral research fellow at Freiburg University, Germany and Harvard Medical School, USA. In 1985, I moved to Akita Prefectural University, and then to Nara Institute of Science and Technology (NAIST) as a professor of plant science. Since April 2007, when I retired from NAIST, I am serving as director of the Stockholm Office of JSPS, and also as visiting professor at the Department of Botany, Stockholm University. I am interested in moving things including birds, butterflies and beetles, and trains. I play the cello.

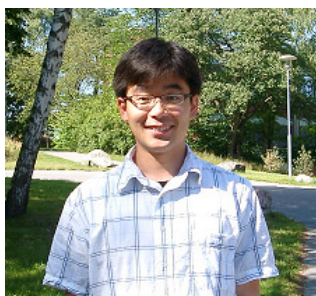


Rumiko Mouri (Deputy Director)

I am responsible for managing budgets, personnel, planning events and others. I come from Tokyo and I have been in Stockholm for 1 year. It is exciting for me to experience differences and similarities between foreign countries and Japan. I think that science is the common key to communicate with people from different countries and even though I am not one myself, I am happy to contribute to promoting mutual communication amongst scientists. I enjoy watching TV and movies while eating potato chips and working-out at the gym. My new challenge is to finish drawing an oil painting of this beautiful city, Stockholm.

Lisa-Mi Swartz (Assistant)

I started working for JSPS Stockholm Office in October 2007. I am the Swedish speaking staff and my work consists of assisting the office members as well as all our external contacts with practicalities and information about JSPS' activities. Prior to my employment I studied law at Stockholm University and I used to live in Tokyo, Japan for six years. I take my pleasure from the company of my family and friends. I enjoy doing yoga and gardening has become my newest interest.



Fumiaki Saruhashi (Accounting Officer)

I am from Hokkaido and majored in Japanese law at Otaru University of Commerce. Since April 2008, I have been working at the JSPS Stockholm Office, engaging in accounting service, promoting various fellowship programs and driving official vehicles. For me, this is the first experience living in Sweden, and I found some difficulties to adapt life here. However, since Swedish people are kind and helpful, I have now become familiar with Sweden, and I am sure that I will miss life here, when I go back to Japan in March 2009. My hobbies are reading Haruki Murakami, a contemporary Japanese writer, swimming and playing the guitar.



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