

A Journey from Sunset to Sunrise

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*Japan Science and Technology Corporation (JST), as a statutory corporation under supervision of MEXT, is implementing the STA Fellowship Program to promote the international exchange of researchers by providing fellowship to foreign researchers in science and technology.

In Arabic, my country, Morocco, is called Al-Maghrib, which means "the land of sunset". When I found out that I would be coming to Japan, I was very excited of course, since I was given an opportunity of a lifetime to visit "the land of sunrise", but I had no idea how amazing of a journey it was going to be and how enchanting it would be to learn about the Japanese culture and myself.

My curiosity for Japan grew unquenchable since my childhood through school lessons, documentaries and movies. For me, Japan was always the model of how societies should evolve: being on the cutting-edge of hi-tech development, while strongly cherishing and holding to their secular traditions. However, visiting this country was as remote of a dream as you can imagine! Then came my trip which was to be triggered, not by my fascination with Japanese cul-

ture, but by my interest for the Japanese scientific advance.

In fact, I have long been in contact with Prof. Kenji Sonomoto of Kyushu University whose work on bacteriocins interested me all the time I was pursuing my Ph.D. in France. In close contact, we agreed upon a research project and a year later I landed in Fukuoka (February 1st, 1998) as a JSPS fellow.

On that same day I sensed that this was going to be like non of the foreign travels I had experienced; my dream was becoming true and it took me about two days to realize that. I was slowly discovering the deeply held traditions that have forged such a wonderful society. However, like all sweet dreams, the two-year-long stay passed too quickly. I did not see and do all that I wanted to.

It was then I contacted Dr. Yimin Cai of the National Grassland Research Institute who was very helpful with the STA application. On July 1st, 2000, I started a new life in Japan as an STA fellow which allowed me to continue my Japanese journey

of enlightenment and enjoyment. When I came back, I was of course overjoyed, but most of all I was delightfully surprised that every detail of my life conditions has been taken care of by JISTEC so that I could enjoy a very comfortable stay.

Now, it's been three years filled with unimagined sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and "rumblings" (some small earthquakes), but most of all with the warmth and kindness of the people I meet everyday, all this compounded to heighten my curiosity and excitement and enrich my experience. Truly speaking, I would say that, though I try my best, what I experienced up till now goes beyond description and words can not do justice to what I feel.

A person who visits this country is enlightened and changed for life, because this is not just about discovering a different culture, the biggest part is what we discover inside ourselves by frequenting wonderful places and wonderful people, which changes our vision of the whole world and the humanity. Thanks to everyone who made this possible!



To my right: Dr.Y.Fujita, Head of the Laboratory. To my left: Mrs.K.Ochiai, Lab Technician;Mrs.T.Furukawa, Lab Technician; and Dr.Y.Cai, my Host Researcher.