

From Limoges to Tajimi



*By Carole Babelot and Alexandre Guignard**

The day we learned we could spend almost 7 months in Japan within the framework of an internship in the Ceramics Research Laboratory, we did not hesitate to apply and to start a fabulous adventure!

Now we are back in Europe and keep amazing memories of our stay in Tajimi, if you want to know more, please read our story...

Once the administrative procedures done, once the plane tickets booked and once our stuff packed: we finally arrive in Nagoya, on a nice day of March. We had left the rude Winter of France to enter in the sweet Spring of Japan. Prof. Ota welcomed us in the airport and he went with us to Nagoya. He taught us how to take the train and the subway, which helped us very much of course.

As you can imagine, we were very tired of this long trip by plane, but we were also already curious of this

new country. We first discovered the so-big train station of the city, with the many shops and restaurants (actually, at the very last day of our stay, we have noticed that we still do not know every single place of this building!). We also visited the famous castle with the beautiful Sakura and we saw the TV Tower by night.

Now, it was time to go to Tajimi and to see the laboratory, the student room, the Guest House and all the people of course!



The first week, a barbecue party was organized: food, drink (sake and beer) and good mood! We liked the atmosphere, it was very nice partying with teachers and students.



Very soon, we wanted to learn the Japanese language and we went on Sundays morning to the lessons given by volunteers in Tajimi. During the second lesson

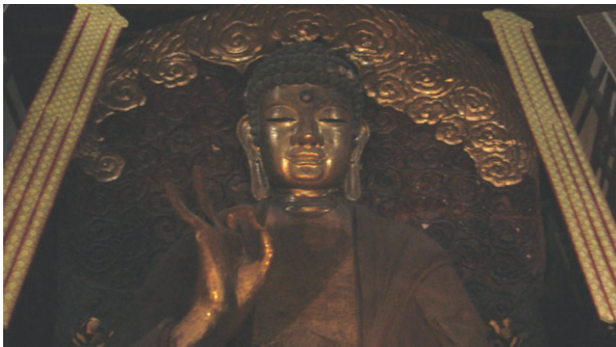
everybody went to the Asahi Factory in Nagoya. It was very nice and we could taste a lot of Asahi beer but also Asahi juices.

We also had the chance to have a very nice tutor, Imai-san, who taught us the language and who answered our questions if we had any about the life in Tajimi.

During our long stay in Japan, we spent our time in the week-end to go and visit a lot of cities as well as Nagoya:

- The castle, the Japan Monkey Park and the Meiji-Mura Museum in **Inuyama**,

- The Japanese-Brazilian festival in **Minokamo**,
- The Biwa Lake, the castle and the Genkyu-en garden in **Hikone**,



- The huge golden Buddha and the castle in **Gifu**,

- The Takeshima Island and the Laguna resort in **Gamagori**,

- The Kinkakuji Temple, the Ryoanji Temple and the Daikakuji Temple in **Kyoto**.

...every time a one-day trip, every time a different place, every time a new discovery and a lot of pictures taken!



As we knew, the Baseball is a very famous sport in Japan, we decided to attend to a game in the Nagoya Dome. It was a little difficult to understand how to buy tickets in the konbini (convenience store), but finally we get some and went to a Nagoya Chunichi Dragons versus Chiba Lotte Marines game with Imai-san and his friend. It was worth going there for the game itself as well as for the many animations with the cheerleaders and the dances.



In early July we were invited to the Seminar of the Tokai Young Ceramists in Gifu. It was the first time we attended a conference and we were very curious of the way it would go. It was very interesting even if almost all the presentations were in Japanese. Actually this is also the opportunity for all the young ceramists of the central Japan to meet and to have fun together.



In the middle of September we went with everybody to Kitakyushu. We visited Nippon Steel, which was very interesting. In the afternoon we arrived in a very nice Japanese-style hotel. We had a dinner with a lot of various dishes and spend the rest of the evening in the karaoke. It was a funny evening for everybody!

On the next day, we could visit the Mojiko Retro area, with the famous train station, the Observation room and the Kanmon Bridge. It is a very nice place and it was a



pity that it was raining!

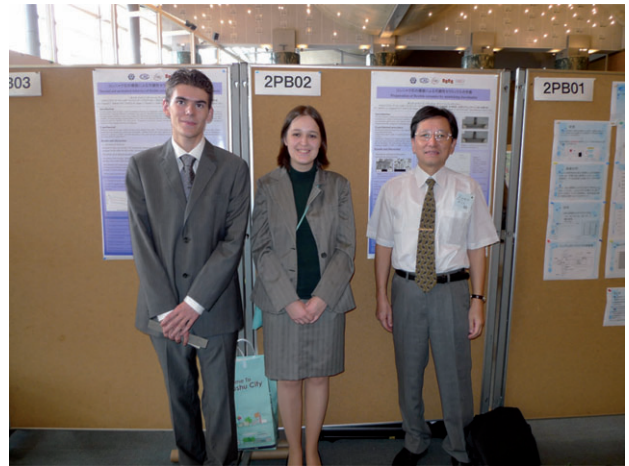


We had a good dinner in a Japanese restaurant with many professors participating at the conference the next day.



Then the 21st Fall Meeting of the Ceramics Society of Japan took place. Prof. Ota helped us not being too stressed about our poster presentation session. He was right, and everything went good.

Then it was time to leave Kitakyushu and to go by Shinkansen to Hiroshima, and then by boat to the beautiful Island of Miyajima. We knew that it was a very famous



spot for tourism and we understand why! This place is just heavenly.



Now that the conference was over, we had 3 days time to visit Tokyo. We had prepared very carefully this trip because we wanted to make the most of every single minute!



The spots that we chose were: Shinjuku with its many skyscrapers and its big garden, Shibuya and Harajuku with all the shops and the young people, the beautiful Odaiba



(Tokyo Bay area), the famous Tokyo Tower, the traditional Asakusa area, as well as Akihabara which is known as the place at the cutting edge of technology. We saw so many things in Tokyo that we would need extra pages to tell them.

The day before our final departure from Tajimi we had lunched with the students of the Guest House. Everybody had prepared something to eat. It was a wonderful experience to taste foods from China, Thailand and the Philippines. Thank you!

And in the evening, the students of the “Composito” Group cooked for us. It was very nice and we once again discovered some Japanese food. We received also many presents. Arigato gozaimashita!

* 08年3月31日～10月17日、フランス ENSCI から FIRE program により 来日し、“Thermomechanical properties of model refractory materials, influence of microstructure evolutions and CTE mismatch between phases” に関して研究を行った。

**Thank you very much to everybody for your warm welcome.
We have learned to know a very nice country as well as very nice people!**

Good luck to everybody and we hope to see you again!