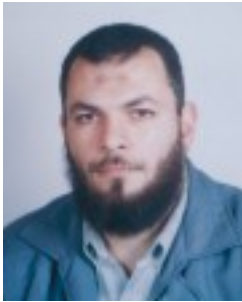


From Egypt to Japan, my impressions.

口腔病理学分野 Wael Mohamed Swelam

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I'm Wael Swelam 33. 5 years old, an assistant lecturer, faculty of Dentistry, Tanta University, Egypt. After I had attained my master degree, the Egyptian government nominated me for a completely financed scholarship to study my PhD in a foreign country. Although my first destination was USA, I preferred Japan and I tried hardly until I succeeded in changing my scholarship to Japan. In my mind, Japan had the image of an ideal country, as I were taught in my English lesson in the Junior High school that "Japanese people are polite & active" and I found that true to a great extent. I came to Japan last April 2001, during the golden week. It was a good opportunity to learn about the Japanese customs, as soon as I arrived. I think the most fascinating thing about Japan is to be one of the highly developed countries, yet preserve and be proud of its traditional customs as well. I felt happy for that because I come from one of the most famous countries all over the world EGYPT, which is very famous for it's Pharonic, Romanic & Islamic history, and Egyptians are proud of their

culture from all these ages. Nowadays we are trying to regain our position as one of the developed countries in the world. That is why my government sends me and other graduate students to study in the most developed countries of the world.

I am married and have two children, a daughter and a boy. They joined me from my first day in Japan, although this might be a heavy burden but it has its uncompensated advantages. My kids can speak Japanese & even read Japanese to a satisfactory extent, much better than do I, however, this problem made me see the other generous side of the of Japanese attitude. Once my colleges realized that I could not catch the difficult Japanese language, they dealt with me in English as much as they can. I would like to speak Japanese and I'm trying my best, which I hope I will do one day.

The different aspects of the people life and their culture amazed me. A great quality in Japanese people is their insistence & patience. It seems that the word impossible does not come to their minds, and maybe that is why Japan became what it is nowadays.

Another relieving sensation in

Japan & especially in Niigata is that you can feel as if you are making a tour around the world. That is to say, anyone can enjoy different seasons across the year from hot summer to snowing winter, through the red trees in autumn & the “cherry blossoms” in the spring.

Another great aspect, which the normal Japanese person might not realize, is safety, which is a rare feeling especially in such developed countries. But as my professor told me once “Japanese believe that the feeling of safety is free in Japan”.

In this occasion, I'd like to say that I feel so grateful to my professor, Saku sensei, who usually treats us not only me-but also all the members of our department as a family. It was so impressive to me that he invited us (the foreigner students in his department) on the last working day of the

last year 2001, on the traditional Japanese Soba & he said that the traditional custom is that the whole family, by the end of the year, should gather together, according to the Japanese custom, on this traditional Soba dish.

The other person, whom I feel thankful to, is my supervisor, Ida Sensei. Although she is my supervisor, I always felt she is a friend as she gives me a lot of her time & knowledge to help me learn, develop and progress with my work.

I am greatly thankful to my God who directed my steps to Japan and more precisely to Niigata department of Oral Pathology and so give me the chance to deal with such kind, Cooperative & hard working Japanese staff, who made the sour taste of homesickness much better by their sweet help.

BEAUTIFUL BUT COLD NIIGATA

咬合制御学分野 GARY A. ESTOMAGUIO



I arrived in Japan last April 4, 2001 for a study program granted by the Japanese government. I came from the Philippines. The

cold weather in Narita surprised me because it was the first time for me to feel a temperature that is below 15 degrees.

April 5, 2001 when I arrived in Niigata and it really surprised me again that

the temperature here is even colder than Narita probably between 7-10 degrees centigrade. It was terribly cold for me because Philippines is a warm country.

As days passed by, I learned to love and cope up with the weather and the surroundings especially during the afternoon when Nihongo class is over because I used to go biking and hiking around Ikarashi. There are lots of beautiful gardens and vegetable farms around the area.

I visited Niigata City at least once a month during my stay in Ikarashi campus and it was really a nice and clean city. There are lots of high rise buildings, beautiful houses, old temples and clean river. On the riverbanks of Shinano cherryblossoms and different colors of tulips bloom on the cold spring.

Summer is my favorite season here in Niigata, no umbrella hassle and most of all no thick clothes to be worn. Japanese people said that summer here is too humid but I love it because it is almost the same weather that we have in the Philippines. The beach in Ikarashi is my favorite spot because I can cool myself in very clean waters of Niigata. I went there almost everyday.

Summer did not last long because after almost 3 months, the cold

autumn started to introduce itself and here I am again experiencing the coldness of Niigata but I enjoyed the season a lot and really appreciated the wonders of nature.

Winter came last December and it has one of the coldest temperatures I have experienced. Some of the trees have no more leaves left on its branches and little by little snow began to fall. It was my first time to see a real one. On January 2, 2002 Niigata was filled with snow and it was really beautiful. I went out of my room during that time to try walking on the snow and it was really a lot of fun and great experience though it was very cold.

Niigata is really a great place to live and study but you have to cope up to its cold weather.

