

# 外国人客員所員を経験して

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I spent four wonderful months in the ISSP, as a guest of Prof. Oshikawa's group. During that time I enjoyed many (but not enough - time flies...) discussions not only with the students in Oshikawa-ken, but also with many other members of ISSP, both theorists and experimentalists. Even though I am kind of a regular visitor to Japan, and - according to some of my Japanese colleagues - I am often behaving as a Japanese person, I never stop learning something new about the country and about the people. This visit to ISSP provided further opportunity to deeper my acquaintance with Japan, some of that I would like to share with you below.

One day Tsuji-san (secretary of Oshikawa-ken) came to my office, and told me that I need to choose the design of my name card. I knew that the name card is very important in Japan, so I carefully looked at the possibilities, but they all looked nice, with tiny differences. So I selected one of the designs randomly. After a couple of weeks, my name cards arrived. I did not have a name card before, so it was a new experience for me. Certainly, I exchanged some of them with my colleagues, and I ended up with a growing number of name cards that I could not really know what to do with.

Since the address and the office phone number was written on the name card, I used it to copy my phone number when I needed to fill some forms. For example, at the hotel reception desk, I noticed that whenever I took my Todai name card, the receptionist behavior changed - they become much more helpful and friendlier. It worked also at the tourist office in Kashiwanoha-campus station.

The most surprising experience I have had when I visited the local branch of the bank in Kashiwa. As usual because I am a foreigner, they wanted to become sure that nothing is lost in translation, so a young bank assistant with good English knowledge was asked to find out the reason of my visit. When he saw my card, his first reaction was: "Oh, you are a professor, that is cool!". I just wonder how many other places in the world would this happen.

Now, back home, my remaining name cards - I still have plenty of them - are residing in a drawer. In my country, the name cards are not so wide-spread among researchers. Actually, I think that I could ask for a name card from my institute, but am afraid that using them would just generate the reverse effect.

Another experience is with a pencil sharpener. As a theorist, I prefer to use ordinary pencils to write. It may sound old fashioned, but there are several advantages. For example, after some time the distribution of the pencils in the office becomes uniform and it is easy to find one when needed. In Japan there are several brands of excellent, high quality pencils. When I asked Tsuji-san for pencils, she went to the storage room, and appeared with a box of pencils. After some time, the pencils became blunt. No problem, I thought, and went to the student's room and asked if they happen to have a desktop pencil sharpener, but they had not. Next, we checked the storage room and the Coop-store on the campus, but neither of them had sharpeners. Apparently, the demand for them is not large. So after consulting



a thick book, we ordered pencil sharpener over the internet, and in a couple of days I got a nice big red one.

I was also lucky that the Japanese language classes organized by the KIO (Kashiwa International Office) just started when I arrived, so I could join them. They were useful in several aspects, apart from learning the Japanese language and culture: first of all, they started at around 9'o clock every morning, so I got over the jet-lag more quickly. Next, I met other foreign students and researchers, so it was kind of a social event. And I learned about the excursions organized by the KIO: in one of them I learned how to play Taiko, the drum - a very entrancing experience. Apropos, excursions: during the workshop in June, the excursions were to soya sauce factory in Noda, and to a nice house that belonged to a rich family producing soya sauce. Another weekend, Prof. Oshikawa drove us in a minibus to Sawara, an old merchant town with historical canal and a famous aquatic garden full of differently colored irises. So I really cannot complain about not seeing enough new things.

Finally, I would like to thank Kameda-san and Seki-san from the ILO for helping me with the administrative procedures, like translating my detailed CV into Japanese, and Hama-san from the KIO for helping me with my accommodation.

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## Fond reminiscence of my stay at the ISSP

Looking back upon my stay as a Visiting Professor at the ISSP from October 2012 until March 2013, I am full of fond memories, and I am still amazed how fast those six months went by. This had as much to do with the welcoming and stimulating atmosphere that I enjoyed in Kashiwa as with the excitement about newly started research projects, for which time never seems enough if one works on an interesting challenge.

Incidentally, this was not my first sojourn at the ISSP: In the summer of 1998, when I had just completed my Ph.D. and the ISSP was still situated in aging buildings on the old Roppongi site, I had been given the opportunity of spending two months there thanks to a Research Experience Fellowship for Young Foreign Researchers awarded by Monbusho. My host then and now was Prof. Takada, whom I had initially met one year before at the APS March Meeting, where we found ourselves giving back-to-back talks on very closely related problems of quantum-mechanical many-body perturbation theory. At that time, I jumped at the chance of exploring these connections further, and also, that much I admit, at the excitement of a non-Western cultural experience. If Monbusho's explicit goal of this Fellowship program was to build long-term relations with foreign academics at an early stage of their careers, then it certainly worked in my case. Many years later, now with a Japanese wife, who is herself a graduate of the University of Tokyo, and three bilingual little children, I was more than happy to return to the ISSP.

Although I had pursued the idea of a Visiting Professorship in Tokyo during my first scheduled sabbatical for some time, the actual application, with a deadline only months after the 2011 Tohoku earthquake, when media reports were full of foreigners leaving Japan and the situation in Fukushima was all but clear, was not an easy decision. In retrospect, I am glad that I did not let the circumstances deter me, but the number of international guest researchers at the ISSP during my stay was clearly lower than what I remembered from my previous visit, and I frequently found myself the only discernible foreigner in seminar talks. I am confident that this is merely a temporary effect, however, and that the ISSP will again quickly become the international hub that it deserves to be due to the high quality of its facilities and research activities, which make it one of the world's acknowledged leading centers of solid state physics. The Visiting Professorship program is, in my opinion, a very valuable and successful part of this strategy.

The preparation of my stay was very well organized thanks to the efficiency of the International Liaison Office and the personal commitment of Ms Kameda. Upon our arrival, we first spent a few days in Tokyo before I came up to Kashiwa and moved into Kashiwanoha Lodge, which turned out to be a convenient base for overnight stays near the campus on weekdays. Weekends were spent in Tokyo, on the other hand, where my family preferred to live in the more spacious house of my parents-in-law and local kindergarten places for our two older children were easier to attain. In this way I could take full advantage of the metropolitan cultural offerings but was equally glad to



participate in the activities organized by the ILO for visiting researchers in Kashiwa. Among the highlights were a very enjoyable day excursion to Nikko, which included a visit to the famous Toshogu shrine followed by sake tasting at a local brewery, as well as a rare, specially organized Rakugo performance in English language. I also benefitted from other offerings at the Kashiwa Campus and attended a daily Japanese language course held at the nearby Graduate School of Frontier Sciences.

In terms of research, I gave an introductory lecture soon after my arrival in Kashiwa and another more specific seminar talk at a later stage, both of which induced fruitful discussions with ISSP staff members. Even before, in early October, I was a speaker at the “International Symposium on Computics: Quantum Simulation and Design” held in Osaka and co-organized by my host, Prof. Takada. Besides giving a good overview of current activities in my field of computational condensed matter physics, the personal contacts at this symposium served to strengthen collaborations with Japanese researchers from other institutions outside Tokyo, up to the point of joint research projects. Two papers in Physical Review B are a direct outcome of my stay at the ISSP: The first, entitled “Analytic evaluation of the electronic self-energy in the GW approximation for two electrons on a sphere”, was completed during the first half of my stay and published even before my departure. The second, entitled “HOMO band dispersion of crystalline rubrene: Effects of self-energy corrections within the GW approximation”, a collaboration with researchers from Osaka and the Ryukyus, was submitted shortly before my return to Germany. However, the fruitful discussions at the ISSP left me with many more ideas that I hope to pursue in the future. Although the time flew by, the six months spent at the ISSP will thus have a lasting influence.

My thanks go to Prof. Takada for inspiring discussions and serving as my host, to his group members Dr. Sakurai and Dr. Maebashi for practical assistance, to the secretaries Ms Mitsudomi and Ms Hayashi for help with office matters as well as, once again, to the staff members of the ILO, Ms. Kameda and Ms. Seki.