

MY VISIT, STAY AND EXPERIENCE IN JAPAN

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Through the JSPS-AASPP collaboration with JKUAT, I was offered a two months research visit to Okayama University starting on 15th August 2011 to 14th October 2011.

I arrived in Japan on 16th August through Kansai airport where I was received by Nishimura san from IPSR- lots of thanks to him and others who planned for this kind gesture. I was warmly received at Okayama train station by Prof. Maekawa san and Emily san, who took me to Kurashiki and to my hotel and ensured that I settled in.

My first day in Japan started at IPSR where I was warmly welcomed by Dr. Eiko Himi, Prof. Sakamoto and the rest of the institute staff who wished me a nice stay in Japan.

Prof. Maekawa then took me around the institute for an orientation tour after which we settled in his laboratory to plan for my work schedule in Japan.

My program in Japan consisted of research visits to various research institutions. These includes:- IPSR –Okayama, NIAS-Tsukuba, Nagoya University and Ishikawa prefecture university.

At NIAS-Tsukuba I was warmly received by Dr. Fukuta a well known rice breeder of JIRCAS and Dr. Hayashi a famous rice blast pathologist of NIAS. Dr. Hayashi, for a duration of one month then patiently took me through the processes of isolating *M. grisea* from infected rice samples and then characterization of the isolates using the differential rice lines. He also introduced me to the procedure of DNA fingerprinting of the blast pathogen through pot-2 PCR.

At Nagoya university with guidance of Dr. Makihara I visited rice blast field screening site at Sankan where I was taken through the procedure of field evaluation and screening for leaf and panicle blast. I also visited various research stations and factories within Nagoya prefecture and its neighbours where I learned about rice seed production, certification, registration of new varieties, milling and packaging.

At Ishikawa prefecture university, through the guidance of Dr. Takahara san I learnt an efficient and simplified method of screening rice lines/varieties for blast resistance under laboratory conditions. Prof. Koga then took me through the procedure of determining whether rice blast resistance is durable or not using

non-detached sheath inoculation method.

At IPSR, I have learnt the molecular techniques for determining genetic polymorphism in rice. This was made possible by Prof. Maekawa- a thorough and meticulous rice breeder assisted by Dr. Eiko Himi- a polite efficient and kind-hearted wheat breeder. Emily san a Kenyan MSc student in Prof. Maekawa's laboratory offered technical and moral support during the involving laboratory procedures.

Knowledge and skills gained from the various training session will go a long way in enabling the completion of my PhD work.

On top of the research training I also encountered several memorable events in Japan.

First is the visit to Ivy's square accompanied by Prof Maekawa and Dr. Himi san where we even made our own nice cups which will help in keeping the memory of this place alive. Then there was the farewell party at Kanazawa by Dr. Koga, the symposium and the mixer at IPSR and parting party by Prof. Maekawa. The most horrifying moment was during the two typhoons and then an earthquake of about 4.0 at Tsukuba. The experience was quite scaring.

In conclusion, I wish to acknowledge the entire staff of IPSR and the whole of the JSPS-AASPP collaborative team for granting me this wonderful opportunity. My appreciation also goes to the research staff members at Prof. Maekawa's Lab-IPSR, Dr. Hayashi's lab -NIAS, Dr. Makihara- Nagoya, Dr. Nakajima-Aichi, Prof. Koga and Dr. Takahara- Ishikawa university for the knowledge and skill disseminated to me during the trainings as well as the administration of the various host institutions for offering the facilities and resources to make the training possible. Without their kind gesture, this would not have been practically possible.

Hats-off to Prof. Maekawa of IPSR who have been a good friend and father figure to me during my entire stay in Japan. He, together with Dr. Himi ensured that my daily stay was comfortable and bearable. I will really miss the good and happy moments shared. Thanks to my Kenyan colleagues for the moral support.

May the spirit of the good work that you have initiated through the collaboration stand the test of time. It will never be in vain.

God bless you all.