

## **2019 Re-Inventing Japan Project (Long-Term)**

**Federal Rural University of Amazonia, Department of Forest Engineering, 5th year**

**Nathália Cardoso Pereira**

**Tokyo NODAI Department: Forest Science**

During the first semester of 2019 I had the opportunity to realize a dream, which until a few years ago seemed impossible, be able to participate in a long-term international exchange. The opportunity came through the Re-Inventing Japan program, a partnership between the Federal Rural University of Amazon and the Tokyo University of Agriculture.

I chose to participate in this program because I wanted to experiment an international experience before graduating, but I wanted to go to Japan specifically because the ancient culture has always intrigued me, and I admire it for many years. For this I prepared myself for a year to improve my grades and curriculum until the selective. I knew this opportunity would change my life and my future career as an engineer and human.



**Figure 1.** Students from Brazil arrived in Japan in April.

After arriving in Japan, it was not difficult to perceive the differences between Japanese and Brazilian culture, in the first weeks it felt difficult to adapt to the climate, food and social behavior of Japan. I had to change my lifestyle to have a better live with my friends. University and lab colleagues, and I certainly learned a lot about respect for others during this time.

Classes started in April, and in this month, I could met Tokyo Nodai campus and the lab that I chose to attend throughout the semester. The university campus is huge and extremely organized, highlighting, in my opinion, the library, which impressed me a lot and I sure miss it, other than that, I was able to watch the games of the university teams, some sports for the first time in my life. About the laboratory that I chose to attend was Forest Management, which was the responsibility of professor SATO Takayoshi and YOSHINO Satoshi.

During this period, I visited my family residing in Japan, in Nagano Prefecture, along with them I had the opportunity to visit Mt. Fuji, one of the most impressive places I have ever visited, just as I could see some of the remaining snow. Winter in the mountain for the first time. I could try Japanese cuisine more closely, as well as being able to visit several natural parks and beautiful tourist places.



**Figure 2.** Me and my cousins in Fujiyoshida.

In the following months, my activities were focused on the semester subjects, I chose 4 subjects, which were: Planning and Design of Landscape Architecture; Life history and Applications of Landscape Plants; Forest and Forestry and Basic Japanese.

A primeira era focada na paisagem ao longo de diversos parques e montanhas ao redor de Tokyo, e pude aprender um pouco sobre a história da paisagem japonesa.

The first was focused in landscape across the many parks and mountains around Tokyo, and I learned about the history of the Japanese landscape. The first practical class on Planning and Design of Landscape Plants we visited Hama rikyu park is one of the many sights of Japan that allows a beautiful view and peaceful environment to those who visit the park. Over the months that I spent in Japan, the Japanese Edo Era was cited in almost every discipline I could participate in, but visiting Hama Rikyu Park allowed me to visualize something concrete that existed during that time, despite knowing that its characteristics have been changed over the years.

The park has a comfortable and reserved air, like a secret place. It is not difficult to understand why looking for visitors to know the place. At the same place, I could see a Pinus Tree with 300-year-old, I know that in Japan there are trees older than the one mentioned, as well as in Brazil. What catch my attention was the techniques that the Japanese used to try to keep the tree in place, such as placing supports and their trunks. Which is very common to see on the streets and even on NODAI.



**Figure 3.** Hidden pond in Hama Rikyu Park

I had been in Tsukuba Space Center My impressions about this place was that the Earth was truly beautiful. This was the first time that I could see a special agency, and the instruments and the place was impressive.



**Figure 4.** Me and the international students and Japanese students in Tsukuba Space Center.

The second subject was Life History and Applications of Landscape Plants, and it focused on the history of these landscapes, especially in relation with plant species and park visits. The possibility of knowing about Japanese vegetation was extremely productive for me, after these practical class, it was possible to see new horizons for erosion control in Brazil, since my country presents one of the biggest problems in degraded areas in the world. In this course I also had the opportunity to attend a class

about Japanese history, ministered by Professor Patricia Wechl of Hofstra University, New York. As a special class, we also have the chance to witness a Japanese art show, Kyogen, a comedy theater, always accompanied by the Noh show, a more serious theater.

My favorite subjects were Forest and Forestry, because it is my specialty, which featured classes taught by excellent teachers, and basic Japanese, which although it was hard to follow, I felt extremely accomplished in being able to learn more about this language that interests me deeply.

At Forest and Forestry, we learn about forest management in Japan, soils and forest ecology. Certainly, all the classes were extremely interesting, with productive discussions from the forest point of view. Our last class was accompanied by Professor SATO, and we had the opportunity to visit Nihon Minkaen park, which preserves ancient Japanese houses and their stories.



**Figure 5.** Me and the class of Forest and Forestry in Nihon Minkaen park.

I decided to study Japanese because I have an extreme interest in the language and I want to become fluent someday, so I chose to study basic Japanese. It was a big challenge for me, considering my difficulties and learning ability, but it was worth it, because I could live closely with the language and learn a lot about the Japanese social customs, so I dedicated myself to the maximum. I had wonderful teachers who welcomed me and made me learn new things about the Japanese language. At the end of the subject, we had a special Japanese calligraphy class, and we had a chance to write some word of our choice on postcards that we could send to our families.

During the semester, all these courses can provide me many discoveries about Japan, culture and history, as well as the natural and historical beauty of the places I visited, and for me it was extremely productive and inspiring.



**Figure 6.** Basic Japanese class in the last day of subject.

About my interaction with NODAI students, they were somewhat restricted, mainly due to the low number of students who could communicate in English, as well as my difficulty in communicating in Japanese. But in the laboratory of forest management, I was able to talk closely with the forest students. Everyone welcomed me politely and kindly, and I was welcomed by everyone in the lab. In this point, I am very grateful to the teachers SATO Takayoshi and YOSHINO Satoshi, for giving me their knowledge and allowing me to live the Japanese culture intensely, thanks to the weekly lab meetings and practical trips with them, even though I was the only international student. At these times I got to know about the Japanese forests and their meanings, both in Tokyo Prefecture and in the Nagano forests. I lived so many unforgettable moments around my lab mates that cannot be expressed in words and surely, I miss them all, and thank you for the amazing 5 months.



**Figure 7.** Students and professor of Laboratory of Forest Management.

In August, TOKYO NODAI and ERECON invited me and my colleagues to have the opportunity to participate in a one-week internship program focusing on the sustainable use of natural resources.



**Figure 8.** Internship in ERECON.

For one week I had an opportunity to participate as training about Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in Institute of Environmental Rehabilitation and Conservation (ERECON). In Japan, ERECON keep up with rural farms, more specifically in Satoyamas, these is areas traditionally existed on the periphery of rural settlements, based on traditional methods of agriculture. During the internship, we could learn more about the ERECON activities around Asian countries and the importance of environmental services in the context of climate changes, lands and biodiversity.

The focus of our activities was to visit a Satoyama, which are areas traditionally existed on the periphery of rural settlements, based on traditional methods of agriculture. We met with the facilitators, who explained about the history of the place, and we could catch vegetables that would be eaten during lunch. In addition to these activities, we learned about pellet and biopesticide production.



**Figure 9.** Visiting a Satoyama.

On the last day, we need to prepare a social project that could be applied in our home countries and then present it to one of ERECON's directors. The internship opportunity was extremely learning for me, and I appreciate the availability of the Tokyo Agricultural University International Advisory Board, in partnership with ERECON, for the time and motivation during this internship.

Over the 5 months, I learned a lot about the world, from the experience of living with people from other cultures and countries, as well as I could learn a lot about myself, living far away from my family and friends. I was able to gain more knowledge through the opportunity to take English classes on various topics concerning Japan, and all subjects were somehow linked to Japanese culture and traditions.

Japanese culture is one of the most impressive I've ever been able to see closely, respect for others is an admirable thing that should be spread around the world. The cuisine is unique and tasty, I tried a little of everything and my favorites are the ramen and okonomiyaki. I am so grateful to have known this very special country, to have seen wonderful places, such as Mt. Fuji, Kyoto, Osaka and Hiroshima, as well as Tokyo itself.



**Figure 10.** Golden Temple in Kyoto.

The Re-Inventing Japan program has fulfilled my dream of know Japan, I believe that after 5 months of living, I returned to my country as a different person, with other points of view about relationships between people and my relationship with nature, and that I hope to preserve in myself and be able to shape myself as a differentiated professional in the job market. In this way, I hope to be able to apply some of the knowledge acquired in the future, I hope to improve the quality of work in the Brazilian forests, and to value these places, like the Japanese people.

I extremely recommend the program to anyone who truly wants to know and experience life in Japan.

I'd like to offer a few suggestions so, in the future, the Re-inventing Project Japan could be so much better:

- Encourage Japanese students to study English language at NODAI so we can spend more time with students.

- Go through more information about university life, such as existing clubs and study groups, which I believe has been poorly recommended and I feel that I could participated much more in internal activities.
- I would suggest a better control of activities for students who have been selected for the program and do not participate in exchange activities.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Naomi and Azael again, for all the time that they have had with me and my colleagues during these 5 months, as well as thanks all the CIP staff for their attention. I appreciate a lot the attention of my professor SATO Takayoshi and YOSHINO Satoshi, for absolutely everything that they did for me while I was present. And thanks TOKYO NODAI and UFRA for allowing me to realize my dream and live this wonderful experience.

I made amazing friends that I will always remember and hope to return and study again at NODAI.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.



**Figure 10.** Last day with international students in NODAI.