

## Final Essay Re-inventing Japan Project (RJP)

Federal Rural University of the Amazon, Agriculture engineering – 3rd Year

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Since my childhood I have the dream to study abroad to know different cultures and face new experiences, but this not as normal as it could be in Brazil so I knew that it was a distant reality. When I started to study agriculture engineering in the Federal Rural University of Amazonia I remember that one of the first things I look for was the possibilities I had to make my dream come true. When I heard about the Re-inventing Japan project one spark of flame began in my heart, mainly because, I was and still am a Japan sympathizer. I always watched anime and liked Japanese food but I could never imagine going to “the other side of the world”, and then I think “Wow Japan will be awesome” and gladly I was right.

On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, I arrive in Japan, in the beginning I did not believe I was finally in the other side of the world, when we arrive at Nodai the CIP members Azael-san and Naomi-san were waiting for us for reception. It was so nice to finally meet in person two of the persons that I was communicating with before and that helped me more than I can tell in making this dream become true. They give us the introduction, explain us some things and rules, later that day I could meet the other international students from other countries (figure 1). Nodai also made us a welcoming party (留学パーティー)

welcoming all the overseas students. With the other Brazilians we dance to show part of our culture (figure 2).



Figure 1 留学生



Figure 2 留学生パーティー

I had one week, before class to adapt to my new reality and choose the classes that I wanted to apply and I choose to make: Vegetable production for international cooperation, Environment and agriculture, food and health 1, global food systems, Japanese agriculture development, food and environment in economic development, life

history and application of landscape, planning and design of landscape architecture, and Japanese language class.

In vegetable production, I could learn how to grow up various crops in Japanese way, cultivation techniques; we could also learn how to build pipe houses, tunnels and climatic control, learned how to produce bokashi and grafting techniques.

On Environment and agriculture, we learn about soil properties, desertification problem in developing countries such as Ethiopia, agriculture facilities, moisture content in food and the importance in how to control it and new technologies used in industrial scale in postharvest and about sake making all process the microorganism involved, how they interact with rice and produce different kind of sake.

In Food and health lecture, we could learn about the risks in the management of foodborne pathogens in Japan, about Lactic acid bacteria that were my favorite class from this lecture we could learn the importance, how the process happens and the application of LAB in food as yogurt, butter, pickles etc. We could also learn about cellular metabolism, cell structure, its composition. About AMPK enzyme that is activated in low nutrition condition. In this class we could learn too about fermentation process like sake making and all the microorganism that are associated to the beverage, how microorganism like the bacteria from the rhizobium genus can recognize soybean root and of course how to have good food habits.

Global food system was one of my favorite classes, mainly because I could travel the world without get out of Japan and also learn a lot about Japanese food and habits around it, what catch my attention on this class was the importance of rice (ご飯) to Japanese culture as the principal dish that compose Japanese meals. Our sensei drew our attention to the change in habits caused by globalization, where youth Japanese are stopping eating rice and are changing to other carbon sources as wheat in pasta and bread. On this class, we had more opportunity to speak about our own countries food habits, Japanese students could tell us their impressions, and more about their opinion in youth habits. All of us were responsible to make a presentation about on food system in our own

country, it was so nice to know more about Mexican, French, Nepal, Peru and Japan food systems. I could present class about the importance of coffee to Brazilian culture it was so nice to make my first English presentation and see how interested they are in our culture.

Japanese agriculture development lecture I could learn the big variety of dishes made of rice in Japan such as: cooked rice, onigiri, rice crackers, rice wine and vinegar and rice sweets like mochi. We learn about normal land size in Japan that is so different in Brazil for example that have such big extension of land, we discuss about principal products produced and the extension of area covered by them like: soybeans, rice, green soybeans, asparagus, tomato and pear. We could know more about stages of work in Japanese farmland: extensive, intensive and organic system and discuss a little about it in Japan and in our own countries and its classification. The work force problem in farmland was also discussed and about agricultural trainee that was the immediate solution for this, we discuss about concepts of kenshusei and gino-gesshusei and together we tried to solve this problem creating a new project.

Food and environment in economic development lecture we learn about agriculture policies and their targets, cash transfer program such as conditional, unconditional and microcredit, how to measure poverty, inequality and income distribution. We also learn about global food crisis mainly about trends of international cereal prices and how the production is held mainly, by just few countries like: USA, Brazil, France, Canada etc. How the development change food habits in the population that start consuming more meat

Life history and application of landscape, was a class exclusive composed by field trips. In the first field trip students went to Kawasaki city to see Satoyama, in the beginning of the visit professor said that after the world war there was an increase in the Japanese population, that made people moved to suburbs where the 3rd sector companies was building new houses with low prices. That movement of people going to the suburbs made a big pressure in forests and nature to give space for the infra instruction for people live well.

However, after the phenomenon of increase population there was an opposite phenomenon of decrease population caused by the difficulties to emigrants establish in Japan principally caused by the idiom and cultural differences. Other problem that may cause the decrease of population is the new way that young people start to live, by do not caring to much about natural things and just think about consume.

After the discussion, the students went into the Satoyama to see landscape, where they can find a variety of plants like sakura trees, as arum, ajuga, dokudami and bamboo. The government in partnership with Noday University bought the area to study and preserve the Satoyama. Noday's students conduct many experiments in the area comparing the appearance of native spices in areas with bamboo and areas where the bamboo are cut. The studies shown that bamboo disturbs the growth of sakura and many native spices.

At last, I thought that the field was an amazing experience to know more the nature in Japan and how important this kind of areas are for the preservation of nature and how they rescue the old Japanese way with young people of the ancient Japanese culture who loves nature things

Feld trip two: Weeds in 多摩川 bank

In the second field trip, students went to Noborito in Kanagawa Prefecture to see the weed bank near Tama-gawa River. First when we arrive at the station Tanaka sensei explain the importance of Japanese rivers and how they with many years change the landscape architecture of mountain areas to flat areas, also the big problem that the cause the floods in the raining season.

Walking in the riverside, we could see the environment that they produce. We could see some trees and the professor explain us that, they are consider a problem and sometimes is prohibited by law. Most of the students been shocked because in Brazil for example when we think in river bank preservation we automatically think about planting trees in the edge but in Japan's case the trees disrupts the flow of water and vegetable debris during the raining season.

We could see many varieties of species of weed during the walking by the river. We could learn that they are used in Japanese culture as food and play a part in traditional ceremonies like in the tea ceremony. What most surprised me in this trip was the big amount of exotic species including Brazilian ones as a water plant that's very common in Brazil's rivers and was introduced like ornamental plant but spread through Japanese rivers.

Field trip number Three: Iriya 朝顔 Festival

In the final field trip students meet at Uguisu-dani station to a local festival, about asagao flower, this festival is one of the biggest festival dedicated to the flower in Japan.

The asagao flower also known as glory flower is a species that belongs to the family Convolvulaceae. It is believed that it was introduced in Japan by diplomats that came from China during Nara period. At first the plant was used as seeds as medicine, but during Edo period became very popular in Japan and people started to grow that flower in big quantity and used as decorative plant. The name asagao comes from the 朝 that means morning and 顔 that means face, very close to the English name glory morning.

Asagao flower has a very short life it blooms in the morning and wilts in the afternoon, the most popular colors are blue and purple but we can also find pink, white, brown and some other colors.

In the afternoon students went to Ueno park, after lunch we went to the Ueno Zoological Gardens one of the oldest zoos in Japan, it was founded in 1882 and is home for more than 3 thousand of animals of different species.

Originally the place was owned by the royal family that gives the place for the major in occasion of the prince Hirohito wedding.

As a preventive measure the Japanese government during the Second World War ordered the killing of animals that could jeopardize human lives, because during the bombing the animals could be released and cause panic in the streets. Despite requests

from zoo officials, the animals were killed by poisoning, strangulation or simply starving, and a memorial was built for them in the same year.

Planning and design of landscape architecture was also a class exclusive composed by field trips:

Field trip one: Hamarikyu gardens

In the third field trip students were conducted to Tsukijishijo Station, after a small walk where we could see the demolition of the old fish market we could reach Hamarikyu garden a beautiful park near Tokyo bay. The park is full of ponds with seawater and traditional Japanese style garden, all of this in contrast with the peripheral view of the skyscrapers.

The garden was built in the Edo period and serve as many propose over the years. At first as feudal lord residence in Tokyo and after that as place duck hunting etc.

We could see several reconstructed hunting blinds, for hunters hide and hunt ducks during the Edo era, the professor explain us the some meat was not allow for people eating, which made the ducks hunting increase during this period as an alternative source of protein.

After we could see one big pine tree that survived the second war and remains alive for more than 300 years, it is so big that is necessary tutors to support the trunk and the leaves of the tree. Walking a little bit further we could see one fujimiyama hill that was built to see the Mount Fuji, the professor explain us that there are a many fujimiyama hills all over the Tokyo for people admire the mount and also for prayers to pray to maintain.

In this trip, what most impressed me was the contrast between the green area and the skyscrapers, also the old pine tree that survived time and the second war, and mainly and knowing that during the Edo era was forbidden to consume certain kind of meat and that is why the duck hunter increase.



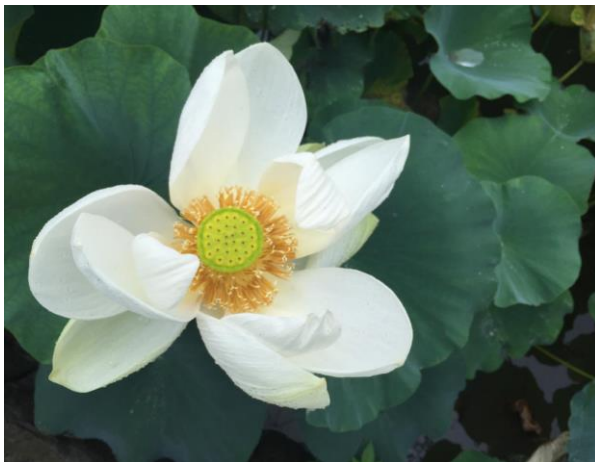
## Field trip two: Kamakura city

In the second field trip the students were conducted to beautiful Kamakura city, when we arrived the teacher explain a bit about the history of the ancient Kamakura that was capital of japan for a time and its history began in Kamakura period that began when Minamoto no Yoritomo defeat Taira, and began the Bushido era. Kamakura was a perfect capital because was surrounded by mountains and seawater, built turned to the sea with a big road coming directly to the royal palace.

During the path to the first temple, the teacher drew our attention to the difference in the colors of the sign of a well-known convenience store it was explained us that the major of the city control urban architecture due that some parts of Kamakura is protected by law.



The second part of the trip we went to the Tsurugaoka shrine and Hokokuji temple. The Tsurugaoka shrine was founded by Minamoto in 1063, the temple served as the seat of government due to its location to get less influence of Kyoto politics. We could see a beautiful garden of lotus and an old tree that was very important to Japanese culture we also could see a marriage ceremony happening in a small place in the middle of the gardens. Hokokuji temple is Secluded in the hills of eastern Kamakura is knew by the sited Buda and its beautiful bamboo forest that is very liked Kyoto gardens, there's a narrow pathways that leads to a tea house where we could see how is design of the house: with open windows where people can see the beautiful view around.



### Field trip Three:

In the field trip number tree we could have the opportunity to climb the mount Takao (高尾山) kindly called by Japanese people Takao-san. Takao is a mountain of 599

meters there is many ways to climb but we dived to climb by using the old way. While climbing we found a small cave where people use to go in because they believe once you get in and get out you are living your old life behind and starting a new one. There is also an observation area, where in clear days we can see Tokyo and Fuji-san, but unfortunately the day was cloudy and we could not. Almost in the top there is a temple called Yakuo. There was many people there to pray for Tengu, Shinto-Buddhist Mountain gods for good fortune, we could see some statues one with a long nose, one with a crow beak and a kind of portal where people pass thought, beat a bell and throw a 5 yen coin and make a wish.

In the summit, we could see how beautiful nature is we had our lunch and contemplate the wonderful view from the top.

