

My Route to Kyoto

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While studying for a degree in Psychology in my native Scotland, I became increasingly fascinated by studies of learning and behavior in nonhuman primates: prosimians, monkeys and apes. Studies of wild primates – their ecology and social behavior - and studies of captive primates – their communicative and cognitive abilities - equally captured my imagination, and soon I became aware of important contributions to “Primateology” by scientists from Kyoto University. The names of Japanese researchers and their studies on Japanese monkeys, Indian langurs and African chimpanzees became increasingly familiar to me, as did “exotic” place names such as Arashiyama, Koshima, and Inuyama (the site of Kyoto University’s Primate Research Institute). Early volumes of the scientific journal *Primates*, published by the Japan Monkey Centre, became an important resource as I spent many hours in the university library searching for further information about the behavior of primates of all kinds. Little did I expect that, 40 years on, I would join the ranks of those Kyoto University primatologists.

After completing my Bachelor’s degree and then my PhD at the University of Stirling, in 1983 I moved from Scotland to take up my first permanent academic job, in Strasbourg, in the eastern French region of Alsace. Strasbourg is a beautiful city, steeped in European history, and visually stunning with its unique combination of German and local architectural styles. I felt privileged to be able to live there and enjoy the culture and surrounds at my leisure thanks to my chosen career path in primate research. During the years I spent in Strasbourg I was able to conduct research on a range of behavioral topics in primates, including communication, dominance, learning and cognition, and environmental enrichment.

It was towards the end of my 12 years in Strasbourg, in the summer of 1994, that I had my first direct contact with a Japanese colleague, Dr Shoji Itakura, who came to conduct a research project at the primate research center. This collaboration proved successful, resulting in a jointly published paper that became well cited. In return, two years later Shoji invited me to a conference in Tokyo, where began the specific chain of events that resulted in me eventually moving permanently to Kyoto. At the conference I met and chatted with another Japanese colleague, Dr. Kazuo Fujita, already an established Professor at Kyoto University and whose research I knew and admired. He had recently established a research laboratory for psychological research on birds, rodents, and nonhuman primates. During that initial, brief discussion he proposed to invite me to Kyoto as an Invited Professor, an invitation that I accepted partly out of curiosity and partly out of politeness. In fact I thought little more about it, and my memories of the sights and buzzing atmosphere of Tokyo began to fade as I continued my teaching and research in Stirling, where I had returned in 1995.

After about a year with little further contact, things suddenly started to move quickly. The official invitation from Kyoto came through, and I hurriedly had to

make arrangements for sabbatical leave, obtain a visa from the Japanese Consulate in Edinburgh, and so on. And so in July 1998 I arrived in Kyoto for the first time, with no real idea about what to expect. I had read briefly about the history of Kyoto, and about its temples and gardens, but no amount of reading can really prepare you for the first-hand experience of a “new” place, especially one as unique as Kyoto.

The first thing that surprised me was the heat and humidity of the summer weather. Scotland never gets so warm. Strasbourg can get very hot and humid, but not like Kyoto! I remember that before I left Scotland Kaz casually mentioned at the end of an email message that in summer the temperature was usually around 35^o, but he said nothing about the humidity! The oppressive heat and humidity of July and August is something that took getting used to, but I now find that I actually enjoy those weather conditions, which often surprises my Japanese friends.

Those first six months in Kyoto saw me exploring many of the famous shrines and temples, along with many less well-known ones, and several beautifully atmospheric gardens. I bought a book that outlined several walks in and around the city, and that proved invaluable as I started to piece together a mental map of what would one day become my home. The locations of convenience stores were easily memorable, and also important for picking up food late at night after a day of discussions and carrying out psychology experiments on monkeys. Our research then focused on a form of self-control, and tactical deception by squirrel monkeys, and I also taught introductory animal behavior to a mixture of undergraduate and graduate students.

As summer gave way to autumn, I appreciated the cooler temperatures and the changing color of the leaves, on the mountainsides and around temples. Our research was starting to produce interesting results, and I was even starting to understand a few Japanese phrases and recognize some Kanji characters. Autumn eventually turned to winter, and it was time for me to return to Scotland. Although sad to leave after an enjoyable and productive six months, somehow I felt that I would return to Kyoto one day.

Our research during that first six-month visit soon gave rise to our first joint publication, and the following year I was granted a Kyoto University Fellowship to continue our studies on various aspects of monkey psychology. And so started what became an almost unbroken series of twice-yearly visits to Kyoto. My home university's semester system meant that each summer I was able to come to Kyoto for 3 months in the summer, and then again for up to 2 months in the winter, and that has been the general pattern for the last 15 years. In collaborative studies with Prof. Fujita and his students we have conducted original research and published on a range of topics including self-control, self-awareness, nonverbal communication, and behavioral influences of visual form and color. The laboratory is a vibrant environment with students working on a range of topics in several different species of birds and mammals.

During my first few visits I lived in various apartments around Kitashirakawa, very convenient for walking to Yoshida campus. Later, I moved to Demachiyanagi, also convenient, and with the additional advantage of being near the Kamogawa River. The river is one of my favorite things about Kyoto. I never tire of walking along the banks. Whatever the season, there is always something interesting to see, either in the water, beside the water, or up in the air, as the kites soar and swoop down to pick up whatever food they please. And although I knew about the cherry blossom season, when I finally saw the trees in full blossom along the riverbanks it was even more beautiful than I had anticipated. I immediately bought a new camera so that I could send photos to friends and family, who all agree that it is a fantastic sight. A combination of proximity to the river, excellent shopping facilities, and being within walking distance to the university helped me to decide to finally settle in the Demachiyanagi area.

During my 2013 summer trip Kaz asked if I would like to teach at Kyoto University. Thinking that he meant another 6-month visit as Invited Professor, I replied that of course I would be interested, and I would need to negotiate with my university for another sabbatical period. But that was not what he meant. He explained about Kyoto University's Institute for Liberal Arts and Sciences, and that I would be teaching students in English. This seemed like an interesting challenge! As much of my teaching has been aimed at introductory level psychology students, I thought it should be possible to re-write and extend my classes to make the material more accessible to a wider range of students. I also felt that it would be satisfying to help non-native speakers to become more at ease both listening and expressing themselves in English, especially in a scientific context. I felt privileged at being asked to consider applying for such a position, and started to weigh up the advantages and costs of emigrating to Japan at this relatively late stage of my career.

I would probably have continued to procrastinate over making a final decision, but that decision was urgent, as there were application deadlines that had to be met so that everything would be ready for April 2014. My next step was therefore to gather the opinions of friends, family members, and colleagues back home, through a frantic series telephone conversations and e-mail exchanges. Quite to my surprise, these opinions were almost universally positive about the move, which helped me to reach the momentous decision to say "Yes" to my colleague's invitation to apply for the position at Kyoto University.

Last winter I came back to Kyoto as I have done so many times before, but this time as well as doing research I started to prepare for my new life in Kyoto. Colleagues arranged for me to visit several apartments; I considered each one carefully (location, size, amenities, cost....) before usually rejecting them all. Fortunately my colleagues were very tolerant of my choosiness, and I'm delighted to say that, following some long negotiations, I finally moved into the one apartment that I felt was "right" for me.

So after 19 years of teaching in my "home" university in Stirling, my "new life" in Kyoto began on April 1st. As with any other new job there is a settling in period. For me that means becoming better acquainted with the University's

administrative procedures (everyone is so helpful!), preparing new classes (something that I have not had to do much of for several years), and establishing some kind of routine that will allow me to combine teaching with research. No doubt, there will be many challenges ahead, one of which will be to improve my Japanese language abilities, but I'm looking forward to meeting them all as they arrive.

Having spent more than 12 years of my early career at one of the most prestigious universities in France, and having successfully collaborated with colleagues from one of Japan's most prestigious institutions over a 15-year period, it now actually feels "natural" for me to physically relocate to Kyoto, where I hope to be able to contribute to the students' intellectual development and continue to be research active in the years ahead.