

**Final Report**  
December 2008 – July 2009



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ドミニク・ウーシュプラング











# 序文

## Preface

In summer 2008, in the middle of the preparations for my final exams in Geneva, I was very confident about the second part of the scholarship program of the Swiss Japanese Chamber of Commerce (SJCC) because I successfully found, as hoped, already at the end of my first stay in Japan (July 2007 – February 2008) an adequate internship position. However, sometimes things change rapidly and take an unexpected course. In the middle of June I was informed that my internship would not take place. Since I did not expect that and had already booked my flight to Japan, I had to come up with a new plan.

Although I was looking for another internship position in Japan I heard about an offer in Korea and applied for it with success. This was only a short internship of three month and I decided to simply insert those three month in Korea, before coming back to Japan for a new internship that had yet to be found.

So it happened to me that I boarded my original flight to Japan, spent some days there to look for internship positions (starting ideally in January) and then flew over to Seoul, where I would spend three fantastic months and gain many valuable insights.

July 2007	October 2007	February 2008	September 2008	January 2009
				
Intensive language training Tokyo	Autumn-Semester Sophia University Tokyo	Spring-Semester and final exams Graduate Institute (IHEID) Geneva	Internship Swiss Embassy Republic of Korea Seoul	Internship National Parliament of Japan Tokyo
				
3 months	4.5 months	7.5 months	3 months	6 months

In order to find a new internship in Japan, the ongoing support of the SJCC, was crucial and allowed me to have in September 2008 (during my quick visit in Tokyo) a first encounter with a contact in the Japanese Parliament. There seemed to be an internship position available. This was confirmed in December when I came back from Seoul and after a few more meetings in Tokyo's Nagatacho political district<sup>1</sup>, I was informed that I could commence working in my new office as of January 2009 – the year when general elections of the lower house needed to take place no later than September. These were very promising prospects.

<sup>1</sup> For a good overview of Nagatacho's role in politics see for example Mure Dickie's article „War on the samurai“ in the financial times (29 June 2009)  
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This final report intends to give the reader an insight into my six-month working experience in the office of a young, dynamic and unconventional member (called “rebel” by the Japan Times) of the Japanese House of Representatives. Although I had a rough idea of what was expecting me during this internship<sup>2</sup>, it turned out to be an experience far beyond my expectations. For that, I can only express my deepest gratitude to *everyone* who was involved in offering me this unique opportunity to spend half a year in the very centre of Japanese politics.

I believe that the support of the SJCC is absolutely crucial firstly, to encourage young people to dare making the step onto the Japanese archipelago and secondly, to significantly facilitate a middle- to long term planning for a career linked to Japan. Further, it meant a lot to me that Mr. Paul Dudler as a Chairman of the Scholarship Found supported me in any situation throughout the changes and new schedules that occurred over the period that was covered by the scholarship. Without this flexibility, understanding and trust, all those enriching experiences would not have been possible.

最後にこの経験をするにあたって、  
色々な方にお世話になったことを感謝をしたい。

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<sup>2</sup> Reports of other SJCC Scholarship recipients who did an Internship in the Parliament: Interim Report Stamm - PDF (2007), Bericht Hartmann - PDF (2003): [www.sjcc.ch/](http://www.sjcc.ch/)  
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# 目次

## Index



<b>Preface</b>		2
<b>Preparations</b>		
	Discovering the Korean peninsula	5
	Visa (Cultural Activity)	6
<b>Working in Nagatachō</b>		
	A full start	6
	Customs and rules at work	7
	Responsibilities	8
<b>Travelling In Japan</b>		
	Kyūshū, Zaō, Nishi-Izu and Kinosaki	9
<b>Future Prospects</b>		
	IFIL and SOAS	10

# 準備

## Preparations Flexibility, Seoul



### Discovering the Korean Peninsula

Before taking up the second part of my scholarship, I was offered the opportunity to do an internship in the Embassy of Switzerland in Seoul. Since I was already familiar with the history of Korea from a class that I took during my time as exchange student in Tokyo, I was looking forward to further develop my understanding of that often miss- and generally little understood country.

I spent three very inspiring months in Seoul, worked on topical issues and could engage in a wide range of activities. The reason why I am mentioning this period here is to shed some light on an unusual link between Switzerland and Korea that affects our understanding of Japan. During the preparations for my final exams in Geneva, I realised that the literature on the history of East Asia is often biased and not reproducing a balanced view of historical events, or there is too much importance given to the succession of families or dynasties. The important links, causes and effects that would allow us to understand the emergence and development of East-Asia to today's situation are too often ignored.

Now, there is one important exception: Swiss Researcher, Prof. Martina Deuchler. Not only does she master all the languages that are necessary to study Korean history (i.e. Korean, Chinese and Japanese), she has also a talent to explain complex events in a very clear and organised way. The fact that she not only identified primary sources (and assessed them as significant national documents), but could read them herself gave her works the precision and direct insights that we do not find elsewhere.

It is only recently that Deuchler's work has been discovered and appreciated by a wider public.<sup>3</sup> In particular her book on the opening of Korea is an easy read but full of fascinating descriptions and explanations. I can only strongly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in the very beginning and subsequent evolution of the international relations between China, Korea and Japan.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In 2008, Deuchler was the first recipient of the Korea Foundation Award for outstanding contributions to the development of Korean Studies internationally. Further, she received the 2009 Award for Distinguished Contributions to Asian Studies from the Association for Asian Studies (AAS)

<sup>4</sup> Deuchler Martina (1977). „*Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys. The Opening of Korea, 1875-1885*“. University of Washington Press  
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## Cultural Activity Visa<sup>5</sup>

For an activity that is non-remunerated and aimed at acquiring a better understanding of Japanese customs, sports or culture, the cultural activity visa is the one to apply for. In my case the six months in the Parliament were intended to make me familiar with the “culture of Japanese Politics”.<sup>6</sup> It is important to know that the requirements for this type of visa are very strict and it is necessary to provide the immigration office with very detailed information such as a job description, a Curriculum Vitae in Japanese, etc. In addition, a certificate of eligibility is needed as well. Thus, it is necessary to start this procedure well in advance.

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Working In Nagatachō  
House of Representatives



### A full start

I could definitely not complain about a lack of big events during my internship. On my very first working day I was thrown in the midst of the upheavals that Japanese politics was already going through for quite some time. The effects of the financial crisis arrived late but then even stronger in Japan and hit the economy that was believed to be slowly recovering, very badly. At the same time, the political sphere was characterised by a deadlock in the bicameral legislative branch. As in many other countries the wider public expected to government to react to the economic crisis and intervene. However, this was not that easy since the decision-making process was markedly slowed down since the opposition took control of the upper house in 2007.<sup>7</sup> This was one of the reasons why an increasing number of actors outside the ruling party were hoping for general elections in order to break the deadlock. All surveys predicted a clear victory of the opposition camp, but then Prime Minister Aso was not keen on dissolving the House of Representatives to overcome the situation. Nevertheless, general elections had to be hold before September 2009. Thus, my time in Nagatachō was obviously dominated by the preparations and strategies towards this event. In short: it was election time in Japan.

<sup>5</sup> 文化活動 Academic or artistic activities that provide no income, or activities for the purpose of pursuing learning and acquiring Japanese culture or arts. 収入を伴わない学術・芸術上の活動又は日本特有の文化・技芸の研究・修得

<sup>6</sup> 日本政治文化

<sup>7</sup> „As a general rule, a bill becomes a law after passage by both houses. A bill that is passed by the House of Representatives but rejected by the House of Councillors can still become law if it is passed a second time by the House of Representatives by a majority of two-thirds or more of the members present. **This provision shall also apply if the House of Councillors fails to take final action within 60 days of receipt of a bill passed by the House of Representatives (...).**” <http://www.shugiin.go.jp>

On that 13 January 2009, my first working day, my superior (called Senpai in Japan) showed me around my new work environment which would not be limited to our office building<sup>8</sup> but include the party headquarter, the national diet library and of course the parliament.<sup>9</sup> I could access all of them at any time with my personal badge. At the end of this introductory tour we reached the assembly hall where the plenary session was taking place. From the gallery I followed the debate of the House and I could see my deputy “doing his work”.

That day, a vote on a second supplementary budget to stimulate the economy was to take place. About 20% of this additional budget, i.e. around ¥2 trillion (CHF22.8bn) was intended to be distributed to the Japanese population in form of cash handouts.<sup>10</sup> After intense debates the opposition camp left the chamber collectively to boycott the vote. But, to my surprise, my new boss had also left his seat, while the remaining members of his own party successfully passed the budget. I was first not aware of the impact this deliberate but spontaneous action had and would have in the future, but as soon as I saw the numerous reactions in and outside the office, I started to understand the extent of the incident.

Later on, in the middle of the night, I received a text message from my Senpai instructing me to come earlier to work the following day because we needed to deal with the first immediate consequence. Until that day, my deputy was a member of the cabinet, however, since he did not support the cash handout plan, by absenting himself from the vote, he was no longer a member of it. As a result we needed to move his belongings from the second office he had in the cabinet building back to the normal one that all the members of the House have. I spend the next few days with checking and scanning all the newspaper articles about this event. Beyond that, there were many people passing by in our office which helped a lot to get familiar with the adequate formal behaviour that I had now many occasions to practice.

## Customs and rules at work

Bowing and greetings are extremely important and the deputy even took some time to correct and help me perfection my manners. One of the difficulties was to quickly recognise the status of the guests that came to our office. Sometimes I did not have to stand up and could keep on working at my desk, but in all other cases, such as a visit of bureaucrats, interest groups or another deputy, I had to stand up as fast as possible and make sure the office is welcoming them correctly before they could (if the matter was important) meet the deputy. The same applied for telephone conversations: if I did not correctly understand the name and the position of the person I was listening to, it became difficult to use the appropriate language in the conversation. For example, it was not appreciated if I greeted people from the same office that were working in the electoral district in a too formal way.<sup>11</sup>

## Responsibilities

Our office consisted of one main policy adviser, my superior and a secretary. Beyond that there was an even bigger team working in the electoral district and over time I discovered that there were also a few more people that were somehow connected with our office. To my surprise I had a very interesting role to play: on the one hand I was treated like any other Japanese. Being the youngest member in the office, I had to do all the tasks that go

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<sup>8</sup> 議員会館

<sup>9</sup> For a good overview on the political district in Tokyo see for example the illustrations in Mure Dickie's article „War on the samurai“ in the financial times (29 June 2009)

<sup>10</sup> 定額給付金

<sup>11</sup> People from the same office have to be greeted with 「お疲れ様です」 and all others with 「どうもお世話になっております」

along with that. Yet, I could also fulfil other tasks that not many other members of the house would let a foreign intern do. One such thing was that I could already in the second week at work represent my deputy at official events! I was simply given his business card and told to memorise one sentence that says that I attend the event representing the person on the card.<sup>12</sup>

The first time I went to such a party (I was the only one who arrived on foot and not with a limousine), I was overwhelmed to find a huge welcome delegation of thirty people smiling at me, as I left the elevator in the luxurious Akasaka Prince Hotel. Anyway, I became quickly used to this environment and started to like those gatherings and henceforth attended them from time to time. Since the very goal of this internship was to understand how politics is done in Japan, this was a very valuable experience. Furthermore, I had very interesting conversations with people working in Nagatacho but also members of different professional organisations or other interest groups and associations.

Another thing that made my six-month internship so interesting were the short moments in which the deputy taught me about certain aspects of Japanese culture or the functioning of politics in Japan. In return it was my job to be ready anytime to make brief oral summaries of international events or reactions in the world press on topical events in Japan. I usually hold them over lunch with our office. I loved this task and spend everyday at least two hours with reading all relevant international newspapers and other news sources.

### **In the electoral district**

The deputy was also very eager to show me his electoral district and the work he and his different support groups<sup>13</sup> were doing there. In this way, I had the chance to see that working at the basis was even harder than working in the office in Tokyo. During the week that I spent there (there was no such thing as a weekend), the work started very early and already at 7am I was at the station with the deputy and his team to distribute his manifesto.<sup>14</sup> After that, we went back to the office and prepared one of the core activities of the support group: going from house to house (in an electoral district that includes more than 300'000 inhabitants) and talk with the people. The support group worked with a very detailed system in which every household and its political preference were registered step by step. Based on that, flyers were (or were not) distributed and some people did also allow us to attach an election poster to their house. It was an enormous amount of work that had to be done this way, but I perceived it as a good way to learn about the concerns and opinions of the population. Most importantly, a major part of the work with this system has been done by young university students. Japan is often perceived as a country where young people cannot take on responsibilities. This was not the case here and I found a very mixed team that worked perfectly together. I found it very encouraging that young people had major responsibilities there while working and respecting the elder ones.

Beyond the purely professional part of such a job I could also see behind it and I am grateful for having been given such an insight. Moreover, I was treated very well in my office in Tokyo. This does not mean that life was easy, it took me at least two months to get used to the pressure of behaving correctly in different contexts, but I think that it was very unusual that I could gain such an insight into Japanese politics.

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<sup>12</sup> 代理出席でございます

<sup>13</sup> 後援会

<sup>14</sup> 通信



# 旅行

## Travelling in Japan Kyūshū, Zao, Nishi-Izu and Kinoshima



### Kyūshū 九州

I have now already been to Kyūshū several times and I am still surprised that many parts of it are still unknown to a wider public. One example is the so-called Asoyufu-plateau bus.<sup>15</sup> Information about it are only available in Japanese but there are also not many Japanese using this excellent offer to discover the wonderful nature and landscape covering the Aso caldera, Yufuin and even Kurokawa. It is the best way to see those areas if you do not rent a car and the tickets for the bus are quite cheap as well. It is possible to board the bus in Beppu, Yufuin or Aso.

### Zaō 蔵王

An excellent option for skiing up in the Tohoku region, less than 4 hours from Tokyo, is the small spa resort Zaō of Yamagata prefecture. As usual the best deals for train, accommodation and ski rental are only available in Japanese. The area offers very easy access from the hotels to the ski lifts and there is usually plenty of slopes that have the potential to also make a Swiss skier very happy.

### Nishi-Izu 西伊豆

Although Izu is famous and popular for its proximity to Tokyo, the western part of this island is rather quiet but as beautiful as the east coast and thus definitely worth a visit. Even with public transport the area can easily be discovered. A good option would be to take the train from Tokyo to Numazu and then board one of the small boats that bring you to different resorts or villages along the west coast of the peninsula. From there you can take a Tokai Bus that brings you to Shuzen-ji (in the middle of the island), which is best explored with the bicycles that can be rented at the train station.

### Kinoshima 城崎

Kinoshima was another highlight during my time in Japan. It is a slightly touristic but very small spa resort in the very northern part of Hyōgo prefecture. The coastal area can only be explored if you rent a car, but the spa town itself has train connections to Osaka. There are also excellent restaurants in the quiet side streets to the main road.

<sup>15</sup> あそゆふ高原バス: <http://www.irkkyushu.co.jp/tabi/yamanami/index.jsp>

## Future Prospects IFIL and SOAS



### **Initiative For Intercultural Learning IFIL.CH<sup>16</sup>**

In April 2008, after I came back from my first eight-month long stay in Japan to Switzerland, I felt that it was time to give something back from all the experiences that I had the chance to go through in Japan. It was then, in the time between by the two parts of my scholarship, that I could convince two other Japan experts, Simon Kneubühl and Anna Takihara to be part of a project team that would organise a two-weeks trip to Japan for students from all over Switzerland.

The journey took place in late August 2009 and was, as I hoped, very instrumental to pass on our interest in the country to other young and motivated Swiss students. Now, there is already a new edition of this trip in planning for September 2010.

### **University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)**

Another consequence of my time in Japan was, that I decided to follow this Japan track even further and commence a one-year Masters program on “International Management for Japan” which can be done here in London. It is one of the few programs where language and management/regional study courses are part of the same degree. In my opinion, this is a combination that should be given more attention to and also offered elsewhere.

<sup>16</sup> More information about the trip can be found on [www.ifil.ch](http://www.ifil.ch)  
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## Photographic Sources:

Page 1: First working day. Page 2: 'Jet d'eau' in Geneva (Picture by P.Padrutt). Page 4: Toi Spa in Nishi-Izu (土肥温泉). Page 5: Presentation on Higher Education in Switzerland at Study and Research in Europe event at Seoul National University <http://www.study-in-europe.kr/> Page 6: Public meeting in the Party Headquarter with the governor of Osaka as a special guest. Page 8: Island near Kami in Mikata District, Hyōgo Prefecture (兵庫県美方郡香美町). Page 10: IFIL Trip to Japan 2009, Group picture in front of the National Diet in Tokyo.