

Adrienne Yap
2024 JCCI x Waseda Scholar



Festivals in Japan

Thank you everyone at JCCI for your continued support. I am Adrienne Yap, one of the 2024 JCCI x Waseda scholarship recipients. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all of you for the valuable scholarship opportunity. I learned so much from my experiences in Japan. This report will cover my travels and the festivals I attended during my stay in Japan. I hope you enjoy reading my report and once again I would like to thank everyone for the opportunity to study in Japan.

Introduction

Experience. It is something that cannot be fully explained in words, it is something one must discover for themselves. During my yearlong studies in Japan, I had the incredible opportunity to immerse myself in a culture that was vastly different from my own. From bustling urban centres to serene countryside cities, I experienced the rich traditions, customs, and vibrant festivals that bring communities together in unique and meaningful ways. Each place visited offered new perspectives, from ancient festivals passed down through generations to contemporary celebrations filled with energy and creativity.

Traveling across various prefectures, I not only deepened my understanding of Japan's complex history and diverse cultural landscape but also gained valuable insights into my own identity and personal growth. The challenges of adapting to a new environment, learning the language, and navigating unfamiliar social norms pushed me outside of my comfort zone and helped me build resilience and confidence. More importantly, these experiences encouraged me to reflect on my values, aspirations, and what truly brings fulfilment.

This report aims to highlight some of the most memorable travel experiences and festivals I participated in throughout the year. By sharing these moments, I hope to

illustrate how they shaped my perspectives, broadened my worldview, and enriched my journey of self discovery in ways I had never anticipated. Through this reflection, I have come to appreciate the profound impact that cultural immersion and meaningful human connections can have on personal transformation.

Moon Art Festival at Shimokitazawa

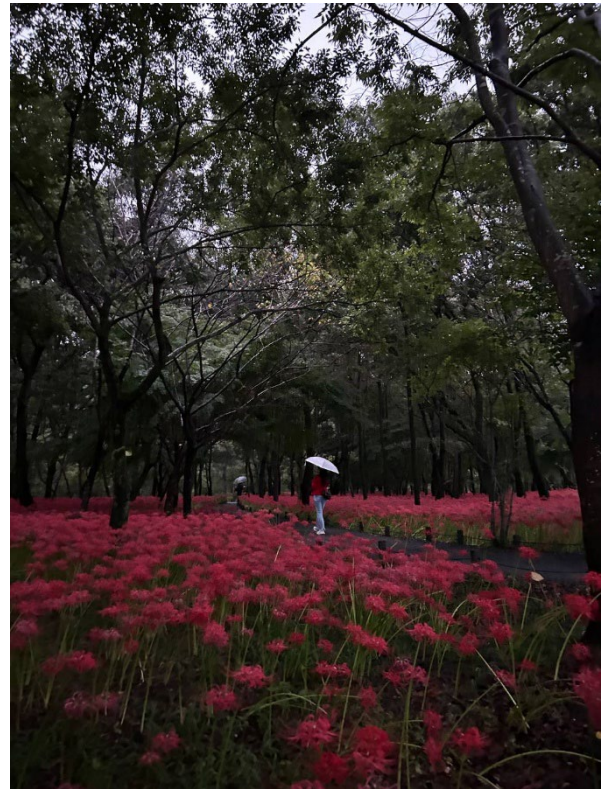
The very first festival I attended when I first landed in Tokyo was the Moon Art Festival at Shimokitazawa. This annual event celebrates the beginning of autumn and is deeply rooted in the traditional Japanese custom of 月見 (tsukimi), or moon viewing, where people gather to appreciate the beauty of the full moon. The festival beautifully blends art, culture, and nature, creating an enchanting atmosphere that invites visitors to slow down and connect with the changing season. Around the area, local artists showcased their work, while food stalls offered seasonal delicacies like dango (sweet rice dumplings), a traditional



treat enjoyed during tsukimi. Lanterns illuminated the streets, casting a warm glow that perfectly complemented the crisp autumn air. Although the Moon Art Festival may seem more ordinary, it made me realize that even viewing something as simple as the full moon can bring people together and create a meaningful connection to nature and tradition. It also made me realise that sometimes, it's important to slow down and appreciate small moments like this. Something I found especially valuable coming from Singapore, where life often feels very fast paced and busy.

Red Spider Lily Festival / 曼珠沙華祭り

On the contrary, the next event I attended was a festival celebrating the beauty of seasonal blooms, the 曼珠沙華祭り (Manjushage Matsuri), or Red Spider Lily Festival, held at Kinchakuda Manjushage Park. This festival is centred around the stunning bloom of the red spider lilies, which carpet the park in vibrant crimson colours every autumn. The sight of thousands of these flowers stretching across the fields creates a breathtaking and almost surreal landscape. The festival not only celebrates the natural beauty of these flowers but also symbolizes themes of transition and remembrance, as red spider lilies are often associated with the changing of seasons and the cycle of life.



I was really fortunate to visit during full bloom. Walking through the winding paths surrounded by these beautiful flowers, I was able to slow down and be present in the moment. The atmosphere was peaceful yet lively, with stalls offering local snacks and souvenirs and families and photographers capturing the fleeting beauty of the flowers. This experience highlighted the Japanese appreciation for seasonal change and nature's quiet grandeur in a way that was both educational and deeply moving.

Kawagoe Hikawa Festival / 川越氷川祭

Last October, I had the incredible privilege of attending the Kawagoe Festival (川越祭り), officially known as the Kawagoe Hikawa Festival (川越氷川祭). Held on the third weekend of October in the city of Kawagoe, Saitama, this annual celebration is far more than just a local event, it's one of Japan's most vibrant and historically rich traditional festivals, honored as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage.



What made it even more special was that it marked the festival's return after a two year pause due to the pandemic. With 29 majestic floats parading through the streets, you could feel the excitement of both locals and visitors. Being there in that moment, surrounded by music, movement, and joy, felt like I went back in time.



The festival's history stretches back over 370 years, originating in the mid 17th century with the autumn rites of the Kawagoe Hikawa Shrine. It's deeply tied to the legacy of the Edo period, preserving the grandeur of the Tenka Matsuri (imperial festivals). Kawagoe, often called "Little Edo" for its historical connection to Tokyo's past, once thrived under the influence of wealthy merchants who funded the creation of towering, elaborate floats to reflect their prosperity. Seeing these massive floats roll through the narrow, lantern lit streets, was a remarkable sight.

The festival traditionally begins with sacred rituals that set the religious tone for the festivities. The most important of these early events is the Jinkosai (God's Procession), an elaborate parade rooted in the festival's founding. During the Jinkosai, the deity (kami) of the Kawagoe Hikawa Shrine is ceremonially placed into a portable shrine (mikoshi), which is then carried by community members through the surrounding neighbourhoods. This procession, which takes place in the afternoon on one of the

festival days, is considered the formal commencement of the celebration, blessing the town before the grand, spectacular floats take over.

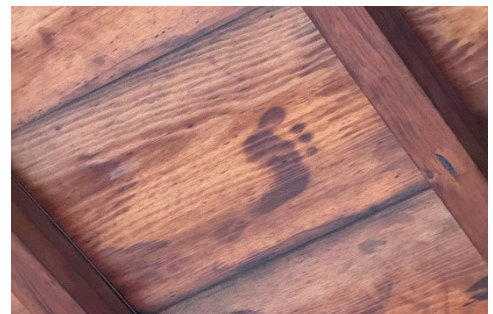
As day turned to night, the atmosphere shifted, with the Hikkawase, a thrilling musical faceoff between floats. When two or more floats met at an intersection, their stages would rotate to face one another, and a lively musical showdown would begin. Flutes, drums, and bells will be played, as masked dancers performed on the floats and people pulling the floats will rush to the floats and cheer. To be amidst the energy of the crowds, following the floats, was a truly immersive experience.

No festival experience would be complete without food, and Kawagoe certainly did not disappoint. The streets were lined with vibrant food stalls offering everything from grilled skewers to traditional Japanese sweets. Participating in the Kawagoe Festival wasn't just about seeing something beautiful, it was about experiencing a place, its people, and its past. It was one of those rare experiences that leaves a lasting impression on all your senses and lingers in your memory long after you've left.

Autumn Festivals in Kyoto / 京都のもみじ祭り

I've visited Kyoto several times before, but never during the autumn season. Experiencing the city in the fall was a wonderful opportunity to truly immerse myself in its culture, where nature and history blend beautifully. Staying in a traditional home, I gained valuable insights from local residents who shared their stories and guided me to some remarkable sites, including Kiyomizudera, famous for its vibrant fall colors, as well as the tranquil Otogi Nenbutsu ji, Bishamon Temple and Genko-an.

One of the most memorable moments was at Genko-an Temple, where the ceiling is constructed from the floorboards of Fushimi Castle and still bears the handprints and footprints of samurai who took their own lives centuries ago during an invasion. Standing beneath this haunting relic, I felt a profound connection to Japan's history and the solemn traditions that have shaped its culture.





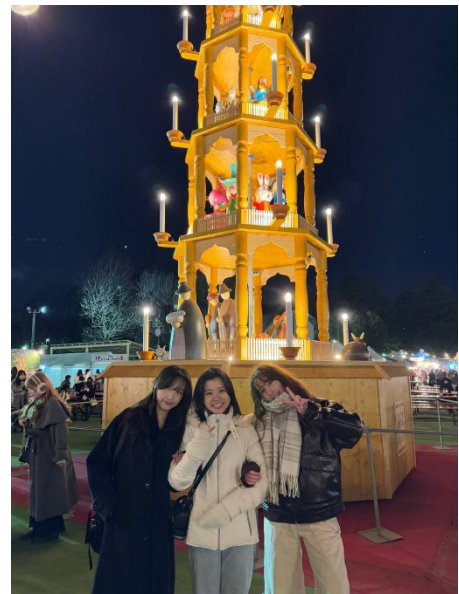
I also had the opportunity to participate in an informal tea ceremony at a local tea shop. I learned that matcha is traditionally served on special occasions alongside wagashi, delicate Japanese sweets crafted to complement the bitterness of the tea. Though simple, the ceremony was deeply meaningful, offering a glimpse into the care and mindfulness behind this iconic cultural practice.

I was also able to rent and wear a kimono while walking around Kyoto. The process of dressing was more intricate than I had anticipated, and it gave me a new appreciation for the craftsmanship and tradition.

Altogether, my time in Kyoto during the autumn season was a rich and authentic experience, offering not only stunning natural beauty but also a deeper understanding of the city's cultural heritage.

Christmas Celebrations

Although Japan is predominantly Shinto and Buddhist and does not celebrate Christmas as a religious holiday, the festive season has been embraced with great enthusiasm and a unique cultural twist. Rather than a family centered day, Christmas in Japan is celebrated primarily as a romantic holiday, similar to Valentine's Day in the West. Couples exchange gifts, book romantic dinners well in advance, and visit dazzling public displays. The cities put up spectacular winter illuminations, turning parks, shopping districts, and landmarks into breathtaking, jewel toned wonderlands.



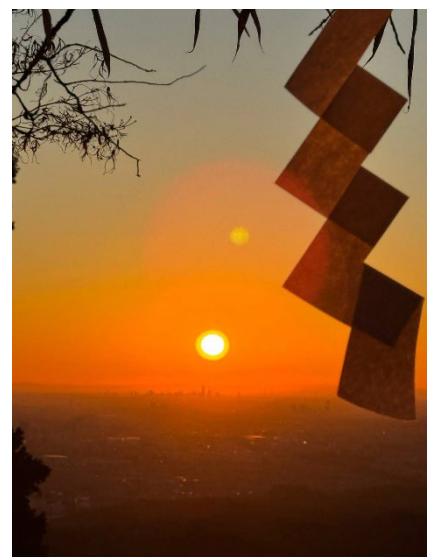
Something I found interesting was the tradition of buying Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) during Christmas. Many people pre ordered their meals weeks in advance to

ensure they can enjoy this festive treat, as KFC outlets become incredibly busy. This tradition began with a highly successful marketing campaign in the 1970s that convinced many Japanese people that fried chicken was the authentic Western holiday meal. After the hearty meal, it's typical to enjoy strawberry shortcake, a popular symbol of the season. Overall, Christmas in Japan is large celebration, focused on spreading cheer, admiring festive lights, and sharing special moments with loved ones, especially romantic partners, rather than traditional religious observance.

Joya no Kane & Hatsu Hinode / 除夜の鐘と初日の出

As Christmas came to a close and the New Year approached, I had the opportunity to take part in the tradition of Joya no Kane. This solemn and deeply reflective Buddhist ceremony involves ringing a large temple bell 108 times at the stroke of midnight. I experienced it at Zojoji Temple in Tokyo, where the ringing of the bell signifies the purification of one of the 108 worldly desires (bonnō) or sins that trouble the human spirit. Just before the final bell rang, everyone got excited and began counting down to midnight, our voices grew louder with each passing second as we welcomed the start of the new year.

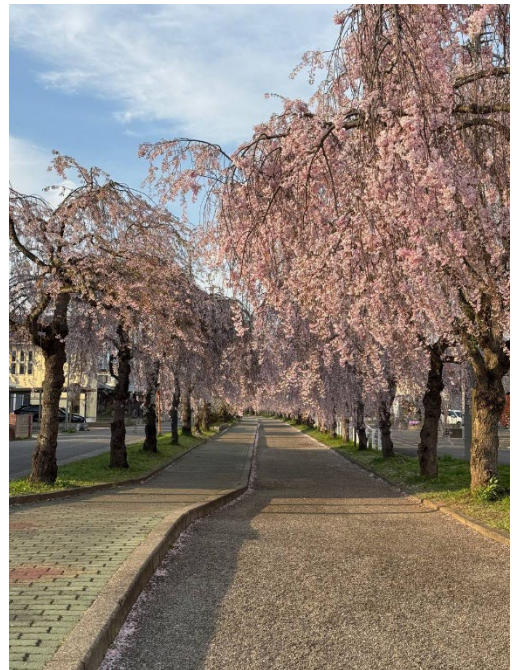
After the countdown, I quickly made my way to Mt. Takao to witness Hatsu Hinode, the first sunrise of the year. Even at 2am, the trains were filled with people heading to the same destination. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to reach the summit in time and instead watched the sunrise from Takaosan Yakuo in Temple, halfway up the mountain. Although I didn't make it all the way to the top, the experience was still terrific. Watching the sunrise together with others created a sense of quiet togetherness as people from all walks of life standing in the cold, waiting for the first light of the year. As I participate in these traditions, I realised that I should appreciate these traditions as it bring people together, even amidst their busy lives.



Flower viewing お花見

As the bitter cold finally came to an end and the first signs of spring arrived, the delicate flowers began to bloom, signaling the start of the much anticipated cherry blossom season. Instead of visiting the crowded festivals in and around Tokyo, I made the purchased the JR Tohoku Pass and embarked on a ambitious journey, heading north to the remote and historically rich Tohoku region to search for the later blooming, and often less crowded, places to experience お花見.

The rail pass allowed me to follow the 桜前線, the wave of blooming cherry blossoms that gradually moves northward each spring. My first stop was Kitakata in Fukushima Prefecture, a city known for its traditional storehouses and famous ramen. There, I visited the old Nichinichu Railway Line, a decommissioned track now transformed into a scenic 3 kilometer walking path lined with hundreds of cherry trees. Once used to transport materials for mining and industry in the early 20th century, the railway has found new life as a peaceful hanami destination.

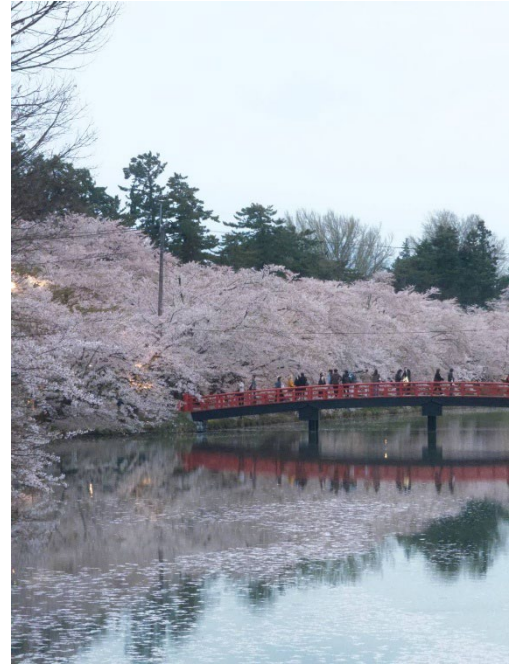


On the second day, I continued into Yamagata Prefecture. I started at Eboshiyama Park in Nanyo City, a park that offers sweeping views and over 1,000 sakura trees. Interestingly, this park is also home to a monument commemorating the Battle of Eboshiyama, a key conflict during the Boshin War, which helped end the Tokugawa shogunate and restore imperial rule. Later, I visited Yonezawa, the former stronghold of the Uesugi clan, one of the powerful samurai families in the olden days. Here, the cherry blossoms added a soft touch to the city's historic sites, including the Uesugi Shrine and the ruins of Yonezawa Castle.

On the third day, I headed to Iwate Prefecture. In Morioka, Takamatsu Park was quiet and scenic, with cherry trees surrounding a central pond, creating symmetrical reflections on the water. I also visited the Morioka Castle Site Park (also known as Iwate Park), built on the remains of a castle constructed in the early 1600s. Although

little of the original castle remains, the massive stone walls and strategic layout of the grounds reflect the region's feudal past. The contrast between the old stone foundations and the delicate blossoms was especially striking.

My final stop was Hirosaki Park in Aomori Prefecture, one of Japan's most renowned cherry blossom destinations. Centred around Hirosaki Castle, originally built in 1611, the park contains more than 2,600 cherry trees, many of which are over a century old. The castle grounds also feature some of Japan's oldest Somei Yoshino cherry trees, carefully maintained by the city. One of the park's most unique features is the "hanaikada" rafts of fallen petals that collect in the moats, turning the water into a vibrant pink carpet. With the historical architecture, the size of the park, and the sheer number of trees, Hirosaki was a stunning and fitting conclusion to my trip.



I realized that experiencing the cherry blossom season outside of the usual crowded spots gave me a deeper appreciation for both the natural beauty and historical depth of each place I visited. I also realised that お花見 is not just about admiring flowers, as mentioned before, they bring people together and help create memories to remember.

Conclusion

Looking back, I am deeply grateful for the incredible experiences I was able to have. It would not have been possible without the support of the JCCI x Waseda Scholarship. Through traveling across regions, attending festivals, and participating in traditional customs, I gained a deeper appreciation not only for Japan's vibrant cultural heritage but also their mannerism and values. These experiences went far beyond sightseeing. They challenged me to step outside my comfort zone, communicate with others, and experience different traditions. In doing so, I discovered a new view of both Japan and myself. I return to Singapore with not only beautiful memories, but also a stronger sense of purpose, independence, and global perspective.

Once again, I would like to sincerely thank everyone at JCCI for making this journey possible. Your support has given me more than an opportunity to study. It has given me the opportunity to turn what I have heard into something I have experienced and allowed me to venture beyond the well trodden paths and experience all things that make Japan, the land of the rising sun.

Jeremy Lim
2024 JCCI x Waseda Scholar



日本と世界とお茶の繋がり

1. 前書き

JCCI の皆様、お世話になっております。2024 年度早稲田大学留学させて頂いた、奨学生のリム・ハオ・ブーン・ジェレミーと申します。この大切に、忘れられない一年間を通して、様々な体験を挑戦してみたり、かけがえの無い記憶を作ったりしました。この日本暮らしは、個人的な成長と、日本への文化と食事への熱情を深めるのが不可欠だとつくづく感じております。日本語の上達はもとより、日本茶への興味深い気持ちを抱え始めました。日本茶は、日本社会がもちろん、国際的な影響をもたらして、諸説が巡っていき、世界中で印象が残るそうです。毎日のよう多種のお茶を頂いたり、お茶を利用して日本文化を味わったりすることで、自分の経験からして、日本とお茶の繋がりがよく見えるのでしょうか。それが故に、私がこの「日本茶」というトピックを、このレポートの形で探索していきたいと存じております。皆様が一読をすれば幸いに存じております。この一年間の留学をいただき、誠にありがとうございました。

2. はじめに

日本には、「お茶」という飲料に関する文化や影響が多く感じられている。正真正銘な「お茶」とは、カメリア・シネンシス (*Camellia sinensis*) という植物で作られている。世界中で、お茶が処理により、白茶、紅茶、黒茶などに分類されているが、日本には主に緑茶（不発酵茶）が生産されている。(伊藤園、2017) でもレストランや小売にお茶の販売や提供されている物が緑茶に限られていない。日本茶の種類は、様々な製造方法、茶葉の預かり方や、茶葉に付け加えた材料により、種々作られ、販売されている。日本歴史によると、8 世紀ごろに日本を訪れた僧侶と業者に日本がお茶を紹介され、12 世紀に庶民までどんどん普及したそうである。(Cartwright, 2024) その上、日本の文化において、茶道が禅仏教のルーツで、9 世紀に遡ることができる。(日本政府観光局、日付無し)

茶類とお茶に関わる文化はともかく、日本茶の歴史のもどて、お茶の飲料が日本社会に普遍に及んだに違いない。マーク・カートライト (Cartwright, 2024) の歴史掲載にも記述したことがあり、12 世紀に禅仏教の僧侶の栄西がお茶の価値と利益を文献で持ち上げたことが影響であり、お茶が広がって 15 世紀の古の文献で分かることに、屋台のあるお茶屋さんの存在からして、古にお茶の普遍さが見えるであろう。そして現在、自動販売機であろうと、レストランであろう

と、日本茶があたかも不可欠な存在のよう、購入され、飲料されている。現在と古を比較すると、宣伝がテクノロジーの元で進化させ、InstagramやTiktokなどのメディアアプリで日本茶、特に抹茶、の名が飛躍的に遠く広くまで波及している。このレポートには、「なぜ日本茶がそんなに有名と不可欠なのか」と主問題にした。まず、日本茶の健康的な利益を説明する。そして日本との関与があることにし、日本の経済、そして文化の調査で繋げる。最後に日本茶が日本的と国際的な有名さを掘り下げる。それぞれの社会的な方面で主問題を回答する。特に抹茶の有名さが世界中で感じられていることが故に、比較的に抹茶を中心にして説明することが多くする。とはいえ、他の日本茶類に対して説明することを省かない。

3. お茶と健康の繋がり

お茶は、どんな国が原産だとしても、利益が様々である。日本茶も例に漏れず、多様な健康利益がある。特にカメツリア・シネンシスという茶葉の成している化合物に関わっている。このレポートは化合物の観点を通して健康的さの分析とする。まず、コーヒーと比べると、コーヒーがない、カフェインとともに飲み込まれる L-テアニン (L-Theanine) がお茶に主にある化合物である。L-テアニン特には、人間体への影響の為、お茶にある化合物と比較的に調査されるであろう。お茶の根と子葉に蓄積され、旨みの大部分に生じる。しかし、根で多く作られ、子葉に多く運ばれても、茶葉が太陽の光と熱に晒されているぶん、L-テアニンが分解され、お茶の旨みと L-テアニンが生じる健康利益も消えて行く。(Vuong et al., 2011) したがって、L-テアニンが他の緑茶より多い抹茶が (Yamamoto et al., 1997)、市価も連れて高くなるかもしれない。L-テアニンは、脳の α -脳波の生産を増加し (Vuong et al., 2011)、ある L-テアニンを若者の参加者に与えた実験にも α -脳波の増加が観測された。(Nobre et al., 2007) α -脳波は、心の意識と意識下を接続し、情報集めなどを助ける。(Koudelková et al., 2018) その為、心を落ち着かせ、リラックス感を促進することができる。(Cooper et al., 2005) 要するに、L-テアニンが知識吸収と不安を消すことに役に立つ。

もちろん、L-テアニンの健康利益だけでなく、多彩な利益もお茶に存在する。身体には、有酸素代謝により、活性酸素 (例: 酸素陰イオン、 O_2^-) が産物である。この活性酸素が余計に生産されると、生産された分、不安定な活性酸素が自分とタンパク質、脂質や DNA など、巨大分子と化学反応が起きてしまい、身体の細胞構成と機能を乱すことになる。(Sverdlov et al., 2020) そして、活性酸素漁りの分析試験法で、(Shang et al., 2021) 緑茶と烏龍茶がフィノール類の化合物を持ち、活性酸素漁りに効果的だということが証明された。すなわち、日本が生産出来る緑茶と烏龍茶が日常的に体の細胞への被害を緩和することが出来、体の老けることを遅らすことも出来る。要するに、お茶には、様々な健康有利な化合物が存在し、細胞乱しを防いだり、集中や生産的さを増加したりする機能がある。

4. お茶と社会の繋がり

前の段落では、お茶の健康利益を語ることにされた。その健康利益が中心で、それぞれの社会的なところを動かすことも多い。日本のお茶、特に抹茶が、食物繊維や、前の語られた抗酸化物質などにより、「スーパーフード」という名称を得たそうである。その上に、多彩なお茶の食事やミール（料理）の準備の手法で、お茶の評判がどんどん増して来ている。昼食などの食事でも、甘味でも、それでもカフェのティータイムとしても、お茶、特に抹茶、への消費が普及されている。

図形1 & 2: 抹茶クレープ、抹茶ラテと抹茶アイスクリーム。抹茶の味にして、様々な甘味を作られることが出来る。



日本外に、特に米国が、抹茶に「スーパーフード」と名付け、健康利益を中心にして、抹茶を日本との伝統関係が消された程、広げることにした。(Dreher, 2019) この論文誌にも述べられたことは、抹茶の様々な伝統的ではない抹茶料理の準備仕方である。そして、ソーシャルメディアにも、その種々の料理の宣伝写真や、Instagram と Tiktok のインフルエンサーに自分の茶筌を使用したり抹茶を立てたりするビデオが投稿されることも多くなっている。

したがって、お茶の人気も段々上がって来るようである。所謂「抹茶生活」がソーシャルメディアで宣伝される為、お茶の消費が普遍になるのが自然であろう。農林水産省の統計による

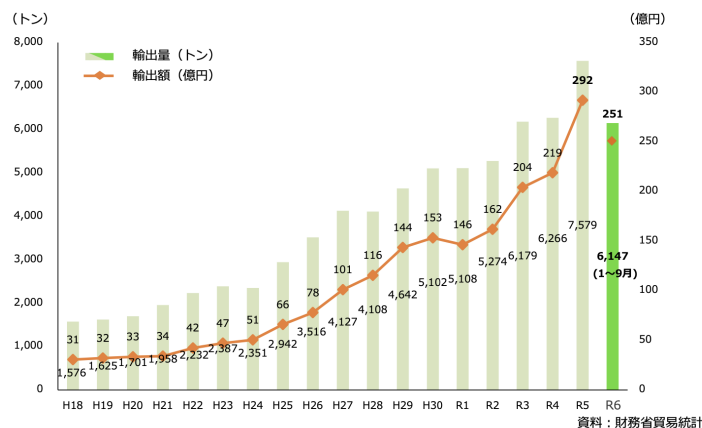
と、抹茶の元のでん茶は、2014 年から 2024 までの 10 年に、生産が 1969 トンから 5336 トンまでの上向きであった。その上、緑茶に対しては、ただの 2 年前（2023 年）に過ぎなく、7579 トン、292 億円金額の著しい輸出数字が、現在のお茶トレンドに及ぼされているはずである。（日本農林水産省, 2024）

図形 3：ここ数年の日本からの緑茶輸出。（日本農林水産省, 2024）

I-2-1 輸出動向（海外需要）

- 米国やEU等における健康志向や日本食への関心の高まり等を背景に、輸出額は大きく増加。2025年（令和7年）輸出額目標は312億円としているところ、**令和5年の輸出額は過去最高の292億円を記録**。令和6年も1月から9月の輸出額が**251億円**（前年同期比26%増）となっている。
- **抹茶を含む粉末状の緑茶の需要が拡大**しているほか、**有機栽培茶に対するニーズが高い**。

【緑茶の輸出実績】

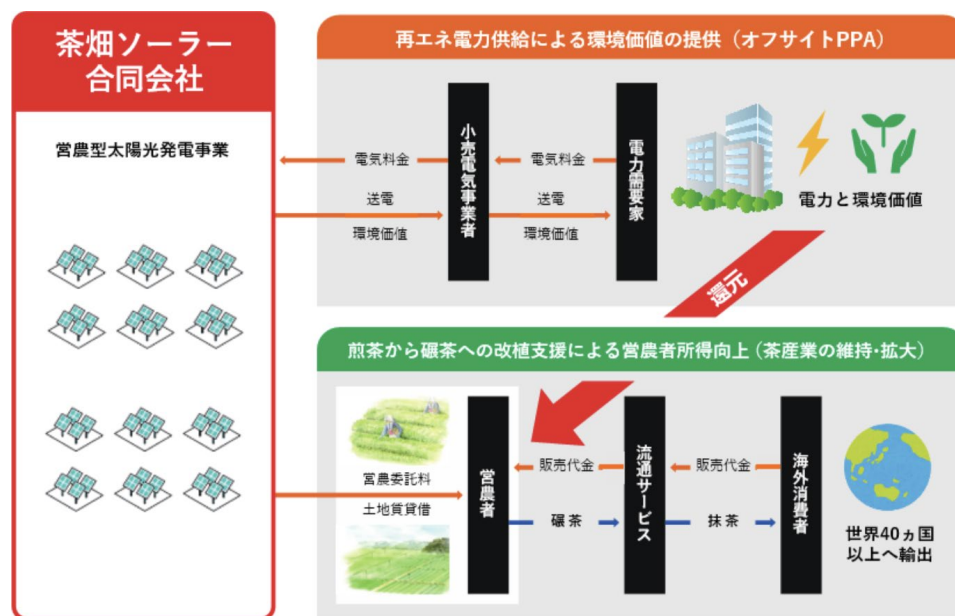


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しかし、その需要に連れ、お茶（特に抹茶）の売れ行きがどんどんと上がって行く可能性もあり、栽培が追いつかない恐れもある。そもそも、国際需要はともかく、新茶もこの数年に、2016 年から 2025 年の 10 年に、摘採面積は約 20%、お茶全般の生葉は約 17.6%減少されたそうである。（日本農林水産省, 2025）その影響で、需要にお茶栽培が追い付かず、不足をもたらしてしまう恐れもある。実際には、日本が観光客の殺到で、抹茶を多数で購入されるため、丸久小山園をはじめ、一保堂などの有名のお茶会社が抹茶の購入制限を実行しているほど、不足が飛躍的に進歩しているようである。（丸久小山園, 2024）

現在、特に抹茶に対して、てん茶生産は増加傾向であっても、消費者からの需要が生産に超えたため、抹茶の不足が存在している。政府が煎茶からてん茶の生産に変えることを積極的に奨励しているとはいえ、(NEWS, 2025)茶類の栽培を豹変するのに時間がかかるそうである。(Anna, 2025) 日本の高齢化社会にお茶業界に対して継ぐ若者も減少するであろう。(Benchetrit, 2025) だが、持続的な業界にする為に、それぞれの会社は対策を思いつき、抹茶業界に貢献したことがある。例えば、JA 三井リースが、TEA ENERGY など4つの会社の協力で、太陽光発電パネルを利用し、てん茶栽培を遮りつつ電気を発電する対策を述べた。(JA 三井リース株式会社, 2025)

図形4: JA 三井リースてん茶栽培農地における営農型太陽光発電所の概念と企画。(JA 三井リース株式会社, 2025)



高質の抹茶になすようにてん茶が遮られ、事業に電気が提供できることで、「持続可能な農業」に叶う問題に取り組むことにもなる。巨大なお茶会社の伊藤園も、荒廃された農地を茶園に生まれ変わる対策を挙げたそうである。(伊藤園, 2022) 効果的な農地使用で、お茶栽培と農園を増やすことができ、伊藤園がお茶栽培の専門技術とテクノロジーを広げることを通して、農業生産企業の設立により雇用も増やし、同時に抹茶の需要にも応えられるであろう。

このようなことで、お茶に関わる社会的な問題が多面であり、深い繋がりが存在する。お茶のその存在で、重大なトレンドを生じ、経済を動かし、業界にも大きな気配にも影響がある。巨大な会社が証明した通り、お茶農業に関して、雇用を増加したり、営業を持続的にしたり、環境を保護したりすることで、社会への利益は間違いなく重要である。それが所謂「お茶と社会の繋がり」であろう。

5. お茶と文化や歴史の繋がり

お茶は世界中で偉大な役目があるとしても、謙虚なルーツや文化を忘れられてはいけない。お茶、特に抹茶とは、日本の伝統と深く、長く、繋がっているそうである。抹茶は普通に「茶道」という美術に関連があり、香道と花道と伴い、「美意識を代表する」三つの伝統文化の三道である。(日本政府観光局、日付無し) 前の段階に行った通りに、815年に禅仏教がルーツにして遡ることが出来る。その時に、仏教僧の永忠が嵯峨天皇にお茶を茶の湯でお茶を煎じて奉じた。(日本政府観光局、日付無し) その上、天皇が日本の近畿地方(現在の関西地方)にお茶栽培を植えることを命じ、貴族もそのきっかけで飲み始めたが、お茶が本当に飛躍的に普及されたのが僧侶の栄西は12世紀の末にお茶の魅力と有利な特徴を広げたことの為である。栄西が粉末状の抹茶と抹茶の作り方を勧めたり、固定したりした。抹茶を作られた起源は高級の蒸されて固められた、団茶という茶葉である。そして、この団茶が粉末に挽かれ、その粉末がお湯と竹の泡立てで溶かれたそうである。(Japan Tourism Agency, 2020) この古代からの準備手法が、現代と違いが全くないようであるが、抹茶工場が粉末を作るのが石臼で挽き、現代のテクノロジーで盛んに製造している。

茶道とは、茶の心を心得て、文化的に重要な手前で抹茶を準備する美術である。「和敬清寂」という4つの基本概念で、無心にして手順をやり切られる。茶の湯の起源が千利休の影響の元で、室町時代に茶の湯の手前におもてなしを中心させ、「一期一会」という思想を巡り、更に茶道を進化させた。その概念に基づいて、礼儀を強調したり、茶室を親しくする為に小さくしたりした。(Cartwright, 2019)

図形 5: 茶人の千利休。(Cartwright, 2019)



彼が信仰しているのが、全ての人生の中のところが一時的にしか経験出来ないことが故に、全てを大切にすべきことである。(日本政府観光局、日付無し) 茶道の流派は数十あるが、殆ど千利休の指示に従っていることで、現代流派の手前の似ているところが多い。しかし、それぞれの流派の中心価値が違う。例えば、裏千家とは、千利休の教えを継ぐ直系の流派であり、千利休のシンプルで禁欲的な手前を守っている。千利休が、日常から感化を取り、茶道の伝統を築き、「侘び」という素朴な精神に沿っている。(Urasenke Konnichian., 2025) 一方、遠州流とは、小堀遠州から始まり、千利休と弟子の古田織部から茶道を受け継ぎ、自分の様式の茶道を築いてきたが、中心にしたのが綺麗寂び：美しさ、明るさと豊かさを茶道の手前に加え、客観性と調和の美にも手前で目指している。(遠州流茶道宗家より引用, 2020) 説明された通り、種々の茶道家がそれぞれの中心される特徴があるが、それぞれの茶道家なりに自分の努力で茶道の魅力を強調し、なりに茶道の本質を展示して来た。

図形 6：筆者が現在遠州流茶道のお稽古を受けている。



図形 7: 遠州流茶道宗家ウェブサイト。(遠州茶道宗家より引用)

URL: <https://www.enshuryu.com/>



日本には、お茶と日本文化と伝統が間違いなく深く繋がっている。現在、日本政府が茶道のような伝統美術を保護するために、日本学校に伝統美術の教育の支持をしているそうである。6500 学校を茶道を教えていることや、教える小学校と幼稚園が増えていることも茶道の伝統のような大事さの証拠であろう。(Chiba, 2022) その故に、お茶の日本歴史と文化の中の役目は不可欠であると称されるに違いない。

6. 終わりに

日本茶は、多面的に日本中の重要であり、大切な物と呼ばれる。お茶の種々の旨みや香りはともかく、本体で健康利益が様々込められ、抗酸化物質や L-テアニンなどの機能で生産集中や消炎効果が生じる。多彩な健康利益がある為、「スーパーフード」という名称を得て、国際的に欲されるトレンドがある。その上に、特に抹茶が多様に食事に使用されることで、更に営業へのビジネス的な価値が存在する。

それが影響で、お茶（特に抹茶）への世界需要が益々増えてきたが、お茶栽培や農園が持続的に需要に追い付かず、所謂「不足」をもとらした。それでも、その事態で社会的な成長の機会も伴った。持続的なお茶営業だけでなく、環境的な世界に改善する為に、対策が考えられた。お茶は雇用と環境という社会問題に繋がり、世界を改善する価値もある。

最後に、日本茶のルーツや伝統を忘れずに、茶道の存在が日本の文化と文明に不可欠であろう。長い歴史を知り、辿り着いた結論であり、茶道から多くの意味のある人生価値が習われ、全人的に成長するのに達するかのせいがある。その故に、お茶が人情にも繋がったと言われているであろう。

日本茶は、その方面で日本をはじめ、世界の立場が重要である。これからも、お茶の次の段階が更に豊かになるのであろう。

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Family Life in Mutsu, Aomori

冬の朝 / A winter morning

The sound of careful footsteps gliding across the wooden floor. Whispers of *okite* wake the children from their sleep. The chilly morning air envelops me as I stir, half-asleep, listening to the family's early morning rush. Before long, the smell of breakfast drifts into my room and I quickly get up to join them.

「おはよう。」 I greet the family as I take my seat at the table.

「よく眠れた？」 The mother asks me warmly.

「うーん。」 I reply with a smile, still shaking off my sleepiness.

Breakfast is simple: lightly toasted bread with butter, served with sausages and eggs on the side. Though modest, its familiar taste brings a quiet warmth. As we eat, the room buzzes with early morning chatter, and my sleepiness slowly fades away.

Soon, it's time to go. The parents help the children into their uniforms and coats, checking their belongings, before bringing the morning routine to a close. The family is now prepared for the day ahead.



もう一つの家 / Finding home in Mutsu

I first experienced this warm family routine when I stayed with the Kojima family during an exchange programme in Aomori in the summer of my first year. They welcomed me with open arms and treated me as part of their family from the very beginning. Their kindness has stayed with me ever since, and this study report is my reflection on the many experiences I have shared with them through the years.

Staying with the Kojima family also meant staying in Mutsu, a small town at the northern tip of Honshū. Home to around 50,000 people, it is one of the northernmost places in Aomori, where winters are long and snowfall is heavy. Nestled between the sea on one side and mountains on the other, Mutsu's serene atmosphere quickly became familiar and dear to me. Its snow-covered streets and close-knit community provide the setting for some of my most cherished memories.

I can say that in both the warmth of the Kojima family and the soothing air of Mutsu, I found a home away from home.

日常生活 / Everyday Life

Interacting with the Kojima family and their environment in Mutsu gave me a unique opportunity to observe everyday life through their lens.

The Kojima family is a dual-income household, with both parents working at the *shiyakusho*. They have an older daughter and younger son, separated by just two years. Their mornings begin with dropping their children off at their respective institutions: elementary school for the older sister and daycare for the younger brother. This responsibility shifts depending on each parent's schedule, with one handling the morning drop-offs and the other managing the evening pick-ups.

Dinners follow a similar rhythm, with both parents taking turns to cook. I was lucky to enjoy many of their homecooked meals, each simple but full of care. One evening we had udon, another time we made our own sushi rolls, on another a hotplate was used to prepare yakisoba and on one of the chilly nights, we shared a warm, comforting nabe together. These hearty and tasty meals truly gave me an appreciation for Japanese home cooking. The day then draws to a close with the *ofuro*, as the family enjoys the warmth and relaxation of hot water and steam.

Living alongside them, I also came to notice their personalities. The daughter is mature beyond her years; though she still carries the playfulness of a child her age, she is always self-aware, receptive to her parents and especially gentle and caring toward her younger brother. The son is a little mischievous and endlessly playful, often bursting into

tears when his mother gently reprimands him, but he always circles back in the end, apologising sweetly. The father has a laid-back presence but is consistently thoughtful and attentive, always making sure I felt comfortable. The mother is gentle and caring, often drawing me into light-hearted conversations and ensuring that I was included and looked after. Together, the family radiates a genuine sense of affection.

Through both their daily routines and personalities, I came to see how care, balance and intimacy are woven into the Kojima family's everyday life.

むつの地元企業 / Mutsu's local businesses

Life in Mutsu is closely tied to its many family-owned local businesses. In contrast to the fast pace of big-city convenience stores and chain outlets, these shops move at a slower, more personal rhythm, where every purchase is accompanied by greetings, smiles and small conversations. Visiting them with the Kojima family showed me how naturally they are woven into the fabric of everyday life in Mutsu.

One of the places we visited was a shop called 八戸屋 (Hachinoheya) that specializes in making Nanbu Senbei, a traditional cracker unique to northern Japan. Unlike the thin, crispy rice crackers I was used to, Nanbu Senbei is thicker and heartier, baked with sesame, peanuts or other ingredients pressed into the dough. At the shop, the children and I tried making our own senbei under the gentle guidance of an elderly woman, who showed us each step with care. I remember carefully pouring the dough into the heavy iron mold, pressing it shut, and waiting as the heat slowly baked it through. As it cooked, the warm, nutty aroma of roasted flour and peanuts filled the room, making it hard to wait. When the mold was finally opened, the senbei inside was golden and fragrant, tasting rustic and richly nutty. I was grateful not only to sample a local specialty but also to experience making it with my own hands.

On one of the mornings, we visited Tokuichi, a cozy café specializing in fruit smoothies. I tried their banana smoothie, made entirely from fresh bananas, and it was rich, creamy and naturally sweet. The shop also sold candied fruit like muscat grapes and strawberries, their glossy coating especially enticing. The atmosphere was warm and playful, with handwritten menus and seasonal offerings that reflected the care and creativity poured into each drink. Beyond the smoothies, part of the café was dedicated to local handicrafts, with shelves displaying handmade accessories, knitted items and dried flower arrangements. This small corner gave the shop a homely, community feel, adding another layer to its already welcoming atmosphere.

Not far from the Kojima family's home is 斗南温泉 (Tonami Onsen), a hot spring with both indoor and outdoor baths. We went there one evening as I wanted to experience the local onsen. Slipping into the outdoor bath after washing, the winter air was crisp,

and I admired the moon and stars shining in the night sky. The contrast between the steaming water and the chill outside made the soak deeply refreshing. After bathing, we followed the familiar onsen tradition of buying ice cream from the vending corner, sharing the treat together while still warm from the baths. As we walked back to the car through the light snowfall, chatting as usual along the way, I felt a quiet sense of peace. It was in these small moments that I came to appreciate sharing these simple joys with the family and I could feel my connection to Mutsu deepen.

My visits to the various local businesses of Mutsu truly revealed the care and sense of community that lay behind their everyday storefronts.



本州の最北端、大間 / Ōma – The Northernmost point of Honshū

「遠くまでいけー！」

「悩みなんて飛んでけー！」

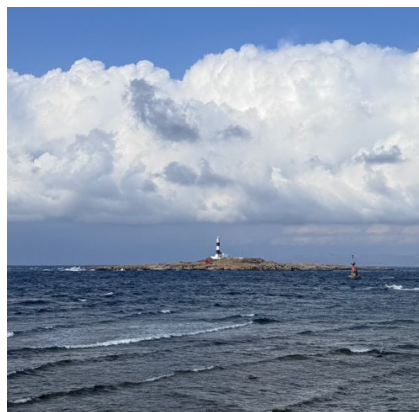
「海にお願いー！」

These were the lines we shouted as we threw stones into the sea at Cape Ōma, with strong wind pushing against us and the sound of waves crashing against the shoreline.

About an hour's drive from Mutsu City is the town of Ōma, best known as the northernmost point of Honshū. At Cape Ōma, we were greeted by the sight of the giant tuna monument, a reminder of the town's pride in its world-famous Ōma-maguro. From the cape, the rugged coastline stretched outward, the sea dark and restless. Above it, towering clouds rolled across the sky, their snow-like purity standing vividly against the deep blue surrounding them. Beyond the Tsugaru Strait lay the faint silhouette of Hokkaidō, close enough to feel connected but distant enough to seem like another world. Standing there, I felt the quiet wonder of being at the farthest point of Honshū.

After taking in the view, we stopped for lunch at a nearby restaurant called Kamome. I ordered a donburi generously topped with fresh slices of Ōma's famous tuna, served with miso soup and small side dishes. The tuna was rich and tender, and together the meal felt like it captured the essence of Ōma. We also visited the Ōma ferry terminal, where ferries make the ninety-minute journey across the Tsugaru Strait to Hakodate. This route has long linked Honshū and Hokkaidō and has played an important role in the flow of people and goods between the two regions. Inside the terminal, another giant tuna monument stood proudly, as if welcoming travellers to the town of Ōma.

Ōma, the peaceful seaside town. The memory of its waves, its wind, and the endless horizon stretching across the Tsugaru Strait returns to me often, and it remains one of my most treasured memories.



家族のやさしさ / The kindness of the family

Besides being a pretty town near Mutsu, Ōma holds another meaning for the Kojima family: it is the mother's hometown. She grew up there, attending school all the way until middle school, and her family still lives in the town. Driving through Ōma, we passed her old school and she pointed it out with a smile, which gave me a subtle sense of nostalgia and connection to her past.

During our visit, we also stopped by her mother's newly renovated house, which was beautifully furnished. With its high ceiling and inviting setting, it closely resembled the ideal home I often imagined for myself. I was warmly welcomed by the grandmother who served me hot tea and soft slices of cake from the nearby supermarket. She had also prepared snacks for the two children, thoughtfully choosing the ones she knew they liked. Watching her gentle interaction with them was quite endearing. As I sipped my tea, I joined the mother and grandmother in light-hearted conversation, and the cheerful, relaxed atmosphere filled me with a soothing happiness, melting away all my worries.

Just next door to the grandmother's newly renovated house was the great-grandmother's home. Though aged and cluttered, the house carried a familiarity and charm, a home filled with memories spanning generations. Just as we were about to leave, the great-grandmother returned home, and I had the chance to greet her as well. It felt almost surreal meeting so many generations of the family in a single visit, but being welcomed so openly left me with a lasting warmth. Even with their busy schedules, the family makes it a point to visit Ōma every few weeks, and I found that especially touching.

Back in Mutsu, the father's parents lived just a short five-minute walk away. One evening, we walked over to their house for dinner, and I thought it was so sweet how the children knew the way by heart, excitedly leading us down the familiar path. The grandmother had prepared a steaming pot of oden, its broth rich with daikon, eggs, and fish cakes, filling the room with a comforting aroma. The house itself had a rustic charm, simple but comforting, and together with the kindness of the grandparents, I felt immediately at ease. Having that meal with them, I felt embraced by their family.

Whether in Ōma or Mutsu, it was heartening to see the closeness of the family. Watching the children's playfulness with their grandparents and the light atmosphere in every home, I could clearly feel the kindness flowing through the family. That same kindness was extended to me as well, and I feel truly fortunate to have been welcomed into their circle of warmth.

むつのコミュニティイベント / Mutsu's community events

Throughout the year, Mutsu City hosts a variety of events where residents come together. I happened to be there during the しもきた冬まつり (Shimokita Winter Festival). The slogan for the festival is 寒さに挑戦 (Challenge the cold), and considering the wind and the chill of winter, I think it was more than appropriate.

At the festival grounds, the first thing that caught my eye were the trees strung with colourful lights. They glowed warmly against the winter night and softened the chill in the air. Beneath them, rows of tables were laid out with skewers of meat and vegetables, each with a grill for families to barbeque together. As the evening got underway, families began to gather, bundled in their coats and scarves while smoke from the grills curled up into the night sky. Nearby stalls served dishes like yakisoba and fried rice, but my favourite was the hot, steamy bowl of senbei-jiru, which instantly warmed me up inside. The way the senbei softened as it soaked up the savory broth was incredibly satisfying.

「二百九十三！」 the announcer's voice echoed.

「当たった！」 the children jumped up in excitement.

「早く取って！」 the parents urged, and they dashed off toward the stage to claim the prize, returning proudly with it in hand.

During the festival, a lottery was also held. Each ticket had a number, and if yours was called, you could win a variety of prizes. What made it special was that every prize was contributed by a local business, ranging from food and bottles of sake to handicrafts and even household appliances, which I felt really showcased the town's community spirit. Our table just so happened to win one, and the whole family celebrated together, making the moment even memorable.

Even with the cold persisting throughout the night, the atmosphere at the festival remained warm and lively, filled with laughter, music, and the buzz of conversation. As the evening drew to a close and we made our way back beneath the winter night sky, I couldn't help but feel that I had experienced the very heart of Mutsu's community. If given the chance, I would love to take part in another event again.



小さな思い出 / Little moments

To end off my report, I would like to share just a few little moments that I treasure and found myself reminiscing about as I wrote this report.

One of them was the snowy night after I had just arrived in Mutsu. We were walking home after having dinner at the nearby Chinese restaurant, and the scene felt almost dreamlike. The street was dimly lit, with only the glow of traffic lights guiding the way. Hand in hand, the family skipped ahead as snow drifted delicately down, and I found myself hoping I could hold on to that moment forever.

I also hold fondly onto a peaceful evening with the parents after the children had gone to sleep. With the gentle hum of light music playing in the background, we talked and relaxed into the calm of the night as the lively energy of the day faded away. The intimate atmosphere of that moment is something I wish I could bottle up and keep with me.

There was a night when we played with fireworks, and this memory shines especially bright. The children's excitement was contagious as they lit their sparklers, shouting "*kirei!*" while twirling the illuminated sticks and scattering trails of light. Colours danced vividly against the darkness, blooming like tiny stars that painted the night sky. As we played, it felt as if the world itself was alight, and those luminous colours will forever be captured in my mind.

And then there were the countless goodbyes. Each time my stay with them came to an end, it was bittersweet. Standing at the station, exchanging smiles and waves, I couldn't help but feel a tinge of sadness. Even so, that sadness was softened by the deep gratitude I carried for the time, kindness and warmth they had so generously shared with me.



結び / Concluding Thoughts

Looking back on my time with the Kojima family, I feel nothing but gratitude. By opening their home and sharing the rhythms of their everyday life with me, they gave me the chance to experience family life in Mutsu not just as an observer, but as one of their own. From sleepy winter mornings to starlit nights filled with warmth and conversation, and from fun side trips to quiet little moments, each memory is one I will cherish forever. Above all, I can't express how thankful I am for their kindness and generosity, and for giving me a home away from home.

「また会おうね！」 — see you again.