

Interview @ KIZUNA

As part of the activities of Student Lounge KI-ZU-NA, on August 12, 2021, we had a chance to interview one of our international students, Ms Tala Bakhtiary, about her student life at KU.

She is a PhD candidate from the Graduate School of Agriculture and was awarded second prize in the short movie competition, Short Movie Contest 2018 for International Students in Kyoto hosted by STUDY KYOTO (<https://www.studykyoto.jp/contest2018/>).

It was her movie, titled Study in Kyoto, that led us to this fun opportunity.

We hope this interview also reflects Ms Tala's vibrant personality.

Two graduate students working as tutors at KIZUNA, Nakura L. H. -san and Tamami -san, managed the interview and asked the questions.

This interview was conducted in Japanese and translated into English.

Let's take a look.

※We carried out this interview following the University's measures against the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

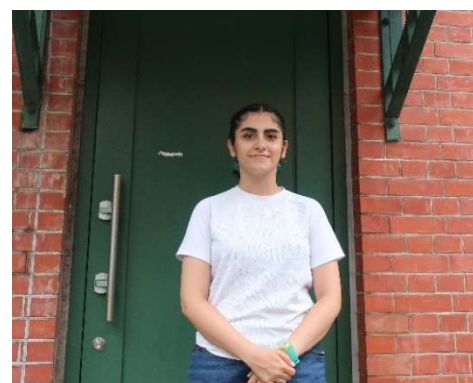
1. Would you tell us where you are from?

I am from Iran.

My hometown has a dry climate with low humidity, and the temperature can reach about 40°C.

When I am back in my hometown, I stay home unless I have something to do outside to avoid the heat.

On the other hand, in Kyoto, the heat and humidity in summer are intense. Although it is my fourth summer in Kyoto, I feel like I will never get used to it.



2. What kind of research are you doing at KU?

Right now, I'm studying microorganisms in the Division of Applied Life Sciences, Graduate School of Agriculture.

Our laboratory has a core time policy, so we are expected to be present in the lab at a specific time of day. But to be honest, I'm not used to this yet.

3. What brought you to Japan?

I have always liked Japan, and while researching various study abroad programs, I learned that the Japanese government would offer a scholarship for international students (※).

※ As of October 2020, 569 out of Kyoto University's 2,623 international students are Japanese government (Monbukagakusho: MEXT) scholarship awardees.

Reference: Kyoto University "Japanese Government (MEXT) Scholarship"

<https://www.kyoto-u.ac.jp/en/education-campus/procedures/scholarships/mext>

4. Which place in Japan do you like best?

I like the Kamo River (in Kyoto City)! It is "my go-to spot" when I would like to have some downtime.

5. What surprised you in Japan?

It is a toilet, an electronic bidet. It is wonderful!

6. What would you say about the difference between Japan and your home country?

Life here is relatively safe.

7. What made you decide to apply for the Short Movie Contest?

I have always been interested in making videos, so I decided to give it a try.

In my opinion, the contest organizer wants to see works portraying daily life in Kyoto from the perspective of international students.

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8. Would you tell us about your favourite Japanese food?

It might not be Japanese food, but Taco rice, *Gyoza*, and *Sukiyaki*.

I cannot eat fish, do not like smell and taste at all. I sort of hate all the seafood.

Sometimes I buy *Onigiri* (rice balls) at convenience stores, but first, remove seaweed wrapped around rice balls and then eat the rest.

When Ramen soup is made from seafood, I have to give it up.

9. What was the most enjoyable extracurricular event organized by KIZUNA or University?

One of the KIZUNA's events I remember is the *Kabuki* music class. I played *Shamisen* (a three-stringed traditional Japanese musical instrument). Also, I wore *Yukata* (traditional

Japanese clothing in summer) in the introductory class for *Nihon-buyo* (Japanese traditional dance).

I also had a good time at the *Mochitsuki* (Rice-cake making) event hosted by the International Exchange Section, the Faculty/Graduate School of Agriculture.

(※) Student Lounge KI-ZU-NA hosts its own event every month, offering opportunities for KU students, faculty and staff member to experience Japanese culture and get to know their counterparts from other countries.

Reference: Kyoto University Student Lounge KI-ZU-NA “Monthly Events”

<https://www.kyoto-u.ac.jp/en/education-campus/facilities/student-lounge-kizuna/events>

10. Please tell us about the changes in your student life due to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Classes are currently offered both online and in classroom settings, but I was happy when classes went online because I no longer had to rush to classrooms.

The good side is that I used to print out lots of paper copies for class, but that is no longer necessary. It made us a bit eco-friendly!

11. How did you spend your free time during the stay home period?

I usually spent time watching videos and embroidering.

I learned today's hair arrangement during the stay home period (she wore beautiful French braids that day).

I can make embroidered placemats and small cushions.

Speaking of videos, I like anime, so I watched movies and dramas.



12. Do you have any plans for job hunting in the future?

If I am offered a job in Japan, I prefer working in Kansai because I love Kansai and do not want to leave. I also like Hiroshima, though.

Osaka is such a bustling city crowded with people, but the people are warm and welcoming.

I think they are good at enjoying life there.

13. Are there many international students in your laboratory?

I was the only international student in the lab.

I eventually found my current lab on my own, but I did a lot of research. I first searched for Japanese universities offering a degree program on microorganisms, and the next step was to contact professors by e-mail. It took a while to receive replies because they were in the middle of the *Obon* summer holidays. Of course, I didn't know about the summer holidays, so it made me worried at that time.

I think getting in touch with professors can be a daunting task for applicants.

14. What is the things make you happy at the moment?

I like spending time doing nothing but just being lazy and relaxing.

I also like to travel and motorbikes too.

I am lucky to be surrounded by kind people, so I enjoy chatting and spending time with friends.

"After the interview" from KIZUNA tutors

Nakura L. H. -san

"It is a very productive interview with Tala. Even though I myself is an international student as well, still, I was astonished at Tala's unique and enthusiastic perspective to see Kyoto."

Tamami -san

"It was my honour to be an interviewer of energetic Tala who is also friendly as is noticeable in the article. I appreciate this opportunity for helping me view Kyoto and the world from a different perspective."

