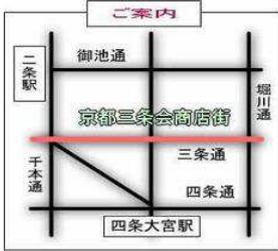


Another Side of Sanjo



Although I love history, and especially traditional Japanese culture, it can feel difficult to get away from the tourism of Kyoto sometimes. Along with so many historical places come tourists, as well as the many businesses that cater to them. Whether it is a traditional street leading to a famous temple or the bright lights and noise of downtown, it can seem impossible to go anywhere without being stuck in the same crowd or being offered the same *yatsuhashi* over and over again.

Then, there is the Sanjo-kai shopping street. It is the kind of place where you hear more Kyoto dialect being spoken than common Japanese. With its numerous bakeries, sweet shops, coffee houses, and restaurants, delicious aromas hit you one after another on this long, roofed shopping street between Horikawa and Omiya.

What the Sanjo-kai shopping street may lack in sparkle, it more than makes up for with heart. The kind of heart you see in a small shoe store ran by an elderly couple, or a family-owned produce shop, or the bustling Chinese restaurant that specializes in steamed pork buns. The kind of heart that a Shijo department store or mega-mall cannot compete with. There is the bakery that only plays Beatles Radio, or the bicycle shop with a bicycle carved out of wood in front. Public announcements and an original Sanjo-kai shopping street theme song rain down from the speakers above, while shop owners call out to you from their storefronts.

Weekends are often a time for events at the Sanjo-kai shopping street, ranging from musical performances to craft beer festivals, and of course traditional Japanese celebrations. On an average weekend, you will hear children shouting while playing soccer in the small park. Or perhaps, you will hear old friends greeting one another, using the local dialect we all wish we spoke. You might see extra tables lined up for selling garments or vegetables, and families heading to Matatabi Shrine. Bicycles deftly maneuver through the foot traffic, many of which are headed to one of the chain grocery stores, drug stores, or the 100 yen store. In other shops, you can find anything from kitchenware to sports equipment, a replacement light bulb to a hot cup of coffee. All life essentials. Weekdays and weekends, morning to night, the steady flow of traffic through this shopping street is the daily life of Kyoto, turning from one page to the next.

It was that aspect that appealed to me most about the Sanjo-kai shopping street. While the beautiful, historical landmarks of Kyoto do a great job of welcoming people from all over the world, it was the Sanjo-kai shopping street that first welcomed me as a resident. That is a feeling I want to hold on to as long as I can.

Appreciation in Gion Festival

Gion Matsuri (祇園祭), the festival of Yasaka Shrine, is the most famous festival in Japan. It takes place over the entire month of July. There are many different events, but the main procession of floats (Yamaboko Junko) is held in July 17. Very enjoyable, are also the festive evenings preceding the procession (Yoiyama). From 2014, a second procession of floats will be reintroduced on July 24 after a hiatus of 48 years. The second procession will feature fewer and smaller floats than the one on July 17. However, both of the events are very spectacular to see.

Although I live in Kyoto for over 6 years, I have never seen the Yamaboko Junko myself. But for the first time, I have decided to attend the event with my friend. On July 17th at 8 o'clock in the morning, people from all over the world gathered around near Karasuma Street to watch the start of the Yamaboko Junko. What was interesting to me was that all the hokos were different, in style, color and size, so you are never bored of watching them. I was impressed by the Naginata hoko (長刀鉾) or the main hoko, because of the way it makes the sound when it moves, how the people perform inside the small float, and a local boy (represent as the divine messenger) dressed in a traditional Japanese clothes. It was amazing to see all of them and I wish to learn more about the history of Gion Festival to enjoy better next year. I would also like to guide tourists around to show this wonderful event as well.



Movie



About Time



Have you ever desired to go back into past? If someone tells you that there is a way you can go back to past, what would you do? On this movie, the main character Tim rewinds the time and uses this ability to make his life happy. Because now he can start over his life from the past even if he fails on this moment. The story is like this, one day Tim meets a beautiful nice woman and fall in love on her at first sight. But he could not deliver his frank feeling to her well. So, he started use his ability to get her and finally he succeed to marry her. He used his power not only for himself but also tried to help the people around him. Later, he finds the rule of time travel which can change his whole life for his own happiness. Eventually, he realizes something more important things than going back to past for recover his mistakes. It was to live on this moment not in the past. He learned the lesson through time travel; I just try to live every day as if I have deliberately came back to this one day, to enjoy it, as if it was the full final day of my extraordinary, ordinary life. We're all traveling through time together, every day of our lives. All we can do is do our best to relish this remarkable ride.

Now, I want to ask you again.

"Have you ever wished to go back into past?"

Rock is for Girls



Women have long had a place in Japanese pop music, but for some reason rock has always been different. Unsurprisingly, male artists dominated the rock scene in the mid 90's and Kyoto was no exception. It was in this kind of environment that the ladies of Dokuro started twenty years ago in a university circle. They started with the simple philosophy of "rock is for girls", and it stuck. They broke in with noise-inspired rock-a-billy, and eventually made songs with punk, folk rock, and electronic influences. With such a variety of songs, it is certainly hard to put a label on them. Their songs are mysteriously playful while often hinting at subjects such as betrayed love, longings just over the horizon, and the fate of striped T-shirts. They are simultaneously eccentric and accessible, creating a special intimacy with fans during live performances.

Dokuro have faced some barriers as women in a male dominated environment, but that has not slowed them down. At times, they have been told that they should not play rock because they are girls, but their music clearly proves that wrong. According to songwriter Sou, "too many guys tend to focus on shouting 'rock'n'roll!!' instead of the actual music." Girls don't do that as much. Singer/guitarist Asako and bassist Oyabin said they'd "be embarrassed to behave like that, and in the end, rock seems like it was just made for girls." See with your own eyes the way Dokuro's take the stage, and you might start to think so yourself.

This year Dokuro have a series of shows in honor of these first two decades. When I asked Asako and Oyabin what is next for Dokuro, they responded, "Well, right now we're the only two original members left, but it would be nice if we could continue to go up on stage even when we're old ladies, wearing diapers or in wheelchairs." I certainly hope so, as we are all looking forward to seeing that. Until then, Doshisha University students should consider their fourth album "Osoi Chushoku" a must listen, and go see them live at their next show in Kyoto.

Free Bicycle Parking

Parking a bicycle on the street illegally is an easy habit to fall into, and a potentially dangerous one. A parked bicycle increases the chances of an accident on streets and walkways that are already narrow, and clusters of bicycles even more so. It is a problem that residents of Kyoto often bring up, and the city has been trying to fix. However, it is something anyone living in Kyoto sees on a daily basis. Dozens of bicycles crammed together on a popular street or busy intersection. There are bicycles new and old, big and small, expensive and cheap. Some have not been there for five minutes, some have a paper citation fluttering in the wind, and others may have been there for days. All are parked illegally. Thanks to the large number of bicycle thieves in Los Angeles, we do not have this problem in my hometown. While the number of illegally parked and abandoned bicycles in Kyoto surprised me at first, I was even more surprised by the city's way of dealing with the problem. It is a scene that is not too uncommon if you are looking for it. Two small pick-up trucks pull up next to a cluster of bicycles, and four men load the bicycles onto the trucks one by one. Fifteen minutes later, the area is cleared of bicycles and awaiting the return of frustrated owners. The bicycles are taken to one of six holding lots in Kyoto, where they are lined up and separated by day from hundreds of others, and at which the rightful owners can pay 2,300 yen to reclaim them. While most owners eventually pay the 2,300 yen to claim their bicycles, some bicycles pass the four week period unclaimed. The city then sells these bicycles to various recycle shops, who repair any problems the bicycle might have, and prepare it for resale. Get it? Re-cycle. From April, 2013 to March, 2014, 54,603 illegally parked bicycles were collected from the streets of Kyoto.

Hypothetically, if every bicycle was reclaimed by its owner last year, it means people of Kyoto would have spent 125,586,900 yen just to get something back that belongs to them. Knowing that bicycles probably resell for more than 2,300 yen, it is fair for us to imagine a much bigger number. A number that both raises questions and makes us think twice before we illegally park our bicycles on the street again.



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