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## Excursions

### Toyohashi Festival

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Saturday 20th of October, 2012 was the day of the Toyohashi Festival. Students from Toyohashi University of Technology signed up at the International Affairs Office to join the festival and wear a yukata (female students) or happi (male students). We had to be at the Toyohashi International Association early to change into yukata. Misato Baba-san, one of the tutors of the International House, helped me find the location.

When we arrived at 14:30 hours, many yukata were available and we could choose from many different colors and designs. I chose to wear a purple yukata with a floral design. In addition to students from Toyohashi Tech there were also students from other universities at the festival, which resulted in quite a large group of international students.

At about 16:00 the dance-practice started. An experienced dancer showed how the dances were done in the center of a large circle, and all international students followed. In total, we practiced 3 dances. One of them was very easy, but the other two were rather difficult. They were repeated for about an hour. Since each song only lasted for about 5 minutes, we could practice the dances often. In the mean time we could also colour a white mask. Everyone coloured their mask differently, and it was lovely to see the various results. The masks were not worn on the face, but on the side of the head (which I have never seen in the Netherlands). After practice, a light meal was provided, before going to the festival, consisting of inarizushi and sandwiches.

At around 18:00 o' clock we went to the festival street. I was very surprised to see that so many people were participating. Different groups were also going towards the starting point at the same time. When we arrived, the streets were completely full. In neat rows of 3 people we started dancing as soon as the music started. The happy vibe of the dances and the visitors of the festival made this one of the best experiences in Japan for me so far. While dancing and walking, we passed the other groups of people. Several groups were very professional. They were all wearing the same clothing and their dancing was perfect every time. Even children were present in those groups. Other groups were enthusiastic and energetic (like our group, with the international students), which was fun to look at. While the music was playing, taiko-drummers were guiding the rhythm in the center of the street. At the sides of the street were food-stalls, giving off a very nice scent. At first I expected that dancing for 2 hours would be very long and tiring, but the cheerful energy and concentration made time pass very quickly. In the end, I probably could have danced for another two hours. During the festival, I really felt connected to the Japanese culture. I am very thankful to have gotten this opportunity to join in such an amazing event. I enjoyed this festival very much. I have never seen so many people performing the same dance at the same time, it was amazing to see, and amazing to participate.



Students wearing yukata



Students dancing Bon-Odori in Toyohashi Festival

## Ceramic art in Tokoname-the city of ceramics

Kenneth Renny Simb, first year masters student majoring in mechanical engineering

As part of Japanese Language studies, every year Toyohashi university of Technology organizes a study tour for Japanese Language Intensive Course Students. Through such tours international students get to know various cultural and related activities in Japan at the same time refreshing their minds.

On 2 August this year, four international students having completed six months of Japanese language studies attended a workshop on ceramic art in Tokoname—the city of ceramics. This city is a very famous place in Japan for ceramic art due to its products commonly known as Tokoname ware.

During this visit the students learnt more about Japanese ceramics and they all made ceramic items by hand. It was a challenging but very interesting thing to see that each one could make very nice ceramic product at first time.

The students also experienced other aspects of Japan first hand including the unique transportation system. A great time was had by all the participants.



Toyohashi Tech students making their own ceramic art at Tokoname.