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## “Landing” in Tokai

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It was by chance that my first substantial contact with the Japanese life occurred in Tokai. And, I have to confess, it was an unexpected lovely surprise. It is not only its special location, so close to the sea and in the same time allowing a mountains perspective, or the lovely mild weather. I think that most of all it was the unusual mixture between country village (with fields scattered between buildings even in its center, small houses and small restaurants) and the busy look of an industrial town. From a simple topological point of view I was expecting something similar to my home institute which is also located in a small village (Magurele) near Bucharest. But unlike Magurele, Tokai seems to have also a life independent of JAERI or other corporations activity. Tokai is much more than a place to go to work, it has a personality of its own.

After only a few months spent here, I cannot expect to really understand the Japanese life, and probably I have also only a limited view of Tokai life itself. At this moment I think that the most appropriate description of Tokai seems to be that one of a big university campus. This image is based, of course, on the big number of typical Japanese corporation residences, but this is only part of the story. The main contribution to the campus-like life arises from the people living here. Always ready to help, polite and friendly, they have helped to allow a smooth transition to a new and very different kind of life.

Looking back, it seems almost incredible to me that every organizational thing was seated up in only one or two weeks, and practical without any stress or problem. Usually, arriving as a postdoc for

the first time in one place means a lot of trouble to get settled in. This seems not to be the case in Japan and it is sure not as a postdoc in JAERI, and this in spite of all language potential problems. Coming from a country in which the bureaucracy is considered the main trouble in solving anything, it was an astonishing surprise to find out that it might also be working and even helpfully. At this point I'd also want to add that, generally speaking, the standard of life for a postdoc in JAERI is very high. These two aspects can be related at a first thought to a very good management but I think this has also more deeper roots, in the general attention and care paid by the Japanese people to details. It might be a simplistic view but I'll try to relate this more to all small details of every life aspect. I'm not thinking only about the so-called "typical Japanese" ways to prune the threes (sentei) or to arrange the food on dishes. I was impressed by the way in which TV speakers are preparing some hardcopy diagrams to emphasize some subjects (which might appear strange in a world where everything may be so easily displayed on a screen) or, for the same reason, the way our Japanese language teachers at Tokai Cultural Center prepare their lessons, with a lot of handwork. It is easy to discuss about trying to make things perfect but it is a very interesting experience to see it in practice.

In this view I can say that my "landing" in Tokai was a very fortunate one. It was also an interesting experience to be able to accommodate to a different lifestyle and using only a limited vocabulary. This was possible only by the friendly cooperation of all the people I have met here, who spend their time and efforts to understand and help me.