PII Internship Report by Yuqi Jasmine Li

Hokkoku Shimbun

This year, I found myself sweating the summer days away at *Hokkoku Shimbun* (北國新聞), a Kanazawa-based newspaper company that claims one of the largest readerships in the Hokuriku Area. My time there, working under the Society Section (社会部), included some of the most challenging, but also some of the most cherished moments of my life. I was able to come face-to-face with the behemoth that is Japanese culture, not only when I was out doing fieldwork, but in the office as well. Looking back now, I can say with confidence that not only have I improved my practical skills of reading, writing, and speaking, but have also grown as an admirer and scholar of Japanese language and culture.

The average day for me started at ten in the morning. I would begin by heading over to the televisions, underneath which would be a time-table that listed the day’s events, along with the journalists that are to cover them. Usually, two of the journalists’ would be tagged with a “+J,” signifying “and Jasmine.” Those would be the *sempai* (先輩) that would be guiding me for the day. If the event wasn’t for another few hours, I took a copy of that day’s *Hokkoku Shimbun*, and read at my desk, marking down words and phrases that I either did not understand, or otherwise caught my attention. Eventually, though, my *sempai* would call to me, and slinging my camera on my shoulder, I would jog out after them.

The Society Section was careful to choose events that they believed I would find interesting—events that they thought pulsed with the vitality of Japanese and, more specifically, Kanazawa’s culture. During my two months there, I watched *ikebana* artists preparing for an exhibition; walked around a *ryōtei* (料亭), a form of traditional Japanese restaurant; and paraded through the streets of Noto, carrying a large festival lantern during the *Abare-matsuri* (あばれ祭り). Some days, if a *sempai* were able to squeeze a few extra hours out of his or her schedule, he or she would offer to take me anywhere I wanted to go. It was on these days that I, a lover of literature and philosophy, was given tours around the memorial museums of the *San-Bungou* (三文豪), otherwise known as the Three Great Literary Masters of Kanazawa, as well as that of the famous Zen philosopher, D.T. Suzuki. On location, I observed the interviews conducted by my *sempai*, while taking pictures and notes of my own. Often, I was also encouraged to ask questions.

After I returned to the office, I would sit at my desk and write down my reflections about one of the events I went to that day. Though these were not always published, my *sempai* never failed to read my reports over for me and give me advice about grammar, structure, and content. On days it was decided my article could be published, it would then be handed up to the “Desk,” or editors, and I would sit there, chewing at my nails, waiting for judgment to be passed. Sometimes, the verdict asked me to add in a simple clarification or take out a sentence or two; at other times, I was asked to rewrite almost the entire report.

As the weeks went by, I was encouraged more and more to strike out and write articles on my own. I would find a topic that interested me, and then go visit the necessary sources (always with a *sempai* in tow), conduct the necessary interviews, and finally write the actual report. My
biggest article took root when I went with a *sempai* to a mock-wedding that she was covering. There, the bride and groom exchanged wedding rings made from *mizuhiki* (水引), a traditional craft from Kanazawa. Intrigued by the blend of Western and Eastern culture, I visited a shop, locally famous for *mizuhiki* wares, and learned about the meaning and history of the art. The finished article was an amalgam of my first impressions, newfound knowledge, and final reflections.

But, in the end, some of the most rewarding experiences of the summer took place within the office, rather than outside of it. Learning about writing, about Kanazawa, about Japan from my *sempai*, sitting side-by-side with them in an authentic work environment—these moments shine just as brightly as the lanterns that wavered through the streets of Noto on the night of the *Abare-matsuri*. I recommend this internship to students who not only wish to learn about the language and culture of Japan, but want to become part of it. As cliché as this sounds, it really is an experience like no other.