

Yukiko, NAGATA

Mexico Month - Mission Accomplished!
Exploration, Discoveries and Paths for the Future

I wonder if I could ever find words to adequately describe how fruitful our entire journey to Mexico from November 10th till the 20th was – Simply, every piece of it was marvelous.

From encountering graduate students and professors of prestigious academic institutions such as El Colegio de México (COLMEX) & Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), getting a chance to immerse ourselves in thought-provoking discussions regarding our researches, to being able to share lots of wonderful quality time with everyone both from Japan and Mexico, I must say the entire journey was filled with exciting discoveries and positive energy; it has naturally led us to keep moving forward for further developing the network between Japan and Mexico, both in terms of individual and public scale. What all the participants excitedly viewed as a milestone in developing a fond network with universities in Mexico and a step towards a treasurable friendship across the Pacific came true, thanks to the very warm support and the generous grant called UTokyo World-leading Innovative Graduate Study (WINGS) Trial Fund provided by The University of Tokyo.



Four other friends from UTokyo, our supervisor and some other professors were sent to Mexico as ambassadors to engage ourselves in various activities which had been planned to promote interaction between UTokyo and COLMEX/UNAM. Had we not granted this generous grant named UTokyo World-leading Innovative Graduate Study (WINGS) Trial Fund by The University of Tokyo, it is no exaggeration to say that our adventures would have never been this colorful and full of exciting exploration. The highlight of my visit was that I had an opportunity to deliver a presentation in front of approximately 20 in total graduate school students from Japan and Mexico and that I was fortunate to have a few professors set a time for private academic tutoring sessions. As for the presentation, it was such a precious experience where I could introduce my own research – in Spanish! - on internal Mexican migration to the northern border cities of Mexico and receive feedback from young scholars from Mexico itself. Likewise, the tutoring sessions with professors who are also working on migration topics gave me hints to ponder as well as chances to expand my network with top-level scholars from Mexico. As much as building up for these two big events was nerve-racking, I would confidently say that it was well-worth all the effort preparing for it and I feel I have been able to make the most of it. In a nutshell, I can confidently say that one of our activities which had been planned and named as “Mexico Presentation Workshop” went outstandingly well; this workshop definitely functioned as a conduit for further enhancing the relationship between UTokyo and COLMEX/UNAM.



Another piece of accomplishment for me was that I got ahead with collecting useful materials for my own studies at the COLMEX library. I had been there for the first time during my master's career in 2014; at that time, I had received a piece of advice by my supervisor which was that

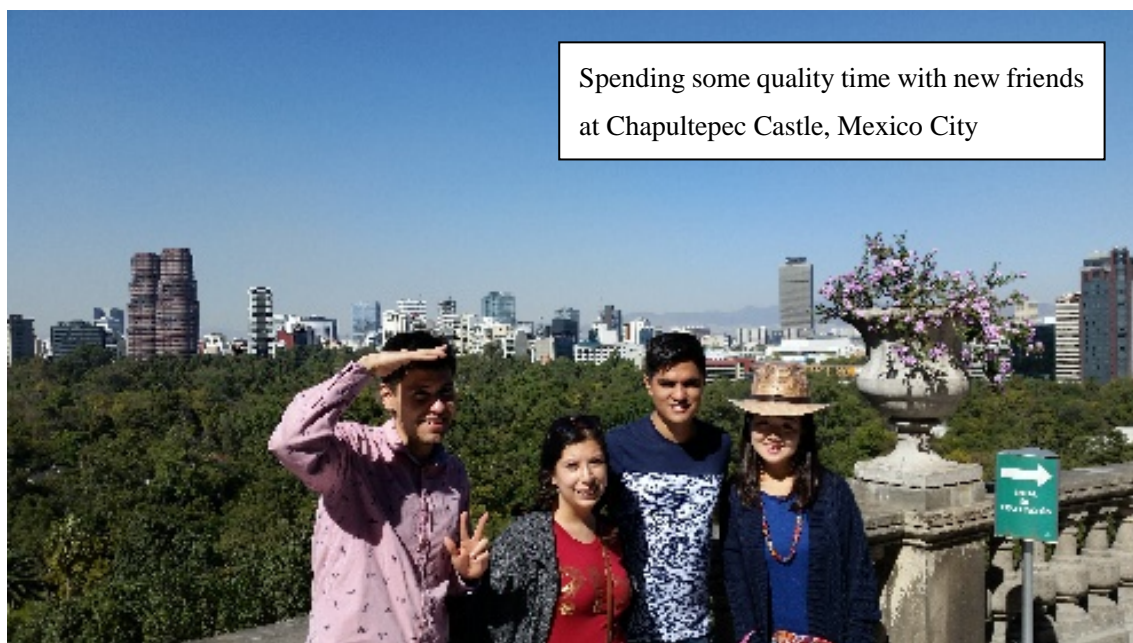
it is always a smart idea to familiarize oneself with the ways of using libraries at academic institutions overseas, Mexico in my case. Looking back, I had not fully grasped the meaning of my supervisor's advice at that time; nevertheless, I have come to really understand his words over the course of my PhD career and was looking forward to dedicating some of my spare time for material hunting prior to hopping on a plane from Japan this time. As a result, I came across an abundant amount of resource which I would never be able to encounter in Japan, or even in the U.S.A., as they consisted of booklets issued by municipal governments of Mexico. Even more, as I kept borrowing and making copies of those materials, I was blessed to be introduced to one of the librarians who kindly set up an appointment for the next day and walked me through the process of material searching one to one. Although I had known about ways to search for books and articles, getting a chance to sit down with a librarian for over an hour was such a delightful addition for gaining new insights.



Our time together outside of those academic institutions was memorable. Of course, the excursion to one of the most historic cities in Mexico, OAXACA was eye-opening. Through visiting famous historical heritages such as Monte Alban and Mitla as well as exploring the town where we were exposed to unique Mexican culture, all of the ambassadors from UTokyo were surrounded with breath-taking experiences one after another. All the lively conversations we shared with students from Mexico through these moments were treasured and catalyzed our relationship even more. Furthermore,

the students who were majoring in Japan studies at COLMEX were also very welcoming; we were curious to learn about each other's interest and enjoyed chatting in an environment which became a very amicable one already upon introducing each other. It went so well that some of them were willing to show us around Mexico City on the next day – we were lucky to visit a famous castle called Chapultepec. What would be a better way than spending time both in and outside of school to nurture friendship which would last for a long time? Thanks to all the activities which all the participants took part in during our stay in Mexico and their excellent outcomes, we are ready to further advance our network with COLMEX/UNAM and look forward to continuing our friendship with those we met during our journey!

I would like to extend a very special thanks to all the professors for generously giving us this incredible opportunity and for all the unwavering support from The University of Tokyo.



Spending some quality time with new friends
at Chapultepec Castle, Mexico City