

Spirit of BU

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About six months ago, I was fortunate enough to be selected as a Yeast Consortium Fellow for the first term by the Ohsumi Frontier Science Foundation. I am very grateful to have received this research grant when I needed some financial support. First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the foundation.

I moved to Kochi University of Technology, School of Environmental Science and Engineering just this spring. It inevitably takes money and time to adjust to a new environment. Even now, every day feels like a fresh challenge.

Kochi University of Technology is a public university located in Kami, a small city in eastern Kochi Prefecture with a population of less than 30,000. The campus is surrounded by abundant nature and peaceful countryside, and my daily morning commute path to work lasts along a riverbed and the beautiful rice paddy fields.

I was born and grown in the countryside, and the path to school during my junior and senior high school years was also along a rice paddy field. And perhaps it is because I am getting older, or maybe it is because of the TV dramas I am watching now, but I feel very familiar with the farmers' works along the daily morning path, which did not even catch my eye in my school days. More precisely, I often think that I would become such a farmer. I wonder how I would deal with the fickle weather of Kochi, what I would feel during the typhoon which often hits Kochi, what kind of certainty would make me decide the harvest date of my precious chives and ginger, how anxious I would be about crop damages;..... Then, I further project myself in reality into that imagination and explore the possibility of whether the skills, experience, and knowledge I have cultivated so far in my experimental research on chromosomes could help the farming business somehow. And then I realize. My current research will not be of help anywhere in the short run.

This contemplation has floated back and forth repeatedly on my way to work. It is a simple thought and contains no disappointment. But the realization of this discrepancy then begs the question, who am I from the farmers' perspective? At first, I convinced myself that I might be an equivalent person who would be in charge of the arts and entertainment, or a role similar to that of a person in charge of the skills. However, the creativity of basic science is of a slightly different kind, and I could not shake off the feeling that something was not right.

Then, very recently, I began to think that it was the samurai. It may sound conceited. However, I have no intention of discussing the hierarchy of positions. My samurai is not a great Shogun but, at best, a small country samurai. But I believe that there are many common aspects in terms of our mentality, our awareness of competing with competitors worldwide, and the content of our current daily work which is deeply involved in education. Above all, I firmly believe that I came to Kochi to become a lord of the land no matter how big it is.

I have rambled on and on about sentences that have nothing to do with my research, but there is a bit of foreshadowing in the content and structure of this article. This time, as a Yeast Consortium Fellow, I received a request from the foundation to write an essay. And it was explicitly to say that the essay was expected to be similar to what each Fellow had written in the free-entry section of the "Attitude toward basic research" section of the grant application, which was excellent. However, what I had written in that column was, to put it simply, a litany of resentment, resentment toward the research budget applications and position searches I had done up to that point. It was not something that could be summarized in an essay, even if I could candy-coat it significantly thick enough.

Then a ray of light came from my hobby. I am an American football fan and enjoy watching games on TV. This season of 2018 has been engaging with the emergence of new young playmakers, and one of the topics has been the resurgence of the traditional Chicago Bears. Matt Nagy, who was 39 years old, was hired as the new head coach this season, and the Bears has been brilliant so far. And importantly, the motto that Nagy used to control the hearts and minds of the team has also hit me as I am struggling.

"Be You."

Nagy was reported to write these words in large letters on the meeting room wall at the beginning of the season and strongly encouraged all players to express their natural and unforced individuality and humanity. This is it. This is precisely the beautiful expression that sublimates all the exasperation of the experience I described in my application for the Foundation's grant. It also represents the exceptional nature of the Ohsumi Frontier Science Foundation that I could complete application honestly without having false myself explaining the applied aspects of my research. Or it symbolizes the fact that the false myself did not work in my job-hunting. The attitude of "Be You" and the pride of "Be You" were the spirit and message I found in the Ohsumi Frontier Science Foundation which were delivered to me all the way. And they support me to stand on my own feet in the land of Kochi. I am very grateful for that.

Of course, I had a hunch that the essay could not be completed simply by explaining the

spirit of “Be You”. However, the moment I changed the notation of Be You to B U, everything synchronized in my mind: it is entirely the spirit of “BU” which is equal to samurai spirit, as solid “bu” is a paraphrase of samurai in Japanese. Everything can simply be based on the samurai spirit, which is all genuine and unique to Japan. The heart of samurai convinces me the relationship with farmers, whether or not my research is helpful in short-circuiting, my self-discipline in seeking the way, and my sense of battle and pride as a researcher. Individuals may perceive things in a thousand different ways. But, as a basic science researcher, I will nobly continue to cherish the spirit of BU in the future.