

Friends of Japan

In this report we introduce the life and work of two friends of Japan.



Jerome Chouchan

Jerome Chouchan, Managing Director of Godiva, who brings insights of traditional kyudo to the chocolate empire. He also serves as a board member of the International Kyudo Federation.

Kyudo and the Balanced Life



Two years after reading Eugen Herrigel's classic book *Zen in the Art of Archery*, Jerome Chouchan began practicing kyudo (Japanese archery)—“the Way of the Bow.” He felt a subtle pull toward a tradition that placed great emphasis on developing the proper *kokoro* (spirit) and *kata* (form). In addition to practicing kyudo, Mr. Chouchan is the Managing Director for the chocolate company, Godiva in Japan and South Korea.

Mr. Chouchan visited Japan for the first time in 1983. He was still in college when his essay—“Why do new graduates in Japanese companies like Matsushita and Japan Airlines go to Zen temples as part of their initiation into a company?”—won a nationwide student essay competition in France. The win afforded him two weeks in Japan.

Mr. Chouchan has been practicing kyudo for 25 years. He believes that it has brought clarity and purpose to his personal and business life and given him insights into Japanese culture. “For example, in kyudo you learn the importance of the moment—both mentally and physically. When you practice kyudo day in and day out, you discover what they call the *kai*, which is when you are in full draw. The moment when you release the arrow decides whether your shot is good or not; and you cannot repeat it.”

“Another thing you discover is to be decisive,” Mr. Chouchan says, “because if you start to worry, the shot will be very weak. This is the same in business. I know that I have to decide now. And I cannot repeat the past. So every year, we try new things.” Mr. Chouchan continues: “Another point that has been important is the saying *seisha bicchu*, which means if you do things correctly, you will hit the target. I try to apply it in my business dealings.”

Mr. Chouchan's clarity of purpose, poise, and determination were demonstrated following the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. Mr. Chouchan recalls, “I was managing this business, and we had 250 stores in Japan and 700 employees. So I could not leave the boat when there was trouble in the sea.” Referring to those dark days, he says, “I was impressed by the dignity with which the staff reacted.”

Kyudo has also given Mr. Chouchan a clear direction with regard to his future and the future of the art around the world. “Anyone from any country,” he says, “can learn the virtues of what is called ‘respect’ in *dō* (way of life), especially in the traditional Japanese martial art of budo: to respect the senior, respect the value of patience, humility, continuity, and the value of the balance between process and result; all of these are completely universal.”

Will Mr. Chouchan stay in Japan? “Yes, for the moment I’m staying,” Mr. Chouchan says. “I would like to export Japan’s skills and treasures, both cultural and human.”





Philippa Clark

Philippa Clark, a student at the Australian National University, proudly wearing a kimono as a badge of international friendship.

A Whole World of Culture in a Kimono

Ms. Philippa Clark is a student of Asian studies and music at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra. She has loved Japan since she was a child. “At my kindergarten,” Ms. Clark says, “we learned Japanese, and I had a lot of Japanese friends in middle school.” When she was 15 years old, Ms. Clark and her family went to Europe on vacation. On the way there, they stopped in Japan for three days. “We stayed in Kyoto,” she says, “and we saw three famous temples: Kinkaku-ji, Ginkaku-ji, and Kiyomizu-dera. I was amazed. It was also the first time that I bought Japanese clothing.” She bought a pink *baori*, a traditional Japanese jacket.

When she and her family returned home, Ms. Clark bought her first kimono. “I always thought kimonos were beautiful,” she says. Ms. Clark showed the kimono to her Japanese teacher, who taught her how to wear it. “For my high school graduation, I wore a kimono,” Ms. Clark says with a smile. Since then, she has loved wearing kimonos. She has also developed an interest in *kitsuke*, the proper way to wear a kimono.

On her next visit to Japan, Ms. Clark was an exchange student for a year at Kansai University in Osaka Prefecture. “I loved studying in Osaka; the people were so warm and friendly and they enjoy talking to foreigners,” she says. At the university, Ms. Clark joined many classes with Japanese and international students. She even joined the university’s a cappella club.

While in Osaka, she quickly searched for a school where she could learn how to wear a kimono. “One of my Japanese friends at the university had a *kitsuke* certificate,” Ms. Clark says, “and her grandmother had a kimono shop.” Through her friend’s introduction, Ms. Clark followed her dream and began a six-month course at a *kitsuke* school.

“Each week you had to learn a new skill because there are many kinds of kimonos,” she says. “For example, you learned how to wear and tie a yukata, a light cotton kimono used in the summer. After you mastered the yukata, you studied how to wear a kimono.” Four months later, she learned how to wear a *tomesode*, a black kimono that a mother wears to her daughter’s wedding. For this, Ms. Clark achieved the second-highest level of the kimono association.

Ms. Clark’s experience at the school also taught her about the people and culture of Japan. “To practice *kitsuke* you have to think very differently from Western culture, especially Australian culture,” she says. “In Japan they care about aesthetics and details, and they don’t hurry.” Ms. Clark has good memories about her teachers at the school. “They were wonderful,” she says. “They were very excited that I wanted to study kimono and wear it in Australia.”

During her stay in Japan, Ms. Clark visited Kyoto, Kanazawa, Nikko, Okinawa, and Tokyo. She made many friends. She enjoyed many parties and cooked local dishes. “It was probably the best year of my life,” she says, smiling at the memory. Talking about the future, Ms. Clark says, “My dream is to be the Australian ambassador to Japan someday.”

