

Research Resumed

Zhao Xiaoli, a Chinese researcher at Tohoku University in Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture, has remained in Japan since the Great East Japan Earthquake. Masaki Yamada interviewed her.

Zhao Xiaoli entered Tohoku University as a graduate student in 2008, where she earned her doctoral degree. Even today, Zhao continues her work at Tohoku University as a researcher for the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science specializing in new titanium alloys used in medical devices.

"In the field of metallic materials, Tohoku University is at a world-class level. The professors exhibit a wonderful approach to research and the facilities are fitted with cutting-edge research equipment," says Zhao.

When the Great East Japan Earthquake struck, the university suffered considerable damage. Rows of bookshelves in the research lab fell over, and almost all the scientific glassware was broken. "It all happened so suddenly, my heart was in my mouth. My teacher thought it better not to go home because of the likelihood of strong aftershocks, so I stayed in the university for two days and then relocated to an evacuation center. If it weren't for the proper guidance from my teacher, I think I would have fallen

into a state of panic," recounts Zhao.

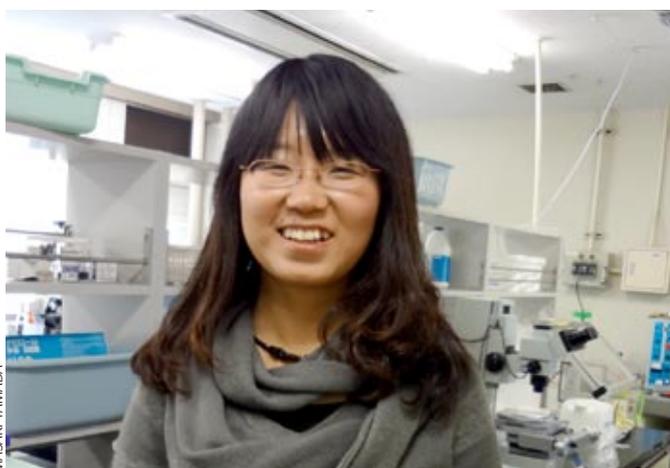
After the earthquake, many researchers and students from overseas returned to their home countries, but Zhao remained in Japan for the sake of the university's recovery. There was a lot that needed to be done quickly, such as disposing of all the shattered glassware and putting everything in the research lab in order.

"The teachers and fellow students at the university are all always friendly, and they are like a family to me. That's why I wanted to do whatever I could to help get the university back on its feet," says Zhao.

In October 2011, when restoration of the research lab had been completed and research activities had resumed, Zhao was awarded a new honor. She received the Professor Fujino Award, which is given to Chinese graduate exchange students enrolled at Tohoku University who are expected to achieve outstanding accomplishments in the future. The award is named after Professor Genkuro Fujino, who was the former teacher of acclaimed Chinese writer Lu Xun, who studied at Sendai Medical School, the predecessor of Tohoku University.

Zhao's dream is to one day return to China and utilize the technologies she has learned in Japan in her home country.

"My daily life is the same as it was before the earthquake, and campus life is back to normal. I just want to continue to dedicate myself to my research here," says Zhao.



MASAKI YAMADA

Zhao Xiaoli at her laboratory in Tohoku University

Masaki Yamada is a freelance writer.