**Young International Scientists Say**

**Seeking Knowledge and Opportunities in China**

*By LI Linxu*

Seek knowledge even if you have to go as far as China, as an Arabic old saying goes.

For Osama Abdalla Abdelshafy Mohamed, an Egyptian young scientist, his journey in China has not only been about knowledge-seeking but also life-rewarding, reflecting the flourishing talent exchanges between China and Egypt.

**Many memorable moments**

Over the years, Osama has gone through many memorable moments in China, such as publishing his first Science Citation Index article, receiving his PhD and landing a research job. The newest one was receiving the Chinese Government Friendship Award last year.

"It is an extraordinary honor and a deeply humbling experience," Osama remarked.

"The award symbolizes the warmth, support, and trust I have received from the Chinese, especially in Xinjiang, where I have had the privilege of collaborating with dedicated scientists and embracing a rich, inclusive culture," he added.

He has been working at the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography (XIEG), the Chinese Academy of Sciences, for almost 10 years, and calls Xinjiang his second home.

Last year, he received his Chinese "green card", China's permanent residence permit, and calls it as a "milestone" in his life, representing his deeper connection to China.

Osama's research focuses on plant-associated microbial communities in arid land, particularly medicinal plants from arid lands in Xinjiang and Egypt. Together with his teammates, he has developed eco-friendly solutions to support sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation.

"Living and working in Xinjiang has been deeply rewarding," he said, recounting a memorable experience during a research trip to a remote area. "After a long day of fieldwork, a local Uyghur family invited us to dinner. Despite the language barrier, we communicated through gestures and laughter, shared stories, and enjoyed a delicious homemade feast. That moment, where work and life intersected so naturally, left an indelible mark on me."

**Two life-changing decisions**

"Coming to China to do my PhD study was one of the best decisions I've made," said Osama.

Despite the geographical distance between China and Egypt and the differences in language and culture, he was drawn to China when considering studying abroad. After realizing that about 70 percent of the references in his master's thesis were from Chinese scientists, he was resolved to go to China.

So he applied for a scholarship to the China Scholarship Council and was eventually admitted by the Northwest A&F University in Shaanxi province in 2008.

"China has given me the opportunity to grow both academically and personally. I'm grateful every day for following my heart and seeking knowledge even as far as China," said Osama. He called his PhD study at the university "transformative" in the sense that it shaped both his academic career and his outlook on life.

After graduation, he briefly worked in Egypt and Italy, but always felt drawn back to China.

When he learned that there was a chance to work at the XIEG, he immediately applied through a support program initiated by the Ministry of Science and Technology and successfully seized the opportunity.

"I flew directly from Rome to Xinjiang, with only a brief stop in Cairo to change flights and meet my family at the airport," Osama said, calling the journey the beginning of a new chapter in his life.

He applauds a series of programs launched by China to support young scientists from other developing countries to do research in China.

"Such programs empower researchers like myself to access cutting-edge facilities, engage with accomplished mentors, and collaborate on transformative research," he said. "They foster innovation, cultivate scientific expertise, and strengthen international ties between China and participating nations, creating a ripple effect of positive impact on global science and technology."

**A bigger dream**

Talking about his future plans, Osama is excited about continuing his R&D on sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation solutions, and eager to mentor young scientists, particularly those from developing countries, at the XIEG.

His perseverance in scientific research, passion for life and love of Chinese culture has made a deep impression on his colleagues.

"Osama has encountered many challenges in his work and life in Xinjiang," said Zhang Yuanming, director of the XIEG. "Faced with challenges, he always forged ahead with optimism and hard work."

Through Osama, the XIEG has established a long-term and stable cooperation relationship with Egypt's Arish University, according to Zhang, who commended Osama's "bridging" role in advancing sci-tech cooperation between the two institutions.

"Without Osama, our research on Sinai desert farming systems would have been impossible," Li Wenjun, research fellow at the XIEG and Osama's team leader, said. "He went back to Egypt alone to collect all the samples we need."

"We understand and support each other," Li said, speaking highly of Osama's role in his team.

Now, Osama has an even bigger dream — to establish a China-Africa Joint Center for Agricultural Research in Cairo.

He wants the center to be a hub for scientific innovation, providing advanced research facilities and offering training courses and workshops led by Chinese scientists.

**More cooperation opportunities**

"Every time I go back to Egypt, I talk about my work and life in China through lectures, workshops and other events," Osama said. "In addition to its natural beauty and cultural richness, China also provides immense opportunities for scientific research and international cooperation."

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the China-Egypt comprehensive strategic partnership, and the two countries have pledged to work together to confront international challenges, such as food security, climate change and desertification.

"Xinjiang, located at the center of the Eurasian continent, is a natural place to study temperate desert ecosystems," Zhang said, who has witnessed an increasing number of young researchers like Osama coming to the XIEG.

In the last five years, the XIEG has signed more than 60 agreements and memorandums with 56 universities, research institutions and international organizations from 23 countries and regions, and has established a number of platforms for joint research and international cooperation, such as the Biodiversity Conservation Alliance for Arid Lands, according to Zhang.

"In our team, we have almost the same number of Chinese and foreign members," Li said. "This illustrates the strong atmosphere for international cooperation at the XIEG."

"In the future, more international young students and researchers will be recruited," said Li. He plans to establish joint labs with countries such as Egypt in the field of microbial resources and utilization in special habitats to support sustainable agriculture. This will provide more opportunities for young talents from developing countries.

"China has provided me with incredible opportunities to develop my scientific skills, especially through my work in Xinjiang," Osama said. "If I were to describe China in a few words, I'd say it is a land of beauty, peace, and opportunity."

*This column is written in cooperation with the China Science and Technology Exchange Center (CSTEC).*

**“国际青科说”系列报道**

**求知、求职在中国**

科技日报记者 李林旭

“知识，虽远在中国，亦当求之。” 这是阿拉伯国家的一句古谚语。

对埃及青年科学家奥萨马·阿布达拉·阿布德尔沙斐·穆罕默德而言，他的中国之旅不仅是求知，而且还让他的人生充满更多可能，是中埃人才交流日益密切的缩影。

**众多难忘时刻**

这些年来，奥萨马在中国经历了众多难忘时刻，包括发表了他的第一篇科学引文索引（SCI）论文，获得博士学位以及找到一份研究工作。去年，他获得中国政府友谊奖，更令他终生难忘。

“这是给我的莫大荣耀，我荣幸之至。”奥萨马说。

“这一奖项代表着我从中国人民那里得到的关怀、支持和信任。我非常幸运能与中国杰出的科学家合作，体验中国尤其是新疆丰富、包容的文化。”他补充道。

奥萨马已在中国科学院新疆生态与地理研究所（以下简称“新疆生地所”）工作近10年，视新疆为他的第二故乡。

去年，他获得了“中国绿卡”——中华人民共和国外国人永久居留证。奥萨马称这是他人生中的一个“里程碑”，象征着他与中国更深的连接。

干旱区植物相关的微生物群落，特别是与新疆和埃及干旱区药用植物相关的微生物群落，是奥萨马的研究重点。他所在的团队研发出了支持可持续农业和环境保护的生态友好解决方案。

“在新疆工作和生活非常有意义。”奥萨马想起了一次在偏远地区科考的经历。“在忙了一天的野外作业后，当地一个维吾尔族家庭邀请我们共进晚餐。我们通过手势进行交流，分享故事，在欢声笑语中品尝手工制作的美味佳肴，令我终生难忘。”

**两个改变命运的决定**

“来到中国读博士是我做过的最正确的决定。”奥萨马说。

虽然中国与埃及相距遥远，语言文化各异，奥萨马在考虑出国留学时还是被中国吸引。当发现他硕士论文中约70%的参考文献源自中国科学家之后，他下定决心要前往中国。

于是他申请了中国国家留学基金管理委员会的奖学金项目，并于2008年被西北农林科技大学录取。

“在学术成长和个人发展上，是中国给我提供了机会。我对遵从内心，选择到中国求知，时刻充满感激。”奥萨马说，无论是对他的学术生涯而言，还是对他的人生观而言，他在西北农林科技大学的博士学习经历都是“蜕变式的”。

博士毕业后，奥萨马曾短暂到埃及和意大利工作，但心仍向往中国。

当了解到有一个到新疆生地所工作的机会后，他立即申请了科技部发起的支持项目，并成功抓住了机会。

“申请成功后，我随即从罗马启程前往新疆，中途仅在开罗转机时见了下家人。”奥萨马表示，这次前往中国工作开启了他人生新篇章。

他为中国发起的一系列项目点赞，这些项目支持其他发展中国家青年科学家来华从事科学研究。

“这使得像我这样的科研人员有机会接触到一流科研设施，与杰出导师合作进行变革性研究。”奥萨马说，“这些项目推动了创新和人才培养，加强了中国与参与国之间的合作，在全球科技领域产生了积极的涟漪效应。”

**一个更大的梦想**

在谈到未来计划时，奥萨马期待能继续在新疆生地所推进他在可持续农业和环境保护领域的研究，并希望培养更多青年科学家，特别是来自发展中国家的青年科学家。

奥萨马对科学研究的执着，对生活的热爱，以及对中国文化的痴迷，给他的同事们留下了深刻印象。

“奥萨马在新疆的工作和生活遇到了很多挑战。”新疆生地所所长张元明说，“面对挑战，他总是以乐观和勤奋来应对。”

据张元明介绍，通过奥萨马牵线搭桥，新疆生地所与埃及阿里什大学建立了长期稳定的科技合作关系。

“如果不是奥萨马，我们对西奈沙漠耕作系统的研究几乎不可能完成。”奥萨马在新疆生地所的同事、也是他所在项目的团队负责人李文均说，“奥萨马独自一人回到埃及收集到了我们所需的所有样品。”

“我们相互理解并相互支持。”李文均对奥萨马在团队中所发挥的作用给予了高度评价。

现在，奥萨马还有个更大的梦想，那就是在开罗建立一个中非农业联合研究中心。

他想把这个中心打造成科技创新中心，里面不仅有先进的研究设施，还将提供中国科学家领衔的培训课程和工作坊。

**更多合作机会**

“每次回到埃及，我都会通过讲座、研讨会或其他活动讲述我在中国的工作和生活。”奥萨马说，“除了美丽的自然风光和丰富多彩的文化，中国还提供了众多科学研究和国际合作机会。”

今年是中埃全面战略伙伴关系建立10周年，两国承诺将共同应对诸如粮食安全、气候变化和沙漠化等国际性挑战。

“新疆地处欧亚大陆腹地，是研究温带沙漠生态系统的天然场所。”张元明观察到越来越多像奥萨马这样的青年研究人员选择加入新疆生地所，致力于科学研究。

据张元明介绍，过去五年来，新疆生地所与来自23个国家和地区的56所大学、科研院所和国际组织签署了60多项合作协议和备忘录，并建立了包括干旱区生物多样性保护联合体在内的多个联合研究和国际合作平台。

“在我们的团队中，中方和外方成员数几乎一样。”李文均说，这反映出新疆生地所开展国际合作的浓厚氛围。

“未来，我们将招收更多海外青年学生和研究人员。”李文均表示，他打算在特殊生境微生物资源研究和利用领域，与埃及等国建立联合实验室，以支持可持续农业，这将为发展中国家的青年才俊提供更多机会。

“中国，特别是在新疆的工作，给我提供了难得的机会来拓展我的科研技能。”奥萨马说，“如果用几个词来描述中国，我要说它是美丽、和平和机会之国。”

*（该栏目与中国科学技术交流中心合作完成。）*