

The Shoin Cambodia Times

Spring 2010

Memories of Cambodia

*A week in Cambodia taught
Kobe Shoin Student Ambassador
Noriko Iba about the rich history
and culture of this poor country*

From 17th to 25th of September, I visited two cities, Siem Reap and Phnom Penh, in Cambodia. Going sightseeing, having home-stay and taking classes in the Royal University of Phnom Penh led me to meet new people and learn more about the country and its rich culture.

In the first city I stayed, Siem Reap, I could see one of the famous World heritage sites, Angkor Wat, and other historical temples. Most of them were well kept, and the atmosphere was very quite and peaceful. It was dramatic to see them in the sunset as well.

I also had a cruise tour to a floating village to see a school, church and people living a different lifestyle. It was afternoon so most people were lying down in their houses and taking it easy because it was too hot to work outside. I believe it is pleasant for them to be able to spend a lot of time with their family, while in Japan people are too busy with their work or school.



Nature gone wild at Ta Prohm



Noriko Iba enjoys Khmer hospitality

Sadly, however, there were many young children working or begging for money from tourists at the sightseeing sites. Some of them could speak English very well as they had learnt it from other tourists. This experience made me understand that if they could have education without any financial problems, they could reach their potential and make their dreams come true. However, the education should not be done by foreign volunteers because this might diminish the rich and peaceful Cambodian culture. It is my hope that the Cambodian education system will keep improving and give equal opportunities for all children.

In Phnom Penh, I stayed with a Cambodian family and took classes in the Royal University of Phnom Penh. During my homestay, I could try typical Cambodian food: Cambodian sour soup, porridge, dried meat and fish, fresh passion-fruit juice and so on. I find Cambodian food not only healthy with lots of vegetables, but also similar to Japanese food since the dishes were made a bit salty to be enjoyed together with rice. My host family took me to markets and let me try sugar cane with chili and salt powder. The taste was very spicy at first, but the sugar cane juice helped me cool down gradually. It was an interesting experience but I think I prefer the sugar cane on its own.

In the Royal University of Phnom Penh, I took classes in the English Department. All the teachers and students spoke only English in class and I was very impressed that they were so keen and enthusiastic. The students were not afraid of making mistakes but spoke with confidence, not hesitation.

Seeing the well-organized syllabus and orientation of the classes, I could see that the teachers are putting so much effort in their work as well. When they were asked any questions from their students, they gave clear answers and also praised and encouraged the students.

Through the field trip to Cambodia, I could see the rich history of the country, learn the importance of education, meet many people and, most importantly, I could explore the culture. I would definitely like to go back again in the future and, by that time, I hope to see Cambodia retaining its history and valuable customs and way of life with warm-hearted people as the country grows and develops ●

Kobe Shoin Poster Presentation Contest

Would *you* like to be our
next ambassador?

*The third contest will be held this June.
You could win a trip to Cambodia!*

Hop-step-Kolap!

Tomomi Yanagihara gets to know the Kobe Shoin Cambodia Prize Winner

Kolap Ry (21) is from Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia. She goes to two universities: Cambodian Mekong University, majoring in business management, and the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Royal University of Phnom Penh, majoring in teaching English as a foreign Language. She visited Japan for two weeks last December as her prize for winning a debate contest at her university.

On December 4th, Kolap came to Japan. Because she is from a warm place, her first impression of Japan was that the weather is cold. She thought Japanese people look busy because every time she took a train, they were sleeping and always looked tired. On the other hand, she was fascinated with the cleanliness of the streets and the beauty of Japanese women.

Kolap stayed in four Kobe Shoin students' homes. At dinner, her host family often served her *nabe-ryori*. She loves it and also she loves *takoyaki*.

In Cambodia, she lives with her parents two sisters, a brother and two aunts. On weekends, she goes to debate club, helps with her parents' business and, in her spare time, likes reading. She used to work at the Buddhist Morality Education Center as a part-time English teacher. And now her dream is to be an English teacher at her university.

Kolap is friendly, easygoing and warmhearted. The last question for Kolap was "Would you like to come back again?" She replied "YES!" with an angelic smile ●

Winter wonderland

For Kolap Ry, a visit to Japan opened her eyes to a different world

The seventeen days I spent in Japan last December was one of the most exciting times that I have ever had. It was wonderful, though the cold and chilly winter weather of December in Japan made me a bit uncomfortable as I had to wear thick clothes. Honestly speaking, I had never thought I would have a chance to visit Japan since it is very difficult for Cambodian people to get a visa. Therefore, I was over the moon and very proud of myself when I heard I had won the scholarship to visit Japan.

The first few days after I arrived in



Kolap with host sister Taeko Koyama at the Kobe Shoin speech contest

Japan, I was shocked by the Japanese way of living. Everyday, people travel by train on lots of complicated lines and in many directions, and they have to run during the rush hours to catch the train. Also, they have to transfer or change the line many times before they can reach their destination. What surprised me most is that people know where to get off even though they are sleeping along the way, while I need to be woken up by my host family. It seems the lives of the Japanese are so busy, but meaningful. Unlike in Japan, Cambodian people prefer traveling by motorbikes or cars, on which they can go straight to their school or workplace. Also, we don't have public transportation in Cambodia.

Though it was just a short visit, I went to many places, such as Kobe Harborland, Kiyomizu Temple in Kyoto, the Kobe Luminarie, Himeji Castle, Taiyo Park, Universal Studios Japan (USJ) and, especially memorable for me, Kinkakuji, which is one of the most wonderful temples in Japan. I loved everywhere I visited, but the place I love the most is USJ. The reason is that I rode the rollercoaster, which has always been my dream, though we don't have one in Cambodia. Also, I watched 3D movies – *Spiderman* and *Future Technology*. Even

though I felt both excited and nervous afterward, I still want to take the rollercoaster ride and watch that kind of movie again.

Food cannot be left out when talking about my experience in Japan. I have always heard that Japanese foods are healthy because of the nutritious fish and rice, so I really wanted to try. Having thought that Japanese people always eat raw fish, I felt worried I would have trouble with food since I had never eaten raw fish before. However, when I was eventually in Japan and ate Japanese food, I found everything to be delicious. I tried lots of foods, such as *ekonomiyaki*, *yakisoba*, *takoyaki* and *nabe*, and I love *takoyaki* and *nabe* the most. During my stay with different families, I ate *nabe* three times, and the taste was different each time. The first *nabe* was very spicy, but I liked it; the second and third times, the taste was quite similar. I wish I could eat all those dishes again soon.

I did have a chance to try *sake*, but since I don't drink alcohol I dared not drink it. I was surprised to see people drink lots of alcohol, especially girls. In Cambodia, it is rare for women to drink, especially teenagers.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express my great thanks to my four host families: Haruka, Mizuho, Miyana, Taeko and their family members for their time and hospitality. They made me feel like I was home though in fact I was a thousand miles away from my family. My sincere gratitude also goes to Mr. and Mrs. Mallett and all the professors and students at Shoin whose support made my visit to Japan a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I will share all these great events with my friends and family ●



Kolap enjoys the last colours of autumn with Kobe Shoin students

Free and easy in Cambodia

Mai Kakimoto and Shoko Kakuda discover what the Khmer youth do in their free time

Kolap explained about the differences and similarities between leisure time in Cambodia and in Japan.

Popular areas in Cambodia among young people are the riverside and the stadium. At the stadium, people enjoy dancing and singing. Japanese young people also like dancing in the park.

She also told us that she hangs out with her friends, going shopping or eating junk food in the fast-food restaurants. It is similar to Japanese young people. They chat with their friends and order a pizza or *bubble tea*. This drink is tea containing tapioca and it's from Thailand.

Some boys like to play soccer. Other popular sports, such as badminton, swimming and tennis are common for both men and women.

The best place for food in Cambodia is in a restaurant but this is expensive for most people. There are cheaper restaurants, of course, but the food is less delicious. So this is also not very different from Japan.

The most popular food is *prahok*. It's a kind of smelly and salty condiment, which is one of the main ingredients for typical Khmer food. Curry with noodles is very common for Cambodian people.

There are many cinemas in Japan but there are few cinemas in Cambodia because people do not really like going to the cinema at all. In Japan, we often go to see a movie with our friends, but the movie theater is used mainly for dates in Cambodia.

Kolap said that very few Japanese actors or singers are famous among her friends.

There are a few amusement parks in Cambodia, but they are small. There is no amusement park like Disneyland or Universal Studios Japan.

Karaoke is a popular pastime in Cambodia, just as in Japan. But Kolap seldom goes to a karaoke box.

There are many public holidays in Cambodia – more than in Japan:

7 January: *Victory Day*

8 March: *Women's Day*

April: *Khmer New Year* (3 days)

May: *King's birthday* (3 days)

September: *Pchom Ben* (like Japanese *Obon*)

November: *Water Festival*

9 November: *Independence Day*

10 December: *Human Rights Day*.

We were surprised to learn about Cambodia's public holidays. There are so many of them!

Mobile phones have become a necessary article around the world for young people and in Cambodia this is true too. Most people there have two mobile phones. One is for their family, another is for their friends. Recently, those using two mobile phones have been increasing in Japan, too.

We found that Japanese and Cambodian youth share many similar habits and we believe Cambodian popular culture will develop in the future as the country modernizes ●

All change for women

Inori Suwa reports on improving conditions for Khmer women

In the past, Cambodian women had few opportunities. The situation has changed for the better today but there are still big differences between the country and the city. What are the opportunities for women in Cambodia today? I asked Kolap about this topic.

There are schools in the city but there are few schools in the country. So people who live in rural areas often move into the city for their education.

Women can get education like men and, in certain circumstances, they can get a higher education than men. With education they can get jobs, for example office work, accounting, bank work, receptionist and cashier and earn money like men in the city. The job that they do depends on what they study. In the workplace, there is no difference in attitude towards men and women.

Like Japanese women, Cambodian women want to work as hard as men. But in Cambodia, sons are given priority over daughters in the family, just as in China. In Japan, we start job-hunting when we become seniors. In Cambodia, it depends on the family financial background. People who are from rich families will start job-hunting late; those from families which are not very rich may start even in high school.

In Cambodian society, the status depends on education or job, regardless of sex. The opportunities for women to work are much better than in the past. Now many women are working outside the home and can enjoy a high position as well ●

A bloody past

Miyana Hasegawa learns about a painful period in Cambodia's history

The Killing Fields is a film based on a true story in Cambodia. Sydney Schanberg, a reporter for the *New York Times*, covered Cambodia's civil war and the secret bombing campaign there by the US with Cambodian interpreter Dith Pran. The experiences and suffering of Dith Pran during the Khmer Rouge regime provide the basis for the story.

It is one of the best films from the great director, Roland Joffe. Filmed on location in Thailand in 1984, this thrilling and awful movie can tell us the horrible reality of life at that time.

The Killing Fields are the generic name of the execution grounds in Cambodia where wholesale slaughter took place. Kolap Ry heard stories about the Khmer Rouge regime from her parents and also sometimes from her teacher when studying something related to it. It is not clear, but about 1.8 million people were killed in the war.

I asked her how often she has been to see the reminders or exhibits of the war in museums or sites where people were tortured to death. Kolap has lived in Phnom Penh since she was born but she has never been to the museum.

There are many land mines in Cambodia and some children cannot read the warning signs. But Kolap believes that most children now can read the signs because there are many organizations providing them with some education and knowledge of the dangers from unexploded mines.

Finally, I asked Kolap what 'peace' means to her. She replied, "To me, the word 'peace' means peace emotionally and physically. It means that I and everyone around me is healthy and can be happy. There is no war, no instability in the society. Everyone lives at their own pace, and are not jealous of each other." ●

Familiar relationships

Takako Sakamoto took a look at Cambodian family life to discover it's not so different from the way the Japanese used to live

We had a great opportunity last year to meet Kolap from Cambodia. She taught us about her life style. It is surprising that Japan and Cambodia have similar points. That is our family life style.

First, we have the same family roles. For example, fathers work outside and mothers do housework. In Japan, women work outside these days. However after marriage, most women in Japan and Cambodia work in their home. Some mothers work outside or, in some families, mothers and fathers work outside together. This can be seen in both countries.

Secondly, the age of marriage is rising in both countries. Cambodian women used to get married between the ages of 16 and 20 years in the past. Now, they get married from 20 to 25 years on average. Japanese women used to get married between 23 and 27 in the past but now they are generally from 26 to 32 years old. Kolap told us an interesting fact: if a woman is smarter than a man in Cambodia, she finds it difficult to get married. The trend might be seen in many countries because a number of men think that women's ability must be below that of men.

However, there is a different point. After marriage, Cambodians live in the home of the wife's parents. Such a custom is rare in Japan. In fact, the number of newly-wed couples living with the parents of either partner is decreasing in Japan.

Cambodian family style is similar to that which existed in the past in Japan. Therefore, as Cambodia develops, Cambodian women will surely work outside more and more in the future. Of course, at the same time, lifestyles in Japan will change more, too ●

Cambodian campus

*It's hard being a student in Phnom Penh, says **Yuko Shimizu**, but education is the route to success*

Now a senior at two universities, Kolap told us about her interesting campus life and how she has learned English.

In Cambodia, students take a test to enter University. About 2,000 students take a test which only 700 of them pass.

Kolap Ry drives herself to school in a car but most students go to school by motor bike, so in the morning the traffic is terrible. There are no buses or trains.

Kolap studies at university from 7:30 to 16:00, Monday to Friday. From 11:00 to 13:00 is lunch time. At that time, Kolap goes back home to help with her family's business.

Kolap's favorite class is literature; she likes to read stories. Her university

KSJCP wins the Kobe Youth Prize



*In a ceremony on 14 February 2010, **Noriko Iba**, Kobe Shoin Student Ambassador, accepted the Kobe Youth Prize on behalf of the Kobe Shoin Japan-Cambodia Project. Before the ceremony, she had an opportunity to talk to the Mayor of Kobe City, together with students from other schools who have been making great efforts in volunteer work.*

“By sharing stories about experiences from volunteer work, I found that the joy of interacting with people made all of the students work harder. For example, standing outside a station in the cold winter season to raise funds for Haiti, or helping clean up the damage from the flood in Sayo District made the students realize the warmth of people and the pleasure of seeing them become happy. It is the same with the Kobe Shoin Japan-Cambodia Project that leads the Japanese and Cambodian students to know and understand each other and gives us opportunities to interact with others through the Global Charity Festival and by raising funds selling cookies on the campus. I believe that these precious experiences have kept and will keep the Shoin and Cambodian students inspired and enthusiastic.

I am grateful to have been a part of this project and to have such a chance to talk with the mayor and the students before the ceremony. The project and the talk made me appreciate the importance of interaction with others through volunteer work.”

If you would like to help the Kobe Shoin Japan-Cambodia Project in its work supporting educational projects in Cambodia, please contact Prof Mallett

has club activities, for example, football, traditional dance, and golf.

Kolap started studying English when she was 13 years old. In junior high school, she studied one hour a day. At the age of 15, she decided to change to another school where a foreign teacher teaches English. Since entering university, she has learned English at a private school. There are many private schools which teach English, because if people can speak English, they can get a higher-paid job.

In Phnom Penh, there are also schools to study Japanese, Korean or Chinese. The teachers are people who have learned those languages for years.

This was the first time for Kolap to

go abroad. If she could go to another country, she wants to go somewhere people speak English ●

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