

# The Shoin Cambodia Times

Spring 2011

## Rich and poor

*Kobe Shoin Student Ambassador  
Yuki Higashikawa experienced  
two worlds in one country  
on her visit to Cambodia*



*Yuki Higashikawa at Angkor Wat*

During my week in Cambodia I experienced so many things I could hardly ever imagine in my own country. I met a great number of people and did a lot of sightseeing. I visited two major cities: Siem Reap, and the capital city, Phnom Penh. These two amazing cities are very different for economic reasons.

From September 17 through 21, I stayed in Siem Reap, famous for the world heritage site Angkor Wat. This most magnificent Buddhist temple was impressive and I was speechless to see how massive it was. I walked from edge to edge of the temple and saw many symbolic sculptures and pictures everywhere. I visited other temples such as Ta Prohm and Bantey Srei, which were a mixture of Hinduism and Buddhism. Just being there made me feel I was going back to the Cambodian ancient times and could see history happen right in front of me.

I also visited an elementary school in a village. It was just like a little

house. At the school, there were approximately 10 children aged probably 4 to 9. They seemed to be having such fun when they were studying with their teacher. When Mr. Mallett gave them a soccer ball, I saw the brightest smiles on their faces and they started playing with it.

I had a tremendous time in Siem Reap. However, something very serious remained in my head. The poverty in this city is rampant: at every place I visited, I was always caught in a crowd of children trying to sell accessories, guide books or small goods like postcards. I bought 10 bracelets for about 2 dollars from a little girl, but the minute the other children saw it, they began to buzz around me expecting me to buy more things from them so that they could get dinner for the day. I was at a loss for words. It was so sad and helpless and even made me feel guilty.

At one of the temples I visited, 3 little kids found me sitting down, and said, "Give me a dollar." I seriously didn't know what to do except give them a bottle of fresh water from my bag. The kids looked very happy and went to look for other tourists to get something from. By watching them, I learned how important it is to have food on the table every night and be able to go to school every morning.

In Phnom Penh, I stayed with a big Cambodian family and visited the Royal University of Phnom Penh. I was very excited to experience what it was like to live in a Cambodian house and try the traditional food. I found the food was akin to Japanese. Starting from spicy food as their staple, I got to try many types of soup, noodles, fish, steak, and fresh fruit.

At the University, I attended an English communication class. Gladly, I joined the audience for a speech contest which gave the winner a ticket to Japan. All the contestants were excellent!

One thing I realized was that the students were patriots, very opinionated, capable of expressing themselves very clearly, and had dreams for their futures. I believe this is a wonderful thing and they could bring a brighter future to Cambodia.

Cambodia is a splendidly beautiful

country which attracts many tourists. There are many warm people who are proud of their nation. I saw a very severe financial gap between the rich people and those who are financially challenged. I made friends there too.

I also visited an NGO office. The director told me about the financial crisis and current educational system. She said that the circumstances in Cambodia now are similar to those in Vietnam 10 years ago. Things are getting better in Cambodia for sure, but there is still definitely a lot to be done for its problems. I really hope that they will suffer less financial burdens and have a more peaceful future •

## A taste of Japan

*Soksreinith Ten, winner of the 1<sup>st</sup> Kobe  
Shoin Cambodia Speech Contest,  
recalls her experience in this country*

In early December, I was granted an invaluable opportunity to spend 18 days in Kobe, Japan, as my prize for winning the 1<sup>st</sup> Kobe Shoin Cambodia Speech Contest. I was absolutely thrilled because it was my first trip abroad. Indeed, it was the most unforgettable experience I ever had in my life.

My first impression of Japan was of the modern transportation: public buses, trains, and subway. We don't have express trains or any public transportation in Cambodia. I became fond of travelling by all these modern modes of transportation and always looked forward to days that I could ride on an express train and enjoy the views of the city and countryside.

I was surprised to see that people favor public transportation, which totally contrasts with the situation in Cambodia. Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians depend on motor bikes and cars to commute to work and study. I hope to have a public transportation system in Cambodia in the future.

During my stay, I visited several historical sites and places of interest such as Himeji and Osaka Castles, Osaka Aquarium, Harborland, the Kobe Luminarie, and, especially, Nara. Of all the places I visited, I was most impressed by Todai-ji temple, where stood a great Buddha. His face gave me

hope and strength to explore exciting experiences in Japan.

I also had a chance to ride on the world's largest Ferris wheel in Tempozan, go fishing, and play golf. Surprisingly, I got a hole-in-one while playing golf with my host mother and her elderly friends in Tatsuno area!

The beauty of the places I visited and the great fun I had remain vividly in my imagination.

The thing I remember most about Japan is the food. Never before did I become addicted to anything else as I did to Japanese food! *I love Japanese food!* I was offered delicious dishes such as *suki-yaki*, *tonkatsu*, my favorite breakfast, *shabushabu*, *chanko-nabe*, *tempura*, *okonomiyaki* and others.

I also really love Japanese green tea! Besides, I had an opportunity to try international cuisines including Italian, Spanish, Turkish, Chinese and Vietnamese food. I strongly hope to eat Japanese food again in the future.

Most importantly, I gained educational experiences from my Japanese friends and teachers at Kobe Shoin Women's University. I attended different classes and observed teaching methodology in English classes. I noticed that most Japanese students find it difficult to speak English in class; however, they are good at comprehension skills such as reading and writing. This reflects a slight difference from Cambodian students who are always eager to speak English.

In conclusion, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Mr. Jackson's family, Miyana, Junko, Misato, Haruka, and Yukari, all of whom were my supportive family during my stay with them. I sincerely thank them for their love and care. I strongly believe the friendship we have built will last forever. Last but not least, I wish to pay sincere thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Mallett who made my trip most worthwhile and comfortable.

Japan marked a new chapter in my life, inspiring me to move towards a better future. The experiences I gained are unforgettable and will last forever ●

## About our friend

*Yuki Higashikawa and Misa Maeda  
get to know Cambodian visitor Sreinith*

Sreinith Ten, the winner of the 1<sup>st</sup> Kobe Shoin Cambodia Speech Contest, is a senior in The Royal University of Phnom Penh. She comes from a big family with 10 members. She has 3 brothers and a sister and her aunt's

family and her daughter live with them. The whole family is from Siem Reap, the location of Angkor Wat.

To our surprise, Sreinith has a very busy schedule everyday. She has to go to work at 7 o'clock in the morning and attend classes in the afternoon. She is a translator. Sreinith says many students work in shops and supermarkets, or as waiters or English teachers. English teaching is very popular in Cambodia.

Sreinith enjoys her campus life and belongs to the debate club. She likes reading books, cooking, exercise, watching movies, and cleaning her room. Sometimes she goes shopping with her friend in her free time.

She also volunteers for a non-profit organization researching the Khmer Rouge genocide so she knows a lot about the tragedy. Her dream for the future is to create her own organization.

At her university's speech contest Sreinith made an excellent presentation about Cambodian transportation and won the prize to come to Kobe, with all the expense borne by our school.



*Sreinith has a lesson in ikebana  
from Mai Kimura*

Sreinith arrived here on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. She stayed with many host families and experienced a lot of things, from tasting Japanese food to seeing people sleeping on trains. She had an opportunity to see the Kobe Luminarie and enjoyed the illuminations.

Sreinith took some English classes at Shoin. In our class, she was interviewed by our classmates and told us about Cambodian history and culture. She also often came to English Island to share what she had been experiencing, and about her lifestyle back in Cambodia. At the Kobe Shoin Speech Contest, she made a great

presentation about women's education in Cambodia and had fun at a little party afterwards.

She left on 21<sup>st</sup>. Sreinith is very kind, clever, and warmhearted. She is an extrovert and became friends with many students quickly. We all wish her all the best and look forward to seeing her again sometime in the future ●

## Genocide in Cambodia

*Atsuko Tsunekage  
takes a lesson in history*

When we hear the name Cambodia, we first think of Angkor Wat. And next we remember the genocide. Angkor Wat is very famous as a world heritage site and many people visit every year to see a sight they will never forget. Undoubtedly, the historic remains will continue to attract visitors from all over the world in the future. However, we may forget the genocide in Cambodia someday. But we should not forget it because it was one of the tragedies in history. We need to know about the war and Cambodia now.

Most people have heard about the Vietnam War. But we don't know about Cambodia and its civil war too much. Cambodia became independent from France in 1953. But the peace didn't last and afterward a civil war continued for a long time. In 1975, Pol Pot's group (Khmer Rouge) took power. Under them, genocide occurred from 1975 until 1979.

When the Khmer Rouge came into power, people were moved from the cities to the countryside and forced to do hard work in irrigation and reclamation all day. They were deprived of everything – freedom, family, and property etc. The Khmer Rouge also prohibited religion and arranged forced marriages.

The Khmer Rouge slaughtered many people – between 1 and 2 million. First they killed priests, teachers and doctors because they were of the elite. Men, women, and even children were killed for petty reasons. There are many killing fields in different places in Cambodia.

After the Khmer Rouge fell in 1979, Cambodia had a small population with many orphans and many women. Many Cambodians became refugees too. There are numerous victims of land mines even now. Everything had to start once again from the beginning. In 1993, the first official elections were held. In this respect, Cambodia is a very young country.

Cambodia is a very beautiful country by nature and was once a rich country called the 'Eastern oasis'. Now the situation in Cambodia is improving again. The government works hard for education and the economy. They constructed schools. Men and women are once again able to marry freely. While Cambodians' lives have once more become calm, there are still some signs of the damage caused by the violence of the past in the devastating civil war ●

## A proper education

*Reimi Soh peeks in the  
Cambodian classroom*

Cambodia followed the educational system of France until 1975, but now the Cambodian Government has reformed the system. Compulsory education requires children to attend 6 years of elementary schooling from the age of 6.

There are two patterns for schooling – 7:00-11:30 or 11:00-17:00 – because Cambodia has a large population of children. They have classes 5 times a week and study Khmer, their mother tongue, ethics, arithmetic and science. All classes are taught in Khmer.

The school is free until junior high school, but from high school they have to pay school fees. It is expensive for Cambodians, therefore, some can't afford to pay for an education and most students can't go to university.

In some schools, buildings are in bad repair and in danger of collapse. I earnestly hope that children can study in a secure environment in future ●

## Women arise

*Aki Tanaka says the role of  
Cambodian women has changed  
since the end of the Civil War*

The status of Cambodian women has improved recently because of the necessity for women in the work force. Some women have become heads of households since a great number of men were killed in the civil war in the 1970s. It meant women had to find jobs instead of men to bring up their families. Women made a living ploughing fields or sewing.

In Cambodia patriarchy is strong. In other words, men dominate women. Many women were taught housework by their mothers and so did not go to school to be educated. Therefore, women are of low social position and many have suffered mental, physical and spiritual abuse. But women do not

complain about such things because they think it is shameful to tell anybody what happened in their home. Some do not even know that women have rights.

Over 400 NGO groups have taken actions to protect women's rights and construct schools for them in Cambodia. In December 1993, The United Nations General Assembly voted to control violence against women, regardless of whether it was inside or outside the house.

Cambodian women's status will improve much if women start movements on their own initiative through NGOs ●

## Music to their ears

*Rika Takami listens to  
the sounds of Cambodia*

Just as in other countries, Cambodians express their national pride through a long tradition of musical culture.

According to Sreinitth Ten, in Cambodia the most famous instrument is a *trau*. It looks like a violin and is made from a palm tree, a symbol of Cambodia. People grow it carefully because it is an important material for their life. Many years ago, the king ordered his people to grow palm trees. This project was carried out on a national level.

Other instruments are mostly percussion, like drums. The side of the instrument is covered with animal skin, for example, snake. In this point, the *jamisen*, a famous instrument in Okinawa, is similar to a *trau*. It is also covered with animal skin.

In Cambodia, people often listen to folk music which is popular among a wide age group. The great folk musician in Cambodia is Sin Sisamuth whose songs are loved by many people. Unfortunately, he has already passed away but his musical tradition is kept alive by others.

Pop music is also popular. Preap Sovath and Oak Sokun Kanha are famous pop musicians.

Recently, foreign music has become popular among young Cambodians. K-POP (Korean Pop) music like Girl's Generation, 4 Minute and KARA is mainstream.

Surprisingly, Japanese music isn't famous in Cambodia. People seldom have an opportunity to listen to Japanese songs. Sreinitth, however, has heard Japanese traditional music. Her school offers a course about Japanese traditional culture. Students learn about Japanese music, dancing and so on.

Also, Japanese instruments are displayed in the university.

Sreinitth says she likes Japanese music. She finds the many differences from Cambodian music.

Music is one of the best ways of communication between people. When you listen to music, you will feel something even if you can't speak Cambodian so we can understand each other through music ●

## Shadows of the night

*Shoko Takeuchi introduces an  
ancient theatrical form*

The most popular traditional entertainment in Cambodia is the shadow puppet play that originates in Siem Reap.

Puppets are made from buffalo and cow skins. The shadow puppet shows are called *Sbaek* in Khmer. *Sbaek* are held in the open air and are lit up at night. There are three kinds of *Sbaek*.

The first is *Sbaek Thom*. *Thom* means 'big'. This play uses 50 big puppets. The puppet is 120 centimeters long and 100 centimeters wide. It is very large-scale. Such puppets are used at festivals and Buddhist events.

The next is *Sbaek Touch*. *Touch* means 'small'. Small dolls, measuring from 40 to 60 centimeters, are used. The puppeteer can shake the doll's mouth and legs. It amuses the audience with speech and movement.

The last kind of play is *Sbaek Por*. *Por* means 'colour'. This *Sbaek* is colorful and does not use shadow puppets. It is held in the daytime.

Today *Sbaek* are still very popular, not only with Cambodians, but also with foreigners ●

## Global relations

*Haruka Totsuka looks at Cambodia's  
interactions with its neighbours*

One of Cambodia's strengths is diplomacy. The Cambodian Government has good relations with countries such as Thailand, China, Korea and the United States. Relations between Cambodia and Japan are also good.

This is necessary for trade between countries. Cambodia's major exports are rice, fish, timber, rubber and garments. Meanwhile, many foreign-made articles can be found in Cambodia, such as tables and chairs from Thailand.

Moreover, relations between Cambodia and the United States have strengthened in the past 2 years. The United States supports Cambodia to



promote human rights, encourage economic development and build democratic institutions.

Furthermore, Cambodians are good at diplomatic negotiation. They use English for diplomacy. Therefore Cambodia's diplomacy is developing more and more.

#### **A career for women**

Today it is not difficult for Cambodian women to work outside the home. It is possible for Cambodian women to have a career in diplomacy if they have a higher education and are rich in experience. Cambodian women can study the history of their own country and another country in order to gain a broad knowledge. It is expected that women can have careers like men in the future.

#### **Visitors from abroad**

The tourism industry is the second-greatest source of income in Cambodia. Visitors are 2.0 million as of now. Siem Reap is the most popular tourist spot. In the north, there are the ruins of Angkor and in the south, the Tonle Sap Lake. Tourism has increased steadily from year to year.

In these ways, Cambodia is developing in diplomacy and its relations with the world. We can expect it to exert a greater influence on us in the future ●

### **Without a family**

*Yukari Ebata was invigorated by the parentless children she met in Siem Reap*

According to Sreinitth and the Cambodian friends I met in Siem Reap, there are hundreds of orphans in Cambodia. The majority are being raised and educated by a number of non-governmental organizations, while some of them live with their close relatives. Most live in Phnom Penh.

There are a number of factors underlying the problem: economic difficulties in their family, some parents having HIV, and so on.

My Cambodian friends say the situation is improving slowly as the Government faces and grapples with the problem. For example, they give educational support so that orphans can take classes at public school.

Sreinitth said that orphans are very unfortunate and feels they need help. She visits schools for orphans as a volunteer. She thinks the most important thing for them is education. She believes the problem will

ultimately be solved because of the work of interested people.

#### **First hand experience**

In September 2009, I went to Cambodia to visit a school for orphans because I was interested in international problems. I wanted to see the situation with my eyes and help.

When I visited, I was so surprised because the school was totally different from what I had imagined. The children were cheerful, kind, active and friendly to me. They are not like Japanese children. I felt shy that I had thought I could help them: on the contrary, they gave me vigor and energy.



*Yukari Ebata visits a school for orphans*

Also they were really eager to play and study. I took pencils, papers and origami and we enjoyed playing and studying together.

I hope these children will enjoy a bright future and that all will have the chance of an education ●

### **Fashionwise**

*Chisa Takahata finds a different way of looking at what to wear*

Cambodian girls like fashion very much although Japanese fashion is not popular in Cambodia. What differences are there between Japanese and Cambodian girls' attitudes to fashion?

Generally Cambodian girls wear a T-shirt and short pants or long skirt. Although there are some fashion brand shops in Phnom Penh, most girls don't shop there and prefer simple clothes.

In Cambodia, some girls watch fashion shows. However, the recycled fashion show held in Phnom Penh on 18 May 2007 is not well known. Sreinitth thinks this is a very interesting and good event, because of the positive effect on the environment.

People in Cambodia like a simple fashion style better than brand style. And they are interested in recycled fashion. Therefore, they don't waste a lot of money and they consider the environment when they buy clothes ●

## **The remains of Cambodia**

*Akemi Nishio explains one of the wonders of the world*

Most people have heard the name Angkor Wat. However, many do not understand what the place is.

Angkor Wat is a famous structure registered as a world heritage site in Cambodia. It was built by King Jayavaramen II and King Jayavaramen VII. Jayavaramen II began Angkor Wat as the king's state temple and Jayavaramen VII completed it.

The height of Angkor Wat is about 65 meters. Most of the visible areas are of sandstone blocks, while laterite was used for the outer wall and for hidden structural parts.

Hindu ceremonies are held at Angkor Wat so there are rules such as "women must not wear shorts but a long skirt." Local people often go to Angkor Wat when something bad happens to them.

Between 561,000 and 677,000 foreign visitors come to Angkor Wat each year and there are many souvenir shops, small restaurants and guide shops near the complex.

If you have money and time to go to Cambodia, you should go to Angkor Wat and feel the atmosphere peculiar to this ancient building!

### **In Memoriam**

*We were greatly shocked and saddened to hear of the brutal murder of the parents and younger sister of the 2009 winner of the Kobe Shoin Cambodia Prize, Kolap Ry, at their home in Phnom Penh on 19 October last year.*

*On a happier note, Kolap married in December as planned and will shortly join her husband in Australia where he is studying. We wish them both well ●*

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If you would like to help the Kobe Shoin Japan-Cambodia Project in its work supporting educational projects in Cambodia, please contact Prof. Mallett: peter@shoin.ac.jp