

The Shoin Cambodia Times

Spring 2017

Changed by travel

*Kobe Shoin Student Ambassador
Kanari Amano's visit to
Cambodia opened her eyes to the
reality of life for children
around the world*

When I first won this prize, I was really excited thinking how I would enjoy this trip: the hotels, the food, the swimming pool and massage! In particular, I was really looking forward to seeing Angkor Wat!

Before going to Cambodia, I thought this trip was just a holiday. In fact, in Cambodia I ate delicious food and swam under the beautiful stars in the gorgeous hotel swimming pool with nobody there. One day I had a massage three times! I felt like a princess. When my friends ask me, I can't give any impression in words about Angkor Wat but I felt like I had time-traveled to the ancient past.



Besides these amazing experiences I also had many good encounters. We visited many places – a university, a kids' English school, a girls' high school – and met many students and made new friends. When I talked about Japanese culture, they were interested in Japan and asked me many questions. I loved to answer as a representative of Japanese people.

However, I not only had these happy memories. Honestly, I had a few days when I felt heartache. This country is a developing country, so many parts are not advanced, especially the traffic system and sanitation. Also, it's easy to see a gap between wages. Traffic jams happen frequently and it's common to find 5 people on a motorbike. When I tried to gargle in the restaurant bathroom, the water tasted strange, and there were not enough good toilets anywhere.



However, there was one thing I really couldn't stand more than the toilets without paper and seat. It was small children trying to sell small goods. If I bought something from one child, others came and tried to sell to me, so I had to escape from them. I didn't like it, because they looked like my younger brother and sister when they were small.

One day I talked to some children, and taught them how to count in Japanese. They laughed shyly, but tried to remember very hard. When I saw their faces I thought I could see their real faces. I thought if they could go to school, they could be good students. This experience showed me how children's lives could be wasted.

After coming back to Japan, I researched how many people in the world don't have access to a toilet in their daily lives. Here is a fact: one in three people don't have access to a toilet, and 800 children die every day because they have low immunity.

This fact, and my Cambodian experience, makes me think that our world loses hundreds or thousands of hopes and possibilities everyday. As someone living on this same earth, I can't ignore it. Do you know that one in six children are suffering from poverty even here in peaceful Japan?

I found one thing I can do to help. It's visiting a *kodomo shokudou* where we can cook dinner for children and eat together. We can also talk and play together with them. It's a really small

thing, but even just meeting people can create possibilities for children.

It's not easy for us to do big things, but I think we have to do even small things as much as we can. I learned this from my Cambodian experience. I'm positive that I could mature because of this Cambodian trip. Let me thank you once again for giving me such a wonderful experience ●

Hospitality, Khmer style

Risa Kamigaso, together with Natsumi Okada and Kanari Amano, was treated like a princess in Phnom Penh

Ratananita ('Nita') Sol, winner of the 5th Kobe Shoin Cambodia Speech Contest, invited us to stay with her for 3 nights during our visit to Phnom Penh. Her three-storey house is luxurious, like a castle! There were 2 rooms for the 3 of us. Mine had a double bed, bathroom, many windows and an air-conditioner. We felt that we were living like princesses!

Generally, everything begins very early in Cambodia but Nita cooked breakfast for us. Moreover, there was a noodle restaurant near her house, so she took us there to eat *Pho* for breakfast. Japanese rarely eat noodles in the morning, so it was new to us!

Before our visit, we thought that most Cambodian food was only spicy or sour. But this is not true. Cambodian food is not too spicy or sour and comes with coriander. Many ingredients are used in one dish and the appearance is

good and healthy. In addition, it is tasty at a good price. Khmer cuisine features many noodle dishes, so you'll enjoy Cambodian food if you like noodles.

When we had a dinner party at home, Nita served her specialty dish. She is good at cooking, especially fried noodles. It is our favorite food. We miss her delicious meals. One of her dreams is to open her own restaurant in the future. We are sure her dream will come true sometime soon.

Although it was short, we really enjoyed our trip. We mingled with the locals such as our Cambodian friends, hotelkeepers and drivers. They are diligent, friendly, and peaceful people. Japanese are known for hospitable hearts, but we felt that Cambodian people also have hospitable hearts *and* nice smiles. We all are proud that we could have this precious experience ●

Amazed by Japan

Muycheng Sok's dream came true when she won the 7th Kobe Shoin Cambodia Speech Contest

Winning this contest not only boosted my self-confidence in public speaking, but also gave me such an eventful experience. Recalling the time I spent during my two-week stay in Japan is rather nostalgic. When I was announced as the winner of the speech contest, I was overjoyed: Japan was a country on my bucket list and I always had a yearning to witness for myself how amazing it is.

Every day I spent there, I learned several new things and it never failed to amaze me. Japan and Japanese people are inspiring. I was amazed by how friendly, disciplined and hardworking Japanese are. It was fascinating how people queue everywhere they go, even in the rest rooms. Additionally, I found that Japanese are extremely polite. I received warm hospitality everywhere, from homes to public places. People would smile at me, bow down, and frequently say *sumimasen*. What's more, I could not help falling in love with the beautiful culture of wearing *kimono*. I had a chance to try it on and I honestly did not want to take it off!

Furthermore, I had a great time at Shoin. I visited various interesting



Muycheng Sok is reunited at Shoin with Natsumi, Risa and Kanari

classes where I got to know more about Japanese culture, lifestyle, technology and educational system. My favourite place in the university is English Island. I really love the concept of having an English-speaking zone, especially with native speakers. I wish we could have one in my home university.

Besides visiting Shoin, I went to many captivating places such as Fushimi Inari Shrine, Oji Zoo, HarborLand, the Ramen Noodle Museum, and many shopping streets. Most exciting, I saw the stunningly beautiful Kobe Luminarie.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Kobe Shoin Women's University for inviting me. I cannot thank enough Mr. and Mrs. Mallett, my host sister Mai Nagato and her family for having me to stay, Shoin teachers, and friends who took great care of me, were my companions, and shared with me unforgettable memories. I am hopeful that we will meet each other again one day – in Japan, Cambodia or another part of the world ●

Cambodian cuisine

Muycheng Sok taught Chinami Mitsu and Chiaki Hashizume about food in her country

You can try many varieties of international cuisine such as Korean, Chinese and Indian food, even in Japan. However, Cambodian food is difficult to find and there is no opportunity to eat it here.

Bai such chrouk, thin slices of pork served over rice, is one of Muycheng's favorite Cambodian foods. This is a common dish for breakfast so you can buy it everywhere like street stalls and it is cheaper than 100 yen.

Amok is the most popular food. It contains crab, fish, coconut milk and a lot of spices. It looks like very spicy curry but it's not as hot as it looks.

The salted fish paste *prahok* is very important in Cambodian food but some people hate it because of its smell.

Food for special occasions depends on the celebration. For example, to celebrate Chinese New Year, Muycheng and her family often eat Chinese food such as a roasted pig, fish cake and fried rice. For birthday celebrations, however, they

often go out to eat fast food.

Japanese restaurants are not very popular in Cambodia but Chinese and Thai food restaurants are. People eat Cambodian food at home and other kinds of food outside and it's common to have breakfast outside as well.

There are some bad manners you should avoid at meal times. You shouldn't make any noise and you can't eat before the elders start because normally food is served on a big plate everyone shares.

From Muycheng's experience, Japanese noodles are completely different from Cambodian noodles. Japanese noodles are lightly seasoned compared with Cambodian noodles which have fried vegetables, many spices and sauces such as a sweet sauce or chili sauce.

We found some similarities with Japanese food but most points were new and quite unique for us. If you have a chance to try Cambodian food, please don't hesitate and enjoy your new food adventure ●

Enriched by education

Aya Mihara says all girls must have the right to study

In Cambodia, the education system has been changing. Muycheng is a private university student. Some of her English teachers are Cambodian, some are not. In high school, she studied French because Cambodia was once a French colony. She has a chance to learn a lot. But her grandmother didn't. Women of her grandmother's generation, didn't go to school because they had to marry and have many children. They are suffering from gender disparity and bad customs. Without equality in education, gender inequalities in society will continue to exist.

In Phnom Penh, there are rich people and many schools and teachers.

Conditions to study are very good there. In comparison, in the countryside, there are few schools and teachers. It takes a long time to go to school. Many children give up school. Some villages don't have water or light. At night, children can't study and it's dangerous to walk alone. Most people in the countryside are very poor and can't pay tuition fees. Families need their children to earn money to help them. They consider it more important than education. The disparity between the rich and the poor is really huge and this is a big problem in Cambodia.

The education system should change. Education will allow children in the countryside to hold professional and leadership positions. It's a fundamental tool for the promotion of social status. Education brings power to change their life ●

Working women

Sahar Sasaki examines employment conditions in Cambodia

Nowadays, it is becoming easier for Cambodian women to get a job but the situation and conditions still need improving.

Cambodian students have part-time jobs like us at coffee shops and in private company offices about 5 days a week. However their salary is not good, and conditions or safety are poor.

In Cambodia about 15% of men and 30% of women can't write or read. Fewer women than men receive education. They can't go to school, even if they want to. This is one of the reasons they can't get a job or work in a good place. They need education for their future. Also, the working conditions are bad. Uneducated women have to work in places where they don't need qualifications and often these places are not safe.

Unlike men, women don't have power, so their working places are limited. Even if they have a job, their salary is not good, like in Japan. Due to Cambodia's history, women are in a difficult situation still now and most Cambodian women are poor and have low social standing.

The most important problem is that violence against women has not died out in Cambodia. This includes domestic violence and sexual abuse like rape. According to a Cambodian newspaper, many cases of violence are reported. These cases make Cambodian women afraid to work.

There is big discrimination against women. Moreover, there is little legal compelling force. Therefore, salaries are different for men and women.

There is hope, however. According to a website, the organization KnK Cambodia is going to empower women by eliminating gender barriers and making it easier for Cambodian women to get a job ●

Marriage matters

Rui Kuniyoshi reports on differences between marriage in Cambodia and Japan while Mai Yoshida looks at Khmer wedding traditions

When Muycheng Sok saw the chart showing the average age to marry in Japan, she was really surprised. Around 30 years old is the most common age for Japanese men and women to get married. In addition, recently, many Japanese women are not getting married at all.

The reason she was so surprised is that average age of marriage in Cambodia is around 17 years old at the earliest, and around 28 years old at the latest. Since there are excellent working conditions in Japan, marriage is not that important point for some women because they can manage financially by themselves and, being single, have more free time. Compared to Japan, a big gap between rich and poor people exists in Cambodia, so those women who are poor have to be housewives and do chores all day.

In Cambodia, the rate of divorce has been increasing because of domestic violence by the husband, which is an extremely common reason for divorce. Therefore, the remarriage rate is also high. This is quite different from Japan where the common cause of divorce is difference of opinion or cheating.

Many Cambodians marry their true love, however, arranged marriage is also still very common. When a child gets older, her parents start seeking a man with a similar background, so basically there is no right for such children to choose their own partner.

There are many ways to marry and to divorce in Cambodia depending on the background and situation of the family. Can you see how free Japanese youth are? They go out with whoever they want and marry whoever they love. Arranged marriage in Japan is not common now. Even focusing on this one topic, I find a lot of differences between Cambodia and Japan.

According to Muycheng, there are big differences in marriage between Cambodia and Japan. Also, there is a difference between the countryside and the city in Cambodia.

In rural areas of Cambodia, women get married when they are 15 to 18 years old on average. After marriage, they become housewives, doing housework and taking care of animals. However, marriage age is between 18 and 24 in the city. City women mostly continue to work after marriage. The reason people living in the countryside get married earlier than in the city is because they are usually poor and need money. In addition, arranged marriages are common in the countryside. In former times, however, most marriages were arranged, regardless of the area.

Cambodian wedding parties last between half a day and 2 days in Chinese style. They eat Chinese food or Cambodian traditional food at the ceremonies. Women wear a white wedding dress like us.

Though it usually costs \$30,000 to invite about 250 guests to one venue, rich people use 3 venues and invite over 1,000 guests.

Popular places for honeymoons for Cambodians are Sihanoukville beach, Siem Reap, Kakhong beach, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Between Cambodia and Japan, there is a similar trend in family style: those in our grandparent's generation had from 4 to 10 children; now the number is decreasing to between 1 and 3.

By meeting Muycheng I learned we each have unique marriage styles. It is important to retain our traditions ●

Pollution problems

Rui Takahashi says Cambodia needs to develop environmental awareness

Cambodia is one of the developing countries currently experiencing rapid growth. The education, economic and social infrastructures are improving and future growth is promising. However, this development has brought Cambodia new problems of sanitation and pollution.

The environment in the city has rather bad conditions. The first problem is the trash. In the central area of Phnom Penh, some people throw away their trash everywhere. Such problems damage the reputation of the city and give a bad impression to tourists. One reason is that they do not separate the garbage completely. Another reason is

manners. People do not throw away trash in garbage boxes, even if they are provided, but dispose of it carelessly.

Cars cause heavy air pollution in the centre of town. Cars are a necessity in Cambodia because public transportation has not improved. Also people use diesel power generators because not all areas can receive electric power from a power company. Such cars and power generators are operated by fossil fuel, so exhaust gas causes air pollution.

Cambodian environmental problems are more serious than in Japan. In recent years, Cambodia has achieved a remarkable economic development and became a tourist destination. However, administrative services and citizens' manners have not kept up with this development. To improve the quality of life, it is necessary that citizens are aware of the urgency of the problems of the environment ●

Emergency call!

Mai Maeda highlights a life-and-death problem for Cambodians

Ambulances must be ready whenever and wherever life is in danger. It is an ambulance's duty to carry an injured person to hospital rapidly and safely. Accidents and disasters happen suddenly: ambulances are necessary for these emergencies.

In Japan, an ambulance arrives 5 minutes after you call. The waiting time is short – an advantage of a good system in a developed country.

But some countries don't have such efficient systems. For example, in Cambodia it takes 30 minutes for an ambulance to arrive, about 6 times as long as in Japan.

Why doesn't an ambulance come more quickly in Cambodia? There are 3 reasons: preparation, environment and public awareness.

Preparation: there is a call number 119, the same as in Japan. You can connect to a monitor center when you call an ambulance. But there are not many telephone lines in the monitor center and, to make matters worse, there are only 2 operators to answer. Even if you can connect to the monitor center, the nearest ambulance may be far from the place of the accident and it needs preparation before dispatch.

Environment: heavy traffic is a problem in Cambodia because of undeveloped traffic routes. It takes 5-10 minutes to move only 100m during the morning and evening rush hours. Many

drivers don't follow traffic rules or obey signals.

Road-users' awareness: drivers in Japan know they must make way for an ambulance when one comes from behind. Such thinking isn't widespread in Cambodia so an ambulance may get stuck on the way to an accident.

I'm most concerned about this last reason: by changing public awareness, ambulances can arrive sooner at hospital. In life-or-death situations, there is no time to lose ●

On stage

Rikako Yachida and Akari Fukunishi put the spotlight on a Cambodian star

Do you know the name of any Cambodian idols? We had never associated Cambodia with idols. But MUYCHENG introduced some interesting Cambodian idols to us.

One famous Cambodian star is AOK SOKUNHANHA. Born in Phnom Penh on 14th September 1987, she is 29 years old. When she was 10 years old, she entered show business, influenced by her father who was a musician.

Cambodian women think AOK SOKUNHANHA is an ideal woman. Her fans describe her as flexible, hard-working, honest and persevering, as well as talented.

AOK is not only a musician but supports activity for orphans. In July 2010, she performed in a concert with Preap Sovath and Rethy Dona's band in Australia for the sake of Cambodian orphans through the Save Cambodian Children Fund Australia.

In Cambodia, you can go to a concert for free because of advertising. AOK SOKUNHANHA often takes part in free concerts so she is as famous as ARASHI or EXILE – whose concerts are very expensive – are in Japan. Many Japanese fans buy CDs and DVDs which include a ticket for a handshake meeting with idols. Occasionally, they buy tens of thousands of CDs and DVDs because they want to go to a handshake meeting and general elections for ranking of idols. However, in Cambodia, there are no fan events because there are many free concerts where fans can meet idols again and again. Also, the audience can discover new idols, because many performers appear in the concerts.

Cambodian idols and Japanese idols are different in many ways. However, their aim is always to entertain us. Why not discover Cambodian idols at a free concert in Phnom Penh?

Success story

Sponsored by the Kobe Shoin Japan-Cambodia Project, Chanthoeun Soun has become a qualified teacher

Chanthoeun Soun never thought she would have the chance of higher education. Born to parents who are now divorced in rural Siem Reap, she grew up in great poverty.



Thanks to a scholarship from the Kobe Shoin Japan-Cambodia Project, however, Chanthoeun was accepted on the Lotus Outreach International GATEways Programme and enrolled at a university. She has just received her teaching qualification and will teach local primary school children.

"I am going to graduate next year from Cambodian University of Specialization in Accounting," says Chanthoeun. "Meanwhile, successfully, I graduate from the Provincial Teacher Training College and I am going to start my teaching in the nearest few months. Because of your help, motivation and encouragement, I can have a great chance to help myself, my family and community."

Chanthoeun's life will be better but not easy. Her mother, depressed by her husband's abandonment, is an alcoholic. Her younger sister, deaf-mute and blind in one eye, will never be able to work. Chanthoeun must support them both. Her education will, at least, give her the opportunity to do this and to earn a decent wage ●

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If you would like to help the **Kobe Shoin Japan-Cambodia Project**, please contact Peter Mallett.



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