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# **Inbetween**

## **Africa and Japan**

**Stories of Study Abroad Experiences  
2016-2020**

Edited by Takanori Oishi & Chihiro Kumashiro

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African Area Studies, School of International and Area  
Studies African Studies Center

## Back cover photos :

Upper left : In May 2019, Participation in *Kurayami* Festival at Fuchu City in Tokyo. (Shukulu Murekatete)

Upper right: The view from the top of a mountain in Huye. Rwanda is known as the "Land of a Thousand Hills," and everywhere is lush and beautiful. (Mako Iino)

Center : With RAMS club mates. (Wendy-Rose Govender)

Lower left: Kofi and his grandmother, who had been at TUFS as a exchange student from the University of Ghana. I could expand my range of activities with the help of Kofi and his family. Exchange student program allowed me to find to have such people in my life. (Yuki Ide)

Lower right: With a master wire artist. (Shoyo Sugiyama)

**Inbetween Africa and Japan:**  
Stories of Study Abroad Experiences 2016-2020



**Tokyo University of Foreign Studies**

## Preface

In this booklet, you will find articles on study abroad experiences by (1) Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) students who have traveled to Africa, and (2) African students who have come to TUFS, for extended periods between 2016 and 2020. While Africa may appear insignificant for many Japanese students, those from TUFS have traveled 13 countries, including Senegal, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mozambique, Zambia, Madagascar, and Sudan in the past five years. There has been a gradual increase of Japanese students studying in Africa. However, the number of Africans studying in Japan is still small, especially at the undergraduate level.

TUFS has over the past few years been working to correct this imbalance by seeking financial support from the private sector and launching crowdfunding programs. Six international students from African countries (Ghana, Rwanda, and South Africa) were sent to TUFS to write about their daily experiences on campus and beyond. By reading these articles, you will find out how students from both regions have explored Africa and Japan. They demonstrate how exchange facilitates mutual understanding between foreign and host students. In addition, it also allows the former to share their daily lives with local people, ensuring a holistic understanding of the host society.

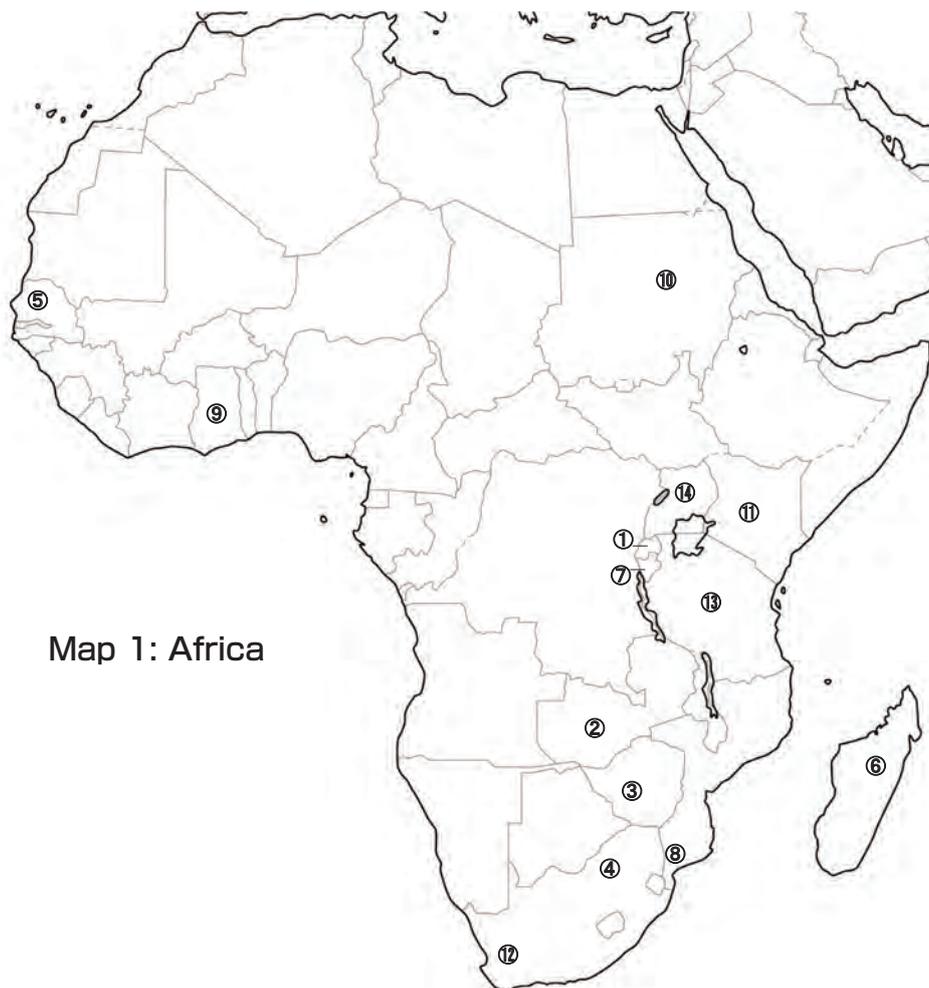
All articles in this booklet were originally posted on the website of the TUFS Department of African Area Studies. There are 20 articles written by Japanese students. We could not translate all of them into English because of budget limitations. So, we selected six representative articles among them for translation. A grant from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) under the “Inter-University Exchange Project (Africa)” program, which has just been adopted in November 2020, ensured translation and publication of the booklet. I hope that this small booklet will serve as a medium to further expand the circle of encounters and exchanges through two-way students exchange between TUFS and partner institutions in the African continent.

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## Places and Universities referred in the articles in this booklet



Map 1: Africa

Each number in the Map1 indicates localization of Institutions and place as follows.

### Part 1 Study abroad

- ① Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Science: PIASS (Huye, Rwanda)
- ② University of Zambia (Lusaka, Zambia)
- ③ University of Zimbabwe (Harare, Zimbabwe)
- ④ University of Pretoria, Johannesburg (South Africa)
- ⑤ Dakar (Senegal)
- ⑥ Antanànarivo (Madagascar)
- ⑦ Bujumbura (Burundi)
- ⑧ Eduardo Mondlane University (Maputo, Mozambique)
- ⑨ University of Ghana, Accra; Northern Ghana (Ghana)
- ⑩ Khartoum (Sudan)

### Part 2 Internship

- ⑪ Masingaprefecture (Kenya)
- ⑫ Cape Town (South Africa)

### Part 3 Teaching volunteer/ Tembea

- ⑬ Arusha, Dar esSalaam (Tanzania)
- ⑭ Kampala (Uganda)



Map 2:

Land names in the map indicate localization of prefectures and cities, as well as TUFS campus, referred in English part of this booklet.

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## II . From TUFS to Partner Universities, from Partner Universities to TUFS

### English Part

TUFS has eight partner institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa as of March 2021. In this section, we will introduce the experiences of international students who went from Japan to Africa and those who went from Africa to Japan for each partner university. We have not yet achieved a two-way student exchange with all of our partner universities in Africa. As more and more students from Africa come to TUFS in the future, we expect that the possibilities for exchange will expand even further.

1 . University of Ghana  $\Leftrightarrow$  Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

# Report on My Study at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Charles Acheampong Agyebeng

University of Ghana

Stay period at TUFS: from April 2018 to July 2018

I wish to begin this report by expressing my esteemed gratitude to all the hands and minds that were involved in the making of this opportunity of a lifetime. The hard work and efforts that were put into this has not been in vain, as it has been the happening that has impacted my life considerably. Again, I wish to assure that if the intention of instituting such a program was to impact change, educate and enlighten its beneficiaries or create an avenue for participants to develop their capacities, then be very assured that the program did nothing short of that.

The 1st of April was the day I arrived in Japan, eager to have a feel of the most fascinating culture I have ever come across. Now I write this with a sense of pride and joy, in that, to some extent, I have been able to gather most of the what Japan has to offer in the limited time as three months. It has to be said that, this chance to study abroad for me is an experience unlike any other. This is because I have come to understand much more both academically and socially than I ever have. I have made new friends from various parts of the world, all thanks to this program.



**Photo1: With Dr. Kirikoshi of ASC-TUFS, who has been conducting fieldwork in Ghana.**

The courses I enrolled in here at TUFS have broadened my understanding of the academic circle more than I can express. In sum, I took six courses Topics in Global Issues, Topics in Introduction to Statistic for Social Sciences, Topics in City and Narrative: Film, Survey of International Development,

Topics in International Relations and Elementary Japanese Language Studies. The abovementioned courses amount to 17 hours (10 classes per week) including Japanese Language Studies. I say with pride that, before I arrived in Japan, all I understood in Japanese was “konnichiwa”, “hai” and “iie”, however, through the Integrated Japanese 101a, now I am able to make daily life conversations, read and understand some basic compositions as well as being able to read and write about 150 kanjis. More so, courses like Topics in city and Narrative: Film and Global Issues has taught me numerous academic analytical skills that will prove worthy both in my final project writing as an undergraduate and also in my future studies. Most especially, Topics in International Relations bought a new dimension to my understanding of the international system. Through the opinions and experiences of the authorities and field workers we interviewed via skype, I am spurred to continue with the studying of international relations. These encounters add to the motivations that gingers me to become a diplomat and an individual who wants to dedicate his life to the service of my nation and mankind as whole.



**Photo2: Visit to the headquarter of the MARUBENI Company, which provided Charles financial support for his stay in Japan.**

Being in Japan did not only mean that I learn about the Japanese culture alone, I also expanded my understanding of the African continent from the seminars organized by the African Studies Centre On 11 April, 2018, I attended a lecture presented by Dr Alex de Waal on the history and the current situations of multilateralism in Africa. The lecture informed me of the Pan African Movement and their role in the decolonization of the African continent. Also, it presented the challenges facing the continent after independence as well suggesting viable solutions for the forging of a better future. In addition to these, on 20<sup>th</sup> of the same month, I took part in the 13th seminar of the African Studies Centre which was titled, South Korea-Africa Encounter via Culture and Arts: The Case of Seoul African Festival. This was a talk presented by Dr Ohsoon Yun, currently the Executive Director of the Seoul African Festival. This talk expressed the efforts of the organizers in propagating the truth narrative of African

to Koreans, Asians and every individual who has interest in knowing about the African culture. More so, on June 13, 2018, I was present at the “ASC-TIAS Seminar” which presented on the achievements and challenges of Olympics and Paralympic in African countries. This was joint seminar with Tsukuba International Academy for Sport Studies.



**Photo3: Mr. Charles playing game during lunch break at TUFU.**

I took part in extracurricular activities with the mind of improving both my study of Japanese language and culture. I joined the TUFU Aikido Club from which I have learnt a lot. With the Aikido club, I had the opportunity to attend the 56th All Japan Aikido Demonstration which was held on the 30th of April. Through the activities of the Aikido club, I have been able to develop some valuable though basic life principles like punctuality, confidence and respect for both authority and peers. I have also been exposed to other cultures than the Japanese culture as the club students from Russia, Mexico and Spain. I made new friends and enjoyed exercising while reducing stress. I felt privileged to have been a part of such an amazing community of people who are dedicated to improving themselves.

I also used the avenue provided by the Musashino International Association (MIA) where international students can have host families. The family MIA assigned me to have been of great help to me and my daily living in Japan. I spent every weekend with the Hasebe Family from 29th of April to the 17th of July. Every weekend they took me sightseeing in and around Tokyo. They made my life here most enjoyable and I really appreciate their efforts. More so, on the 16th of June, I volunteered for MIA's Musashino Family Exchange Party. Through this volunteering, I learnt more about Japanese calligraphy and also origami making.

Finally, from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> July 2018, I attended the 26<sup>th</sup> “Day of the African child” in Kumamoto. This three-day celebration saw the gathering of African students studying in Japan, the Ambassador of Mali, Mrs. Aya Thiam Diallo, some Africans living in Japan, Japanese high school students in Kumamoto and some Japanese citizens interested in African affairs. The agenda that was under discussion for this year’s celebration centered on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on the Right of the Child. I took part in the discussion on the state agriculture in the world and the similarities that can be found in agricultural production in both Japan and Africa, challenges and solutions. What I enjoyed

most and found fascinating from this engagement is the energy and dedication that the Japanese use in their efforts to build better relations with Africans.

In sum, this experience is one of the most eventful, amazing and educational parts of my life. Without a doubt, I can say that I now have a comprehensive understanding of my field of study, I have acquired a new language and made life-long friends from different countries and backgrounds who have shaped my knowledge of life. I am most grateful for taking part in this exchange program and I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to TOYOTA GHANA Company Limited, the African Studies Centre (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies), the International Programmes Office of University of Ghana, JICA and Student Exchange Division (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies) for the daily support and assistance they provided during my exchange period. I really appreciate their assistance and kindness.

# Throw Away the Book, and Let's Enter the Village: Recommendation of Fieldwork during Studying Abroad

Yuki Ide

Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Stay period at University of Ghana: from August 2018 to June 2019

## 1. Introduction

What type of image comes to mind when you think of an "exchange program"? Dorm life with international friends? Tough classes that you cannot keep up with unless you work until the middle of the night? High-achieving students? ...You would not be wrong, for the most part. The student exchange system between the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and partner schools is such a typical exchange program. This system allows for transferable credits and thus makes possible long-term foreign study without taking a leave of absence. Being an exchange student is also a type of brand because only students who have passed the university selection process are sent.

However, I am sorry to disappoint, but I was astonishingly not that interested in any of the things mentioned above (not that they are bad or meaningless; it's just a matter of taste). What I wanted was to "immerse" myself in Ghanaian society, not to wrestle with books at University of Ghana, where only the elite gather. Usually, students who want to do this do not choose the exchange program in the first place. They take a leave of absence from college and apply to an internship or volunteer job.

However, I dared to use the exchange program system to go outside the university to do fieldwork. This, in fact, I think, gave me a big advantage in conducting meaningful and safe fieldwork (Fig. 1). In this chapter, I would like to explain how to twist the exchange program system of a "demanding" university to increase one's degree of freedom in the field using my own life as a foreign student as an example.

I hope you will consider this as one way of spending your time while on an exchange program rather than just studying, and I would be very happy if you take an interest in the depth of Ghanaian society, which takes in even selfish obroni ("foreigners" in local language, thus me) and turns us into "relatives."

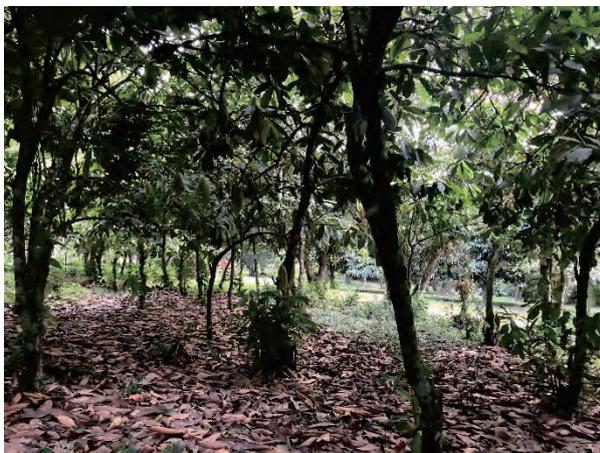


(Fig. 1) Kofi, who came to the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies as exchange students from the University of Ghana, together with his grandma. I placed my full confidence in Kofi and his family and, through their guidance, was able to expand the reach of my work. Having things like this makes exchange programs worthwhile.

## 2. Foreign study life

### 2-1. What sort of country is Ghana?

The Republic of Ghana, where I was doing my foreign study, is located on the coast of West Africa. It is a diverse country with 44 ethnic groups (or over 90 if classified in finer detail) in an area of about two-thirds the size of Japan. In terms of climate, the southern part has a moist (frankly, fatally hot and humid) tropical monsoon climate, while the northern part has a dry savanna climate (where you cannot live without the shea butter prepared by local moms!). Naturally, livelihoods differ depending on the region and ethnic group. In the south, cacao and cassava (an indispensable tuber for making staple dishes) are cultivated, and in the north, grain cultivation and livestock farming are widespread (Fig. 2, Fig. 3).



**(Fig.2) Cacao field in the East Region in south Ghana. Cacao fruit grows right on the trunk.**



**(Fig.3) In the Upper East Region in north Ghana during the dry season. When the grain is harvested, the baobab fruit is ready to eat.**

Ghana is famous for being the first country to gain independence from British colonial rule in 1957. Naturally, the people of Ghana are quite proud of this fact. However, there are also areas where you might find an unexpected craze for all things British, with a torotoro (a minibus frequently used by average people) waving the British flag and folks bragging that their English is “British English” (even though their accent and phrasing are completely different!).

What surprised me the most was that its first president, Kwame Nkrumah, lived in a castle (Osu Castle) built by the colonial powers on the coast as a base of control. Is such a thing not usually demolished or treated as a painful reminder? However, the Ghanaians were able to take advantage of things that had been imposed upon them during the colonial era as needed and make them their own (Fig. 4). That is something I like about Ghana.



**(Fig. 4) Elmina Castle (World Heritage Monument) in Cape Coast in south Ghana. The former slave trade site has become an important tourism resource for the locals.**

## **2-2. First half of foreign study: Life at the University of Ghana**

Based on my own experience, the classes at the University of Ghana are basically packed. If you do not memorize the textbook and fully copy the professor's opinion, you will get terrible grades. Of course, free discussion is not at all allowed, and reports do not require originality. I think that other people may differ in their opinion, but I did not like the classes. However, such lesson formats seemed to be a microcosm of authoritarian Ghanaian society, which was quite interesting. Thus, I observed the relationship between the teachers and students while absorbing knowledge through books (Fig. 5).



**(Fig. 5) The symbol of the University of Ghana: the library. It boasts the largest collection of books in West Africa.**

However, if days at the University of Ghana are supposedly tedious, that was not the case for me. I was blessed with friends. Many Ghanaian college students live in dormitories on vast campuses in the capital. Students generally do not schedule anything outside of class. Playing around or doing

extracurricular activities is rare (naturally, there are some more active students, but they seem likely to be wealthy).

My friends were no exception. Together we would just repeat a normal life of going shopping, cooking and eating, cleaning our rooms, washing the laundry, sometimes enjoying Korean movies, and going to class when it was time. The only major form of entertainment (for the large percentage that are Christian) is going to church once a week, as they, above all, love to dance and pray with roaring music. I did not like this sort of amusement park church so much, but I loved my friends, so I always followed them.

The church was not the only place they took me. They were very active in introducing me to their families and acquaintances and took turns taking me to the suburbs every weekend. Fortunately, the time spent talking to and cooking with their families was far more enjoyable and meaningful than classes, where I would just be reading textbooks (Fig. 6).



**(Fig. 6) Felicia, a friend of mine, returned to a relative's house in the suburbs almost every weekend to take care of her nieces. In this photo, she is teaching me how to make my favorite banku (sour dumplings made from cassava dough and maize powder, a local staple).**

As long as you have a textbook, you can absorb knowledge by yourself. As that was the case, I decided, why not relocate outside the university and get more into the community? That is why I spent about six out of the 10 months of my foreign study period off campus and in the field (including my internship).

### **2-3. Second half of foreign study: Field work in rural areas**

I stayed mainly in two places: the mountainous area of the Akuapem Hills in Ghana's Eastern Region, where I was an intern, and my second home, Manso Adubia. It is a rural village enclosed by tropical rainforest about three hours from Kumasi, the regional capital of the Ashanti Region in central Ghana. I made Adubia Village my main field of work, conducting research on a form of "family" that

transcends kinship.

The image of African families is that they are traditionally quite large. However, the effects of urbanization and globalization are definitely pushing their way into rural Ghana. Many people are going back and forth between urban and rural areas to go to school, get a job (migrant work), go to the hospital, or other necessities of life. So, has the old-fashioned large family shrunk or disappeared? Is Ghana destined to become like Japan and be a society of distant and isolated persons? Personally, I do not think so.

In the first place, Ghanaian people have a very broad definition of "family." People who are close to each other, despite not being connected by blood, call each other "Brother" and "Sister" and treat each other like family members. On the other hand, sometimes, people even move out to the city and live together while relying upon unfamiliar blood ties. Encountering cases such as these, I found myself asking, "Is the originally flexible large Ghanaian family becoming increasingly fluid and 'expanding' as people move about?"

I considered this awareness to be the result of field work conducted at each place of stay (Fig. 7). If I had not gone out to towns and villages, I would not have realized that the whole picture of "family" in Ghana could not be grasped in terms of the fixed and closed Japanese family. The reality of towns and villages brilliantly destroys Japanese assumptions and images of Ghanaian society and forces our eyes open. Touching the realities of life in fieldwork yields not only research but, sometimes, a turning point in one's own life.



**(Fig.7) Ellen and her mother make the staple food fufu (rice cake made from cassava and kokoyam). As is often the case in Ghana, Ellen is adopted. She is on good terms with her adoptive mother and her real mother, who lives in the neighborhood (as of May 2019). The flexible view of family in Ghana society greatly changed my own.**

### **3. Benefits of being a University of Ghana student**

Although I called myself a University of Ghana student, I was actually only on campus for four months, but having this status made a lot of sense.

First, despite contradicting the title "Throw away the books," you can easily obtain interesting local literature at university libraries and bookstores. Before my foreign study, I thought that there was hardly "any" information about Ghanaian family system written by the Ghanaian people. However, this was incorrect. It is not there was not "any" information; it just had not reached Japan. In the latter half of my foreign study, when I lived in a rural area, I occasionally came to the university and was able to procure various documents, which was of great help to my field work.

Another advantage of having access to information is that it is easier to find good places for field work or internships. It would probably be difficult to determine where to work in Africa while in Japan.

I hear that even if you can find such places, you have to go through sites that charge high commissions, endure exploitative practices, and deal with unsafe management. However, if you are locally based as a student, you will not be bothered by such problems when searching for a place to pursue an activity.

If you go over to Ghana as a student, you will get a lot of local tips. You can pick a location after checking on what activities are actually taking place there. Moreover, introductions may be provided by JICA volunteers, Japanese company personnel, or local friends from the university (this method avoids the frustration of not getting replies to your inquiries). Instead of paying a fee, you may even get paid depending on the terms and conditions. Furthermore, it is possible to participate in community-based activities through a local NGO that might not have a homepage or similar communication tool but is doing wonderful things (Fig. 8). You will not feel pressed into choosing a location while still in Japan.



**(Fig. 8) I visited the JICA volunteers in each region to see their activities. In some cases, those who finished their terms started NGOs and continued their activities, and it will be interesting to intern with such an organization.**

Some people may worry, "Won't freely engaging in activities this way get you expelled as an exchange student?" However, the University of Ghana was very supportive in this regard. The person in the foreign study department who heard my plan to move to a rural area and work unhesitatingly replied, "No problem!" and told me, "Just tell us where you are so that we can protect you even if you leave the university." Moreover, the dormitory fee I paid for the first year was promptly returned even though I had to go to several offices.

A big point is that even if you operate alone, you are protected by the university. In Ghana, which is out of Japan's sight and full of local police corruption, the only means of self-defense is to connect with reliable people. However, can the people around you (Ghanaian, Japanese, or any other) really be trusted? I do not know. To be honest, I think it is a situation where crimes such as date rape are likely

to occur. However, a good deterrent to crime is to have a clear local affiliation with some place in authority. I think this is very important.

However, it is rude to universally consider the local population to be untrustworthy. To anyone on the receiving end, you are a foreigner of uncertain identity. If you cannot let go of your prejudices, you may not gain any trust yourself. When I was doing field work in the village, whenever I went to a public institution, I was often asked, "Where is your letter of introduction?" Ghana's public offices are so authoritarian that they take great care of paperwork (which makes it annoying that their management is so messy; the running gag is that even if a document has been heavily critiqued and rewritten multiple times, it ends up immediately tossed out!). At such times, I would solve things in one shot by saying, "I'm a student at the University of Ghana," and showing my student ID card. Thus, belonging to a local university is very advantageous for conducting surveys smoothly.

On the other hand, precisely to the contrary of government offices, once you join a village community, you are no longer a stranger. You are a member of an expanding "family." In Ghanaian society, with its open ties, even if your hair is straight and you have single eyelids with your yellow skin, you can live together and be a "family" (Fig. 9).



(Fig. 9) With my family in my second home, Manso Adubia.

#### 4. Conclusion

There are various forms of foreign study. You can work on field work as I did, or you can spend a lot of time studying at the university. Enhancing your hobbies and club activities also may seem like fun. In fact, there is almost no such thing as "must be XX" or "should not be XX." For example, in my case, even though I deviated a little from the curriculum I was not deported. Furthermore, even though I was betrayed by a person and it made me lost my faith in humanity for a temporary period of time, it could not kill me (However you DO have to take measures to prevent injury to yourself and others as much as possible). Even if you fall off the rails of the world a little, you can proceed in the direction that your heart's bells ring. I am sure you will be fine; the ship of life does not strand easily.

2. Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences <=>

Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

# Essay about My Stay in Japan

Shukulu Murekatete

Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences (PIASS)

Stay period at TUFS: from October 2018 to July 2019

I came to Japan last year at the end of September. I studied and stayed in Japan for ten months. I was an exchange student at Tokyo University for Foreign Studies (Photo 1). My life in Japan is divided into two parts. Mostly I spent my time studying, I was taking courses of international relational and area studies and Japanese language. During weekends, holidays and free time, I did different things related to social life. Below are some of the things that described how my life in Japan was.



**Photo 1: In April 2019, with cherry blossoms at TUFS**

For the first time in my life, I learned Japanese which is very different from my mother tongue in term of the structure of the sentences and letters. But the most thing I liked about the Japanese language is how it is full of harmonious spirit and respect. The time I spent studying Japanese it was a good time for me to learn more about Japanese culture, especially the norms and values of Japanese society. Even though studying Japanese was quite difficult for me, and it required to spend extra time studying it privately, but I enjoyed it, and it helped me to get a lot of new vocabularies with a short period of the time (Photo 2).



**Photo 2: In September 2018, conversation with ASC staffs after the arrival in Japan**

Due to coming to Japan, I got the opportunity of learning the history of Japan especially during World War II and post-war reconstruction of the country. Something that surprised me is how Japan developed economically at a high level. This helped the country to recover from the destruction of the war. The success story of Japanese economic development could be a good lesson for all countries that are still struggling with war recovery.

History of Southern East Asia, before I came to Japan, I knew little about the history of southeast Asia. But after attending different classes, I learned a lot about it. For example, before I attended the class on peacebuilding in theories and practice, I did not know the conflict in Philippine in a place called Mindanao, and how Japan supported in solving the conflicts. I like the approach of Japan used in Mindanao for helping people to solve the country's problem but, at the same time, helping them to develop economically.

Also, it was a great experience for me to visit different shrines in Japan and know about Japanese religion Shintoism. I went to different shrines such as Yasukuni Shrine, Asakusa and many others. But mostly I liked Kurayami festival as part of religious practice (Photo 3). I liked the whole idea of Kurayami. I enjoyed different performances during the festival. Even though I belonged in different religion, I appreciate the different practices of Japanese religion and I learned a lot from it.



**Photo 3: In May 2019, Participation in Kurayami Festival at Fuchu City in Tokyo.**

Not only Shintoism, but I was also blessed to visit different temples around Japan and it was a good time for me to learn more about other religion. I remember in my higher school, I learned about Buddhism but I could not understand the practice of this particular religious group. But, after got to Japan and visit different temples, I got to understand different practices of the religion that I learned many years ago in my higher school. One of the popular temples that I visited is the golden temple in Kyoto.

Apart from studying in the class, I spent some of my time doing an internship in a nongovernment organization called Munakata Foundation. In this grant organization, I learned a lot about NGOs such as how to run the organization, founding process, how the organizations are getting donations and the means they are using to make them well known. This was a good time for me to learn practical things rather than theories.

Still talking about my stay in Japan, I was blessed to get time to visit different places in Japan. Not only different places in Tokyo but also outside of Tokyo. I went to places like Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto, Okinawa, Hiroshima and other areas that are surrounding Tokyo (Photo 4). For example, I went to the peace museum in Hiroshima to learn about the Atomic bomb. I was shocked to see how people suffered from the Atomic Bomb. I met one survivor of Nuclear Atomic Bomb, and he shared with me his testimony during the period they dropped the Atomic Bomb in Hiroshima. I learned a lot within a very short period. Before I came to Japan, I did not know much about the Atomic Bomb in Japan.



**Photo 4: In November 2018, Visit to Okinawa with Prof. Sasaki from PIASS**

Another thing that I enjoyed a lot during my stay in Japan was spending time with different groups of people. Such as the group of old women from Tachikawa called Connecting Children from African and Japan. From this group, I was surprised by how these people are active even though they are old, and they are eager to try new things like learning a new language like English. As a young person, I realized that it is possible to learn something new even though someone is his or her seventies or above. This encouraged me to be always active and not to consider age as an obstacle to getting to your goals

in life.

In addition to all the above is that I enjoyed cultural exchange with Japanese students as well as international students, and having friends from different countries. This was very good for me because there are stereotypes that I had before meeting new people from other countries that changed through interacting with different people from different places. I realized how good diversity is because I got the new insight into different things from different places of the world from people whom I was talking to. This helped me to open my mind and see how we are interconnected despite the different backgrounds, cultural or nationalities (Photo 5).

Despite the challenges that I met a new person in the place. Like the challenge of winter because it was very cold for me. And it was my first time to experience winter. But my Stay in Japan was full of more interesting things and I benefited a lot from it in different aspects such as academic and social. Things I learned in Japan are the ones of the precious gift that I have ever had in my life. I would like to thank anyone who contributed anything so that I could be able to come and stay in Japan for ten months. I will always remember the good opportunity gave me in my life.



**Photo 5: In November 2018, exchange meeting with her supporters and TUFS students**

# Report on My Stay in Japan

Elie Rodrigue Icishatse

Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences (PIASS)

Stay period at TUFS: from October 2018 to July 2019

My name is Icishatse Elie Rodrigue. I am 22 years old and I am from Burundi. I studied and lived in Japan (Photo 1).

From September 23rd, 2018 to July 17th, 2019, I stayed, in Japan, at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. From my home university - Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences in Rwanda, I was at TUFS as an exchange student under ISEP (International Student Exchange Program). I was invited by the African Studies Center which conducted a fundraising for my airplane tickets and living expenses. In addition, I was a recipient of JASSO scholarship.

In this report, I will discuss two main points: on one hand, my studies at TUFS, and on the other hand, my life in Japan as a foreign person.



**Photo 1: Rodrigue with Japanese souvenir which one of his supporters gave him.**

First of all, as my major is Peace and Conflict studies, I was interested in classes related to international relations, peace - building and the history of Japan as a country which experienced a dramatic change, in terms of Peace loving, from the end of the Second World War (Photo 2). During the Autumn semester which started in October 2018 and was completed in January 2019, I took classes on International Organizations and Human rights, Theory and Practice of Peace building and Development Cooperation and Japan. I caught a lot of lessons especially in the class on Human Rights which was my first class on such a topic. As I am from Burundi, a country that experienced political crisis recently, in 2015, I realized how human rights violations were inflicted to innocent Burundians.

They didn't have any governmental institution to help them and, at a certain point of time, even the international community couldn't intervene and help. This fact was discussed in the class as my fellow classmates, under the instruction of our Professor, realized that the sovereignty of the state, sometimes, is a block to the relief of those whose human rights are violated.



Photo 2: Having seminars on the topics of peace and conflict with high school students.

During the winter period, I took a class on the Asia - Pacific war. This class was very important for me as I was eager to know about the history of wars into which Japan was involved. I didn't know that Japan used to colonize many countries. Surely, I have already learnt about Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs, but I haven't learnt the war history which led to them. During the class, which was run as seminar with different speakers and different topics, I learnt about the memory issue in Japan, the Okinawa issue with US military bases, the comfort women issue and the victimhood sense which was promoted after the A-bombs. During the last sessions of the class, we watched a movie together about the A-bomb and we conducted online discussions about the movie with Students in America. I liked the session very much.

During the spring semester, I took classes on cross-cultural issues of collective memory in Japan, the Allied Occupation of Japan, International cooperation, Social movements and Democracy in Postwar Japan and the Theory and Practice of the United Nations. I enjoyed the United Nations Class because I got to know some details about the organization which is famous even in Burundi, my Country. For instance, I was shocked to learn that the right of veto which is famously spoken on media is not included in the charter of the United Nations. Also, I enjoyed the end term work which was about to draft a resolution on plastic waste. I represented China, a country which used to monopolize the global imports of wastes before the ban of plastics waste importation in January 2018. I have never done a similar work during my university studies.

All in all, the classes at TUFs were very interesting and satisfying with updated academic

information. Despite the good atmosphere reigning inside the classrooms, the professors were very humble. They listened to students' questions, suggestions and comments, they all presented a clear plan of the class during the first session and the plan was followed with few exceptions. Requirement readings were at the center of the education at TUFS which was very good for me because I also wanted to improvement my book- reading capabilities.

Second, in order to grasp some Japanese cultural understandings, I took classes on Introduction to Cultural Studies, Japanese Religion and Popular Culture, and Japanese Performative Culture. Also, I took Japanese language classes at JLC (Japanese Language Center). I still remember how was wonderful for me to learn and research about Takarazuka during the class on Japanese Performative Culture. I was more interested in the songs, dances and costumes of Takarazuka actresses than the gender ideals around Otokoyaku. My research, which was the end term paper, has the goal of investigating on the areas of interests in Takarazuka.

With regard to JLC classes, I completed two levels: 100 and 200 level. I enjoyed Kanji because some of them have interesting meanings which can be drawn from the combination of different Kanjis. For instance, I learnt 親 - おや (Parent). The kanji is made of three different kanji: 立つ (to stand), 木 (tree) and 見る (to see). If I can try to make sense of this kanji, a parent looks (見る) at his child standing (立つ) on a tree (木) and says あぶない。

Also, I enjoyed the Honorific Expressions (けいご) which are けんじょうご - Humble form for and そんけいご - Respect form. In Burundi, we don't have such rich structures to express the respect and the humbleness.

Outside the classrooms, I joined Choeur Soleil, a chorus club at TUFS, and LETS, an association that bring together students who speak and learn different languages in order to exchange knowledge.

As I am concluding, allow me to share what I did outside TUFS. I traveled in many places in Japan: Hiroshima, Okinawa, Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto, Ichi, Miye, Kanagawa and Shizoka. In Hiroshima, I visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and, in Okinawa, I joined a nonviolent protest in front of Henoko base. Also, I participated in Kurayami festival and visited many Churches, Shrines and Temples such as International Christian University (ICU) Church, Ise Jingu, Meiji Shrine and Golden Temple. At Ise Jingu, on May 1st, I joined ceremonies to welcome the new emperor of Japan, at Oi Baptist Church, I participated in the commemoration of Genocide in Rwanda and, at Jindaiji temple, with a classmate from Portugal; I visited a pet cemetery which is a culture Burundians don't have. Furthermore, I stayed in families in Osaka and Nagoya. I ate and learned to cook different Japanese meals such as Nabe and Okonomiyaki. I interacted with local groups such as the Connecting Children of Africa and Japan. All in all, I can confirm that I lived in Japan and lived with Japanese (Photo 3).

I want to address my sincere appreciations to my Professor Kazuyuki Sasaki, to African Studies Center, to donors in the crowdfunding, to JASSO scholarship administration and to all my friends in Japan.



**Photo 3: In May 2019, Rodrigue at Kurayami Festival at Fuchu-shi**

# Essay on My Stay in Japan

Octave Gahirwe Kabera

Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences: (PIASS)

Stay period at TUFS: from October 2019 to July 2020

I still remember the first time I went to Japan; last year towards the end of September. I was very excited to visit the country and even more excited to meet new and a diversity of people. My stay in Japan was from September to July. Which is long enough to learn and experience a few things, but at the same time it felt like a short stay.

Thanks to the efforts of Prof. Sasaki, Prof. Takeuchi and the African Studies Centre, crowd-funding members and TUFS, I was able to go to Japan as a TUFS exchange student from Rwanda. During my stay in Japan I experienced a lot of good things and new perspectives of life which I learned from a variety of people of different cultures and age groups. I learned very important things which can help me improve my life, both in my daily experiences and with my academic studies.

## My experiences

Most of my friends were from different countries such as; France, Spain, UK, USA, Brazil, Nigeria and New Zealand to name a few. Thanks to TUFS I was able to make such friendships which I never thought I would be able to.

To my surprise, I met some very interesting Japanese people which I later befriended. I was surprised because before coming to Japan I was under the impression that Japanese people were quiet and a bit shy, but after a few days of spending a bit of time with my Japanese friends, the opposite was true. Each of them were very interesting, some ranging from very active and outgoing to a few others that are more reserved but just as much of good company.



Photo 1: Friends at a Halloween party (October 2019)

When I was in TUFS I stayed in one of the dormitories which were reserved for international students. There I met lot of students from other countries and we would often explore the cities of Japan, shrines, temples and in a few occasions' festivals.



Photo2: At a festival with a few of my friends (October 2019)

### Food and cultural festivals

Someone once told me that the best way to fully experience a culture is through the food and language. Unfortunately my Japanese is not good enough to have long conversations with local people, so I tried the next best thing. Food! During the first few weeks in Japan before intensive classes started I was on a mission to get fat on Japanese food. Although I didn't get as fat as I wanted to be, I thoroughly enjoyed the tastes of Japanese cuisine. What I came to realize is that sushi and sashimi were incredibly tasty but with a bit of soy sauce, my taste buds would be in a frenzy of delight. Sushi and sashimi are just a few of the food I enjoyed there. The most memorable of the foods I tried in Japan were okonomiyaki and tempura.



Photo 3: Tempura in Okinawa (December 2019)



Photo 4: Sashimi in Okinawa (December 2019)



**Photo5: Okonomiyaki**



**Photo6: Fish dish I really enjoyed**

During my stay in Japan I went to a few festivals such as the chestnut festival. I had a lot of fun meeting new people and eating some very delicious chestnuts. It is only then where I saw parades which seemed very Japanese and different types of foods being sold. This made me appreciate how beautiful the Japanese culture is.



Photo7-8: Chestnut festival in Fuchu (October 2019)

## **Trips to Okinawa and Hiroshima**

### **Okinawa**

During the times when I wasn't studying I had the pleasure of going to Okinawa. I was very happy to go because at that time winter was approaching and it was very cold in Tokyo, but prof. Sasaki planned a study trip to Okinawa and mentioned that it would be warmer there.



**Photo9: The beautiful blue Okinawa sea**

While in Okinawa we learned about the army bases in Okinawa and a few cases of how the Okinawa people are distressed by this. However, I was glad to hear that some locals would protest every week. As a student of Environmental Science I knew that the building of new army bases would negatively affect the natural environment, so something needed to be done to ensure that the environment and peace were fought for. In order to this, people would protest and slow down the building of these army bases and fortunately I had the chance to join the local people in protesting. I just hope our efforts and the efforts of the protesting locals are not in vain and that peace and understanding can be achieved.

### **Hiroshima**

Hiroshima was one of my favorite places in Japan; i enjoyed its presence and happy people.

Despite my enjoyment and wish to one day return there, it was a bit of a sad but fulfilling trip. What made it sad were the stories which I read about the effects of the A-bombs and how people suffered. It was quit depressing but very insightful. My hearts go out to those still affected directly or indirectly and to those who have overcome the pain of what had happened.

After visiting the museum two friends that we met in Hiroshima took us out to okonomiyaki and it was great! It was my first time trying okonomiyaki and I was told that Hiroshima has the best okonomiyaki in Japan.



**Photo 10: In Hiroshima with friends and Pastor Harima.**

### **In Tokyo**

In Tokyo I would sometimes travel to different parts of the city such as Shibuya, Shinjuku and Kichijoji, but my favorite place was Kichijoji because it was closer and had everything I needed from bigger cities such as Shibuya and Shinjuku. Seeing such tall buildings and a more urban life than I'm used to in Rwanda was a nice surprise and worth the experience.



**Photo11: Tokyo metropolitan tower**

### **Weather (winter)**

I love the changing seasons but i think winter was the worst thing I've experienced in Japan! I'm naturally used to warmer weather so winter was very difficult for me to cope with. I did enjoy the beauty of snow but not so much the feel of it.

### **My school life**

Life in TUFS was often busy in between classes and club activities. At PIASS (Protestant Institute of arts and Social Sciences) I study environmental sciences. With this course, I was a bit worried if I would find any courses related to my field of study but I was glad to found a few.

In the first semester I took about 11 courses which were all very interesting including Japanese 101. The courses which I found most interesting in the first semester were my Japanese courses, globalization and social change and world geography. The courses which I highlighted were very

engaging. The manner with which the lecturers would conduct the class felt very professional and personal. The classes tried to get each and every student to give their own opinions and views on the courses. The classes never felt like lectures but more like conversations.

I had some trouble being early for classes in the first few weeks but once I got used to the campus, I learned how to manage my time for almost each class and although I'm no longer in Japan, I wish to experience the teaching methods of TUFS.

I was looking forward to the second semester, but unfortunately for everyone covid-19 left the world stuck and at home. The pandemic did not allow for classes to be open so the TUFS students (new and old) had to take classes online. Although it was inconvenient to meet the new students joining the second semester and physically join clubs for school activities, studying online was not so bad and I could enjoy classes and still learn a lot through video. I appreciate the lecturers for making the classes interesting even in that situation.



**Photo12: TUFS campus**

### **Club activities**

Towards the end of the first semester I joined the QUATRO club for dancing. The main club I was in was house dancing. As an African, dancing is something I do almost all the time and joining that club not only made me want to dance but also meet new people. I met a lot of very talented Japanese and international students, each with amazing dance moves!

The other club I joined was a basketball club. This was my favorite club but unfortunately due to covid-19 it had to be closed and we could no play.

Despite the missed opportunities caused by the pandemic, I had a lot of fun in Japan and I learned a lot about myself and gained a new understanding of the world while I was there. I shall never forget the courses I took and the teachers who shared their knowledge with me and allowed me to share mine with them.

TUFS for hosting me, putting me on JASSO scholarship which really helped and the African Studies Centre for making sure I was alright and enjoying my stay in Japan. I would like to show my

appreciation to the crowd-funding members for making it possible for me to go to Japan and last but not least Prof. Sasaki for sending me to Japan blessing me with that opportunity to learn, explore and make new connections.

Thank you all!



**Photo13: Me and my friends that I miss so much !**

# My Stay in Japan

Hélène Mikanda Alinethu

Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences: PIASS

Stay Period at TUFS: from October 2019 to July 2020

My name is Hélène Mikanda Alinethu; I am a 20 years old Congolese lady. I studied and stayed in Japan for 10 months. I am a student at the Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences, in Peace and Conflict Studies, program of Peace-building and Development.

From September 24th, 2019 to August 3rd, 2020, I stayed in Japan, Tokyo, at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies "TUFS". I was there as an exchange student under the ISEP "International Student Exchange Program"; from my home university, I was invited by the African Studies Center which conducted a fundraising that supported me for my airplane tickets and living expenses. Apart from that I was supported by JASSO as one of their scholarship recipients.



**Photo: With Prof. Sasaki and Octave, at Shuri Castle, Okinawa.**

In this report, as I am going to talk about my stay in Japan, I would like to thank first of all those people who made my stay in Japan possible and enjoyable, those who supported me throughout the whole process. This report will be talked about into two main parts; at first I will talk about my life at the university as a student, and lately I will talk about my life as foreigner in Japan which will include my social life and adventures.

First of all, I am a student in Peace and Conflict Studies and while in Japan I was interested in learning classes related to peace-building, war and postwar history of Japan, history of reconstruction of Japan, international relations, Japanese culture and religion. During the first semester, also called fall semester, I took seven classes which are; Oral communication for Japanese language lessons, introduction to gender in contemporary Japan, intercultural communication, international law, and diplomatic relations of postwar Japan, China's economic reform and globalization, and International protection of refugees.

I learned a lot in classes that I took for this semester especially in the class of international protection of refugees; it was my first time to have a class on this topic and things that we did in the class were related to some kind of cases happening in my country, Democratic Republic of Congo. This class talked about refugees and their rights, asylum seeking, and many other interesting topics; the most interesting thing to me was about the rights of refugees because this took me back to my country where I see different cases of discrimination of refugees, and this made me understand that it is not easy to leave one's home and be expected to feel comfortable at an outside home; therefore, it is not easy to a refugee, all we need is to make them feel comfortable and we should let them find peace at our host places.

About the classes that I took on history of Japan, I learned a lot about the Japan's international relations with other countries especially those from Asia; the history was such interesting as I learned about historical relations between Japan and Asian countries, and how that still have some impacts and still affecting Japan's international relation and globalization with the world. Another interesting thing was to learn about gender in Japan, as a foreign woman from Africa, it was really great to know about gender in Japan.

During the second semester, also called spring semester, I took again seven classes based on my interest; the classes I took are; Topics in the news media and its role in global society, topics in religion and popular culture in Japan, topics in global business and leadership-innovation, introduction to intercultural communication and language education, Japanese performative culture, gender and globalization, and social movements and democracy in postwar Japan.

In this semester I learned a lot about the Japanese culture, religion, war and postwar history, reconstruction and development in Japan. It was so interesting to take all those classes on Japan because I got to know that as my country is right now, Japan also went through hard time and they did so much effort to develop fast, they lost, but still they persevered till they reached the goal. I also got to know about religions and culture in Japan; was such interesting to see how religion is also involved reconstruction and that, they, on their own ways support the development process through various ways.

To understand well the Japanese culture, I took a class on Japanese performative culture and a class on religion and culture in Japan; from which I got to know about different values, norms and I also got to see the beauty of Japanese culture. I learned about the Takarazuka performance and was so interesting to see how women perform the dances, songs, and put on costumes no matter the gender ideals around the place. I did a research on that as a way to understand well the gender ideals and roles

in the Japanese society with regard to the meaning of the Takarazuka performances.

To deepen my knowledge on the Japanese culture, I tried to learn Japanese with regard to JLC classes; I started just one level, 100, which I could not achieve, but kept doing my best in the oral communication class. The thing that I liked the most in learning Japanese was the polite way the language is spoken; I found that Japanese is the most polite language and most of the words I could hear every day apart from "arigatou" was "sumimasen" and "irashaimase"; the language was different and hard to learn for me even though I really love it. During the classes, I did not only learn from the lectures; I also learned from the lecturers and my fellow students through their shared experiences and knowledge.

The second part of this story is about my life outside the university; outside the classrooms, I joined LET'S, an association that brings together students from different places and who speak and who are interested to learn different languages in order to exchange knowledge; I also joined a bible study group at TUFS, a group of numbered students who are Christians and who are open to welcoming other people who are not Christians.

Talking about my social life in Japan; I had a great social experience in and outside school; I got more experiences from the friends I met in Japan, and many of them were from different countries all over the world; this is the greatest experience I have ever had in my life, living with youths from more than 50 countries in the world. Apart from that I visited so many places in Japan, apart from Tokyo; Hiroshima, Okinawa, Kobe, Osaka, Kyoto, Kanagawa, Ibaraki, Chiba, Saitama, Shizuoka.

Okinawa is the place where I stayed for many days, and I visited the Himeyuri Peace Museum, the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum, and also different US military bases where I joined a nonviolent protest in front of the Camp Schwab in Henoko. In many of these places I visited, I also participated in Church services, I visited different Shrines and Temples; I usually went to church at the International Christian University.

At my visit in Kyoto, I tried the Japanese traditional dressing "Kimono". Apart from just visiting, I stayed in families in Osaka and Ibaraki. I also tasted some Japanese dishes, among which I liked Okonomiyaki and Takoyaki. On January 13th, I joined an international restaurant for children with some Japanese and international students, where we cooked different kind of foods, and I made Congolese Ugali made with maize flour. Within the first academic term, I also started to interact with students of the Ikubunkan Global High School, with whom we organized seminars on Africa and Japan.

I also did my internship at the Munakata Foundation, where I usually did researches about different issues in Africa and presentations about my findings, and sometimes I wrote some proposals to the Foundation basing on what could be done. I lastly visited Hiroshima where I wish I could spend more time; in Hiroshima I learned about the Japan A-Bomb, read some testimonies of survivors and also learn about the Japanese understanding of what happened during and after the war; I also learned about the Japan reconstruction and it was also interesting to learn about the atomic bomb from history in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. Apart from that, I learned about the social life in Hiroshima and got the chance to visit just for some minutes, thanks to the pastor and some friends, we had a great

moment in Hiroshima, and we could also try and enjoy some dishes.

To conclude, I will say that my stay in Japan was beyond my expectations; I learned a lot from the ten months experience I got from Japan. Not just as a student, but also as a professional; I have improved my skills and knowledge and for me, my stay in Japan was a dream come true. All these could not have been possible without the support of different people who made all the things that I have said above possible.

I want to thank all the crowd funding group with each person involved in it, I want to thank the African Studies Center, I want to thank Sasaki Sensei, I want to thank Baptist community in Japan, the TUFS and JASSO administrations, all my Japanese and international friends I met in Japan and those I met in Rwanda; you all made my stay in Japan enjoyable and possible, and everything you did for me will never be forgotten; your support changed me, and I will always be grateful.

# My Study in Rwanda and after Returning Home: The Post-genocide Reconciliation and Some People I Met in Rwanda

Chika Umetsu

Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Stay period at PIASS: from October 2018 to July 2019

## 1. Introduction

My name is Chika Umetsu, and I am a fourth year student in the School of International and Area Studies at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS). I was an exchange student in Rwanda from October 2018 to September 2019. Even 10 months after I came back to Japan, sometimes memories in Rwanda suddenly comes to my mind. Whenever I throw out a huge amount of food at my part-time job in Japan, I remember the children begging for 100 Rwandan Francs (JPY10) in the city of Rwanda.

Drinking a cup of coffee, I recall the clerk who worked at the coffee shop I frequented. When I eat a banana or boiled egg, I remember the girl who worked at the kiosk where I ate breakfast (they knew my name, although I never introduced myself) (Photo 1). Writing this report about my experience in Rwanda is making me want to return there right now.



**Photo 1: Caffe latte at the coffee shop in Huye. Although I did not introduce myself, the clerk here called me by name. In Japan, Ethiopian coffee beans are common; however, it is great to see Rwandan coffee beans occasionally.**

I majored in peace building at TUFS, learning about the causes and factors of violent conflicts and social issues, and how to resolve them. I decided to study in Rwanda because I thought I could learn peace building practically, considering the country remains involved in post-genocide reconciliation.

In Rwanda, I studied in the Department of Peace Building and Conflict Studies at the Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences (PIASS) (Photo 2) as an exchange student. In addition, I did an internship at a local NGO involved in post-genocide reconciliation activities, assisted a cooperative women's reconciliation group, and worked as a staff at a Japanese social business group selling custom-made clothes made of African fabric to mail-order customers in Japan (Photo 3).

I would like to share some of the most memorable experiences in Rwanda..



**Photo 2: The Alternatives to Violence Project workshop. It aimed at developing nonviolent conflict resolution abilities. Students from different departments in addition to the department of Peace Building and Conflict Studies participated. We learned technical tips and knowledge to solve problems without violence in the workshop, but also we might pay more attention to our attitude toward other people and problems as participants in the nonviolent workshop.**



**Photo 3: Atomic bomb exhibition organized by JICA volunteers. I invited other students to visit there together and we learned a lot.**

## 2. Difficulties of apology and reconciliation

With the help of Dr. Kazuyuki Sasaki (Note 1) I participated in the activities of a cooperative women's group called Umucyo Nyanza (in Kinyarwanda, "Umucyo" is "light" and "Nyanza" is the name of the area where they live and work ), which Dr. Sasaki and his wife Megumi support. Umucyo Nyanza comprises women either who are victims or whose husbands are perpetrators convicted on murder or accomplice. The aim of Umucyo Nyanza is to reconcile and to earn income by working in cooperation with other members to grow flowers, make book jackets, clothes and small items, and sell them (Photo 4).



**Photo 4: The women of Umucyo Nyanza usually work very peacefully with smile. I saw them crying just once. It was during the commemorative ceremony. Their cry made me sad too.**

Former exchange students from Japan also participated in this activity; however, I think the activities during my stay were different. In the past, the main target of the activity was women; however, when I was there, they started working with incarcerated husbands (see note 2).

Several women members visited the prison for the first time as the activity of Umucyo Nyanza, speaking with their incarcerated husbands. I was allowed to accompany them on this important occasion. I heard that any victims had never visited the prison before and the workers in the prison were surprised too.

The most impressive part of the visit was when those incarcerated said, "I am grateful that my wife tries to reconcile on my behalf." and "I myself would like to apologize and participate in the reconciliation." Organizations such as Umucyo Nyanza, which visit prisons, are rare, and thus, they

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Note 1: He has been involved in the reconciliation project in cooperation with local NGOs in Rwanda since 2005. In 2011, he was involved in the establishment of the Department of Peace Building and Conflict Studies at PIASS. He teaches at the university.

Note 2: Women took a main part of the activity for reconciliation, but the target of the activity extends to their children, their husband, and the community they belong to. The children's activities began in 2017. And the activity for men has started recently because more men will return from the prison to the community soon.

wished they could get a chance to participate in the reconciliation process in the prison.

However, it is obvious that some victims do not want to see the perpetrators. When considering reconciliation, striking a balance between the two sides is more difficult than I had imagined. I had connections with those who experienced the genocide. Although it is impossible to know their whole feelings, it was easier to feel part of them in Rwanda than in Japan. It is all the more reason why I had to be more careful not to be too heavily affected by one side's feelings.

### **3. Perpetrators and victims**

During my stay, the women's own perception toward perpetrators and victims seemed to have changed. They visited a genocide memorial museum with their own will. However, one of them fell ill of trauma.

Her husband was in prison as a perpetrator. However, she also had Tutsi relatives, some of whom had been killed during the genocide. She was in a difficult position. Her illness became the catalyst for other members changing their perceptions of the perpetrators and victims.

One woman who was a victim said, "I think that we, as victims, have often told our story and received care. However, I also think that speaking and care are perhaps necessary for the side of perpetrators too." Personally, this made me realize that the genocide in Rwanda was an atrocity in which those who experienced the genocide cannot be simply classified into two sides, which means I cannot tell who is wrong and who is hurt.

Even someone classified as a perpetrator may have had relatives that were killed. In addition, with their husbands incarcerated, the women might also be carrying economic, social, and/or psychological burdens; therefore, in a sense, they too might be victims.

### **4. How do you forgive?**

Although I more often thought about the side of perpetrators during my stay in Rwanda, upon returning to Japan, I began to think of difficulties of some victims to "forgive." In Japan, I had issues in one of my friendships. Despite receiving an apology, I found it very difficult to forgive.

Although my problem is tiny compared to the issues of Rwandan victims, my own difficulties with forgiveness prompted me to think of how the Rwandan people managed to forgive. It will take time, but I will try to repair my friendship, while reflecting on those in Rwanda who achieved reconciliation.

### **5. A single word which expresses my stay in Rwanda...**

The one word that expresses my experience as an exchange student in Rwanda is "love." Although it was too direct and I felt slightly embarrassed, I thought about love and felt a lot of it from those around me (Photo 5). At the first training session for a local NGO, the staff spoke of "Love yourself."



**Photo 5:** The maid of the house owner, Clemantine, and her child Cyntia. Through the wall, I heard Clemantine’s voice scolding Cyntia, their laughing, and praying. When I was there, they moved to Uganda. I do not know their new phone number, so it is difficult to get in touch. I wonder if Cyntia started going to elementary school. I wonder if Clemantine laughs with her jolly voice like she did before.

Even if you want to help other people, or partake in reconciliation, you cannot take care of others if you do not care about yourself. Although it seems an obvious thing, I want to remember these words, because I often put myself last.

I also felt love from the Japanese exchange students who stayed in Rwanda in the same period as me, other PIASS students, students from other African countries who I ate with, the land owner, their maid, and her daughter, who lived at the same compound for half the year (Photo 6; Photo 7).



**Photo 6:**

A farewell party hosted by the international student community. In the latter half of my study year, we ate lunch and dinner together. We usually ate rice, beans, potatoes, cabbage, cassava, and so on. Occasionally, when meat was served, someone always became a “meat keeper” to dish out the meat so that everyone had an equal portion. Some students usually go back to their room soon after they finish eating, but when meat is served, they stay at the place to eat for a long time, waiting for leftover meat.



**Photo 7: Japanese exchange students. I had a very valuable time with students from Japan as well as from African countries. We discussed many things about Rwanda and about the social problems in Japan.**

When COVID-19 has spread since 2019, many students with whom I spent time in Rwanda sent messages to me, worried about Japan and me. It pleased me greatly that although my student exchange period had ended, there were still people in Rwanda who cared for me and with whom I wanted to catch up as well.

## **6. After returning home**

Soon after I returned to Japan, Octave and Hellen came to Japan as exchange students from PIASS. I met Hellen frequently, particularly for meals, coffee, shopping, and so on. Honestly, when studying in Rwanda, we did not have so many conversations.

However, we had more opportunities to talk in Japan. We talked about Hellen's family, her home country of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the relationships within the community of international students at PIASS, of which I had been unaware during my stay in Rwanda. My impression of Hellen also changed from when I had met her in Rwanda to when we met in Japan.

There are so many things that I still want to do and places I still want to go with Octave and Hellen in Japan, so I hope that they will visit Japan again. (Photo 8).



**Photo 8:** Climbing Mt Takao with Hellen, who came to TUFSS as an exchange student in 2019–2020, and Mako Iino, who was an exchange student during the same period as me. I wanted to take them to my hometown, Yamagata; however, we had to postpone this due to the spread of COVID-19. Hellen and I talked about many things and she told me particularly about her family. I would like to visit her hometown and meet her unique family.



**Photo 9:** My friend Rachel, who always asks, “When will you come back to Rwanda?”, whenever I contact her. If it were possible, I would go now, to chat with her while drinking ikivuguto (It is fermented milk like yogurt to drink).

## 7. Conclusion

I have a Rwandan friend who asks, “When will you come back to Rwanda?” every time I contact her (Photo 9). I kept saying that I would visit in summer in 2020, but I am very disappointed to be unable to visit due to COVID-19.

All I can say to her now is “I’ll come after the situation improves”. I just hope that a day will come soon when I can tell her about a concrete plan to visit her.

3. University of Pretoria  $\Leftrightarrow$  Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

# My Stay in Japan

Wendy-Rose Govender

University of Pretoria

Stay period at TUFSS: from April 2018 to July 2018

My stay in Japan has been one of the most enriching experience of my life. I fell in love with the culture and amazing food they have to offer. When first arriving in Japan, I didn't know what to expect and my Japanese wasn't very good. I adapted quickly to the culture and environment in Japan and got to experience new outlooks, customs and activities. I got to experience Japan, understand the people, its traditions, and its culture, I've learnt so much in just three and a half months of living here. TUFSS has helped me in my studies as well as encourage me for further studies.

I chose courses in Greek and Roman Mythology, English Literature, Religion and Culture in Japan and Japanese level 100. In Greek and Roman Mythology, I learnt about Greek stories and I was tested on them every Friday. In English Literature we read the novel, Bliteldale Romance and we discussed topics about the novel in each class. In Religion and Culture in Japan, I learnt about Buddhism and how it has affected the country of Japan and the lives in Japan. I was happy in my choice of subjects and learnt a lot through my semester. The lecturers were enthusiastic about their subject and I felt that the classes were very interesting. Japanese level 100 was my hardest class but it was very fun to learn a new language and the teachers taught me in a way that I could understand. I had eight hours of class per week which helped me have time to go sightseeing.

I also made a lot of international friends and we have become very close. To name some countries they are from are Brazil, Singapore, Philippines, Hawaii and America. We spent most of our time traveling around Japan and I got to learn different cultures from each one of them. I got to hear my Philippine friend, Victoria, sing a song from her country in her language during some Karaoke as well as my Hawaiian, Audrey, who made food for us from her home country.

Together we were able to travel to Chiba and have fun at Disney Sea and Disney World. We also did a lot of traveling around Tokyo. We went to the Ghibli Museum and a lot of other museums in Ueno. We also traveled around Shinjuku, Harajuku and Shibuya many times. We did a lot of shopping was able to use our Japanese language skills as much as we could. I was also able to experience traditional festivals such as the Fuchu City Festival which is held every year. My family from South Africa also came to visit me during my stay in Japan. They spent a week in Tokyo and I was about to eat out with them when I had the free time. I was lucky enough to celebrate my birthday in Japan and spent it bowling with some friends and family.

During this semester, I wanted to join a club to make a lot of Japanese friends. I join RAMS cheerleading club because it looked like fun. I've practiced with them for three months and I made a

lot of amazing friends in the team (Photo). The RAMS cheerleading club were friendly from the beginning and I have a lot of fun practicing with them. We practice about five to six times a week and I learn so much from them. I was also able to compete in the Kanto Championship with RAMS. It was a lot of hard work and determination but I gave my best and we worked hard together as a team. On some weekends we go to other universities to practice and I met a lot of cheerleading friends. It was a very hard team to join since they taught in Japanese but I adapted and it became easier as time went on, I was also able to learn a lot of the Japanese culture through this club. Also, there were many times when they would translate for us. I'm glad I joined their club; I have made a lot of memories with them and I am going to miss them a lot.



**Photo: With RAMS club mates.**

The most favorite thing about staying in Japan is the food. I love the different types of food Japan has to offer and I make sure to try something new every time I eat out. There are so many restaurants around Tokyo that we eat out at a new place every time. My favorite food to eat is Sushi and Ramen noodles. Almost every day we would try a different Ice cream flavor and my favorite dessert here is milk pudding.

I'm grateful to TUFs for giving me such a wonderful time studying abroad. I don't have any regrets and I had so much fun living here. I was able to make a lot of new friends and learn a lot of different cultures. I have a better understanding and appreciation for the nations people and their history.

I am also thankful to Yazaki Corp. for their financial support as well as Prof. Takeuchi and Mr. Myoi from African Studies Center - TUFs, and Ms. Kawakita of Centre for Japanese Studies, University of Pretoria who helped in making it possible for me to be able to study in Japan. They have given me a once in a lifetime opportunity. I will forever cherish the memories and friends I have made in Japan.

# A Network Built on a Johannesburg Street Corner Corner Connecting to the World

Naoto Mihara

Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Stay period at University of Pretoria: from July 2018 to June 2019

## 1. Introduction

How do you do. I am Naoto Mihara, a fourth-year student who was majoring in Africa in 2015.

Saki Takayama has already written in detail about the life and academics at the University of Pretoria, so in this article, I would like to talk about the cultures and networks in Johannesburg, South Africa. I feel that interacting through foreign study with diverse cultures and lifestyles and the lives of people in another place was about learning new living scenarios (Fig. 1). I also feel that I was able to learn the importance of building human networks.



Fig. 1: A stylish-looking older man selling sunglasses in Soweto Township.

## 2. Fashion culture and networks

In this section, I will describe how the network I formed in Johannesburg, South Africa, became a catalyst for connecting with people all over the world and led to a documentary (video) attracting worldwide attention, and I will talk about the lessons I learned from the milestones leading up to that point.

Video: *The Fashion Culture in South Africa by The Unknown Vlogs*

(Source URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYGoxIyh7T0> )

It was on the street corners of Johannesburg that I built a diverse network of people with local street culture as its backbone, represented by photography, dance, fashion, and BMX (motor cross bikes). It was built by taking walks on the street. You would think it would be better to walk with one of the locals or avoid walking altogether in order to reduce the chances of running into criminals. However, it is here that you learn about the fashion consciousness of young people in Johannesburg, how “cool” it is that they make street culture the backbone of their networks, and how they are so straightforward in talking that they might just pull you over while you are walking.

Starting with small comments such as "Hey, nice style" and "Take a picture," I became more and more connected to these fashion-obsessed youngsters. The first thing I learned from these young South African fashion lovers is a DIY[A1] mindset. Naturally, I and many other Japanese, especially those of my generation, tend to shell out money for things that look cute or cool.

However, the first impressions they shared upon seeing clothes I was wearing were "How did you make it?" and "Where did you buy the fabric?" For me “making” something and “buying” something were not equivalent ideas, so this was a new revelation. The youth of Johannesburg have the mindset of making their own things, like their own versions of the Birkin bag from Hermès (Hermès of Paris, a high-class French fashion brand) out of fabric they have purchased.

### 3. Communication tools

What is good about the fashion culture and networks in South Africa is that they are very compact and dense. As a result, my friendships spread widely, and I was able to connect with many of South Africa's most famous designers, photographers, and artists.

My hub for building friendships was the “Court Order” consignment store (Note 1), which was the wholesaler for clothing I imported from Japan. Various people who formed the backbone of my network gathered there, interacting with each other while talking about their shared fashion and sneakers over coffee (Fig. 2). I became acquainted with Akoo, an Indian from South Africa who is the boss at Court Order, and we would eat dinner at his home (Fig. 3; Fig. 4).



**Fig. 2: My friend Steve, a designer for the Pessimistic brand (appearing at 3:56 in the video)**

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(Note 1) Court Order is a consignment store, and in addition to the one in Johannesburg, there is another in Cape Town. It sells fashion-related products but is also a community store with a coffee counter (Instagram URL: <https://www.instagram.com/courtorderza/>).



**Fig. 3: My friend Akoo, owner of Court Order**



**Fig. 4: Court Order and me**

One of the most informative friends I met at Court Order was a nonwhite youth who expressed the anguish and aspirations of other nonwhite and black [A2] people through illustrations. His name is Seth (a.k.a. “African Ginger”). I feel that I learned a lot about the pains and passions of South African youth, which are born of social structures still defined by skin color, as told by Seth using art as his tool (Fig. 5; Fig. 6).

Presumably, what troubles many students at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies is that they know there exist people in dire straits and difficult situations, but they do not know what to do about it. However, there are countless ways to take action. I think that what is important is to discover what suits you.



**Fig. 5: Illustrator Seth a.k.a. “African Ginger”**



**Fig. 6: One of the works by Seth. You can view his Instagram page at [https://www.instagram.com/african\\_ginger/](https://www.instagram.com/african_ginger/).**

#### 4. Cape Town fashion culture

I think that South Africa's fashion culture has been able to reach the depths it has because of the close connections between networks in Johannesburg and those in Cape Town.

My own network grew explosively as a result of meeting Regan, who works at Orphan Street Clothing Store (OSCS) in Cape Town and is the same age as his boss; Francesco from Italy, who is a friend of Regan and manages a rooftop bar; Seeraj who works at Levis South Africa; and Alex at Baseline Skate Co. (Fig. 7; see Note 2 for the stores).

Francesco's network, in particular, spreads out both domestically and internationally, connected through a pro-skater and photographer from New York and Braai (a BBQ gathering in South Africa). This was the first time I had ever seen a person who was as good at social communication as Francesco, and I learned a lot about mindset and behavior (Fig. 8).



**Fig. 7:** At the Orphan Street Clothing Store (OSCS); the person on the right is the author, and the person on the left is Regan Paulsen.



**Fig. 8:** Francesco's Instagram page: <https://www.instagram.com/francheeze/>

When my girlfriend came to Cape Town, we served Francesco Japanese food at his house, and he served us Italian food. (Thanks to Francesco) I was able to get my name out a little in Johannesburg and Cape Town, which led to more and more requests to shoot photos from several local brands through Instagram and to becoming increasingly immersed in South Africa's fashion culture.

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(Note 2) Levis is a jeans brand that originated in the United States. It has stores around the world, and Seeraj handles press for the Levis South Africa home office (Cape Town). Baseline Skate Co. is a skateboard store typical of Cape Town. Alex is a clerk there, and we became close enough that he hung out with me and my girlfriend when she came to Cape Town to visit.

## 5. Networks are connecting to new networks

Meanwhile, I was suddenly contacted by a British cameraman and filmmaker through Instagram. He said, "I want to make a documentary about fashion culture in South Africa. Can you introduce me to a designer? I heard that you are familiar with the fashion scene in South Africa."

When I asked how he got my name, it turned out to be Akoo, the boss of Court Order. The British man, Toby, was the exclusive cameraman and filmmaker for the world-famous fashion icon Icy Kof (Note 3).

I introduced him to two designers, one from Johannesburg and one from Cape Town. One was my friend Steve from Pessimistic (at 3:56 in the video), an internationally competitive quality brand. The other was Anees from Young and Lazy (at 8:47 in the vide), who has been featured in magazines such as Hypebeast. It was at this moment that a network built on street corners in South Africa was connected to one in the United Kingdom. Currently, I am working to connect a network built in South Africa to red hot Tokyo.

## 6. Self-definition

I feel that young people in South Africa must define and appraise themselves to a greater degree than in other countries. One reason is that the unemployment rate in 2019 is up to 29%, and there is a chronic lack of jobs. By definition, this means that one in three people are unemployed. However, I feel they have the ability to define and appraise themselves.

As no one has given anything to them, they define themselves, building networks and getting work in different fields and areas. I feel that it was really valuable that I got to learn about this hungry spirit, which is useful in any occupation, through real-life experience in the course of my life studying abroad.

## 7. Self-image

I feel that it is important to build human networks, whatever realm you find yourself in. Increasing the diversity of human networks leads to diversification of one's possible self-image. Thus, you can push the boundaries of your existence, break away from stereotypes relying on a particular culture, and observe others' behavior in depth.

I feel that observing others contributes to determining one's values and priorities as well as defining one's own role and identity. I think it is important to come into contact with a wide variety of



**Fig. 9: Friends on skateboards in the evening in Johannesburg CBD.**

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(Note 3) Icy Kof's Instagram page: <https://www.instagram.com/icykof/>.

identities and life scenarios when you are young. I encourage you all to step out of your comfort zone (Fig. 9).

Thank you for reading through to the end.

4. Tokyo University of Foreign Studies => University of Zambia,  
University of Zimbabwe and Eduardo Mondlane University

# Studying and Working in Africa: Studying in Zambia and Working in Sudan

Riho Ikeda

Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Stay period at University of Zambia: from November 2016 to September 2017

Hello everyone. My name is Riho Ikeda, and I am a fourth-year student majoring in Africa. I enrolled in 2014, the same year as Sae Torii, who introduced us her wonderful life in Cape Town the other day.

In this page, I would like to write about my two experiences in Africa –studying and working – in the form of a comparative account. If you have never been to Africa, if you are interested in but have not made your first step, or if you are thinking about which future course you take, I hope you enjoy this column and use it as a reference.

## 1. First off, I would like to explain when, where, and how I spent my time in Africa.

My first experience in Africa had started with a foreign study I did in Zambia that lasted about ten months from the autumn of my third year in November 2016 to September 2017. I am sure it seems like I had a great motivation to study abroad in Africa, but as far as I can recall, I chose Zambia simply because I thought it should be the real deal when we learn. Another reason was because it seemed really fun based on what I was told by one of my seniors at school, who had already studied in Zambia.

After wrapping up a most enjoyable time in Zambia, the country I chose as the setting for my second excursion to Africa was Sudan (Fig. 1). I took a leave of absence during the fall of my fourth year in September 2018 and have been working at the Embassy of Japan in Sudan as an assigned diplomatic staffer (Note 1), the same as Ms. Torii. I heard about diplomatic staffing from a veteran Tokyo University of Foreign Studies alumnus I met in Zambia and decided to apply, since there seemed to be a lot of merit to students getting practical experience.



Fig. 1: Locations of Zambia and Sudan

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Note 1: Staff assigned to Ministry of Foreign Affairs diplomatic establishments abroad are sent to Japanese embassies around the world as employees of the International Exchange Service Association to assist administrative work. For details, check out the website of the International Exchange Service Association: <http://www.ihcsa.or.jp/japanese/zaigaikoukan/hakenin-01/>

I chose Sudan because I was interested in the culture and history of the country, which is located at the intersection of African and Arab cultures and has experienced many conflicts, so I wanted to know more about it.

## 2. Language, religion, and culture

Next, I will introduce some basic information regarding how the language, religion, and culture of the two completely different countries of Zambia and Sudan.

First, I will start with Zambia. Zambia gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1964, and its official language is English. Particularly in the capital city of Lusaka where I lived, most Zambians speak English. At the beginning of my stay, I had a hard time adapting to their unique African-accented English, but once I got used to it, there I was. Schools teach in English, and all classes at the University of Zambia (Note 2), where I studied, were also conducted in English. In addition, there are more than 70 tribes in Zambia, each with their own local language. The language most commonly used in conversations between Zambians is not English but one among major local languages such as Nyanja, Bemba, and Tongan. Due to the influence of its former colonizer, the United Kingdom, the majority of the people are Christian, and all go to mass on Sundays. The capital, Lusaka, is relatively developed, with many large shopping malls and plenty of South African chain supermarkets and apparel shops. Due to the high altitude of the entire city, the climate is relatively mild, making it a very comfortable and recommendable city for Africa novices like me at that time (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2: Zambian food. White corn flour kneaded in warm water and garnished with steamed nshima. Excellent.**

Next is Sudan. Sudan was the earliest African country to gain independence (from the United Kingdom), which it did in 1956. However, despite this, its official language is Arabic, and its main religion is Islam due to the influence of earlier Egyptian rule. Sudanese people pray toward the holy city of Mecca five times a day. A loud call to worship (reading aloud from the Quran) is broadcasted in cities for each worship services, the first of which begins around 4 am each day. At first, the daily

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Note 2: The University of Zambia is a national university in the Republic of Zambia. It is located in the capital city of Lusaka. It has an exchange agreement with Tokyo University of Foreign Studies including a foreign exchange program. Public website (English): <https://www.unza.zm/>

broadcasts would wake me up every day, but once I got used to it, I could fall asleep even if there was an explosion (Fig. 3). However, it was also difficult to get used to the scheduled days off on Friday and Saturday peculiar to Islamic countries. Before I did, every time I heard the phrase "see you next week" at the end of Thursday, I was engulfed by an unexpected feeling of happiness. This was despite the fact that I make up work on Sundays . . . One of the most famous Islamic culture is the tradition of Ramadan (fasting). The schedule is set every year depending on the Islamic calendar and the phases of the moon, and that year, it was 30 days from the beginning of May. During this period, we are not allowed to eat or drink anything, including water, everyday from sunrise to sunset. I also tried it, but I could not handle it even for a day and gave up.



**Fig. 3: A landscape of Sudanese homes.**

### **3. Life while studying abroad / Being an embassy staffer**

“Africa” might just be one word, but my experiences living in Zambia and Sudan differed completely in terms of language, religion, and culture. Here, I would like to talk about my experiences while studying abroad in Zambia and my life in Sudan as an embassy staffer.

At the University of Zambia, I was in a development studies course, leaning about various fields of development in Africa as well as the present state of development, the processes and problems thereof, all with a focus especially on Zambia. Pursuing such studies on campus was undeniably interesting, but my most enjoyable and memorable experience in Zambia were the days I spent outside the university. My biggest privilege as a foreign student was that I could make use of any weekdays when there was no class, such as when the university was closed due to student strikes and term breaks (breaks between semesters). I visited some towns where Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers worked, to learn about their activities (Fig. 4), and assisted the field work of NGOs (Fig. 5). These experiences observing Japanese living overseas and working at the forefront of international cooperation was quite irreplaceable for me.



**Fig. 4: Visiting an elementary school in Zambia, where Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers were assigned. Everyone loved the camera.**



**Fig. 5: A local volunteer weighing a child at a screening for children under five, sponsored by a Japanese NGO working in Zambia.**

Through my exchange program, I was able to meet and talk with Japanese residents from various backgrounds, such as UN agencies, embassy, government-affiliated organizations, private companies, and NGOs, and I realize the various ways of international cooperation. Thus, this turned out to be a very significant time for me to think about what I wanted to do in the future. My everyday life was always with the constant water and power cuts, but these experiences also provided with opportunities to cultivate survival skills. I am now confident that I could live anywhere in the world.

My main job in Sudan is to make arrangements for business travelers (airline tickets, hotels, vehicle, etc.), just as Ms. Torii described in her article, as well as to handle a wide range of tasks such as assistance in accounting, events, and other general matters. Assigned embassy staffs do not play a leading role in diplomacy; they work behind the scenes. I feel a great sense of accomplishment when other embassy staffs are able to complete their work without delay, and when events end up with

success (Fig. 6). This work is full of joy and rewarding, and at the same time I was able to acquire the business skills required as a member of society.

Additionally, I fully enjoyed shopping, spending time with friends, and exploring my hobbies on weeknights and my days off.



**Fig. 6: Photo with embassy staffs. There are 25 local staffs, compared to 12 Japanese staffs.**

#### **4. Peaceful Zambia / Turbulent Sudan**

One of the biggest concerns for anyone heading to Africa is probably the local security and state of affairs. From my perspective, Zambia and Sudan represent polar opposites, and I feel that being able to see the political changes in Sudan is a particularly valuable experience.

Zambia has experienced no conflicts since its independence, and I had an impression that its citizens are peace-loving and gentle (Fig. 7). According to overseas safety information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, except areas bordering Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the travel risk level throughout Zambia is "Level 1", which is the lowest, requiring only the normal level of caution for overseas travel (being careful of pickpockets and luggage thieves, avoiding walking alone at night, etc.).



**Fig. 7: Team Japan vs. Team Zambia baseball tournament. I participated as a scorekeeper.**

On the other hand, Sudan has been experiencing a turbulent period of history since I was assassinated. The dictatorship of former President al-Bashir, which had lasted about 30 years, was overthrown by popular protests. Anti-government demonstrations spread from the city of Atbara last December 19 (2018) in response to soaring prices. On April 6 (2019), the army finally took action. Former President al-Bashir was eventually forced to resign, and the coup d'état was successful. However, negotiations between those desiring a transition to civilian rule and the Transitional Military Council established after the coup could not easily reach an agreement. Then, on June 3, militias fired at people holding a sit-in demonstration in front of the military headquarters with live ammunition, which developed into a dire situation with more than 100 people dead within a few days. At this point, the travel risk level according to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs was raised up to "Level 3" throughout the country, and many Japanese residents, including JICA staffs, were forced to evacuate. Actually, I was one of them and am currently waiting in Japan for the situation to improve. The political change in Sudan over the last six months has definitely left its mark on its history, and as one of the people who witnessed the entire situation, I must share what I saw and felt from the position of the diplomatic corps (Fig. 8).



**Fig. 8:** A photo taken during a Nile River cruise. You can see the confluence of the White Nile and Blue Nile.

## **5. Looking back**

Although I have outlined two types of my African experiences, I am not conclusively advising you which is better. Being able to use your time freely as a student will put your independence and proactivity to the test, while working gives you the opportunity to acquire skills. Being a membership in a foreign organization also offers a bird's eye view of the country, however, there will be constraints on your time. The answer depends on what kind of experience you prefer to spend your time on and which ability you would like to develop.” (Fig. 9).



**Fig. 9: Victoria Falls, a World Heritage Site in Zambia.  
I am completely overwhelmed by the vast natural  
wonder!**

It is my best pleasure if you would feel Africa interesting through this column. Thank you so much for letting me share my experience with you!

# My Experience in Zimbabwe

Shoyo Sugiyama

Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Stay period at University of Zimbabwe: from February 2018 to December 2018

## 1. Introduction

My name is Shoyo Sugiyama. I have been a member of the International Sociology Department and the African Regional Studies Department at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies for four years. After completing my third year, I took a year off from TUFS to attend the University of Zimbabwe, as an exchange student, from February to December in 2018. As information regarding Zimbabwe, especially those related to student exchange, is very scarce in both Japanese and English, I have written this article in hopes it may be of use to the reader. If you happen to be interested in Zimbabwe, or studying in Africa, I would be delighted if you stayed to read my personal epilogue of the time I spent in Zimbabwe.

## 2. Zimbabwe

First, let me talk about Zimbabwe from my personal perspective. After the turmoil following the 2017 ousting of President Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe has transitioned to a new system under President Emmerson Mnangagwa, who has been in power since the 2018 general election. Despite civil unrest, such as assassination attempts and deaths during the protests in the lead-up to the elections, when I left Zimbabwe in December 2018, I felt that the country was returning to a much calmer state.

Zimbabwe is often associated with hyperinflation (Photo 1). During my time as an exchange student, I faced some problems in buying daily necessities using US dollars and proxy currencies (called bond notes, eco-cash) for various transactions. However, the current economy is far from stable (at the time of writing, in January 2019, commodity prices, including gasoline, have risen sharply), and the situation remains unstable; therefore, I recommend caution when travelling around the nation.



Photo 1: A 10-trillion Zimbabwe dollar note in use in 2008; of course, this is not currently in use.

The level of safety in the country is excellent. One can walk around at night in the city of Harare (Photo 2) without running into any problems (although, I would not recommend it), and if one has the misfortune to cross into any, aid can immediately be sought and found from those around. This is not to say that one must abandon his sense of caution, but I personally did not experience any danger during my stay.



**Photo 2: Photo of the city of Harare. Jacaranda trees in bloom in September.**

### **3. University of Zimbabwe**

Considering the lack of information on the internet, I wish to discuss a little about the University of Zimbabwe. The University of Zimbabwe is the largest university in Zimbabwe, featuring various faculties of both liberal arts and natural sciences, and is home to an immense number of students. While some of the dormitory equipment and Wi-Fi was slightly problematic, most of facilities were maintained well and was available (notably, a wide range of sports facilities, including basketball hoops, soccer courts, running tracks, and even a martial arts gym, and swimming pool). Therefore, I faced no particular issues or shortcomings when studying at the school. The university library, in particular, was outstanding, as it housed valuable literature such as official documents dating from the Rhodesian period, ethnographies, and demographic data of the country, and was a valuable source when searching for materials.

There were no Asian students studying at the undergraduate level, though there seemed to be a few studying post-graduate. There were however quite a large number of international students coming from other parts of Africa, such as Lesotho, Mozambique, and South Sudan, to study the field of medicine. Therefore, I think that, unless you search for it, there is little opportunity to meet with exchange students to talk or study.

### **4. Preparation for study abroad**

I did not do anything special to prepare, as I recall it was only two weeks before departure when I

managed to gather all the documents I needed. It should be noted that I had been trying to receive my vaccinations a year prior before I went to study abroad (I believe I started around May). Items that proved to be useful are the following; electric pots, origami, electrical connectors, and instant foodstuffs. I did face some struggles because I had forgotten to pack a portable water boiler/immersion heater. As there is no hot water on tap in Zimbabwe, one must fill buckets and heat water using those devices. There is the option to purchase portable water boilers/immersion rods on arrival; however, my advice is to bring one with you.

In addition, one should exercise great care when applying for a student visa. Upon securing my visa, I had all the necessary documents per the listing on the Zimbabwe Immigration Ministry website; however, when I arrived in Zimbabwe, the local immigration office requested a form not listed in the visa application (a criminal background check was required), which became problematic. Therefore, my advice is to contact the Embassy of Japan in Zimbabwe prior and proceed with great care during the application process.

## 5. My Life as an Exchange Student

I lived in a college dorm. My lectures ran from February to May and August to November; with the rest being holidays, where I visited neighboring countries (I visited Rwanda and Mozambique, and a little of South Africa and Zambia), or enjoyed homestay with my friends from the University. (photo 3A, 3B).



**Photo 3A: My homestay environment**



**Photo 3B: Another scene from homestay**

At the University of Zimbabwe, I studied sociology, psychology, anthropology, African philosophies, and social research methods. My classes were challenging, with the latter two being especially difficult, and I struggled writing papers in English at the end-of-the-semester exams. I took 12 units over the course of the year; with the one leaving the greatest impression on me being African philosophies. According to my professor, the traditional philosophy of Africa starts with the assumption that “it is absolutely impossible to understand everything in the world.” The words which left a strong impression on me were the following; ‘Do you have any idea how arrogant the western premise

ideology of “Dismissing ignorance” is?”

Often, the university lectures would finish in the morning or early afternoon, and with no classes on the weekends, I had a lot of free time. I spent my free hours walking through the city of Harare, participating at the University’s Tae Kwon Do Club, and receiving lessons from a local wire artist (Photo 4). University life in general was not too busy, so other students too used their free time to play sports, drink, and generally enjoy their youth.



**Photo 4: With a master wire artist**

## **6. Conclusion**

Drinking beer with friends at a local tavern in town. Taking a mid-summer anthropology lecture in the auditorium. Learning wire art and African philosophy in Zimbabwe. My humble experiences in interacting with the kind and noble people of Zimbabwe. All of these experiences and memories are with me. Given its geographical and political conditions, it may be difficult to recommend Zimbabwe as an ideal destination. However, for me, studying in Zimbabwe was an excellent decision, perhaps the best I made in my life. Although I do not recommend Zimbabwe lightly, if you are interested, I highly recommend studying or simply visiting the country. I am most certain you will have a fulfilling experience.

# Great Mozambique Adventure

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Stay period at Eduardo Mondlane University: from May 2018 to February 2019

## Introduction

Good afternoon. I am Ryohei, a major in Latin American Studies specializing in Portuguese-speaking countries. I spent about eight months studying abroad in the African nation of Mozambique (Fig. 1).

I thought of writing about why I went to Mozambique and how it made me feel. Since I am someone with strong personal feelings, my account of my experience begins before my travels.



Fig. 1: Location of Mozambique.

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## **1. Studying abroad is like a vacation!**

I wasn't attending school at the time, just stuck working and taking exams. Finally, after what seemed like a year-long winter, I suddenly felt, "Now is the time!" so I enrolled in the Latin American (not African) Portuguese program at the School of International and Area Studies at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Thoughts had been growing over that long winter such as "Latin America looks interesting" and "I want to work at the United Nations!" Deciding that I wanted to get into the U.N. and thus wanted to study under a professor whose background included working there, I chose to enroll.

By the way, back then, I came up with an idea: choose Spanish to get into the UN because it would be great if I could speak one of their official languages. Portuguese was my second choice. At that time, it was a major shock that I was being exiled to an island, but when I think about it now, I could not have reached Mozambique without doing so (Equatorial Guinea is the only Spanish-speaking African country).

Upon admission, I immediately made an appointment with my professor. The conversation was as follows (although there are some places where I had to make it up a little):

"I want to get into the U.N. What should I do?!"

"Join a foreign-owned company as soon as you can and use what you earn to go on to a foreign graduate school. Get an MBA (Master of Business Administration). Then take the JPO test (Note 1)."

"What should I do if I'm thinking of studying abroad?"

"Studying abroad is like going on vacation! If you have that kind of time, then you should go to graduate school early and get an MBA."

Conversing this way, while there were parts that seemed reasonable, I'd give an uncomfortable "Hmmm?" Then I had a thought.

"Why do I want to join the U.N.?"

It wasn't a case of "I want to do something!" I just thought, "I want to see if I can get into the U.N."

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Note 1: Abbreviation for Junior Professional Officer (Junior Professional Officer): non-regular professional staff dispatched from a country to an international organization such as the U.N. for a certain period of time based on an agreement between the international organization and the country's government.

I realized that if the U.N. is as I imagined it to be, then I didn't want people like me to be in the organization. I started to realize that I just wanted the U.N. as a way of accomplishing something.

I wanted to dig deeper into my interests. On top of that, I wanted to think more and more about what types of steps I should be taking in my life. That is what came to mind (when I told the professor, "I just realize that the U.N. is just a means to me," she became furious).

## **2. "Why didn't all of you shoot for Harvard?"**

I started attending seminars my third year. I was in Hyoduk Lee's seminar as part of the Contemporary World Theory course at the School of International and Area Studies. In that seminar, I encountered a question that had an outsized personal impact on me.

"Why didn't you all shoot for Harvard? Right now, if you get out of Harvard, there's a life with annual income of about 30 million yen waiting for you, right? In such a world, it's amazing that Harvard wasn't one of your options when picking out a university. Perhaps society is structured in a way that doesn't let you see those options."

I was shocked. It was as if I'd been hit by a single shot from outside my perception, diagonally above where my consciousness could not reach. Maybe I had messed up, or, assuming I had chosen that option, I might have ended up playing a game on rails that society had laid out for me. It was scary.

"If 'undergraduate studying abroad is a vacation,' then I would make it a meaningful one."

I would study abroad for one year without getting a degree, and in doing so, I would make it something more meaningful than just a degree or something along those lines. If the words I said before matched the question posed to me in this seminar, then I'd spend a year in the place that seemed the farthest from me now and look back at my present self objectively from there.

## **3. I wanted to study abroad, but I did not want to take any classes**

"So, you want to go to the place that seems the farthest? How about Africa?"

While I was thinking about this is when Mozambique came up. Of the five Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa, I felt that Mozambique was the easiest to reach (I have heard rumors that there were quite a few people in the Portuguese department who were studying abroad in Mozambique). There was another reason for choosing Mozambique, but I will skip it because it is long (if you are interested, click here: "Why I chose Mozambique").

Now, what to do about Mozambique? I wanted to go, but I did not want to take any more classes, and I wasn't confident in my Portuguese. I also did not want to spend time in classes I did not understand. That is what I thought.

However, I wanted to stay there for a long time. I mean, I wanted a visa. Student visas are the quickest way to do this, but I did not want to take classes.

"Ummm."

When I talked with a someone who seemed to have a connection to Mozambique about this problem,

she said, "As a research student, how about directly asking a local professor? There seems to be some research you want to do." It turns out that I met someone doing local field work! (What!)

Through that person, I got into direct contact with local professors and administrative staff and, after occasionally negotiating over the phone on WhatsApp (Note 2), managed to get a letter of acceptance.

#### 4. "A rough start"

Because of the hectic nature of everything in the lead-up, I eventually jumped on an airplane in the middle of figuring out with the university where I was going to live. I could not get answers to questions such as "What will my address be? What is the rent? What about food?" before I departed, and then I arrived . . .

"Please call us when you arrive, okay? Then come to the university."

I had received such an email from the office of my host university before arriving, so I purchased a SIM card at the airport and made a phone call.

"We closed at 3:30 PM, so everyone has already gone home. Go straight to the dormitory."

"...Okay. (Yeah, they're already closed ... Bit scary to go straight to the dormitory alone ...)"

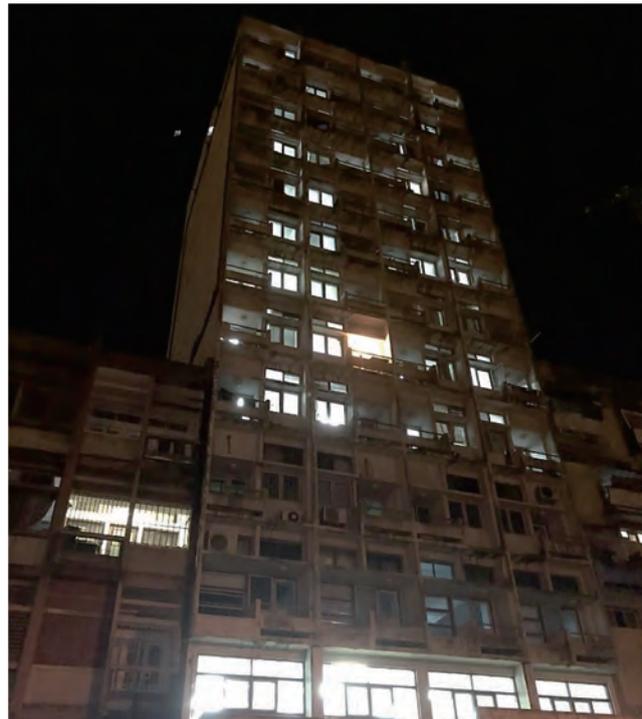
Confused by the sudden change, I handed my phone to the taxi driver and had the office direct me to the dormitory. I then suddenly found myself dropped off by the taxi in front of a towering 11-story building (Fig. 2). There was no elevator.

With the help of the driver, I carried my large bags up to the 11th floor. On the way, I passed by a person who seemed to be the dorm mother, who exclaimed, "I didn't hear that a new exchange student was coming!" Me: "Oh My Goodness ..."

Nevertheless, the top room had a vacancy. Having been told this, I managed to get into the dorm. I gave myself a breather. I had brought only the minimum amount of luggage, so I wanted to do some shopping, and I consulted with my roommate (it was a double room). This was because there was only one key.

"You can go out. I will leave the key with the first-floor security guard."

I was relieved by what he said, so I asked another student who was nearby for directions and went to the supermarket. By the way, Maputo is the



**Fig. 2: The towering dormitory. At night, it has the overwhelming feeling of a haunted mansion.**

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Note 2: WhatsApp is the world's largest free SNS application, offered by the American WhatsApp company and allowing for messages to be exchanged in real time. It can be installed on a mobile phone or other device and can be found even in developing countries.

capital city of Mozambique, and it is quite developed and has pretty much everything, from local shops to Aeon Mall-like shopping centers.

Then, I got back. I retrieved the key from the security guard and went to the 11th floor. However, the key DID NOT work. I went back to the first floor and said that I thought it was the wrong key. However, the response I got was, “That is the only key. You’re probably not using it right.”

Since that could have been the reason, I went back to the room, but it still didn’t work. I went to the first floor again and complained that this was definitely the wrong key. The response I got was, “That’s the only key. I don’t know [what’s wrong].”

Well, what could I do? Wait? So, I waited 45 minutes for my roommate, and when I ran into him, he said, “Sorry, I forgot to leave it [the key].”

I was lucky he came. Together, we returned to the room. As I had made two and a half trips back and forth to the 11th floor at this point, I was feeling a bit woozy. When we got to the room, he said, “Did you eat? There is a school cafeteria on the second floor, so you should go get dinner.” I invited him to go with me, but he did not come.

I entered the dining room with a tense look, and all eyes turned toward me at once. I wondered, “Maybe this dorm was not originally for exchange students.” (A staff person later explained to me that other dorms for international students had filled up, so this place had to house local students.)

“Blah-blah-blah . . . yadda-yadda-yadda . . .”

At this point, I was already feeling crestfallen, but I still wanted to eat, so I got in line. Everyone else was carrying some kind of punch card, but of course, I did not have one. What was I supposed to do? I wondered while I waited for my turn. When it came up, I said to the receptionist, “I just got here today and don’t know how things work. I am a foreign university student.”

“×●～!= : ※ ? ♪ =cinco!”

I had no idea what he was saying, and all I caught was the “cinco!” at the end (phonetically, “cinco” means “5” in Portuguese), so I thought he meant five meticals (Note 3, approximately 10 yen), which seemed very cheap, and I handed over five meticals. When I did this, he responded more harshly (angrily), “×●～!= : ※!!!!!! ? … ×●～!= : ※ ? ♪ cinco!”

He shouted at me again, but still, the only part I caught was “cinco.” “So, I’m giving you 5 meticals!” I shouted back. A student who could not bear to watch this finally took control of the situation (I was told later that “trinta e cinco” (phonetically, “trinta e cinco” means 35 in Portuguese) was what the person was telling me (or maybe it was 25), which, regrettably, was not quite as cheap). Luckily, that day, they let me eat for free, so I managed to survive on kindness.

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Note 3: Meticals are Mozambique currency and were introduced in 1980. 1 metical equals 1.72 yen (rate as of March 31, 2019).

Later, I climbed back to the 11th floor, and needless to say, I fell asleep (Fig. 3). Right then, I really wanted to return to Japan. How often would I have to go to the 11th floor?



**Fig. 3: Nighttime view from my dorm room. The height made it quite beautiful. However, the first night it made me feel empty inside.**

## **5. Eduardo Mondlane University**

The place I was staying at was affiliated with Eduardo Mondlane University in the capital city of Maputo (Note 4, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane). It is the largest of Mozambique’s public universities and, supposedly, the most difficult. It is a comprehensive university, offering a wide range of disciplines, from the humanities to the natural sciences and medicine.

Many of the exchange students are from East Timor (where the official language is also Portuguese), and I got the impression that there were only a few exchange students from various other countries. However, they had a system for receiving exchange students, and new arrivals were given a mentor called a “padrinho” (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 4: My padrinho.**

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Note 4: Public website URL: <https://www.uem.mz/>

The students from East Timor were great, and as we were all from Asia, there was often a sense of companionship. They treated each other like family, and I was often invited to various gatherings. At the invitation of some East Timor students, I got to play soccer (Fig. 5). Even though I had almost no experience, I said "I can play soccer!" because I wanted friends, but suddenly, I found myself thrown into a serious match with spectators and referees.



“Kagawa! No, Honda!”

**Fig. 5: Soccer with exchange students from East Timor.**

It ended up being neither. I obviously could not catch a pass from my friends and was substituted. My lie was easy to spot (however, they were great and invited me, saying, “Let’s practice together!”). By the way, every Sunday, soccer league matches were held on campus.

## **6. The police**

Public safety in Maputo is not considered to be very good. It is said that you should be especially wary of the police, and the number one thing is to not run into them at night. If you are out at night (which, naturally, you should not be) and run into them, you will inevitably be asked to show your identification.

In Mozambique, you are legally required to carry an ID card at all times, but if someone tells you, “Hand it over for me to see,” and you do give it to them, something bad may happen. If you are very unlucky, a cop might say, “Give me money if you want it back.”

When I was asked to show my ID, I was always careful not to hand it over. However, the police often try to take it by force, and then the situation turns into a fight resembling a bread-eating contest at a sports event (Fig. 6). Eventually, this ends in getting a lecture from the police, who say, “Enough already. You have our respect . . . “



**Fig. 6: Illustration of a bread-eating contest. Police trying to take my ID (passport) are like a person trying to catch and eat anpan (bread pastries with bean-paste filling).**

## 7. Homestay

In the beginning, I tried doing some field work. A friend's family home was near a location I wanted to check out, and they let me stay there for about a week.

The location was in Xai-Xai, the provincial capital of Gaza Province, which is located next to Maputo.

Mozambique's largest city is its capital of Maputo. The second is Beira, which is the capital of Sofala Province, and the third is Nampula, which is the capital of Nampula Province. However, it feels as if the only place with any noticeable development is Maputo.

A 30-minute drive into the outskirts of Maputo reveals a wide stretch of grass. Many of the fields show signs of slash-and-burn farming, and the differences in development are obvious. Xai-Xai is located about four hours' drive from Maputo.

Mozambique is famous for its beaches, but looking at the ocean from Maputo is stunning. It is almost brown. However, if you go to Xai-Xai, you will see a beautiful sea (Fig. 7).



**Fig. 7: The shops are lined up on the opposite side, creating a relaxed atmosphere.**

Compared to Maputo, Xai-Xai has no skyscrapers, and the view is completely different (there was a Kentucky Fried Chicken still). About 30 minutes by a shapa passenger bus from the center of Xai-Xai and then about 20 minutes on foot from there is where my friend's parents lived. Though I thought, "Do I really want to go to the rural countryside?" it turned out to be a relaxing place.

The next day, I decided to go to the house where my friend's sister lived, and after finishing my planned work, I left the house around 4 pm. I did so having been told it would take me about an hour on foot.

On the way, I saw someone waving their hand. From what they were saying, they seemed to be my friend's family. I sat there for a while and had some rice because it was time for dinner. After staying about 30 minutes, I headed out again. At this point, it was pretty dark.

On the way, I encountered the family again, and the same thing happened.

"Why don't you try saying, 'Nadziha'?"

My friend had said this to me with a mischievous look in his eye, and without thinking, I humorously said this to the family I had just met. They burst out laughing. Without realizing it, I had blurted it out rather boisterously, so I asked them what it meant, which turned out to be "delicious" in the local Shangana language. Stroking my heart, I vowed to continue using it.

This meeting went on again a total of three times after these two, and finally, I headed home, relying on the light from my friend's cell phone. When I finally arrived, it was pitch black. The dinner calling out "Come on, eat!" to me was already my fourth. It was delicious, as I had to say (Fig. 8) (I recall that it took between two and a half and three hours to get home).



**Fig. 8: A curry-like dish made with cassava leaves and called matappa is common. It contains coconut.**

There was no electricity in my friend's sister's house, so we used candles at night. There was a toilet and a bath (though it was just some warm water for bathing) outside that were surrounded by straw. Naturally, there was no ceiling, so I bathed under a sky full of stars (Fig. 9). This was truly a great experience.



**Fig. 9: Shower room space. The toilet was the same way.**

## **8. Even if you believe the same thing, what you experience is completely subjective**

When you live in a dormitory, you are often asked to lend money.

Sometimes, someone would ask me to lend 10 meticals (approximately 20 yen) to ride the shapa (passenger bus) because they had no money. I would be asked to do this two more times before getting my money back. I'd be told, "I'll pay you back any day now," but on the promised day, the money was not there. Gradually, those friends might start to feel guilty or stay away from me.

The amount of money was not the problem. I just would have liked if they had said something like, "Sorry for being late," or "I can't pay you now, but I'll pay you ~." However, there was one thing that concerned me. They, my friends, treated me to a meal many times. There were many times I would have a full stomach from whatever he cooked.

"I'm always feeding you, so is it okay if I don't return your money?"

I thought, if he said that, I would be at a loss for words. It would be an exchange I would rather not have. However, it never came to that. It probably never even came to his mind.

This was just one individual example, so I cannot make a generalization, but I think between the

two of us there was a different sense of the value of money. We may mutually recognize the coins and notes in front of us as money, but the implications associated with them probably differ in regard to many factors, including the environments in which we live and traditions that have been passed down to us.

There are shared concepts in the world, such as “religion” and “capitalism”; however, if you ask someone other than me, they might not recognize them in exactly the same way. This situation made me strongly aware of this.

## **9. If you want to make something popular, you must determine demand and capacity**

I was not very serious about attending the university, so I interned for three months at a company called Nippon Plant Fuel Co., Ltd. that I had been interested in for a long time (Note 5).

In simple terms, it is a company that is working on "using IT to solve problems facing agriculture." This includes disseminating new products in cooperation with farmers, which is something I participated in (Fig. 10).



**Fig. 10: One shot from my internship. On many occasions, I went to Boane, an hour's drive from Maputo, and had many meetings with farmers. It was a really valuable experience.**

It is often said that ICT (Information and Communication Technology) is rapidly spreading in Africa, and that is true. A lot of people have smart phones, and feature phone users can easily use interpersonal money transfer technology. That is why there are so many people in Africa working in business and international cooperation using this technology.

However, what you have to be careful about at now is, "Is there demand? If not, is there a possibility that demand can be created? If so, is there the local capacity to support the solution?"

No matter how good a project or how efficient a product is, it will not work without the help of the

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Note 5: This link leads to an article about the business of Nippon Plant Fuel Co., Ltd. in Mozambique: JETRO Area / Analysis Report, "An App that connects villages, Japanese companies embark upon an 'Electronic Agricultural Cooperative Platform' (Mozambique)," November 29, 2018

locals. Even if a business is conducting a project that they think is good for locals, if those locals do not want it, the project will never even make it to the starting line.

Local people have tended to accept outside projects as "help" without refusal. However, I was keenly aware that just getting the okay did not necessarily mean you were actually at the starting line.

Furthermore, no matter how well something works theoretically, anything that exceeds the capacity of the local people will not work in the first place—it is like having only a recipe but no pot or ingredients. As I mentioned above, the world that the locals perceive is often different from the world that we perceive.

I realized that no matter how good an idea is, it will not succeed unless the little differences and capacity are carefully determined (Note 6).

## 10. Seeing is believing

Now the word “Africa” is seen everywhere. TICAD 7 (The 7th Tokyo International Conference on African Development), hosted by the Japanese government, will be held in Yokohama in 2019, so it will be even more exciting.

Many people who come to “Africa” do not even know where “Mozambique” is. I think there are so many people like that. There is no other place like this—55 countries that can easily be lumped into one word: “Africa.” Before studying abroad, I would easily fall into saying “Africa.”

On the other hand, the people of Mozambique saw me and shouted "Chinese!" many times. Every time I walked around the city, I'd hear a voice saying "Nihao! Ching-chong, ching-chong!" When I responded, "I'm Japanese!" they'd laugh unapologetically, saying, "Oh, are you Japanese?" From their point of view, Asians are mostly Chinese.

In "Africa," the area where "we" from East Asia lived was collectively regarded as "China." This is what is going on—it is like the flip side of the fact that we lump 55 countries together and call them “Africa.”

Few of those specializing in the Latin American region go to Mozambique. It has been called the "stray Portuguese department." However, I am really glad that I spent a precious year of my student life in Mozambique. It was a very valuable year for me, during which I sharpened my image of "Africa" and gained some perspective on things I had taken for granted.

I wrote at length, but now here is the end.

If you want to go to Mozambique, or if you want to go somewhere else in Africa, follow your instincts. Please go, by all means. No doubt it will be an important time.

\*If you have any questions, please contact me at any time. I am waiting for you!

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Note 6: In that sense, I think that the mobile phone-based m-pesa money transfer technology, which has become popular from Kenya, is superb in terms of grasping demand and capacity. See the following link for m-pesa: <https://af-tech.jp/m-pesa/>



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