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①Report on Event for International Students (May 2018)

On May 30, 2018, we went to JRA Racing Museum located within Tokyo Race Course to encourage interaction among TUFS exchange students (two Cambodians, three Laotians and three Burmese).



In front of JRA Racing Museum

Thirteen people participated in the event:

Sim Danez (exchange student from Cambodia for academic year 2017-2018)

Lao Sokheng (same as above)

Kormoua Faïda (exchange student from Laos for academic year 2017-2018)

Souvenir Vongkhamchanh (same as above)

Samita Muenadasa (same as above)

Phou Pyae Hein Htet (exchange student from Myanmar for academic year 2017-2018)

Win Yu Naing (same as above)

Thae Su Hlaing (same as above)

Prof. Van Sovathana (Cambodian language visiting professor)

Prof. Soulikanh Thammavong (Laotian language visiting professor)

Prof. Sai Kyaw Tun (Burmese language visiting professor)

Prof. Reiko Suzuki (Inter-University Exchange Project (ASEAN) Supervisor, Professor)

Junichi Terai (Inter-University Exchange Project (ASEAN) Coordinator)

International students sitting in the “Learning about Horses” program

Our tour of JRA Racing Museum started with a lecture on horses given by a curator as part of the “Learning about Horses” program. The curator’s Japanese was easy to understand such that the students were able to answer quizzes from him properly.

After that, we looked around the museum freely. At the starting gate used for real races, the students played the role of a starter and jockey. They appreciated works of prominent illustrator Yoshitaka Amano and learned about horses. It was a good opportunity to learn about museum display methods.



At the Horse Riding Center

After the museum, we attended a horse show at the Horse Riding Center. The students’ eyes were fixed on horses sitting down, lying down with their heads on their laps, and running with their bodies tilted—an extraordinary sight of riders and horses acting in unison. Then, we took a tour of the Horse Riding Center, looking at miniature horses and how horses were being taken care of. Later we went to Hiyoshigaoka Park on the premises of the center, where the international students really enjoyed playing on the playground equipment. It was a very impressive scene.

At the end of the event, we went back to Tobitakyu for lunch. The pork and kimchi set meal was most popular.

At first, the students gathered in native language groups, but with the visiting professors’ canny advice,

they began to open up to one another, and in the end, they were talking actively with students from different countries. There is not much time left for their stay in Japan, but I hope this excursion provided an opportunity to mingle for the students from the three countries, who had previously made little contact with each other.

Finally, I would like to extend my appreciation for the staff at the JRA Racing Museum and Horse Riding Center for allowing us to take a tour of their facilities.

Written by Junichi Terai

②Report on Kotohira Online Bus Tour (June 2020)

With the spread of the novel coronavirus, the university's spring term classes shifted to online, keeping this project's long-term exchange students at home as well. Many had been planning to travel within Japan over spring break and were sorry to lose the opportunity to do so. They were also uneasy over the prospect of returning home. To get one last experience in Japan and a final chance to enjoy themselves, we found a travel agent who could arrange an online tour. Kotohira Bus Co., a company with prior experience of online bus tours, was glad to oblige us, creating the bus tour described below. Given preparation issues, the online tour visited Kotohira in Kagawa Prefecture.

Date: June 27, 2020 (Sat.) 9:30 to 12:00

Venue: Online (Zoom)

Planner: Yamamoto Saki (Kotohira Bus Co., Ltd.)

Participants: ASEAN exchange students (10), Russian exchange student (1)

Itinerary: Gather at Takamatsu Airport — Walk the path to Kotohira Shrine — Visit the Kinryo no Sato Sake Museum — Visit the Kanamaru Theater — Visit the Nakano Udon School — Experience udon-making — End

Udon rolls (for the udon-making experience) and Kotohira souvenirs were sent to participants in advance.

The tour set off from Takamatsu Airport, heading for Kotohira. On the way, participants were introduced to the



From Tokyo (Haneda Airport)
to Kagawa (Takamatsu Airport)



Goods sent to participants



Scenery from the bus windows on the way

population, area, and best-known products of Kagawa Prefecture, with a quiz about how many udon shops it boasts.

After arriving at Kotohira, the participants connected to Ms. Yagi, the guide, at the Kotori tourism center, who told them about Kotohira Town and the facilities they would be visiting.



Listening to Ms. Yagi at *Kotori* (livestream)

The connection flickered partway through, but after wandering around the town a little, the participants were able to observe the Kinryo no Sato Sake Museum, which has been making sake in Kotohira Town for 231 years. After seeing a live stream of the sugidama, a ball of cedar leaves under the eaves, and the sacred camphor tree in the middle of the plaza, they visited the History Hall to



Observation at Kinryo no Sato Sake Museum
(livestream and video)

learn about how sake was once made and with what tools. Participants also saw a video on the Kotohira sake warehouses, usually not open to the public, and learned about how sake is made today. Here, the students sampled amazake (a sweet soft drink made from sake lees) from Kinryo sake lees, which had been sent to them in advance.

After visiting Kinryo no Sato, the tour moved to the Kanamaru Theater (formerly the Konpira Grand Theatre), Japan's oldest surviving playhouse. First, they heard about the three entryways: the large door, the business door, and the "mouse door," by which customers were divided. Next,



Observation at Kanamaru Theater
(livestream and video)

they followed the backstage route and learned about the audience seating, the extended stage area, and the stage mechanisms. They also observed the greenrooms backstage and learned that different types of actors used

different rooms. Finally, they saw the underground naraku area under the stage and learned about performance mechanisms such as rotating stages and elevator traps.

Afterward, each participant prepared to make udon (boiling water, assembling a cutting board and knife, etc.) during the break. Then they shifted to the Nakano Udon School. Because stepping is important for Sanuki udon, the instructor and the guide sang the “Sanuki Udon Shaking Song” while dancing, showing the students how to step.

Then the participants took out the “udon rolls” sent to them in advance, cut it to their preferred thickness, and took a group photo. While the udon was cooking, music played in accordance with participants’ requests. Finally, everyone ate their udon, which they all seemed to enjoy it. There was lively conversation on the topic of each country’s equivalent of udon.



Stepping dance (livestream)



An exchange student’s delicious-looking udon

Finally, Ms. Yagi reappeared to introduce the participants to a store selling kyuman, a traditional Kotohira sweet. Having received these sweets in the mail, the participants ate them while learning about them. Then, the guide walked along the Kotohira Shrine path to show them various shops, such as former inns turned udon restaurants. The participants were delighted with the tour and became eager to visit in person. The guide also introduced wasanbon sugar sweets and stock soy sauce as recommended souvenirs.



Introducing the shrine path (livestream)

The entire tour was conducted in Japanese, and some of it may have been difficult for the exchange students to understand. However, the chat function was used to provide additional explanations in English, and information on the tour sites had been shared via PowerPoint in advance, so the students were mostly able to understand. The planner and guide, Ms. Yamamoto and Ms. Yagi, were also careful to speak slowly and use simple Japanese, avoiding any serious problems with comprehension. The post-tour questionnaire also showed that most of the students had found it easy or reasonably easy to understand, and that the guide's speech had not been too fast.

The most common response to the question about activities the students liked was the udon experience at the Nakano Udon School. Participating in the udon stepping dance and cutting the noodles through the livestream was fun, and the participants enjoyed the mutual exchange. They also evaluated the guide and planner positively. Many students responded that it had seemed like actually traveling, and that they now wanted to visit in person. There were also responses mentioning learning about the brewing of Japanese sake and the manufacture of udon noodles.

Positive points mentioned included the following.

- Participating in this tour, even though it was online, made me feel as if we were all in Kagawa. The guide was very energetic. I'd like to be like that. All the places introduced were good. I learned a lot about Japanese sake, udon, and kabuki.
- Making udon was a lot of fun.
- Making udon in my own apartment was exciting and interesting.
- Because I couldn't go sightseeing anywhere, I was glad to take part in the online tour. The guide was very kind and helped us enjoy the tour.

Points for improvement included the following.

- Sometimes the guide's network cut out.
- I wanted the guide to take the camera around the area more. I wanted to see the scenery behind her as well as in front of her.
- The only advice I have is to take a little more time for the tour. Also, I wish there had been more real-type activities, not just the udon.

Suggestions for other sightseeing spots that would make good online tours included Okinawa, Hokkaido, Osaka, Nara, Kyoto, Lake Kawaguchi, and "the summit of Mt. Fuji." Ideas that might work for online tours included having the participants play games together. Advantages of online tours were listed as being able to participate remotely, not becoming tired due to travel, being able to eat during the tour, and being able to participate from home. Many of the students pointed out that poor Internet connection might make online tours in their own countries difficult.

Many plans were disrupted by the novel coronavirus, but were it not for this situation, online tours of this kind may never have been developed or used. We would also never have encountered Kotohira Bus Co. and their flexible and thoughtful handling of our highly specific requests. It was clear that a great deal of trouble was taken to make the tour more real, such as the smooth transitions between videos and livestreaming, the guide's live reactions to videos shot in advance, the events the participants could join in on, and more, showing us a new model of interchange beyond the coronavirus. The university is very grateful to Kotohira Bus Co. for planning and executing this online tour.

Inter-University Exchange Project (ASEAN) Coordinator

Junichi TERAJ

③Report on Webinar Introducing Employment in Japan (June 2020)

In March, a VPI career interest test was conducted as part of career path support for long-term students in this project. Based on the survey conducted at that time, about half of the students are considering employment in Japan. At the same time, some students are concerned about the Japanese language ability required upon



Slides revised for our university

employment in Japanese workplaces, as well as unique Japanese culture and customs. In order to resolve these concerns to some extent, and to provide basic information on the job-hunting schedule in Japan, we requested cooperation from Connect Job, which offers employment support for foreign students, and had them arrange their existing Webinar Introducing Employment in Japan for our university.

Date: June 5, 2020 (Fri.) 4:00 to 5:30 PM

Venue: Online (Zoom)

Lecturer: Itakura Akane (Fourth Valley Concierge Corporation)

Participants: ASEAN exchange students (10), Russian exchange student (1), winter program Japanese lecturer (Chinese graduate student) (1)

Content: Status quo of Japanese society, differences from employment in home countries, job-hunting schedule in Japan, internships, hiring process, examples of aptitude tests such as SPI, hiring interview questions, Japanese corporate workplace environment, required Japanese language ability, etc.

During the webinar, the participants and the lecturer exchanged questions and answers such as the following.

Question 1: Is there a pass/fail line for aptitude tests?
Should I practice areas I'm not good at?

Answer 1: Most often there is no specific pass/fail line, as the tests are designed to learn about your aptitudes and your character. They include content which is difficult for Japanese test-takers as well. Some corporations hold hiring events specifically for foreign students, taking active steps toward employment; try researching some of these.



Characteristics of the
Japanese workplace environment

Question 2: What about the required Japanese and English language ability? Is business-level or JLPT N1 equivalent good enough? Would there be Japanese language training available after being hired, or would poor language ability be an obstacle to employment?



Required Japanese language ability

Answer 2: Usually, N2 level is required. But language ability may be less important for positions requiring special skills. You can also study Japanese while you work. It's also possible to open the way to employment with a Japanese company by taking a job involving trade with Japan, even if your Japanese is not that good.

Through the Q&A above, the lecturer provided advice on applying for jobs through routes suited to individual ability.

According to the survey conducted after the webinar, students hoped to use Connect Job services such as career counseling, interview and ES practice, seminars on self-analysis and industry research, and information on hiring events specifically for foreign students.

Apparently, it is common in Southeast Asia, unlike in Japan, for students to begin the application process after graduating from university. Therefore, they may not have many opportunities to consider employment in their everyday life. This occasion was a good chance for exchange students unfamiliar with Japanese employment to obtain basic information and to consider employment in general. As discussed during the webinar, it can be difficult in many ways for foreign students to find employment in Japan, but we hope to continue providing the support needed for each student to reach the future they envision.

Finally, we are most grateful to Connect Job for conducting the webinar at our university.

Inter-University Exchange Project (ASEAN) Coordinator

Junichi TERAJ