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## ①Report on Online Educational Practice for Cambodian Studies (1): Participation in an online tour to taste the morning in Cambodia

"Japan Specialist Program for the Enhancement of Japanese Language and Cultural Outreach in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia", Inter-University Exchange Project (Supporting the Formation of Relations with Universities in ASEAN Countries) conducted practical Khmer language study through an online tour during TUFS Cambodian language classes summer term intensive (September 2020).

As advance study, the students watched a video of a breakfast scene at a restaurant in Siem Reap City and read the script, thinking of questions to ask before the day of the tour. On the day itself, they connected to the office of the company which made the video via Zoom, and the guide who shot the video answered questions and added explanations in Khmer. At the same time, the guide used the chat function to display explanations of points in Khmer, helping the students understand.

Below is a report by a participating student.

### **Participation in an online tour to taste the morning in Cambodia**

Ai Noguchi,

School of International and Area Studies, Cambodian Studies, 2nd year

With meals out restricted as they are in 2020, we cannot sit together around a table. In the current conditions, where we cannot easily eat meals with friends in the school cafeteria or gather at the homes of faraway relatives, the university held an online tour of breakfast in Cambodia this September. We Japanese students watched a video of interviews on breakfast shot in Cambodia by the guide, Pholin, and then connected directly with her to ask questions.

In Japan, we tend to think of breakfast as something you eat at home, but in Cambodia, most people go out to eat breakfast before work or when starting their day. The tour showed this kind of situation, at a

restaurant where people gathered to eat and talk. The menu included a mix of grilled pork and chicken with rice, kuy teav rice noodles, and fish and cucumber in vinegar; seeing all the dishes lined up in the restaurant window was mouthwatering, even on video.

In the kitchen, they were making broth with a big pot full of fish sauce, bones and various herbs, busily handling customer orders, questions and payment while cooking, but seeming to enjoy running the show. The interviews included a man on his way to work and a family with children. Everyone had their own way of eating, with some people adding hot chili or pickles, but everyone smiled and said “chhnang” (delicious).

The Q&A session on the day went by in moments. Because we watched the video online, we had the chance to notice small details that might have escaped us if we had actually been there, overwhelmed by the atmosphere and the conversation, and we had so many questions. We began with “What’s that food? How is it made?”, “Why do people put so much sugar in their coffee?”, “Is that expensive or cheap in Cambodia?” and just went on from there.

Pholin was so patient and kind with us, answering each question thoroughly. For example, she said that kuy teav is a standard breakfast food for Cambodians, that the rice noodles are sticky and that you eat them in a light soup with meat and vegetables. She also said that Cambodians like their coffee sweet, with a layer of condensed milk at the bottom of the cup. The man who was interviewed shocked us by adding four or five spoons of sugar to his coffee. The coffee cost 3000 riels a cup (about 77 yen), a typical price in the city.

In some regions there are more families that eat breakfast at home, but in the city it is considered a normal part of life, not a luxury, to eat breakfast out. However, the recent pandemic has seriously affected Siem Reap and its tourist industry, so the customers were all saying that they had less work than usual. In this way, the discussion spread from food to food culture to life in general.

As if they were at home, the customers and the restaurant owner chatted about the weather, their hometowns, their work, and more. The situation we are in right now brought it home to me how precious this place could be. Conversation became an extra spice for the delicious food as they encouraged one

another to get through the day; even online, this touched me. It seemed to me that they were just living in the moment, cherishing the chance to laugh and savor a meal together.

This year I was unable to visit Cambodia, but the tour gave me a chance to understand its food and food culture, the way people are coping with the current situation, and how much they treasure their meals. Textbooks do not teach you about daily life and people's feelings in this way. Through the online tour, hearing their voices, I felt close to Cambodia once again.

## ②Report on Online Educational Practice for Cambodian Studies (2): Learning Khmer with Cambodian Exchange Students

"Japan Specialist Program for the Enhancement of Japanese Language and Cultural Outreach in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia", Inter-University Exchange Project (Supporting the Formation of Relations with Universities in ASEAN Countries) has students from the Royal University of Phnom Penh in Cambodia assisting with TUFS Cambodian language classes.

In AY 2019, exchange students provided assistance in the classroom, whereas in AY 2020 classes were held online via Zoom, with remote assistance from Cambodia depending on the term. Using the Zoom breakout room and screen-sharing functions, the students helped correct essays and coached pronunciation.

Below is a report from a student participating in these Khmer classes in the 2019 and 2020 academic years.

### Learning Khmer with Cambodian Exchange Students

Yuki Sato

#### 2019

As a freshman without much experience studying Khmer, I had a lot of trouble understanding what the Cambodian professor was saying. When that happened, the exchange student classroom aides would use gestures or write words on the whiteboard, running over to help anyone who might be in trouble, with kindness and support. When we were learning to write, they went around to each of us and showed us how to write the letters, especially the stroke order, and how to tell apart similar letters, taking pains to correct what we had written. Because they were closer in age to us than the professor, it was easy to talk with them and ask them questions.

When I visited the professor's office after class, the exchange students would often be there, and we would study at the same table, us Khmer and them Japanese. It turned into tandem study, each of us teaching

the other. Because all of us were encountering a new writing system for the first time, teaching each other was a lot of fun.

I also got to know the exchange students better out of class by taking part in the Boat Race and the Foreign Language Festival with them. At the Boat Race, they were there early in the morning to cheer on our team, taking a lot of photographs. At the Foreign Language Festival, they took part in the Cambodian cooking event and taught us how to make various dishes.

I still talk with the students who have gone back to Cambodia sometimes on social media.

## 2020

The exchange student classroom aides supported our classes online. Specifically, they read our essays and assignments and corrected our pronunciation and grammar. Different people have trouble with different sounds and make different mistakes, so they did not just correct us but made us repeat until we got it.

I had trouble telling apart aspirated and unaspirated consonants, so I practiced one word at a time. I was struck by our work on the Khmer word for "thank you," one of the first things we learned, which has an unaspirated consonant that I kept pronouncing as an aspirated consonant. They practiced with me until I could say it right.

Classes with Cambodian professors are held entirely in Khmer. Online classes also have more verbal explanation than face-to-face classes. The exchange students used the chat function to teach us word spellings and meanings. That kind of support was unique to the online environment.

The exchange students also put together a summary of the pronunciation and usage of the words we learned in class, sending it to our mailing list for review.

After class, if we had time, we would stay online and talk together, not only about the topics that had come up in class, but also about our everyday life. We had fun talking about trivial things like going shopping or eating something tasty, or about college students' attitudes toward love, Japanese celebrities, and so on. Through this kind of interchange, we were able to enjoy learning not just the vocabulary and phrases in

our textbooks but also conversational expressions like interjections and ways to change the subject.

Even in the summer term, after the exchange students had gone back to Cambodia, they took part in classes remotely. This support also utilized the benefits of online classes.

### ③Report on Online Educational Practice for Cambodian Studies (3): Lecture on the Cambodian Civil War

ផ្ទះរបស់ខ្ញុំ

"Japan Specialist Program for the Enhancement of Japanese Language and Cultural Outreach in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia", Inter-University Exchange Project (Supporting the Formation of Relations with Universities in ASEAN Countries) invited Professor Van Sovathana of the Khmer Language Department, Royal University of Phnom Penh, to conduct a lecture in TUFS Cambodian language class via Zoom.



ចាន់ សុវត្ថនា

パン・ソバタナ先生のエッセイ集の表紙

The eight student participants prepared in advance by reading Professor Van Sovathana's autobiographical essays on her own experience during the Cambodian conflict in the original Khmer.

On October 30, 2020, the day of the lecture, participants asked questions about the families separated by the conflict, the specific experience of being forcibly relocated to the countryside for manual labor, and the rewards for informants under the extreme Communist regime. There was also a question about Professor Van Sovathana's motivation for writing these essays.

Professor Van Sovathana described her experience of the conflict, being relocated from her home in Phnom Penh to a faraway location and forced to do manual labor under the Pol Pot regime (1975–1979), while losing family members. Children her own age, while still small, were ordered to mind other children, keep sparrows off the fields, tend cows, or gather palm leaves for adults to weave baskets with. After age ten, they were set to perform heavy labor such as digging irrigation ditches or carrying rice seedlings for planting.

Furthermore, the professor explained that she was moved to write these essays by her experience teaching Khmer at universities in Japan, and that, in particular, she had wanted to convey how the Cambodian conflict robbed children of the joys of childhood.

All the questions and answers were in Khmer.



## ④Report on Online Educational Practice for Cambodian Studies (4): Learning Together: Japanese Language Study Online

As part of the Inter-University Exchange Project (Supporting the Formation of Relations with Universities in ASEAN Countries), the TUFS Japan Specialist Program for the Enhancement of Japanese Language and Cultural Outreach in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia hosts exchange students from its partner university, the Royal University of Phnom Penh in Cambodia. However, in the AY 2020 fall term, the students were unable to come to Japan, so classes were held remotely. Below is a report from the tutor assisting the Cambodian exchange students with Japanese language study.

### Learning Together: Japanese Language Study Online

Ai Noguchi

In fall 2020, all exchange programs between our university and Cambodia's Royal University of Phnom Penh were held online. I used Zoom to provide Japanese language support for Sophy, an exchange student from Cambodia. Japan and Cambodia have a two-hour time difference. Every Thursday from 8 to 10 am, that is from 6 to 8 am in Cambodia, I provided support for the points she was struggling with in her Japanese language class. Sophy is a student in the Khmer Literature Department and a Japanese beginner.

At first, when she was at home in the countryside and did not have a good Internet connection, we exchanged emails on how to use Zoom and how to register for classes. She must have felt very unsure about the university procedures, trying to handle them on her own from Cambodia. Having to do everything online was very inconvenient, when if only I had been there I could have looked at the paperwork along with her. However, after we began working together over Zoom, we could exchange text, photographs, and videos, connecting whenever we both had spare time, so there were some advantages to online work as well.

We met face-to-face over Zoom for the first time on October 8. Sophy was very cheerful, making efforts



## ⑤Report on Online Educational Practice for Cambodian Studies (5): Workshop on Traditional Arts: Experiencing the Storytelling of a Large Shadow Theater

"Japan Specialist Program for the Enhancement of Japanese Language and Cultural Outreach in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia", Inter-University Exchange Project (Supporting the Formation of Relations with Universities in ASEAN Countries), invited twenty performers for a remote workshop using Zoom for Tufs Cambodian language classes. The performers included Chien Sophan, leader of the Ty Chien shadow puppet theater (a World Intangible Cultural Heritage) along with theater members such as the storyteller Eng Chantong, the puppeteer Kdeb Sophal, and others.

The eight participating students prepared in advance by practicing telling stories ("Ponnya Khai Transforms into Seda's Corpse" and "The Naga's Arrow") from the Reamker (the Cambodian Ramayana), the story cycle of the Cambodian large shadow theater.

On November 10, 2020, the day of the workshop, after an overview of the troupe, the musical and shadow performance began along with the participants' storytelling. The participants were moved by the experience of the performance of these traditional arts along with their own storytelling.

Next, the participants raised questions. The students asked a wide range of questions, and the responses from the performers conveyed their powerful intent to protect these traditional arts. Questions included how many large shadow theater troupes there are in Cambodia, how old the performers are when they join the troupe and until what age they perform, whether there are conditions for becoming a performer, how today's performers took up their positions, how they decide who uses which puppets, whether the meaning of the offerings in the rehearsal space differs by their height, whether these arts are popular among young people as well, whether there are plays affected by modern trends like anime in Japanese kabuki, and so on.

The storyteller Eng Chantong said that while this was the first Zoom workshop he had held, he was surprised at how clear the voices of the storytelling participants in faraway Japan were. In a message received later, the puppeteer Kdeb Sophal praised the participants' clear Khmer and their many good

questions, including queries about offerings as well as the large shadow theater.

After the workshop, the participants enjoyed a special performance of the music usually used to see the audience out after a show.

All the questions and answers were in Khmer.



Performers from the Ty Chien large shadow theater

Participants' comments included the following. Students were motivated to keep working by the emotion of experiencing traditional arts through storytelling and the joy of speaking Khmer.

- With no face-to-face Khmer classes and no everyday conversation with exchange students due to the novel coronavirus, I was losing confidence in my pronunciation and conversation. So, I was really worried about whether the troupe would be able to perform along with my storytelling, but the music wiped away my fears as the performance began, giving me a sense of the joy of communicating in Khmer.
- I spent the whole week before the performance worrying about whether I would be able to read my part properly, but when the collaboration began, it was a lot of fun. I'm looking forward to finding out what the next collaboration will be.

- It was really moving to see the Sbek Thom play take place along with our storytelling. The troupe performers were so kind that it was easy to ask a lot of questions. I was so happy to have my storytelling praised.
- It was a great honor to have these valuable people perform the shadow play along with our storytelling. I was also happy that the troupe members seemed to be able to understand us.
- The experience of participating in the shadow play as a storyteller was immensely valuable.
- This class has transformed my image of the traditional arts. Even without understanding everything, I was drawn into the world of the arts. I owe this to the valuable experience of watching the play unfold along with my own storytelling. The music accompanying us seemed more immense than when we were just watching, surprising me with how much I was moved.
- We prepared for today's class by watching videos. In the videos the performers seemed very far away, but the live stream seemed as close as watching an actual performance in person.
- The performers not only matched my tentative storytelling, but praised it as beautiful, making me so happy that I was able to share this time with them, as if I had become a member of the troupe myself.
- It meant a lot to me to see the performers match their music and movements to my storytelling, and the drama of the music and the delicacy of the shadows overwhelmed me even online. Because classes have been online, we haven't had a

chance to talk with any Cambodians but the instructor, so I was really happy that the performers seemed to understand my Khmer.

- Because we had studied the content of the stories and the Reamker in advance, it was easy to understand the shadow play, making the performance a lot of fun. Along with the pleasure of encountering Cambodian traditional arts, this experience motivated me to study harder in order to learn more about them.



Performance of the large-scale shadow play *Reamker*

## ⑥Report on Online Educational Practice for Cambodian Studies (6): Interviews with a traditional shadow puppet theater troupe

"Japan Specialist Program for the Enhancement of Japanese Language and Cultural Outreach in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia", Inter-University Exchange Project (Supporting the Formation of Relations with Universities in ASEAN Countries), invited Chien Sophan, leader of the Ty Chien large-scale shadow puppet theater troupe in Cambodia (a World Intangible Cultural Heritage), and 13 other performers and musicians of the troupe to participate in an interview-type workshop using Zoom for TUFS Cambodian language classes.

The following is a report by a student who participated in the program.

### **Life and traditional performing arts:**

#### **Talking to the members of a shadow puppet theater troupe**

#### **about the impact of the floods and the coronavirus pandemic and the passing down of the art**

Ai Noguchi

On the afternoon of November 6, 2020, we spoke with 13 members of a large-scale shadow puppetry troupe in Siem Reap Province, Cambodia, about the floods that occurred during this rainy season, the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, and their shadow puppetry work. Twelve Khmer majors participated from our university.

The rainy season is from May to the end of October in Cambodia. This year, however, the rainfall was heavy, and houses were submerged in water while roads collapsed all over the country. When we looked at the pictures, we could see that the water was knee-deep and rushing into the houses. The members of the troupe refrained from going out in the rain as much as possible.

What surprised me was that when a flood occurs, people can catch fish in front of their houses. They told us that they had been catching fish in front of their houses to pass the time, as they could not go out due to floods and the coronavirus pandemic.

However, it seems that this year's floods were still less damaging than previous major floods, which were so severe in some years that the water did not drain for more than a month. If the water was below knee level, they would travel on foot or by motorcycle, so they all seemed to be responding to the annual flood very calmly.



Village submerged in water  
(Photo courtesy of the Ty Chien Troupe)

This troupe performs large-scale shadow-puppet plays, a traditional Cambodian performing art called Sbek Thom. The shadow puppets are hand-carved from cowhide and are over a meter in length. The story of "Reamker," which arrived in Cambodia from ancient India, is performed to music played by traditional musical instruments.



Flooding around the large-scale shadow-puppet theater (Photo courtesy of the Ty Chien Troupe)

This time, we had as many as thirteen members who were kind enough to answer our questions. Each of them has a role in the troupe. In the class, they showed us a part of the scene from Reamker where the villain appears. When they move a large shadow puppet, they use the whole body to express its strength and delicacy, such as stepping with the feet and creating fine movements using their wrists. We also felt a sense of oneness among the puppets, the xylophone, and the flute, which were in sync with one another, through the screen. They told us that each movement and theme music are all different in the extensive play, and they practice to perform each one perfectly. They usually perform the play during festivals and traditional events. In November and December, when there are many events, they perform more than 20 times a month.

At the end of the class, we also saw a video of a cooking scene recorded in the leader's house. In the kitchen, there was a large stove and cleanly prepared fish and vegetables. We watched the cook use a



kitchen knife carefully and swiftly. They also have a dish in which small fish and vegetables are wrapped in banana leaves and baked, which they described as Cambodian home cooking. Looking at these scenes of everyday life, I felt that the members of the troupe were like a real family and that their daily lives and art were deeply connected.

However, the coronavirus pandemic has also seriously affected areas of art like this. As all the scheduled performances have been canceled, the troupe is in financial difficulties. Above all, it was mentally difficult not to have the opportunity to perform, because life and art are closely interconnected for them.

When asked about the recent situation, they told us that they had only recently had an opportunity to perform once. Although it seemed likely to rain on that day, when they burned incense in prayer, they were able to perform the play without incident. The members of the troupe looked very happy when they were talking about their play, and positively told us that they would like to have more opportunities like this in the future.

The coronavirus pandemic has had a great impact on the field of art in Japan, too, and we have had fewer opportunities to enjoy art. Still, as we make efforts to prevent the spread of infection, people are gradually returning to places of entertainment. When I watched the troupe trying to preserve the traditional performing arts against their changing daily lives I was reminded of the importance of art and felt that they were encouraging us to overcome the current situation and keep the light of art burning.

The class was all conducted in Khmer this time, and the members of the troupe gave us replies that were very clear and easy to understand. They were also kind enough to listen to our clumsy Khmer patiently. It was still difficult for me to immediately translate the questions that occurred to me into Khmer. However, I believe that my ability to converse in Khmer will improve through unusual distance learning like this program.

While hearing about the recent situation with the floods and the coronavirus pandemic, I was able to learn about the life and thoughts of the members of the troupe along with their art. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to them for giving us such a valuable opportunity.

## ⑦Report on Online Educational Practice for Cambodian Studies (7): Online Tour of Angkor Wat

“Japan Specialist Program for the Enhancement of Japanese Language and Cultural Outreach in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia”, Inter-University Exchange Project (Supporting the Formation of Relations with Universities in ASEAN Countries), conducted an online tour of the Angkor Wat remains in Cambodia via Zoom, on October 16, 2020 for TUFs Cambodian language classes. The following is a report by a participating student.



Angkor Wat remains, devoid of tourists due to COVID-19

### The Difference From the Angkor Wat Tourists See

Sato Yuki

For this online tour, we connected with a guide in Siem Reap, the city where Angkor Wat is, and watched a pre-recorded video while the guide answered our questions. I have never been to Cambodia and, because of the novel coronavirus, I probably will not be able to go for a while, so I was extremely interested in the tour.

The video entered Angkor Wat on the western route, passed through the western tower gate and went around the first, second, and third galleries and the temple interior. The guide explained everything to us in detail.

Regarding the decorations, we learned not only what was depicted but also that the snake in the pictures, called a "naga," signified the connection between the world of humans and the world of the gods, showed that the gods were fighting, and so on.

The guide explained the details of the features which mix Hinduism and Buddhism. For example, as I mentioned above, the naga snake painted on the lintels originally came from Indian myths, appearing as a characteristic of Hinduism. However, there are also many statues of the Buddha within the temple, as the two religions blend together.

At the western tower gate, the guide explained that there are several gates, including one royal gate and others which are used by the public, and that this was based on the way Cambodians who were not royals would walk at the sides of the road. Traveling on our own, we might never have learned something like this.

We had a wide range of questions, from "What does the decoration on this wall mean?" to "How has the novel coronavirus affected tourism?", and the guide answered not with simple information that could be found in a book, but from the perspective of a local. I sensed that there was a difference that I could not easily put into words between the Angkor Wat tourists see and Cambodia in the eyes of the Cambodians. Inside the temple, there were children sitting around and people praying next to the tourists. It seemed very different from what you might see at Kiyomizudera or Todaiji, which are also religious buildings that double as tourist spots. I was very much struck by this. Compared with Cambodia, Japan seems to have been very touristified. In Japan, even we Japanese think of Kiyomizudera, for instance, mostly as a sightseeing spot. In contrast, Cambodians seem to feel that Angkor Wat is a space for prayer, a religious institution. When we asked if Cambodians mind having tourists there while they pray, the guide said that they do not really mind. This reaction from the local residents was unexpected, too. As I said above, we could only have been guided in this way by someone who was from there.

Sightseeing in the ordinary way, my attention would have been drawn to the interior decoration and the remains, and I would not have thought much about things like this. The online tour was a unique source

of knowledge. When we can travel again, the first thing I will do is go to Cambodia and see Angkor Wat for myself.

## ⑧Report on Online Educational Practice for Cambodian Studies (8): Introducing Japan (1) Names

As part of the Inter-University Exchange Project (Supporting the Formation of Relations with Universities in ASEAN Countries), "Japan Specialist Program for the Enhancement of Japanese Language and Cultural Outreach in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia" is conducting presentations introducing Japan to students at its partner university, the Royal University of Phnom Penh in Cambodia.

Participants from TUFS used Zoom for active learning in class, explaining their points with hand-drawn illustrations and holding a Q&A session. After the class, in order to find out how their presentations were received they received feedback from RUPP students.

The presentations, varying by TUFS students' class year, covered topics from the presenter's name and region of origin to the Japanese educational system and tourism policy. Below is a report by a participating student on the first-year students' presentation on "Names."

### **Names in Japan and Cambodia: What I learned from the Japanese students' presentation**

Nhib Sophy

(3rd-year student, RUPP Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of Khmer Literature)

Everyone has their own name as part of their identity, differing by language and country. For example, how are Japanese and Cambodian names different, and how are they alike?

First, they have four points in common.

The first is how names are given. Names are chosen using good words or good meanings, the names of famous people or celebrities, or pleasant sounds.

The second is the choice of easily used nicknames. Most Japanese and Cambodians have nicknames.



At a careers fair hosted by the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP)

The third is that when a married couple has a child, the child usually takes the father's family name.

The fourth is that the family name comes before the personal name.

One point of difference is how family names are assigned.

First, Cambodians use family names in two ways. Some people use their father's given name as a family name, while others use their paternal grandfather's given name. Thus, Cambodian family names change by generation, whereas Japanese people use just one family name.

Second, Cambodians don't change their names after marriage, whether men or women, while most Japanese women take their husband's name when they get married. However, some women do use their own family names. Sometimes, husbands also take their wives' family names, to keep the family name from dying out or because it has become a professional symbol. If Cambodians don't like their family name, they can change it to something they like better.

(Originally in Khmer;

translated to Japanese by Morimoto Mayuka, Cambodian Studies, 1st year)

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Japanese translator's comment

(Morimoto Mayuka)

I hope Sophy and I can continue this discussion. I'd like to develop the topic even further and explore the similarities and differences in other countries as well.

Giving a presentation in Khmer on my own name, I discovered that, despite being Japanese myself, there is so much I don't know about Japan. It's hard to even distinguish what I know and what I don't know, just based on living in Japan. This experience reminded me that it's important to learn more about Japan as a basis for learning about other countries.

## ⑨Report on Online Educational Practice for Cambodian Studies (9): Tour of Siem Reap City

“Japan Specialist Program for the Enhancement of Japanese Language and Cultural Outreach in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia”, Inter-University Exchange Project (Supporting the Formation of Relations with Universities in ASEAN Countries), provides remote experiences using Zoom for TUFs Cambodian language classes.

On December 8, 2020, students experienced an online tour of Siem Reap City, including how to ride city transport options, the outdoor market, an amusement park, and an outdoor dance lesson.

On December 8, 2020, the day of the workshop, students watched videos including negotiations for using transport, the main city buildings, various shops at the outdoor market, an amusement park with rides for



At the outdoor market

children, an interview with children, and a Zumba lesson held outside in the evening.

Next, the 11 participants raised questions. They focused on the differences with Japan, asking about the state of the roads, how transport fees are determined, the times children leave the house, health-related exercise, and so on.



Outdoor Zumba lesson in the evening

Participants' comments are as follows: They expressed

their desire to learn more about Cambodia by the time they can actually visit it in the future, including the city's traffic situation, how to shop, and how people live differently in different areas.

- I was inspired to learn more about Cambodia by the time I can actually visit there, including city transportation, how to go shopping, and the regional differences in daily life.

- The online tour taught me that towns in the region do not build anything taller than Angkor Wat so as not to disrupt the landscape.
- It was very interesting because it was all things you actually have to go to Cambodia to learn, what the guidebooks don't include. I want to go to Cambodia even more now. Thinking back later, I came up with a lot more questions that didn't occur to me during the tour. I hope to ask the exchange students and go to Cambodia myself to find out.
- So many things were new to me—like the goods at the night market and the Zumba dancing—that even though it was online it was really fulfilling. I feel as satisfied as if I'd actually been to Cambodia.
- It was a lot of fun, as if I was really there. It was also really helpful to get to ask so many questions and come to understand Cambodia better, further raising my motivation to study.
- The tour was just like being there in person. Everything the guide said was stimulating and interesting.
- What stayed with me was that Cambodians emphasize dialogue and connections. For example, talking the price down when you buy something is established as an important form of communication. I was also struck by the way people gather in the square to exercise and work out together, and the way ordinary people answered a sudden request with a smile.

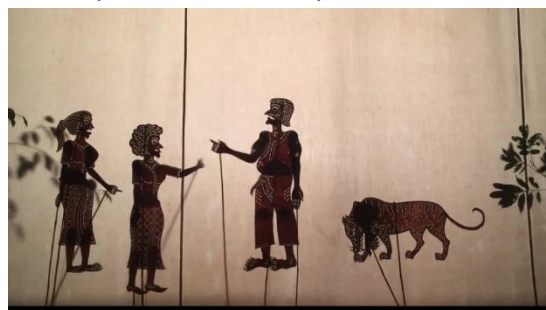


## ⑩Report on Online Educational Practice for Cambodian Studies (10): Workshop on Traditional Arts: Experiencing a Small Shadow Theater

As part of the Inter-University Exchange Project (Supporting the Formation of Relations with Universities in ASEAN Countries), the TUFs Japan Specialist Program for the Enhancement of Japanese Language and Cultural Outreach in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia invited ten performers for a remote workshop via Zoom in the Khmer Program. The performers included Chien Sophan, leader of the Ty Chien shadow puppet theater (a World Intangible Cultural Heritage) along with theater members such as the storyteller Eng Chantong, the puppeteer Kdeb Sophal, and others.

The eight participating students read the folktale to be performed, Kong Hiyang (Kong the Hero) beforehand.

At the workshop on December 15, 2020, participants watched the small shadow theater troupe perform four scenes based on the folktale, and then asked questions. Students' questions included which was more difficult to perform, this or the large-scale shadow theater at the previous workshop; how the women's voices were created; how the sound effects for the fight with the tiger were made; what position the performers manipulated the puppets from; how they choose music for new stories, and so on. The performers provided thorough responses along with demonstrations.



Performance of a folktale (Kong the Hero)  
in a small shadow theater

All the questions and answers were in Khmer.

Participants' comments included the following. They seemed to realize that, rather than just watching the performance, they could deepen their understanding by asking questions.

- I got out my class notes on folktales from freshman and sophomore year, so I understood the story as I watched, and it felt both fun and nostalgic. It was really interesting to be able to read the folktale with perspectives I hadn't picked up on when we studied it in class.

- Sbek Thom created a mellow atmosphere throughout the entire performance. Even though I couldn't understand everything, there were funny moments in the way the characters talked, the songs and music, and the way the puppets moved, so I enjoyed myself. The performers also said they were "playing it for laughs," so I'm glad I picked up on that.
- I could see the performers' years of experience in the way the sound of the puppets hitting the white cloth carried to the audience. It seemed as if they were striking so hard I almost thought the sound came from one of the instruments, but when I watched their hands move, they weren't using much force at all. I was surprised at what a loud noise they could make with delicate movements of their fingertips.
- I was impressed by how, though the puppets' expressions didn't change, the performers' tones of voice and sharp movements made it clear what kind of scene was happening. At the same time, they showed wonderful technique in developing the story so that even people who didn't fully understand the language could follow along. This is what traditional arts should be like.
- It was a really valuable experience to get to see the backstage (performers' area) after watching the performance. We were also very lucky to get to learn more about Sbek Thom by asking questions and seeing excerpts from the performance in response. For example, when the elephant appears, at first the Hero Kong and the elephant are manipulated by different puppeteers, but when he starts riding the elephant, they're handled by just one person. I would never have found this out if I hadn't asked how the puppets were manipulated. Also, in scenes with many characters, I thought there would be a lot of puppeteers, but actually they just slid back and forth a little bit to cover them, which I would never have imagined. There was so much I learned from seeing the backstage.
- I was amazed at the technical skill required for the puppeteers to make their own puppets for each story. After experiencing the gentle atmosphere of the performers, I really want to go and see a performance in Cambodia.
- Seeing Sbek Thom performed, I was reminded of the charm of Cambodia's culture of sharing

enjoyment. Sbek Thom is apparently often performed at memorial services and other gatherings. I was reminded of how well suited the Cambodian culture of watching funny plays and laughing together is to the country and the way family and friends are treasured there.



Performers backstage answer questions and demonstrate movement behind the scenes

## ⑪Report on Online Educational Practice for Cambodian Studies (11): Workshop on Traditional Arts: Experiencing the World of Folktales and Traditional Music

"Japan Specialist Program for the Enhancement of Japanese Language and Cultural Outreach in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia", Inter-University Exchange Project (Supporting the Formation of Relations with Universities in ASEAN Countries), invited ten performers for a remote workshop using Zoom for TUFS Cambodian language classes. The performers included Chien Sophan, leader of the Ty Chien shadow puppet theater (a World Intangible Cultural Heritage) along with theater members such as the storyteller Eng Chantong, the puppeteer Kdeb Sophal, and others.

The ten participating students read the folktale to be performed in the original beforehand. At the workshop on December 22, 2020, participants watched the small shadow theater troupe perform four scenes based on the folktale Kong Hiyang (Kong the Hero), and then asked questions. They also experienced the rhythms of traditional music, tapping on their own desks under the guidance of the double-sided drum instructor.

Participants' comments included the following.

- I was happy to get to make comparisons with Japanese traditional arts, discover new things through the backstage tour, hear about how the puppets are made and about the instruments, and most of all to make use of the Khmer I've learned.
- It was a lot of fun to see the story I'd read in class actually performed in the shadow theater. Not only did we watch, but the performers also answered our questions. It was the first time I'd talked to anyone but instructors and exchange students in Khmer, and really being able to speak and



Experiencing the double-sided drum rhythm along with the drum instructor's performance



Performers answering questions

listen in Khmer was an important experience for me.

- It was a great experience for me as a student, being able to use Khmer to ask questions in real time to people other than instructors or exchange students. I wasn't sure I could make myself understood, but I tried to speak as slowly and clearly as possible, and we were able to communicate successfully. I could also basically understand what the performers were saying in response, so this was a good opportunity to build confidence in my own studies.
- When they spoke, they gestured along with the rhythm of the Khmer, making it clear immediately what character's voice it was. The movements felt very real, and I can still remember them vividly—they really stuck in my mind. The storytellers' voices were wonderful, too. In particular, the voice of the wife in the first scene was so kind and so rhythmical, I really liked it.
- Each line was full of emotion, and the pace varied to convey the characters' feelings and circumstances.
- The panels used for the shadows were very finely made, and the diverse instruments also sounded lovely, making me curious about the sources of the techniques used.
- I noticed a lot of similarities between Sbek Thom, the Cambodian traditional art which creates a unique space through the combination of puppet theater and music, and the traditional bunraku (joruri) puppet theater in Japan.
- The performance made me want to research if there are rules connecting the instruments used in Cambodian shadow theater to the scenes' images, as with the music used in Japanese traditional arts.
- I was struck by how open the tradition of Cambodian shadow theater is. This tradition, protected by people who really find it worthwhile, with no over-strict taboos or traditional restrictions, gave me a lot of hope.
- The instruments introduced were extremely fascinating. I was especially impressed by the way the performers on the large flutes and vertical flutes never seemed to need to breathe as they kept the sound going.

## ⑫Report on Online Educational Practice for Cambodian Studies (12): Workshop on Traditional Arts: Keeping the Flame Burning

Noguchi Ai,  
Cambodian Studies, 2nd year

On December 18, 2020, we connected online with the Ty Chien shadow theater in Cambodia to watch the traditional Cambodian shadow theater, Sbek Thom. Eleven TUFS undergraduates participated.

The title of the shadow play was “Kong Hiyang,” a traditional Cambodian folktale. In this story, the cowardly protagonist, Kong, makes his way in life with the support of his two wives. He fights a tiger and a crocodile, goes to battle riding on an elephant, and sings and dances with his wives.

One of the essential elements of Sbek Thom is the many elaborate puppets. Individually hand-cut from tanned cowhide, the puppets are detailed down to the point of shoelaces, individual hairs, and even the seams on clothing. The puppet types include not just humans but also tigers, crocodiles, elephants, boats and their rowers, and even the waves, all delicately cut out.



The hero rides an elephant to defeat a crocodile

These delicate expressions are visible not just in the puppets but also in their movements. During the performance, the puppets move their hands and feet freely and move their mouths as they speak, exactly as if they were alive. Afterward, when we asked questions about this delicate movement, we were surprised to learn that just one person handles the voice and movements of one puppet. The main puppets have three rods attached, which are used with different grips to move them up and down and make them walk or fight. Speech movements are created by attaching an elastic to the puppet’s mouth and wrapping it around the puppeteer’s index finger, who moves it as they speak.

When the puppets sing happily or panic, their movements are made larger or smaller for delicate or bold expressions. During the fights, two puppets are smashed into each other with a degree of realism amazing

for a shadow play. At today's workshop, because we had the opportunity to observe the backstage as well, we realized just how much practice and sublime work underpin the energy of the performance.

In November 2020, before the workshop, our university held an online culture festival. The ten sophomores from the Khmer Department made our own stick puppets and recorded a Khmer-language play to put online for the occasion. Like the shadow theater, we chose a Cambodian folktale to perform. It was much harder than we had imagined to arrange the long text into a script, rewrite the background text as dialogue, and write up compact and accurate subtitles; it took us more than two months from concept to completion. When we recorded the performance, we had so much trouble getting the puppets' movements right and putting emotion into our voiceover, too.

Based on this experience, we could understand just how much patient work it had taken for the shadow theater to perform with such quick tempo and impressive power, involving endless practice of the sophisticated expressions. The performers work out their play concept day after day, humming their songs throughout their daily life as they compose them. Their daily life and their art are intimately connected.



Recording the performance

The music makes the play even more exciting. The background music is always performed live, with vertical flute, double-sided drum, gong, wooden chimes and so on, using a total of seven traditional Cambodian instruments. For instance, the woodwinds have an incredibly wide range of delicate sound, so that you would never guess they were made of bamboo. The players use circular breathing and store the air in their cheeks so that they can keep on playing forever without stopping for air. The songs and calls also create the integrated atmosphere of each scene in the performance.

In the latter half of the workshop, the students practiced the drum rhythms used in the play. The drummer taught us the rhythms, and we practiced together, using Zoom to focus on our hands. At first, it was hard

to keep our left and right hands straight, but when the performers called out “left, right!” for us, we finally managed to drum along with the songs and puppets, feeling as though we had become a part of this traditional art at last.

Finally, each of us had a chance to express our thanks. The Ty Chien troupe performers have been kind enough to provide background music for an open campus video and participate in a previous workshop, so we were very happy to be able to thank them in Khmer.

This was a very rare opportunity to encounter Cambodian traditional arts in this way. The valuable experience of sharing a discussion with professional performers could only have been achieved online. At the previous workshop, we learned how badly the arts field has been affected by the novel coronavirus; seeing the shadow play again, it was more evident than ever that we must not let the flame go out. The Cambodian shadow theater reflects its country’s long history—a light shining on society, created by long tradition and endless practice. We need to keep moving forward step by step toward recovery, without ever giving up. At the workshop, we were able to learn a great deal about Cambodian traditional arts, while also reaffirming this stance. I am very grateful to the members of the Ty Chien troupe for granting us this opportunity.



## ⑬ Report on Short-Term Online Study Project (Feb. 2021)

From Monday, February 8, 2021 to Friday, February 12, the short-term online exchange program was conducted by “Japan Specialist Program for the Enhancement of Japanese Language and Cultural Outreach in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia”, Inter-University Exchange Project (Supporting the Formation of Relations with Universities in ASEAN Countries), in which 16 students participated.

For the cooperation of the Royal University of Phnom Penh (hereafter, “RUPP”) in this program, refer to our university website.

[Vice President of Royal University of Phnom Penh Gives Online Lecture to TUFS Students and Meets with President Hayashi](#)

Many activities became possible through the online format, with participants’ learning seen to improve, marking a success as a next-generation foreign study program.

### 1. Activities made possible via online format

- Concentration on class content (no obstacles due to unexpected events)
- Visits to locations throughout Cambodia (no travel time required)
- Streaming subtitles (spelling and Japanese translation of difficult terms streamed simultaneously via chat function to aid student understanding)

### 2. Program characteristics

- The entire program below was carried out in Khmer. Because half the participants were freshmen, they were assigned to study pairs with the sophomores.
- Five workshops were held with the Ty Chien troupe, Cambodia’s oldest and best known shadow puppet theater (registered as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage). In particular, students were moved by the performance in which they became the

storytellers for the Ramayana play, with troupe members manipulating puppets and musicians playing along with them.

- Faculty from our sister school, the RUPP, gave lectures, and students visited a junior high school which employs RUPP alumni.
- Students gave presentations introducing Japan in Khmer as part of tandem study. A cultural introduction including typically Japanese foods such as mochi and rice balls, goods for everyday use with demonstration was held to RUPP students of the program for the last five years as well as shadow puppet troupe teachers who we asked for cultural guidance.

### 3. Learning Outcomes

- I can ask questions actively in Khmer now.
- I had a chance to communicate in Khmer with a variety of people.
- I got more interested in and more motivated to study Cambodian culture, society, and history, as well as Khmer language.

Below is a selection from responses of the participating students:

#### Experiencing workshops with the large-scale shadow puppet theater

- This was a valuable, once-in-a-lifetime experience. Especially valuable was the chance to take part in poetic storytelling, which became a source of great motivation for my continued Khmer study.
- I'll never forget how moved I was during the actual storytelling performance, when my voice was overlaid on the shadow play. It was certainly difficult for a Khmer novice like me, but trying it meant a lot.
- The instructors patiently taught us line by line, so that we could confirm the different nuances and gradually learn how to pay attention to precise inflections. When the play began after my storytelling, I felt as proud as if I were a real member of the troupe.

- I was moved to feel that I was taking part in the artwork and in the tradition. I will always remember my absorption in the play while taking part, to the point of forgetting that we were connected online, and the beauty and strength of the shadow play therein.
- When I asked the performers if they had ever played any Japanese music, they played Sakamoto Kyu's Ue o Muite Aruko for us; I was deeply impressed by the extremely delicate timbre and the universality of the beauty of music.

### **Giving presentations introducing Japan**

- The Cambodians took notes carefully and listened with thoughtful interjections. It's very encouraging to have foreigners who kindly show interest in your own country's culture.
- I learned that having people make interjections and ask questions is encouraging. This online presentation taught me some tricks for improving communication in dialogues, which I hope to put to use in language study and social activities.
- During these three presentations, I learned more than just practical knowledge. Above all, I was able to confirm once again the essence of conveying and receiving information as a language student.

### **Future studies**

- I was surprised at how better language capability the older students' Khmer has, even though there's only a year difference between us. At the same time, I started to look forward to seeing myself one year later.
- The online study project was a good opportunity to learn about traditional Cambodian culture and consider its practices this time.
- Through this short-term online study program, my motivation for learning about Cambodia increased and I discovered some of my own internal values.

- I hope to make use of the various things I learned through this project in my future studies of Cambodia, and to go there when it becomes possible to travel again.
- The instructors responded patiently to our stumbling Khmer. This program served as motivation to increase my ability to use language in practice, and I hope to keep on working hard at my Khmer studies.

### **Touring the junior high school**

- The online format made it possible to observe the school interior on screen, getting a sense of the everyday atmosphere of Cambodian students.
- We were able to connect with the junior high school in their library via Zoom. Behind Ms. Sophea, I could see students working independently in the library, and realized how enthusiastic they were about their studies.
- Through this program, I was able to discover a new aspect of education in Cambodia.
- I felt that they were achieving the independently motivated learning that will be called for in the future.

### **Attending the lecture**

- People often think of the Pol Pot regime, the civil war, or poverty when they hear about Cambodia, but the lecture brought me to realize that the people who lived through those times still have memories that make them smile, just as we do.

### **Touring the historical sites**

- When I can go to Cambodia for real, I would very much like to visit Preah Vihear Temple. Until then, I'm going to keep up my Khmer studies so that I can understand the guide's Khmer next time.