

# The Doshisha Student

Issue No. 11

July 2013

Home and Abroad: Possibilities Abound

## “Kizuna” and “Kakehashi”: Friendship Across the Seven Seas

Yui Kajita (Faculty of Letters)



From the beginning of April 2013, Doshisha University has acted as host to several programs that encourage cultural exchange between university students of various countries around the world. One such program is called JENESYS 2.0 (Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths), which was organized as part of Japan's diplomatic aim to create stronger ties between the youths of Asian countries. It invited 265 students in total, visiting on three separate occasions, from the ASEAN member states (of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) to experience Japan for more than a week; and the keyword for this project is *kizuna*, Japanese for “bond.” Another program operates under the name “Kakehashi Project: The Bridge for Tomorrow,” represented by word *kakehashi*, “connecting bridge.” Being a part of the Youth Exchange Program with North America advocated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, it welcomes students from universities in the United States, such as the University of Wisconsin-Madison and City University of New York. Both programs, brought to Doshisha by the Institute for the Liberal Arts Office of the University, are a significant contribution to the globalization of the school as well as the mindset of the participating

students themselves. As a member of the G30 universities chosen by the Japanese government, Doshisha seems to be promoting international exchange now more than ever before.

Members of *The Doshisha Student* have been participating in these events as part of the representative body of Doshisha students, with the responsibility of welcoming the guests to Doshisha and sharing Japanese youth culture. Not only is it a fantastic opportunity to put our English skills to good use, it is also always very fruitful in cultivating our knowledge of these visiting countries and – simply but perhaps most importantly – making friends.

Each event follows a similar schedule; we begin the day with welcome speeches, short introductions to Japan and Doshisha, and presentations by the participating nations – most of which are very creative and fun to watch, giving us a whole new impression of each country. Then we conduct a campus tour, showing our guests where we study, eat, or just hang out, while chatting about whatever topics come to mind – from what styles of dancing someone likes to the “obligatory” enlightenment of learning each country's slangs and swear words. Our main wish here is getting to know each other better, and of course, especially in the case of ASEAN students, taking copious amounts of pictures together to be uploaded on Facebook at the end

of the day. This tour is usually followed by a buffet-style lunch party, during which we have the pleasure of seeing all kinds of performances by our guests, such as traditional dances of each ASEAN country, or a chorus of boisterous singing; at one of the events, for example, they sang “We are the World” all together, unifying the entire room-full of people, and then, to wrap it all up, the “Doraemon” theme song, complete with original hand gestures. After this, we move on to the more serious atmosphere of group discussions. We converse about topics such as “How to preserve traditional culture, and what role the young people can play in it,” or “What to keep and not to keep in Japanese culture,” or “What can we do to strengthen bonds between ASEAN countries and Japan in the area of traditional culture?” Our discussions range over a wide variety of subjects, from what the visiting students see in Japan and their own cultures to how we, as Japanese youths, view our own culture. We mull over what stance we take in regard to our cultures, and how intercultural exchange plays into developing its visions and revisions. When the discussions are over, each group presents its

findings to the whole room. With that we end the day – the conclusion is the swapping of playful souvenirs from our guests, along with contact details, and finally, a huge, impressive group photo with all the participants assembled together.

Even though each one is a one-day event for us Doshisha students, we can gather much from these occasions every time. I believe that the most basic and essential purpose of international exchange is broadening our awareness and perspectives, as well as building and nurturing connections between people – from these, an infinite number of possibilities arise, such as a fuller understanding of each other's cultures and worldviews. We are given a valuable chance to talk about our daily lives, to touch the everyday and traditional cultures of each country, and also to get a renewed sense of what it means to be Brunei, Japanese, Malaysian, Vietnamese, et cetera. At the same time, it also reminds us to perceive all these countries as one Asian region as a whole, encouraging a wider point of view.

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## Building Connections, Broadening Your World

(Continued from p. 1) It is rather moving to see how much these students, especially from ASEAN nations, are delighted to be visiting Japan; and I know from keeping in touch with them after they return back home that the bond of friendship that develops between the participants themselves are considerable. One of my recent acquaintances from Singapore recounts his experience: "I feel truly like a member of ASEAN, and now I can say I have a friend in every ASEAN country." It is remarkable that these programs can create such a sense of belonging and unity to these youths of diverse backgrounds. Although the countries we have interacted with in these programs have been ones that are not particularly in opposition to each other or Japan at the moment, these face-to-face, grassroots kind of opportunities for communication is crucial to foster mutual appreciation and compassion between young people from various nations. Several hours is short, it is true – but even the slightest familiarity can grow into something much more substantial.



Indonesian traditional dance performance by a guest student



Students engage in discussions.



Our member gives a presentation.

# Going International

Do you want to know more about studying abroad?  
Take a look at what we have to say about it from our experiences.

## Why should we study abroad?

Naoto Oishi (Faculty of Economics)

When people are asked "Why do you study abroad?" most of people would answer "to study languages." It might be true. But my perspective is there is more to it than that. It doesn't matter what your purpose of going abroad is. To study languages? To play football? To study art? Anything is all right. I'm sure you will learn and obtain something more than you expected from your life abroad. So, I would like to write here from my experience why we should study or go abroad. I hope it helps in encouraging somebody to go abroad.

First I would like to introduce my experiences. I have been studying at Doshisha University for 5 years, and this year is my 6<sup>th</sup> year. For half of my college life, I spent my time abroad in such places as Germany, Ireland and South Korea, so now I am able to speak English, German and Korean. However, I was actually so bad at English when I entered the university. I didn't even reach the level of English that you must have learnt at junior-high school because I was so crazy about playing football that I had played it all day instead of going to school. Perhaps you are wondering why I can speak many languages now. The answer is I had a big turning point, which is playing football in Germany. I actually wanted to be a top football player, and that's why I went to Germany. My football skill was improved after playing football in Germany for one year, and I got an offer to be a professional football player, but I declined it and decided not to play football as a footballer anymore because I figured out something more important and attractive than football. I cannot explain what it exactly is, but something. When I came back to Japan, I finally started studying languages very hard because I wanted to either speak to or meet people all over the world. So my life was totally changed after coming back from abroad.

To return to the main topic, what I want to say is that you should go abroad because you must obtain something new which might be very important for you. But I don't know what it is because everybody will have different experiences and opinions. I have a strong conviction that experiences abroad will be a treasure of your lifetime. Even if you don't fancy studying abroad, just go out once. It's okay if you go abroad as a trip, but it is preferable to go alone so that you will have time to think something about yourself. The answer why we should study abroad is, it depends on the person. So, go and see the world and find your only answer and new life.

## Studying Abroad in Ireland: What I learned from living with flatmates

Rieko Yamamoto  
(Faculty of Law)

When I decided to be a flight attendant and to study abroad, some people said it was not necessary to go abroad to become a flight attendant. In their opinion it was enough if I were able to speak only easy English like "beef or chicken?" But I didn't completely agree with them. Flight attendants work around the whole world. I take it for granted that they communicate with passengers who come from all over the world in English or other languages. And I think it is necessary to have partly learned about other customs or culture as a person who works in international surroundings. I would have never known any of them if I had just kept studying some languages on the desk, just from books.

Instead, I studied in Ireland for nine months and lived with four girls who come from Korea, Mexico, and Brazil. I tried not to meet any Japanese people there to improve my English by myself. I thought living with foreigners was helpful to learn English and would help me to understand what differences in values there are between them and us.

However, living with foreigners was not only pleasant. We always had some problems. The first problem was that one Brazilian girl loved to throw parties at home. She threw a party every Friday and Saturday night without telling us before. We had to listen to loud music the whole night until 7 a.m. Another Brazilian flatmate said it was quite normal to throw parties like that in Brazil. But the Korean girl and I were not used to that in our own countries. One day many friends of the Brazilian girl went into the room in which me and two other girls were sleeping late at night. We were enraged and held a meeting the next morning. We discussed everyone's ideas, even customs, culture, and so on at the time. When we told the Brazilian girl that we don't normally kiss other boys except our boyfriends, I realized she was extremely surprised, because she does it anytime regardless of gender as a meaning of fellowship.

After that, she threw a party once a month.

On another occasion, we lost 100 euros of the rent. Our rent was 280 euros per person. That evening, four girls including me paid at the same time. And the Mexican girl paid alone at night. Then, we ran out of 100 euros of the rent the next morning. I thought the Mexican girl had made a mistake counting money because she paid all of the rent with 20-euro bills. However, she didn't accept my opinion at all and other girls insisted somebody stole the money. We talked for a long time. After all, we couldn't find any solution. Therefore I suggested that everyone pay 20 euros extra. The answer was "You do not hesitate to pay money because you are Japanese." I was shocked. That was the image the other girl had of the Japanese.

From these experiences, I think it is very important to try to know other people's ideas or customs and to remove stereotypes of each country when we try to build a good relationship.

Fortunately I am going to work as a flight attendant starting from next year.

There are differences in backgrounds, courtesy towards others, life, and the sense of value of money between people from other countries and the Japanese. My experience only gave me a glimpse of these differences. Still I think that the time comes for me to work all around the world and serve my customers, I will be able to utilize my experiences for good purposes.



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