



KOMABA *times*

English Newsletter by Komaba Students
<http://komabatimes.wordpress.com/>

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"The Beauty of Cherry Blossoms." Photo by Rizca Hikmah Hijria.

ACADEMIC LIFE

Taking a PEAK course: Through the eyes of an April-entry student

By Kai Ohata

Some domestic students (April-entry students) have found it beneficial and interesting to take PEAK courses, although it is not always easy for them to know beforehand what PEAK courses or the students that take them are like. I entered a classroom of a PEAK course, named Komaba Times, for the first time in April 2015 without any prediction about what the future would hold. This took some courage, but it has given me a lot of opportunities to write in English.

Komaba Times features journalistic writing, and in class we discuss journalistic matters in a small group, write articles like this one you are reading now, give feedback on classmates' articles. I am sure we can learn a lot from trying to write in a totally different way from the one we do in ALESA/ALESS, our academic writing class.

This is just one example of a variety of PEAK courses on offer. Yoko Iwase, an April-entry 2nd year student, is taking another one, Philosophy East and West, in which she learns metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. She likes the course and found that she loves expressing her opinions in English and loves that the professor is very enthusiastic; enough to make the whole class involved in the discussion. Just these two examples of perspectives on PEAK show the great diversity of PEAK classes and its appeal for some domestic students.

According to the administration office of the university, however, only 34 domestic students took PEAK junior division courses in the winter semester of 2014. This number has fluctuated between 30 and 50 in the last few years. The number is surprisingly small, given that PEAK

courses are open to all students of the university, which has about three thousand April-entry students each year. What is discouraging them from taking PEAK courses?

One of the reasons may lie in their lack of confidence in using English, as Yoko hinted. She pointed out that we need some level of English in order to truly learn an area of study. Lectures delivered in English are definitely something that attracts domestic students who seek a chance to practice their English skills, but, at the same time, it is something that discourages those who are not so confident in their language ability.

When you tell other students who do not participate in PEAK classes that you are taking a PEAK class, their responses will be, 'you have some courage to do that!' or 'it is expected from a highly motivated student like you.' This may be because it seems unusual or even scary for an April-entry student to take a PEAK course when we can choose courses in Japanese. I have to

admit that taking a PEAK course is not a common option for domestic students.

All the same, I believe that PEAK courses are too fruitful of an option for domestic students to miss, even if it is just for the sake of seeing and making friends with students from literally all over the world. That kind of experience has to be of great value for many Todai students who tend to have friends from similar backgrounds to them.

Yoko mentions, when asked if her image of PEAK has changed after actually taking the course, that she was surprised how the PEAK students' backgrounds were so diverse. The exact same thought struck me after taking my first class of Komaba Times. What I have found about PEAK is that the diversity is always here waiting for us and we are welcome to it. Even though such pockets of foreign perspectives may be unique within Todai, if we are curious to know more, and challenge ourselves as domestic students, all we have to do is to have a little courage and jump on in.

April-entry students enjoying a discussion with PEAK students. Photo by author.





"Spring time." Photo by Joshua Angelo E. Bata.

How do you know if you're an "ishiki-takai" person?

By Kai Ohata

Slang is something that we all are familiar with; not only is it easy to use but also it is sometimes useful to analyse what sort of implication it has

for the society that uses it. Among young Japanese people, there is a slang expression that is now well-known. "Ishiki-takai (意識高い)." It interests me because of how its meaning varies from situation to situation.

The literal meaning of "ishiki-takai" is similar to 'highly motivated' or 'highly conscious.' The first use of "ishiki-takai" is to refer to these sorts of people. A master's student in Todai said, "I would use 'ishiki-takai' to refer to a person who is job hunting like crazy or a master's student who works on their research far more than the average student." In this second use, the expression is used when the degree to which someone does something serious goes too far.

The expression can also be uttered towards someone who is showing off; just doing something considered to be hard in order to appear highly motivated. One student considers a person to be ishiki-takai when they talk about serious top-

ics, such as their future or issues facing modern society at a drinking party. This kind of "ishiki-takai" can be replaced by the synonym word "ishiki-takai-kei (a "type" of ishiki-takai)," which has a much stronger negative nuance.

So "ishiki-takai" can be used for describing someone who is actually working hard and their work excels, or for ironically teasing someone who tries to appear efficient and successful by showing off that they are working hard, sometimes with an implication that they are not efficient in reality.

We might have to be careful not to abuse the expression; if we label those whose zeal and ambition we cannot comprehend as "ishiki-takai" without differentiating them from the less 'serious' type ("ishiki-takai-kei"), it may amount to a sort of labeling, or even putting a stigma on them.

Complexity of the connotation of "ishiki-takai" might lie here. Just working hard is not a bad thing at all, and therefore the literal meaning of the expression. Why the expression is used in a negative way can be explained by Japanese culture, or rather a common human feeling of not welcoming people who show off their efficiency or hard work. If, however, we let this emotion get the better of us and keep regarding those who seem to be working hard as a show-off, it can only be a kind of intolerance towards diligence.

As we see, the connotation of "ishiki-takai" varies from negative to positive so it might be a bit difficult to use it properly. However it is this complexity of the expression that interests me because it is something that sheds some light on social context in which the phrase is used as well as the subtle feelings of those who utter the expression.



"Ishiki-takai" style of studying? Photo by author.

From above, abroad and beyond: A Todai-sei on UTokyo

By Sherry Zheng

For many juniors in Japanese universities, the prospect of international exchange or full-time study is overshadowed by the coming-of-age dilemma, reaching their peak of employability in Japan, or of whether or not it is about time they joined the season of job-hunting.

However, Todai graduate Yuta Kaminishi, now a second year Ph.D. student at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington, took a very different path to most Japanese college graduates. With a passion for cinema, Yuta entered the Univ. of Tokyo for his Master's degree in Media Studies and after graduating in 2012, came to Seattle to pursue Cinema and Media Studies.

The U.S. is a popular destination as the next step of the academic ladder for many college students all over the world. American colleges dominate the world rankings, with four out of five of the world's top universities located in the United States (according to the QS World University Rankings of 2015/16).

What do American colleges possess that have made them so competitive, and on such a global scale? What compelled Yuta to cross the Pacific Ocean to the notoriously wet city of Seattle to pursue his studies in film?

Not only was it expected of Yuta as a cinema major, but the decision to study abroad was also described as a "dream," inspired by his Japanese seniors and fellow graduates of Todai.

Studying at the university up until 2012, pre-PEAK/GPEAK, Yuta knew little about the dramatic changes which have recently begun to diversify the Komaba campus and the university as a whole. With a growing number of internationalising initiatives including the creation of not only PEAK/GPEAK, but also the Global Education for Innovation and Leadership programme (GEFIL), Abroad in Komaba (AIKOM) and University-wide Exchange Program (U-STEP) exchange programmes, and the Domestic/International Hands-On Summer programmes, the University is clearly working hard to promote greater international diversity on campus.

Prior to the introduction of all these initiatives, the inspiration to study abroad came to Yuta from his peers. Through an extracurricular 'reading group,'

his seniors, who had gone before him to study and work overseas, shared their experiences and advice, and ultimately nurtured his desire to see the world. The tight-knit relationship between juniors and seniors, fellow peers, and with professors outside of the classroom, is what Yuta reminisces about now when thinking of Todai. Yuta has realised now that the greatest lessons from Todai were unknowingly found in these informal relationships.

Now that UTokyo has invested plenty of time, money and other resources into these internationalising efforts, how do Todai students feel about breaking away from the norm of timely

job-hunting, graduation and work? With Todai graduates paving the way for their juniors for the road ahead, will the current cohorts venture further?

"It is a big change," Yuta acknowledges upon hearing about the impressive list of new introductions. Is this a good move for the university? Of course, Yuta agrees. As a Todai graduate, Yuta aspires to serve as an example, showing another possibility beyond third-year shuukatsu (job hunting) for students back home, "I want to continue to foster exchange and mutual understanding."



"Todai graduate Yuta Kaminishi, now at the University of Washington, is part of a growing number of students venturing further, and away from the beaten path." (Photo by author).

Spirit from the 9th Japanese-Chinese University Presidents' Forum

By Tomoko Takahashi



Photo by SCIKyu, on October 29, 2015.

It all happened in three days. No one expected that we could be so close in such a short period of time.

From October 28 to 30, 2015, the 9th Japanese-Chinese University Presidents' Forum was held at Kyushu University, and I attended the Forum as a student delegate of the University of Tokyo. This is the spirit I felt in the Forum.

There were 18 universities and 5 institutions represented from Japan and 19 universities from China. While all the University Presidents gathered during the two-day event to foster new alliances, our parallel Student Forum was to discuss two topics this year; on the reasons universities need to internationalize and on how students can collaborate on the internationalization of Japanese and Chinese universities. At first, the itinerary seemed too short to get to know people well. In addition, I was pretty nervous at first. My first trip to Fukuoka prefecture surrounded by people whom I was meeting for the first time, with no books or lectures to rely on but just myself. However, the moment I opened the hotel room, I found my Chinese roommate, whom I felt I had known for a very long time. We were talking fast and as much as we can as if to compensate for the short schedule. The accumulation of short talks from our room to the reception hall, or on the bus to Ito campus, or even the coincidental hello from sitting next to someone at the cere-

mony led to colorful experiences. As someone said, it is more about the depth of experience than its length.

The student forum provided opportunities for deep discussions. For the first topic "Why do universities need to be internationalized," our Student Forum concluded that there are three actors within this issue, namely students, universities and the so-

ciety. Each actor will gain benefit in the conveying of knowledge, capability building, expansion of job opportunities, the emergence of new ideas and the broadening of views. One student raised the point that while criticism is often found between Japan and China, we can transform it into positive energy and convert them into new ideas.

I participated in a group discussion that addressed how students can collaborate for the internationalization of Japanese and Chinese universities. Within the three aspects; academics, social, and extracurricular activities, we took up the aspect of social activities, and suggested the framework of 'Give and Take,' which meant that a win-win solution was necessary for real implementation. For social activities, we identified five categories; a) Diversifying and harmonizing societies while learning the local culture and gaining a sense of belonging, b) Helping international communities in developing countries or devastated areas while gaining a global mindset and multicultural understanding, c) Contributing to society by utilizing our academic skills through volunteer work or entrepreneurship while gaining practical experience or financial benefit, d) Creating a mutually beneficial platform for language and opinion exchange, e) Building student organizations that are in charge of the four activities above. In other aspects, namely academics and extracurricular activities, students came up with new ideas such as creating social networking services, which

can be operated within the university. This was a unique idea, since national restriction of social networking services hinder connectivity for Chinese students. However, I should also note that almost every Japanese student who participated in this forum had a WeChat account, the Chinese version of the LINE app, and many already had Chinese speaking ability.

For weeks after the event, my smartphone kept flashing green lights telling me that another WeChat message had arrived. The discussion in Kyushu was fruitful, but it did not have to end there. It is the vital spirit I felt from all the participants in this Forum that makes it all the more worthy.

One of my new Chinese friends who majors in law was asking me my class schedule and the structure of Japanese contracts, and we were so excited to learn the differences in our curricula and the judiciary system. He was so keen about getting to know Japan that he was raising many questions and listening to every single word with enthusiasm, which impressed me so much; this is how you can really absorb a new culture without any prejudice.

It was not just the Chinese students that impressed me. The Japanese students each carried unique thoughts on Japan-Sino relations and experiences regarding China. I also must thank the SCIKyu (Student Committee for Internationalization of Kyushu University) members, who were great leaders in facilitating our discussions and planning things.

Readers may be questioning the quantitative outcome of this event, but I must say that the best thing I learned here is that the vitality among ourselves can lead to solid friendships. Whether in the field of academics or business, our paths may cross again, and most importantly, we are already friends. With our ties, there are many complicated issues we can address together. I learned the true value of people gathering at one place-of course we can have conversations online, but it is face-to-face communication that brings about all the bonds. My best wishes to the 10th Forum that will come up in 2017.

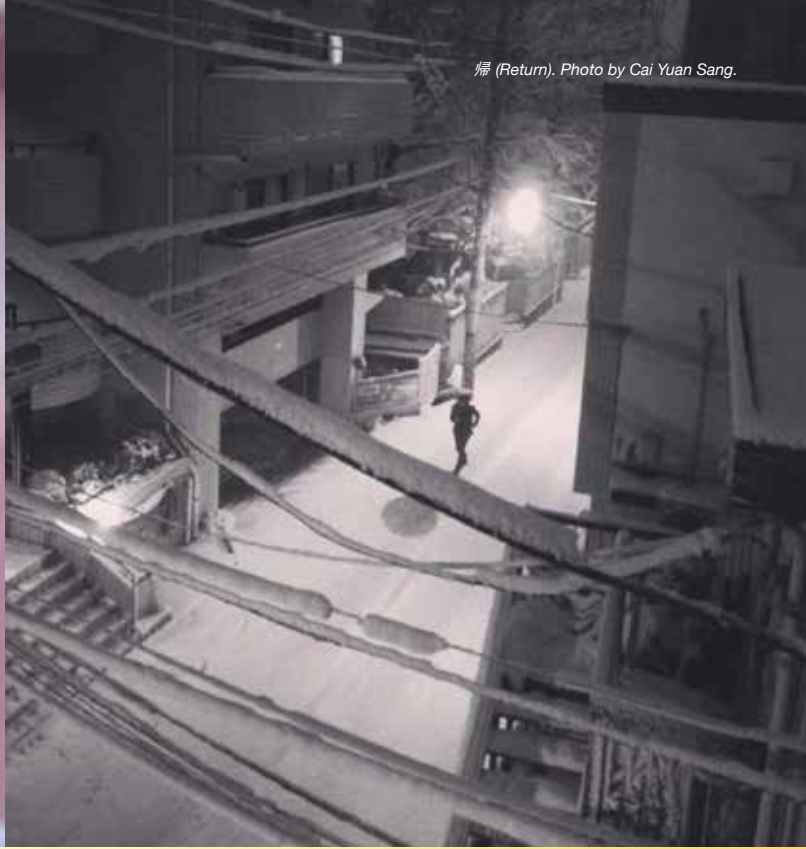


Faito. Photo by Wanyu (Helen) Chang.

"Reflections." Photo by Joshua Angelo E. Bata.



帰 (Return). Photo by Cai Yuan Sang.



"Sunset by the River." Photo by Joshua Angelo E. Bata.





Global Interaction Lunch. By Trinh Xuan Truong.

I'm Off Again: Some thoughts from an international student on exchange

By Samuel Brustad

You're drinking black coffee in a pretentious café on a cobbled street, tabs for Skyscanner and AirBnB open on your laptop. This is the situation of a twenty-something exchange student abroad in Europe. This is where I find myself, but not somewhere I ever expected to be. Because I am already an 'exchange' student, I have been through these now familiar routines of adjustment in Japan, which is where I have lived for 2 years. That is until just a couple of months ago when I decided to up and leave the place I had started to call home to start again, again.

The PEAK programme is somewhat unique in that it draws in people from around the world to a new and exciting environment and then sends them back out again in the hopes of becoming 'global' students of the 21st century. Thanks to the University of Tokyo I have been able to attend four different universities in four different continents over the last 2 years. I have nailed the 5-point self-introduction and made a huge amount of friends from all sorts of places. But these very advantages, these new aspects of my life that I have so loved, have also brought with them an incredible sense of isolation. In the familiar unfamiliarity I have lost something, a tangible home and a sense of security.

So is there value in doing it all again? As PEAK students should we push ourselves to unsettle our newly ordered worlds and head off again to some far flung part of the world? Especially when we more than most can already appreciate how difficult that is. I say yes, for many of the same reasons that saw us venture abroad in the first place. This whole experience is teaching me a lot. In particular, coming to PEAK I have had to come to a lot of unsettling conclusions about myself and the world around me. I am much less content being alone than I first thought, I

have far more white privilege than I realised and most people around the world are really far more similar than they are different. But from my time on exchange however, I see now that like it or not PEAK will also irrevocably change me in ways that I couldn't possibly have known until I took a step away from it. While I for one still have no clue what I want to do with my life, I realise now that Japan as much as New Zealand has become a part of me.

It may be one of the more first-world problems, but identity is something that shapes us all. PEAK students are lucky in that we get to straddle the borders of so many divisive issues, culture, religion, nationality; we get the rare gift of perspective. We are the third culture children that occupy the middle ground. But the middle ground is a lonely place. So instead of fighting for a home and a sense of normalcy, it seems far more productive to get out there and meet new people, make new memories and live your own adventure. It's so easy to get wrapped up in our own confusing web of thoughts and identity crises that we forget to truly utilise the gift we have been given. That is to use our fresh perspectives to come to a better understanding of the world around us and then work out where



Off again.

we fit into that. That is what an exchange has to offer PEAK students. Beyond the incredible academic value, connections and travel opportunities, you get to continue the adventure that you started right back when you made the decision to matriculate into Tōdai. You get to keep pushing yourself and your understanding of the world around you.

So I'm going to try to forget my self-indulgent complaints and realise that what I have is the world before my feet. I'll keep sipping my coffee, reopen Skyscanner, and start planning my next adventure.

Equestrian: What horses teach us

By Kai Ohata

Even if you are completely unfamiliar with equestrianism, you do not need any kind of background information to be amazed by the beauty and the excellence of the sport; just one glance at the horse and rider working together will take your breath away. Their sophisticated movements in dressage, or brave jumps over high obstacles are something that shows not only the great athletic ability of the horse and rider but also their mutual trust in one another.

To introduce some of the various disciplines of equestrian sports, there are three well-known ones that you can watch in the Olympics: dressage, show jumping and eventing. In dressage, the horse and rider perform some predetermined patterns of movement. This is like figure skating on horseback, and when performed well, it is very visually appealing. In show jumping, they sometimes jump over 160cm-high obstacles. Eventing is a complex discipline combining elements of dressage,

jumping and cross-country. Some disciplines take a lot of courage while others need sensitivity to graceful movements, but what they all require is something above physical capability: trust in each other, confidence in ones ability.

I am charmed by this beautiful sport. When I visited the equestrian club of the university as a freshman, the first time I saw club members jumping on horseback immediately I made my mind up to join the club. Since then, I have practiced riding horses and have been taking care of them almost every day. Every time I see the horses I always feel like I am able to learn from them.

If perhaps you were thinking riding a horse is something similar to riding a motorcycle, you are completely wrong. When you ride a horse you do not manipulate or operate them, nor even order them, for that matter. Indeed, like when driving a motorcycle, we usually use our hands (that are

connected with metal mouthpieces through reins) and legs and some other parts of our body to let them know what we want from them. But we call these means an aid. This is symbolic because we think we are helping, rather than ordering, horses to move voluntarily and in synchronization with the rider.

The horses are far stronger than humans, and if they want to go against us we have no way to stop them. The horse is not only strong but also a sensitive animal and this makes it much more difficult for us to help them to move as we wish. (It takes years of practice just to move horses smoothly.) However it is the very same features that make riding a horse a great pleasure as well as attractive sport. Above all, what will strike you about the horses is that they are kind and patient enough to let us know the pleasure and joy of cooperating with them and of doing something special that could not be done without cooperation.

*A beautiful jump at an equestrian event.
Image by Robert McGoldrick | Flickr.*



Tough and global?

By Yasuka Tateishi

Being “tough and global” – the slogan had been launched by Former President Hamada at the University of Tokyo and became popular among students. Although most people still do not consider it seriously, studying abroad is still considered to be something prestigious.

Why are people so attracted by the adjective “international” or “global”? It is perhaps because the experience of studying abroad may enable one to improve one’s language skill. It might be because you hardly have the opportunity of getting to know another culture or people from another culture in this ‘homogeneous’ country. People expect that you will be able to cultivate insight with a different point of view.

It was the case for me, too. Whenever I said that I got a chance to be an exchange student for a year at Sciences Po Paris, people praised me and encouraged me to do my best, as if it

was the biggest success in my life. Indeed, I myself felt very honored to be nominated as an exchange student.

In August, I arrived to Paris filled with excitement. I dreamed that I could be a super girl, improving my English and French to a native speaker level, studying hard with a lot of international students. But life at Sciences Po was somewhat different from that of Todai.

At Sciences Po, people put strong value on students’ presentation –which is called *exposé* in France. In a class, most of the time is devoted to *exposé*, so the quality of the class depend highly on it. I felt literally “exposed” when I did it. The silence killed me. I did not know if my explanation was understandable to everyone. I rarely did presentations in Komaba. Language was my excuse at Komaba because the majority of my classmates were native English speakers.

“Everything is fine even if I cannot get a good grade because I am not a native speaker” - this way of thinking made me lazy.

I had difficulty in communication as well. In Sciences Po, around 1,500 students are welcomed from all over the world every year. My classmates were mostly international students but the majority were American students. I could not understand when they spoke too fast and especially when they told jokes. Without the same cultural background, it was hard to find it funny. With French students, the language barrier seemed even higher. Of course I made a lot of friends after all, I was too shy to make contact at first.

The terrorist attack in Paris was by far the most shocking incident for me. I was safe at home on the night of November 13th, but the fact that the shootings happened just 15 minutes away from my apartment terrified me. The university

Walking from Komaba to Shibuya

By Makoto Hirata

Todai Komaba students cannot live without going to Shibuya. “Shibuya is the center of Japanese *Kawaii!*” “Let’s have a drinking party in Shibuya!” A lot of the students like walking to Shibuya rather than taking the train. The distance is not too far to walk, and if we choose to get on the Keio Inokashira line, we have to spend 124 yen. This is critical for us.

Instead of using the trains, there are many routes to walk to Shibuya. Many students in Komaba have their own favorite route. However, most people probably just walk through and miss the interesting places. Here are some good places along the way to enjoy a good walk to and from Shibuya.

There are mainly two routes. One is from *Komaba-Ura*, through the gym (the blue route). The other is from *Komaba-Todaimae* station (the red route). If you start from the main entrance gate of Komaba campus with the Hachiko statue in Shibuya as the goal, the blue route takes 17 min, and the red route takes 23 min. Many assume the blue route is more convenient, and many use this blue route. But still, I would recommend the red one, because this way has more interesting spots. Along this way, there are a lot of restaurants and cafes, compared to the blue way (1).



1 The way to Shibuya from Komaba. From Google map.



If you want to try fresh fish, go to *Eika* [英香] (2). This restaurant offers fish dishes, and my recommendation is *Maguro-Nakauchi Don* [まぐろ中落ち丼, 860 yen] (3). This is a traditional style seafood rice bowl.

2 Eika. Photo by author.

3 Maguro-Nakauchi Don. Photo by author.



opened as usual from the next Monday, but I encountered extraordinariness. Baggage check was introduced in the university and even in the supermarket. I saw soldiers with guns in the street. We had to evacuate from a library when a suspicious bag was found, which eventually proved to be an abandoned bag by a careless student. Some of my friends were forced to return to their home country by their parents. On the surface, it was possible to conduct your life as usual, but all these small incidents made me nervous. I could not concentrate on my studies for several weeks.

I was different from what I had dreamed to be in Paris. I did not know how difficult it was to “do my best” in a new environment. Mais c’est la vie (but it is the life). People cannot change so dramatically with a mere exposure to a foreign culture. I was too idealistic. I regretted being lazy and shy but that is what I used to be. But then

I noticed that my life in Paris was not as bad as I regretted. I made wonderful friends from different places of the world, with whom I am confident I will keep in touch. Although it is not the same way as I communicate with my Japanese friends, I found it very comfortable talking with them. I got a good mark on some of my presentation and essays, although not the best. I was so pleased when my friends said, “Hey, good job! It was such a nice exposé.” I got to know a lot of French culture, which I would not have known as a tourist. I realized I do not regret my decision to study in Paris.

Can we become “tough and global” by studying abroad? You will think it possible seeing photos



Friendship is the best thing I got in Paris. Photo credit: author.

with foreign faces posted on Facebook; it is symbolic of international experiences. But what is important is that you need to find your own way of becoming “tough and global.” It may require extraordinary effort, but you might find your own version of it.



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- 4 The front door of Lisblanc. Photo by author.
- 5 Canelé (100yen). Photo by author.
- 6 Bramble jelly (350yen). Photo by author.
- 7 Vegetable curry (600 yen). Photo by author.
- 8 Curry House Lucy. Photo by author.

When you want a private study room, or want to speak with your friends, you probably look for a café. Komaba campus has some cafés, but they are all always crowded. At such times, students tend to flee away from campus. Lisblanc (4) is along this way, and very near to the campus. It has many kinds of cakes and coffees, and they

are relatively reasonable. For example, Canelé [カヌレ, a brown baked cake] (5) is 100 yen, and Bramble jelly [木苺のゼリー] is 350 yen (6). They offer 200yen drinks with these sweets.

If you get tired of the food on campus, visit Curry House Lucy (7) (8). This restaurant has a very

good atmosphere, and you can relax. If you cannot eat a lot, you can choose the mini-size (and save 50 yen).

There are a lot of appealing restaurants beside what I mention here. When you walk down from Komaba to Shibuya, look carefully around the way. You might find a hidden treasure.

Students and professors say “Be more global”

By Makoto Hirata

Recently, more and more students on the Todai Komaba Campus want to participate in international activities. The number of students who want to enter the faculty of International Relations is also increasing. Responding to such voices, this university offers a lot of these courses, such as variety of foreign languages or PEAK courses (these classes are conducted in English, but Japanese students are allowed to take them.). However, there are many activities in which students manage independently from the university.

On June 28, 2015, a Todai chorus club held a party for the Oxford University chorus club at the Hongo Campus. It took nearly a year to make arrangements after the Oxford club first e-mailed the Todai's chorus club. Approximately 40 Todai students and 10 Oxford students gathered for this party. It was held entirely in English. There

were some Japanese members who had difficulty with the language, but using body gesture or drawing pictures, they managed to interact with their British peers.

Another case in point. One of the Todai students organizes 2-week overseas trips for high school students and encourages international interaction among the youth. Not only does he send Japanese students overseas, but he also brings American students to Japan and tries to promote mutual understanding. In order to carry out these activities, he solicits donations from many big companies of Japan. He has not disclosed the cost of running such a program, but it is surprising that one university student has initiated such a great international program.

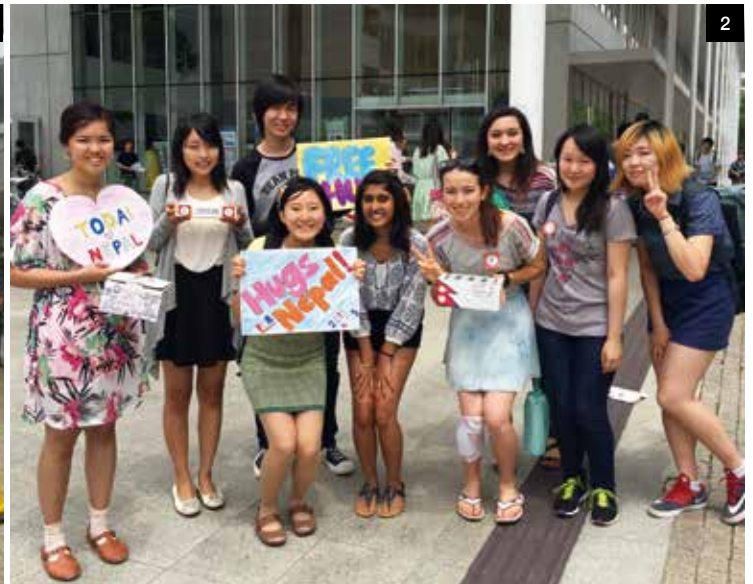
I have given two examples of internationalization lead by students, but the university, too, offers

excellent opportunities to be international, besides classes. For instance, on July 9, 2015, the University and the Supreme Court of Japan coordinated to invite the Chief Justice of the United States, the Honorable John G. Roberts, Jr. and all of the students at the University were allowed to listen to the lecture freely. Probably there are few universities that can offer such a marvelous chance to students.

There are a lot of attempts to make opportunities to interact with the international community, not only by the university but also by the students. The importance of internationalization is emphasized, and this university also joins this movement. If you are at Todai, why not jump into these activities or create such chances? If you are outside Japan, Todai students will definitely welcome you and they will want to interact with you.



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1 2 “Hugs for Nepal.” Photo by Koji Matsumoto.

3 “Close encounters.” Photo by Joshua Angelo E. Bata. ICKO Photo Contest 2014 Grand Prize winner.



“Old Clock Tower and Modern Building in Komaba Research Campus.” Photo by Liew Chun Fui.

Quarter-life crises

By Yen Hyoung Cho

“What do you want to be when you grow up?”
“I want to be a violinist”
“I want to be an artist”
“I want to be a game designer”
“I want to be a lawyer”
“I want to be a person who can protect the world”
“I want to be someone who can change the world”

When I was really young, I remember my mind was bubbling with dreams. A naïve, indecisive girl who thought nothing in the world was impossible for her, and earnestly believed she could become anything she wanted to be. I’m sure you’ve all had that, too. We would constantly be inspired by books, movies, music, games and the environment around us; being fed with dreams of what we could become in the future. We would all wish to grow older faster and become our well-thought-out-selves of the future— I know I did. But, all happy times must come to an end, and now that I have grown up, I have inevitably begun to bear the burdens of what it means to be an adult.

It is not an easy decision to make so simply based on what we wanted to become at a young age. Having become a responsible age, we now have millions of other factors to consider into our lives: family, income, housing, tax, parents, and more. Our wings of dreams have been snipped from us so that we can live up to the realistic standards of the world. This has changed how some students view higher level of education and why they want to attain it.

Students thoughtlessly enter university or college not as a means of broadening their knowledge in the field of interest, but rather for the name of the university printed on our resumes for future reference. They don’t have the heart to gamble their well-built lives on what their heart tells them to do, so they generally go with what is expected of them from those around. According to U.S News, Worlds Report and The Princeton Review, out of the top 10 reasons as to why students

choose to go to college, the top two reasons correspond to:

- 1.This college has a very good academic reputation
- 2.This college’s graduates get good jobs

We have become an age where we have realized that it is no longer a question of “What do we ‘want’ to be when we grow up?” but rather “What we are ‘allowed’ to be when we grow up?” It is a harsh reality many students my age face in today’s age of colorless gray. Of course, there are those who end up realizing that the path they chose is the one for them, but not everyone is as fortunate.

There will be those who come face to face with a tall wall of self-doubt and uncertainty about their future. The question of “Is this truly what I want to do?” is not an uncommon one asked by many young people today. Quarter-life crises; a period of life usually ranging from late teens to early thirties, in which a person begins to feel doubt about their own life brought on by the stress of becoming an adult, is a common feeling felt by young adults today. I too, have also come across this barrier countless of times during my journey to adulthood. Even till this day I have doubts about what I really want to be when I grow up because I don’t know what the future holds. It is a crushing feeling where everything you have done until this moment seems useless. You keep telling yourself you wasted your time because at the end of all the hardship you have endured, you are now unsure if you are ready to pursue this career you have chosen. Self-doubt will always be the one thing constantly that pulls you back down to your knees.

For any of you facing similar problems, if anything, I would love to say ‘follow your heart’— a cheesy unrealistic line, but life really isn’t that simple. We are all afraid of failure and regrets that possibly await us in the future. For some of us, we don’t even know what we want to do in the future. So, instead I’ll tell you this— “If you are facing a quarter-life crises, it’s never too late to take the unpredictable turn.” Whatever you are doing in life, and whatever point you are at life, try taking a plunge into the unknown for once. Bilbo Baggins, a character in the famous book *The Hobbit* by J.R.R Tolkien, once said “I’m going on an adventure!” Try leaving the hobbit hole. You never know what possibilities may lie ahead.



It is more than just a battle with time. It is a battle with realistic expectations and self-doubt given to us by the world. Drawing by Yuki Iida.

How should Japan answer the Syrian refugees knocking on its door?

By Amaël Cognacq



Poster of the Japan for UNHCR. "What if, tomorrow, you are chased away from home?"

Since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, and especially since the expansion of the Islamic State's so-called caliphate those past two years over the Syrian territory, Syrians have been desperately fleeing their country. To date, these refugees represent a diaspora of about 4.3 million people registered with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Most of them escaped in large numbers to neighboring nations such as Turkey, Lebanon or Jordan, and some went further, notably to Europe. The dangers and difficulties they face embarking on this journey only underlines their desperation.

This huge flow of people wishing to resume a normal life in another country was met with more or less warm welcome. Many countries such as Germany asserted their determination to welcome refugees, but this unprecedented flow also caused many concerns within Europe. How many refugees can Europe welcome? Should Europe act together with binding quotas, or should each country act according to its own convictions? The concern moreover did not just affect the Middle East, North Africa and Europe, but soon was echoed all around the world. Brazil already welcomed 3,000 Syrians and is ready for more, while Venezuela has allocated 20,000 refugee visas, and Australia was scheduled to

welcome roughly 26,000 refugees by the end of 2015. Meanwhile in Japan, despite the number of refugee visa applications reaching 5,000 last year, only 11 applications were successful. Contrary to many countries preparing to welcome more refugees, Japan and its rigid refugee policy remain deaf to the pleas of asylum seekers.

Is Japan then just ignoring the refugee crisis occurring in the world? No. It is so far helping in another important way: financially. The country is indeed contributing to the international efforts, ranking 8th in the world for financial aid. The question is: should that be considered sufficient?

Why is Japan reluctant to welcome refugees? While distance may play a role, it cannot be considered as the main reason; indeed, governments from every continent are accepting refugees from Syria. There may be the fear also that the refugees will not feel welcomed in Japan, that the cultural shock will be too big for the refugees. It would inevitably be true for a few refugees, but can that be made a legitimate excuse for not answering the 5,000 people seeking asylum? Another reason may be that the crisis in Syria could not be considered justifiable for accepting refugees: do countries have any

obligations toward citizens of another country far away albeit facing a civil war? There is also the fear that welcoming many people may endanger Japan's stability; a fear that is often refuted by migration specialists as the refugees welcomed in Japan would remain a very low percentage of the population.

In the meantime, we can mention the reasons why Japan may want to consider opening its arms to refugees. Playing a bigger role along with other nations to solve the refugee crisis could confirm the determination manifested by Japan to be a hub in globalization. As the country suffers from an aging population, bringing young and often strongly motivated people could boost the economy. Japan could present itself as an example of a morally involved, global-minded country in the East-Asian region, leading other nations by example.

Many more reasons could be mentioned concerning the fears Japan may have as well as the positive reasons for welcoming more refugees. This article do not aim to convince its readers that Japan has to do so, but rather to create awareness about the topic and trigger personal reflection.

More than just connections: People you meet while studying abroad

By Chae Yeon Kim

Having been enrolled in the Programs in English at Komaba (PEAK) for the past two years or so, being an “international” student or a “foreigner” in a country is nothing new to me. However, throughout my experience studying abroad, the word “foreigner” has been brought upon me in a slightly different light.

Despite being a foreigner to Japan, studying at the University of Tokyo—my home university—has been a rather comforting experience enlivened with a sense of belonging. However, being a foreigner to China as a short-term exchange student at Peking University seems to have emphasized my “foreign-ness” to my new surroundings.

I would say I have rediscovered the limits to which I can adapt, immersed in the beautiful yet chaotic city called Beijing: unable to communicate with the local people, experiencing newsworthy high levels of pollution, but still enjoying the distinct culture and traditions of

modern day China. I would only describe my past semester’s worth of experience in Beijing as rewarding.

The most enriching experience during study abroad, however, I would have to say, is having the opportunity to meet people and forming relationships. Out of all the amazing perks Beijing has to offer, the best it has introduced me to is the group of people who share the same curiosity and passion for the city. I have a feeling that this holds for any study abroad student out there.

You have chosen the school or city in which you spend a portion of your university career for a reason, and it is most likely that international students on exchange with you share this similar passion. You may not be there for the same exact reason, but serendipity has brought you together in that relatively small part of the world. I would say it is a fate of sorts.

After all, it is those people with which you experience being a “foreigner.” It meant banding together to explain directions in broken Chinese to an angry taxi driver, or trying together that Chinese soup that makes your tongue feel numb. It seems that because of this reason—because you are together experiencing this “foreignness”—you end up forming a kind of fellowship with these people.

Also, knowing that you must return to your respective countries afterwards, and therefore knowing your time together is short, seems to make the experiences you share all the more special.

Academics is no doubt very important for a driven university student. However, if you are planning on studying abroad any time soon, remember that the most important lessons will be learned from outside the classroom, from probably the most diverse and fascinating group of people you will ever meet in your lifetime.



Ordinary everyday streets of Beijing become special and memorable locations for bonding amongst foreign students. Photo by author.

Whiplash of grief beyond borders: The lasting emotion in the hearts of people

By Yen Hyoung Cho

Families, teachers and fellow students gather by the dock to commemorate the unexpected nightmare that happened a year ago, all repeating words of sorrow, grief and regret— “I’m sorry”. Sorry they could not save them, protect them and sorry they are the ones who survived. A year has passed since the Sewol ferry incident, an event no one was prepared for and shook the Korean media. But the whiplash of the grief has yet to die down, leaving many unable to move on with their everyday lives.

On the morning of 16th April 2014 the South Korean Ferry, Sewol, capsized while carrying 476 passengers. Of the 304 passengers on the boat only 172 managed to escape, leaving the remaining passengers in the cold ocean; of which were mostly secondary school students from Danwon High school of Ansan. Even with fishing boats, Republic of Korea (ROK) navy ships and coastguards on the scene, the rescue mission did not go as planned. Many of the passengers were told to remain inside the cabins of the ship, leaving them trapped in the capsized boat, while the captain and 14 crew members jumped off

from their sinking deathtrap and into the safety of the rescuers. Because of the cold waters of early spring and the strong currents, attempts to free the trapped passengers were not easy, only managing to recover lifeless bodies back to their awaiting families. On April 17 2015, as part of commemorations for the victims of Sewol, 4,475 people participated in the commemoration titled ‘The Saddest Challenge in the World’ for the Guinness world book record.

Seasons have flown by since that day, but the boat still lies in the ocean unmoved— with only the government’s announcements of planning to raise the Sewol ferry. The crowd and candle flames at the Gwanghwa-Mun plaza once filled with angry protestors have died down to simmer, with people occasionally visiting the place to pray for the loss of the victims and their families. Even after months of effort made by coastal guards, 9 bodies have yet to be returned to their families; relatives pray for their lost family members to be returned to them so they can rest in peace. For the survivors and the relatives of the victims, time seems to have stopped

for them as they have yet to recover from the horrors of that day. Many of them have yet to accept the tragedy, unable to move on with their lives. Surviving students remain traumatized; some carrying the burdens and dreams of their deceased friends, some unable to return to their school and choosing to transfer to a different area. The empty seats of the classrooms remind teachers of how they lost many of their students that morning to one fluke accident that should have not happened. Many of them visit the dock periodically to mourn for their friends and family members, in hopes that they will sleep in peace.

Although, the spark of the accident has died down in the country, to these people it is still a reoccurring nightmare that brings new misfortune to their everyday lives. On May 8, 2015, officially known as ‘Parent’s day’ in Korea, the father of one of the student victim was found to have hung himself. According to his family, May 8 was not just parent’s day but also his deceased daughter’s birthday— the bonding day for parent and child have reminded him of his treasure he could no longer protect. This

extreme way of evading grief is not an uncommon route of escape for many. Over 55% of the people involved in the incident (mainly relatives of the incident’s victims) have urges to end their own life; accompanied by other problems such as anxiety, despair and lethargy. This whiplash of losing a loved one so unexpected will remain in their hearts for years to come, and possibly to their graves.

The aftershock of losing a loved one is not confound within national borders. Not all, but those who have felt it, understand how fragile and precious their mundane life can be; and how it can go from happiness to utter chaos in a matter of seconds. Recall the Tohoku Earthquake, the tragedy no one foresaw and changed the lives of thousands. Over 15,000 deaths reported, leaving many people family-less, homeless and the nation in tears. Consider the recent aviation accidents, or the earthquakes that shook Nepal into rubbles. The pain of such a tragedy can be understood by those who have gone through such themselves regardless of nationality, ethnicity or religion— it is a downward spiral no one wishes upon anyone. It is an emotion that is understood globally throughout the world, and perhaps is the only emotion that can truly allow people to understand one another regardless of their difference.



Grief - an emotion that holds the world together. Image by author.

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"Inspiring Beginning – Spring in Komaba." Photo by Lin Pei-Hsi

Tokyo: A city for the lost?

By Eve Bentley

In the past year and a half I have been living in Tokyo, I have met individuals from all over the world, each with a wealth of experience and a multitude of stories of travel and adventure. I bump into them in coffee shops, waiting in queues for trains and most often through friends of friends who are travelling together.

Yet, one of the strangest things that seem to bind all of these individuals together is their being in Japan out of some form of existential crisis. That is, the most common reasoning behind their move to Japan, even for just a temporary stay, being a combination of, 'I don't know what to do with my life' and 'but it's Japan so I thought why not.'

This has made me reflect over my time here so far, and question what is it about Tokyo, and Japan in general, that seems to attract these perhaps 'lost' individuals? Some of these people have finished university degrees, some have never gone, some have dropped out and some have given up a job simply to move here to Japan. Of course, travel itself is oft written about as the experience that opens your mind and allows you to question everything you've ever known and believed. You become friends with people you never imagined meeting; you discover new places together and get lost among the people and lights. This however doesn't explain the nature of Japan as being the destination of choice for those perhaps lost in the world and themselves.

It's often difficult to reconcile the changes that occur within our lives especially because, as the

subjects of change, we perhaps can't observe them objectively. However, in my brief time living here so far, it seems that for many of the people I meet, the beauty that lies in Japan is that it offers no expectations of them. You can experience a purity of freedom in the obvious ways such as not being able to understand the language or intrinsic cultural characteristics, but more than this, it is the whirlwind of being able to reinvent yourself. As a foreigner in the homogeneity of Japan, no matter where

you are from, you can fulfill a personal niche that may have remained undiscovered due to previous demands in your life from your initial home country's culture, or traditions and familial pressure.

It seems that Japan is an ideal ground for those individuals lost, and recently there has been much discussion around the notion of Japan being that kind of 'dream bubble' you live in so comfortably you almost develop a world separate to that of the rest.... As many foreigners will never truly become 'Japanese,' they live in some ways free of traditional expectation and find it difficult to leave at the end of their journey here.

This holiday season, as someone travelling home



Shibuya Crossing at Night. Photo Richard Schneider | Flickr.

for the first time since moving here, I myself am filled with a certain amount of anxiety considering the challenges I have faced living here, and the inevitable change as a consequence. Yet, I think from all of the various friends I have made, it seems it is the hardest for those Japanese who have lived or studied overseas to return back to Japan, and adjust back to their lives here, many saying that don't know what to call 'home' any longer.

At the end of the day, I think our ideas of 'home' change as we travel, and our selves can no longer be defined clearly, and for me, this is one of the most perfect serendipities of life.

Shibuya passes same-sex partnership act

By Makoto Hirata



At the Rainbow Pride Parade in Shibuya, April 26, 2015. Photo by Sam Brustad.

In 2015, a controversial act was passed in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward. It is called the "Same sex partnership agreement." In Japan, LGBT people cannot get married with a person of the same sex. Shibuya Ward, however, decided to allow them to do this, however only in a symbolic sense. They can get a certificate which recognizes their relations, and Shibuya asks all public offices and private corporations in the ward to treat them the same as an heterosexual couple.

It seems that some LGBT people are encouraged by this act. One of my friends, who is gay, responded anonymously, "Finally Japan is starting to protect our rights. In other countries, such as France, government are recognizing our situation gradually. Japan is finally get involved in this movement."

"Japan should make more of an effort for LGBT people. This act is a great first step, but not enough," he continued. "In interactions with ordinary people, they still discriminate against us. If we didn't suffer discrimination, I wouldn't need to respond to you anonymously." For LGBT

communities, it seems that this act is only the first step for ordinary people to change their minds.

In fact, there is a wave of recognition of LGBT rights around the world. France has passed a law called "le Pax." This is a marriage-like contract. Compared with a traditional marriage, this union can be cancelled more easily, and all people in France utilize this as a kind of 'pre-marriage.' This law is designed for both straight and same-sex couples. A number of same-sex couples have made use of this contract and live together in France. In addition, Holland, the U.S., and some other nations have started to sign in laws which gives same-sex couples lawful stature.

However, even this first step has some resistance in Japan. For example, some researchers of the Japanese Constitution say this act may conflict with an article in the Constitution. This article is as follow; "婚姻は、両性の合意に基づいての成立し" [Marriage is formed only by the agreement of both sexes]. The term "both sex" is the problem. Some argue "both sexes" implies "male and female," whereas others argue that it can be interpreted

as a shorthand for "both people." We will have to wait and see if the Constitution prohibits same sex marriage.

Of all of the resistance, arguably the strongest resistance may come from "the people's conscious". The LGBT issue is a recent thing for many Japanese people. Most of LGBTs in Japan kept it a secret that they were LGBT and the society did not recognize their existence.

Recently there has been a wave of people coming out in other countries. For many Japanese, LGBT people are not still familiar. Some people tend to make a fool of them, or to avert from them. In public, there are trials to abolish such prejudice, but I feel ordinary people's internal feelings have not changed yet. This is especially true of older generations. Some of them think this act will destroy the traditional way of marriage or family and this should be stopped.

For LGBT people, this act is only the first step. A much more difficult problem lies ahead. The conscious of ordinary people.

Junishi: The unknown aspect of the Japanese zodiac

By Yoshihiro Nakamura

Do you know about *Junishi*? In Japan, for a long time we have had *Junishi*, which is a zodiac calendar imported from China. The cycle of this calendar is completed every twelve years and each year is assigned a symbolic animal: rat, bull, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog and boar. The sequence of zodiac animals always remains consistent. For example, 2015 is the year of the sheep, so 2016 will be the year of the monkey. This is a very traditional way to denote different years, and in present-day Japan we still make use of it in order to refer to years.

Everyone, not only Japanese people, has his or her own animal from *Junishi*. By this I mean, you can find your animal by looking up the animal corresponding to the year of your birth. In my case, I was born in 1995 and my zodiac animal is the boar. President Barack Obama was born in 1961, which means his zodiac animal is the bull. Therefore, in Japan, asking someone what animal year they were born is an indirect way to ask their age.

In addition, until the Edo period (1603-1867), *Junishi* had been widely used to show direction and time. The rat is the north and the rabbit, horse and rooster indicate the east, the south and the west respectively. We also divided 360 degrees into 12 parts and we named them based on *Junishi*. Time is divided by splitting 24 hours into 12 parts and each two hours were also named using *Junishi*.

Junishi is not used only in Japan. It is used also in countries such as China, Korea, Tibet, Thailand, Vietnam, Russia, and Mongolia. However, the 12 animal signs are a little different among the countries. In Thailand, Vietnam and Tibet, they replace the rabbit and the boar with the cat and the pig respectively. In addition, they use the water buffalo and the goat as a substitute for the bull and the sheep in Vietnam. In Mongolia, the leopard serves as the tiger. Actually, it is natural to be different by region, because the twelve animal signs were appropriated after the zodiac was created in China.

In Japan, there are some superstitions related to *Junishi*. "Hinoeuma" is one of them. Hinoeuma is the name of a special zodiac year which comes once every 60 years. 1966 was the last

Hinoeuma year. "Uma" of "Hinoeuma" means horse in Japanese, Hinoeuma is one in 5 years of the horse. According to legend, it is said that women who were born in the Hinoeuma year have a hot temper so that she can take years off her husband's life. Therefore, there is a tendency to avoid giving birth to babies in this year. In the last Hinoeuma year of 1966, the birth rate in Japan decreased dramatically from 2.14 to 1.58.

In your country, is zodiac used? If so, what kinds of animals are used as the twelve animal signs? Are there any superstitions? *Junishi* has various theories and stories in each country. In the modern age of rationality, it is interesting that zodiac signs still have cultural value.

Zodiac chart

Year	Junishi (Japanese)	Junishi (English)
1972 / 1984 / 1996 / 2008	子	rat
1973 / 1985 / 1997 / 2009	丑	bull
1974 / 1986 / 1998 / 2010	寅	tiger
1975 / 1987 / 1999 / 2011	卯	rabbit
1976 / 1988 / 2000 / 2012	辰	dragon
1977 / 1989 / 2001 / 2013	巳	snake
1978 / 1990 / 2002 / 2014	午	horse
1979 / 1991 / 2003 / 2015	未	sheep
1980 / 1992 / 2004 / 2016	申	monkey
1981 / 1993 / 2005 / 2017	酉	rooster
1982 / 1994 / 2006 / 2018	戌	dog
1983 / 1995 / 2007 / 2019	亥	boar

Junishi. Image by m-louis | Flickr. (The author made some changes.)



The interesting history of Tempura

By Yoshihiro Nakamura



Tempura. Image by OilMax | Flickr.

What kind of food do you associate with Japan? Sushi? Ramen? I would like to write about one particularly delicious type of Japanese food: Tempura.

Tempura is a well-known fried food made from fish and/or vegetables such as prawn, whitefish, and pumpkin. In order to make Tempura, first we have to make the batter which is composed

of wheat flour, eggs and water. We then dip the ingredient into this batter and fry them. You can eat it with salt or Tempura sauce which is made up of soup base, sweet sake and soy sauce.

“Obon” : A holiday peculiar to Japan

By Yoshihiro Nakamura

There are many kinds of holidays in the world. Christmas, Easter, Halloween and New Year’s Day to name a few. However, many people outside of Japan are unaware that there is also a holiday in the middle of August. The holiday is called “Obon”(お盆).

Obon is a holiday meant for mourning the deceased. In Japan, it is said that the spirits of the deceased come back to this world during the Obon season. Held from the 13rd to the 16th of August, almost all people in Japan take some days off, despite the fact that Obon is not an official holiday. During this period, people often return to their hometown to visit the graves of their ancestors. As such, it is a very important holiday.

However, in Nagasaki prefecture, which is located in the far west of Japan, a few unique customs can be observed. First, there is an event named “Shoro-nagashi” in Nagasaki, a tradition-

al event held during Obon. In this event, crewless boats with many lanterns called “Shoro-bune” are carried to the river; these boats symbolize the carrying of the spirits of the deceased. You may imagine this to be a very beautiful or solemn view, in fact, it is beautiful but not that solemn. This event is a scene of liveliness with firecrackers accompanying animated chatter and festivities. Some might even consider “Shoro-nagashi” to be too loud and showy to appropriately welcome the dead.

Perhaps the most surprising thing is that the people of Nagasaki celebrate Obon with fireworks, even though

this holiday is in remembrance of the deceased. They play with friends or relatives, lighting up hand-held fireworks. Moreover, they play with



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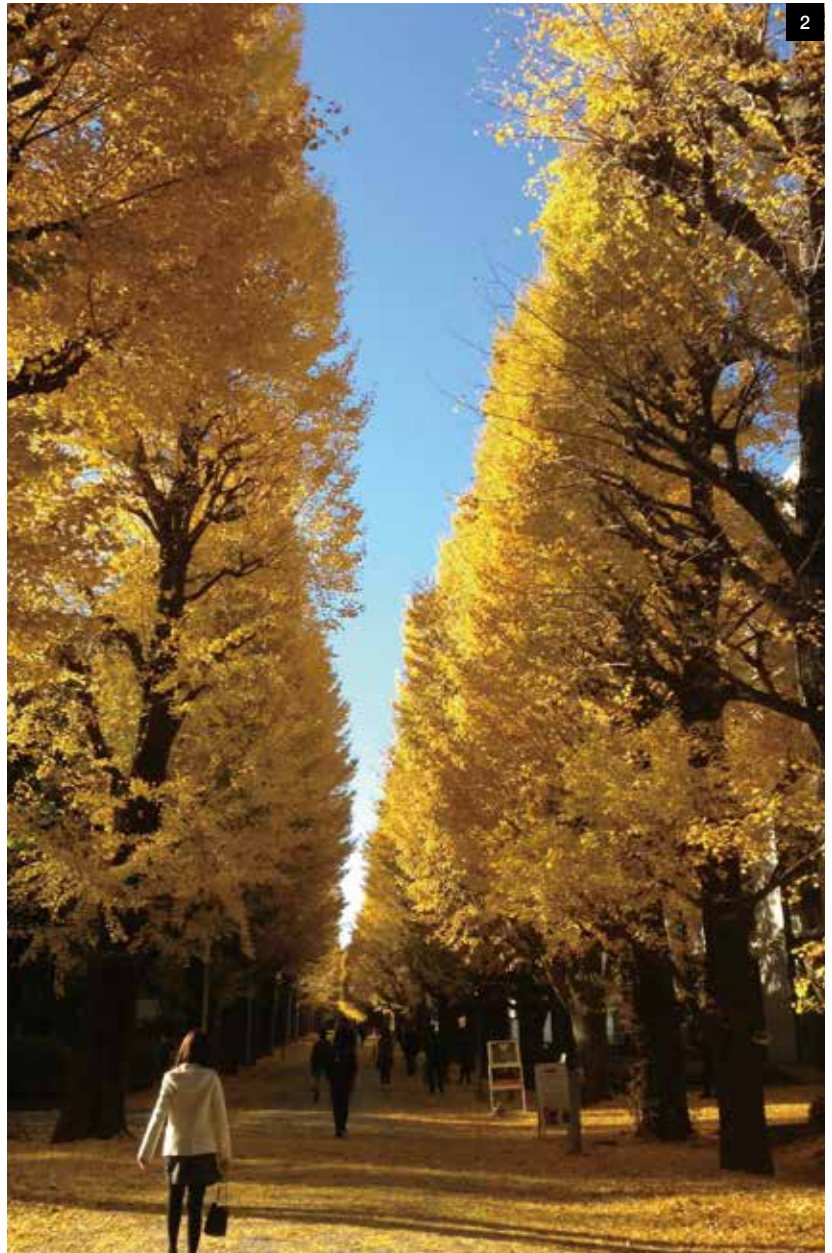
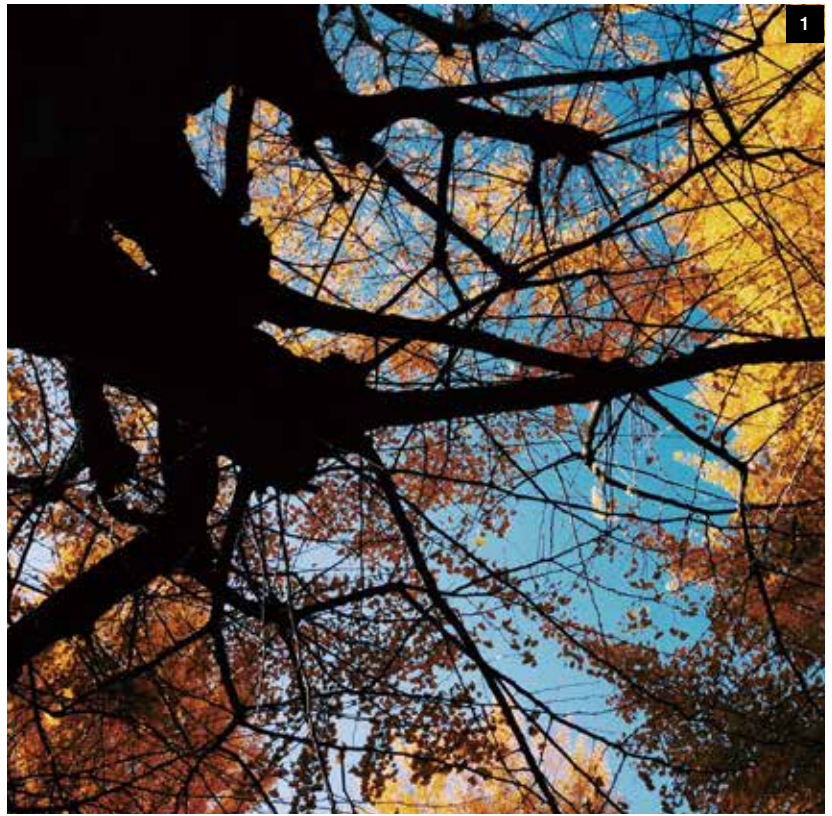
Tempura has a relatively long history in Japan, but surprisingly, tempura was not born in Japan. Tempura was introduced into Japan in the middle of the 16th century from Portugal. Tempura did not spread to ordinary people in Japan for some time because it was made with a lot of oil, which made it prohibitively expensive at that time. However, in the Edo period (1603-1867), tempura got less expensive and became much more popular among the common people. Tempura was so popular that it was even mentioned in some books and essays. At first, people regarded tempura as just a snack and it was often sold in stands. It was not until the Meiji period (1868-1912) that tempura restaurants began to appear, and gradually tempura has been considered as a typical Japanese dish.

There is an interesting anecdote that shows just how much tempura meant to Edo-era Japanese people. The Edo period was created and managed by the Tokugawa family. Ieyasu, the first Tokugawa shogun (i.e. samurai general), was very careful about his health in his old age, yet he still loved tempura very much. Even though he paid the closest attention to his health, he was so engrossed in tempura that one day he ate too much of it, which eventually led to his death. Even if the authenticity of this story is questionable, it is fair to say that it implies tempura was considered a common dish in the Edo period.

Tempura is just a food, but have you ever thought about the history of Japanese food itself? I recommend you consider learning more about the history of these sorts of day to day food. Maybe it will change your viewpoint on this sort of food and it will lead to a positive change in your eating life.

them around the graves. In general, it is fair to say that such a custom is out of the ordinary, in Japan.

I was born in Nagasaki and visit the area almost every Obon season. Some (or perhaps most) people say that Nagasaki's customs are imprudent. They also feel that it is too noisy to mourn the deceased. Personally, I'm not sure but I think it seems a little imprudent, as well. However, I also feel that this cheerful mourning does not really pose as a problem; it could even be seen as important. Of course these kind of ceremonies should be held so as not to insult the deceased, but this does not necessarily mean that it cannot be cheerful. Their way to express their respect for the deceased may be a little unique, but what is important is just to respectfully remember the deceased. I do not think this means we have to be too gloomy. I guess we should learn to accept and tolerate such rare customs.



1 割れ空 (Fragmented sky). Photo by Cai Yuan Sang. 2 輝き (Glow). Photo by Liao Tze-Hsuan.



"On mountain's top," Trinh Xuan Truong. ICKO Photo Contest 2015 Grand Prize winner.

Editor's Note

Komaba Times is an English-language newsletter written by students at the University of Tokyo. Our goal is to create a place for students to voice their opinions to the university community as well as to the wider world. This year we were delighted to have many former Komaba Times writers reprise their role and contribute a piece. We are also excited to showcase the winning photographs from the International Center Komaba Office Photo Contest.

Komaba Times has also started to cooperate with Todai Shimbun, which is the official student newspaper at the University. Some of the stories from Komaba Times are now being reposted on Todai Shimbun for their digital content. We are delighted that these alliances are being formed and hope that this nurtures our journalistic community. We believe student journalism will increasingly gain relevance as the voting age has been lowered to 18.

We hope to hear from readers as well as students who would like to join our endeavor.

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