

# e-vision

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The Official Publication of the English Engineering Education Program of Hokkaido University.



# talk of the town

## national wealth

by jaja gaid



### About the Author

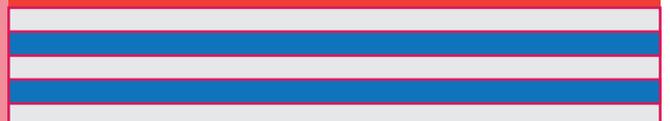
Jaja Gaid is in her second year in the master's program with the Laboratory of Transportation Intelligence.

The valuation of currencies is based on the volume of gold reserves central banks of countries possess. But as an effort to stimulate the local economy, central banks are at liberty to issue money if there is too little of it circulating in the country. If there is too much of it, prices will rise. The government's role is to strike a balance between what goes around, and what is saved—to keep the economy running. Such are the workings of money that it becomes virtually impossible for economies to stagnate or recede—as long as the circulation is sustained—as long as there are domestic exchanges of goods and services. This is clear, simple logic. But economies do stagnate and recede—even the US economy is in recession! With this in mind, let's see what lessons the developing world can draw from the latest talk of the town—the US recession!

Over issuance of money for circulation defies the gold standard for money to some degree. Spurring large injections of dollars in order to help the domestic economy recover from the downslides of 9/11 (and all that this entails) put money in circulation in the US without corresponding value in gold standards, a mild distortion I am ill-equipped to calculate. The dot-com boom, as the good Professor Prabhu Gupta would emphasize, was also a co-agent in circulating even more virtual amounts as investments rose with no tangible returns.

Here's the rub: the market operated with too much virtual money, made and unmade by investments made also with virtual wealth. When crises set in and the real thing was in demand, stock market failed. Investment banks start filing bankruptcy. Take Lehman Brothers (a global investment bank) as the most vivid example of how investment-based economies are bound to fail because they operate too much on promised money, not real money secured according to gold standards. The lesson: go back to the basics. Revert to trade-based economies. To put it more simply, promote bartering with co-developing countries. Live on the real things, the basic things, not on markets based entirely on speculations. The US recession is partly an outcome of the failure of the stock market to sustain genuine economic exchange because the singular medium of trade was money that did not exist!

"The US recession is partly an outcome of the failure of the stock market to sustain genuine economic exchange because the singular medium of trade was money that did not exist!"



As a non-economist, it also comes to me as a huge shock why developing countries bustling with economic activities fall way below the standard measure of national wealth—the GDP. Why is there less income from exporting a thousand tons of Pacific tuna and more on er... wine and tourism? Governance may be another story entirely. I itch to write deeply on the matter; but I find that the best explanation for this fallacious valuation for money is the killer rate, the interest rate. Development paradigms of developing countries are influenced by structural adjustment loans, bilateral and multilateral loans that are made with interest rates that foster a perpetual loaning system, putting additional value to money, a value that doesn't exist. What is the lesson for the Third World? Loan less. Loan not. Do not copy the structural prototype of Western cities and build your own, using a huge loan from a non-answerable, non-accountable institution called the World Bank.

The third lesson we can derive is based on the energy crisis. Fact: the US is the largest consumer of oil. Although there are various factors that cause oil prices to fluctuate, among the most pressing is the issue of supply. On a global scale, about 3 million barrels of oil are supplied to the world each day. Allow me to exaggerate that all the products we use are a result of petroleum use (acquisition, processing, packaging, transport, promotion, usage, and disposal). Face it: “we live

in the fossil age” (indeed!). Be it a race for the resource that brought trouble to the Middle East or oil scarcity that raised the price of every other commodity, the message is clear for developing countries: depend less on oil. Resort to alternative sources of energy and decentralize power sources to promote locally competitive energy sources. Run your system based on what you have; the less dependent on importation, the better.

Fact: national wealth includes natural resource. Singaporeans are smart. They run a knowledge-based economy. What of the Third World? How we harvest and manage our resources makes GDP the most obsolete measure of wealth. The economic recession in the States tells us why.

“Development paradigms of developing countries are influenced by structural adjustment loans, bilateral and multilateral loans that are made with interest rates that foster a perpetual loaning system, putting additional value to money, a value that doesn't exist.”



# English or Japanese



**editor's note: the e3 program was established to promote English as the official medium of instruction in the Graduate School of Engineering.**

**by naoshi baba**

A new program for Asian students will start in the Graduate School of Engineering this October. This program is supported by METI (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) and MEXT. The title of the program can be translated into English as "Fostering highly educated experts from foreign students based on the concept of Asian Human Resource Funds". The scholarship is awarded to foreign students who are willing to work in industrial companies in Hokkaido or Japan after their graduation. In this program foreign students must take several lectures in Japanese, because they will work in Japanese industrial companies.

This program reminds me of some Japanese corporations' scholarship programs, founded in the late 90's. One of their objectives is to provide scholarship opportunities to privately financed students from Asian countries who wish to pursue a master's course in Japan. Applicants are required to have adequate proficiency in the Japanese language not only for studying at master's level but also for understanding Japanese culture.

Both these programs state to aim to foster highly educated experts who can contribute to promote mutual friendship between their home countries and Japan. They require Japanese language

proficiency and foreign students need to take lectures in Japanese.

On the other hand, lectures for the e<sup>3</sup> students are delivered in English. Recently it is said that 30% of the lectures should be done in English. This means that Japanese students must have English language proficiency. It becomes apparent that Japanese students will have to take lectures in English. For the e<sup>3</sup> students it would be desirable also take some lectures in Japanese.

*About the Writer:* Prof. Naoshi Baba is a professor at the Laboratory of Photonics Engineering, under the Applied Physics and Engineering Course



Prof. Baba appreciates your comments. Kindly address them to [nbaba@sog.hokudai.ac.jp](mailto:nbaba@sog.hokudai.ac.jp) as cc: Mail to the editor.

# boys be ambitious

## policy initiatives for internationalizing Japanese universities

by werawan manakul

I am writing this article in my hotel room in Seoul. It is Friday morning and I have been here since Monday evening to attend a workshop on world university ranking and the Asia Pacific Professional Leaders in Education Conference. So far conferences I have attended dealt with engineering education. This conference therefore provides me an overall picture of higher education not only in the engineering fields and a glimpse into the efforts that universities in various countries exert in order to attract international students.

At the exhibition, there are over 40 booths from universities and education-related organizations. They represent countries that have long been destinations for Asian students and many countries from East and Southeast Asia.

Many presentations describe the latest educational policy set by their governments. The word “internationalization” is repeatedly used. Some countries set numerical targets for the number of international students, as well as faculty. Let’s look at the country in which we now reside. Japan aims to triple the number of international students in 20 years, and universities are expected to increase the number of international students and faculty to 20% and 30%, respectively. The number of courses taught in English should also be increased to 30%.

**“Japan aims to triple the number of international students in 20 years, and universities are expected to increase the number of international students and faculty to 20% and 30%, respectively.”**

Globalization and the IT revolution have completely changed the economic landscape. I am certain that every government realizes that producing graduates that meet local manpower needs alone is not sufficient for the country to survive. Graduates should be able to compete locally and internationally.

The workshop and conference I am attending are held at Yonsei University, the oldest and one of the largest private universities in Korea. The workshop is being held at the newly opened Samsung Library, while the conference is at the engineering exhibition hall. The library, opened two months ago, applies the most advance information technology in every aspect from entering, booking study cubicles, etc, to posting messages on the e-board.

Besides the library facilities, which stun me, what impresses me most is the liveliness of Korean students. I do not know the precise number, but I roughly count that there must be no less than 30 students assisting conference participants. They speak English well and very well (with that all-American accent). I chat with some of them and learn that they are undergraduate students. It was refreshing having them around.





“However being a member of Hokkaido University I would still like to follow Dr Clark’s famous parting words, “Boys, be ambitious!” Changing the entire university is an impossible dream but changing our Graduate School of Engineering is not.”



What makes the difference in the outlook of this young generation growing up in Korea and that in Japan? Koreans believe that it is important that they embrace internationalization, which inevitably includes the international language, in order to compete in the global market. Universities give incentives to faculty who teach in English. Parents do their utmost to make sure that their children can speak English and employers regard English as one of the must have qualifications. On the contrary, while the Japanese government announces, one after another, strategic plans on internationalization and the improvement of English proficiency of its citizens, most Japanese people regard “internationalization” as someone else’s business.

Woodrow Wilson is reported to have said that it is easier to move a cemetery than to change a university. I completely agree with him. However being a member of Hokkaido University I would still like to follow Dr Clark’s famous parting words, “Boys, be ambitious!” Changing the entire university is an impossible dream but changing our Graduate School of Engineering is not. If all e3 family members, like

the Koreans, regard “internationalization” as their and not someone else’s business, I am confident in our School becoming globally competitive – a place we all can be proud of.

*About the Writer:* Dr. Werawan Manakul is the coordinator of the English Engineering Education Program (e<sup>3</sup>) of the Graduate School of Engineering in Hokkaido University.



# sustaining *sustainability*

## what are we really interested in?"

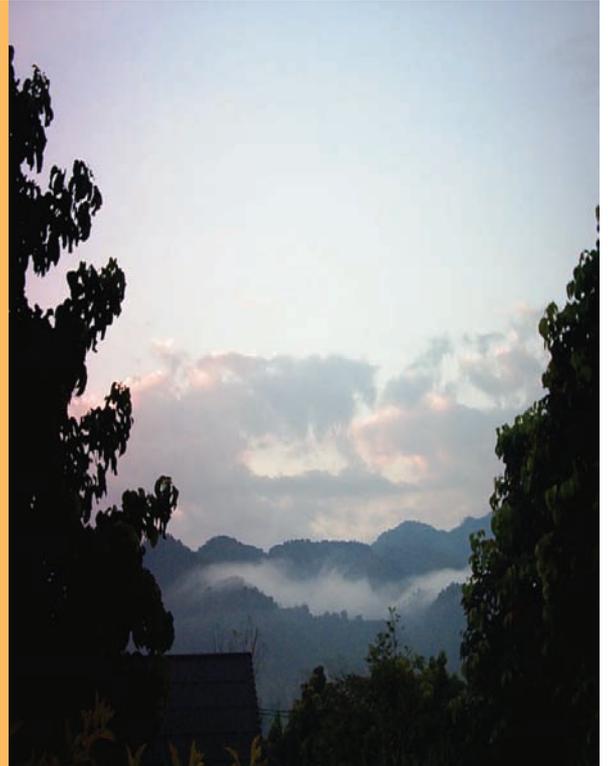
by upaka sanjeewa rathnayake

Even though it is very difficult to give an exact, straight forward definition for Sustainability, the term has been well established in the world in recent decades. However, personally, I find a small fissure in the process by which Sustainability is being achieved. Allow me to talk more about this fissure.

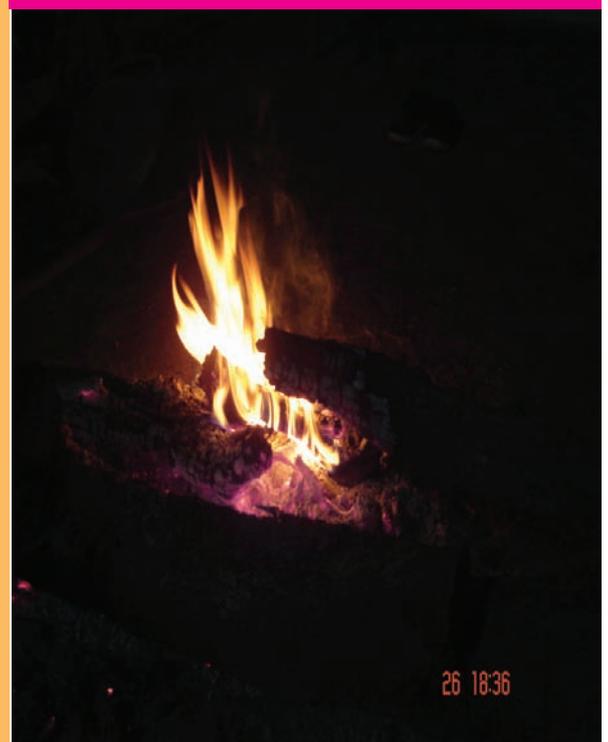
More than Sustainability as a process, my main question is on the result: are we getting real output from best practices for Sustainability? Perhaps yes; but I think these outputs are not relevant to each other. Most of these results come out as highly independent and geographically separate outputs, which I find lacking in global impact. What I mean to say is that our current efforts are more regional in nature, and so we must take some pause and start thinking and acting more globally as we are facing global problems already.

At present, most of our solutions are situation-based, or region-based. But the alarming threats we are facing, such as CO2 emissions, cover all situations and all regions. To put it more simply, it is time we think as one body of people who must act globally to make the future more livable for the succeeding generations. I apologize for expecting too much. But this is precisely how the fissure can be filled.

Newspapers and research journals talk about various problems, few with possible solutions, more so with the problems. There is an endless report on how humans have caused every environmental problem known on the planet. Call me a pessimist. Call me a bore. But it simply exhausts me to read so much about the history of our problems because we cannot start working from the past. We should start now. We cannot undo the past so we have to adapt to the current situation and provide sustainable solutions for future processes in production, consumption, and growth. Learning should be directed only towards that which secures us a good future.



"Objectives are best discussed only when implementation is feasible. MDGs concern the world; hence, global implementation is as important."



With this in mind, I get even more bothered. Why are there research centers for developing new kinds of weapons? Just when will these weapons be necessary? And what of the 8 MDGs (Millenium Development Goals)? There are eight propositions ranging from ending poverty by half, halting the spread of AIDS/HIV, and providing primary education for all. The agreed deadline is the year 2015. The idea is beautiful, highly ambitious but very good for the world. My only question is whether or not we are implementing this globally, or if it is feasible to even implement these programs globally. Objectives are best discussed only when implementation is feasible. MDGs concern the world; hence, global implementation is as important.

Take for instance the energy issue. Oil is a non-renewable resource (not unless we live for another million years), which is unavailable in many countries. The way we have mismanaged this resource in the last fifty years is not a secret; but because of rising demands and oil prices, developed countries are forced to find alternative solutions. This is good. Really. But their solutions might not be any better. Some countries are resorting to getting ethanol from food (corn): the promising future of biofuels. This, they say, is a sustainable solution for

“Situation-based, region-based thinking gives avenue for distortions in Sustainability principles.”

the energy crisis; but it seems very unacceptable, for me for instance, to convert food to provide energy. There are countries in Africa with food shortage, with corn as their staple food. Maybe the value of food is relative. Rich country. Poor country. What is best regionally may be globally unacceptable.

Situation-based, region-based thinking gives avenue for distortions in Sustainability principles. There is a theory that the current wars are entirely about oil. Countries without oil will wage war against those who have it. Pretty soon we might have wars for water too—if we do not cease to think about what we have or don't have in our regions.

It is time we think and act and work together as one people, less as social units with powerful labels that are difficult to get rid of: country, color, or faith. To achieve Sustainability, we must remember we have one enemy, one goal which extends to the future generations. Unless we do this, all our efforts in various scales will be futile.



## About the Author

Upaka sanjeewa Rathnayake is in his second year in the master's program with the Laboratory of River and Watershed

# not just we-men la carolina

by david blanco

*I walk through the north wing of the faculty of engineering. Everything is immaculately clean, squeaky clean, and the whiteness of the walls are blinding! I enter the Laboratory of Urban and Regional Design, and in the midst of all this newness, I immediately recognize some feminine touch in the room: a plant!!! Aroma-rich coffee!!!! And a sweet, strong Colombian Spanish callout, "Quítese esa barba que le queda horrible!"*

*Carolina Blanco, a graduate from the National University of Colombia, is best remembered for her active involvement in the English Program (now e<sup>3</sup>), a former vice-president (wink!). In 2005, she earned her masters in Socio-Environmental Engineering. Just last year, she married a fellow hokudaisei, Lukasz Zablonki from Poland, six years after they first met in Bogotá, where Lukasz himself was a ryuugakusei. Carolina Blanco-Zablonki is now working on a new attachment to her name: a Ph. D.*

*But let's take advantage of my brotherly status and go beyond the written facts!*



*A great ending for a great time, thanks Carolina! May your words echo in our minds just as your laughter echoes throughout the university!*

About the Author: David Blanco is in his first year in the master's program with the Laboratory of Environmental Systems Research.

## What is the best way to keep fit despite so much work?

Every time you stand up from your desk, go running, move, shake it, stretch. A good posture while sitting is very important! Going to the swimming pool and reading a good book that's not related with your field are two important stress relievers.

## As you have been in Japan for many years, how have your expectations changed?

At the beginning, when you come to Japan you are very "academically oriented," but when you face a system that is so different, you start to broaden your perspective of the world, introducing more elements to your personality, specially regarding tolerance and understanding of the different cultural treasures that each culture possesses. And Japan being such a different country, you start to respect it a lot.

## Something from Japan that you will miss for life?

I will miss the security that allows me to do so many things! To work pretty late at the university, to go home walking or even coming after 11 pm when going to the gym, to relax in a park with your laptop, or to submit to your moods and go alone for a drink or downtown for some dancing. I will also miss my main transport medium, my bike, not to mention the transportation infrastructure that makes commuting here so comfortable, which is not always common in other countries. Finally I will miss the *onigiris*, the *ikakakiagi* *soba* and the best *sushi* on Planet Earth!

## If you had the chance to choose again, would you still choose to be an architect?

A dancer (almost with no hesitation, then adds...) Well... I

would have tried to make both careers...

## How can we improve the e3 program?

If classes don't work well, professors can introduce small projects instead. In this way, completing a project can be more fulfilling for both students and teachers. Students should not lose the initiative they have when they arrive... They should understand and be flexible with the differences, but continuously demand the best quality and at the same time give their best... Always!

## What is the difference between being married and not?

I'm so fortunate to have a very open and self-assured person like Lukasz for my partner. I can continue with all my activities. Despite all the big challenges and responsibilities that marriage entails, you know that you are going to share your lifetime with one person, enriching each other. This makes you feel better in all spheres.

## Something you have always wanted to do in Japan but have never done?

Join a contemporary dance group, and climb Mount Fuji.

## At the end, everything reduces to.....?

Standing up and going on...

## Some words for the newbies?

The world has more than 2000 universities. You have the fortune to be enrolled in one of the top 150<sup>th</sup>. You have access to equipment and excellent facilities so take advantage of it! Some Japanese professors might look a bit shy, but they are geniuses in their own field. Take advantage of your potentials. The general rule of life: don't expect anyone to make you happy... Be happy by yourself!



About the Author:  
Miss Jintana Wongta is a first year masteral student at the Water Quality Control Engineering Laboratory of the Graduate School of Engineering.

Author's Favorite Quote, by G. Randolph:  
"Truly great friends are hard to find, difficult to leave, and impossible to forget!!!"



# not just we-men

## our new academic affairs officer

by jintana wongta

*Hello and haloo! Pacing at the corridors, armed with a bunch of questions co-authored by my well and able cameraman (Upaka), I had the privilege of interviewing this very lovely lady, familiar to us all but actually new to the Academic Affairs Office, Miss Naoko Ikeno.*

### **When did you start your working here in Hokkaido University?**

I came here in July 2007 to start my work at the General Office of the Faculty of Engineering, and in January 2008 I started at the Academic Affairs Office (AAO). I'm quite new in this office now.

### **What are your *kyoumu* duties at the AAO?**

I work with international students, and as well as Japanese students. I mainly work on caring international students such as medical insurance, dormitory and scholarship applications, procedure related MEXT scholarships, and the some new projects on international students started this year. At the office, we always welcome you and we don't mind if you're from overseas or from Japan.

### **Where did you study?**

Hokkaido is my hometown; but I graduated from Kobe City University of Foreign Studies, the same university which Mifue san graduated.

### **Why Kobe?**

(Because) I'm interested in foreign studies. We learned (about) cultures overseas. The Public Universities of Foreign Studies are located only in Osaka, Tokyo and Kobe; so I choose Kobe.

### **Did you work in Hokkaido University right after finishing your degree?**

No, after graduation I went to London to enjoy my life and improve my English skill for 1 year. After that I came back to Sapporo and worked at an office doing web magazine, publishing art and design information. They publish overseas articles from about 11 different cities around the world, it was exciting to me.

### **What's most interesting about London?**

There are many interesting things! For example, they have a lot of beautiful parks even though it's a big city, as you know. In May, there are a lot of roses out there. I also used to go to clubs and pubs with friends from the dormitory. I lived in the university dormitory, which has very international atmosphere with students from

overseas such as Portugal, Sweden, Germany, and the USA.

### **Did you have any problems while you were in London?**

Yes, of course. One experience was in purchasing the cell phone. I was at a shop and had to ask the salesman about the payment system and the phone functions. I couldn't understand what he was saying, so I had to ask again and again... may be over 5 times. It was a real language barrier!

I couldn't understand every word in speaking English at that time. I realized facial expressions and body language are important to survive.

### **But your English is very good! What would you advise Japanese students on improving their English?**

Having the opportunity is really difficult, but try to make it. Do not take it so seriously, just participate in English classes or groups and have some chat freely, because it takes practice to expressing yourself in another language. Sometimes it might seem difficult to say something; in that case, you can see some examples from text books or some magazines.

### **Do you have any message suggestion for e<sup>3</sup> students when they go to the AAO office?**

Most students smile when they come to AAO office; but some new students seem anxious. I hope them to relief themselves and enjoy their short time experience here in Sapporo. \*\*\*Please sign for your scholarship every month ☺\*\*\*

### **What do you do in your spare time?**

I like to do some handicrafts. I'm planning to sell some works in the flea market called "Art Market" at Sapporo Art Park. I'm making *Otoshidama* envelopes (for New Year and special envelopes for giving money to children) to sell there. I'm also interested in wearing Kimono and going to Kimono café once a month. Some exhibition and fortune telling is held there. I have some Kimono-friends to go there with and they are actually ones who are going to open the shop at Art Market with me.

# yim noi naka

smile to me

by maiko akatsuka



*About the Author:* Maiko Akatsuka is an M2 student at the Laboratory of Mineral Processing and Resource Recycling. She is an active co-organizer of CEED-sponsored activities for enhanced interaction between Japanese and foreign students.

In August last year, I went to visit Thailand for my internship.

I have been studying about the development of mining and recycling using several mining technologies. The theme of my research is on the recycling of shredder residue of plastics. I was interested and so eager to experience a real mine. Unfortunately, in Japan, major mines have already closed due to various reasons; so, I wanted to go abroad to have a real experience in mines.

It was too bad that during my internship, I fell ill and had to be brought to the hospital. Most of the time, I couldn't communicate well with the Thais, even in English. In Japan, my foreigner friends talk to me in English with some mix of Japanese words and at a steady slow pace. However, at the hospital in Thailand, the doctor spoke using difficult medical words. Communicating with the nurses about my illness was also difficult for me. I really needed to tell them the specifics, I had to. And I did—the best I could. And when I began to get better, I was in better condition to spark conversations—in English. Through this experience, I came to learn that the heart of communication lies in the will to communicate.

Although I wasn't able to finish my internship program, I gained so much more from it. After getting better, I was able to go to sight seeing places around Bangkok and devour all sorts of fruits, which are very expensive in Japan! It cost me only 150 baht (600 yen) to try each fruit and fill my stomach.

Last spring, three students from Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, came to Hokkaido University for their internship too. They were among those who welcomed me back in Thailand last year. I did some experiments with them in our laboratory and took them around Sapporo for sightseeing, as a return of their hospitality during my stay in Thailand.

The internship and the visit of Thai interns were very good experiences for me. With foreign students, English is frequently used to discuss all topics. There is no other way of communicating with them but only through English. So after my internship, I tried talking more with my international friends in English and earned more friends.

Last but not the least, I want to extend my gratitude to my professor, for giving me the opportunity to visit Thailand. I also want to give a lot of thanks to the Thai professors and students for inviting me to Thailand and helping me throughout my stay.



# backpacker trails

## around hokkaido in summer

by mari korhonen

It was mid-June when I finished my three-month internship at Hokkaido University. Time had flown by so fast, and in addition to life in the laboratory, I also wanted to see the other side of Japan before returning to Finland. Fortunately, or actually on purpose, my plane ticket was of the flexible kind, so putting in an extra month for local traveling was quite easy. I wanted to see the wilderness and natural beauty for which Hokkaido is most famous; so I drafted an unfixed plan, packed my backpack, and set out for the trip I am most excited to tell you about now.

I got around the regular way, by bus or train, and several nights in hostels. I also got a closer look at the local people in rural Hokkaido by *woofing* and hitchhiking. Having to travel alone felt a bit lonesome at first. 'One' can be a lonely number; but I didn't my options were limited and so was my time, so I did what I could do and made the most out of everything, solo. Looking back, I realize it really was worth my while. I met many people, had a lot of practice with my Japanese, and ended up in many situations that would have not been possible if I had been traveling with a group or a complete plan.

WOOOFING is a great way to see rural Japan by doing volunteer work in organic farms. There are around 50 host farms in

Hokkaido alone. I was lucky to visit two of them for a week each during my travels. In exchange for around six hours of work a day, the *woofers* get food, accommodation and maybe even friends for a lifetime. [see: [www.woofjapan.org](http://www.woofjapan.org) for more info!]

HITCH HIKING, Hokkaido has a reputation for being safe, cheap, and easy way to get around. For some locals, a hitch hiker seems to be the strangest, most uncommon sight. But that was never a problem for me. My sole problem was heading once to the wrong direction! Rental cars and tour buses usually drove past me. Most tourists going around the area appear to have fairly fixed patterns. Since my movements were mostly random at their best, it was just impossible at times to get a lift to the direction to which I wanted to go. Do not try to resist the planned routes of mass tourism. They will win! Well, eventually that was not a bad thing at all. Usually someone going the other way stopped, told me there was a nice place they were going to see and asked if I wanted to join them even though it was nowhere close to my destination. I got to go to Lake Akan because of this.

When I came to Japan, I wanted to see daily life, the real Japan, not just the tourist attractions. However, after leaving the lab, I realized that there is so much more out there, that life in the city even with all the *matsuri* and cultural events is only such a narrow view of life in Hokkaido. So I want to say to all: take time off! Go beyond Asahiyama zoo! There's so much more to see (and experience)!

## BEYOND BORDERE:VISION



About the Author: Miss Mari Korhonen was an intern at the Laboratory of Urban Water System Engineering. She is an undergraduate student from Finland.

# hotter than hot

## the hottest summer in my life

by toshikatsu takagi



About the Author: M2 -  
Division of Mechanical  
and Space Engineering

I went to Oman from July 1 to September 2 last year. I had heard about Oman before as Japan usually takes on Oman in the World Cup Asian qualifiers. But the country seemed relatively unfamiliar to the Japanese, especially me. My parents too didn't know so much about Oman. Mass media covering terrorism in the Middle East made them more concerned about my trip. But I must say now, after having been there, that Oman is a very safe country.

I chose to be trained at an automobile services company because I wanted to fully understand the mechanisms within the automobile. When I was in 3rd grade, I designed a gasoline engine in class and ever since then my interest in cars grew.

In Oman, there are a lot of immigrants from India and Sri Lanka—my trainer himself came from the latter. At first I didn't know enough technical terms necessary to repair cars. I was totally dependent on my trainer for help. I read the manuals everyday and kept asking questions. Later, my trainer let me repair or replace parts by myself.

The working area was sooooo hot. There was no air conditioning. The temperature hit a maximum 50 C with 90% relative humidity. The room some-

times was filled with car exhausts. I sometimes had severe headaches and dehydration. However, to my surprise, I got to fix a lot of cars despite the terrible environment. The training deepened my understanding about automobiles.

After working, I would go to the bar and pool with my friends. Sometimes we gathered in someone's room and discussed war, religion, culture, industry, economy, ways of thinking, and so on—topics I seldom discuss with the Japanese. I enjoyed these chats very much. I realized later that it was also through these that my conversational English improved—simply by talking!

On the weekends, people in IASETE-Oman took us around the country to learn about their culture. We went to the mosques, the beautiful sea and the fort, among others. We also went to Dubai. Dubai, as we all know, is one of the economically hot places in the world right now. I could feel the energy emanating from the high-rise buildings (more than 600 m!).

I gained so much from my internship in Oman—experiences I never would have had in Japan. I felt that my perspectives were broadened and I believe I learned lessons I will carry on for the rest of my life.

# gift of the Nile

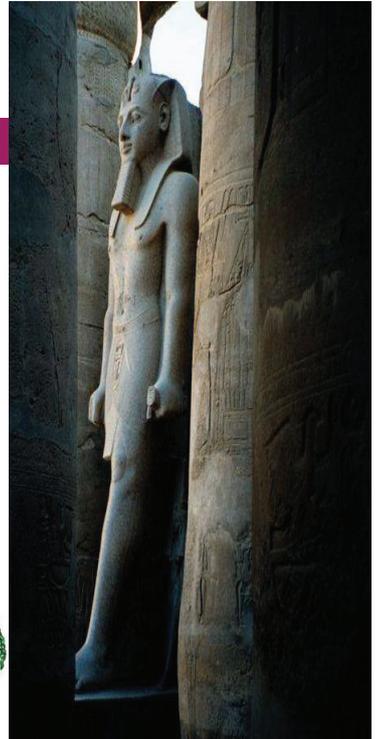
## hometown feature

by mohamed zakaria hassan

Egyptian history is a rich source of other histories—such as those that led to the development of the arts or architecture, and the hieroglyphs that gave birth to the writing system. I, for one, am proud to say that Egypt moved from the prehistoric ages to become the first country with a documented history—from the age of Pharaohs to being Greco-Roman, then Coptic, and later an Islamic Protectorate. These stages in history reflect the Egyptian character of love, tolerance, heartiness, and hospitality.



I would love for you to google Egypt, sit and have coffee with me for your questions while I spill the answers. But as a hometown feature for Beyond Borders, allow me to orient you with Egypt in ways wikipedia authors don't know how. It is difficult to discuss further with a few lines, because it so much more than the Pyramids. So let me take you to my hometown, Aswan.



Aswan is Egypt's southernmost city, the main gate to the rest of Africa. It opened to tourists since the 19th century. From the riverside you can see the feluccas (famous sailboats in Aswan). From the hilltops you can see the mausoleum of Mohammed Shah Aga Khan, spiritual leader of the Ismailis, a Shiite section. You can visit his white Carrara marble tomb, where his widow (the Begum) placed a rose everyday.

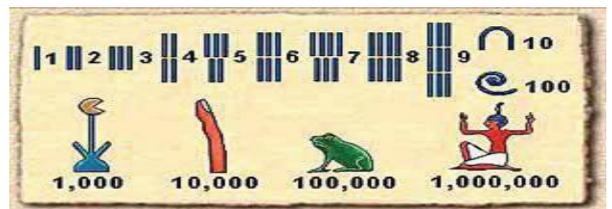
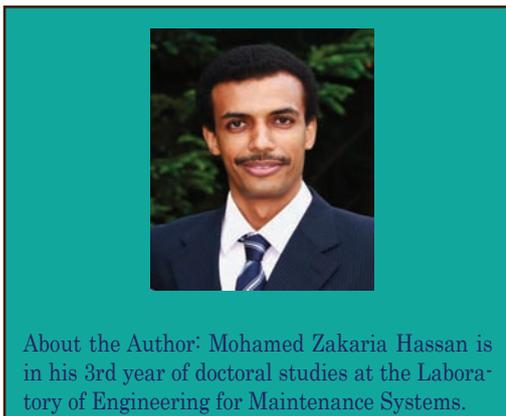
Aswan is within the Nubian lands. Nubian states, however, disappeared with the rise of the 1st dynasty in Egypt. The Nubian museum showcases 4500 years of Nubian history, including a model of the Nubian house. Abu Simbel is also home to the temple of the famous Ramses II—among the most impressive temples in the world. His statue is visible even from several miles of

distance, watching his visitors come 3100 years later. Next to it is a smaller temple dedicated to Hathor, idol of love, and Queen Nefertari—his favorite among 6 wives (with whom he had a hundred children!). He definitely had time for everything—apart from commanding troops and building an empire! To date, the Abu Simbel temple is venue for the biannual Sun Festival, which actually also recalls the Nubian culture!



The Aswan bazaar is among the most beautiful in Egypt. The most famous souvenir is the shisha (water pipe); but I would also recommend you to buy traditional spices like the karkadeh, the indigo and henna for dyeing. You can have the popular henna tattoos too!

There you go, a personalized guide to Gift of the Nile. I hope that these vivid descriptions entice you to come to Aswan and look beyond the pyramids and into the rich culture and history of the land I am blessed to belong.



# sushi to burgers

saving the shape of a nation

by mifue shimemura

According to the statistics presented by the Japanese Immigration Office back in 2007, the number of people who entered Japan in that year was almost twice that in 2002. One of the main reasons is that the Japanese government has been inviting our neighbors, South Korea and China, to come and visit Japan. However, I am sure that this isn't the only reason we are having more and more tourists coming in. You might say there are many elements in Japan that attract tourists from all over the world, such as advanced technologies, electronic devices, cars, anime, pop-culture, *kawaii* stuff (Hello Kitty!), tradition, history...and the last but not the least, one must not forget Japanese cuisine.

Before I wrote this article, I asked people randomly online as to "why they chose Japan," and I got a few variations with the answers, all of which included one fact: food is great!!! If you watch Hollywood blockbuster movies often like I do, you will understand what I mean when you see at least once that they always have this scene of people eating Sushi or discussing Sushi. If you read interviews with Hollywood movie stars, you will be surprised how many of them say "Sushi!", when asked about their favorite dish. That's right! Japanese food gets more attention around the world. People think that the Japanese tend to be slim because they only eat good and healthy Japanese food everyday, such as fish, beans and sea weed, which are all fiber-rich. However, the Japanese label for slimness will gradually fade away. In a decade or two, when kids celebrate their "coming-of-age day," you may see most of them squeezing into their kimono or hakama.

People who are reading this article while living in Japan should



understand why this is happening: we have too much food everywhere. Wherever you turn, there are many convenient stores full of junk foods. I believe that if you have to walk to a convenient store that is 20 blocks away because you are thirsty, 80% will be happy with just water. The rest of the 20% will get a soda or something; but they get the exercise of walking 20 blocks too! Doesn't this sound better for Japan's future?

Actually, having a lot of food should not be such a big issue if what you eat is good old Japanese traditional food, low-cal and cholesterol-free; but that simply is not the case. After the Second World War, Japanese people worked harder and harder to make this country better and more advanced, which introduced quick and easy meals, such as fast food or instant noodles. Also, meat and milk products were introduced around that time. Today, these things are part of our diet.

One survey says that, the death rate from heart diseases out of 100,000 people in Japan is 65.1 while in the U.K. it is 225.0, almost 4 times higher. Western countries have more people dying of heart diseases than of cancer due to the food they have been eating (meat and dairy products). This is precisely why they have started to appreciate Japanese food—as

"However, the Japanese label for slimness will gradually fade away. In a decade or two, when kids celebrate their "coming-of-age day," you may see most of them squeezing into their kimono or hakama."



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reflected by these frequent sushi scenes in movies. It is very interesting and at the same time ironic that the Japanese people are turning away from Japanese food, while more non-Japanese people are becoming aware of the benefits of Japanese food.

30% of all Japanese men that are in their 30's to 60's are said to be obese today. That is not a small number. Many wise people have said that change is a necessary step for the better, and I cannot agree more. However, it is important to know what needs to be changed and what not to. Living long is not everything, but living healthy is what everyone desires, right? For the bright future of this country, we need to destroy convenient stores!!! No, we just need to realize again how important it is to be back to our old customs: eating plant protein with plenty of vegetables and beans. Now, whether you are Japanese or not, we all live in Japan, a great country that can offer us healthy food. Let's learn how to make Japanese food and get healthier. When you go back to your country, tell your family and friends that sushi and tempura are not the only food from Japan. A final message to the Japanese readers (myself included): we cannot keep whistling around, thinking "we Japanese cannot get too big." We are being forewarned.