

SONODA WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY EXCHANGE REPORT

4TH - 21ST DECEMBER 2016



NAME: FIFINE TARI

PROGRAM: BACHELOR OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

I am a ni- Vanuatu citizen aged 33 years old doing first year at the University of the South Pacific, Laucala Campus this year and I participated in this program for about three weeks from the 4th to the 21st of December at the Sonoda Women's University in Japan, Amagasaki Prefecture.

Although, this was my second tour to Japan, I was just overjoyed to be offered another marvellous opportunity which was quite a remarkable experience indeed as I get to actually experience the authentic Japanese culture. From this exchange, I get to interact with so many wonderful people and made many new friends as well with both students at the university, other students who are also on exchange and lecturers at the university. I participated in various exciting activities and enjoyed the vivacious assorted Japanese culture.

I only knew very few basic Japanese words before going to Japan but I was so fortunate to be given the opportunity to attend Japanese classes taught by a lecturer who made the Japanese lessons so interesting and easy for a beginner like me. I can now introduce myself in Japanese and can understand Japanese a bit when spoken to and this has given me a bit of pride just to think that I can understand Japanese a little.

Homestay at the Shin'Onsen city was the most interesting part of the trip as I get to meet and interact with very important delegates such as the mayor and his deputy, the city's chairman of the International Exchange Association. This shows how respectful the Japanese people are no matter their different backgrounds, they all demonstrated the same level of respect. Another fascinating experience is getting to bath in the Onshen daily with my host mother and sister and enjoying the drive up the mountain to where my host family lives and seeing deers. Visiting and boiling eggs in the city's hot spring was delicious and was wonderful and refreshing to actually bath from the natural hot springs pumped from underground. Feeling and adoring the beautiful mountain scenery covered with snow was just overwhelming. Amazingly yet, my host mother and sister took me to visit Totori City, Totori Sand Dunes and Illumination and Totori Sand Museum which was just so spectacular. This was my first time to actually see sand sculpture in reality.



Fig 1: Boiling eggs at the Hot Spring.

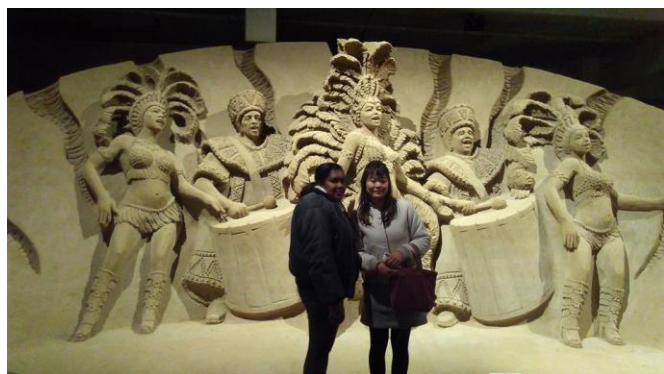


Fig 2: Visiting Totori Sand Museum

The Kimono fitting, tea ceremony, the elementary and high school visit, was a lifetime experience not to forget the Shinto shrine and having the experience to be shrine maidens for a few hours, attending origami class and enjoying the diverse Japanese dishes, the Japanese way. Obviously Japan is one of the leading countries in advanced technology but still implements a very rich and active culture. As an exchange student, I am very proud to be given the privilege to participate in these traditional Japanese activities and to enjoy them.



Fig 3: Kimono Fitting



Fig 4: Preparing traditional Japanese tea



Fig 5: Hamasaka Senior High School visit



Fig 6: Being Shrine maidens at the Shinto Shrine

I believe that the exchange has offered me a lot of experience and at the same time an eye opener, as such I would like to thank the Sonoda Women's University exchange team namely Keiji, David, Junko and Rena for their hard work in planning and making this exchange an enjoyable one with lots of laughter and learning. Lastly, but not least, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Sonoda Women's University for establishing this program so that Pacific students are able to participate and actually see Japan, learn and experience its diverse culture and giving me the honour to participate in it. Further gratitude goes to the students whom have a busy schedule but took their time to be our tour guide as well as attending to us one way or the other and are brave enough to practise their English with us. I am tremendously grateful for what you have done for us and I will always confide in other students at the USP and encouraging them to participate in the exchange as it was truly a one of a life time experience.

Special thanks goes to the University of the South Pacific and its International Office for offering us this opportunity to participate in the exchange, to see Japan and experience its diverse culture. It was an honour and I will always be indebted for that. Further thanks goes out to our USP International Mobility Officer Archana for all the hard work and preparations that she has done for us to be able to go for the exchange. To my other fellow friends whom we are all on the exchange program together, I would like to share my special thanks with you for making my three weeks stay in Japan a memorable experience. Although, we are from two different universities but we blend in together so well and become very good friends, helped each other out no matter our different cultures, therefore, I will never forget you all for that.



Fig 7: Us in our Kimonos

As we say in English, THANK YOU very much for all that you have done. In Vanuatu, we say "TANKIO TUMAS".