



From the World to Kumamoto University

From the most academic place in Kumamoto, aspiring to help energize Laos

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Prathoumxay Sousada came to Kumamoto from Laos in 2009.

While studying and contemplating community development in Japan, focusing on the case of Yufuin, a community similar to her hometown, she hopes to eventually make her own contribution to the development of her country.

I studied at a high school in Vientiane, where good educational facilities were available, thanks to a scholarship from the Kumamoto-Laos Friendship Association. Then, the head of the association, who is from Kumamoto City and a former Japanese Ambassador to Laos, suggested "Why don't you come to Kumamoto and learn about Japan?" So, I decided to come to Kumamoto.

Initially, I learned the Japanese language at a language school but, later, I thought that if I was going to study in Japan I wanted to not only learn the language but also about other aspects of Japan, such as its cultures, economy and legal system. So, I enrolled in the Graduate School at Kumamoto University. Here, I major in public policy, focusing on community development in Yufuin.

Blessed with an abundance of nature and its rural landscape, Yufuin is very like my hometown. I became interested in why such a small town attracts about twice as many as tourists as it has residents, and I began learning about Yufuin in the hope of finding some ideas that would be useful in revitalizing Laotian communities.

Through visiting the local town hall, guesthouses and Japanese-style inns to interview local people and reading local ordinances related to its townscape, I examine the successes and challenges entailed.

When I first arrived at Kumamoto University, I was impressed by the time-honored solemnity of the Red Gate and the Memorial Museum of the Fifth High School. Soseki Natsume also taught here, and the current faculty members are all scholars with distinguished backgrounds. I felt galvanized, realizing that I had come to the most academic place in Kumamoto: I still remember the feeling vividly.

The place I love best in Kumamoto is Amakusa. Since Laos is an inland country, we yearn for the seaside. Now, I love sashimi so much that I often prepare and eat gizzard shad which I buy at the Kokai shopping area, whereas back home in Laos, I hardly ever ate fish.

Looking ahead, I hope to return to Laos and work for the development of my homeland, making the most of what I have learned here and of my Japanese language skills.



Prathoumxay Sousada, in front of the Memorial Museum of the Fifth High School, her favorite spot on the Kumamoto University campus



The tranquil landscape of Yufuin: With a renewed love of her motherland, she concentrates on her studies.