

STUDENT LIFE IN JAPAN

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I am RABOTOVAO Andriatsitohaina Mamy, a student on the master's program at the Graduate School of Engineering at Kobe University. I am a member of the Structural Concrete Laboratory under Professor Miki Tomohiro. I am very pleased to have this opportunity to write for the JSCE Concrete Committee Newsletter and I express my gratitude to the editor for giving me the chance to share my experiences of living and studying in Japan.

I am from Madagascar. That's the large island off the east coast of Africa. Back there, I was always dreaming of coming to Japan. I had three main reasons for this dream: Japan is well known for its advanced technology, Japanese civil engineering is ahead of its time, and Japan education is to a very high standard. My dream came true in 2019, when the Japanese government offered me a scholarship to pursue graduate studies here.

The idea of coming to Japan was both exciting and frightening at the same time. I was worried about language and culture barriers. But in fact, there were no reason to worry because the Japanese people are a model of kindness and are very friendly. I remember the first day I had to come to the university. It was in the morning and it was going to be my first train ride in Japan. My main fear at the time was of getting lost. So, upon arrival at the station, I was quite stressed until a high school student helped me buy the ticket and showed me where I should get off. Then, on leaving the station, I met a Kobe University student at the bus station. He was so interested in my country.... He asked a lot of questions like: How is the weather? What is the national language? And so on. Then, he talked to me about the life of a Japanese student. By the end of the day we were friends. After that day, I was confident that everything would be fine; on my first day in Japan I overcame my fears and managed to make a Japanese friend.

My life in Japan allows me time to visit different places. I have been to famous sights in Hyogo, Tottori, Nara and Kyoto as well as to Fuji. For example, I visited Himeji Castle and was amazed by the architecture. I have also had the chance to participate in various activities with my lab mates. For example, we went night fishing, setting out at 7 p.m. and returning at 9 a.m. It was an opportunity to share our different cultures. I learned so many things from them, and the most important part is that they managed to make me feel like I am at home.

Looking at my life as a student at Kobe University, I must first mention my supervisor, Professor Miki. He is the one who gave me the opportunity to continue my studies in Japan. I spent my first year under his guidance learning new things, mainly about structural concrete mechanics, FE nonlinear analysis, new materials such as fiber-reinforced polymers and the seismic behavior of structural components. Professor Miki is really kind and supportive, always listening to students' ideas and giving us the freedom to find our own ways to achieve a goal. Now I am convinced that his laboratory is the best place to grow academically.

To sum up, Japan is a place where you can grow both academically and personally. The country is amazing. Come and see for yourself!



Figure 1: Laboratory members



Figure 2: Summer in Tottori



Figure 3: Aikido club (Kobe University)



Figure 5: Hanami in Nara



Figure 6: Come to Japan even if it's only to taste Takoyaki!



Figure 4: Mount Fuji

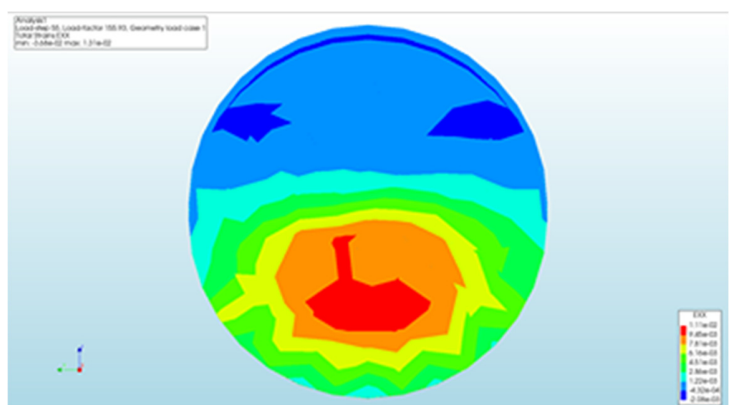


Figure 6: Internal strain distribution of circular concrete beam reinforced with CFRP bars. (It seems that the concrete beam has a sad face at failure!)