

最終レポート

# 日本・共立での留学生生活を振り返って

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## 要約(日本語)

本レポートは、ジュネーブ大学アジア研究修士課程の一環として行った、共立女子大学での留学経験についてまとめたものである。本留学は、学業面だけでなく、人間的、個人的な成長の面においても、私にとって非常に重要な経験となった。カナダおよび韓国での留学経験を経て、日本で学ぶことは長年の目標であり、共立女子大学での半年間の留学は、温かい支援と多くの出会いに支えられた、密度の高い時間であった。

渡日前にはいくつかの不安があった。特に、ビザ取得の手続きでは、申請および受領のためにパリへ渡航する必要があり、精神的な負担を感じた。しかし、国際交流センターの迅速な対応により、安心して準備を進めることができた。また、日本語学習に関しても大きな不安を抱えていた。日本語は専攻ではなく、学習歴も一年半程度であったため、日本の大学で授業を受け、生活することに強い緊張を感じていた。しかし、到着後は、教員、チューター、学生の方々の支援により、安心して学び、自分のペースで成長することができた。

留学中は、日本各地を訪れる機会にも恵まれた。夏休みには大阪、京都、奈良、広島、静岡を訪れ、日本の歴史や文化の多様性を実際に体感した。冬休みには九州地方を旅行し、福岡でクリスマスを過ごし、別府で初めて温泉を体験し、長崎で新年を迎えた。また、学期中には高尾山や鋸山への登山、江の島訪問など、東京近郊の自然や風景にも触れ、これらの経験は忘れがたい思い出となっている。

本留学は、修士論文「To Be or not to Be Born Japanese: Eugenics, Biopolitics, and the Female Body」の研究にも大きく貢献した。特に、共立女子大学図書館で『戦争と女性雑誌——一九三一年～一九四五』を利用できたことは、研究内容を深める上で非常に有意義であった。また、『Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everyday Life』や『Japan Reborn: Race and Eugenics from Empire to Cold War』などの文献を通じて、戦後日本における優生思想、人口政策、女性の身体をめぐる生政治の問題について理解を深めることができた。

このように、共立女子大学での留学経験は、学術的知見の深化だけでなく、人とのつながりや自己成長をもたらす貴重な機会であった。本留学で得た経験と学びは、今後の研究および人生においても大切にしていきたい。

## **Introduction**

This report aims to reflect on my study abroad experience in Japan as part of my second year of a master's degree in Asian Studies at the University of Geneva. This study abroad program represented an important step in my education, both as a student and as a young researcher in the field of Asian Studies. It was also a long-standing personal project, fueled by my interest in Japan and my previous experiences of international mobility, in Canada where I completed my bachelor's degree, and in South Korea where I spent my second undergraduate year. My stay at Kyoritsu University had a profound and lasting impact on me, both academically and personally. Indeed, this six-month stay, as brief as intense, was nourished by the encounters and bonds I forged, made possible by the warm welcome I received from Kyoritsu's International Exchange Center, all the teaching staff, and the students I had the chance to meet.

## **Pre-departure Concerns**

Before leaving for Japan, I had several concerns and uncertainties as I prepared for my time abroad. The first practical difficulty was obtaining a visa. As a student at the University of Geneva but a French citizen, I had to travel to Paris twice, first to submit my application and then to collect my visa in person. These trips were a source of stress and fatigue, reinforcing the feeling of uncertainty that often precedes a semester abroad. Fortunately, Kyoritsu's International Exchange Center was very reassuring and responsive, and supported me very well throughout the process.

## **Linguistic Challenges and Learning Japanese**

Beyond the administrative aspects, I also had a more personal concern: not being able to keep up linguistically. Japanese wasn't my major, and I had only studied the language for about a year and a half before I left. Entering a Japanese university, taking classes, and living in a Japanese-speaking environment seemed particularly intimidating to me. I was afraid that I would not be able to express myself fluently and that I would struggle to meet academic expectations. However, as soon as I arrived in Japan, despite my fears of not being ready, I was moved by the quality of the support and attention given to international students. Interactions with professors, administrative staff, my Japanese tutors, and my classmates

quickly created a healthy environment in which I felt both supported and encouraged to progress at my own pace. These human connections played a central role in my experience and greatly facilitated my integration into Japanese life.

### **Exploring Japan: Travel Opportunities and Cultural Immersion**

My stay in Japan gave me the opportunity to discover different regions of the country outside of my place of study and to live experiences that I will cherish forever. During the summer, I had the chance to travel to Osaka, Kyoto, Nara, Hiroshima, and Shizuoka, all destinations that allowed me to explore Japan's cultural, historical, and regional richness. During the winter break, I discovered the Kyūshū region, where I had some particularly memorable moments: I celebrated Christmas in Fukuoka, experienced onsen for the first time in Beppu, and welcomed the New Year in Nagasaki.

Throughout the semester, I also explored the areas surrounding Tokyo. I was able to admire the colors of autumn during a hike on Mount Takao, climb Mount Nokogiri, and visit Enoshima Island and its picturesque beach, offering a breathtaking view of snow-capped Mount Fuji. These trips, these landscapes, these moments of calm in nature and wonder, have deeply enriched my stay and will remain etched in my heart forever.

### **Research Project: Objectives and Framework**

My stay abroad in Japan was also a great opportunity to work on my research thesis, entitled “To Be or not to Be Born Japanese: Eugenics, Biopolitics, and the Female Body.” My research question is as follows: to what extent does postwar Japan's demographic policy, even when cloaked in the appealing language of science and modernity, embody political control over bodies, and specifically female bodies? The objectives of my study can be summarized in three main points: to demonstrate how the idea of a “superior race” was rationalized, particularly through the influence of medical professionals, the media, and intellectuals in the Japanese context; to examine what eugenics is, what its limits are, and how to define it; and finally to analyze the role and instrumentalization of women's bodies in the biopolitical project of the postwar Japanese government. Being in Japan gave me access to valuable academic resources. In particular, I borrowed a book from the Kyoritsu library entitled “戦争と女性雑誌——一九三一年~一九四五” (War and Women's Magazines: 1931-1945), which analyzes the role and representation of women in Japanese magazines during World War II.

This book gave me concrete examples and historical arguments that were essential to deepening my analysis. In addition, two other books played a fundamental role in constructing my theoretical framework: *Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everyday Life* by Sheldon Garon, and *Japan Reborn: Race and Eugenics from Empire to Cold War*, written by Kristin Roebuck. These readings deepened my understanding about the mechanisms of ideological construction, socialization, and transformation in Japanese society. Reading and working on these books while immersed in Japanese culture gave my research a particularly vivid and embodied dimension.

### **Eugenics as a Research Focus**

The historiography of eugenics tends to favor a normative, even fragmented approach, contrasting a “before” and “after” 1945, while making the defeat and American occupation a radical break in population policies. This perspective can be explained in part by the moral burden associated with the very term “eugenics,” which is inseparable in the collective imagination from the crimes of the Nazi regime. Indeed, one of the epistemological difficulties of my research concerns the relationship between biopolitics and eugenics. Invariably discredited by its association with Nazi ideology, eugenics has long been relegated outside the academic field, reduced either to a pseudo-science or to an intrinsically totalitarian ideology, and therefore, the victim of a *reductio ad Hitlerum* that freezes its analysis.

By confining eugenics to its most radical expression, historiography has obscured its gradual normalization within the Japanese state, where it was deployed less as an explicit project of ostracism than as a set of preventive and management practices, or even, one might say, of “soft modeling” of the population. However, several studies have highlighted that many of the biopolitical approaches implemented in the pre-war period persisted, in reformulated forms, in the post-war welfare state. In particular, the enactment of the Eugenic Protection Law of 1948 illustrates this paradoxical persistence. Adopted in a context of democratization and reconstruction in Japan, it nevertheless renewed the principles of rationalization and selection of the population, highlighting a striking continuity with pre-war ideology.

This research is framed within a Foucauldian perspective on biopolitics. Michel Foucault defines biopolitics as the historical process by which “life” emerges as a catalyst for political

strategies, operating on two levels: on the one hand, on individuals, through disciplinary measures relating to hygiene, medicine, and sexuality, and on the other, on populations, through public health and birth control policies. To quote Foucault, where once the Church and the monarchy held the right of life and death, the modern state now gives life and lets die. The link between biopolitics and eugenics thus appears to be a central point of analytical tension, requiring us to think of eugenics not as a historical anomaly, but as one of the methods used by the Japanese government to govern life. However, analysis of these policies through the lens of the female body remains largely unexplored, even though it is no exaggeration to say that women played a major, if not equally decisive, role alongside combatants during periods of war.

Furthermore, at the outset of this research, a second obstacle arises concerning the definition of eugenics. In addition to its obvious emotional undertone linked to Nazi crimes, eugenics is an eminently ambiguous concept, whose complexity begins with its etymology. Derived from the Greek *eu* (good) and *genos* (birth, origin), the term literally refers to the idea of “being well-born” or “good birth.” This lexical origin immediately forces us to shift our perspective from a violent and oppressive ideology to a project oriented towards collective well-being, even the progress of humanity. It is precisely this claim that makes eugenics so difficult to grasp and so dangerous to define legally.

Sort of conceptual “potluck”, eugenics encompasses extremely diverse practices, ranging from forced sterilization policies to contemporary forms of embryo selection, as well as feminist, hygienist, and medico-social discourses. It can serve as justification for authoritarian and fascist projects, or be mobilized in the name of individual emancipation or health protection. Margaret Sanger, a founding figure of family planning in the United States, whose destiny led her to Japan, placed part of her feminist struggle within an explicitly eugenicist framework, defending birth control as a means of improving society and emancipating women. This intertwining and fluidity of the concept reveals its extreme ideological plasticity and, consequently, the danger of exploiting eugenics.

This plasticity is reflected in contemporary bioethics, where the line between what constitutes eugenics and what does not is becoming increasingly blurred. In France, for example, a law passed in 2001 authorizes the sterilization of persons “whose mental faculties are impaired to the point of constituting a disability” (Article 27), under certain conditions and with the

approval of a guardianship judge. Similarly, the widespread use of prenatal diagnosis raises questions about the contemporary continuities of eugenicist logic: according to a study by the Federal Center for Health Care Expertise and reported by the European Institute of Bioethics, in 95.5% of cases where trisomy 21 is diagnosed in the fetus, a medical termination of pregnancy (MTP) is performed. Without constituting explicit state eugenics, these practices nevertheless outline the clear contours of a normative horizon. In Switzerland, Auguste Forel, a multifaceted figure, is sometimes celebrated as the “father of Swiss psychiatry” and one of Switzerland's last “universal geniuses”, sometimes condemned in veiled terms for his eugenicist thinking rooted in the racial ideology of European imperialism. His influence was decisive in the adoption in 1928 of a law in the canton of Vaud authorizing the forced sterilization of people with disabilities. Effective until the early 1990s, the canton of Vaud can claim, not without shame, to have been a pioneer in this field at the European level. However, Auguste Forel's eugenicist position in no way hindered his scientific and academic canonization. In Zurich, the “August-Forrel Strasse”, a street named in his honor on his centenary, still exists, and until 2006 his bronze bust stood proudly in front of the Zurich University Hospital, before being discreetly removed under pressure from students and the resurgence of his eugenicist past. In the Nordic countries, Sweden, regularly ranked among the happiest countries in the world, saw its image shaken by a scandal revealed in August 1997: a commission uncovered the forced sterilization of approximately 63,000 people between 1935 and 1976, 93% of whom were women. In light of these examples, it is apparent that the “clear conscience that prevails in Europe” is based on fragile foundations, not to say collective hypocrisy. Finally, it is worth remembering, as P. Zylberman points out, that eugenics was never condemned as a crime in itself by the Allies at the Nuremberg trials, as the German law of July 1933 on forced sterilization fell outside the jurisdiction of the Tribunal. To quote him, “one would be naive to believe this episode closed,” and it is precisely in this breach that the anchor point of my analysis lies.

## **Conclusion and Acknowledgments**

In conclusion, my stay in Japan will remain a deeply unforgettable experience for me. It allowed me to step outside my comfort zone, gain confidence, and gradually improve my Japanese. Over the months, I learned a lot, but above all, I had the opportunity to build meaningful human connections, rooted in sharing and kindness. This experience has strengthened my attachment to Japan and played an essential role in the maturation of my

research project, giving it a depth and human dimension that I could not have acquired otherwise.

Last but not least, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Kyoritsu Women's University for the quality of its support and for the warm and welcoming environment it offers to international students. I sincerely thank the professors for their availability, advice, and academic support, as well as the administrative staff for their invaluable assistance throughout my stay. Finally, I would like to thank the students and friends I met in Japan, whose kindness transformed this stay into memories that I will cherish forever.