最終レポート

日本文化とアイデンティティ

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短いレポートだけでは、日本で抱いたすべての印象を伝えきれない。そのため本レポートでは、日本文化とアイデンティティについての自分の考えを述べる。

ポーランド人のアイデンティティは主に歴史に由来するものだと思う。一方、日本人の場合は、むしろ文化に関わる問題だと言えるだろう。「大いなる調和」を意味する「大和（やまと）」の洗練された文化こそが、日本人のアイデンティティの主要な源泉であるように思われる。日本の文化的ルーツは、日常生活の至る所にも影響を及ぼしているように思われる。理髪師、レジ係、教師、大学教授など、多くの人々が自身の仕事に細心の注意を払っていることに気づきましたが、それらすべては社会の調和を保つためなのです。ポーランドでは、私たちはしばしば歴史について議論する。それが私的な場であれ公の場であれ。日本人は、どちらかといえば現在に重きを置いているようです。

前述した日本の文化的ルーツは、日常生活の至る所にも息づいているように感じられた。理髪師、レジ係、教師、大学教授など、多くの人々が自身の仕事に細心の注意を払って取り組んでいる姿を目にしたが、それはすべて社会の調和を保つためなのだと感じた。また、レストランやバー、シーシャバーといった様々な場所でも、素晴らしいサービスを受けつつ、こちらの邪魔にならないよう配慮して接してくれたため、内向的な性格の私にとっては非常に心地よい体験となりた。こうして、学びの時間もリラックスした時間も、共に素晴らしいひとときを過ごすことができた。

もちろん、日本での生活がバラ色というわけではありません。特に職場の文化などには、否定的な側面があることも承知している。日本人の規律正しい振る舞いや、公益や他者の幸福を重んじる姿勢からはポーランド人も大いに学ぶべき点があるが、こと残業といった

問題に関しては、その関係は逆になるでしょう。日本では一般的であるものの、ポーランドでは、無給での残業を要求することは社会的に容認されない。

日本での滞在を振り返る際、もう一つ思い浮かぶのは、宗教に対する姿勢の顕著な違いです。ポーランドは依然として大部分がカトリックの国ですが、日本の宗教事情はかなり複雑です。私の知る限り、多くの日本人は「特定の宗教には属していない」と答えます。それにもかかわらず、彼らが神道や仏教の慣習を日常的に行っている様子を、私は目にした。

報告の最後に、共立のスタッフ、教師、チューター、そして学生の皆さんから受けた印象について触れずにはいられない。皆さんは私にとても親切に、そして快く協力してくださいた。ですから、心からの感謝の意を表すことは、私にとっての「義理」（当然果たすべき務め）なのです。

Japanese Culture and Identity

It is hard to pour all of my impressions, emotions, reflections, observations about staying in Japan in a short report. Instead of listing mundane aspects of daily life in Japan I chose to reflect on how differently Japanese people view their identity and history. I also wanted to describe my thoughts on selected various Japanese cultural and social practices that I noticed.

Perception of owns identity and history by people from different countries always fascinated me. When I met foreign nationals, I usually cannot restrain my curiosity about how they see the past of their country. In my circle of friends we often discuss historical events and interpretation of them. In fact, Polish people's identity is mainly derived from history – events, battles, individuals, movements, etc. Culture of course also plays major role, but not in the same extent as in Japan. Refined culture of Yamato, the „Great Harmony", seems to be the main source of Japanese identity. Of course culture and history are inseparably connected, but what I try to describe is rather subjective feeling of individuals. And now it is mostly cultural practices that makes Japanese people Japanese – no matter the historical events. It can be seen even in culinary culture – despite availability of numerous overseas dishes the Japanese still prefer their traditional foods and are very attached to them – and to the way of preparing them. In Poland we also cherish our typical dishes – I miss dearly an ordinary dinner with minced meat and potatoes! – but in comparison to Japan the process of preparing them seems to be rather simple.

Back to the topic – in Poland we often discuss history and, be it privately or in public. There are constant debates about historical events, peoples etc. Some of them are quite tense, and on the internet there are plenty of harsh comments on this matter from various sides and viewpoints. The Japanese seem to be rather focused on present. I noticed several electoral posters in Tokyo but they are not very big and visible. In Poland politics is pervasive – even to the point of dividing single families.

Aforementioned cultural roots of Japan seem to have influence even in daily life. I noticed that many people take a great care in what they are doing, be it barbers, cashiers, teacher, professors, etc., everything for upholding social harmony. Also, everyone in various places such restaurants, bars, shisha parlors etc. offered great service and tried to not disturb me very much – a very pleasant experience for someone with introvert mind like me. Thus I had a great time both while learning and during relaxation time.

Of course living in Japan is not all rosy. I know there are some negative sides, especially in the workplace culture. As Polish people could learn greatly from Japanese orderly conduct and care for common good and well-being of others, in case of such things as working overtime it would be the other way around. For example, it is socially unacceptable in Poland to demand overtime work – practice common across Japan – without compensation (either in additional pay or in reducing

working hours on other day) and is deemed as serious breach of the law. This kind of attitude could help Japan solve its problems with overworked population.

Another thing that comes to my mind when I reflect on my stay in Japan is a notable difference in attitude towards religion. Sometimes I wonder how it is that some Japanese do not know the difference between Catholic and Protestant Churches. But it stroke me that most people in Europe probably do not know the difference between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, or even between Taoism and Zen Buddhism, rather obvious in this part of the world. It is just that different religions play different roles. Poland is still largely Catholic country and religious situation of Japan is rather complex. As far as I know, many Japanese would say that they are not part of any religion. Despite that I observed that they often do practices of Shinto and Buddhism. Even during the crossing the Torii gates almost everyone bows their head. Also, in modern religious imaginarium some Christian motives also probably play a role. I remember there was a vision of hell in one of the Akutagawa Ryuunosuke's short novels. Actually there is also a Catholic community in Japan. While being in a church in Tokyo, I noticed that Japanese worshippers pay great attention to singing. In Poland Catholics also sing during the Mass but it is not treated as something very important – usually people prefer silent worship. Meanwhile I noticed that Japanese Catholics often use songbooks and sing loudly and with attention to tone – a bit of contrast towards rather calm expressions of faith by the Polish. There are also practices present that many traditional Catholics would not probably like, such as altar girls and Communion on hand. In Poland such things are often unthinkable. In St. Ignatius Church in Tokyo there is even Mass in Polish once a month – a visible evidence that even very small community of Poles living in Japan has a decent percentage of believers.

At the end of the report I cannot omit my impression of Kyouritsu staff, teachers, tutors and students. Everyone was very kind and helpful for me, so it is my *giri* to express my sincere gratitude. I was treated with great care and utmost respect and for this I am really thankful. I really felt welcomed at Kyouritsu even though I am a male student – a pretty unusual situation in women's university! I hope that my presence did not disrupt unique feminine atmosphere and that I represented my country well. I was always happy to tell about Poland to anyone interested so I hope that everyone I spoke to has good impression of Poland. At last, maybe thanks to that someone will decide to go to Poland for exchange programme, and I will have opportunity to be the one who takes care of visitor, and to repay for kindness I received here.