

A magazine about Shimane Prefecture, Japan

The Shimanean

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島根の田舎暮らしで見えたこと。

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住むと決めた場所



The Place I Decided to Live From Now On

Jae-Jin Lee

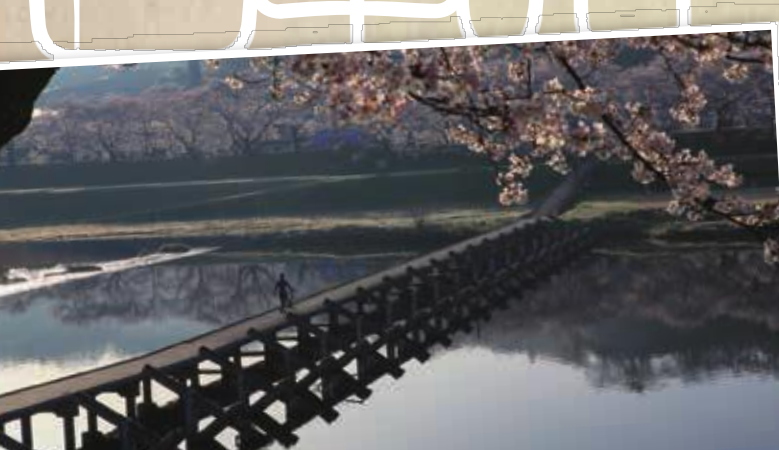
Unnan City, the place where I live, is a regional city located in a mountainous area. In the spring, all of the cherry blossom trees throughout the town are in full bloom, and the city is dyed the color of their petals. In the summer, you can enjoy the fireflies' natural illumination. In the fall, sparkling golden rice fields spread before you. In the winter, you can see a beautiful landscape crafted by the clumps and piles of snow. Furthermore, throughout the year you can soak yourself in a hot spring that



● Japanese

ここにずっと住むと決めた場所

私が住んでいる雲南市は島根県の中山間地域に位置する地方都市です。春には町の至る所で桜が満開になり、街中が桜の色に染まります。夏には蛍による天然イルミネーションが楽しめます。秋には黄金の色に輝く田んぼが広がり、冬



李 在鎮

にはこんもりと積もる雪が描く静かで美しい風景があります。また、一年を通じて肌が滑らかになる温泉に浸かれます。美味しくて健康的な食べ物はもちろん、アニメ「もののけ姫」のモチーフにもなった「たたら製鉄」の集落も昔のまま残っています。人口3万9千人の小さな町ですが、自然、食、歴史の全てが揃っているところなんです。

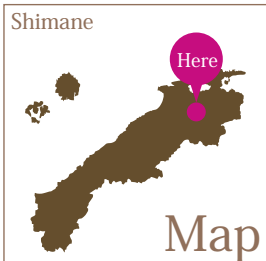
この雲南市に来て、私は「今日も幸せな一日だった」と感じる事がよくあります。最初は何もかもが珍しく、自分が夢見てきた生活を思いきり楽しめているという満足感からだったと思います。優しい人に囲まれて楽しい時間を過ごすこと自体が幸せだったのです。しかし1年、2年、3年と年が経つにつれ、私の幸福観は変化しました。仕事以外にも祭りやボランティア作業など、地域行事に参加して住民の方と一緒に喜んだり悲しんだり…そうやってその瞬間、瞬間を共に感じて分かち合うことで、私の中の「人」に対する思いが変わっていきました。人と触れ合う瞬間、瞬間が私にとって大きな「幸せ」となり、私は出会いやご縁を以前よりもずっと大切にするようになりました。なぜ故郷であるソウルにいた時はこうした幸福を感じられなかったのか…それは雲南市に残っている素朴な人情

smoothens your skin. Delicious and healthy food are a given, and there is also a hamlet, preserved just as it was long ago, that is the home of the "tatara" smelting technique, which was used as a motif in the anime, "Princess Mononoke." Unnan's population is only 39,000 people, but it has nature, food, and history all in one.

There are often times that I feel that "today was a happy day," after coming to Unnan City. I think this is because everything is rare at first, and there is this sense of satisfaction that I am enjoying the life that I dreamed about to the fullest. I was happy to be surrounded by kind people and have an enjoyable time here. However, as the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year passed, my happy perspective changed. Outside of work there were festivals and volunteer work, participating in local events, experiencing happiness and sadness with the people that live here...those moments, through sharing them with each other, have changed how I thought about "people." The moment I interact with people- that moment becomes a big source of "happiness" to me, and I have come to put more importance on the connections and encounters that I have. I wonder why I did not feel this happiness when I was in Seoul, my hometown...I think it is because there is a simple humanity that still exists in Unnan.

Children who call out, "Mr. Jae-jin," while running towards me, say greetings in Korean, such as "Annyeonghaseyo" (Hello) and "Tomannayo" (See you later). The mothers who would say, "eat this," while offering vegetables or side dishes that they made. Older men and women whom I met for the first time, speak to me in friendly manner, and there are many people who have met me and said, "I became interested in Korea," or "I like Korea."

Unnan taught me where to find happiness. Now, I am filled with a desire to give back to Unnan in any way I can. Recently, I purchased a fantastic



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old residence in a farming village. From now on, I want to live here with my wife and newborn son, while having our little happiness. And, I want to do what I can for the sake of Unnan City.



Japanese

のためだと思います。

「ジェジンさん」と私の名前を呼びながら駆け寄って来てくれたり「アンニョンハセヨ(こんにちは)」「トマンナヨ(またね)」と韓国語で挨拶してくれる子ども



たち。「これ食べて」と野菜やおかずをくださるお母さんたち。初対面のおじいさんおばあさんも親しみを持って声をかけて下さり、私と出会って「韓国に興味を持った」「韓国が好きになった」と言ってくれる方も多くありました。

幸福がどこにあるかを教えてくれた雲南市。私は今、雲南市に少しでも恩返ししたい気持ちでいっぱいです。最近、私は農村の素敵な古民家を購入しました。私はこれからもここで妻と生まれたばかりの息子と共に、小さな幸せを感じながら暮らしたいと思っています。そして雲南市のために自分が出来ることをやって行きたいと考えています。



New York and Shimane: Small Community, Big Heart

Sondey Olaseun

Thinking back to when I first stepped off of that plane, I remember how nervous I was. I was to officially start my work as a coordinator for international relations (CIR). It was an extremely hot and humid day, and my supervisor told me it was fine to take off my suit jacket. As we drove down the road from the Izumo Airport, I remember being surrounded by fields of green rice paddies. The land is flat, so I could clearly see the mountains in the distance to the right and left. These were different from the skyscrapers and tall apartment complexes that I was used to back in New York. The combination of farmland, mountains, and humid weather would become my first impression of Shimane Prefecture (for my American friends, think of prefecture as a state): "It sure is green here."

I was born and raised in the Bronx, one of the five boroughs of New York City. Though Matsue City is where the prefectural government office is located, it is still a quiet place. Back home, it is normal to hear people speaking loudly or blasting their music late into the night. There are not nearly as many people in Matsue, which has about 200,000 people, as in the Bronx, which has about 1,450,000 people. Shops and banks in Matsue tend to close earlier compared to the Bronx. Bronx is connected to a large and convenient subway system that can take someone really far for a cheap price. Matsue has two train lines, the Ichibata Railway and JR. Life in New York City does not require a car, but there have been many times that I wished I could drive here in Shimane Prefecture.

During my time here, I have had the privilege to visit many places in Shimane from Yasugi City to Yoshika Town. Some of my favorite places are Oomori Town (located in Oda City), Yunotsu (also in Oda City), Lake Shinji (in between Matsue City and Izumo City), Tsuwano Town, and the Adachi Museum of Art (Yasugi City). I have had the opportunity to participate in a

myriad of Japanese cultural activities, such as wearing kimono, doing zen meditations, as well as making matcha tea and wagashi. In my spare time, I have also come to enjoy snowboarding, hiking, and cycling. It is one of the benefits of living in a place that is abundant with nature! However, even though I have been able to go to those places and experience those things, it is the people that I met here in Shimane that really left an impression on me.

Work as a coordinator for international relations has allowed me to travel around Shimane and speak with many people within a wide age range. I have traveled to schools, community centers, and an assortment of both public and private spaces to speak about American culture, international exchange, and even human rights! I have to say that the most fulfilling part of my job is interacting with people and being a catalyst for cultural understanding. It is through my interactions with the local people that I was able to see what kind of communities exist, how people interact with each other, and their values.

Recently, I received a request from Hida Elementary School to speak about human rights to the school's PTA. At first, I thought that it would just be members of the PTA, but people who had heard about my presentation had come through the snow just to hear it! The people in Hirose are very interested in hearing different perspectives and they have been inviting people from other prefectures and outside Japan to speak and conduct workshops. This was because they had the same goal: to find ways to preserve their community and create new ideas. The members of that



Japanese

ニューヨークと島根:小さなコミュニティと大きな心

ソンデ・オラシュン

初めて飛行機から降りた時、心が緊張でいっぱいでした。その日から正式に国際交流員として働くことになりました。とても蒸し暑くて、私の担当者はスーツの上着を脱いでいいよと言ってくれました。車で進む出雲空港からの道の周りは緑の稲田に囲まれていた覚えがあります。地面が平らだったので、左右の遠い山々がはっきりと見えていました。慣れていた高層ビルや団地の光景とは違いました。農地、山、そして蒸し暑い気候が合わさった島根県に対する第一印象を受けました:「とても緑だな。」

ニューヨークの五つの行政区の一つであるブロンクス区で生まれ育った僕。松江市は島根県の県庁所在地なもの、まだ静かな場所だと思います。出身地では人々の声が大きく、深夜まで音楽の音量を大きいままで流していることが普通です。松江市の人口は約20万人で、ブロンクス区の人口(約145万人)ほどではありません。松江市では店や銀行はブロンクス区に比べ早めに閉店し、ブロンクスには便利な地下鉄があり、遠くまでも安く行けます。松江には一畑電車とJR電車しかありません。ニューヨークでは車がなくても生活が出来ますが、島根県では車がなくて何回も困ったことがあります。

島根では安来市から吉賀町まで、いろいろなところを沢山訪問できました。好き

なところは大田市の大森町と温泉津、松江市と出雲市の間にある宍道湖、津和野町、そして安来市の足立美術館です。訪問だけでなく、着物の試着、瞑想、抹茶や和菓子を作るワークショップを沢山体験させてもらいました。そして、スノーボード、登山、サイクリングもしました。このような活動は豊かな自然がある場所しかできません。ですが、それより、島根県の「人」は本当に印象に残っています。

国際交流員の仕事を通じて島根県を旅し、幅広い年齢層の沢山の人々と話すことが出来ました。学校、公民館、そしていろいろな会場に行き、その場所でもアメリカの文化、国際交流、人権についてささ話しました。仕事の中で一番充実感がある時は地元の人と交流し、僕自身が文化理解や多文化共生のきっかけになることです。地元の方との交流を通じてどのようなコミュニティやどのような人間関係があるのか、島根県民の価値観が分かるようになりました。

最近安来市広瀬町の比田小学校からPTAの方々の人権について発表する依頼が来ました。最初はPTAの方だけが参加すると思いましたが、僕のプレゼンテーションのことを聞いた人々も来てくれました!広瀬町に住む人々はいろいろな観点を聞きたくて、県外や海外の方の発表やワークショップに参加したいと思っています。

community are open-minded and open-hearted.

I remember when I visited multiple community centers in Matsue City in order to do a presentation on the difference between American and Japanese culture. The attendees for the presentations were mostly either retired or housewives. Each group of attendees has its own aggregate personality, and it was fun to see the difference between the groups. I remember there were a number of people who brought snacks to the event, and even prepared tea! It was a Japanese hospitality that I was delighted to experience. When I needed help for setting up, they were very enthusiastic in helping me, and when the presentation ended, they were insistent that I take some snacks with me. I remember how engaged and enthusiastic they were to hear what I had to say and to learn and asked me many questions. Seeing how they chatted, laughed, and helped each other also left an impression on me.

These communities are small, but they are close-knit, and everyone knows everyone else. In the Bronx, you could live in the same neighborhood for years, and never know the people who live in the same building as you. Though there are places like this even in Matsue, it is on a much larger scale in the Bronx. At first I was really anxious about it. I mean, because the community is small, rumors spread fast, and I am not a fan of rumors. It is one of the challenges I have had to face living in Shimane, as I like to have my privacy. However, on the other hand, I can see how a close-knit community like that could provide support to someone who needs it. People come over and bring vegetables they grew, chat, and relax with each



Japanese

す。その理由は新しいアイデアを得て、コミュニティや地域に未来を与えたいからです。広瀬町のようなコミュニティの人々は柔軟性があり、心が広いです。

松江にあるいくつかの公民館に訪問しアメリカと日本の文化の違いについてプレゼンテーションした覚えもあります。参加者はほとんど退職されたか主婦の方でした。各公民館のグループは様々な性格があり、グループの違いを見るのも楽しかったです。おやつを持ってきた人も、お茶を用意した人も覚えています!楽しく体験できた日本のおもてなしでした。プレゼンテーションの準備をした際に積極的に手伝ってくれ、終了した時におやつを持ち帰ることも勧められました。プレゼンテーションの内容にも興味があり、沢山質問をしてくれました。楽しく話したり、笑ったり、助け合ったり、生き生きしている姿が見えて、印象に残りました。

小さいですが、結束の強いコミュニティがあります。そして、そのコミュニティの皆さんがお互いのことを知っています。ブロンクス区では数年経っても同じアパートなのに知らない人がいるというのは普通です。松江にもこのような状況があってもスケールは全く違います。最初、私はそういうことが不安でした。コミュニティが小さいからこそ噂話が広がりやすいので私はあまりそれが好きではありません。プライバシーを

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other. Also, there are communities here where no one even locks their doors! That's something you won't find in New York City!

Coming from a place that is bustling with business, loud cars, bright lights, and seemingly non-stop activity, Shimane Prefecture is like a whole different world. Even Matsue City, where I currently live, is worlds apart from New York. The thing is, though, is that it is precisely the reason why I can have such unique experiences. Though I came here to speak about America and to promote cultural exchange, I am also here to see and experience Japanese culture. Throughout my time here in Shimane, I have realized that I have many teachers, whether it be my shamisen teacher, or an elderly woman with wisdom. I have learned how to appreciate the nature around me, the importance of taking time for tea and snacks, appreciating people that I encounter, and discipline. I know that when I do leave Shimane, I leave with all of the lessons that only a place like Shimane could provide. Also, I know that this won't be my last time in Shimane. After all, Shimane is the land of En.



大事にしたいので、島根県では難しいところもありました。一方、そのような結束の強いコミュニティには人を支える力があることが分かります。家庭菜園で作った野菜などを持ち寄り、楽しく話したり、リラックスしたり、人の心をいやすこともできます。そして、家や車に鍵をかけないコミュニティもある!ニューヨークでは考えられない!

沢山の企業がある、数えきれない車の大音が響く、鮮やかなライトが光る、そして絶え間のない生き生きとした忙しいライフスタイルのある所から来た僕にとって島根県は全く違います。今は住んでいる松江も別世界のようです。だからこそ、これらのようなユニークな体験ができる理由です。アメリカについて話し、文化交流を推進するために来ましたが日本の文化を見て経験することも目的です。島根に住む間、三味線を教えてくださる人や知恵のあるおばあさんなど、様々な「先生」がいることに気づきました。自然を楽しんで感謝する、お茶やおやつ時間の大切さ、出会った人を大事にするいわゆる一期一会、そして規律を守ることを学んできました。島根県を去る時に島根県でしか学べないレッスンで得たことを次の場所へ必ず持って行くことになるでしょう。そして、これは島根への滞在の最後ではない。なぜなら、やはり島根県はご縁の国だからです。

Matsue is the Countryside?

Peng Yao

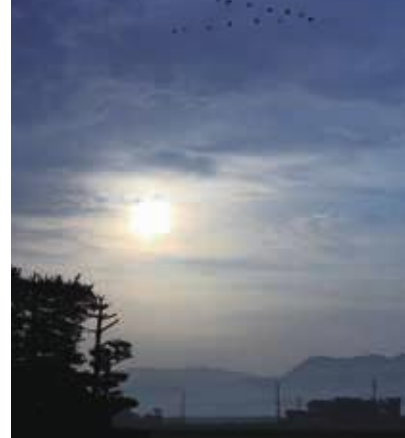
Before I came to Matsue City in Shimane Prefecture, my predecessor told me this: "Matsue is a small and quiet town. There are few people out at night, and it gets dark with not much light. Even for people who have heard of Shimane, it is hard for them to differentiate between the Chinese characters used for 'Shimane (島根)' and 'Tottori (鳥取),' even calling one prefecture 'Torine (鳥根)' and the other 'Shimatori (鳥取).'"

When I came to Shimane, the people here are accustomed to a self-deprecating humor, arguing about whether their economy was the slowest or second slowest economy in Japan, and describing their towns as places few tourists visit. However, whenever I heard people speak about that, rather than feeling a sense of loneliness, I was able to feel deep sentiments toward this land.

Emotions are truly mysterious. Before I knew it, I found that I had come to like it once I started living here. Since I arrived here, there was a time that I

had to leave the prefecture for a business trip for a number of days. I don't know why or how, but during those times I found myself wanting to return back to Matsue. It was that time that I first realized that

Matsue is a very important place to me. The moment I returned from my business trip, I suddenly felt a deep calmness and familiarity that was completely as if I had returned home. I thought this must have been that feeling of reluctance I had when I was leaving Matsue. I did not realize it when I was in Matsue, but going away on the business trip was the first time that I felt that way. If someone were to ask me just what is so good



● Japanese

松江は田舎?

島根県松江市に来る前に、先輩からこう言われていました。松江は小さくて静かな町で、夜になると、人が少なくなり光も少なく暗くなる。島根のことを聞いたことがある人でも「島根」と「鳥取」を区別しにくく、「島根」や「鳥取」とまで呼んでしまうこともあると。

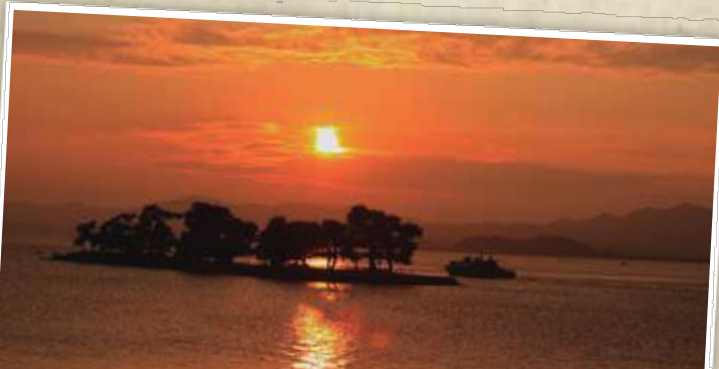
島根に来たとき、ここの人々が既に自嘲に慣れていて、ここは日本で一、二を争うような経済が立ち遅れた所で、観光客が少ない町だといつも言っていました。でも、そういう話を聞くたびに、寂しさとかいう感じではなく、却ってこの土地に対する深い感情を感じられました。

人の感情は本当に不思議なもので、ここで生活したら、自分が知らないうちに好きになってきたことに案外と気付いてきました。ここに来てからしばらく、出張で別の都市に何日間か滞在しました。何だか分かりませんが、滞在中とても松江に帰りたくなりました。その時初めて松江は自分にとってとても重要な存在であることに気付きました。出張から帰った瞬間、急に心が落ち着いてきて、まるで家に帰ったかのような親しみを深く感じました。これは正に松江への名残惜しさなのではないかと思いました。ここにいる時には気づいていなかったけど、離れて初めて悟った

彭瑤

のです。もし誰かに聞かれたら、この一体どこがいいのかはすぐには思い出しにくいけど、たぶん何といってもいろいろ体験しながら生活してきたのだから、この花も木も全部私にとって有意義になるのではないかと思います。

その出張以来、松江に対する気持ちは前と全然違うようになりました。また名残惜しさが出てきた理由も段々分かるようになりました。朝、列に並んで空を飛





about Matsue, I would have difficulty coming up with an example right away, but at the very least I think that the flowers, the trees- everything has become meaningful to me likely because of the various experiences I have had while living here.

Since that business trip, my feelings toward Matsue had completely changed. I also have gradually come to understand why I felt reluctant to leave. In the morning, the sight of birds flying in a line, the incomparable beauty of Lake Shinji with the sunset reflected in its water, the far off mountains that are visible if you incidentally raise your head when you walk around, the pigeons that stroll on the path in front of Matsue station, everything has an charm that allows me to feel comfortable here, and whenever I do see those things, I always think about how beautiful the world is.

People drenched in sweat from working out at the gym even when it becomes late at night, a long line of people who have come to view the exhibition at the Shimane Art Museum even when it is close to closing time, people who earnestly wear kimono even in cold weather in order to watch a rare Noh performance even during cold weather, people who rush towards a new crab restaurant that opened somewhere, and children excited by all-you-can-eat gourmet food...When I saw moments such as these, I deeply felt that the people here are charming. Various things are considered rare in Matsue, which is a complete contrast to the worlds of big cities, where your eyes are constantly dazzled. It is because of this that people feel grateful for those opportunities.

No matter what it is, people consider any opportunity that is very difficult to come by important because of their gratefulness. Furthermore, it is because they regard it with importance that you can see the solemnness in their expressions, and the ceremonial air to their behavior. I think this is what makes Matsue and the people here charming. As a result, it made me feel that no matter when or where, each encounter should be regarded with importance; each and every experience has an exceptional significance.

Even now, the people of Matsue say, "this is the countryside," as if they are downplaying themselves. So what!? You can't compare the charm of Matsue

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to anywhere else. You may not fall in love at first sight like with other cities, but Matsue's charm can last with those who take their time to deeply take in what Matsue has to offer. If you live here and interact with the people of Matsue you will come to like it here even more.

This is Matsue. In nearly a year, the feeling that Matsue is precious and nostalgic has continued to grow even more.



Japanese

んでいる鳥、夕日が映った比べものないほど綺麗な宍道湖、街で歩く時ふと頭を上げるとすぐ見える遠い山、駅前の歩道で気楽に散歩するハトなど、すべてに趣があって心地よい気持ちをもたらしてくれ、見る度に、世界とはこんなに美しいものなのかと思ってしまいます。

深夜になろうとしてもジムで汗まみれになって運動する人たち、美術館の展示会が終わるぎりぎりの時期になっても長い列に並んで鑑賞に行く人たち、めったにない能を見に行くため寒い天気でも真剣に着物を着る人たち、またどこか新しく開いた蟹の店に押し寄せる人々と、存分美食に興奮した子供たちの姿を見た瞬間、ここの人々は本当に可愛いなと深く感じました。大都市のような目がくらむばかりの世界と違って、いろんなものは松江にとって稀な存在です。それゆえ、ありがたく思われます。

そういうありがたさがあるからこそ、人々はどんなことに対してもとても見つけにくいチャンスのように大切にしています。またそういう大切さがあるからこそ、人々の顔には荘重感が見えて、行動上にも儀式感を感じます。それこそ松江の町とこの人の可愛いところだと思います。なので、一つ一つの体験には並外れ

た意義があり、一人一人との出会いを大切にすべきだといつでもどこでも感じさせられました。

「ここは田舎だよ」と松江の人は今でも相変わらず自嘲するようにしています。だったらなんだよ!この可愛さが他の所と比べられないです。ほかの都市のような一目ぼれの気持ちはないかもしれませんが、時間をかけて深く味わうことに耐えられます。松江の人と接して生活するに従って、更に好きになります。

ここは松江です。一年近くの時間で、ますます懐かしく愛しく思うようになりました。



Did You Say The Countryside??

Katherine Simpson

When I first found out I was moving to Ohnan in Shimane Prefecture, I felt a mixture of excitement and nervousness. I poured over blogs about inaka (countryside) life, and one phrase continued to pop up: "You have to find your own fun." After living in larger cities my entire life, I was concerned about how my inaka life would pan out. Yet looking back on this past year, it's hard to remember that I was even worried at all. I'm pretty sure this phrase should actually be, "In the countryside, fun will find you."

Culture shock number one: bugs. Insects seem to be a normal part of everyday life (as I suppose they should be...). I will never forget the day a coworker asked me if I had ever seen kuwagata (stag beetle). After replying no, he quickly nicked away down the hall. I thought it strange until he came back with a wriggling stag beetle in his grasp. Where did he even find it?? And so quickly?? I embarrassingly let out a girlish shriek, which caused the entire office to burst into laughter. People then took turns holding the beetle, reminiscing about how they used to catch them in their childhood. One person even ended up taking it home as a pet. While I did not hold the beetle, it dawned on me that this simple pleasure of everyday life is something I would have never had the opportunity to experience in the city.

Another culture shock I experienced was food. No, no. Not your typical raw fish or odd sea creature. Inland inaka food. My second month in Ohnan I was invited to dinner by a local farming group. The leader was thrilled to introduce the main course: wild boar meat. I had half thought that wild boars were only animals from Japanese mythology. To my surprise, it was quite delicious! My host then came out beaming, bringing me a



small bowl.

"I've made you suppon soup!" he told me, brimming with excitement. "What is... suppon?" I asked. He beamed and responded, "Soft-shelled turtle." As I brought the bowl to my mouth, he pulled something out from behind his back. It was a small turtle skull tied to a thin cord. My jaw dropped in pure surprise, and the other women shrieked playfully, saying that it looked like the head of a demon. "Not many people have these. I'll bring you the shell later once it's finished." A few days later I came into work and on my desk lay the shell of the turtle (as promised), with suppon written several places in hiragana, katakana and kanji.

After having the opportunity to experience the real essence of Japan over this past year, I wouldn't trade my experience for the world. I am eternally grateful to the people of Ohnan for welcoming me into their fold. Their warmth and eagerness to show me the hidden side of Japan never ceases to entice me. To anyone interested in living in Japan and looking for an adventure, I heartily and enthusiastically recommend countryside life!



Japanese

全部違うけど...

キャサリン・シン普森

島根県邑南町に行くことが決まったとき、楽しみと不安が混ざった複雑な気分だった。その後、色々な田舎暮らしについてのブログを読み込むと、同じフレーズが何回も出てきた。「田舎での楽しみは自分で見つけるしかない」と。子供の頃から都会やその郊外に住んできた私は、田舎ではどのような生活が送れるだろうかと心配していたが、この一年を振り返ってみると、その様に考えていたなんて自分でも信じられないあのフレーズを変えてやる、「田舎では、楽しみの方が自分を見つけてくれる」の方がピッタリ合うでしょう。

一番のカルチャーショックは虫。田舎の場合、昆虫は日常生活の一部であり、普通の存在のようだ。当たり前のことだと自分でも認めるが、ある日虫に関する一生忘れない出来事があった。それは、同僚に「クワガタを見たことある?」と聞かれた。「いいえ」と答えた途端、同僚はすぐ廊下の向こうに走り出した。あれ?と思ったら、一瞬のうちに戻ってきた彼の手のひらにはうごめいているクワガタがいた。どこで見つけた??こんなに早く??と私は想像がつかなかった。恥ずかしいことに私はキヤーと叫んで、職場の皆さんはドッと笑いだした。皆さんは、幼い頃にクワガタを捕まえていたと思い出話をしながら、それぞれクワガタを手にとって順番に回っていた。そのうちの一人が子供のペットとして持って帰った。私はクワガタを触らなかつたが、都市ならこのような日常生活のささやかな喜びは、決して経験

できないだろうということ気づかせてくれた。

もう一つのカルチャーショックは食べ物。生魚とか海の生き物ではないですよ。海から離れた田舎料理です。邑南町に来て最初のヶ月が過ぎたころ、地元の農業関係の会の夕食会に誘われた。会長は楽しそうにメインの料理を紹介してくれた。それはイノシシだった。アメリカ人である私は、正直イノシシというのは日本の神話でしか存在しない怪物だと思っていた...けど驚くほど美味しかった!次に会長は汁椀を嬉しそうに持ってきてくれた。

「すっぽんスープを作ったよ!」と興奮ぎみに言った。「すっぽん...とは?」と戸惑いながら聞いた。「カメの一種だよ」と、とても楽しそうに答えてくれた。彼は、汁椀を口へ持って行きながら背中からあるものを出した。細い糸が付けられた小さなすっぽんのドクロだった。私はあんぐり口を開け、他の女性は「鬼の頭みたい!」とふざけながらキヤーキヤーと叫んだ。「珍しいもんや。甲羅は後で持って来てあげる」と会長は言ってくれた。数日後、約束通り仕事の机の上にすっぽんの甲羅が置いてあり、それに「すっぽん」の字が「ひらがな、カタカナ、漢字」で書いてあった。

この一年で本当の日本を経験することができ、これが何よりも大切な思い出になった。仲間として迎え入れてくれた邑南町の皆さんには感謝の気持ちで一杯。心の温かさ、本当の日本を熱心に教えてくださる町民の皆さんは、田舎の生活にますます私を引き込んでくれる。日本の生活を経験してみたい、日本を旅したい皆さんへ、心から田舎をお勧めします!

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