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A Trip to Mongolia – Homestay Experiences at Carcan Village in the Province of Bayan-Olgii

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In September 2017, I joined a group tour to Mongolia titled “The Golden Eagle Festival and Homestay with a Kazakh Family.” The village was located at the western edge of Mongolia, which is bordered by Russia, Kazakhstan and China, and which is at the foot of the Altai Mountain range. Many Kazakhs live in the community, speaking the Kazakh language as the mainstream mother tongue rather than Mongolian. People live in an assembly-format shelter called *ui* which has a ceiling slightly higher than that of a ger. Major attractions of the group tour were three-fold – we could experience a homestay with a Kazakh family, enjoy seeing the annual Golden Eagle Festival, and join a car drive along the Altai heights to see the glacier.

During the Golden Eagle Festival, local people compete enthusiastically in different skills, including golden eagle-driven hunting, snatching of a goat skin played on horseback, called *Bushkashi*, as well as a race between a man and a woman, both on horseback, called *Kyz Kuar*. People came from the vicinity to join the festival, dressed in traditional costumes. The men, who participated in the competition, were dressed up in fur clothes to appeal their brave attitude.

My host family had already assembled their *ui* before my visit. They butchered and cooked a sheep as a way of expressing hospitality to me. When they let me help with the sheep skinning, I realized that the work calls for some physical strength. They treated me to stewed mutton and vegetables, as well as milk tea. I found that, by adding a small quantity of salt, I could enjoy drinking many cups of their tea. After the dinner, the whole family got together inside the *ui* and stated to play music to welcome their guests. The *dombra*, a local musical instrument, was played while adults and children sang songs by turns.

In summer and winter, many of the local people, along with their domesticated animals, relocate to different places. Therefore, there is not any paved road or any facilities for water supply and sewage in the community. For toilets, people use holes, dug in a U-shape and covered with a blue sheet. They are generally located about 40 - 50 meters away from the shelters. It was a bit thrilling to walk out at night, wearing a head lamp, and look for the toilet, avoiding the risk of losing the way.

At night you can hear the breathing of cows and horses, lying here and there. In the sky you can see a constellation which looks as if it were falling down upon you, along with the arc-shaped Milky Way. At that moment I renewed awareness that I'm only a tiny piece of creature. Because people use water brought from the river, they pay utmost attention not to pollute the stream, reflecting their lifestyle to be thankful for what nature offers.

Once we returned to Ulaanbaatar the capital, we saw buildings after buildings and an overflowing number of cars. We were told that the air pollution in the city is worse than in Beijing. Although

(To be continued on P.7)

The Karst Region in Slovenia

- History, Food Culture and Relations with Japan -

Date: September 27, 2018

Place: Minato City Life-long Learning Center

We had the pleasure of having Dr. Bostjan Bertalanic as the speaker for this lecture. He is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Contemporary Policy Studies at Josai University, and originally comes from Slovenia.

Self-introduction by Dr. Bertalanic:

Born in the karst region of Slovenia, located close to Italy. Enrolled into the Japanese Studies Department of the University of Ljubljana. Majored in international relations, including Japan's diplomatic policies concerning the national border issues on the Balkan Peninsula, following the end of the WWI. Obtained a doctor's degree in politics from the University of Tokyo in 2012. Slovenia has a territory almost the size of Japan's Shikoku Island, with a population of two million embracing diversified cultural backgrounds. Took interest in Japan as a child. After graduation from the high school, I was wondering about my future course, whether to enter police or university.



Because I excelled in foreign languages, I decided to enter the University of Ljubljana and to major in the Japanese language along with Japan's history at a time when Japanese was not so popular. Later I obtained scholarship and studied the Japanese history at Tsukuba University. I lived long enough in Japan to experience the local Coming of Age Day. After my return to Slovenia, I became a senior student and was required to submit a dissertation paper on what I had researched. I know that Japanese universities do not always require their students to submit graduation papers.

Fortunately I obtained another scholarship at that time. Therefore I could evade military service duty. In Slovenia, a one-year special draft exemption was granted to those students who were engaged in academic, research or art studies, or who took up activities at hospitals or other organizations for civil society benefits. Today this exemption system does not exist as the Slovenian military personnel are all professionals. In 2014 I took a teaching position at Josai University, more specifically at its Central Europe Research Institute. I also taught law faculty graduate students at Hitotsubashi University.

The Summary of Dr. Bertalanic's Lecture:

His lecture touched upon diversified subjects, including the history of the karst region, the food culture & local wine, and other major topics as shown below:

1. Karst plateau region

While Slovenia boasts its scenic beauty, the most conspicuous unique attraction is the karst region which features the limestone plateau. The region abounds not only in the topographic charm but also in the dual cultural environment due to its proximity to Italy. The karst plateau is formed by limestone. The karst in Slovenia took place first among all similar phenomena in the world. The karst topography has developed in different shapes. In textbooks used in Japanese elementary schools, a Slovenian word, which means a farming field, is introduced. The word "kras" is the original term of karst, meaning the places where water or rivers abundantly flow and where karst was created between water and stone.

In ancient times, the karst region in Slovenia was a country of greenery, covered with oak trees. However, from the 14th to 16th centuries, those trees were all cut down to be used as lumbers for architecture in Italy, Austria and other countries. In the karst region, people used to say, "Venice in Italy stands on the lumbers taken from our region." In other countries, the lumbers were also used as railroad sleepers. After the deforestation, the karst plateau turned into barren deserts, showing

only rocks and stone. Local people, who passed the plateau, felt as if they were seeing the hell scene and lamented the deforestation. At the end of the 19th century, the noble clans started to plant on the plateau black pines which were renowned for their strong survivability, enabling root growth even in deserts. During the 1860's, a project to plant black pines started with the participation of local people. The Slovenian Embassy in Japan is promoting its public image by the phrase - "Slovenia is a treasure of greenery in Central Europe."

• Postojnska Jama (limestone cave)

This cave was discovered by a local resident when the community was making preparations for the visit by the Austrian Prince Ferdinand I in 1818. It is estimated as one of the largest caves in Europe. You will feel very cool inside the cave, with the temperature ranging from 8°C to 10,°C and will see fantastic stalactites. The cave boasts an extensive whole length of 24km, of which the sightseeing course occupies about 5km. Tourists rides a tramcar inside. There are event facilities such as a concert hall and a dance hall in the cave. At a certain location, tourists get off the tram car and walk a short distance until they see a bridge constructed over a valley. It is called the "Russian Bridge" because it was built by Russian prisoners of war during the WWI. Among different kinds of unique limestones shaped inside the cave, the white one nicknamed the "Briljant" (brilliant) is regarded as the symbol of the Postojnska Jama.



• Proteus Anguinus

A rare and precious creature lives in the cave. It is called "Hora-imori" in Japanese and "Proteus" in English. It has rudimental eyes and its full length is 20cm to 30cm. Because they look white like a Caucasian, they are nicknamed "Cloveska ribica" in Slovenian, meaning a human-like fish. Actually it is not a fish but an amphibian. In 1689, a local writer introduced the creature as an "infant dragon." Because the proteus lays eggs only once in ten years, it became a sensation when a proteus laid eggs in 2016 inside an exhibition water tank in the cave.

• Predjama Grad (cave castle)

About 9km to the northwest of the Postojnska Jama, there is a medieval castle, built on a 123m high precipitous cliff, which was completed around the 12th century. The lord of the castle was a knight but he was known as a chivalrous outlaw who robbed the aristocrats of their treasures and distributed the obtained riches to the poor. He was alternately called Robin Hood. In the castle there are currently exhibitions, featuring the furniture and paintings produced during the 16th to 19th century period, along with the dolls which reproduce the atmosphere of everyday life in those years.

• Skocjanske Jame

You will see this limestone cave in the Kras region which is located 33km to the southwest of the Postojnska Jama. The word "karst" originated from the region's name. In 1986 this cave was registered as a UNESCO World Heritage. In 1999 it was also counted among the marshes, as defined by the Ramsar Convention as the first subterranean marsh. The topography in the region is suitable for growing grapes. The place offers cultivation beds for highly nourishing grapes. The Skocjanske Jame features a gigantic 100m-deep depressed doline, formed by the local subterranean water current which is the largest of its kind in Slovenia.

2. Food culture and wine

• Food culture: Slovenia is surrounded by the Julian Alps to the north and by the Adrian Sea to the southwest. The country abounds in all kinds of natural environment, including mountains, rivers, lakes, plains, karst, and limestone caves. It resembles Japan in this regard. A strong wind called "bora," which comes from the Adrian Sea, blows over to the surface of the karst plateau. This strong wind as well as the fertile soil and favorable environment have enabled the region to yield quality agricultural products such as wine, truffle and prosciutto. Because the summer season in the karst region is very hot, most Slovenian houses have basements where the temperature is low. Local

people, especially men, enjoy drinking wine as they eat tasty food in the cool room during hot summer.

The wine produced in the karst region is called Teran (an Italian word) which symbolizes the red soil (terra rossa) inherent to the locality. Anyone who visits a home in the region must drink the wine produced by the host family. If the visitors want to purchase the family's wine, they are often scrutinized about their motive simply because the family wants to make sure that their home-made wine will be treasured by the guests. In August, people enjoy a festival of prosciutto and wine where you will see a proceeding of floats, ornamented by the year's political satirical items or gossip objects.

3. Other major topics

• Lipizzaner horse

It is a horse produced by improved breeding in Austria in the 16th century. White and beautiful hair characterize the horse. When born as a baby horse, its hair is black, grey or brown. Over a period of about seven years of its growth, the hair gradually changes into white color.

During the Hapsburg dynasty, efforts were made to breed strong military horses. For this purpose they sent for Andalusian horses of Arabic origin from Spain which was then a part of the dynasty. Those horses were mixed with the karst-region horses and were collectively called Lipizzaner due to the name of the stock farm. Up until the mid-18th century, Lipizzaner horses were highly regarded. The horses survived the two world wars and are today bred in Austria, including the original stock yard where the breeding expertise has been maintained. These horses have an average life span of about 30 years (equivalent to human age of 120), longer than other types of horses. The oldest Lipizzaner horse still alive is at age 32.

• Poet Srečko Kosovel

Kosovel is well known as a great poet in Slovenia and central Europe although he died very young at age 22. He was also a mathematician. His poetry was characterized by his deep affection toward his mother as well as his regard for the pine trees in the karst region. He depicted in his poetry the societal changes he had experienced.

• Education

The Slovenians are known for their competence to learn foreign languages. The schools in the country have traditionally placed an emphasis on the education of English, in addition to Russian, since the days when it was a part of Yugoslavia. In particular, the English proficiency among the citizens below age 50 is remarkable. Today the four national universities in Slovenia, including the University of Ljubljana, the Univ. of Maribor, the Univ. of Nova Gorica, and the Univ. of Primorska, have exchange programs with a total of 22 Japanese universities.

• Sports

Although a relatively small country, Slovenian people are enthusiastic about sports and are proud of the Olympic medals won by their athletes. In the 1912 Olympiad held in Stockholm, Rudolf Cvetko won a silver medal in fencing. In the 1964 Tokyo Olympiad, Miroslav Cerar won a gold medal in pommel horse in men's gymnastics. This athlete is the father of the incumbent Prime Minister in Slovenia and is currently engaged in the Slovenia Japan Business Council in connection with the 2020 Tokyo Olympiad. Most recently, in the 2012 London Olympiad, Urska Zoinir won a gold medal in the 63kg category of women's judo.

Q&A Session with the floor:

Q1: Beekeeping in Slovenia is well known. How about in the karst region?

A: The karst plateau is suitable for beekeeping. In the community I came from, it has a long history as a treasured culture. A friend of my father's used to produce about 200l of honey each year. Regrettably, the number of bees has decreased due to various diseases and agricultural chemicals.

Q2: Is Slovenia promoting IT or high technology under a major national policy? How about any cooperation offered from engineering-centric universities? **(To be continued on P. 8)**

Dialog with the UNESCO committee students of Tokyo Metropolitan Mita Senior High School

Date: June 19, 2018

Place: Minato City Lifelong Learning Center

A total of twenty-two students of the UNESCO committee of Tokyo Metropolitan Mita Senior High School, led by Mr. Katsumi Hirose, teacher, visited Minato UNESCO Association. This was the seventh visit in seven consecutive years. Mr. H. Nagano, President of MUA, talked about the grass-roots UNESCO activities in Japan and, then, Mr. G. Shimizu, Director of MUA, explained his experience during the World War II (hereafter “WWII”). He not only spoke but also sang along with accompaniments by himself on the accordion songs sung quite often to encourage people during the period of WWII in Japan. He added some explanation on the sentiment of people of the time when they sang those songs.

After the visit, Ms. Yamauchi, a teacher of the school, kindly forwarded us the letters written by two students. We took the liberty of introducing the letters hereunder.

Letter 1 written by Miss Tamaki Misawa:

We the members of the UNESCO committee of Tokyo Metropolitan Mita High School had the opportunity of visiting MUA located in Shimbashi. Mr. Shimizu kindly explained about his experience during the WWII. He also played songs sung during war time along his accordion. He was in the upper elementary grades and in the middle school at that time. Thus, he did not actually fight in the war. However, we were able to touch on the atmosphere during the war by listening to his speech. What impressed me most was his talk on the air raid experienced during group evacuation. I was totally downhearted when I found that it was only three days before the war ended when 40 people buried alive because of the air raid. As most of the people survived the war are in their 80s, the number of people who actually experienced the war shall become smaller as the time passes. Therefore, it was a very good opportunity that we listened to Mr. Shimizu's speech. I shall not forget the story on the war told this time and feel responsible to keep the same taken over years to come.

Letter 2 written by Mr. Kentaro Watanabe:

I felt various kinds of feelings coming up from the bottom of my heart as I listened to the speech of Mr. Shimizu on his harsh experience he had during the WWII. I was most impressed by his performance of the songs over the accordion which even children were forced to sing to encourage soldiers.

I really became sad to know that people at my age or much younger sang such songs. I also felt strongly that the war only create sadness in the peoples' mind. As the number of people who can talk about their experience of war become smaller and smaller in the peaceful world, I strongly felt that we the member of UNESCO committee are obliged to tell the story we heard today to the next generation. Thank you for providing us with the precious time and experience.



(Written by J. Inoue, Secretary General, and translated by Y. Suda, the PR & Internet Committee Associate)

The 2nd Hands-on Cultural Workshop The Japanese Folk Song & Folklore in Shimane Prefecture

Date: Saturday, October 14, 2018

Place: Minato City Life-long Learning Center

We took up Shimane Prefecture for the workshop this time. We enjoyed listening to the local tale spoken in Izumo dialect as well as looking at the Yasugibushi Odori performed not only by the instructor but the participants as well.

In Part I, Ms. Teruko Tatanai, a member of Shimane-Izumo Folklore Circle, who travelled all the way from Izumo to join us for the workshop, told stories on “Luck Determination by Gods” and “Visit to Izumo Taisha by a hastily person”. Ms. Tatanai has been continuing her activities in an effort to help hand down the story-telling. Participants were all moved by her story telling in Izumo dialect. We can touch on the historical background, aspect of life and various lessons taught in Japan through such stories told.



In Part II, Mr. Susumu Ichiugawa, an instructor of Traditional Yasugibushi Odori Preservation Society, performed the dancing, and Ms. Shinobu Moriwaki, a member of the Society, performed the song and Shamisen. Yasugibushi Odori, loach scooping dance, is one of the traditional performance arts designated as an Intangible Cultural Property of Yasugi City. We all not only enjoyed watching but learned how to play the humorous loach scooping dance with a song and Shamisen.



(Written by K. Hirakata, Vice President of MUA, and translated by Y. Suda, the PR & Internet Committee Associate)

Participation in the 37th Minato Citizens Festival

Date: October 6 (Sat), 2018

Place: Minato City Shiba Park

As in the past, MUA participated in the Minato City's flagship annual event to introduce its extensive grass-roots activities while also doing a mini-bazaar for fund-raising. The festival has been held in two consecutive days every year. However, due to the approach of a typhoon, it was shortened to only one day event.

We hanged the publicity panels of different MUA committees on the cloth walls while placing complementary event flyers and member-recruitment leaflets on the convenient table surface. Whenever people walked by, we spoke to them to catch their attention to MUA. Mayor Takei made round visits to all the tents and boosted the participation atmosphere. He kindly visited MUA tent as usual and said hello to our members.



As for the mini-bazaar, we had a smaller number of donated items than last year. However, we could record a larger amount of sales, thanks to the cooperation from our members. The proceeds were donated to the East Japan Great Earthquake Student Relief Scholarship. We'd like to extend hearty thanks, to all the members who offered various assistance.

(Written by T. Isobe, Standing Director, the Minato Citizens Festival Committee, and translated by Y. Suda, the PR & Internet Committee Associate)

Introductory Tea Ceremony Workshop -Three-day Course for Beginners-

Date: June 25, July 23 and September 24, 2018

Place: Minato City Life-Long Learning Center

MUA newly started this introductory workshop inviting Ms. Sokei Ono, Associate Instructor of Urasenke School of Tea Ceremony. The class consists of only 5 participants. Admission is JPY6,000 for a three-day course.

Major contents of workshop are:

1. How to taste Japanese Maccha
2. How to use tea utensils
3. How to make the tea

As there are only 5 participants in a class, each and every participant can enjoy a very intimate hands-on lecture. The second round of three-day course will be held in coming October.



(Written by K. Hirakata, Vice-president of MUA, and translated by Y. Suda, the PR & Internet Committee Associate)

(Continued from P. 1) A Trip to Mongolia

our stay was only about a week, we were exposed to a lifestyle where people don't possess more things than they really need. Once back in Tokyo, I was overwhelmed with a flood of information and commodities. I became tired of resisting the allure of the materialistic environment. I wonder why we in Japan need to possess so many commodities around us.

(Translated by S. Tanahashi, the PR & Internet Committee)

(Continued from P. 4) The Karst Region in Slovenia

A: Slovenia maintains a high level in education. However, compared with countries like Hungary or Poland, it was not so active in inviting foreign investments or industries from overseas. Recently the Japanese robotics industry has entered the Slovenian market. I think that we share similar work ethics like the Japanese.

Q3: Why are the Slovenian people so competent in learning foreign languages?

A: For example, my grandfather at age 85, who has never been to foreign countries, speaks four different foreign languages. Because there had been constant changes with the national border, he learned to speak German, Italian, Russian and Swedish, on top of his mother tongue Slovenian. Those who lived in any of the countries bordered by Slovenia had to go through Slovenia to reach another bordered country. In administration offices, German was the official language. At religious places, the ministers were expected to speak in Slovenian as a way of maintaining the Slovenian identity.

Q4: What do you study at Josai University's Central Europe Research Institute where you belong?

A: There are five researchers at the institute. My research concerns international relations, including the diplomatic issues between Slovenia and Japan. Japanese researchers at the institute are studying the Balkan Peninsula issues, along with other subjects. Recently we are placing an emphasis on the exchange of students.

Q5: How do you perceive the current interrelations between Slovenia and Japan?

A: The most active interaction between the two countries has been in the area of culture and education, as exemplified by the exchange programs between the University of Ljubljana and Tsukuba University. I was informed that Tsukuba University also accepts students from Italy and South Croatia. In sports, Slovenian athletes did good jobs at the Nagano Winter Olympiad. The Japanese embassy in Slovenia has been active in responding to the growing interest in Japan among the local Slovenian citizens.

Q6: In Japan people generally have a somewhat gloomy image about the former Yugoslavia. How do you assess Slovenia today?

A: Back in 1991 or so, the former Yugoslavia was a Communist country where citizens could utilize all public services, offered at schools, hospitals, and other facilities, free of charge. Therefore, many Slovenians at ages from 50 to 60 share a nostalgic perception that they were better off in those old days. In 1990, President Tito, who was capable of keeping up the national unity, passed away. This triggered the end of nationalism or civil power in the society. The country fell into the status of an internal war driven by ethnic hostility. During the 1990's, Slovenians became an independent state and started to emulate the West European democracy model. Because the country has maintained a stable society, it was nicknamed "Switzerland on the Balkan peninsula."

(Written by T. Watabe, Standing Director, the International Culture & Science Committee, and translated by S. Tanahashi, the PR & Internet Committee)

Minato UNESCO Association is a citizens' voluntary membership organization that promotes Japanese traditional culture, holds cross-cultural workshops and presents multicultural events and international symposia for world peace. For any questions or comments about our articles, please contact our secretariat office at:

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