

Summary of Study Tour in Japan

In order to make sure that the short study period of one week would be utilized as productively as possible, we examined possible study sites together with the advisers to this project, Professor Kitawaki and Mr. Tamura. Based on the results of the examination, the following cities were selected as study sites: Kani City and Minokamo City in Gifu Prefecture, two cities where a large number of newcomer residents have settled since the 1990s and where some unique activities have been implemented in recent years, and Kobe City, an established international city since the opening of Japan in the Meiji Period, where numerous old comers coexist with a large number of new foreign residents, and where, as a result of the dynamic initiatives implemented by non-governmental organizations (NGO) and the city administration in the aftermath of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of 1995, the term "multicultural coexistence" has gathered a lot of popularity and is now widely accepted.

The members of the study group arrived from Europe on October 31 and received a briefing from Professor Kitawaki on the current situation of foreign residents in Japan and relevant policies on the morning of November 1 (see Photo 1). The group members apparently had done advance research on the subject and asked various questions regarding a wide range of topics reaching as far as background issues such as the Japanese education and labor systems. The group members maintained this enthusiastic attitude throughout the entire duration of the study tour. After a lunch of sandwiches, the group members headed to Tokyo Station, where they boarded a shinkansen bullet train to Nagoya. From Nagoya they travelled to the first study site: Kani City and Minokamo City.

Kani City (Gifu Prefecture)

Immediately after arriving in Kani City, the group attended a multicultural festival organized by the Kani City Multicultural Center "Frevia." The festival featured stalls selling homemade dishes prepared by foreign residents, as well as crops and handicrafts, and various games such as singing contests and bingo. Japanese residents also participated in the festival. The group members rushed into the festival in its final stage, and caught a demonstration of Brazilian capoeira and Philippine gong dances. At the end, the members of the group joined in and enjoyed the dances (see Photo 2). The next morning the group made a courtesy call on Kani City Mayor Yutaka Yamada (see Photo 3). Next, they visited again the Kani City

Multicultural Center "Frevia," where Mr. Edison Kato from the Kani City Hall provided an overview in English of the policies for multicultural coexistence implemented by the city administration. Halfway through his explanation, the members of the group started asking various questions, and later they individually conducted a frank exchange of opinions with foreign residents who came to the venue (see Photo 4).

Next, the group visited Bara Kyoshitsu Kani or the Rose Classroom, an international classroom similar to a preparatory school for children of foreign residents run by Kani City. Education provided in this classroom covers the first stage of the educational system for children of foreign residents established by Kani City. After receiving an explanation on the activities implemented by the Rose Classroom by Director Amaike, the members of the study group joined the children in cleaning the classroom, an activity common for all Japanese elementary schools. Next, they participated in one of the classes called "Hiragana Bingo Game" and had students teach them the hiragana syllabary (see Photo 5). After that, they tried the baked sweet potatoes that the children had dug and prepared for them. Later, the members expressed their impressions from the visit, stating that it had not simply given them an opportunity to enjoy a precious experience with the children of foreign residents in Kani, but also that they believed the three-stage system was extremely well organized, and, furthermore, that the very existence of such classrooms run by the local government administration was unheard of in Europe and in that sense they represented an innovative initiative (see Photo 6).

Next, the group members visited the Kani Public Arts Center ala. After a tour of the facility, they watched a digest DVD of the Multicultural Project "Close Call" created by the center. The producer Ms. Sumiko Tamuro provided a running commentary on the project. Created with the participation of 50 residents of Kani City from 10 countries, this production presents "Japan today" as seen through the eyes of foreign residents and describes their life here. Next, the members of the study group exchanged opinions and ideas with the cast of the production. The members stated that that was a very meaningful endeavor (see Photo 7).

In the evening, there was a reception held jointly by Kani City and Minokamo City. The event was attended by VIP guests including the mayor of Kani City Mr. Yamada and the deputy mayor of Minokamo City Mr. Kazuyoshi Ebi, as well as members of the administration of both cities, NGO representatives and foreign residents, and provided a venue for a dynamic exchange and dialogue. The reception also featured shinobue (Japanese transverse flute), shakuhachi (Japanese end-blown flute), and koto (traditional Japanese stringed musical instrument) performances,

creating an opportunity for the members of the study group to get a taste of Japanese traditional culture (see Photo 8).

Minokamo City (Gifu Prefecture)

On November 3, the study group members visited the Community Hall of Minokamo City and were briefed on the policies for multicultural coexistence implemented by the city administration. They were particularly impressed with the Minokamo Multicultural Community Promotion Plan. Next, Mr. Marcelo Watanabe of the Minokamo Permanent Foreign Residents Independence Support Center provided an overview of the situation of Brazilian nationals of Japanese descent living in Minokamo City and the support system established by the city. His explanation helped the members of the study group deepen their understanding of the administrative policies and the current situation (see Photo 9).

Next, they participated in an informal discussion held at Nakasendo Hall and attended by the mayor of Minokamo City Mr. Naoyoshi Watanabe, representatives of the City Hall, and members of the Brazilian Friendship Association. The discussion included a dynamic Q&A exchange. The members of the study group demonstrated particularly strong interest in the functions of Japanese neighborhood associations in establishing connections between foreign residents and local Japanese. The discussion was followed by a get-together party held at the same venue. The study group members enjoyed Minokamo local specialties and a lively exchange with the participants, including the staff of Nakasendo Hall, in a cozy and friendly atmosphere (see Photo 10).

Next, the group departed from Minokamo City for Nagoya, where they again boarded the shinkansen bullet train and headed to Kobe.

Kobe City (Hyogo Prefecture)

On November 4, the group visited the Kobe City Hall and received a detailed explanation of the city's policies for multicultural existence, from the opening of its port in the end of the Edo Period to the reconstruction efforts in the aftermath of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of 1995. The members of the study group demonstrated particularly strong interest in the Foreign Citizen Council, the purpose of which is to reflect the opinions of foreign residents in the policies of the city administration, and the Kobe International Center for Cooperation and Communication, which provides one-stop services to foreigners (see Photo 11).

Next, the study group visited the Kobe Foreigners Friendship Center, a NGO in Nagata Ward, Kobe City, and received an overview from the director of the center Mr. Kim Son Gil regarding the situation of foreign

residents in Japan and the activities implemented by the Center. The group also visited the day service center "Hana no Kai" for elderly citizens of North and South Korean descent run by the Kobe Foreigners Friendship Center, and received an opportunity to observe the activities of the center (see Photo 12).

Next, the study group paid a visit to the Takatori Community Center, another NGO located in Nagata Ward. This center, whose predecessor served as a hub for rescue and relief activities after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, is made up of a network of eight groups committed to creating a new local community where people of different languages, cultures, races, nationalities, etc. can coexist in harmony. The Kobe Foreigners Friendship Center, which the study group visited earlier, originally was one of the groups in the Takatori Community Center's network. Ms. Shizuyo Yoshitomi, board member of the Takatori Community Center and representative of the Multicultural PRO³ Group, gave us an overview of the activities implemented by the Takatori Community Center and a tour of its facilities. The study group members took particularly eager interest in the exhibition corner that displayed photographs of the city immediately after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and the subsequent restoration efforts, as well as in the Takatori Catholic Church, which is based on a temporary church building erected right after the earthquake using paper tubes as structural elements. Next, the study group members participated in a get-together party held in the Takatori Community Center and enjoyed Peruvian, Korean, Vietnamese, Burmese, and Spanish national cuisine (see Photo 13). As part of its activities, the center organizes cooking classes for various national cuisines and provides delivery services. Furthermore, the Takatori Community Center provides FM broadcasts in several languages. The same evening, two Spanish-speaking members of the study group (Mr. Olexander Butsenko and Mr. Pierre Salama) made an impromptu appearance on the Spanish language broadcast and shared their impressions of Japan (see Photo 14).

On November 5, the study group visited the Kobe Center for Overseas Migration and Cultural Interaction. There, the members of the study group were briefed on the background and activities of the center, as well as on the history of Japanese emigration. They also had an opportunity to learn about the history of the numerous Japanese emigrants who left Japan and settled in Brazil and other countries (see Photo 15).

This visit concluded the group's short but very productive study tour. The group members returned to Tokyo (see Photo 16) and participated in the symposium on November 6 (see Photos 17 to 20).