

Wuhan-East Asia Disability Studies Forum, Sakura (Cherry Blossoms), Gyoza (Dumplings)

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If you hear Wuhan, now you will most likely think about a new type of pneumonia caused by coronavirus. I feel that it was a great pleasure to hold the East Asia Disability Studies Forum 2019 in Wuhan October last year.

The East Asia Disability Studies Forum has been held in Seoul in 2010, and has been a forum for discussions and exchanges of East Asia's disability studies that have been held every year. Ritsumeikan University's Institute of Ars Vivendi, to which I belong, has been the host organization from the beginning, and started in the framework of Korea and Japan, but has since been joined by China and Taiwan. It cannot be forgotten that the East Asian network formed through open lectures and workshops by REASE (Study on Economic and Social Exclusion), the predecessor of REDDY (Economics of Diversity), contributed greatly to its expansion. .

The East Asia Disability Studies Forum 2019 in Wuhan was the tenth in its entirety, with the theme "Inclusive Society for All," and the second in China, following Beijing in 2015. Wuhan is located in central China, facing Yangtze River, the longest river in Asia and the third longest river in the world, flowing from the Tibetan Plateau to the East China Sea. Wuhan is a huge city with a population of more than 10 million, with high-rise buildings. On this visit, I was impressed by the magnificent night view.

In modern history, Wuhan is known for the uprising of 1911, which triggered the establishment of the Republic of China, and for the Battle of Wuhan. The Japanese army captured and occupied Wuhan, the temporary capital of the Republic of China's Chiang Kai-shek administration, in 1938.

According to Ishikawa Tatsuzo, who accompanied the Japanese army, in concluded his book "Wuhan Campaign" saying that "The war will soon be over, and the wounded soldiers will return soon. Until the day when their life's peace and happiness came to a reality, the full joy of the war was to be put on hold". The renowned blind and disability rights leader Matsui Shinjiro (awardee of Yoshikawa Eiji Cultural Award), who was blinded by the Xuzhou operation prior to the Wuhan operation, comes to mind.

Wuhan has famous cherry blossoms. Cherry trees were planted at Wuhan

University, which was seized by the Japanese army during the war to comfort injured Japanese soldiers. And now many citizens go to Wuhan University for cherry-blossom viewing.

I first visited Wuhan in August 2013. I was invited to participate in inclusive education and employment meetings and training events for young people with disabilities, including those with intellectual disabilities, organized by disability and civil society organizations in China. The meeting adopted the "Wuhan Declaration" as a result. It was a time when there was still freedom, sometimes shortly after the inauguration of the current administration. At present, this is impossible, and it is really sad that training opportunities for young people with disabilities have been closed.

I was a bit nervous about the visit to Wuhan, as Japan-China relations were very bad due to the issue of the Senkaku Islands, and the anti-Japanese demonstration across China had taken place in the previous 2012. In fact, I was really welcomed by the Chinese participants. It's a wonderful memory that volunteer staff students have asked me many times to join their photos.

During the meetings, the staff of Wuhan University Public Interest Law Development Center, guided me another participant from Japan to the famous Yellow Crane Tower sung in Li Bai's poem. She asked me and at the Yellow Crane Tower with a good view, "I'm close to my house, so please have lunch at my house". We appreciated the generous offer and accepted the snap invitation.

When she arrived at her house, her relaxed father was surprised that her daughter suddenly brought foreign guests. However, as soon as he understood about the situation, he immediately went out of the way to go out to buy ingredients in the terrible heat to cook water dumplings with his daughter (gyoza) for our lunch.

While eating, I could not help asking about the war between Japan and China. He told me that one of relatives died. Hearing this, I appreciated the gyoza more. When we left, he even gave us beautiful ink paintings as a souvenir. I found the hospitality .

I have been thinking about my friends and colleagues in Wuhan since the new pneumonia gained a lot of attention and especially after the city was sealed off in late January. I realize that it has a great meaning to work on the same theme across borders is particularly important in East Asia where political and historical factors, including colonial rule, the Cold War, are dividing us. East

Asia Disability Studies Forum is just one example that unite us. I understand the meaning of having personal relationships in which we can think of individual faces, not as Chinese or Japanese, for instance.

In June this year, we are inviting Professor Zhang Wanhong of Wuhan University, a partner of our East Asia Disability Studies Forum, to Kyoto for intensive lectures. On September 26 and 27, the East Asia Disability Studies Forum 2020 will be held at the Suzaku Campus in Kyoto, hosted by Ritsumeikan University's Institute of Ars Vivendi. The theme is "Living independently in the community" (Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), and participation from Singapore and Hong Kong is being considered.

I sincerely hope that the spread of the new type of pneumonia will have ended by the time of the Forum in Kyoto. We look forward to participation from Wuhan. I myself look forward to the next opportunity to visit Wuhan. I also want to appreciate the beautiful Wuhan cherry trees that I haven't had the chance to see yet.