Technical Intern Life

Introducing a Winning Entry in a Past Japanese Essay Contest —Become Familiar with Washoku!—

Continuing from the previous issue, let's think about "food" once again in this issue.

Each country and region has its own food culture, and knowing the uniqueness of each food culture is extremely helpful in gaining an understanding of that country or region. We often hear stories of how technical intern trainees have deepened interactions with Japanese people at work and in their community by preparing and serving their native dishes. This is precisely owing to the power of "food." In addition, if you expose yourself to Japan's food culture, you will probably acquire hints for understanding Japanese customs and the people, and gain more breadth to appreciate life in Japan.

Japanese food, or *washoku*, was included in UNESCO's List of Intangible World Heritage in 2013. As you are in Japan, make the most of your stay by enjoying washoku! There is nothing difficult about this. You could, for example, cook an ordinary stir-fried dish using soy sauce or miso, which are representative seasonings in Japan made by fermenting soy beans. You might also want to make *tsukemono*, or vegetables pickled in salt or soy sauce. Tsukemono variations exist throughout Japan as regional specialties, but you could start with something simple to go along with white rice.

One of the most common tsukemono is *takuwan* (pickled daikon radish). An essay written about takuwan is introduced below, expressing the power of "food."

%In Japanese, the essay is printed exactly as written by the technical intern trainee, with furigana added by the editorial department.

[2013 First Highest Prize in the Technical Intern Trainee Japanese Essay Contest]

Gain a Glimpse of the Japanese People through Takuwan (Zhu Xiaobin)

At the beginning of this year, I was invited to a New Year's party at the home of a Japanese acquaintance. When I told my acquaintance's wife that I love to cook, she let me help her. In the kitchen, she asked me to cut takuwan. I am quite adept at using a kitchen knife, so I began cutting the takuwan as thinly as I could.

When I finished cutting the entire takuwan, my acquaintance's wife, who had been watching me from nearby said to me, "Zhu-san, please cut the takuwan so that each slice is as thick as your little finger."

"Oh? Alright," I responded, although I was full of

技能実習Life

日本語作文コンクール からくこうかい 過去の名作公開!~和食に親しもう

ぜんごう つづ しょく 前号に続き「食」について、今号も考えてみましょう。

食文化は国や地域によって異なり、その独特さを知ることは、その国や地域を理解する大きな手助けとなります。技能実習生が会社や地域の日本人に母国の料理を作ってふるまい、交流が深まったというお話をよく聞きますが、それも「食」のなせる技ではないでしょうか。逆に、皆さんが日本の食文化に触れてみれば、それは皆さんが日本の風土や日本人を理解することの助けとなり、日本生活を楽しむ余裕にも繋がるのではないかと思います。

漬物の代表的なものに「沢庵」(大根漬)があります。このたくわん。 について書かれた作文をご紹介します。この作文から「食」の持つ力を感じることでしょう。

がいこくじん ぎゅう じっしゅうせい けんしゅうせい にほん こさくぶん こん く ー る はん [外国人技能実習生・研修生日本語作文コンクール 2013年 ゆうりょうしょう 優良賞]

たくわん にっぽんじん のぞ ZHU XIAOBIN (未から日本人を覗いてみよう(朱 小斌)

今年の初め、日本人の家で新年会が私も招待され参加しました。その家の奥さんに私は料理をすることが好きだと話し、お手会がをさせていただきました。キッチンに入ると「朱さん、沢庵を切ってもらっていい」と奥さんに頼まれました。私は包丁使いが得意なので出来るだけ薄く切り始めました。

沢庵を一本切りました時、そばて見ていた奥さんを「朱さん、 たくさん いちまいこ ゆび 沢庵は一枚小指くらいの厚さで切ってください。」と言われま questions.

I thought, "Why? Thin slices look nice. Perhaps it's a personal habit, or the wife is a difficult person..." However, I did as I was told and cut another takuwan, this time into thick slices. I put the thin and thick slices of takuwan in two different dishes and placed the dishes on the dining table. In the end, the thick slices of takuwan were mostly all gone, but the thin slices remained, except for one slice that was eaten by someone. "Why?" I thought again, and asked my acquaintance's wife, "Why didn't anyone eat the thin slices of takuwan when they're the same daikon radish?"

"It's the same daikon, but the thick and thin slices taste different. Zhu-san, go ahead and compare the two," the wife said with a smile on her face.

I took a slice of thick takuwan from the plate and put it in my mouth. The pickled juice squirted out, each bite made a crunchy sound, and the taste of takuwan filled my mouth. Next, I tried the thin slice. It was crunchy, but there was less juice, and the pickled taste seemed weaker.

"Not only that, but the thicker slices are easier to eat with chopsticks," the wife added.

"How kind!" I blurted out.

"Huh? Thank you," she said, looking at me curiously.

I thought that the Japanese people and the taste of takuwan were both kind. How could I have thought my acquaintance's wife might be a difficult person? Just a short time ago, I had thought all Japanese people were difficult, but my impression changed in an instant. It did not occur to me at all that the thickness of a takuwan slice could affect its taste. This ingenuity came naturally from a regular housewife. My acquaintance's wife serves food simply because she wants everyone to eat delicious food, and not because she wishes to show off her culinary skills. This is the spirit of hospitality that the Japanese people have cultivated within themselves. My acquaintance's wife will surely continue to cut thick slices of takuwan from here on.

This story about "cutting slices so that they are as thick as my little finger" reverberates in my mind like the lingering sound of a bell. To me, it seemed that the kindness and diligence of the Japanese people have seeped through from a single daikon radish. Even a mere slice of takuwan harbors a mild taste that expresses the Japanese people's ability to show consideration for others in every little thing they do.

した。

「え~え?はい、わかりました。」といっぱい疑問を持って返事をしました。

「どうして?薄く切ってきれいじゃないか。個人の習慣?頑固な人…」と思いましたけど、言われるとおりに厚く切りました。そして薄いのと厚く切ったものを二つのお皿へ分けて皆に出しました。結局、厚いほうの沢庵はほどんと食べられ、薄いほうは一枚だけ取られました。「なぜ?」と思いながら、奥さんに「どうしてみんな薄い沢庵を食べないのですか、同じ大根ですよ。」と聞きました。

「同じですけど、味が違いますよ。朱さん食べてみて」と奥さんが微笑みながら言いました。

■から一枚厚いのをとって口の中へ入れました。ぷーと水分がいっぱい出て、バリバリと感じ、味が口中に広がっていきました。次に薄いのはパリパリ感はありますけれど、水分がなく漬物の味を薄く感じました。

「それに、厚いのは箸で取りやすい」と奥さんがまた言いました。「やさしいなぁ~」とついこの一言が私の口から出ていました。

「へえ?ありがとう」と奥さんが不思議そうな顔で言いました。私。「……」

「小指くらい厚さで切ってください」という話しは私の中で鐘の余韻のように響いています。ただ一本の大根から染み出したにのほんだんの優しさと真面目さを感じました。たった一切れの沢庵ですが、些細なことまで人へ気配りが出来る、やさしい味が隠されていました。