

Viewpoints

Mc Donald's and Baskin-Robbins: Is That All There Is?



McDonald's, Baskin-Robbins, the driver's seat being on the left side of the car, and special interest groups demonstrating over the latest cause: we take them for granted as part of daily life in the United States.

To the Japanese, however, these represent the United States, according to Jitsuro Yamamoto, Tokyo native and graduate student in American Studies at Capitol Campus.

"Liberty, freedom, release for the young is a general view from student movements and counterculture," says Yama. McDonald's, although a sub-culture of the U.S., is a national front that has become a symbol of U.S. culture to Japan.

Culture and cultural relations are important topics to Yama. By culture, he means subtleties, way of life, fine culture, everything. "We have diplomatic relations, but cultural relations are more personal, they are more individual, more eternal, more steady, and can go beyond nationality and the nationalism that produces war."

"People talk about detente, but exchange of culture is more important. That is the only fundamental way to prevent war and establish peace, even though it may take a lot of time."

"That kind of culture is not McDonald's."

An example of the importance of learning about other cultures is shown in the importation and exportation of cars.

Japanese cars are made with the driver's seat on the right side, as in Britain. For Japan to export those cars to the U.S., though, the driver's seat must be put on the left side.

The U.S. makes cars with the driver's seat on the left,

but does not move the seat to the right for cars being exported to Japan.

"American cars might be better than Japanese, but it's too inconvenient to drive American cars in Japan," Yama says.

American students are eager to teach the American way of life, but are not so willing to learn the ways of other countries. The role of international students is important since these students provide an opportunity for U.S. students to become familiar with other cultures.

Yama feels that even brief experiences here with international students and events like the IAA dinner can teach cultural maturity and be the first step toward world-wide peace.

Students life is quite different in Japan. Yama noted that students there are more culturally oriented than U.S. students.

When he arrived here a year ago, he experienced a two-fold culture shock.

One was the usual culture shock that results from leaving one's home and entering a strange environment.

The other culture shock was a disappointment at the quality and quantity of student-oriented culture.

In Japan students go to school from ages six to twenty-six and spend eight years in college. They study English from junior high on, and when they reach college, they must learn a second foreign language.

Here, English is the native tongue and unless one is enrolled in a college prep program in high school or goes on to college, one is not exposed to a foreign language.

Learning a foreign language would help American students become familiar with other countries, and on a large scale would help the American culture

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