



OKINAWA STUDY TRIP

"Okinawa is very different from mainland Japan", this statement is what I always hear from people who have visited Okinawa, Japan. I wonder how different it was and in what ways? Our study trip on March 18 to 22, 2015, under JDS Program in International Christian University, has given me the opportunity to see for myself.

Indeed, Okinawa is quite different from mainland Japan. These differences vary from climate, culture, beliefs, etc. Its climate is more tropical. The houses and building designs and architecture has its uniqueness compare to those in mainland Japan, particularly in Tokyo. I could see the influences of different countries particularly China and United States. At the same time, I could also see the distinct Okinawan culture.

Most of the places we have visited showed how World War II shattered the islands and people of Okinawa. The most impressive and interesting aspects among them are the Sakima Art Museum, Peace Memorial Museum and Peace Monuments, Itokazu Abuchiragama Cave and Himeyuri Museum. These places were able to illustrate and narrate the history of Okinawa and the events that occurred in World War II. I could see the sufferings, helplessness and hopelessness of the people trapped and forced in those times. It could not be helped but seeing these things brought tears into my eyes and realized how lucky I was to be living in peaceful times. I always thought that the world today was the worst, however, the situation during wartime is incomparable. Through the pictures, artifacts, illustrations and narrations, I was able to see how war could turn earth into hell. On the other hand, other places showcased the lively and lovely characteristics and culture of Okinawan people. My favorites were Environmental Education Site "Min Min" and Syuri-jo Castle where we were able to walk a road and see a temple and palace constructed during the times of Ryukyu Kingdom. Another is Okinawa World where one of its famous cave is located. It is also where the traditional houses of Okinawan people were preserved. We were also able to see one of Okinawan traditional dances. Next is the Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium where we were able to see the richness of the ocean with different sea creatures. Finally,

the food served to us all throughout our stay was very great. Through these experiences I was able to feel the warmth and wonder of the Okinawan way of life.

The lectures of Professors Makoto Arakaki and Manubu Sato and the visit to Henoko Beach gave a great overview of the background and current situation of Okinawa and its people. Through their lectures, I was able to understand where Okinawan people are coming from and where their principles are based especially with the issues on U.S. bases in their land. Amidst the issues Okinawa and its people face, their opposition against the U.S. bases and their cry to the Japan government to hear their voices, I can see their utmost desire that the current and future generation would never again to experience the hell-like horror of past wars. They are continually fighting for a peaceful and happy life where their children could live without fear of the possibility of another war. For me, this desire is the same for all people in the world. This is what we should aim for whoever we are and wherever we come from.

Finally, this study trip will be one of the most memorable events during my study here in Japan. This trip is truly educational and mind opening especially on the events during World War II. I suggest that the ICU-JDS Program continue this activity.

