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マルタ留学での異文化交流を通して、異文化理解や対話の大切さを学んだ経験を綴ったものです。京都のオーバーツーリズム問題や埼玉県川口市の移民問題など、日本社会が抱える多文化共生の課題を踏まえ、日本で真の多文化共生社会を実現するために何が必要かを見つめ直しました。

Finding Harmony Through Dialogue

At first, the phrase “Let’s build a multicultural society” sounds simple, even obvious. However, behind it lie many challenges. In Kyoto, an overflow of tourists has caused serious problems for local communities. In Kawaguchi, Saitama, tensions toward the Kurdish community escalated into large-scale protests. As globalization advances in Japan, we face a profound question—should we welcome immigrants or turn them away? Simultaneously, we must consider how to truly understand and connect with different cultures and live together in harmony.

Seeking a way to protect Japan’s traditions and values while opening our hearts to the world, I applied for the Tobitate! Study Abroad Initiative and traveled to Malta, a small island in the Mediterranean Sea. Throughout its long history, Malta has been ruled by many nations, but it has consistently embraced new cultures while carefully preserving its own. It was the perfect place to learn the delicate balance between coexistence and tradition.

At language school, I studied alongside classmates from Europe, Africa, and South America. Initially, I felt isolated and struggled with English, yet over time my confidence grew. After class, we would sit by the sea at sunset, sharing stories about our homes. I spoke about Japan’s samurai spirit, Hafed from Libya described the beauty of his desert, and Zoé from Belgium shared photos of traditional sweets. We laughed, sometimes grew serious, and discussed the challenges facing our countries. In those conversations, I felt the quiet still profound power of dialogue.

One moment that stands out in my memory is during a “cultural presentation” class, where I introduced Japanese calligraphy, explaining that it embodies a calm heart and focused mind—the very spirit of wa, or harmony. Hafed confidently brushed the word Peace and said, “This is what my country needs.” In that instant, I felt a spark of hope. I realized that cultural exchange does not diminish

tradition but deepens understanding and strengthens our desire to protect it.

As part of my research, I interviewed my host mother, Grace. When I asked how she felt about the growing number of immigrants and students in Malta, she paused thoughtfully and said, “Of course, differences can make us uneasy, but Malta has always grown together with many cultures. We don’t push people away; we welcome them while preserving our own heritage. The important thing is not to fear differences, but to talk and discover how to live together.” Her words moved me deeply. Malta’s coexistence is not just a slogan—it is wisdom shaped by history. Japan may need time, yet we have much to learn from this approach.

After returning home, Hafed and I organized an online meeting connecting Libyan youth with Japanese high school students on the theme “Our Peace.” At first, everyone was shy, but gradually the conversation grew warm as we listened, empathized, and tried to understand each other. Through this cross-border exchange, I once again felt the powerful force of dialogue. One scene remains particularly poignant: a Japanese student spoke to a Libyan friend who had lost his parents in war, saying, “This exchange reminded me how precious peace is; Japan needs more talks like this if we want to walk with the world.” Hafed nodded softly, his eyes full of quiet understanding.

In the years ahead, tourism and immigration will surely increase, and a multicultural society will inevitably arrive in Japan. To protect our traditions and people’s hopes, we need the courage to connect hearts and the strength of dialogue: to confront misunderstandings, learn about differences, and build a future grounded in respect. Japanese people are often described as reserved, and silence can sometimes allow misunderstandings to grow—yet if we dare to speak and explore our differences together, we may find a way to live as true neighbors.

My journey has only just begun. I want to continue creating spaces in Japan where diverse cultures and values can meet and resonate, as my friends in Malta taught me this truth: the answer to Japan’s future lies within those conversations. It is through these conversations where hearts truly meet across cultures that we can shape a Japan that honors both its traditions and its openness to the world.