

## “Japanese Culture of Umbrella”

Yesterday, on a commercial television program called “Tokoro-san’s appearance in Japan”, it was said that Japanese people carry umbrellas with them when the weather is bad, and even when it rains a little, but in many foreign countries, very few people carry umbrellas. When it rains a little, it seems normal to walk around wet or at most put on a raincoat, and when it rains heavily, it seems normal to take shelter and wait for it to stop, and we talked about why this is different. When you say that, I always have about 10 umbrellas in my house, including folding ones and parasols, and I simply assumed that it was the same in other countries, but apparently it’s different in other countries.

The conclusion of the above program was that it rains relatively often in Japan, and the industriousness and seriousness of the Japanese people, who do not mind being late for appointments due to rain, gave rise to Japan’s unique umbrella culture.

My wife has a habit of watching NHK TV’s weather forecast programs every morning, noon and night, and has an abnormal ability to grasp information about today’s and tomorrow’s weather, heavy rain, typhoons, snowfall, morning, noon and evening temperatures, and the presence or absence of frost. He has a paranoid interest. I also spend several days each week doing outdoor activities such as volunteering for greening (mowing grass in local public areas, etc.), playing senior softball, and playing golf, so I almost always check tomorrow’s weather and weekly forecasts on my TV or smartphone. I’ve always seen this, but I’ve always thought it was normal.

It seems to be so popular that even on Japanese TV news programs and daytime wide show programs, the weather forecast section takes a considerable amount of time to explain it in detail. In other words, in Japanese weather programs, it shows sunny/cloudy/rainy weather every few hours, minimum temperature/maximum temperature, probability of precipitation/rainfall amount, accumulated rainfall over the past 1 hour, 3 hours, and 24 hours, atmospheric pressure, weather maps, satellite photos, Humidity, wind direction/speed, wave height, various warnings, etc. are reported on a daily basis, and even monthly to long-term forecasts, laundry index, discomfort index, heatstroke index, and hours of sunshine per hour of the day are also displayed. As a

result, in terms of unnecessary care, it is comparable to the announcements made inside buses and trains or in stations.

In particular, when a typhoon is coming, the regular program is changed from about a week in advance to provide detailed explanations. I occasionally watch foreign news programs such as CNN, but apart from times like hurricanes and heavy rain and snow, the weather forecasts are generally rough and easy to predict.

The reason why Japan is so concerned about the weather is because 100 million people live in a small area of land surrounded by the ocean and mountains, so natural disasters caused by rain and wind can strike in a short period of time, destroying homes and farmland. This is probably because the concept of ``rain = disaster'' has been stuck in the minds of Japanese people since ancient times.

Those who broke the rules and customs and caused trouble were severely punished, and were also ostracized and expelled. To be late for work or school classes, to keep appointments with others, and to do so, we give priority to carrying an umbrella or wearing rain gear and heading to our destination rather than taking shelter from the rain. I find myself thinking, ``It's my fault that I was late, I'm sorry.'' These are Japanese social customs, social rules, or morals.

What do you feel ``bad about''? It's your own self who considers being late to be a kind of guilt or shame, your parents who are paying for your education, or your parents who have worked hard to prepare. To the organizers who gave me lectures and lectures, to the lecturers and speakers, to the acquaintances and friends I made appointments with, and to the people who damaged my precious clothes by getting them wet in the rain. Westerners have the idea that "individualism" takes precedence over groups, and society also tolerates individual ways of thinking, so when it rains heavily, they take shelter from the rain at their own risk even if they are a little late for their appointment. I also think that's normal. That's why I don't carry an umbrella with me when it rains a little, and even if I'm prepared for the rain, I still wear a raincoat, hat, rainwear, and rain shoes as a fashion item and carry an umbrella.

Incidentally, in Japan, there is a wide variety of umbrella designs, functions, and materials that are typical of Japan, and even foreigners seem to be impressed by the abundance of folding umbrellas and inexpensive convenience store umbrellas. Among convenience store umbrellas, some foreigners are particularly surprised by the colorless

and transparent umbrellas, and praise them for their good visibility in the wind and rain.

On a side note, in Japan, it is common for trains and buses to run almost according to the schedule, and if the schedule is disrupted and arrival is delayed, unless there is a natural disaster, the operator will apologize for the delay or disruption by saying, ``Sorry for the inconvenience.'' ``I called you,'' and ``I was sorry,'' he apologized profusely.

However, in foreign countries, even if the train is slightly delayed, it is tolerated as something that can't be helped, is possible, and natural, and people don't apologize profusely, and passengers think it's a daily occurrence, so they grumble. Although I may grumble, I rarely complain. On the other hand, Japanese people are often said to be ``hard-working people,'' but the idea that ``not working is not good or bad because it causes trouble for your family'' is ingrained in their DNA. In this way, in Japan, the fact that trains and buses run on timetables and hard work are the same thing as the fact that the majority of people carry umbrellas on rainy days.

In recent years, the morale of the Japanese people has been gradually declining, and we have been seeing a number of incidents that seem to indicate that the average number of people feel that they did something wrong or caused trouble. However, it seems that as long as the majority of people carry umbrellas, there is no need to worry so much, but what does that mean?