

Memories of a hometown that connect to the future

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On December 14, 2019, I participated in the “Sacred Land of Japanese Sweets” study tour of Koniya High School. Given that Christmas was just around the corner, there were a total of 40 first- to third-year students dressed as Santa Claus and reindeer who took a tour around the site of the white sugar factory in Kuji, Koniya town. They shared quizzes and games with a total of 44 preschoolers, elementary school students, and their parents joining.

I took part in the quiz as practice on the bus from Koniya to Kuji. The participants were divided into four teams once at the factory, and with worksheets in hand, they toured four locations, such as the white sugar rocks and ruins of the white sugar factory that remain in the village, where they learned about the history of those areas while having fun with quizzes and games that the high school students prepared at each location. On the ride back, the participants had a great time playing a bingo game which reflected the content learned on the tour.

A rehearsal tour was held a month ago, in November, in which I also participated. Besides the tour, which involved only listening to the quizzes and explanations given by the high school students, there were games to search for photographs and keywords hidden in the surrounding area and experiences to measure the length of the chimney (36 m) of the white sugar factory with your own stride length, and there were a variety of efforts to make children enjoy learning.

I had thought that there was still room for improvement in the worksheet, but this is just the ramblings of a random man. The children were writing in the worksheets while passionately listening to the explanations of the high school students. There were scenes where the children would ask questions and the high school students would answer them. To what extent has the memory of the white sugar factory being here permeated into the children? This is not something for which the answers should immediately be sought and is a problem that should be considered over a long time.

During this time, the high school students went through numerous phases of trial and error, thinking about how to best communicate this information in an easy-to-understand manner. On the day of the tour, each high school student took responsibility for explaining the information. In fact, the high school students themselves have simulated the experience of connecting the memories of the white sugar factory to the future. It can be said that this memory was certainly inherited by the high school students.

The memory of the hometown created in relation to society is also evidence that people inhabited and lived there. The disappearance of this signifies the disappearance of the people there, and their history. However, today, local communities have become weakened with aging, population outflow, and industrial decline, making it difficult to pass on conventional

and practical wisdom and memory. Meanwhile, it is not always the case that the population flowing into a city would create something like that of a local community. I felt comfort and reliability in watching what seemed more like neighborhood lads and lasses doing their best to teach neighborhood children rather than high school students teaching elementary school students.

This kind of inheritance of the memories of a hometown cannot be completed by leaving them in the hands of experts. That being said, it is also not a solution to rely entirely on high school students. It is each resident who is interested in each position of society who connects the circle of inheritance of memory, and it is desirable that residents take the initiative in their own efforts. The communities in which we live every day contain a large amount of heterogeneity and diversity. Having a regular and constant relationship is important for each individual resident to understand each other's differences, find connections in them, and nurture those connections.

On top of this, there is no choice but to expand the "mutual" aspect as a collaborative arena that includes diversity in the process of learning or rediscovering the past and creating something new while inheriting that past. A new historical image should be opened by new relationships with people.

I was able to see this in the study tour.

The fact that, on December 14, 2019, there were high school students in Koniya who carried out activities to connect the memory of the Kuji white sugar factory, built by the Satsuma domain, from the Bakumatsu period to the future; and the fact that there were children who passionately participated in those activities.

This series will be reliable material that conveys this fact 100 years later, 1000 years later, and even beyond.



Children taking a quiz in front of the model of a white sugar factory