

# Start by Listening: Application of the *Kikigaki* method to the world

Our daily lives have been formed from close interaction with the local landscape and its natural features. In the course of transmitting culture which is developed in daily lives from person to person and generation to generation, the wisdom, innovations and values of each person and era are added and perpetuated.

One of the methods to carefully inquire into and record the stories of persons' works, skills, lives and values is *Kikigaki* (it literally means listening and documenting). By grasping each individual's *Kikigaki* story, we can understand the characteristics of each region. We will also know the wisdom and innovations of our ancestors who have sustainably managed and used nature.

## ■ Kikigaki by Japanese high school students

With the cooperation of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, the Ministry of the Environment and related organizations, we have annually organized the "Kikigaki Koshien," in which high school students all over Japan visit and interview veteran experts in occupations connected with the natural environment of forests, the ocean and rivers, using Kikigaki method\*.

100 high school students participate in this program every year and most of them are from urban areas. In contrast, these experts are elderly people who have lived in rural areas. Through the one-on-one Kikigaki interview activities, the students get to know the lives and values of these experts. They also begin to re-appreciate the traditional lives and occupations appropriate for their natural environments and to think about their own identities.

\*Kikigaki is a method that inquires into and records the stories of interviewee's lives and values through one-on-one dialogue. The interviewee's words are faithfully recorded and transcribed. These narratives are then summarized in reports that preserve the flavor of the interviewees' way of speaking.

## ■ Application of the Kikigaki method at home and abroad

In recent years, the Kikigaki Koshien, which started in 2002, has been recognized for its usefulness in overseas countries as well. Especially in Asian countries which have been trying to achieve rapid economic development, there are growing concerns about the deteriorating forest resources, the environmental destruction and the disappearing local and indigenous cultures. In order to raise awareness of the experiences and know-how of Kikigaki, English Kikigaki textbooks were published in cooperation with IPSI Secretariat, United Nations University-Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS) and the Ministry of the Environment of Japan in 2012. At present, the first project has been conducted in Indonesia using these textbooks.

In addition, after Noto's Satoyama-Satoumi in Noto Peninsula was designated as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS), Noto Regional GIAHS Executive Committee started the Kikigaki program in Ishikawa prefecture (a member of IPSI) last year. This is a program for local high school students to visit and interview veteran experts in the region, and we have assisted its management.

## ■ Promoting the SATOYAMA Initiative

The Kikigaki method can help in the collection and documenting of traditional knowledge, skills and lives. Besides, it also contributes to developing the youth who will lead the next generation. It is our hope that it will lead to a re-appreciation of the diverse ecosystem services and the sustainable development of society.

## ■ Contact Information

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