

## **Home area's history and revitalization**

### **1. Motivation behind Research Paper**

I am thinking of revitalization because I studied old tales of Tenri City in an elementary school research project 7 years ago. I collected many old tales. For example, Konnyaku Ghost. The summary of his tale is that "Loggerhead's married couple was fighting for Konnyaku. The husband killed his wife. Since then, her ghost appeared." I longed to be a folklorist and archeologist at that time. I found the charm of Tenri City and was interested in the history of it. I wanted to study the history of Tenri City but my junior high school research project was limited to science. The days flew by, I remembered this theme when I became a high school student. I thought that now was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to study this theme.

### **2. Introduction**

In recent years, Japan's population has decreased and concentrated in urban cities. This phenomenon is due to the decreasing birthrate and ageing population. Also, local traditional culture will no longer be passed on. I think the decrease in population will cause the extinction of its history and traditional culture in local areas. I thought it would curb the decrease in population and preserve local history and traditional culture.

The aim of this research is to find ways to protect the local history of Japan through revitalization by researching books and online sources, interviewing around ten Yamanobe-no-Michi Fanclub members, and interviewing two members from Tenri city's Industrial Promotion Division. I propose models for Kumano-Kodo, how revitalization uses Yamanobe-no-Michi. According to Hitoshi Kinoshita, author of Chihou Sousei Taizen, "people must cooperate, both locally and internationally, to help revitalise Japan."

### 3. Results and Analysis

First, I researched Tenri City's present condition and Yamanobe-no-Michi's history. Tenri has many problems. One of its main problems is the decreasing population. As a result, it cannot hold economy-stimulating events such as the Ojiba-Gaeri event in Tenri City. Due to the lack of funds, the city cannot preserve historical places such as Yamanobe-no-Michi. As the oldest road in Japan, Yamanobe-no-Michi has a total length of 26 kilometres with many historic landmarks around it. Yamanobe-no-Michi stretches over Nara City, Tenri City, and Sakurai City. The tourists who visit Yamanobe-no-Michi have good manners, so there is little garbage but still there is insufficient conservation due to its large size.

People should preserve the harmony between nature and history. For that reason, I interviewed Yamanobe-no-Michi Fanclub members. Yamanobe-no-Michi Fanclub is a volunteer preservation group. As a result, I found three problems. First, fanclub members don't receive any assistance from Tenri City or Nara Prefecture. Fanclub members sell crops to make money. Second, the average age of the club members is 70 years old. Since there are no young people, there is a succession

problem and it will be difficult to continue the club. Third, wildlife such as wild boar, Japanese raccoon dog, etc. descends from hiking trails.

Next, I also interviewed Tenri City's Industrial Promotion Division about how to deal with these problems. As a result, the following responses were returned: the Industrial Promotion Division does not think it is necessary to support the preservation group. Yamanobe-no-Michi does not have enough guides to help tourists. The ageing of the population is also progressing in the volunteer guide group run mainly by the Industrial Promotion Division.

A solution to this is looking at Kumano-Kodo, which solved these problems. Tanabe City is the only city in Japan that uses roads to revitalise its town. However, Tanabe City's number of tourists has been decreasing for 10 years. Tanabe City cooperated with the volunteer preservation group, and provided guide education for many people. As a result, Kumano-Kodo is visited by 3,900,000 tourists a year.

Based on the above results, I proposed a revitalization plan. First, there should be an establishment of standing sign boards. The city should also create a flow of people on the Yamanobe-no-Michi with a signboard. Second, there needs to be cooperation with Sakurai City, Nara City and other volunteer preservation groups. They need to carry out more conservation activities like Kumano-Kodo through public-private partnerships. Finally, they must carry out education of Tenri City's history and Yamanobe-no-Michi for students. In addition, there needs to be a shift to a policy in which the city takes the lead in promoting the training of guides and conservationists.

#### 4. Conclusion and Future Problems

In response to the declining population in Japan, my goal was to restimulate the economy by helping local areas in Nara Prefecture. I made a proposal to revitalise Tenri City's economy by using Yamanobe-no-Michi and models for Kumano-Kodo. I worked together with local city officers to help launch this plan.

There are some problems that we might have to consider. For example, we need to think about the locations where we can advertise effectively. If we go too deep into the countryside, not many people will see our posters which will not result in anything. Secondly, I think that if we can gather younger people to help with this cause, it might have a bigger impact.

#### 5. Reflection

In writing this paper, I was able to learn about the history of Tenri City, where I live, and Yamanobe-no-Michi for the first time. In the future, I would like to use this experience to make further contributions to the region and Yamanobe-no-Michi. Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Yamanobe-no-Michi Fun club and the Tenri City Industrial Promotion Division for their cooperation in this interview.

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