

Importance of the stories as the background of nature understanding: an example in the Visayas, the Philippines

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What kind of a perspective on nature do the children acquire through nature experiences, exchanges with families and surrounding people, and books or media? In this study, I conducted interviews via Skype for tens of young people (generally in their twenties) living in the Visayas region, the Philippines, and collected examples of how or what kind of a perspective on nature get during their childhood. Here, I introduce the tentative results regarding the understanding and experience of people in the Visayas, Philippine against the moon, rain, and forests.

Moon: Regarding the image of the moon surface, they have no common understanding like a rabbit for Japanese. There was also a case who have no experiences to pay attention to the pattern on the moon surface during childhood. On the lunar eclipse, there is a folktale that the sea serpent called Bakunawa ate the moon, but the popularization of the folktale is not high (about half). On the other hand, only the sentence of Gikaon sa Bakunawa (eaten by Bakunawawa) survives. There are cases where that word is used in the scene that people went home without notice or things went missing. The full moon was treated as a negative. They have experiences threatened as “monsters or ghosts become active at night of full moon, so you should go home early.”

Rain: The impression of rain is so different from the Japanese. They had a very positive impression against rain, especially during their childhood. Rain is a blessing and a gift from the sky to cool their body. In the rain, most of the people played becoming muddy, running around with friends, washing the body as a natural shower. After returning home, about 70% of people experienced being urged to drink plenty of water after taking shower and changing clothes. On the other hand, against too heavy rain, some people had the habit of cutting clouds or rain grains with “the scissors” made with fingers also remained.

Forest: About the forest, they have a feeling of awe and respect. This is because of the sense that the forest is the place where something other than human beings. In the forest, they do not make noise and they do not point anything by a finger to pay tribute or to avoid disturb something else. Also when they enter into the forest, especially when they pass through beside a big tree, the chant of tabi tabi po (Excuse me) still remains as a habit

Of course in the Philippines, as in Japan, school education treats moon, rain, and forest as part of natural science. On the other hand, we also should keep in mind that indigenous ideas such as those introduced here have penetrated and people in the Visayas are deeply affected. In particular, we should consider being sufficient consideration when implementing natural research or natural education programs in the Visayas as a field.

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