

Lessons from Buratamori –An introduction to the session

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Buratamori, airing from 7:30 pm on every Saturday, is a TV program broadcasted by NHK (Japanese public broadcast). In the program, local experts on geology, geography and history host a well-known TV talent Tamori and a female announcer and stroll a location to reveal its history and development with them. This program originally started in 2008 as a late-night program featuring areas in Tokyo and its surrounding and won the Geographical Society of Japan Award in 2011. Since 2015, the TV program has been aired in the prime time as the present and began to feature locations all over Japan. After this time, the TV program has won awards from National Geographical Information Authority of Japan, Geological Society of Japan and Japanese Geotechnical Society. As implied from presenters of the awards, the Buratamori is highly recognized by earth scientists in Japan. In this session, we would like to reveal how the program, which satisfies even professional earth scientists, was made from diversified stand points including the TV producer, experts who host the show and the audience. The followings are my schedule and personal impression when I hosted the show.

I have hosted three episodes entitled “Hakone” (aired on April 22, 2017), “Hakone Sekisho (checkpoint)” (May 13, 2017), and “Hot springs in Hakone” (October 6, 2018), as a local geological expert. The preparation process for the episodes aired in 2017 began in the late December 2016 with a phone call from NHK to my office. The crew spent all January in 2017 to gather diverse information of the featuring area. The outlines of the episodes were fixed in the mid-February and I was requested to be the host by the directors. In the early March, the directors presented scripts for the episodes and a rehearsal without Tamori and the announcer was held. The shooting was held in the mid-March. After the filming, I was requested to review the the scripts of narration and animation movies that would be used in the episodes to help audience to understand until 2 weeks before the airing.

The preparation process of the program, which includes intensive information gathering by the crew members and detailed discussion with the experts, were interesting and very impressive for me. The effort made by crew to keep the cast members relax during filming was also impressive.

Recently, chances for scientist to explain his/her research to the taxpayers are increasing. Such a scientist can learn from the TV crews who have several specific capabilities including 1) extensive information gathering, 2) insight that extracts reality of the featuring area, 3) story making to convey the gathered information to the public and 4) efforts to keep the filming location relax and delightful.

On the other hand, the TV program simplifies scientific context boldly and this bothers experts in the show deeply. In my talk, my experience of such simplification will be also presented and discussed briefly.

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