I was born in Ota, Gunma Prefecture, where laborers from Asian countries settled in the late 1980s and nikkei South Americans gathered in the 1990s. In this region, despite the presence of foreign laborers, there has been no change in local attitudes toward foreigners. Relations between laborers and the local community are characterized by a strong sense of prejudice. I can only imagine that this kind of situation is happening all over Japan. For this reason, the subject of my research is “consciousness toward foreigners in Japanese regional communities.” My aim is to investigate a way to improve this consciousness.

Abstract

In the past, there were two main categories of foreigners in Japan. The first was the so called “old-timer,” such as the zainichi Korean who came to Japan during the colonial period. The second was the so called “new comer,” such as the nikkei South American Japanese who came to Japan to work in local industrial cities suffering from labor shortages.

However, there is a recent new trend of foreigners increasing in regions where there is no key industry. This means that their contribution to the local community is becoming larger even though Japanese people’s awareness of this contribution has not changed, leading to a decrease in the Japanese level of consciousness. Moreover, although it is more so in the case of nikkei South American Japanese, the consciousness toward foreigners is worsening in regional communities due to little interaction. The two trends combined result in the danger of even further consciousness deterioration. I conducted interviews in two cities, Wakkanai, Hokkaido, where there are many Russian sailors and Chinese trainees, and Izumi, Toyama Prefecture, where there are Russian sailors, Pakistanis who sell the sailors used cars (the number of car lots is about 260), nikkei Brazilian Japanese, as well as Chinese trainees. The findings of the interviews reveal the existing circumstances within Japanese regional society, and raise questions about ways to improve Japanese consciousness toward foreigners.