

Creation of Ethnological Films through Interaction with Residents : A Case Study of Kesennuma City, Miyagi Prefecture

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The purpose of this study is to examine the possibility of using the production of ethnological films as a way of carrying out continuous, mutually negotiated field studies. As an example, this study addresses a video production that recorded the activities of a cultural property rescue that collects and preserves household goods from the Ogata family house, a private house in Kogoshio, Kesennuma City, Miyagi Prefecture, which was damaged by the tsunami caused by the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake.

Kesennuma residents participated in this activity and collaborated with the staff of the National Museum of Japanese History, which included the author of the present paper. Thus, I first examine the theoretical framework for cooperation between researchers and residents. In the past, fieldwork has often caused a power imbalance between researchers and residents, as researchers often describe local culture from a one-sided perspective. I took up public history and action research as a way to solve the problem. These methods in area studies and problem-solving place emphasis on the collaboration and consensus building between researchers and residents. I argue that, using these methods, researchers and residents may be able to collaboratively deepen their understanding of local culture by conducting regional studies. This confirms that modern museums emphasize dialogue between researchers and residents, and that the aforementioned methods are effective in museum activities.

I then describe the circumstances of the rescue of cultural properties in Kesennuma City in which I began to shoot a video, the process of making use of the captured video materials, and the interactions between researchers and residents in front of the video equipment; I also describe the process of public history in which residents share their local culture and talk about their own experiences through video, and the action research process in which this is done continuously.

Based on the above, I argue that public history and action research methods are effective in bringing about interactive communication in video production. However, I also point out that interactive communication is not made possible by the characteristics of visual methods themselves, but rather that the researcher's study design is crucial.

Key words: Cultural Heritage Rescue, Public History, Action Research, Interactive Communication, Fieldwork
