Interviewee: Nagamo kun

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Q: Interviewer A: Interviewee T: Translator

Q: When did he start farming?

A: From last year, he began to do it by himself. Two years ago, he learnt from Tanaka san, he went to his place to help his work and learn it. He went to his place, but not in a good way. (T: In Japanese, we say that we went to someone's place but not in a good mean, it might be something annoying to the one who is visited. He said that, he was not really helping. I know the feeling, when I went to someone's rice field and help with the jobs, I just felt that I was not helping, just like I'm the annoying one.)

Q: What did he do at Tanaka san's place?

A: From rice planting, he had been visiting. About the seedlings, he missed it. Tanaka san had to make the rice field flat, and plough the land and draw lines.

Q: So he followed the whole process, how often did he visit Tanaka san at that time?

A: Twice or three times in a week, he did not really go so much, maybe less than 20 times that he visited. (T: I'm just surprised how he started by himself last year, he said he did not know anything.)

Q: Why did he want to learn rice farming in the beginning?

A: He is from Kyoto, he had been thinking about being a rice farmer for a year. Because the rice is the source of Japanese energy, it is our main food. He always wanted to do the rice farming, there are someone who wanted to give him some lands for rice farming in Kyoto where he was born. He wanted to do rice planting in some other countries, he was tired of city. He was not interested in taking over those farmlands in Kyoto, he has been thinking about making rice by himself. There are conferences things, or seminar things, that Tanaka san and other organic farmers talking all together, he kind of has visited that talking session, it was held in Kyoto city. Tanaka san is also from Kyoto, they have some kind of connections with rice farmers in Tokyo, someone organized the session. There are several weird organic farmers there.

Q: What was he doing before that?

A: He was involved in the construction business and working at those construction sites, the previous job was to demolish the house. He is in the Matsudai construction company now, but before he came here, he was already involved in it. Before that, he was building the water pipes, and before that, he was building the base of house.

Q: What drew him to come here suddenly? Did he plan for it?

A: He was looking for somewhere he wanted to go in the countryside, he was not really thinking about specific place but just countryside in general. At first, he came to the next town, the one right next to where Suki san is for three months, he was in a village that has a lot of straw roof houses, like a traditional Japanese house. You can stay there, but you have to pay, he was there for three months. After three months, he had to get a job, so he left the house. The job became the one in Matsudai construction company, so he got the job there and he kind of looked for somewhere to live in, so he found here and he came.

Q: At that time during the three months, was he already learning from Tanaka san?

A: Yes. When he was there, he visited Tanaka san. After he moved here, he did not go to Tanaka san's place because he got a job and he had to work. He did not have much time to visit him.

Q: When did he decide to start farming one year ago?

A: If he does not do it, he thought that nothing would proceed. He wanted to make a move in this life, without doing actual rice planting, he did not think that he is in the process. He was not really interested in if he could actually harvest the rice, it was not important for him, he just needed to do the whole process so that he could learn. Without starting it, he thought he could not learn from that, so he actually had to do it. He had the idea that, if he does not do himself, he never gets actual learning. Tanaka san did not mention that he could start by himself, it was his own idea to start by himself to learn. In the Murono village, he met someone and borrowed someone's rice field, it was like the middle of where Tanaka san is, so he just started. Tanaka san helped him so much for the first year. (T: I saw it on Facebook, Tanaka san wrote a post that there is weird guy who just started, it was like impossible, he had to help.) He had no idea how much he could handle for how big the field is, if you got to harvest and sundry the rice, how much the spaces of the bars that you have to put there, he had no idea how much spaces is needed. He did not know anything, he had no idea. He got the idea of how much he could handle by himself or not, this year he kind of got the idea of the whole process and how much he could handle, he has decided how much he could do this year.

Q: Is he going to expand?

A: He is going to reduce because last year was too big.

Q: How big was it?

A: 20 arcs, by hands and all by himself, it is a lot.

Q: The decision to reduce is linked to his physical energy or for the incomes?

A: About the physical part, he wanted to expand in the future, but from last year's experience, he could not take care of all of his rice fields last year. For example, the weeding, he could not do some parts in the rice fields and it turned out that there are a lot of weeds in some area and little bit of rice straws. He wanted to take care of all the fields by himself, he got the idea that he had to reduce the size of the land so that he could take care of them. Physically he is going to get used to the work that he has to do, so it wouldn't be a matter, but last year he just couldn't do it.

(Nagamo kun showing us the pictures of his field)

Q: Why did he want to follow Tanaka san's way?

A: It is to get back Japan, the Japanese ancient way. Having the ancient and primitive way, it is the most modern thing to him, using the traditional and primitive knowledge is the most leading way to him.

Q: Does he mean that the future would be the ancient way?

A: The old way...he thinks that it makes humans alive...the mainstream modern agriculture is not for living, it is just to make things easier, people don't really have to move, just like city life, it is really convenient but it makes human do less and try less.

(Nagamo kun showing us the weeds on his rice fields last year)

A: If you pull out the weeds and just leave them there, they will just come up again. If you just leave them in the water, the roots will just grow, the weeds are so strong and smart.

(Discussing about how to deal with the weeds)

A: Too many weeds in the end when he harvested, he had a weed cutting machine, there are too many weeds, he cannot even distinguish the rice from weeds, he just cut it by weeding machines.

(Nagamo kun showing us pictures of his farming process)

A: When he first rent the land, it was dry and not in a good condition. Tanaka san suggested that he could use the tractor to plough the soil. In the beginning, he used the machine. He was like, it is important for him to process, to experience the whole process, he is not so interested in knowing and doing the efficient way. He is not interested in that, he is more interested in doing actual process so that he can learn the things. In the end, he is going to get the same way, or the same view of the things to do it. He is going to get to that position in the end, but he kind of likes to walk the winding road to get to his destination, he kind of likes it.

Q: Will he modify the practices he had last year in the coming years?

A: He is going to follow most of the steps like last year, he just reduced the field, next year he has some plans to do new things, he is going to work on it.

Q: What are the new things?

A: He actually wants to try spread the rice seeds on the field directly, he wants to skip the seedlings part. He will make a line and plant the seeds in there. If it comes out, it will just like how he put the seedlings. Maybe over 60 years ago, people are doing it in that way, spreading the rice seedlings in the field, they picked the seedlings and just grew from seeds. When they spread the seeds, the rice knows when's the suitable condition to grow. Right now when people make the seedlings, it is just that they made the seeds to grow but he actually wanted to do it naturally and let the seeds grow when they want to. He wanted to do it in that way. He thinks that chemicals and fertilizations were used on his farmlands previously, so he is facing the problem of how to provide nitrogen to the soil in a natural way, he also mentioned that looking at the weeds or plants in winter, they do not look like active, but they are not dying, they are just sleeping. He thinks that maybe those plants are storing their energy in winter.

Q: What are the positive experiences to him in his farming?

A: It is not just about farming, everything is about learning new things to him after he moved to Matsudai. Facing challenges too, it is fun that you have learnt something after living, he is having fun.

(Showing him pictures of artworks and asking him questions about the artworks)

T: He is interested in the view of 'Rice House' the most when he saw it. He thinks that you can look at all the views at the rice field, it is really cool, the view itself. When he was doing rice planting work by himself, he just goes inside himself so much, so having such a nice view would be so nice. Thinking about that, while working on rice planting, it will give himself room, feelings and atmosphere around. He thinks that if he is actually working on this rice field, it would be really nice, not too much thinking going, so that one impresses him the most. He is not really interested in the artwork, he just asked me, why did they put the frame here, but thinking about view and this rice terrace, he thinks in this way.

Q: Did he see the art piece when he looked at the picture?

A: He found that artwork, but the view is more attractive, it is not the artwork.

Q: Did he see other artworks when he moved around?

A: He has seen this. He does not really go far.

Q: How does he feel about seeing those artworks around?

A: The Rice Field drew his attention. You have to know about the background and what those artists thought about the artwork to understand the artwork, he needs to know the background, it is really something important for him to know the artwork. When you see it, it is just something put on the ground, you do not really know why it is there, if you once know the story or background of what it meant to be, you understand the artwork. He was mentioning art pieces or art in general.

Q: How does he feel about having artworks on the rice field?

A: Those are shapes of the old way of how people farm, he just wondered why they put the figures of the old way, but not in the way of how they are doing it right now, e.g. in tractors, he wonders.

T: It is like the thing Suki san mentioned, about the good old days.

A: If one wants to have the 'good old days', he thinks that people should actually just do it, instead of driving the tractors and stuffs, people should go back to the way they have been, if they think that it is good. In that way, those art needs to be the shape of the tractor.

Q: Is it like, he thinks that if people want the good old days, they should do it instead of putting it in an artwork?

T: Yes, it should be about what people are actually doing.

A: If the old people are doing it in this way could be a brand of the rice and the town itself, he would be happy. If people follow those good and old ways, it does not just bring economic happiness, from the bottom of the heart, you will also feel satisfied and be happy. That's why he is saying about bringing back Japanese spirit, and he does it by doing it, he wants to get it back. He thinks that right now people are doing something, leaving the important things, doing something that does not have the true spirit, they are just doing it technically and leaving the important things that they should remember, that's a problem and how it is right now. It is not just about rice farming, everything is happening in this way in general. He started with rice farming because rice is what we eat mainly, it is a good beginning and approach.