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Brochure Publication Committee
for the 20th Anniversary Commemorative Project of the Japan Society
for the Study of Kominkan

The Japan Society for the Study of Kominkan

Brochure for the 20th Anniversary of the Japan Society
for the Study of Kominkan

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**Sustainable Community
Development
and**

Kominkan



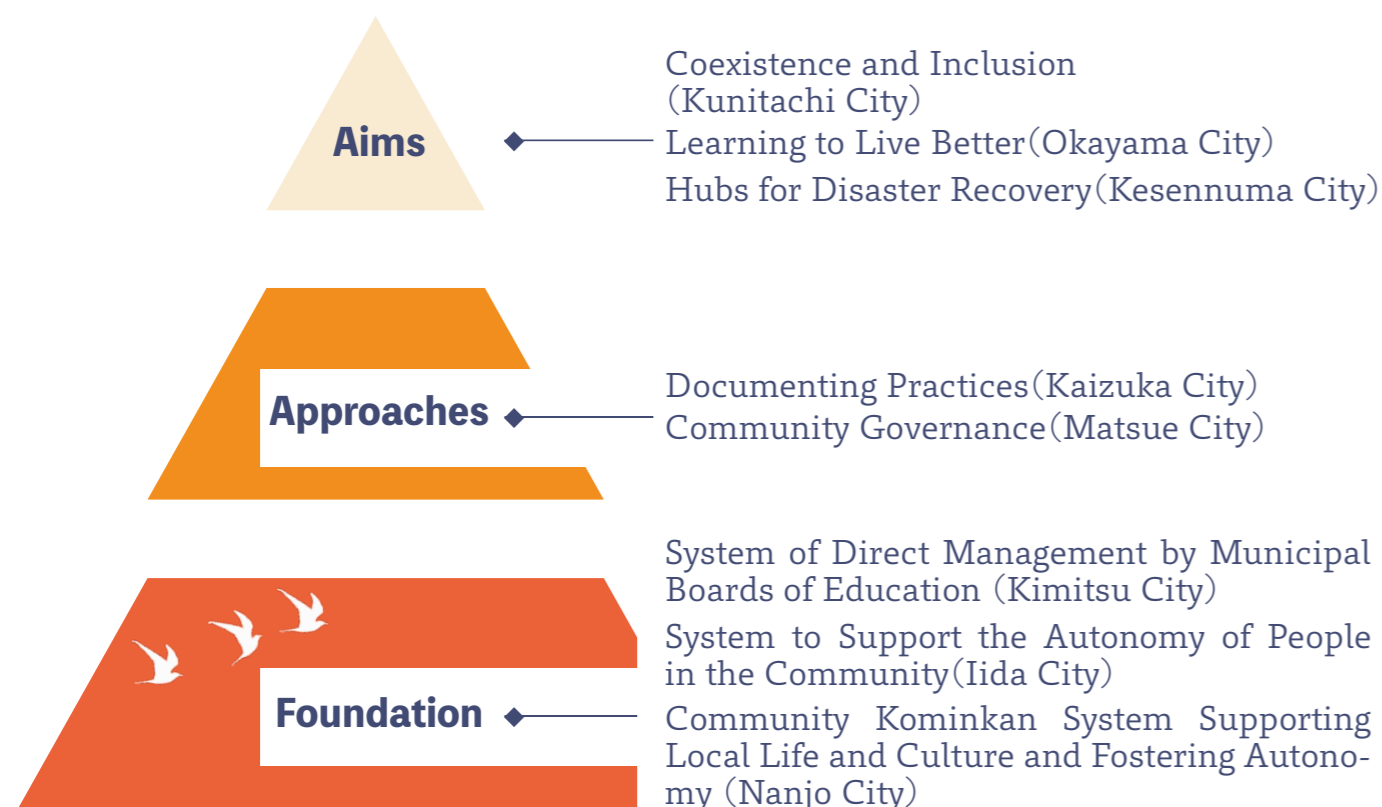
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Sustainable Community Development and Kominkan

Brochure Publication Committee

This brochure is part of the 20th-anniversary commemorative project of the Japan Society for the Study of Kominkan. It was prepared with the goal of sharing the Society's research findings, with a particular emphasis on global outreach. To help achieve this, the brochure is being issued in both Japanese and English.

During the nearly 80 years since the release of a national policy directive, 'On the Establishment and Management of Kominkan,' which came in the immediate aftermath of World War II (1946), Kominkan in Japan have engaged in a wealth of practical activities. However, due to the strong historical, social, and cultural context of these activities, practices, and programs, they have not been widely shared with people and groups outside Japan. Previous dissemination efforts have included the Japanese-English pamphlet 'Kominkan' (2009), published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) in conjunction with the 6th UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education. In addition, the UNESCO Bangkok office has shared information about Kominkan with Community Learning Centers (CLCs) in other parts of Asia.



About this Brochure

In putting together this brochure, we looked at Kominkan from various perspectives:

First, Kominkan in Japan vary greatly in terms of size, facilities, staffing, and resources, making it difficult to present a uniform image or offer typical case studies. As a result, this brochure focuses on eight unique Kominkan, exploring three key characteristics: their 'aims,' the 'approaches' they use to organize learning, and the 'foundations' upon which they operate. While each case study is fascinating, none are intended to represent the entirety of Japan. In presenting each case, we sought to highlight the historical aggregation of Kominkan practices as well as the scholarly attention given to these practices by members of the Society, with the hope that the content resonates with a global audience.

Second, we sought to convey the attitudes and thoughts of Kominkan staff by structuring the content in a way that captures the vibrant and unique atmosphere that staff and community bring to Kominkan, rather than offering simple summaries. To emphasize the human element, we included staff voices and photos in each of the case studies. Most of these were authored through a collaboration of practitioners and researchers that balanced the practical insights of the practitioners with the objective analyses provided by the researchers.

Lastly, the brochure will be distributed primarily as a downloadable PDF on the Society's website. By making the brochure easily accessible, we hope to encourage new exchanges and the growth of learning circles in Japan and abroad.

Our Perspectives

The overarching theme of this brochure is 'sustainable community development and Kominkan.' In light of the historical evolution of the Kominkan in Japan and the challenges they will face in the future, our aim has been to reflect the diversity of their foundations, convey the unique cultures of their approaches (forms of learning organization), and express the international relevance of their aims. The rationale for this was as follows:

1. Foundation: Today, the postwar system for promoting social education, established by the Social Education Law, is undergoing significant change. As we consider the future of Kominkan within the overriding goal of fostering a sustainable society, we must also revisit and affirm the foundations and systems that have sustained them until now. Kominkan throughout Japan have evolved employing diverse approaches, primarily within municipal public administrative systems, but not solely dependent on them. To illustrate this, we selected three case studies that demonstrate: 1) a system of direct management by municipal boards of education; 2) a system of committees and branch Kominkan run by the community and supported by local government staff; 3) a community Kominkan system that supports and upholds local life and culture and fosters autonomy.

2. Approaches: We also found it necessary to examine the historical development of Kominkan, particularly the trend that has seen them being transformed into facilities, such as community centers, that take them beyond their social education role. We explored the role of Kominkan as learning-support organizations, which is the focus of our 'methods and approaches' section. One such area of inquiry was the 'documentation of practice,' which links the Japanese tradition of 'life writing' in school education to the 'life recording' found in social education courses. This reflects the broader history of education and people's history that goes beyond social education. Conversely, on the topic of 'community governance,' we considered how local governments have maintained systems of learning, rooted in Kominkan prototypes, with strong ties to local organizations that are deeply embedded in the community.

3. Aims: After the war, Kominkan were established as hubs of democracy, deeply intertwined with people's daily lives. Now is the time to reflect on how Kominkan have been shaped by the values of each ensuing era. There is a need to reposition these aims in today's globalized world and engage in discussions not only within Japan but also globally. To facilitate this dialogue, we have introduced case studies that focus on universal values such as 'coexistence and inclusion,' 'well-being,' and 'resilience.' When discussing resilience, we placed particular focus on Japan's unique position as a disaster-prone country.

Through dialogue with the international community, we are developing and proposing perspectives on 'aims,' 'approaches' and 'foundation' to re-examine the key turning points in the historical development of Japan's Kominkan.

Message from the President

Kazuko Murata (President of the Japan Society for the Study of Kominkan)

The Japan Society for the Study of Kominkan was established in April 2003 and is now celebrating its 20th anniversary. I would like to begin by introducing the prospectus of the Society.

The Prospectus of the Society (2003)

More than half a century has passed since Kominkan were first established in Japan. During this time, Kominkan have grown and developed significantly as distinguished social education institutions that are unique to Japan, with no parallel elsewhere in the world. Additionally, research on Kominkan has advanced greatly, with valuable findings being accumulated by organizations such as the Japan Society for the Study of Adult and Community Education, the Japan Association of Lifelong Education, and the National Kominkan Association, as well as other local groups involved with Kominkan.

Today, Kominkan are at a critical turning point. The Transitioning to a Lifelong Learning System, which began in the mid-1980s, presented a grand vision of guaranteed lifelong learning for all citizens, while at the same time calling for the introduction of private-sector dynamism and an emphasis on volunteer activities. Furthermore, the role of Kominkan is now being re-considered from various angles, including the outsourcing of Kominkan operations to foundations and the exploration of possible relationships with non-profit organizations. Moreover, moves towards a reassessment of public facilities, due to the financial difficulties at both national and local government levels, is also a significant concern for Kominkan.

Looking at global trends in adult education and lifelong learning, which can be seen in the 'UNESCO Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning,' one sees a growing interest worldwide in adult learning and community activities. This has led to a surge in the attention that is being paid to social education facilities, resulting in the creation and growth of them in various parts of the world. As a result, people in these countries have begun to look at their Community Learning Centers (CLCs) and other community-based learning facilities in comparison with Japan's Kominkan.

When researching Kominkan, it is essential to consider their relationship with other social education facilities, such as libraries and museums, as well as with public gymnasiums and other sports venues. As for the role of Kominkan in local communities, it is crucial that their connection with similar facilities be taken into consideration, and more broadly, their relationship with local planning and policy initiatives. Moreover, while maintaining a focus on Kominkan research, collaboration with related academic societies is crucial for any researcher. Considering these factors, we came to believe the time had come to establish a Japan Society for the Study of Kominkan, an academic society dedicated to research on Kominkan, which have become important social education institutions.

Taking these points into consideration, the Society was established as an academic society that focusses on Kominkan. Since its founding, a wealth of highly-regarded studies have been published. We also recognized the importance of our becoming a hub for international research on adult and community education facilities, Kominkan in particular, while also conducting comparative research across the globe. The Society's mission is to promote research and relevant activities, aimed at the growth of Kominkan into 21st-century institutions that, in collaboration with other social education institutions, guarantee the right to lifelong learning for all.

Almost 80 years have passed since the birth of the Kominkan system in Japan. After the Second World War, Kominkan were established as places for the reconstruction of local communities and the promotion of democracy. "A cultural facility for us, by our own efforts - that is the essence of the Kominkan. Like democratic governance, which is by the people and for the people, Kominkan became a space for cultivating a new civic spirit that aimed to put democracy into practice in towns and villages across Japan" (Sakuo Teranaka (1946) Construction of Kominkan). Kominkan have since spread throughout Japan, becoming core social education facilities rooted in local communities.

The Kominkan system has continued to expand in diverse and vibrant ways amid the various twists and turns and the changes and fluctuations of postwar Japanese society. This includes the establishment of facilities that are close to the daily lives of people in the community, that organize a variety of projects and individualized cultural activities that respond to local needs, as well as practical learning programs that address the problems and challenges faced by communities throughout Japan.

Although born into a nationwide system, Kominkan have taken on unique characteristics that reflect the diversity of the communities in which they are based and the municipalities under which they operate. However, one crucial aspect that has remained a constant is the importance placed on having staff who work closely with people in the community, who share their concerns, and learn and work together to improve the local educational environment. Furthermore, staff expertise and staff development have been emphasized from the outset.

As illustrated in this brochure, it has been necessary for the Society to empirically clarify the functions and roles of Kominkan that enable local residents, communities, and towns to thrive. Residents and staff alike work to promote the everyday use of these learning spaces, making the reconfirmation of the roles staff play even more vital today.

Although the Kominkan system has a long history, it is also true that the staffing system that supports their expertise has largely depended on the efforts of local government bodies. Therefore, efforts by both local and national governments to make effective use of legal systems to further improve staff expertise are still greatly needed today. This brochure offers insights, specific measures, and frameworks to help bring these efforts to fruition.

While Kominkan have accumulated significant local experience over the years, the foundations of the system have never been sufficiently robust. Over the past 20 years, neoliberal policies have affected many social systems, and the Kominkan system is no exception. With the decentralization reforms that have been driven by the financial difficulties faced at all governmental levels, the management of municipalities have been opened to market forces and they have undergone restructuring and consolidations as well, leading to considerable upheaval. Some local governments now find it difficult to maintain or explore new directions for their systems.

Currently, the world is in a state of ongoing turbulence, with the war in Ukraine, the conflict in Gaza, and other events that threaten peace, democracy, and human rights. In this era, as we mark the 20th anniversary of the Japan Society for the Study of Kominkan, we reaffirm our original purpose. To contribute to the advancement of world peace and democracy, we are publishing this brochure to highlight the practices accumulated by Kominkan in Japan and to share our vision for future development with our colleagues worldwide, who are working diligently to promote local learning and education.

We hope that Japanese Kominkan and community-based learning facilities and spaces such as CLCs around the world can collaborate to open up the future and discover new perspectives by taking action from the ground up with a global perspective, standing in their local communities and acting globally.



Kimitsu City, located in Chiba Prefecture, is a municipality in the Tokyo suburbs that has experienced rapid urbanization. In the 1960s, one of the country's leading steelworks was built by the coast. This dramatically altered the lives of local residents who had previously been engaged primarily in fishing and farming. In 1971, five towns and villages merged to form the city of Kimitsu. The city has consistently prioritized basic social education programs. It now has eight Kominkan (plus three branch Kominkan), each staffed with a social education specialist and or similarly accredited staff member.

Kimitsu Central Kominkan
(Kimitsu City Lifelong Learning Community Center)

In recent years, even as the management styles of Kominkan across Japan have become more diversified, Kimitsu City has continued to operate its Kominkan directly under the local Board of Education. The city has, by maintaining a respect for the principles and fundamentals of the system by which Kominkan are run, made it possible for Kominkan staff to take the time to actively support the lives and learning of local residents, and to engage in long-term efforts to sustain and enrich the community.



Message from the staff

As a Kominkan staff member, I have been involved for many years in the study of financial issues with members of the community. Over that time, the location and kinds of support have changed due to personnel transfers, but I have always valued the idea of 'learning and reflecting together.' Interestingly, my initial goal was not to provide education about finances. Instead, I sought to uncover the true nature of the problems hidden behind the individual concerns and questions that emerged during group discussions. Finance education became a process of sharing amidst a 'context of learning' with local people who have been the main learning agents, leading to a better understanding of those with whom we are learning and why we are doing so.

Naoya Aizawa (Assistant Chief, Obitsu Kominkan, Kimitsu City)

"Work up a sweat together!" This motto was passed on to me by a local resident who frequented the Kominkan where I first started working. I always make it a point to step out of the office and engage with local people, to laugh together and sometimes have discussions with them or to air out frustrations. It is through these connections that we uncover the learning needs of the community and identify the activities that will shape its future. As Kominkan staff, it is our role to support and facilitate the realization of these aspirations within the official structure of the city.

Akihiko Nakamura (Assistant Chief, Seiwa Kominkan, Kimitsu City)

Written by Toshiyuki Fuse, Vice Director, Lifelong Learning and Culture Department, Kimitsu City Education Board, Yasuhito Tamma, Associate Professor, University of Tsukuba

Our activities

The Kominkan in Kimitsu City places great importance on collaborations with the local community. Staff members frequently travel to different parts of the area to observe local conditions and listen to local residents. In doing so, they are able to identify the needs of the community and build relationships of trust that can contribute to local development and local learning activities. The following are two examples.

First, there is a study circle of local residents that focusses on life in Kimitsu. The circle begins with questions from participants regarding issues that arise in their daily lives and then uses these to launch into discussions about city finances. From there, the circle continues to research how local government and local citizens can shape the future of their community. The circle was formed in 2016 by residents who had studied the city's educational and financial situation in a 2008 home and family management class run by the Kimitsu Central Kominkan. This was followed by a course on local finances organized by the Yaehara Kominkan in 2014-2015. Kominkan staff have been involved with the circle since its inception, helping it become a self-sustaining group and facilitating the development of content driven by questions posed by local residents. Kominkan staff have continued to support this initiative, which has proven to be a valuable learning tool concerning life in the community.

Another example is the Seiwa Kominkan, located in a rural mountainous area that is facing the challenges of an aging population and a declining birth rate. The Kominkan has aided the community with various initiatives, including the publication of a long-running Kominkan newsletter, which has become the most accessible source of local news. Other activities include efforts to promote a sense of attachment of children towards their hometown, learning programs about the history, culture and natural environment of the area, and the preservation of traditional performing arts. When the Seiwa Kominkan building became dilapidated, it was relocated to a new multi-functional facility, which now houses a citizens' center, a community development center, and the Seiwa Children's Center. This facility is housed in a renovated primary school that had previously been closed; it opened in January 2024. The discussions and preparations leading up to the facility's opening, along with the formation of a new community development council led by

local citizens, reflect the Seiwa Kominkan's commitment to community development as well as the strong bonds it has formed with the local community.

What supports our activities

In Kimitsu City, the Board of Education oversees the Kominkan directly while emphasizing its adherence to the principles of the Social Education Law, particularly when establishing district Kominkan and allocating staff. This approach has contributed to both the diversity of learning in the different areas and the continuity of learning opportunities offered to people in communities throughout the city.

Kimitsu City is geographically diverse, ranging from coastal and mountainous areas to urban centers and rural districts. The city has established a Kominkan in each of its eight districts. Because they are located in areas close to where people live, each one has developed learning programs that are tailored to the unique needs and conditions of the surrounding area.

The city hires social education specialists and assigns them to each Kominkan. At each Kominkan, there are also staff members equipped with the expertise to support independent learning, as well as the know-how to plan, design, and implement Kominkan projects. They also dedicate time to engaging with the local community and supporting the lifelong learning and growth of individual residents. To ensure city-wide cooperation and promote collaboration among Kominkan, meetings and training sessions are regularly held for staff from each Kominkan. These initiatives have helped to expand and enhance learning activities and Kominkan projects across the city.

In Kimitsu City, the effectiveness of its direct administration over the Kominkan is reflected in the strategic allocation of District Kominkan and specialized staff. This system has formed a foundation for the creation of sustainable local communities.

Outreach learning program promoting
lifelong well-being



Celebrating the launch of the Seiwa
Kominkan within a multi-purpose
facility



A system to support the autonomy of people in the community



District Kominkan have been established in each former town or village and are staffed by a Kominkan Coordinator. There is one liaison and coordination center, 20 district Kominkan that are located in each district, and 100 or so branch Kominkan, run independently by people in the community.

The four management principles are: community-centeredness, the even distribution of Kominkan throughout the district, community participation, institutional independence. Some notable initiatives include the citizens' seminars that were held during the 1970s, aimed at addressing life and community issues, and citizens' university courses (see photo) to promote the diversity of perspectives within the community.

The activities of the Iida City Kominkan can be characterized by its community-driven management approach that utilizes specialized committees that have been organized to handle culture, sports, public relations, etc., as well as by the activities of branch Kominkan, which are operated independently by local citizens. This people-led system of autonomy is built around local Kominkan Coordinators, who act as “*kuroko*,” working behind the scenes. These Coordinators offer support to the community and in turn are supported by the community.

A scene from the first Citizens' University lecture



Message from the staff

In 2000, I was transferred from the Kominkan to become the head of the Tatsuoka branch of the local government. At a 2001 municipal government round-table meeting, I proposed a theme of ‘community welfare.’ This meeting served as a forum where people in the community could share their thoughts on the welfare of the community, and where the mayor and department heads could learn from the perspectives that emerged. This round-table led to study sessions within the community regarding social welfare, eventually leading to the establishment of a community-based day service center ‘*Minna no ie – Nukunuku* (a warm house for everyone).’ This initiative continued as a monthly gathering until it was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Even after my time as Kominkan Coordinator ended, I continued to look at my work from a social education perspective, where community members learn from one other about local issues and collaborate to solve them. My experience is not unique, but shared with other colleagues who have worked in Kominkan in Iida. We view it as an experience that prepared us for work in local government. We believe that the structure and principles of Iida-style Kominkan can be shared and applied to other communities. For example, we were involved in the review of the community development system in Amagasaki City, Hyogo Prefecture, and supported efforts to adapt the Kominkan model in Legazpi City in the Philippines (photo: the author is on the far right).

(Norikazu Kinoshita)

Kominkan in Legazpi City and Taysan Village



Written by Norikazu Kinoshita, Former Deputy Director of the Iida City Kominkan, Ryogo Ogino, Associate Professor, Japan Women's University
In collaboration with Kazumasa Nomaki, Director of the Kamimura Local Government Promotion Centre (former Coordinator of the Kamimura Kominkan),
Yuichiro Hayashi, Director of the Minami Shinano Local Government Promotion Centre (former Coordinator of the Minami Shinano Kominkan)

Iida City Kominkan, Nagano Prefecture

Our activities

Iida City Kominkan activities, conducted through a management system of specialized committees and branch Kominkan, have led to a growing realization that community members themselves are the primary actors when it comes to resolving local issues.

Kominkan Coordinators organize lectures, classes and other projects that address local issues, while viewing the people in the community as the key players. Coordinators themselves function as “*kuroko*,” working in the background, close to the lives of local residents.

Currently, many parts of the city are facing falling birthrates and aging and shrinking populations, which raises questions about the role of schools and the local community. For its part, the Kominkan are working to create opportunities for people to learn from one another in ways that can enrich community life.

For example, in the Kamimura area, where the population has fallen below 400, local residents are looking for ways to insure that the community continues to be a sustainable place to live. They have launched an ‘after-school watch-over project’ to care for local primary and nursery school children during the after-school hours when their parents are still at work. The project was initiated through discussions with local community development committee members, nursery school principals, primary school teachers, and other community stakeholders. This initiative led to an exchange of views with parents and highlighted an awareness of the need to create a more vibrant and closely-knit community.

In the Minami Shinano area, young people who had returned to or moved to Iida consulted with the Kominkan Coordinator about making the area a more lively place to live and work. The Coordinator suggested that simply ‘loving the area’ might not lead to long-term sustainable activities or programs. Heeding that advice, a group of young residents decided to rent an empty dwelling and open a shared house called COM(M)PASS HOUSE, where they could better experience life in Toyama(village). The Coordinator continued to consult with these young people, which enabled them to establish connections with the community development committee and Kominkan activities, and also helped link them up with older members of the community.

Kominkan continue to foster mutual learning opportunities in the community, while promoting a sense of gratitude amongst all its members, from its youth to its senior citizens.

What supports our activities

Iida City has positioned its Kominkan as places to help nurture the capabilities of municipal officials as they work to build and maintain autonomous communities in the city. The city has also proactively placed young staff in their 20s and 30s in the Kominkan. Kominkan Coordinators, supported by the local community, work actively behind the scenes, collaborating with members of specialized committees and branch Kominkan management members. This “Kominkan method,” having developed as part of this process, refers to the following field-based project development and management approaches.

A commitment to utilizing the ‘five senses’ to understand the community: immersing oneself in the field and listening carefully to the voices of the people and engaging with various community groups. This involves becoming aware of the diverse levels of enthusiasm within the community and striving to achieve meaningful and balanced changes.

Perspectives on the origins of the community: connecting stakeholders by uncovering the social movements that lie behind different community initiatives, local facilities and key places in the community, as well as understanding the thoughts, ideas and concerns of local residents.

Digging deeper to understand local issues by listening to the voice of each member of the community in order to identify common ideas and underlying concerns. This helps flesh out the issues faced daily by all those who reside in the community, and is more effective than categorizing local residents into predefined groups such as women, youth or the elderly.

Creating spaces for community discussion: creating and facilitating discussions where people are made aware of local issues and can take initiatives to address them.

After several years of on-site experience at a Kominkan, Coordinators are transferred to other departments within the city government. They are expected to continue applying the “Kominkan method,” approaching local issues from the perspective of the community. One example of this is an attitude of patiently waiting for community consensus, carefully fitting together the people's voices and their needs, and helping reconcile conflicts within the community.

In the Iida City Kominkan, there is a cycle through which the community nurtures Kominkan Coordinators who go on to other local government positions while continuing to support local self-governance.



Tsuhako is the most populous district within Nanjo City, with approximately 3,800 inhabitants as of 2024.

The Kominkan was established in 1955 and renovated in 2011. The community head who serves as the Kominkan Director is elected by the community to a two-year term and is responsible for the full-time management of the Kominkan. The 1960 description of “the Kominkan as a tea room, a liaison and meeting place, a school for social learning, and a place of comfort” is still the guiding philosophy of this Kominkan.

Okinawa was under US occupation rule for 27 years following World War II. During this time, the Japanese Social Education Law did not apply to Okinawa. Instead, the pre-war *muraya* (community office) system continued to function and was widely applied to *Aza* (community) Kominkan. This system, however, did function in a similar way to the Kominkan on the main islands that operated under the Social Education Law. Integrated into the community’s administrative body, these *Aza* Kominkan were not only centers for learning but were also vital for preserving local life and culture, as well as promoting self-governance. In Nanjo City, there is one public Kominkan and 69 *Aza* Kominkan, which serve as the primary hubs for community development activities.

Message from the staff

A key strength of the Tsuhako Kominkan is its full-time staff. We aim to provide opportunities for members of the community to come together weekly, encourage casual conversations, support circle activities, and organize various events. We have found that people in the community feel uplifted and energized when they engage with one another.

It is also important that Kominkan staff enjoy their work. If the staff are not in good spirits, it affects the overall atmosphere and visitors from the community will find it difficult smile or feel cheerful. We focus every day on managing the Kominkan in a way that makes our visitors happy. It brings us joy when someone says, “I enjoy coming to the Kominkan.”

In Tsuhako, *muraya* (Kominkan) have long been built on the philosophy of ‘common unity’ and we are committed to continuing the spirit of this.

(Yuichi Miyagi)

The community head (author) praying for village safety at a sacred site



Our activities

The Tsuhako Kominkan operates autonomously, overseeing administrative and community activities, as well as the organization of annual events such as the Harvest Festival, *Baten Harley* (dragon boat competition), and *Jugoya* (moon viewing festival). It also plays a key role in the preservation of performance folk arts, including *Amanchu* (legend of giants), *Bōjutsu* (stick fighting) and *Shishimai* (lion dance). Furthermore, the Kominkan organizes year-round activities, such as childcare services, ‘Mini Day’ neighborhood care service initiatives, and community efforts related to the local sugarcane industry, which include prayers for a bountiful harvest and logistical support. In the past, the community also operated a village kindergarten. Given the challenges posed by a low birthrate and an aging population, the Kominkan, in collaboration with group leaders and social welfare committee members, works to ensure child safety and provide care for the elderly. It also functions as an evacuation center during disasters and operates a children’s cafeteria and, occasionally, as a funeral home.

Key to this Kominkan’s approach is its ability to communicate. One example is the 2012 publication of the *Tsuhako Azashi*, 800 pages spread across 15 chapters that chronicles local history and tradition, and was designed to help future generations learn about local history. The Kominkan also uses a variety of public relations media to disseminate information. The monthly Kominkan newsletter is a four-page publication; information not covered in the newsletter is shared through social networking services, making the most of different PR platforms.

Collecting information is just as important as disseminating it. The Kominkan gathers community membership fees at its counter. During their visits, local residents often share information, voice their concerns regarding community issues, and offer suggestions for the Kominkan. The opinions shared are diverse and the Kominkan staff listen attentively and consider even the smallest suggestion or opinion as valuable feedback. The staff also values the importance of greeting each and everyone with a smile.

What supports our activities

Unlike official public Kominkan, the Tsuhako *Aza* Kominkan serve not only as centers for cultural, educational and mundane daily activities but also as a hub for self-governance. The Kominkan hosts learning activities for a wide range of community groups, including youth sports clubs, youth associations, senior citizens’ clubs, traditional arts preservation groups, PTAs and other social groups, as well as the 15 village community groups. The comprehensive and multi-layered activities of these groups foster *yuimaru*, a sense of community, centered around the Kominkan.

Beyond their individual activities, these groups also create opportunities for intergenerational exchanges. For example, they organize radio exercise sessions during the summer holidays, provide breakfasts for children, and host study sessions at the Kominkan. Performances of dances and traditional arts during local festivals or other public events serve to showcase and promote the activities of the Kominkan.

The 15 village group leaders play a direct role in managing the Kominkan, distributing city and Kominkan newsletters to individual households, collecting donations, and encouraging participation in community events. Their role is crucial to the self-governing activities of the Kominkan, and the monthly group leaders’ meeting serves as a platform for discussing project plans, addressing specific group issues, and the sharing of information between the different groups.

The Kominkan remains an active presence in Nanjo, and its success rests with the dedication of these groups and their leaders.

Lion dance performed at a village event, with villagers watching





Kaizuka City is located in the southern part of Osaka Prefecture, with a population of approximately 83,000. In 1953, the City Kominkan was established, which included a public auditorium. For 36 years, this was the only Kominkan in Kaizuka. Today, there are three Kominkan, each operating independently with no administrative hierarchy amongst them. The total staff is comprised of 18 members: 10 permanent and 8 appointed on a year-to-year basis.

Since its opening in 1953, users of the Kaizuka City Kominkan have engaged in 'documenting practices' and applying these experiences towards future activities.

This approach is a key element of our social education program, which aims at fostering a sense of community ownership. Kominkan staff also document activities yearly to enhance the Kominkan's collective capabilities. These efforts help us overcome current challenges and pave the way for future success.

Mothers collaborating on editorial tasks (Childcare Network Association)



Message from the staff

We refer to the Kaizuka Kominkan as 'the Kominkan where people grow.' This is because we observe and learn from those who are engaged actively in our activities, and who, by doing so, contribute to our local community and our local schools. Kominkan staff witness how people in the community persistently pursue personal growth, strive to unlock their potential, and extend their activities from the Kominkan into the broader community. To document these efforts, we publish the *Kominkan no Ayumi* (Progress of the Kominkan) annually and the Bulletin every five years, capturing the history of Kaizuka Kominkan lectures, courses, and other activities.

The Bulletin is not just a record of 'what happened,' but represents our efforts to convey what we 'saw and felt' through the planning and implementation of lectures, courses, activities, and daily interactions with people in the community.

In preparing the Bulletin, we staff members engage in extensive discussions amongst ourselves. These conversations help us understand not only the significance of the lectures and courses but also the current needs of society and the future challenges we will need to face. We are committed to continuing this practice as a way to reaffirm the role of the Kominkan as a vital place of learning and its steadfast presence in the community.

(Tomoko Nakagawa)

Staff member (author) facilitating a senior citizen's course



Written by Tomoko Nakagawa, Staff, Kaizuka Central Kominkan
In collaboration with Kazuko Murata, Professor Emeritus, Wakayama University

Our activities

At the Kaizuka City Kominkan (currently the Central Kominkan), self-directed activities have emerged from lectures and other courses organized by the Kominkan. To apply what is learned from these to real life, various networks have been formed to foster connections between individuals and groups and to put these connections to work in the community. Support for these activities is bolstered by the chronicling of learning activities.

Tsurukame University, a senior citizen's course inaugurated in 1964, addresses key issues related to the lives of local seniors. An anthology, *Ashiato* (Footsteps), was issued in the 1980s. In *Nenrin* (Tree Rings), a reflection on World War II experiences and the realities of aging, participants documented their life paths in order to pass on their life lessons to future generations. The Club Council, established in 1956, has published an annual journal, *Dorasena*, since 1963. This ongoing social education project honors the work of past generations and offers an opportunity for others to appreciate and learn from their experiences and achievements.

The Kaizuka Childcare Network Association was established in 1988 in order to create a community environment that supports childbirth and child-raising. This network actively documents its activities through its monthly newsletters and special anniversary issues. This has enabled mothers to reflect on what they have learned as well as the significance of their childcare experiences and to be made aware of the wider relevance of these experiences to society. Current leaders are able to learn from their predecessors' experiences by reading past accounts, which helps them understand traditional values and apply this wisdom to overcome the challenges they face in guiding others in their child-raising and other related activities. These publications are shared widely within the community, serving as resources that help people deepen their understanding and enable them to find shared values.

What supports our activities

A key factor in the initiation of and the continued community-led chronicling of the learning that takes place is the Kaizuka Kominkan itself, which has emphasized 'documentation' since its opening in 1953. At the time it was the only Kominkan in Kaizuka. This practice of 'documentation' has persisted through to the current system, where Kominkan are now found in three Kaizuka locations. Staff members have also become practitioners of this initiative, which continues to serve as one of the foundations for the support of learning.

There are several examples of how this documentation is undertaken. One example is the Progress of the Kominkan, written by Kominkan staff as a summary of the year's activities and published after discussions amongst the entire staff. Another example is the Bulletin, published every five years to summarize activities and to identify practical challenges the Kominkan will face in the upcoming five years. Staff learn about the accumulated history and impact of the Kaizuka City Kominkan from the Bulletin, which makes it possible for them to understand the emphasis and value that has been placed on Kominkan activities and programs over time. It also provides an opportunity for staff members to reflect on what they have seen and heard, recognize how people are striving to change, and understand aspects of Kominkan activities that are not always visible.

The Kaizuka Kominkan 40th Anniversary Magazine, published in March 1994, became a catalyst for the collaboration of staff and Kominkan users as they conducted interviews and documented Kominkan activities. The Kaizuka Kominkan 50th Anniversary Magazine, published in March 2004, involved the entire staff in a two-year learning and writing process. Despite their busy daily responsibilities, they completed the project, reviewing old booklets and conducting interviews with long-term Kominkan users. These collaborative efforts between staff and the community, together with enhanced staff collaboration, are at the core of Kominkan operations. The annual Progress of the Kominkan, the quinquennial Bulletin, and the ongoing documentation carried out by Kominkan users and community members continue to drive Kominkan activities.





Matsue City in Shimane Prefecture is located north of the Chugoku Mountains. It is a core city facing the Sea of Japan and serves as one of the political and economic hubs of the San'in region. The city has 29 Kominkan, one in each of its 29 districts. These Kominkan were initially established in 1952 and are managed directly by the government.

However, due to the city's worsening financial situation in the mid-1960s, a unique system called 'public establishment and local self-management' was introduced in 1966 to support and maintain the Kominkan. In 2005, the city merged with seven surrounding towns and villages, and the Kominkan, which had previously been government-run, were gradually transferred to a 'public establishment and local self-management' system.

The guiding philosophy behind the operation of Kominkan in Matsue City can be described as 'Kominkan of the residents, by the residents, and for the residents.' Each Kominkan is managed by local organizations and residents in its respective area, developing projects tailored to the unique characteristics and challenges of the community. Here, we introduce the initiatives of the Koshihara Kominkan.

Matsue Minami High School students sharing their SDGs activities with local residents



Matsue Technical High School Denbora (electricity volunteers) students maintaining light fixtures



Director Matsumoto (author) participating in a workshop with Matsue Commercial High School students



Message from the staff

Kominkan staff are creators: It's not easy to sum up what a Kominkan is in just a few words, but I firmly believe that Kominkan are hubs of creativity, and that the staff who work there are creators. I envision Kominkan as platforms for the innovative ideas generated by these creators.

My management policy revolves around three core components: mission, vision, and annual key objectives. After setting the annual key objectives, I hand over the execution to a working group, which consists of staff members and local residents. I refer to this approach as "mission command." In alignment with the annual key objectives, staff members create their own project plans and implement them in partnership with the working group. The success of these projects depends heavily on the planning and creative skills of the staff, so their skills are both crucial and valuable.

Our primary objective for 2024 is what I call the "Butterfly Effect." The goal is to build a sustainable local community where good ideas can be shared and where people can collaborate to solve problems in an organized, cohesive manner.

(Shoichi Matsumoto)

Written by Shoichi Matsumoto, Director, Koshihara Kominkan, Matsue City, Yasuhito Tamma, Associate Professor, University of Tsukuba

Our activities

Koshihara is a gently sloping hilly area, known as a culturally-rich district with schools and parks. During the period of national rapid economic growth, residential development took place, accompanied by the expansion of main roads and bus routes. While it is a pleasant area to live in, like many other places in Japan, it faces the issue of an aging population. The area has two high schools, attracting many students from other areas. At present, a School Appeal Consortium is being developed each Shimane Prefectural high school, and collaboration with local communities and businesses is being promoted.

Within this context, the Koshihara Kominkan has been fostering cooperation between the local community and schools to create new activities. One notable example is the *Denbora* (electricity volunteers) initiative by the Shimane Prefectural Matsue Technical High School. High school students visit homes to assist with everyday tasks such as replacing light fixtures and cleaning air conditioners. For the students, this is an opportunity to apply the specialized knowledge they have gained in school, while for residents, it not only resolves household issues but also provides a chance for cheerful interaction with young people, a rare experience for many.

Additionally, graduates from an alternative (primarily evening) course at the aforementioned high school created a large illuminated art installation in the Kominkan garden. They also organized a course with another local high school to discuss community issues and explore the future of the community. These activities exemplify how the Kominkan serves as a vital hub, connecting people and organizations in the community, and demonstrate how initiatives that reflect the unique needs and characteristics of the community can be implemented in collaboration with local organizations and institutions.

What supports our activities

Matsue City's 'public establishment and local self-management' system, often referred to as the "Matsue Method," has a long history. Each of the city's 29 districts has its own Kominkan Management Council, appointed by the city, which is responsible for the management and operation of the Kominkan. The council members include representatives from local organizations, including neighborhood associations, community groups, district social welfare councils,

youth development councils, children's associations, and sports associations. This bottom-up system contrasts with the typical top-down administrative management approach, as local organizations in each district operate their own Kominkan.

Each Kominkan has a director, a senior staff member, and a staff member (with additional staff in more populous areas). The director is a part-time employee appointed by the city's Board of Education, while the other staff are employed by the Kominkan Management Council of each district. The Matsue City Kominkan Management Council Federation, which coordinates all districts, oversees personnel matters. This system enables staff to become eligible for transfers and promotions, and to gain expertise by working with multiple Kominkan. Many staff members are employed long-term, actively participate in training, and hold qualifications as social education specialists.

A distinctive feature of Kominkan project planning and management is the system of working groups within the Kominkan Management Council. These working groups are divided into categories such as General Affairs, Welfare, Human Rights Study, Youth, Culture, and Sports. Each group is comprised of members of local residents. They collaborate to discuss, plan, and implement Kominkan projects, with the support of the Kominkan staff. This process of planning and execution is rooted in resident participation, with courses and events shaped by the local community in collaboration with the staff.

Additionally, Matsue City has a unique system of 'local fees' for Kominkan, which is not common in Japan. Residents pay a 'Kominkan cooperation fee' of 350 to 3,000 yen per household per year, depending on the district. While the city covers personnel and project costs, some of the management expenses are funded through these local fees. In the past, concerns were raised about 'double taxation.' In response, the Kominkan's budget and financial statements, including local funds, are made public and explained to residents annually. This transparency fosters a sense of ownership, making it 'our Kominkan.'

In this way, Kominkan in Matsue City are recognized as community-run centers. The philosophy of 'Kominkan of the residents, by the residents, and for the residents' has been key in maintaining the Kominkan, even in the face of the city's severe financial challenges.



Kunitachi City has a population of approximately 76,000 and covers an area of around 8 km², making it a small city. The Kominkan, which opened in 1955 and was renovated in 1979, serves as the only Kominkan as well as the only core social education institution in the city. As of 2024, it has been run by a staff of 10. Five are social education specialists hired by the city and four hold special qualifications (social education (2), library, museum). The Kominkan has established a system to ensure that staff maintain a high level of expertise.

Drawing inspiration from the UNESCO Declaration on the Right to Education (1985), the Kunitachi City Kominkan in Tokyo has been working to ensure that all local citizens have access to learning opportunities. Our community is diverse, including women who face child-rearing difficulties, young people with disabilities or other life challenges, recent foreign migrants to Japan, and senior citizens with limited opportunities to leave their homes. These individuals often encounter barriers to social participation and seek chances to learn and connect with others.

The Kunitachi City Kominkan supports organizing learning activities, aimed at social inclusion, for these people.

Message from the staff

To meet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to ‘leave no one behind,’ local communities are now being called upon to adopt practices that promote living together. I believe that Kominkan have a long-standing commitment to offer learning opportunities as open and inclusive spaces for everyone, as outlined in Article 3 of the Social Education Act: “All citizens may utilize all opportunities and places to improve their cultural literacy in ways that are meaningful to their lives.” The role of the Kominkan is more important now than ever before.

In our society today, rationality and efficiency have come to be emphasized as part of the modernization process. This has led to the increasing specialization of functions related to everyday life. This specialization has fostered the growth of complex systems and procedures, with government operations having become highly specialized and fragmented. People’s lives, however, are not so easily compartmentalized.

The needs of minority groups, such as people with disabilities or foreign residents, are often overlooked in these systems and procedures. Even when living and working support structures for minority groups are established, opportunities for learning and leisure, which give life meaning, are often pushed aside or dismissed as ‘luxuries.’ Even if small, Kominkan can play a crucial role as a ‘social infrastructure’ that meets the diverse needs of everyday life. They are places where unrecognized learning needs can be discovered and nurtured and connections with neighbors and the wider community can be established.

(Keitaro Iguchi)

Café Waigaya, crowded with people



Sports *chanbara* (sword fight) in a *Shogaisha* Youth Class (the author is in the center)



Learning tea ceremony together at *Nihongo Salon*



Written by Keitaro Iguchi, Social Education Specialist, Assistant Director of Kunitachi City Kominkan

Our activities

Inclusion of persons with disabilities

The Kunitachi City Kominkan has prioritized the right to learning by offering free use of the facility and by organizing a variety of classes and other learning activities. Since 1980, the Kominkan has offered a ‘*Shogaisha* (persons with disabilities) Youth Class,’ designed to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to make use of their leisure time and to make friends after finishing their formal education. At the time of its inception, the staff in charge of the project believed that people with disabilities should not receive special treatment but should instead engage as equals with their peers, regardless of their disability. To foster this inclusive approach, ‘Coffee House,’ originally a 1970s ‘hangout’ for young people, was made accessible to persons with disabilities. In addition, a coffee shop corner, ‘*Waigaya* (laughs and fun),’ was established on the ground floor of the Kominkan, where people with and without disabilities can work together. In 2025, the café will be in its 45th year.

In recent years, although national policies have promoted lifelong learning for people with disabilities, young people with intellectual disabilities still struggle to find ways to spend their free time, make friends, and enjoy leisure activities outside their homes after having finished school or having joined the workforce. Therefore, the creation of spaces, like the ‘*Shogaisha* Youth Class’ and ‘*Café Waigaya*,’ that give people with disabilities an opportunity to engage with the Kominkan and meet up with a diverse group of friends and other learners has taken on an even greater importance. Many of the Kominkan’s younger staff members, who have no disabilities themselves and participate in these activities, sometimes felt uncomfortable because they saw themselves as work-related “volunteers.” Over time, these staff members have found that their perceptions of disability have changed as a result of their collaborations with young people with disabilities. These young staff members, who once viewed their role as ‘doing something for people with disabilities,’ have reversed their thinking as a result of these collaborations and have begun to explore the idea of ‘living together’ as peers and seeing their relationship as an equal partnership and the activities as enjoyable.

Learning to live together in a multicultural society

Another important initiative at the Kominkan began

in 1989 when the number of newly arrived foreign residents began to increase. In response, the Kominkan has organized ‘Japanese for Everyday Life’ courses for non-native speakers. Four proficiency-based classes are held each week, providing learners with the language skills needed for daily life. Qualified instructors with experience in teaching Japanese offer group lessons in basic Japanese language.

Building on the ‘Japanese for Everyday Life’ classes, several additional programs have been initiated. After each weekday class or on Saturdays, when no regular courses are offered, volunteers provide personalized *Nihongo* (Japanese language) support based on the individual needs of the learners. The Kominkan, in cooperation with NPOs, has also organized a ‘*Nihongo Salon*,’ a space for daily life consultations and multicultural exchanges. These initiatives have led to the creation of a comprehensive disaster risk reduction (DRR) program, which involve the making of multilingual maps and participation in municipal DRR events. Over time, these efforts have contributed to a multicultural ‘living together’ community.

What supports our activities

There are people in the community who have not yet participated in a Kominkan project or activity. Many of them face barriers to participation. We have been reflecting on this issue and have initiated activities targeting those not connected to the Kominkan, like collaborations with other institutions and organizations to promote and expand our activities. Those who have gradually become engaged come from diverse backgrounds and with various learning needs. While it can be challenging for people from different cultural backgrounds to come together to learn, these ‘differences’ can also create opportunities for dialogue and mutual understanding. This has enriched the learning experiences and led to unexpected insights and discoveries. We remain committed to fostering dialogue among people from diverse backgrounds.





Okayama City, located in southern Okayama Prefecture, has a population of 710,000 and is host to 37 Kominkan, one per junior high school district. The Tomiyama School District has a population of 13,451, with an elderly population of 32% (as of March 2024). It is home to one junior high school and one primary school.

The Tomiyama Kominkan opened in 1990 and has 5 staff members: one director (a retired city employee who is rehired or employed on a yearly contract), two staff members in charge of projects (a social education specialist and a Kominkan coordinator), a night staff member, and a staff member in charge of the local area (from the Citizens' Cooperation Bureau). The social education specialist is the only fulltime permanent staff member.

The Tomiyama Kominkan in Okayama City has developed a community development plan that has been aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This plan addresses various local issues, with the Kominkan serving as a foundation for learning. The Small Community Care Council, which includes the Kominkan, serves as the driving force for activities that are designed to improve the well-being of the people in the community.

Tomiyama Kominkan



Message from the staff

Members of the local community people appreciate the role the Kominkan plays in promoting community development. We also find it rewarding, as our activities have expanded as a result of the learning activities we offer and the collaborations with different people at the Kominkan. At the same time, meeting people's expectations requires that we continuously improve our skills as staff, which provides us with challenges daily.

To further community development, we believe it is necessary for young people, especially junior and senior high school students, to participate in town planning and to offer their perspectives. Members of the community have high expectations for junior high school students, as there is a shared understanding that the future of our town depends on cross-generational involvement.

Looking ahead, our aim is to enhance the well-being of all age groups, ensuring that the thoughts and ideas of young people are realized and can contribute to community development.

(Satoko Hanafusa)

A scene of cleaning up the Hyakkengawa River and collecting rubbish



Written by Satoko Hanafusa, Social Education Specialist, Tomiyama Kominkan
In collaboration with Mitsutoshi Uchida, Director, Saidaiji Kominkan,
Junko Tanaka, Kominkan Promotion Office, Lifelong Learning Department, Okayama City Education Board

Our activities

Various community activities are driven by the local people themselves, based on learning experiences gained from courses offered by the Kominkan.

Since 2017, the Tomiyama Kominkan has hosted the Tomiyama ESD *Nikoniko* (Smile) Café in collaboration with local organizations to promote an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) project. The aim is to offer a space for the diversity of people in the community, including younger generations, to learn and connect, in order to foster a sustainable society "full of smiles." Themes covered have included ESD and SDGs, food waste reduction, multicultural conviviality, the current situation of children in orphanages and other social welfare institutions, and children's cafeteria initiatives. Key persons from various local organizations participate, and the insights gained from these learning activities are applied to community development and to improving the quality of life for local residents.

The Kominkan collaboration with the community is ongoing. One example is the 'Water and Green Project' that focusses on local environmental conservation. Another is an initiative to encourage learning and reflection regarding child-raising.

Thanks to this cooperative learning, the community has come to realize the importance of continually building face-to-face relationships, especially with women and children, who, for example, are those most at risk during disasters. This has led to the creation of the 'Women and Children Support Network,' which was followed by the "Atsumare! Rainbow at Home" project which offers once a month after-school gatherings. These gatherings offering a place for multi-generational exchanges through play and hands-on activities.

In 2018, in response to the challenges posed by the district's declining birthrate and aging population, a 'First Community Development Plan' for the Tomiyama School District was formulated independently within the local community with the intent of developing a livable town for all. Since January 2019, the "Tomiyama *Tasukeai-tai*," a mutual support initiative, where local volunteers help residents meet the challenges they face in their everyday lives, has been instrumental in improving the general well-being of the community.

The Kominkan provides the essential spaces, opportunities, and supports that empower people to actively contribute to their communities, expand their autonomous activities, and find fulfillment in their lives.

What supports our activities

In the Tomiyama area, people often say "Let's learn first," when they address local issues. The connection between learning and initiative is deeply ingrained. This is because many members of the community have grown and gained strength as a result of the various learning opportunities offered by the Kominkan over the past 20 years.

Several individuals and groups have transitioned from the learning they gained from Kominkan programs to organizing voluntary activities. They are now involved in efforts to preserve the district's natural environment and to more fully engage with the local community. For instance, the Tomiyama Nature Club focuses on local conservation issues and disseminating the importance of these and related issues to the local community. The *Zōsan* (elephant) Club provides childcare support, and the Pocket *Bunko* (library) conducts library activities such as reading picture books to children. These efforts contribute to the overall well-being of the community.

A key mechanism for building a learning-based community is the 'Sub-Community Care Council.' This forum brings together representatives from various local groups, social welfare and health professionals, and Kominkan staff to discuss future community development and to address other pressing issues. These meetings act as an engine for the promotion of community building in Tomiyama, with many members also engaged in other Kominkan projects, thus linking their learning with related activities.

The 'Sub-Community Care Council' plays a pivotal role in the creation and promotion of the 'Tomiyama School District Third Community Development Plan,' which offers a future vision of the community. They also continue to publish the 'Tomiyama School District SDGs News,' a newsletter that promotes activities aligned with the achieving of SDGs. By organizing courses in collaboration with the Kominkan, they effectively serve as a bridge between learning and community development.

It can be said that the various practical programs that the Kominkan has implemented to date have helped build these systems and initiatives, and we believe that it is important for Kominkan staff to continue their support of this cycle of learning and practice in order to improve the well-being of the people in our community.



Kesennuma, while primarily a fishing port, is also an agricultural area, with a population within the Kominkan district of approximately 8,000.

The Kominkan is managed by a community organization, which is authorized by the local government. The staff is comprised of a director and two other members.

Like many Kominkan across Japan, this facility has traditional Japanese-style rooms, cooking spaces, and a lobby.

In Japan, Kominkan have long played a number of roles within their communities, one of which is serving as an evacuation hub during a disaster. Among the various evacuation centers set up in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, it was the Kominkan that attracted attention for the way in which they fulfilled this role.

One such center, the Matsuiwa Kominkan in Kesennuma City (Miyagi Prefecture), had a Management Committee that efficiently managed its evacuation center, supporting over 600 evacuees with flexibility and caring.

Matsuiwa Kominkan



Message from the staff

At the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake, the people of Saga Prefecture donated pianos and other music-related equipment, recognizing the importance of music for psychological care during a disaster recovery. Shortly after assuming his role, the director at the time organized a ‘*Maho* (magic) Piano Appreciation Gathering’ with Sumie, a picture book author from Kesennuma, who had written a book on this topic. I was impressed by how quickly he gathered a team of volunteers, including a piano teacher and her jazz band to make the event a reality.

The ‘Singing Voice Café,’ part of a community social welfare initiative, has been well received by the many participants who have expressed how much they enjoyed joining in.

The director actively promoted the Kominkan’s initiatives, helping the community become more familiar with the Kominkan.

The Kominkan newsletter has increased in size, and we have received more inquiries from the public. People in the community have become more engaged and interested in the content of the newsletter than ever before.

(Eiki Komatsu)

A Scene from the ‘Singing Voice Café’



Written by Eiki Komatsu, Director, Matsuiwa Kominkan
In collaboration with Yukio Ueda, Professor Emeritus, Nippon Sport Science University

Our activities

1. Disseminating information about the Kominkan

The Matsuiwa Kominkan has started to utilize social network services (SNS), including a Facebook page. It utilizes these to introduce various learning circles and to invite applications for courses, while also showcasing activities and events with photos and video presentations. In addition, the Kominkan has launched an official LINE (a popular SNS in Japan) and publishes a monthly newsletter.

2. Offering attractive courses

The Matsuiwa Kominkan is widely recognized for offering ‘unconventional’ courses, such as ‘drone courses’ and ‘mini-bike workshops.’ A notable example is a cooking class inspired by the wishes of local children to ‘promote cooking with rice flour.’ The class is designed for both children and adults. This ‘citizen-proposed project’ has now become a fixture at the Kominkan.

Another popular event is the ‘Singing Voice Café,’ which is organized in collaboration with interested groups. To reach people in areas with limited access to the Kominkan, the Café also organizes on-site events in these more remote areas.

3. Creating timely and attractive lectures

A ‘Music Gathering’ was organized with the help of local amateur musicians, followed by a ‘how to sing well’ course led by a chanson singer who had moved to the city.

To encourage younger generations, the Kominkan organizes parent-child events such as ‘Rhythm Jump’ and ‘Gold Mine Museum Experience.’ The Kominkan also offers lectures on contemporary topics such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), incorporating local topics such as ‘Making the longline fishing industry for pelagic tuna sustainable.’

What supports our activities

The role of the Kominkan is to transform the people’s ‘desire to learn’ into the ‘joy of learning.’ Sometimes ideas emanating from people in the community are taken up, while at other times, the Kominkan itself identifies pressing issues. The goal is to empower both individuals and the community as a whole in order to bring about a more sustainable local society.

Today, the Kominkan’s focus is not on ‘top-down’ learning, but on ‘citizen-proposed projects’ that reflect the needs and suggestions of members of the community. The ‘Kominkan-proposed projects’ cover contemporary topics and offer participants ‘a sense of accomplishment by fulfilling their desire to learn’ as well as ‘excitement in discovering something new.’

Last year, one of these citizen-proposed courses evolved into a workshop where participants discussed ‘what they wanted to learn and what they wanted to pursue.’ The participants agreed to conduct a survey of the background literature and to visit places relevant to the course. This shift offered an example of how a Kominkan-led initiative can lead to one that is driven by the community.

Our vision is to become an “*Oraho* (Our) Kominkan”, a place where local residents feel that the Kominkan can be relied upon, where they can use the facilities as they wish, and can consult with us regarding any concerns they might have.



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