

Taxi drivers report 'ghost passengers' in area devastated by 2011 tsunami

被災地、タクシーに乗る幽霊 東北学院大生が卒論に



「幽霊」を題材に卒論を書いた工藤優花さん＝2015年12月、仙台市泉区の東北学院大
The Asahi Shimbun

宮城県石巻市では5年前、東日本大震災で大勢が亡くなりました。その地でタクシーを走らせる運転手の中には、「幽霊」に乗せるという経験をした人たちがいます。こうした不思議な現象について、東北学院大学で社会学を専攻する学生が調査し、卒業論文にまとめました。朝日新聞デジタルが1月20日付で報じ、英語ニュースサイト「The Asahi Shimbun Asia & Japan Watch (AJW)」が英訳記事を発表した結果、国内外から長期間にわたって大きな反響を呼んだため、ここに英訳記事と日本語の要約を掲載します。

By Hideaki Ishibashi
Asahi Shimbun Senior Staff Writer

In early summer 2011, a taxi driver had a mysterious encounter in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, a town devastated by a tsunami a few months earlier.

A woman, wearing an unseasonably heavy coat, climbed into his cab near Ishinomaki Station.

"Please go to Minamihama," she said, instructing the driver to go to a coastal neighborhood.

The driver, in his 50s, asked her, "That area is basically a vacant lot. Are you sure?"

The woman replied in a quavering voice, "Have I died?"

Shocked at the question, the driver turned and looked at the back seat. No one was there.

A university senior majoring in

sociology included the encounter in her graduation thesis, in which seven taxi drivers reported carrying "ghost passengers" following the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

Yuka Kudo, 22, of Tohoku Gakuin University in Sendai, is one of seven students taking a seminar class which looked into spiritual experiences of survivors of the disaster which killed 15,894 people and left 2,561 missing.

Kudo traveled to Ishinomaki every week during her junior year to ask taxi drivers waiting for fares if they'd had any unusual experiences after the disaster.

She quizzed more than 100 drivers. Many ignored her. Some became angry. However, seven drivers

agreed to recount their mysterious experiences.

One of the drivers, a man in his 40s, recalled a time when a man who looked to be in his 20s got into his taxi. When the driver looked in the rearview mirror, the passenger, dressed in a coat, had stretched out his arm and was pointing forward.

The driver repeatedly asked the man for his destination. Finally, the passenger replied, "Hiyoriyama," referring to a hill near the coast. They set off, but when the cab arrived the man had disappeared from the vehicle.

The seven drivers' accounts cannot be easily dismissed as delusions or fantasies. Each time a "passenger" climbed in their cabs, the drivers activated the meter, and records show that the car was in use.

If disappearing passengers weren't bad enough, drivers were forced to pay the fares because the ghosts were technically considered "free riders."

Some of the drivers jotted down their experiences in their logs. One showed Kudo his driver's report, which noted that there was a fare that went unpaid.

As the "ghosts" the drivers encountered were all youthful, some believe they could be the spirits of victims of the 2011 disaster.

敬意をもって向き合う

"Young people are especially upset (at their deaths) because they cannot

meet people they love. Wanting to express their bitterness, they may have chosen taxis, which are like private rooms, as a medium to do so," Kudo said.

What impressed Kudo was that all the drivers said they weren't afraid of their ghost passengers, but held them in reverence. They regarded the encounters as important experiences to be cherished.

The drivers said they felt the daily sorrow of the residents of Ishinomaki, where many people were killed by the tsunami. One said that he lost a family member in the disaster.

Another said: "It is not strange to see a ghost (here). If I encounter a ghost again, I will accept it as my passenger."

Kudo is from Akita Prefecture, which was not struck by the tsunami. Before interviewing the taxi drivers, she had only thought of the victims as "thousands of people" who had died in the disaster.

"(Through the interviews) I learned that the death of each victim carries importance," she said. "I want to convey that (to other people)."

Kiyoshi Kanebishi, the professor of environmental sociology who supervised Kudo and her seminar class, said he hoped by studying various spiritual experiences "we can cast a light on how those affected by the disaster have come to terms with the dead, an issue often considered taboo."



震災から約3週間後の様子＝2011年3月30日、宮城県石巻市
Asahi Shimbun file photo

【日本語記事の要約】

「震災による死」に人々はどのように向き合い、感じてきたか——東北学院大学で社会学を専攻していたゼミ生たちが、この春の卒業を目前に、フィールドワークの結果を卒論にまとめた。

その中でも工藤優花(ゆか)さん(22)は、多くの死者が出た宮城県石巻市で、タクシー運転手たちが体験した「幽霊現象」をテーマに選んだ。

工藤さんが3年生の1年間、毎週石

巻に通い、タクシー運転手の100人以上に聞いたところ、7人が「幽霊に乗せた」という経験を語ったという。不思議な出来事を記した日記や、運転日報を見せてくれた人もいた。

証言した運転手がみな恐怖心ではなく、幽霊に畏敬(いけい)の念を持っていることも印象的だった。工藤さんは「一人一人の死に重みがあるということ。それを伝えたい」と話している。

mysterious encounter 不思議な遭遇	spiritual experience(s) 心霊体験	fantasy(-les) 幻想	held(hold)...reverence ～に畏敬(いけい)の念を抱いた
unseasonably 季節外れに	wait(ing) for fare(s) 客待ちをする	if...enough 乗客が消えただけでも大変なことなのに	(be) cherished 大切にされる
vacant lot 空地、空き地	quiz(zed) ～を質問攻めにした	free rider(s) ～を乗車する人	supervise(d) ～を指導した
quavering voice 震える声	recount ～を詳しく語る	jot(ted) down ～を書き留めた	cast...on ～に光をあてる
major(ing) in ～を専攻する	rearview mirror バックミラー	log(s) 日誌	come...with ～を受け入れる、～と向き合う
sociology 社会学	account(s) 証言、説明	medium 媒体、媒介物	
graduation thesis 卒業論文	delusion(s) 思い込み、妄想		

開講 36年

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