

An attempt to create a Universal Village in Amami Oshima, Island, Japan

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Abstract—Currently, in Japanese metropolitan areas, various problems such as overwhelming educational workload, workers being viewed as disposable and concerns about life in retirement have been highlighted. On the other hand, in rural areas, problems such as depopulation and the aging of society have come to the surface. Moreover, problems such as shortages of labor, decrease in the number of children, and an increase in the abandonment of cultivated land are occurring. National and local governments are taking various measures, however, there is no remarkable improvement.

In Amami Oshima, island located south of Kyushu, depopulation is also a serious issue, and many elementary and junior high schools have been closed. One of the authors, Yoshihiro Takano, who is a doctor as well as former (in 2014) director of the Setouchi Tokushukai Hospital, had great interest in organic farming using Effective Microorganisms (EM) technology. He was seeking to create a Robinson Crusoe farm (farming-centered self-sufficient lifestyle that does not cost money). In 2014, Setouchi Town situated in the south of Amami Oshima, asked Takano if he could utilize the abandoned “Sekko Elementary and Junior High School”, and his idea became a reality.

With various groups of people who sympathized with Takano’s idea, we made effective use of the abolished school’s classrooms and yard. We restored the schoolyard that had been left decayed so that it could be used for various events, and started raising animals. Also, classrooms were renovated into accommodation and restaurant so that people are able to stay long-term.

Utilizing the large site of the closed school and the community as well as the rich natural surroundings, we began operating a safe and simple organic agriculture using EM and raising goats and chickens. Apart from those, we are conducting green tourism, which includes agricultural experiences and rehabilitation tours in cooperation with hospitals.

In the future, we aim to link medical care and agriculture (cultivate herbs and provide them in meals), use garbage effectively and develop products such as environmentally friendly detergents.

We believe that when these activities bear fruit, they will lead to the realization of Universal Village, a society where, we imagine, we are able to get back to the basics of being human, do not rely on money and feel fully content.