

Report of Field Trip in Gunma

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On June 1-2, members of the EAA project went on a field trip to Gunma. Although the main themes were modernization and the environment, I had many other impressions as well.

At noon on the 1st, we arrived in Tomioka and experienced traditional Japanese cuisine. Tomioka makes me know more about how places other than cities like Tokyo feel. Then we visited the World Heritage site, the Tomioka Silk Mill. I was impressed not only by the site itself but also by its presentation as a tourist or educational destination. The Tomioka Silk Mill reflects Japan's adoption of Western industrial technology and its path towards modernization during the Meiji period. As we walked through the site, seeing the brick buildings, machinery, and various structures from factories to clinics and residences, and learning about the technologies, people, stories, and history behind them, I deeply felt the significance of preserving this place as a valuable heritage for educational purposes. Additionally, although the Tomioka Silk Mill is not a very famous tourist attraction, its facilities and guides are very well-organized and detailed. I believe this has some enlightening implications for cultural education and tourism in China. Visiting such sites should not be a superficial experience but should provoke deeper thinking by understanding the details behind them.



Afterward, we went to 少林山达摩寺, where the scenery was beautiful, and the daruma dolls left a deep impression on me. In the evening, we stayed in Takasaki, and I felt the atmosphere of the city's streets as I walked around at night.



The next day, we visited the Tanaka Shozo Memorial Hall and related memorial facilities. I learned about the cost of mining, which caused relocation of residents and environmental issues, and learned about the process of modernization and its impact on the health or dynamics of humans and nature, as well as Tanaka's tireless efforts. This prompted me to further reflect on the costs of modernization and the many complex issues policymakers must consider, including economic value, the environment, human rights, and moral responsibilities. These are not just specific political and economic issues but also philosophical ones. Tanaka Shozo, through his actions, upheld his belief that true modernization should not come at the expense of nature and human beings. This offers historical lessons for us today as we face climate and pollution issues. I was also curious about the operation of this small-scale memorial hall, which seems to be maintained by only a few staff members and features exhibits that merely present the local geography and review historical events. Although it might not appear attractive to many tourists, it still provides meticulous and heartfelt explanations, allowing me to feel the strength of preserving history through every small effort.

Later, we toured the Watarase Retarding Basin and Yanaka Lake area in the rain, under the guidance and explanation of Professor Horie. The once-inhabited villages have turned into vast

green spaces, with small graves watching over the land where people once lived. Thunder echoed as we walked to the old site of Raiden Shrine, and the stone monuments and statues standing in the wild grass seemed to preserve history for eternity. The heart-shaped Yanaka Lake, which buried the old village and sulfur pollution, has now become a popular spot for lovers. Such changes are truly a testament to the passage of time.



This also reminded me of a previous visit to Nakano Prison led by Professor Ako, where she explained their efforts to preserve the prison gate and the importance of educating children about the history behind the buildings around them. This perhaps highlights the significance of experiencing physical places (including various buildings and natural environment) firsthand: being there allowed the construction and operation of the silk mill which represents the hopes of modern progress, the geographical transformations of the Yanaka Lake area, and all the things that I saw and heard and was immersed in to impact me so clearly, making me feel as if I were at the intersection of history, reality, and the future.

Thank you to Professor Cheung, Ms. Watanabe, Professor Horie, and the staff at various locations who provided explanations, as well as my fellow classmates, for making these two days so memorable.