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Tokiko Kawachi

Nouryou Bon-odori Festival

On July 14th and 15th, the 39th *Nouryou Bon-odori Festival* was held at the Musashino city's Chuou public library. It started from 3pm and finished at 8pm. It takes about 15 minutes to get there by foot from Seikei University or about 30-40 minutes by foot from Kichijoji Station. You can take a bus from Kichijoji Station or Seikei University. There was a small circle park in front of the library. There was a Japanese drum (*Wadaiko*) in the center stage of the park and also numerous stalls with food, drink and games. Also, people could dance in the *Bon-odori*. This is a kind of dance which shows respect to ancestors and welcomes their souls in the season called "bon", which is roughly between July to October. *Nouryou* means to escape from the heat and enjoy the coolness. Thus, generally, the *Nouryou* festival is not held during the day but in the evening. The *Nouryou Bon-odori* Festival has a long history and is popular summer festival loved by people living in the Kichijoji area.

I took part on both the 14th and 15th and worked as a volunteer member with other University students. It was sunny and over 30 Celsius during the day, but I felt a pleasant breeze in the evening. I could see many children wearing *yukata*, which is an old style of Japanese clothing for summer. In the center stage, a Japanese drum performance had started. Performers played Japanese traditional music one after another. The players were young. I think they were a young drum circle. Their strong beat literally reached my heart and I realized that summer had finally come. After their performance, the *Bon-odori* started. People made a circle around the center stage, and danced to the strong beat of the drum. You don't have to worry if you don't know how to dance. Just copy what other people do. Since there is no entrance fee, you can drop in anytime and just enjoy the atmosphere of the festival.

If I was given a chance to offer a suggestion to this festival, I would say they need an information service for tourists or visitors who are not familiar with the area or the festival. Why don't they have T-shirts which says "staff" in big letter so that people who need information can notice them easily? Actually, I met a family coming from other country. They seemed somewhat lost, so I talked them in English. They asked me what kind of shops there were, if they could take some pictures or videos and the purpose of that festival. I don't think that all staff have to be well-trained in English, because the festival is mainly for those people living around the area, so maybe just preparing pamphlets are enough, but for people who want to know the festival well, giving information will be a great help.