

Experts offer theories on Kobe killer

Yomiuri Shimbun

KOBE—The discovery on Tuesday of the head of an 11-year-old boy in Kobe poses important questions not only to police, but also to academics striving to understand what motivates individuals to commit such heinous acts against their fellow human beings.

Following are personal opinions of three psychoanalysis experts on the psychological makeup of the kind of person who would be capable of committing such a crime. All three specialists have studied the words written on a piece of paper that was found attached to the victim's mouth.

Takeo Mori, a professor at Senshu University who specializes in criminal psychology, speculates that the murderer may be someone who suffers from an inferiority complex. Such a complex often leads people to bully those weaker than themselves to compensate for their feelings of inferiority.

People whose thoughts are constantly filled with images of sadistic and cruel acts may eventually wish to carry out those acts in real life, Mori said.

Alternatively, the murderer may have been influenced by violence portrayed in movies. Such images are believed to have led alleged serial killer Tsutomu Miyazaki to murder several young girls in 1988 and 1989.

According to social commentator Yukio Akatsuka, the fact that the head of Jun Hase was left in front of a school gate suggests that the murderer wished to make his or her presence



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Mothers escort children Wednesday morning to Tainohata Primary School in Suma Ward, Kobe, where Jun Hase had been a student.

known to society in as alarming and direct a way possible. It is also possible that the criminal held a grudge against people living near the school, he added.

Toshiyuki Inoue, a professor at Kobe Kaisei College, believes the murderer could be someone who is isolated from the local community, and whose sense of reality may have been influenced by animation programs or computer games.

Inoue, who specializes in youth psychology, said that the murderer may have brought the boy into his or

characters was found written on a piece of paper attached to the boy's mouth. Together, the characters read as follows: "sake," "oni" (demon), "bara" (rose) "sei" (sacred) and "to" (fight).

Mori believes the characters represent a challenge to police to decipher some kind of hidden message. The sounds of the characters "sei" and "to," when placed together, can mean student, the professor said. Mori added that a male in his 40s or 50s would be unlikely to present an intellectual challenge to police in the form of a cryptic message.

Akatsuka speculated that the words may be a name that the murderer has chosen, thereby portraying himself or herself as a character in a crime thriller. The use of the character meaning "demon" suggests that the murderer has a particularly brutal streak, he said.

In addition, the two characters that can be read together as "seito," meaning sacred fight, may suggest that the crime was a direct challenge to the norms of civilized society, Akatsuka said.

Another message found written on the same piece of paper said: "Watashi o tomeru koto ga dekiru ka?" ("Can you stop me?"). The sentence suggests the crime could be related to the attacks on two schoolgirls in the same area two months ago, according to Mori. If that is the case, the murderer may have decided to commit the latest crime safe in the knowledge that police had made little progress in their earlier investigations, Mori said.

Reading between the lines

A message comprising six kanji