

Police believe Kobe boy murdered on Saturday

Yomiuri Shimbun

KOBE—Police believe that Jun Hase, the 11-year-old boy whose severed head was found Tuesday morning in Suma Ward, Kobe, was murdered shortly after he was abducted on Saturday evening. The Yomiuri Shimbun learned Thursday.

According to an autopsy conducted at a hospital affiliated with Kobe University's medical department, Hase's stomach contained only a small amount of food, presumed to be the contents of a lunch that he reportedly ate at around noon Saturday.

Allowing for the fact that children take longer than adults to digest food, police believe the boy was strangled sometime between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Saturday. It takes an adult an average of eight hours to digest food.

The boy reportedly left home at 1:30 p.m. Saturday to visit his grandfather's house, which is about 500 meters

away. Several residents reported seeing him playing alone in a park at around 4 p.m. The park is about 50 meters from the grandfather's house. Hase was last seen alive at around 6 p.m. Saturday at Myohoji subway station.

Meanwhile, two of the six kanji characters that had been written on a piece of paper found in the boy's mouth were seen last autumn sprayed on a nearby tunnel wall, it was learned Thursday.

Police also discovered another of the kanji characters written on the wall of a house in the area.

The characters "sei" (sacred) and "to" (fight) were sprayed on the wall of the 15-meter tunnel, which is about 500 meters northwest of Tomogaoka Middle School, where the boy's head was found. The tunnel is also near the area where two primary school girls were attacked in separate incidents on March 16.

A 51-year-old homemaker reportedly saw the two characters scrawled horizontally in either red or black paint on the concrete wall, which is about 1.5 meters high. Each character was said to have been about 50 centimeters long.

The character "oni" (demon) was discovered on the wall of a residence near Tainohata Primary School, where the boy had been a pupil. The house is located 200 meters from the wood where the body was discovered Tuesday evening. The character was about 20 centimeters long and written in yellow paint.

Meanwhile, police announced Thursday that bloodstains found Wednesday near Myohoji subway station were not related to the Hase case. The blood reportedly came from a man who had stumbled and injured his knee while riding his motorbike in the area on Tuesday night, police said.