Religious Services in Non-Paddy Farming Villages in Hyuga Mountains

ISHIKAWA, Jun'ichiro

In the mountainous region of Hyuga, there are many farming villages engaged in a variety of activities such as slash-and-burn farming, hunting, etc., maintaining abundant symbols thereof. These villages have a non-paddy cultivation culture of their own which is clearly distinguished from the paddy-cultivation culture. This paper represents a preparatory work for the comparison of the two cultures.

The people of Mt. Shiiba experienced, twice, political events; during the Kamakura period and in the beginning of the Edo period. The special ways of life and the nature of these mountain dwellers must have invited these events. So far, their ways of life as slash-and-burn farmers have been transformed in several stages. The reclamation work for expansion of paddies, promoted from the last years of the Edo period onwards, penetration of the consumer economy, and waves of modernization accelerated this transformation. The second world war also brought about an important change in their way of life. Before the war, at least, a traditional slash-and-burn farming culture was notable in the inhabitants' life, but now it remains only in their worship of tutelary gods.

The Omae area was chosen as a typical colony in the Shiiba village. Focusing on the villages rituals of the area to present in a intensive manner the folkways of the local community as a whole, the paper describes, analytically, various aspects of these rituals: social aspects such as the function of colonies, organizations for religious services, religious aspects, such as the meaning and content of rituals, and aspects of entertainment such as meaning of rituals and public entertainment. The paper also studies their relation to the observances inherited from their traditional non-paddy farming and hunting. The Shimochuki Kagura, played as a winter festival, is an popular entertainment inherited from the Shugen sect and has an independent significance of its
own. But in this local community, it has transformed through a long historical steps reflecting the inhabitants' ways life and aims in life. In this sense, the village rituals constitute an important subject of folkloric study.

This paper represents some of the fruits of our survey of a non-paddy farming village that we conducted to understand folkways of a local community as a whole. It is an interim report and will be followed by other papers describing their slash-and-burn farming observances, hunting observances, and religious life.