Mountain Descends to Plain
—The Transformation of Folkways in Omae, Shiiba Village—

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This paper intends to clarify the characteristics of non-paddy farming village (mountain village) through their transformation, examining the case of the Omae area, Shiiba village, Usuki district, Miyazaki prefecture.

The life in the Omae area, located in the north-west of the Shiiba village, is divided in tow parts, mountain life and village life, as was seen in case of other non-paddy farming villages. For the inhabitants, mountains are theater of their various production activities such as slash-and-burn farming, hunting, collections of natural products, etc., and the village is that of their consumption life. The mountain and the village were of a different nature, but coexisted to form a folkloric world. Here one could find a characteristic of a folkloric culture of non-paddy farming: the mountain and the village coexisted in a interdependent relationship.

In these years, however, both the mountain world and the village world underwent a complete transformation and lost thus characteristic. On the mountain, production activities are transformed and simplified: slash-and-burn farming was no longer maintained, traditional hunting and natural product collection less practiced. In the village, paddy cultivation was introduced and expanded, the village itself was transformed into a place of production activities.

The most remarkable and important change in both the mountain and village worlds occurred in people's way of thinking: their original way of thinking that consisted in "borrowing" the products of nature (or adapting oneself to nature) was replaced by a desire to maintain their life through possession and management. That is to say, their sense of values had drastically changed.

The change of times make change of folkways inevitable. It should be noted, however, that when there is change of folkways there is always change in the inhabitants themselves. If folkways show what is left after the people's own judgments and choices in daily life, an ethnography
should not be a simple description of folkways, but something reflecting people’s process of thinking such as their feelings in life or ways of judgment. In this sense, it may be said that the fact that, in a non-paddy farming mountain village, the mountain tends to descend toward the village, represents a characteristic of non-paddy farming villages.