Significance of Folk Craft Study in Terms of the Cultural History

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This paper proposes that in the study of the folk craft not only making the researches of folk craft themselves but also looking into the life culture structurally through the techniques to manufacture the folk craft as well as those to use them, the folklore study will be deepened and also it will become possible to grasp the folk society from the different viewpoint.

For example, the new designs and inventions to improve the function of “Mabushi”, one of the tools to raise silkworms, promoted the development of the sericulture, and consequently the unique building structures such as a “hip roof construction” and “Kabuto construction” were born.

Furthermore, through the examination of the use of an oval and very shallow bowl called “Hirabachi”, one of the wooden vessels called “kurimono”, we can know the form of banquet in the mountain villages. It is also possible to think of the origin of “kuribune” or a dugout which is the original form of a boat.

As one of the wooden vessels, there is a vessel made by lathe called “Hikimono”. Artisans who manufactured those vessels were called “Kijiya”. Among the tools they possessed, there is a bellows. By paying attention to the importance of its use, we can tell that “Kijiya” were not only wood working engineers but also iron workers and they were manufacturers of medicines as well. We can also tell the characteristics of the wandering artisans and the structure of their life culture.

There is a round vessel shaped by bending and securing a thin sheet of cypress wood or “Magemono”, one of the wooden vessels. By examining it from every aspect making the most use of the every related material, not only the existing folk craft but also unearthed remains, literatures, picture scrolls, etc., we can tell the influence of “Magemono”, one type of wooden vessel, on the life of the Japanese at the time. It will become possible to know the changes in the eating habit of the Japanese through the examination of the
use, and also it will be possible to set the zones of life and culture through the examination of the mode of their distribution.