The Urban Folklore of the "Morning Set"

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In the study of folklore, i.e., in the study of urban folklore, there is a growing accumulation of studies on various types of living space that exist in the city. However, there have not yet been any folklore studies made on the subject of the coffee house. The coffee house is, needless to say, a place to eat and drink, but from the point of view of folklore studies, it can be pointed out that there is more to the coffee house than its role in providing a place for eating and drinking.

This paper focuses on the coffee house, especially on the phenomenon of the "morning set" (the habit of eating the "morning set" at a coffee house instead of having breakfast at home), defining the phenomenon and arranging the issues. The comments made in the paper are as follows.

1) The reasons that people have a "morning set" are one or more of the following: a) to save effort, b) because it is convenient for single people, and c) for communication.

2) The "morning set" in Japan can be seen in urban areas west of Toyohashi, i.e., in cities in the Chukyo (Nagoya), Hanshin (Osaka and Kobe), or Chushikoku (Chugoku and Shikoku) regions, particularly in the old downtown areas of industrial zones.

3) The "morning set" is thought to have come into existence in the late 1960s. At that time, the coffee house owners had begun providing the "morning set" or "morning service" for salaried workers who stopped by on their way to work; however, as the idea was accepted into the community it began to serve as a meeting place for the people, especially women, of the community to get together and talk.

4) If we look at the whole of Asia, in urban society it is almost more widespread to take breakfast outside the home, and it can be said that the Japanese "morning set" contains an aspect of life and culture that is universal all across Asian urban communities.

5) The venue of the "morning set" is a communal space where strangers share the same space and exchange words with each other, but the words that are exchanged there are never theoretically sound, clearly defined logical arguments. Rather, in the case of the "morning", the coffee house exists as a place to meet people and exchange opinions that are excluded from the "citizens' communal space" which is made up of logical arguments. Therefore, one might regard the "morning set" venue as "another communal space" as compared to the "citizen's space".