A Comparative Study of Memory: Logic of Accelerating "History" Following the Great Hanshin Earthquake and the Terrorist Attacks

TERADA Masahiro

In this paper I examine what constitutes the speed at which events are turned into history through the adoption of the perspective of metahistory, a field of historical studies that has been gaining importance in recent years.

The materials I study are those of the Great Hanshin Earthquake. The special period of time of a disaster has a huge influence on people's subsequent awareness of the past and awareness of history. Here, I take the example of the Great Hanshin Earthquake that occurred on January 17, 1995 and study the mechanisms through which it is recognized as history today.

First of all, I study the awareness of time following the earthquake by classifying periods of time. I show that the awareness of time following the earthquake can divided into the following stages: first, after experiencing a temporal vacuum in the affected area as a result of the shock of the earthquake, there was a period in which there was a sudden turning back to the past, during which the immediate aftermath of the earthquake elapsed. This was followed by a "record" stage and then a "memory" stage. There was frequent use during the "record" stage of the words "records of the earthquake", but by around 1998 this had progressed to the "memory" stage.

Then, using the Great Hanshin Earthquake Memorial Center as an example, this is followed by a discussion of what form of structure time was based on following the earthquake. In particular, I look at the circumstances in which the earthquake is discussed within a framework of "disaster prevention" and "lessons" as well as its converse perspective, while taking into consideration theories on public memory, memory and erasure discussed in relation to museum representation, and the economy of memory.

Lastly, I compare the earthquake with the terrorist attacks in the US, in which I examine the transfiguration of the perception of time and its structure today. I suggest that in Japan and the US where these huge stories have come to an end, the attention paid to memory, which exists between the present and history, is a feature of the speed of history in the present day.
Through an examination of the points mentioned above, this paper is an attempt to undertake a historical study of the awareness of time and the awareness of history during the same period by employing a methodology that adopts a metahistorical perspective.