Gender and Sibling Relationship: From the Empirical Study in Papua New Guinea

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In this paper, I investigate the dynamics of the gender of children within the family, focusing on sibling relationship by analysis of the high mortality rate of female children in Papua New Guinea. Presently, while awareness of the constructiveness of the modern family has been shared among social sciences, the gender of children within the family construction in diverse social condition is seldom studied, in spite of a lot of relative problems. High mortality rate of female children is one of the relative problems. While this problem has been analyzed in biomedical paradigm focusing on parents "son preference", such focus overlooks the constructiveness of family or gender. I undertook various kinds of surveys in Kaluli, one of the language groups living in Highlands Fringe of Papua New Guinea, from November 1998 to November 1999. At first, by analysis of the dynamics of demographic feature, I found the high mortality rate of female children. Secondly, by participant observation, mechanism of the high mortality is revealed, in which a unique sibling relationship in this population, that "elder sister" must take care of "younger brother", will cause death of the "sister". Thirdly, I clarify the dynamics of the constructiveness, in which the social construction based on the sibling relationship constructed by the demographic condition that lacks of "parents" generation leads the autonomous decision making of the "sister". The results of this study object former studies, that discuss high mortality of female children or gender relationship within family focusing merely on the relationship between parents and children. Such studies are not able to understand the problems and obstruct the resolution of problems.