The History and Tradition of Miyaza in Mikami in Shiga Prefecture: Through the Existence of Kumon and the Origin of Groups

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The festival named “Zuiki-Matsuri” in Mikami in Shiga Prefecture has interested a lot of scholars who study about Miyaza, a kind of Shrine ritual and festival. In this festival, 5 men called “Tounin” who were selected from 3 groups (Chounoya, Higashi, Nishi) each prepare a rice cake named Hanabira-mochi and a portable shrine made from stalks of taros. Tounins belonging to Higashi and Nishi give young boys as Sumo wrestlers at Shibahara-shiki, a shrine ritual that has continued since the 16th century. In each group there is a man named “Kumon” who selects Tounin from the group.

The name of Kumon began from a manor official in medieval Japan. But nobody studied facts in Mikami in detail. In this paper, I investigated by using archives and records of tradition about the existence of Kumon and the origin of each group in Mikami. Furthermore, I explained make-up of Shibahara-shiki.

Even now, the main characters are not 5 Tounins, but 3 Kumons at Shibahara-shiki. The group name of Chounoya means a shrine building; the group name of Higashi means sitting on the ground at the east side; the group name of Nishi means sitting on the ground at the west side. The system of this shrine ritual was organized on the basis of the receipt system of the manor. To tell the origin, Chounoya was on the basis of the territory of Mikami-shrine. Higashi was on the basis of the manor in Mikami, Nishi was on the basis of Sanjo in Mikami, where various people gathered from here and there. In each territory, there was a Kumon.

The Kumon selects the next year’s Tounin and at Shibahara-shiki, each Kumon presents a paper written with the Tounin’s names of next year, to their leader. And at Hanabira-mochi and Hanabira-kago, which were made by 5 Tounins, they are handed to the Kumons. Hanabira-mochi symbolized an ox’s tongue. Hanabira-kago was used as an ox’s muzzle after the ritual. Then a masked man of Sarutahiko, who is said to be the messenger of the god of Mikami-shrine, enters the central court and thrusts a spear and throws his nasal mucus toward Kumon. This action means the god gives energy.

The people of the middle ages believed the energy of the god produced fertility and security. This shrine ritual, which was made for Kumon, controlled society in the middle ages in Mikami. Especially Hanabira-kago which covered the ox’s mouth, was used as a plow, meaning Kumon forced agriculture on the people who lived in Mikami.

In this report, I indicated the 3 steps in the changing of Kumon in relation to the point in history and showed actual people who were Kumon.

Key word: Kumon, Za, Shibahara-shiki, Sinji, selection of Tounin