Politics of Suigo (Lakeside): Introduction of Land Consolidation Project in the Northeastern Coastal Area of Lake Kahokugata and Its Historic Background

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The recent interest in the argument surrounding the security of rice cultivation specialization in folkloric studies concentrates on multilateral utilization of internal resources, or the individual living situations of households. Needless to say, however, political dynamics surrounding households must not be overlooked. This article pays attention particularly to the significance of the land consolidation project that has been disregarded in folkloric studies for many years.

There is an impression that the land consolidation project after the Meiji period was developed uniformly all over the country as a national project, and after the project, the farming system changed dramatically in nature. However, it becomes clear that such impression has no foundation when looking at the background of introducing the said project in Kawashiri, Tsubatamachi located in the Lake Kahokugata northeastern area.

First, regarding the space formation, emphasis was placed on the reorganization to the Suigo space centered on the creek based on the geographical environment located in the margin of lagoon and water transportation as business since the early modern period. This increased the number of boats for farming rapidly and changed the river mouth into a berth where boathouses formed a line. In other words, the project at the time attempted the "localization" suitable for the local history and environment.

Next, regarding the changes in work, transportation by ship became popular through the establishment of the Suigo space, and the transportation cost for rice after harvest was drastically reduced. Meanwhile, regarding the field preparation work, dry farming such as cultivation by livestock, cultivation of Chinese milk vetch, etc. was not introduced, leaving no other option but to continue the farming system of the feudal clan period.

The lack of dramatic changes in the work can be attributed not only to the soil environment where dry farming was not introduced, but also to the social and economic factors which were intricately affected: the landlords had overwhelming authority, the organization of peasants necessary for technological innovation was delayed, and the landlords did not want any changes in the fertilizer market because they were wholesalers of fertilizer. This shows that rice cultivation was a social practice that came to fruition through political and economic conformity in the local community.

Key words: Rice paddies, Suigo, Lake Kahokugata, land consolidation project, politics