The Hani People's Use of Edible Wild Flora and Fauna in the Border Region of China

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This article is intended to clarify the livelihood activities of the Hani people and their utilization of edible wild flora and fauna in Gema Village, Zhemi, Jinping County, Yunnan Province, China. In the Zhemi region, a rapid-growing market economy has been promoted in recent years. The Hani people in Gema grow cash crops for large cities as a measure for promoting the market economy. Another measure for promoting the market economy that the people in Gema take is a positive use of edible wild flora and fauna. In this article, the reason that such edible wild flora and fauna have been used continuously is studied.

First, concerning livelihood activities, the people in Gema grow lemon grass, cassava, and paddy rice as cash crops. These cash crops are transported to large cities and consumed. As one measure, products that people in the Zhemi region consume may be grown through differentiation of livelihood in the Zhemi region from that in other villages. People in Gema, however, selected the production of cash crops for large cities.

Another action of the people in Gema for promotion of the market economy is the positive utilization of edible wild flora and fauna. Even now when the market economy has been promoted and people have more chances to obtain cash, they use edible wild flora and fauna. The survey result regarding the content of their diet showed that people in Gema use what they buy at fairs and what they get from hunting/fieldwork with almost equal frequency.

One of the reasons that people in Gema keep using edible wild flora and fauna lies in the economic structure of this region. In this region, even if cash crops are planted rapidly in a wide area with expectation of high income, excessive production will soon occur, resulting in a price collapse. For people in Gema who take the livelihood strategy of depending on cash crops, the utilization of edible wild flora and fauna serves as a cushion for reducing the instability of cash crop prices. A simultaneous positive utilization of edible wild flora and fauna allows an aggressive trial of growing of new crops having high commercial value. Utilization of edible wild flora and fauna is also motivating power to promote a market economy of the livelihood activities of the village.

Key words: minority people, cash crop, development, fair, hunting, field work