Formation of Folk Songs in Modern Period: Focusing on “Kokiriko” in Gokayama, Toyama

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This article discusses “kokiriko” as a case example of a “folk song” generated in a local community in modern Japan. The “folk song” treated here is not a field of oral tradition inherited from the pre-modern period. “Kokiriko” is a folk song inherited in Gokayama, Toyama. It died out after the modern period, but was rediscovered after the war. Then, the form of lyrics and dance were arranged for this folk song by local society for conservation, and became popular gradually by appearing in many events. In other words, “kokiriko” clearly has an aspect of “creation of tradition,” or a folkloric aspect.

However, we should pay attention here to the human resources, written and oral materials, and various media networks used in the process of such a "creation." This article investigates the discourse given to this “folk song,” and its complication and separation in the above modern systems to consider the modernization of a "folk song."

In the following, this article considers the written materials of early modern topography that existed as a background or a resource of the formation of a folk song, and local historians who tried to reinterpret them to construct the local “history.” Next, it attempts to clarify the competitive aspect among regions over the symbolic capital of “folk song” generated in the process from the rediscovery to the creation. It is paradoxical, but through such competition, the discourse about the dance, the lyrics, and the origin of “kokiriko” has acquired consistent characteristics of history and story. Based on the above, this article examines the viewpoint of researchers in the center who agreed with the claim from the local side or local historians, and also the nationwide movement to promote the revival of folk songs, which developed while involving both parties.

Key words: Folk song, modernization, local historian, competition, dengaku