Decline and Expression of Folklore: High Economic Growth as Experienced by the Local Quarrying Industry

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The purpose of this article is to ethnographically study the activities of people beyond the fixed relationship between high economic growth and local folklore and to explore their changes, through the experiences of people in the quarrying industry who enjoyed the economic boom in the high-economic-growth period by engaging in the quarrying industry on the isolated island in Japan's Inland Sea.

There are two problems in the relationship between high economic growth and change of folklore. One is regional depopulation and the other is modernization of life. These two problems have not been organized or incorporated into the term "high economic growth." In the background, frustrations regarding the rapid changes in local regions as the survey target can be seen. In the period from the latter half of the '30s of the Showa Era to the beginning of the '40s (1955 to 1965), a change of folklore had already been recognized, and concerning the change, a folk survey led by the Cultural Affairs Agency was conducted from the viewpoint of cultural property protection. Coincidentally, depopulation became a social problem connected with the decline of folklore. In the process, the recognition that folklore was subject to rapid changes and tended to disappear or be homogenized was generalized without regional differences taken into consideration and the position of high economic growth as the extrinsic factor in the change was defined.

However, if the aim of folklore is to clarify the "concept that becomes the norm by which a man to lives" and the "purpose of man's living, which is clarified by the concept," the scale or the presence or absence of change does not always need to become an issue. As an example, when we listen to the experiences of people in the quarrying industry who were directly connected with the boom in economic growth through public works and the demand for tombstones or monuments and objectify the image, we can find various notions such as humility in working and an appetite for the interests and philosophy of the age. The high-economic-growth period is the very age for the expression of folklore. Where people who live in any age exist, life exists and associated folklore as a notion exists, too.

Key words: high economic growth, depopulation, modernization, quarrying industry, decline of folklore