Essay on Techniques of Regular Market Vendors : A Case Study of A Japanese Anise and Cleyera Shop at the Street Market in Kochi

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Regular markets held on fixed days of the week or month is one of general business forms in Japan. While many were disappearing in the modernization process, some are still working as a local economic activity, and some have been newly established in a different form. If you make a living by running a stall at a regular market, you need a sales strategy to continue your business. Regarding this as one of occupational techniques, this paper analyzes a concrete example of current regular market business.

As a case study, this paper focuses on a shop that has only dealt in Japanese anise (shikimi, also known as shikibi in the study area) and cleyera (sakaki) for about 60 years over two generations at the street market in Kochi, whose history dates back to the feudal period. Both Japanese anise and cleyera are familiar plants used for seasonal events and celebrations, and they are in demand at all times of the year in Kochi. People used to gather branches from trees growing wild in the mountains for sale. Since the 1970s, however, as Japanese anise cultivation was promoted as one of ways for earnings in the hilly and mountainous areas, people have sold high-quality branches supplied by tree farms. Expert loggers called kiriko have been involved in this process through management and lumbering of Japanese anise and cleyera under contract with landholders. In Kochi, in general, branches with small, shiny leaves called koba are very popular. These commercially valuable branches can be produced by landholders’ careful sterilization and loggers’ high techniques.

On the other hand, street market vendors make use of their various skills and keep prices low to sell as many products as possible. The store in this study is most highly evaluated for its good quality and trustworthiness, so it has a large patronage. It has collaborated with landholders and loggers by combining respective skills so that the distribution system can provide customers with best products, in spite of its small scale. Continuing this cooperation is vital for vendors. In other words, the study reveals the potential orientation of street market business to a harmonious relationship.

Keywords: Regular markets, Kochi, Japanese anise (shikimi/shikibi), loggers (kiriko), occupations