Essay on the Folkways of Tsukuba Science City: A Folklore Study of Man-made Nature

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Tsukuba Science City is a planned city whose outline was established in 1980. A total of 43 national laboratories, research organizations, and education institutes moved there with their workers and families. It was and still is the largest planned city. In recent years, it has been transformed into a sophisticated suburban town through private urban development projects inspired by the opening of Tsukuba Express line. This report investigates the nature and life of Tsukuba, focusing on its formative years, when it was a typical planned city. The “nature” of Tsukuba Science City was artificial green spaces. It was different from the secondary nature of the neighboring rural areas. The newly afforested “nature” was not used for production activities nor had any relationship with humans. Nevertheless, residents of the science city utilized this “nature” and grew a deep attachment to it. Especially, this trend was obvious in immigrant children. Although these immigrants were called altogether as “new residents,” there were differences among them. They were categorized into different character types according to the time of immigration. All of their children, however, equally put energy into developing fondness for Tsukuba as though it was their hometown while coming to terms with their new environment and classmates. Original residents who had lived in the rural areas around the city were also getting to know new residents who looked solemn as well as man-made nature though they sometimes found themselves in conflict with new residents and the city itself. Those from the neighboring areas have been engaged in Festival Tsukuba held in the center of the Science City. On the other hand, new residents are hardly seen these days. They are becoming involved in the intellectual environment under the slogan of “Tsukuba style.” Now that 30 years have passed since the establishment of the science city, artificial green spaces have widely extended. They have become different from the “nature of the hometown” where children used to play. A “hometown” created by developers is disappearing. The same might go for many children who grow up at large-scale housing complexes. It is not a problem unique to Tsukuba Science City.

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