Livelihoods in the Chikugo Plains and Rapid Economic Growth

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Few ethnographic studies are directly aimed at rapid economic growth. As a research process to reconstruct histories from dictated records, ethnography can yield valuable insights for the present and future by reviving a “living history.”

This paper examines various documents, consisting mainly of dictated records but also of statistics and government publications, to analyze the changes in livelihoods in Ōki Town, Fukuoka Prefecture. The town’s people used to be engaged in agriculture, producing rice as a main crop, with wheat, barley, and mat rush as secondary crops, by using creeks crisscrossing the whole town. However, rapid economic growth brought changes to their lives: the mechanization and chemicalization of rice production, the use of surplus labor, the decline of wheat and barley production, and the increase of mat rush producers and factory workers.

Due to these changes, the town’s people were no longer required to maintain the creeks, and the relationship between the people and creeks was transformed. The creeks became considered a nuisance and abandoned. However, they made an emotional comeback after the rapid economic growth and are making a practical comeback today.

The rapid economic growth also made a cash-based policy predominant. It served as a complement to the communal principle which had been undermined by the changes in livelihoods. The ownership of land and implements also became based on cash.

Key words: Dictated records, “living history”, livelihoods, abandoning of creeks, revival of creeks, cash-based policy