

The Study on Handing Down the Tradition to the Next Generation in the Village where Natural Environment is Severe: ”Mamorana-mon”in Shirakawa,Gifu Prefecture

Makiko ASADA

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Continue existence of the community

1. Background and Purpose of the Study

In Japan, there are many suburban villages where even continuing the village life is difficult because of flowing out of young generation and aging of local population. However, there are villages that continue their living in the rigid conditions. What is the village that can continue their living? What has done in those villages? There are a lot of places where we can learn by seeing the current state of the village that keeps continuing their livings even in many challenges. Shirakawa village continues their life and community although their surrounding natural environment is severe like snowfall period last for four months in winter. The study aims to clarify the mechanism and wisdom of the lore among different generations though community activities especially focusing on the contents of the activities, the process of establishing the awareness and methods of handing down the tradition.

2. Outline of the Study

The study was conducted from Jan. 25 to26, Feb.14 to18, and March 3 to 5, 2009 as baseline survey to understand the local community. Then, main study was conducted from Jun. 13 to 16, Oct 9 to 22, Nov. 6 to 20, 2009 and Jan. 21 to27 2010. The study focused in the Ogimachi district where is registered as the traditional architectures preservation district and UNESCO World Heritage. The study was done by interview survey to the local residents and participatory observation of activities of everyday life, festival (not ordinal situation) and activities within the family.

3. Handing down the Tradition to the Generation in Shirakawa Village

One of the characteristics of the village is, there are many regional activities that are the chances of the handing down the tradition to the next generation. The interpersonal relationship with various people of different generations is established in several activities, and mood that brings up the next generation could be seen in the whole village. Also, all the residents, the young and old, men and women, have their own roles and that helps for them to be aware of a member of Shirakawa village. When looking at the regional activities, it was understood that it establishes a multiple structure. In one activity, the activity is maintained by combining the flexible one and the absolute one. Also, in order to continue the activities, the tradition is handing down to the generation and its methods are the combination of oral, learning by seeing, teaching and written. Furthermore, the role of each house is one of important factors that support these regional activities. Eldest son is tough from the young that he is the one to inherit the family, and change of generation is done in early age to bring up by participating in the community activities. Though these community activities, one can learn the contents of activities and that help to increase the awareness. Having the awareness means activities maintained. Therefore, there is correlation between activities and awareness.

4. “Mamoranan-non”(Things that have to be uphold)

“Mamoranan-mon” for people in Shirakawa village is the ordinal village life and an interpersonal relationship among local residents. Being World Heritage attracts attention, but people in Shirakawa village have been making efforts and established a mechanism to continue the village life by their wisdom and innovative ideas.

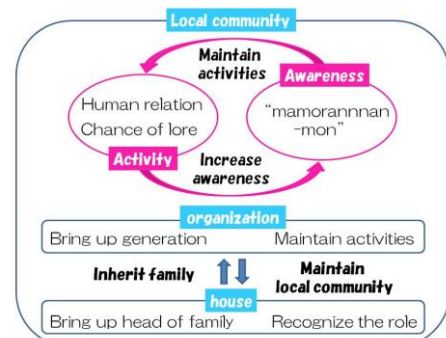


Fig-1 Mechanism of handing down the tradition in Shirakawa village