

The relationship between the changeable community and environment protection

~The case of Shiraho Community in Ishigaki Island ~

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1. The object of study

The coral reef that has unique environment covers rich nature and culture of human beings. People have kept their lives in using the natural resources of World-valued coral reef and developed the culture at Shiraho in Ishigaki Island. The resources in the sea of Shiraho are neither privately-owned nor public-owned, but are communally-owned by all their use and kept for a long time. In 1979, the Okinawa prefectural government planed the new Ishigaki Airport. At that time, the people of Shiraho strongly opposed against this destruction for saving their sea. And now, we find many problems such as red clay pollution run from farms, and exhaustion of natural resources. What makes such problems? What should be done to protect them?

2. What is [the sea of Shiraho]?

At Shiraho, all people of Shiraho who were almost farmers had used the resources as seaweeds, shellfishes and fishes in the reef flat in daily life. They had given thankful for the blessing of the sea. But now, the farmers do rarely make use of them. Only the fisherman and some limited people do. The chances to know the sea through actual scene for the inhabitants of Shiraho are decreasing as their living ways change. Smaller knowing it, less showing for thanks to the sea Inhabitants of Shiraho got awareness of importance and influence in their daily-living, and their knowledge have kept the “Commons” practice. The natural order of environment has been maintained. To make sure, I have done the questionnaire survey there.

3. The questionnaire survey

To know the relationship between the inhabitants and the sea of Shiraho, I have done the questionnaire survey from April to June in 2004, which has 39 questions to them from teens to seventies who live at Shiraho. I find that people who have chances of getting foods from the sea show thanks for the sea. And also, the pride of the sea leads them think of importance of clean the sea. Some children had experiences of fishing in the educational program conducted by WWFJapan Coral Reef Conservation and Research Centre. They got the pride and awareness of the sea It is obvious that there is close relationship between knowing the sea and thinking of the sea. Knowing it in actual scene yields the feelings of thanks for the blessing of the sea.

4. Prospects of the protection of the environment at Shiraho

It is important to know the sea in their actual lives for being aware of the problems happening in the sea of Shiraho, and enjoying the blessing of the sea. At present, native inhabitants don't get merits from the resources directly in their daily life. “Strangers”, that mean visitors and people moved in from out-side places, promote inhabitants to have chances to know the sea. At Shiraho, WWFJapan Coral Reef Conservation and Research Centre provides native inhabitants and “strangers” with the scientific information, opportunity to know the sea as learning experience, and supports to preserve and follow the traditional culture. Not only the inhabitants but also the “strangers” should carry out the action to save the sea of Shiraho. Native inhabitants don't try to solve problems by all the way.