

Relationships between Native Honeybees and Humans in Nepal and Tsushima -From the perspective of minor-subsistence-

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1. Introduction

Human beings have made a living with honeybees at various scales throughout the world from ancient times until the present. The activities concerning honeybee and honey extraction can be divided into three categories; 1) honey hunting that extracts honey from the wild honeybee colonies, 2) traditional beekeeping with native honeybees, 3) modern style of beekeeping where humans have full control over the reproduction of bees.

Honey hunting and traditional beekeeping are regarded as an activity called “minor-subsistence” which is sometimes explained as “play work” or “small life work”. Although its economic value is usually low for people who deal with minor-subsistence, it has been practiced for quite a long time with enthusiasm and pride. Previous researches have not paid much attention to minor-subsistence because this activity was considered to have the local endemism which is strongly depending on local context and nature.

2. Objective

The objective of this study is to clarify the role of honeybee-related “minor-subsistence” in the local communities through the field survey concerning honey hunting and traditional beekeeping with native honeybees respectively.

3. Methodology

This study chosen two activities, honey hunting in Bhujung village, Lamjung district, Nepal, and traditional beekeeping with native honeybees in Tsushima city, Nagasaki Prefecture, Japan. Field research in Bhujung village was conducted in March and September of 2012, and in Tsushima city from July to August and October of 2012. Semi-structured interviews were done with people who practice honey hunting and traditional beekeeping, and participatory direct observation of the minor subsistence was also conducted during the periods.

4. Results and discussion

The study found that there were differences among each community people’s perception to native honeybees in the two case studies. These differences might be caused by the nature of the two activities. In honey hunting, people are required formed to contact with honeybees in non-human territory, while in traditional beekeeping people bring wild honeybees to the domesticated environment and keep them within it.

On the other hand, the role of such activities within each community was similar in that they both promoted interaction among the community people. In the case of Bhujung village, participation in honey harvesting is an obligation for people. In the case of Tsushima, there is a support network among the beekeepers with functions of helping one another. It can be inferred that native honeybees related to minor-subsistence play a critical role in maintaining a strong connection among community people or those who participate in the native honeybee-related activities.