

The Folklore of Landscape
—The Landscape of a Village at the Foot of a Mountain—

MATSUZAKI, Kenzo

How can Folklore studies decipher the "living environment"? This is the ultimate goal for folklorists to reach; meanwhile, judging from the status quo of Folklore studies, a preparatory stage for this research would be to comprehend the "landscape" of villages. First, present trends concerning landscape are viewed with reference to Japanese folklore, geography, history, architecture and environmental technology. Next an analysis is presented of landscape at Yagura, in Omi, Nagano prefecture, which is a village located at the foot of a mountain. In the analysis, the same eight items were used which had been examined to decipher the spatial composition of another village, Kurahashi (Unagami, Chiba Pref.): (1) the boundaries of the village (*murazakai*) (2) residential area (3) land for cultivation (4) non-cultivated land (5) ritual areas (6) social areas (7) place names (8) directions (c. f. A Study of the Spatial Composition of a Village—In Kurahashi, Unagami, Chiba prefecture, *Bulletin of the National Museum of Japanese History Vol. II*).

The results are as follows:

(1) The residential area seems to have begun in the gentle slopes of the mountains, and as the cultivation of paddy fields expanded and the irrigation system was adjusted, this area expanded downward to the river. As a result the *dorokujin* ("guardian of the village boundary") which was placed at the north entrance of the old residential area is now in the center. Meanwhile, the Suwa Shrine, *Suwasha*, which was a *ubusunajinja* (shrine of the local guardian deity) is located at the south of the residential area, at the point on the Murosawa River where irrigation water runs in. This is a crucial place and can be thought of as the village's lifeline.

(2) In the land for cultivation, paddy fields are located near houses and extend to the foot of the mountain. Paddy fields are located in front of the residential area and the boundaries are created by the Omi River that runs from east to west. The land for cultivation is protected by the Suwa shrine. During the Kazematsuri festival, to protect crops from storm damage, ritual cards (*kitōfuda*) are taken out from the shrine and are placed at four places around the land, so that the paddy field area is surrounded.

(3) Non-cultivated land lies at the back of the residential area. First lies private forests, common forests and forests which are controlled by government offices. In the private forests and common forests *yamanokami* (mountain god) is worshipped by the entire village. Private forests may have been common earlier,

but as land was divided and privately owned, the *yamanokami* that was worshipped lost its function as a common deity and after moving upwards it lost its prestige by the placement of another *yamanokami*. Forests controlled by government offices were used by other villages that had not possessed any land and are an area that is out of the control of Yagura.

(4) In the upper part of the non-cultivated land, is a ritual area where *komorimyōjin* ("god that protects children") and *azumayagongen* ("god of the shed") are worshipped.

Four categories are used to study villages and the criteria for division are based on subsistence and the topography: Tagata (flat land villages), Nogata (villages located on plateaus or at the foot of a mountain), Yamagata (mountain villages) and Uragata (fishing villages). In the meantime, study of the landscape of these villages and a comparison of them will be a primary concern.