

Family Structure and Ancestor Worship in Iyayama

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This paper is a report of a survey we have conducted four times since 1981 on the inkyo-system (residential separation system in a family), observed in Zentoku community of the Nishi-iyayama village, Miyoshi District, Tokushima Prefecture. Although it is not so frequently practiced in these days of depopulation, the inkyo-system seems to have been very frequently used in the past.

The characteristics of the family with inkyo-system in Zentoku are similar to those of other mountain villages in Shikoku: the residential separation of the parent couple in a family and their creation of a new branch family. Here, the creation of branch family should be given special attention. Following this inkyo-system, families of Zentoku show a very characteristic structure. It is family structure formed by a single couple, a structure of ancestor worship making continuation of one family line difficult.

The inkyo-system is a very important family system to be considered in the explanation of Japanese family structure. Especially in the family system in Zentoku, its relation with ancestor worship deserves close attention. In recent years, has greatly changed as seen in their erection of ancestors' tomstones. its relation to the inkyo-system presents an important question. Such a structure of family system in Zentoku seems to be influenced by the fact that Zentoku is a mountain village subsisting on non-paddy farming, including shifting cultivation. Thus the analysis of inkyo-system in Zentoku is at the same time that of family structure in in a non-paddy cultivation village. This paper intends to show the family s tructure of Zentoku centering around the inkyo-system, and to consider their position among Japanese families as a whole.

The analysis conducted in this paper showed that, in Zentoku, fundamental form of inkyo-system consists of residential separation of a couple and creation of a new branch family. It may be said that the creation of a branch family by the aged couple results in a form of ancestor worship considerably different

from the one that that seems to be generally practiced by other Japanese families. But with the advance of recent depopulation, they began to erect ancestors' tomstones to secure their ancestor worship in future. Not seen before now in Zentoku, this tendency consists of replacing the diffused form of their traditional ancestor worship by a concentrated and continuous form of ancestor worship, thus resulting in a structural change in the ancestor worship form in Zentoku. Various factors are supposed to be causing change, but it will be pertinent to suppose that the changes was brought about, in a situation where creation of branch families is no longer possible and where most of children go out to towns, by their desire to continue their ancestor worship somehow or other. The people of Iyayama chose a concentrated and continuous form of ancestor worship when their ancestors, until now worshiped within the village in a diffused form as they were, seems to disperse out of village.