

An Essay on "Folk-Musicography"

—Taking the Folk Music of a Mountain Village as an Example—

KOJIMA Tomiko

It is not only possible to establish a "Folk-Musicography" in the study of folk music, but necessary, just as ethnography is a part of ethnology. "Folk-Musicography" can be defined as a systematic description of all phases of folk music, based on field work and being strongly related to natural conditions, people's occupations, life styles, religion, and other cultural aspects of the studied area. In Japan, there are various collections of folk songs, but none as yet are in the form of a "Folk-Musicography".

The folk music of mountain villages in Japan differs from that of rice-growing agricultural villages on the plains and again of fishing villages on an isolated island or in a coastal area. In this essay, taking as an example Shiiba village of Miyazaki prefecture in Kyushu, the southern part of the Japanese Islands, author tries to enumerate the points which should be taken into consideration when writing a "Folk-Musicography" of a mountain village.

Shiiba is a typical mountain village of the west part of Japan. Its population is approximately 5,000. The village has few flat areas, but is made up of tiny, hard-to-reach colonies on its mountain slopes. Situated on the border of a broadleaf forest and a Japanese beech forest, it has a rich plant typology, villagers used to plant Deccan grass and buckwheat in their barnyards, collect tea leaves and edible wild plants, hunt white-whiskered boars, and fish in the river.

They have abundant folk music including folk songs, kagura sacred dances for a winter festival, and music accompanying matoi an old-style archery performed during the spring festival. Musical performance still plays an important role in their lives.

The performance of music has its roots in the belief of mountain gods, and each season has a different type of folk songs since they are sung as prayers to the mountain gods, which vary with the seasons.

People in the village walk and work on the the mountain slopes. Therefore, they have a dynamic rhythm perception and their breathing is excellent. They have continuously refined in their own unique way some very ancient elements of Japanese folk songs, and in their hearts have confidence and even pride in their life and culture.

The author thinks that "Folk-Musicograpny" must be able to report all phases of folk music of such a mountain village systematically and concretely, especially in connection with the various conditions which have formed its unique characteristics as the music of a mountain village.