

Session 2 Comments and Questions

Kinhide Mushakoji:

I would like to ask two questions. First question is how we can utilize the indigenous traditional knowledge and modern scientific knowledge for the habitat in-situ conservation and non-habitat ex-situ conservation that the Convention on Biological Diversity clearly distinguished in 1992. In the habitat area, the indigenous knowledge can play the vital role in conserving the natural species because the nature, human beings and their society are connected each other in the habitat. On the other hand, in the non-habitat case, the indigenous peoples are not able use their knowledge for conservation of nature even though they live their lives and make their economic activities normally because the relationship between nature, human beings and society are disconnected. Under the convention of biological diversity, these conservation areas were clearly distinguished and only area Indigenous people can manage with their knowledge is the habitat area. In my opinion, Satoyama in Japan and common law in England are the perfect examples of the habit in-situ conservation through the connection between nature, human beings and society. Do you think indigenous knowledge and local knowledge should be used for both habitat and non-habitat conservations?

Secondly, I would like to ask Ms. Lin about millet cultivation. In Japan the major crop of cultivation has shifted from five barleys to rice but in Taiwan some indigenous people remain in millet cultivation. In the Taiwan's case, does millet cultivation only take place in indigenous villages or does it also happen in non-indigenous region?

Yugo Tomonaga:

As for the nature of Satoyama, I agree with the nature of Satoyama as the connection with the nature, human beings and their society. However, I have a skeptical perspective for the nature of Satoyama because it is very difficult that local people manage the Satoyama without financial help as well as outsiders at the present. For example, in the case of Kameoka city, local people who historically traced back to their origin as Buraku-min, that is, outcast group in Japan got the mountain back from the municipal government in 1970s. But, many members conserving the common pool property have recently become old and some local people have gone out from their community. In the case of the south-east Australia, Indigenous people was acknowledged as the traditional owner to take the cooperative management with the state governments in the national park. However, the park was distinguished between habitat and non-habitat zone and only designated areas can be managed by the indigenous people. These examples show how hard we utilize indigenous and local knowledge for conserving the land holistically.

As far as the common law is concerned, it is clear that indigenous peoples in Canada, New Zealand and Australia got the indigenous rights such as land management and a certain sovereignty in the limited area through the nature of the common law which saw past cases as applicable to the current situation.

Liying Lin:

Indigenous peoples in Taiwan had to change millet cultivation as ritual to ordinary cultivation, especially after the Japanese colonization the traditional land which contains the gods, culture and people was dispossessed. So Taiwan indigenous people lost the ritual place for the Millet cultivation and they had to move to new environment in the end of 19th century.

After the World War II, the Chinese government came to Taiwan and many laborers came to the indigenous traditional land which pushed out and some indigenous from their villages. As a result, millet cultivation by indigenous peoples dramatically reduced. Despite this catastrophic situation, indigenous peoples did not give up millet cultivation and they have tried to revive the cultivation as an annual ceremony since the 1950s. This millet cultivation ceremony is not practical event but is more symbolic one which gives indigenous people a strong psychological attachment.

As for the convention of Biological Diversity, it has only been twenty years since a university scholar in Taiwan recognized the importance of the convention with regard to the Indigenous knowledge which led the Taiwan government to recognize the importance of the indigenous knowledge and to establish some institutions for the biodiversity. However, at the local level, biodiversity issues have still not been a pressing matter. At the same time, organic millet with high protein has become popular in Taiwan as organic millet production becomes a profitable commodity, and local community has shifted the ordinary millet cultivation to the organic millet. As a result, the meaning of millet cultivation is changing from a symbolic ceremony connecting themselves with their ancestors and gods to a more profit-oriented cultivation even though the symbolic meaning still remains.