

Feeling Evolution of Agrarian Civilization via Terraced Paddy Field in Kamogawa

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On September 12, 2006, as a studying tour, our team went to a beautiful place named Kamogawa by bus, Kamogawa city is located in southeastern of Chiba Prefecture. Every year there is lots of tourists visit the city for enjoying its singular natural environment. Likewise, our purpose is to feel a kind of peculiar agrarian civilization which embodied a history of economics in Japan 200 years ago, as Japan goes her way toward industrialization, traditional agrarian areas, such as Kamogawa, have to face various challenges. Could traditional agrarian areas be suitable for modern situation? May they survive?

What a pity, it was raining with heavy clouds while our team started, then what a surprise, the rain stopped and the wind quieted down when we arrived at Kamogawa. Suddenly a beautiful landscape just like Isaak Levitan's paintings reflected into our eyes, mountains rise straight up with colorful dress, without cock crowing in farmyard, without smoke arise from farmhouse, everything is quiet and mysterious. All of us seemed to indulge in the natural landscape and have little drink. In a hurry, we are very happy to take pictures together lest missing so beautiful things.

Of course, we went to Kamogawa not only for enjoying her natural screen, but also for her very famous program, that is, Kamogawa City Oyama Senmaida, via the program, its wonderful Terraced Paddy Fields will be protected. According to the introduce, "Oyama Senmaida" is comprised of as many as approximately 400 rice

paddies in a 32000 m² plot of land and the slant distance from the highest rice paddy to the lowest rice paddy is 300 meters while the vertical drop is 60 meters above the sea level. It is also Terraced Paddy Field that is located closest to Tokyo among the “Top 100 Terraced Paddy Fields” in Japan.

China is the origin of Rice Civilization in world, there are many Terraced Paddy Fields around China, I remember, in which the most famous is Terraced Paddy Field in Yangsuo (阳朔) that is located in scenic resort of Guilin (桂林),Guangxi province. Comparison to “Oyama Senmaida”, Yangsuo Terraced Paddy Field is very similar with it in many aspects. I think the evident difference is in function. Yangsuo is still a traditional agrarian area up to now, not need to protect its Terraced Paddy Fields studiously, because farmers often earn their livelihood basing on cultivating on their Terraced Paddy Fields, even though tour industry is becoming more and more popular in the region.

In a word, Japan does best to protect her agrarian traditions while Chinese people continue to live on such agrarian traditions in some regions instead. It is very important to recognize this point.