

Transmission of Folk Music in Kohama Island from the Perspective of Personal Histories

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The purpose of this research is to show that there is a place for music education research in folk music transmission, from the perspective of personal histories. It clarifies folk music transmission from two perspectives. Firstly, it examines the activities of individual folklorists who have played a significant role in continuing the tradition up through the present. Secondly, it considers the influence these folklorists have had in shaping the musical and individual identity of others. The ethnographic area of research, Kohama Island, Yaeyama County, Okinawa Prefecture, Japan, was chosen for three reasons. First of all, it is an area with a rich folk music culture which is still transmitted. Secondly, important folklorists were easily identified on this small island. Thirdly, it was possible to investigate the processes and influences of a tradition longitudinally, due to extensive interaction with the ethnographic area from 1974 onwards.

The case study examines the young people of Kohama Island who have determined the rich folk music identity and who were influenced by the significant folklorists. The importance of these folklorists in transmitting the tradition was uncovered when describing the personal histories of the young individuals. First, the abilities or conditions and individual variance for traditions to be receptive; secondly, the results of intentional transmission by the folklorists; and finally, the musical identity of the folk music tradition, are considered.

The conclusion summarises the significance of the case study and focuses on individual folklorists in music education research. The educational system has solidly established music education within the regional society, allowing the folk music culture, the educational strength and musicality to be transmitted, away from the venue of performance.