

Function changes of premises forests in agricultural village, Iki island, Western Japan

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In agricultural villages in Iki island, Nagasaki prefecture, a characteristic premises forests are seen. They are called “Sedon-Yama”, which make traditional landscape of Iki island. This landscape has been saved in the relationship between farmers and nature. The detail management system and usage situations of Sedon-Yama has yet been researched. In addition, as researching the history of the forests, they are playing an important part of making traditional rural village landscape in Iki island. The decrease of Sedon-Yama means that the loss of traditional rural landscape, still the identification of the name Sedon-Yama is very low even in Iki island. This study focuses on the forming process, maintenance and management system, and usage situation of Sedon-Yama. The history of them was researched by analyzing references. In order to clarify the sort of wood consisting the premises forests, usage situations in the past and present, and management situations, the surveys of interviews, questionnaires, and observations were done in Iki island. The analyzation of the results of these surveys revealed the position of Sedon-Yama as regional resources in present days among the residents, who own these premises forests.

The surveys of interviews and questionnaires clarified the fact that Sedon-Yama is placed as premises forests. Premises forests are secondly vegetation grown by people living nearby their houses, which play some important roles, such as for windbreak, for obtaining food, fuel, for borders between neighbors, and the shade of houses. These roles used to be deep-based on the lives of villagers from the late Edo period to the 1950s. From the surveys, premises forests surround the main houses, which implies the factors of Sedon-Yama as shading. But nowadays, the function of windbreak has played the main part, and many other parts have been losing their importance. From interviews and questionnaires, both positive and negative opinions of Sedon-Yama are claimed by residents. The positive opinions point out the expectation of windbreak and importance of ancestral heritage’ s succeeding. On the other hands, the high cost of maintenance of Sedon-Yama makes some residents feel uncomfortable. The structural changes in house architecture from thatched-roof houses to tile-roofed houses has also made the importance of premises forests decrease. Thus, some people even suggest that the situation should be better if they could cut down the trees.

Today, it can be said that as functions the necessity of Sedon-Yama is growing lower. And the high maintenance cost of them compels a burden on residents. This leads a result that the decrease of the houses owning their premises forests. However, not many people have negative opinions on Sedon-Yama, the number of premises forests may not decrease rapidly. Because the activities related to maintenance of them are not seen, the decrease of them can be a natural and unstoppable fact. If the conservation of Sedon-Yama is done, the values of them being worth maintaining is required. Not only discovering new functions but also the strengthen of functions today’ s Sedon-Yama contain is needed. From now on, besides additional detail researches, the function of windbreak has to be analyzed and discussed.

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