

Effects of past charcoal production on landscape development in Japanese mountain regions

*KIYOSHI SAIJO¹

1. Miyagi University of Education

Charcoal production had been a major traditional use of forest in Japan before the late 1950' s when common fuel drastically changed from firewood or charcoal to fossil fuel. Distribution of abandoned charcoal kilns indicates that charcoal production was especially active in hilly areas (*Satoyama*) adjacent villages. It has recently been suggested, however, that similar charcoal kilns are recognized in mountain areas far from villages. For example, abandoned charcoal kilns are found at 790 meters high on the slope of the Mt. Izumigatake (1175 m) belonging to the Oou Mountains in Miyagi Prefecture. This fact means that trees around the kilns was once cleared for charcoal production and present forest has recovered after the clearance. The fact that many abandoned charcoal kilns are distributed not only in hills but also on higher mountains indicates that consideration about the effects of past human activity is important for elucidation of landscape development of mountain areas.

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