

Historical disasters in the middle reaches of the Tone River in the southern part of Gunma Prefecture from the viewpoint of disaster monuments and their impact on local communities

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This study shows the results of a survey on the distribution of disaster monuments and the contents of their inscriptions conducted in the middle reaches of the Tone River in southern Gunma Prefecture. In addition, we will examine the impact of these disasters on the local community using various materials, and introduce the recognition status of disaster monuments among local residents. The survey area is the middle basin of the Tone River in the southern part of Gunma Prefecture and its tributaries such as Kanna River, Usui River and Karasu River.

(1) Distribution of disaster monuments, contents of inscriptions and disaster types: There are 26 disaster monuments in Gunma prefecture as of January 14, 2022, of which are listed on the GSI Maps, and 9 monuments are present in the study area. However, this survey revealed that there are more than 100 disaster monuments in the study area. Most of the disaster types are related to flood and landslide disasters, 1742 (Kanpo 2), 1786 (Tenmei 6), 1823 (Bunsei 6), 1824 (Bunsei 7), 1846 (Koka 3), 1907 (Meiji 40), 1910 (Meiji 43), 1935 (Showa 10) and 1947, 1948, 1949 (Showa 22, 23, 24). In addition to the description of memorial of the victims, many of these monuments also describe the damage situation and restoration process in the area. In particular, many of the 1947 Kathleen Typhoon disaster monuments are restoration memorials that engrave the restoration process of cultivated land and embankments. In recent years, in a survey of residents in the area around the flood monument conducted in this study area, few residents recognize the existence of the flood monument (not listed as a monument on the GSI Map). In addition to the monuments related to floods and landslides, there are many monuments related to the 1783 (Tenmei 3) Asama Tenmei eruption (ash fall) and mudflow, 1887 (Meiji 20) hail damage, and 1893 (Meiji 26) frost damage. In addition, there is a monument related to the 1931 Nishi-Saitama Earthquake in Annaka City in the southwestern part of the prefecture.

(2) Hail and frost damage and their impact on local communities

Since the study area was a region where sericulture flourishes, when the leaves of mulberry, which is the feed for silk moths, died due to hail and frost damages, it became difficult to raise silk moths, which had a great impact on the silk industry. With the rise of the silk moth industry after the Edo period, sericulture worship spread widely, and many "silk moth monuments" were erected. Among them, there is a monument that clearly engraves the damage situation of hail and frost damage in the area. In particular, the 1887 hail damage monument is concentrated at the southeastern foot of Mt. Haruna, and the 1893 frost damage monument is concentrated in the Annaka and Isesaki areas. The contents of these inscriptions are similar, and it is engraved that the remains of silk moths that could not be bred due to the withering of mulberry leaves due to hail and frost damage were buried and memorialized. These monuments were erected from the end of the Edo period to the beginning of the Showa period when the silk industry was flourishing. Looking at the materials on the amount of disaster-type spending to relieve disaster-affected people, a large amount of savings was paid to sufferers of the hail and frost damages. It shows the importance of sericulture and silk industry in the local community and the serious damage to the local community due to hail and frost damage.

Keywords: disaster monuments, flood disaster, landslide disaster, hail and frost damages, southern part of Gunma Prefecture