

# Exploitation and Conservation of Forest Resources in a Mountain of Early Modern Japan

**SHIROUZU Satoshi**

*Chuo Gakuin University, Chiba, Japan*

**SHIROUZU Satoshi** is an associate professor at Chuo Gakuin University. He studies Japanese history, especially on the structures of the governance system and the subsistence in the mountainous and seaside communities of medieval and early modern Japan. His main study fields were coastal area and mountainous area in Fukui prefecture, and mountainous area in Yamanashi prefecture and Nagano prefecture. He is also positively related to the arrangement and the preservation of regional historical materials. He was a JSPS fellow at the Institute for the Study of Japanese Folk Culture, Kanagawa University (1992-1994). His major publications include : “Shirarezaru Nihon: Sanson no Kataru Rekishisekai [Unrevealed Japan: Historic World in the Mountainous Community]” (2005) (Nihon Housou Shuppan Kyokai [Japan Broadcast Publishing, Co.,ltd.]); “Chusei no gyogyo to gyogyo-ken: Kinsei eno tenbou wo fukumete [Fishery and fishing rights in the medieval ages: Including the view to the early modern ages]” In: “Okunoto to Tokikuni-ke, kenkyu-hen 2 [Okunoto area and Tokikuni family: Chapters of research 2]” (2001) (Heibonsha Limited, Publishers); and “Kinsei sankan chiiki ni okeru kankyo-riyuu to sonraku: Shinano-Koku Akiyama no seikatsu-sekai kara [Utility of the environment and the village in the mountainous area of early modern ages: From a view point of the everyday life in the Akiyama, Shinano-no-kuni province]” (2005) (Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan Kenkyu Houkoku [Bulletin of the National Museum of Japanese History]). [ven05021@nifty.com](mailto:ven05021@nifty.com)

## **Abstract**

Over-harvesting of natural resources frequently occurred with growing population and industrial development in early modern Japan. The forest environment around mountainous villages was often drastically changed by over-logging. In the Akiyama region, trans-boundary area between Shinano province (present Nagano Prefecture) and Echigo province (present Niigata Prefecture), the forest faced a serious crisis in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the forest was almost clear-cut by people living in and around the village.

At that crisis, people living in the Akiyama region tried to create new subsistence by using various and congesting forest resources. They started to use hardwoods for wood crafts that they had not been used. In addition, they reduced logging pressure of external people by various methods; such as taking advantage of the *sutakayama* custom—breeding hawk chicks in a protected forest as a gift for the Tokugawa *shogun*—and taking legal action against them.

While external people, who logged all trees, regarded the nature as logging resources for their consumption, while people living in the village treated major forest changes as a serious issue, since they intended to use forest not only as a logging resource but also for hunting, as a gathering place and as a source of various forest ecosystem services. They intended to eliminate external pressure on the forests by using feudal-lord authority and thus succeed to sustain fundamental nature environment. I conclude that nature conservation activities ultimately depend on goodwill of the native people.

**Keywords:** mountainous village; Early-Modern; forest resources; Sutakayama (hawk breeding forest); congesting resources