

The Life of Mountain Village and Communally Owned Forest
—Nishihara and Amagase, Kami-kitayama, Yoshino, Nara—

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The purpose of this paper is to define indicators to be used in ethnological comprehension of mountain villages in Japan through study of the life in the Nishihara and Amagase sections of the Kamikitayama Village.

Kami-Kitayama Village is a mountain village located on the east in Mt, Ōmine and engaged in various kinds of production activities. The most important activity is forestry, but an observation of the annual events of the village demonstrate parallel worship of different gods or goddesses, each of which protects an activity: *yamanokami* (the god of the mountain) for forestry, *hatakenokami* (the god of the field) for field cultivation, *tanokami* (the god of the paddy) for pad dycultivation. From this, it may be said that production activities of the village, centering around the above three activities and changing through their history, present diversified aspects. Since mountain villages in Japan taken on the whole, present the same diversified activities, it can be expected that this multipolarity of production style may offer an important viewpoint in the study of mountain villages.

On the other hand, every colony of families in Kami-Kitayama Village had forests owned in common at various levels of organization. The owner was sometimes an *Ōaza* (big section) and sometimes a *Kumi* (group). The common ownership of forests assured the stable unity of each organization. But as the demands of timber grew rapidly after Meiji years, outside capital was invested in these forests and attracted many forestry workers who stayed to live in the village. Moreover, from the Meiji era, communally owned forests were integrated into government owneship by government policy. This integration was intensified and accelerated frnm the late years of Meiji onwards. In this situation, the Kami-Kitayama village organized incorporated foundations and forestry producers guilds was based on their traditional common foretst. The organization of corporate foundation and producers' guilds was intended

originally to maintain the ownership of common forest and to protect the life of members families. Admission of newcomers from elsewhere was restricted in a manner that fixed the membership of commonly owned forests. These organizations also respond well to other activities of the village, such as religious services assumed by them in turns or fraternities. Thus the common ownership of forests plays an important role in the unity of a mountain village community, and can be used as a good indicator in the study of mountain villages.