A History of Village in the University Forest

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The Takakuma University Forest became part of the Kagoshima College of Agriculture and Forestry, now Kagoshima University, in December 1909, through a transfer of land from the national forest to the college forest. Initially, the forest comprised land that had been devastated due to wildfires and illegal logging by community residents. Moreover, most trees in the university forest were damaged by the 1914 Taisho eruption of the Sakurajima volcano. However, the present Takakuma University Forest has 1878 ha of natural forest and 1,170 ha of artificial forest, making it one of the biggest artificial forests among Japanese university forests. Planting this vast artificial forest required the combined efforts of full-time technical officials and village residents from the university forest and the neighboring village, as important labor forces. This paper aims to describe one aspect of Japan's forest resource development by studying the establishment and disappearance of forest settlements and actual life records. Also, the record of afforestation in the southernmost mainland highlights the situation in protected areas.

Before the war, in 1925, the village in the university forest consisted of 35 houses and 153 residents; by 1930, it had grown to 41 houses and 172 people, while in 1935, it had 49 houses and 183 people. The number of houses and population gradually increased. However, between 1935 and 1946, both the number of households and the population decreased to half the size as residents migrated to a coal mine in the northern part of Kyushu. A similar migration happened in the mountain village of Kyushu as well. After World War II, although the size of the village in the forest remained the same, a university policy, influenced by the liberation of farmlands in the Hokkaido University Forest, was brought into effect in 1963. This led to issues of land rights in the village in the Kagoshima University Forest, which were not completely resolved until 2011.

Key words: University Forest, Afforestation, Village in the forest, Forest conservation, Artificial forest