

## 焼畑農耕はどのようにして営まれるか

では、「焼畑の心」というのは、いったい何だろうか。それを考えるためには、焼畑はどのようにして営まれるのか。また、それは山地で生活を営む人々にとってどのような意味をもっていたのかを、まず説明しなければならない。

焼畑を営むためには、まず第一に適当な山林を伐採しなければならない。自分の所有地あるいはムラの共有地の中で、森林が生育し、有機質が十分に堆積して土壌が肥沃なところが望ましい。それに日当たりや傾斜などの条件もあり、また他人の植林地に接しているところはまずい。焼畑をつくるには山地のいろいろな条件をよく考えて土地が選ばれるわけである。場所が決まるを伐採にかかるのだが、その直前に山ノ神に祈りを捧げる例が多かった。九州山地の村々では、焼畑用地の上端近くにある大きな木の根元に御神酒を注いで神に祈り、その木の梢の先端は「せびの枝」とよび、山ノ神の依代として伐採せずに残しておくのが常であった。伐採の作業中も神に加護を祈る気持ちは強く、日向の山地に伝えられてきた「木おろし歌」（伐採の労働歌）の中にも山ノ神をたたえる唱句が数多く現出される。

通常、伐採は秋に行なわれ、翌年の春、伐木が乾燥したところに火入れが行なわれる（夏に伐採、火入れする場合もある）。この火入れも、ただ火をつけて燃えるにまかせるといった簡単なものではない。焼畑耕地のまわりには例外なく幅二～三メートルほどの可燃物をきれいに取り去った防火帯がつくられる。しかも、火は必ず焼畑の上端にまず点火して、人が監視しながら焼き下ろしてくるのである。このとき農民たちは「骨まで焼く」とか「低まで焼く」とか言って、ゆっくり焼きながら土の温度が十分に上昇するよう注意している。これは土壌中の雑草の種子や害虫を死滅させるとともに、地熱の上昇によって土壌の性格を変化させ、作物に肥料を吸収しやすくする効果があるといわれている。

## How is Slash and Burn Agriculture Carried Out?

Well, what on earth is the “heart of slash and burn”? To consider this, we must first ask how slash and burn is carried out, and also explain what meaning it had for the people who go about their lives in the mountainous regions.

In order to carry out a slash and burn, one must first of all fell a suitable mountain forest. A location on one’s own land or land belonging to the *mura* is desirable, where a forest is growing, organic matter is adequately piled up and the soil is fertile. Additionally, there are also conditions such as slope and exposure to the sun [to consider]; a location adjacent to another’s forested land is inadvisable. To create a slash and burn, the land is chosen on careful consideration of the various conditions of the mountainside. When the location has been decided on, felling starts; however, there were many cases of offering prayer to the mountain god just prior to felling. In the villages of the mountainous region of Southern Kyushu, [the villagers] would pray to the [mountain] god and pour out a sake offering at the base of a large tree near the upper end of the land to be used for slash and burn. The very top of the tree was called the “*sebi*<sup>1</sup> branch” and it was normal to leave it uncut as a conduit for the mountain god. There is also a strong impression that they prayed to the [mountain] god for divine protection during the felling work as well; a great number of verses that praise the mountain god also appear in the “falling tree songs” (tree felling work-songs) found throughout the mountainous regions in Hyūga.

In general, the felling is carried out in autumn and the burning carried out the following spring, when the felled wood is dry (there are also cases of felling and burning in summer). Even this burning is not a simple matter of just lighting the fire and leaving it to burn. Without exception, a fire belt two to three metres wide is made around the slash and burn land by cleanly removing anything combustible. Furthermore, the fire must be ignited on the upper part of the slash and burn area, burning downwards while people keep watch. The farmers call this time, “burning to the bone” or “razing it to the bottom.” It burns slowly to ensure that the soil temperature rises sufficiently. This is to kill weed seeds and insect pests, as well as to alter the quality of the soil through a rise in geothermal temperature; this is said to have the effect of making it easier for crops to absorb fertiliser.

---

<sup>1</sup> A *sebi* is a kind of charm to attract the gods and/or guide their arrival.