

Book Review

Yasuda, Yasunori (Ed.): *Forest and Civilisations*. Lustre Press Pvy. Ltd. and Roli Books Pvt. Ltd. (M 75 Greater Kailash II Market, New Delli 110048, India. e-mail : roli@vsnl.com), 200 pages, 2001.

This unique book is a collection of articles related to forest and civilisation, which is a very important topic not only from the standpoint of the environmental archaeology, but also philosophical consideration, history, folk lore etc. This book is edited quite well by Yasuda, a professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in Kyoto, Japan. He has conducted research in many countries including Japan, Korea, Greece, Turkey, India, China and the Himalayan regions. Based on his studies in these fields, present book deals with the a diversity of stories concerning the relationship between the forest and the human activities.

Organization composed by five parts with 13 chapters in total presents a complete structure of the problems. Part I, "Changes in the Forest and Civilisations", has four chapters. Firstly, Yasuda compared the values of cedar forests in culture in East Asia and West Asia. This chapter presents not only facts about the topics, but his ways and methods of his studies with many relative percentage pollen diagrams and beautiful colour photographs. Chapter 2, "Changes in the Forest Environment of Western Europe and Rise and Fall of Civilisation" by J.L. de Beaulien discussed the impact of prehistoric and historic civilisations on forest ecosystems with a particular focus on France. Chapters 3 and 4 concerned the forest and civilisation in Easter Island. J. R. Flenley came to a conclusion that Easter Island was formerly forested and that this forest continued with little change from 30,000 years ago untill about 1,200 years ago. He gave a possible model of an ecological disaster occurred on Easter Island. Paul Bahn described a summary of his study and emphasized that "the parallel between the ecological disaster on Easter Island, isolated in the Pacific, and what is happening on the planet Earth, isolated in space, is far too close for comfort."

Part II on "Forest and Animism" contains four articles. Namely, it is shown in Chapter 5 by R. A. Joyce that crocodile, serpent and shark are powerful animals in Olmec and Maya art, belief and riuial. Then, Hiroko Yoshino dealt with snake cult in

Japan in Chapter 6. Also, A. M. Victor-Howe took Xuts as chief of the woods and the Tlingit of North America. Eyes of the forest gods were considered in Chapter 8 by Yasuda. This chapter describes the recent results of discovery of forest civilisation in Yangtze River, China, and their comparison with Jomon culture in Japan, which is one of the main aims of this publication under review.

Part III relates "Forest and Witches", which is composed by three chapters. A. Yoshida discussed the "Origin of the Earth-Mother cult in Japan" in Chapter 9 and Ph. Walter "European Forests, Fairies and Witches in Medieval Folklore" in Chapter 10. The last chapter of this Part III is dedicated to "The Insect and the Western Image of the Forest" by A. Siganos. Finally, Part IV, "Forests and Future Society" has two chapters both by Japanese authors and Part V, "Conclusion" by Yasuda, editor of this volume. It is thought that the two chapters are the most modern topics as a problem of human activities with forests in the future world. The relatively long conclusion was written with the headings such as world domination by deforestation civilisation, the birth of a civilisation of hierarchical dominance, the birth of civilisation to rule over nature, the birth of monotheism, the spread of human-centric civilisation, the fifth desertification, the earth in miniature, the tragedy of Easter Island, spread of mistakes, a forest civilisation flourished on the Japanese archipelago, palaeolithic Japanese forest culture, and Jomon forest Japanese culture in Japan. One can understand easily from this headings what the editor intends to say to the readers by this book. He says that the keywords of forest civilisation are symbiosis, renewal, and rebirth, and egalitarianism in the relationship between humans and nature.

Studies on the so-called global environmental problems have been carried on internationally and multidisciplinary by the IGBP and IHDP. However, their core projects do not have the items on human activities as dimensions of civilisation and culture in the periods of prehistorical and archaeological time scales. From this viewpoint, this volume has built up a conplete, huge, first milestone on the way to be progressed.

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