Satoyama management in the twenty-first century: the challenge of sustainable use and continued biocultural diversity in rural cultural landscapes

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Published online: 11 May 2011

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Rural cultural landscapes, also known as *Satoyama*, provide diverse habitats for plants and animals, are rich in biodiversity, and are home to distinctive cultural features and centuries-old agricultural wisdom that significantly contribute to the cultural diversity of the world. Unfortunately, during the last few decades, many of these bioculturally rich landscapes have disappeared as a result of economic development, landscape standardization, or abandonment. Others, especially those in mountainous areas, are on the brink of vanishing due to depopulation and aging.

In recent years, however, the importance of Satoyama as well-functioning ecosystems rich in biocultural diversity has been widely recognized, and efforts to preserve Satoyama have been made. In Japan, measures taken include the 2004 revision of Japan's Cultural Properties Law, based on which Satoyama can be designated as a cultural property, and the 2008 implementation of the *Satoyama Initiative*, which aims to promote biodiversity and the sustainable use of Satoyama in Japan and beyond. As a result of such measures, public awareness of the social, ecological, and cultural importance of Satoyama has increased, and the concept of Satoyama as the socio-ecological production landscapes of Japan has taken root. The challenge today is to develop efficient strategies for continued sustainable land use in various kinds of Satoyama. This is quite a formidable task.

This monograph, which includes six contributions from Japan and one from the United Kingdom, focuses on

strategies for effective management, sustainable land use, and the preservation of biocultural diversity in Satoyama today.

The first contribution outlines the role of Satoyama as a model of sustainable ecosystem management and as a hotspot of biodiversity. It then explains the crisis Satoyama is facing today: farmland and forests are abandoned due to depopulation in rural areas; urban development is creeping in; and there is a loss of traditional knowledge and skills. Strategies to overcome these issues are suggested. The next article presents a survey of how the general public in Japan values Satoyama scenery, and emphasizes the importance of awareness among the public. The third contribution researches isolated trees and hedges in a cultural landscape close to Lake Biwa in western Japan, and investigates the important role they play in contributing to biocultural diversity and local identity. The next article highlights management issues of remnant colonies of wild rhododendron in hilly Satoyama on Setouchi Island, and investigates ways to preserve these colonies. These papers show the close connection between culture, human intervention, and biodiversity in a local context.

A report from the Kanto area emphasizes that in order to maintain Satoyama landscapes as homes of biocultural diversity, new management approaches must be found. Satoyama biodiversity has traditionally been the direct result of human disturbance, such as the cutting of weeds or trees for animal fodder, timber, or firewood. Such uses, however, are not lucrative in today's society. The article suggests that woodlands should be used in new ways; for example, woody biomass can be employed for energy, which will promote management in woodlands and contribute to carbon reduction. It also points out the need for the involvement of the community and to bring together diverse actors, a topic that is extensively illustrated in the

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following contribution, a case study on the sustainable use of forest resources in western Japan, where a network of citizens, non-profit organizations, and governmental bodies have cooperated in the restoration of reed communities in a lakeshore area. The monograph concludes with an article on the involvement of the public in decision-making regarding the future of a rural landscape in the United Kingdom. This report shows that diverse countries face similar challenges, such as citizen participation, and confirms the significance of cross-cultural research.

Today, a large number of individuals and groups are engaged in finding ways to revitalize the use and

management of Satoyama in order to ensure the continuity of its rich biocultural heritage. The research in this volume suggests that fostering local identity, promoting lucrative management methods, and encouraging citizen participation may be key strategies in future Satoyama management. We hope that the viewpoints in this monograph will inspire further initiatives in the field, and that they will encourage new approaches for the sustainable use of Satoyama in Japan and beyond.