An Introduction to the Economic Geographical Study of Japanese Mountain Villages (Abstract for the Article Published in No. 1, January)

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Japan, besides having a high population density, has also vast mountain lands, her people being crowded into small plains. Such irregular distribution of population has been intensified as the result of the so-called "industrial revolution." Although, recently, mountainous districts have increased in population owing to the extension of such modern industries as mining, water power plants, and tourist traffics, the largest part of the mountain population is engaged in agriculture, which includes forestry and the live stock industry. The mountain barriers surrounding these villages hindered their cultural and economical development until they were
conquered by railways, and especially by motor roads. The mountain villages, with their scanty populations and poverty in natural resources, with consequent of low standard of living, are compelled to exchange their products with other regions more economically powerful than those in the plains.

Although access to Japanese mountain villages, today, has considerably improved. It is always worse than that in the plains, owing to the steep inclinations and the numerous curves of the road. With them, self-sufficient economy consists in the production of some special merchandise, characterising the whole economy of that village. There is an intimate relation between such production and the natural resources, historical tradition, and the geographical situation of such villages. It is, however, difficult to raise the standard of living of the mountain villagers to that of the rural district in plains, since even depopulation is rare.

In studying Japanese mountain villages (excepting those in which modern industries have made inroads), it is necessary to take the foregoing conditions into consideration.