

**A story of trees, that's sure to please**

and provide  
expertise

# The Great Succession The Great Succession

Japanese Way of the Forest



**A book to enrich lives by revealing the brilliant hidden strategies of trees**

**Gankoyama Paperback Edition**

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\*"yama" means "mountain" in Japanese



**With love and respect to the trees who survive by accepting all without excuse.**

# The Great Succession: Japanese Way of the Forest

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## Introduction: The world of trees

Trees live without regret, remorse, or indecision. They simply live by following their nature to surpass challenges and pressures. However, they have brilliant life strategies, which make full use of their nature, to survive and pass on genes.



All creations - heavens, earth, trees, people - flow and connect in our world. I invite you to reach out to trees and life force energy, to know yourself more, to like yourself more, and to live according to your nature. Let's step into the world of trees for our own sakes.

# Chapter 1: Tree philosophy

## ★Mission: The top priority of trees



The biggest mission given to trees is to leave behind many genes. Their instinct is to survive for that purpose. Physical things lose form in time. Even trees, with their tremendous vitality, are subject to that principle. It also applies to forests where various life forms gather around trees. In the long history of nature, trees and forests have lost their forms due to forest fires, floods, storms, as well as logging and burning by humans. Loss of form, however, does not mean death. It means that one's ending is another's beginning. While trees still have form, they bury in the soil a vast amount of seeds containing genetic codes. The only thing not lost is this store of genetic information. That is the core of life. Forests are reset and reborn due to the power of genes transferred as information. In time, they will lose form again. When one forest's form is lost, a new forest can be born. Even if form is lost, the flow of genes continues on. That is the mission entrusted to trees.

## ★Strategy: Following your nature is healthiest

Strategy means knowing your own nature and making the most of it. Evergreens do not live like deciduous trees, and deciduous trees do not live like evergreens. Trees are subject to various conditions and constraints, such as requirement for copious sunlight, tolerance of shade, dryness or humidity, and soil properties. There are no unbound and almighty super trees. It follows that all trees live by a strategy.

The shade-intolerant *akame-gashiwa* does not bud in a forest that is covered by the leaves of large *shii*. On the other hand, *shii* does not bud in light-filled forests where pioneer plants such as *akame-gashiwa* do. Trees survive by staying true to the nature of their species and competing where they have an advantage. A tree's nature depends on stored information called genes passed on since ancient times. Trees cannot alter their nature. So they do not compete in places that do not suit their nature. That is the principle underlying their strategy. If there is no place that matches their nature, they wait until they can find such a place. Humans often embellish their nature by naming strong points and shortcomings, but that is meaningless to trees. Trees only obey their nature and use it to live. That enables the healthiest and longest life.

**Attributes of *akame-gashiwa*:** Exceptional germinating power and vigor in light-filled places, but extremely intolerant of shade.

Trees face many restrictions and barriers in life. No almighty tree exists who can conquer all kinds of sunlight, soil, dryness, wind, salt, and rain. To overcome obstacles, they devotedly hone their strong points, without changing their weak points. When their merits and demerits no longer balance out, they wither and die.

**★Detest self-assertion and betrayal: Why do trees adhere to long life-spans in the form of trees?**

Trees outclass other organisms in longevity. Trees have long survived in their form not only to fulfill their role as the structural organization of genes. Trees embody life force energy (in Japanese, "tree" and "life force energy" are both pronounced "ki"). They are committed to long life in their form to stay true to their nature. The generational change of life forms is self-alteration to defend against dangers from change in the external environment. Humans call that "evolution," but evolution requires tremendous energy. Trees do not move and prefer not to alter themselves through frequent generational change. They save energy that would be used for evolution, and instead use it for long life. By doing so, they have the ability to remain unfazed by changes in the external environment. Trees embody life force energy. They have faith in the weapon that is their nature, which they hone to live forever through genes. Trees defy the ordinary wisdom of evolution. Trees do not insist on long life only to serve as the structure of vast numbers of genes. They live long because they are devoted to passing on genes without betraying their nature.

**★Job: Devotion to unity of self and other**

Today is a fleeting moment that differs from yesterday and tomorrow. Trees accept all without fleeing or making a fuss. They do not try to redo what has happened in the moment and they do not make excuses or repent. Although subject each moment to the influences of sun, rain, wind, heat, cold, enemies, and allies, trees survive by withstanding change and turning it into an advantage. Lacking a means of locomotion, trees must bear the full brunt of impacts from the external environment and other life forms. They absorb the energy of those impacts and then use it as they wish. They do not resist. They do not fight against enemies. If cabbage worms want to eat trees' leaves, they are allowed to. Trees feed them, fatten them up, and then invite the birds over. The trees reward the birds with delicious berries for eating the cabbage worms. Birds eat the berries and then spread the trees' seeds in their droppings. Trees are not fazed by enemies and do not use energy against them. The job of trees is to survive through devotion to unity between self and other. In that way, they get the last laugh.

## ★Destiny and rebirth: Circle of life

The forest world is characterized by cycles. Trees, of course, play the leading role. Pioneer plants are the first to take to the stage. In the long history of nature, there has always come a time when a forest loses its form due to forest fires, floods, or typhoons, as well as logging and burning by humans. However, that does not signify death. When a forest returns to zero, it is reset. Zero is the start of potentiality. Glorious new trees appear on the now well-lit land. These are the pioneer plants. Full of frontier spirit, they bathe in bright sunlight and use their strong photosynthetic ability to rapidly grow. Then they produce and spread large amounts of their genes. They are all deciduous. Because trees rely on photosynthesis, they must secure space to overcome competitors and



survive. There is also, however, the option of using less energy to withstand less sunlight. Evergreens excel at that, so they can grow even in some degree of shade. Deciduous trees grow fast with bright sunlight, but without it their vitality wanes.

Eventually, the evergreens arrive later and overwhelm the deciduous trees. In that way, only the trees meant to survive remain. Evergreens such as *shii*, *kashi*,

and *tabu* survive as the dominant species. This is called a climax forest. The process of change is called succession. As the saying goes, however, "Even the mighty shall fall." Over many months and years, the climax form too disappears. Although the forest loses its shape, it does not die. The day will come when the pioneers again see the light of day. Seeds from the last generation of pioneers can lie in wait underground for hundreds of years until the time to awaken comes.

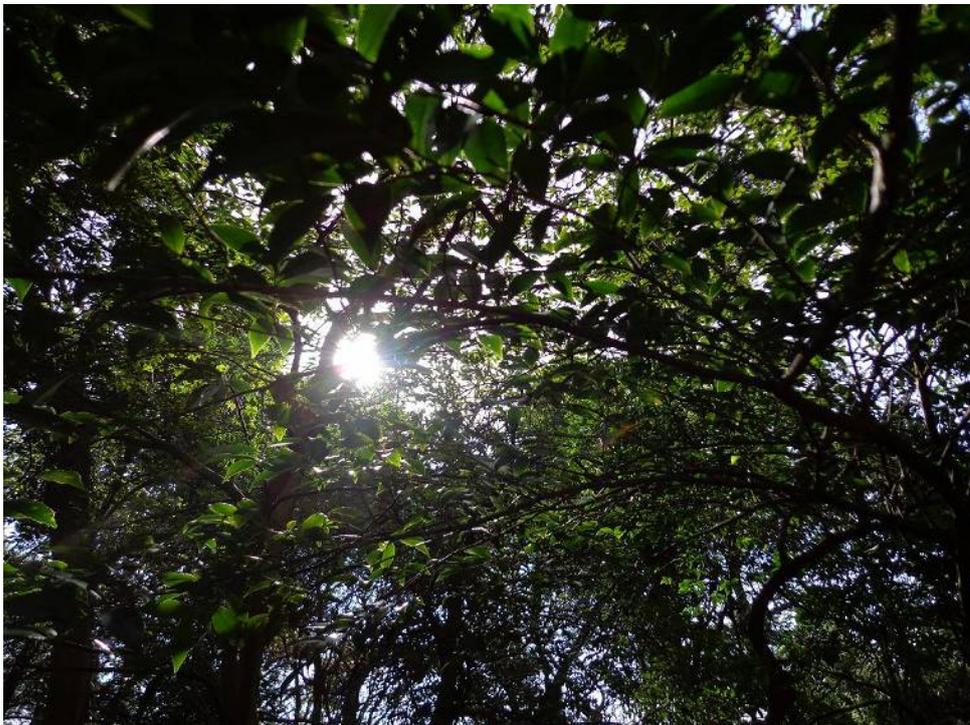
When the chance arrives, genes in the form of pioneer plant seeds swiftly rise to the surface and speedily grow. The wisdom of returning to zero through succession, and not evolution, grants immortality to trees.

### ★The law of trees: Wait for rebirth

Trees do not easily give up territory once they secure it. Because they live by photosynthesis, acquiring territory is their lifeline. Tree seeds patiently wait for a place to become vacant. That is the law of survival in the forest: you must wait an enormously long time for your chance to be reborn. Trees who grow up after withstanding the hardships of the seed phase do not easily give up their territory.

Trees have two superb strategies for succeeding the last generation. The first is growing from seedling into adult tree through seed dispersal. The second is cloning ability. Many trees do not die after being struck by lightning or cut by humans. That is to say, trees can assume the identity of a mother (trunk) who can raise children (shoots). This cyclic regeneration ability is known as coppicing. Only trees have been given this special ability to clone as an art of generational change. This enables trees to continue spreading many genes for a long time in one place. All things possessing form, however, will someday decay.

When a tree can no longer rejuvenate through shoots, it becomes a giant tree. Its final enemy is itself. The day will come when it collapses from its own weight, the wind, or enemies invading its aged body. An ending, however, is a beginning. That is rebirth. Only those who can endure the wait until rebirth can secure territory.



## Chapter 2: Strategy of following your nature

Who is the central player in the forest? It is the trees, of course. **Trees serve a core role as the pump that drives the generational cycle in the forest community.** Trees grow by absorbing sunlight and soaking up rain water from the soil, and then share the resulting product with various other life forms. At the same time, birds, insects, and other animals help trees to leave offspring. In this way the **circle of life** continues. Without trees, there would be no circle. While remaining stationary, trees use diverse strategies to attract forest denizens and direct their roles. Without lifting a foot, trees cause the movement of forest life and sometimes even humans. Next let's take a look at the superb life strategies and mysterious abilities possessed only by trees whose nature is their weapon.

### ★Trees are not stationary objects: Tree intentions



Trees are not mere objects. They are living things with intention. *Harigiri* is a deciduous tree that grows in relatively well-lit evergreen broadleaf forests and *sugi* forests. It has a frontier spirit similar to that of pioneer plants. *Harigiri* is not only delicious, but also produces such good timber that its Japanese name includes a reference to royalty.

Its shoots can be eaten as *tempura*. Its large and sharp thorns are a defense against deer who try to eat its leaves. Trees do not produce thorns without reason. They possess intention to defend against enemies. When they grow tall enough that their leaves cannot be eaten by enemies, they stop making thorns. The reason is that making thorns requires extra energy. *Harigiri* escapes deer attacks by sending out thorns and growing fast. Since this is too much effort for a tree, *harigiri* is short-lived compared to other trees. Isn't there another way to ward off attacks? Trees would not ask such a question. They faithfully follow their nature to pass on genes and prosper as a species. A tree's life is not its form. All things with a form will lose that form. Even if form is lost, however, the flow of stored information called genes does not end. The endless flow of genes is life. Trees are skilled in that life strategy.

### ★The resource strategy of *aoki*

*Aoki* is abundant everywhere. It can grow on mountains, in parks and gardens, and anywhere else. Although it looks like an ordinary short evergreen tree, its lifestyle is not ordinary. *Aoki* has a distinct strategic option. Deer love to eat its leaves. The deciduous trees whose leaves deer like to eat - *tara-no-ki*, *karasu-zanshou*, and *harigiri* - all have thorns. They use nutrients to make thorns as a defense against deer. *Harigiri* and *karasu-zanshou* grow tall to escape deer and stop making thorns once they grow enough, but even that is too much work, causing them to have short lives for trees. *Aoki*, however, does not become so riled up that it produces thorns, and stays at a short height. It chooses neither the path of height nor thorns. It instead gives energy to propagating its community. Short trees might have a short lifespan, but tree life does not depend on preserving each individual tree. The basis of tree life is reproducing as a community through the uninterrupted flow of stored information called genes.

To distribute energy resources, *aoki* relies on its ability to reproduce community. That is its nature and strategy. Cloning ability using shoots underpins its reproductive ability. Many trees send out extra branches called tillers as insurance when their trunks are felled or damaged. In the case of *aoki*, its own weight and snowbreaks make it easy for branches to touch the ground. It has the ability to increase clones of itself by lowering roots from those branches. This unique germination is the secret to how *aoki* can reproduce without losing to deer. The important thing is the strategy for how to choose a way of distributing energy from limited nutrients. The more common and ordinary a tree is thought to be, the more its species has a distinguished strategy.

### ★Stay put and use others' efforts

To continue to survive and pass on genes, the immobile trees use the efforts of others, such as wind, bacteria, insects, birds, animals, and humans. "The enemy of my enemy is my friend" also applies to trees. In other words, trees need to partner with other animate and inanimate beings. And all life forms in the forest depend on trees. That is how the forest is designed. Surprisingly, trees change their numbers of partners by adjusting amounts of seeds and limiting pollination.

To benefit their species' survival, nut-bearing trees can manipulate forest organisms by adjusting seed number. Japanese raccoon dogs, field rats, squirrels, and other animals help spread acorns but also eat them. The balance between predation and distribution is important. The speechless trees can coordinate with nearby trees and decide to stop producing acorns. This is called acorn synchronization. Trees do not

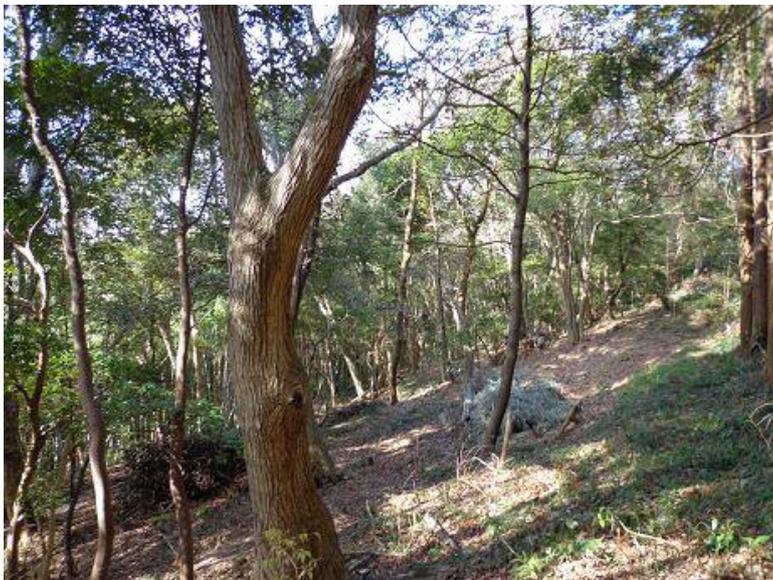


try to use their own strength, but instead read the situation to defeat enemies or make allies. Forest life is influenced enormously by the intentions of trees. When forest life becomes complacent and goes too far, it comes to know that "what goes around comes around."

★**Kunugi and konara: Strategy of desperation**

**There is a principle of rebirth in the world of trees.** Evergreens replace deciduous in a transition called **succession**. For instance, *karasu-zanshou* is a shade-intolerant deciduous tree. When its role as pioneer who starts the forest is finished, it must give up its place to shade-tolerant evergreens such as *kashi* and *shii* who have acorns as "products" and exceptional "business" sense. **Kunugi and konara are deciduous trees who overcome the fate of rebirth known as the succession from deciduous to evergreen.**

*Kunugi* and *konara* are both deciduous. The leaves and small branches of both have been used as fertilizer. Their trunks hold a lot of heat energy and make excellent firewood. Together with *kashi* and *shii*, they have hard wood that is suitable for firewood and charcoal, and are known as hardwoods. Because their leaves and small branches have been used as fertilizer, they are representative species who support Japanese agricultural life. To remain the dominant species among other hardwoods in *satoyama* (mixed forests and landscapes used by agricultural communities), it is necessary to draw attention to one's merits other than value for human use. No matter how much utility value a tree has, if it is a hard-to-please tree who expires in one generation, then it cannot become the dominant species in *satoyama*. To continue to be loved by humans, a tree must have the ability to leave heirs.



*Kunugi* and *konara* have a special ability to rejuvenate and regenerate. Even if the parent is cut, offspring quickly replace the parent and renew life. This ability to renew germination is called cloning. *Kunugi* and *konara* have excellent ability to renew germination. Humans have focused on that ability by using it for sustainable energy as firewood and charcoal. If cut at an age when they have reached suitable size for firewood and charcoal, *kunugi* and *konara* can

continue to renew germination. By being cut by humans, they establish an impregnable position in *satoyama*. Compared to fellow evergreen and rival *shii*, they produce less popular acorns and have inferior management strength such as energy cost. Their prosperity comes from a desperate marketing strategy of narrowing their target to humans and merchandising not only leaves and branches, but also trunks.

In this way they overcome the fate of other deciduous trees and cover the sky, preventing *shii* and other broad-leaved evergreens, who spread out luxuriously, from monopolizing the area. **In many forests, *kunugi* and *konara* hold in check succession by evergreens into a climax forest. This state of arrested succession is called *satoyama*. *Kunugi* and *konara* maintain the prosperity of *satoyama*.** They use humans to stop a federation of evergreen "businesses" from taking over the forest.

As a result, *satoyama* can maintain proper light owing to proper size of deciduous trees, which affords many trees and plants opportunities to germinate and thrive. Many customers come to visit, such as children, birds, insects, butterflies, and other animals. This is called **biodiversity**. Thanks to this type of cooperation between trees and humans, many mountains in Japan can maintain unique ecosystems. The wisdom of *kunugi* and *konara* to rejuvenate using germination ability has enabled the unique forest culture of Japan in the form of *satoyama*.

**\*Note: *Kunugi, konara, and satoyama***

In the *satoyama* community, trees maintain both their **self-reliance** and **harmonious coexistence** with different species. They display an ongoing **cycle of regeneration**. The cheerfulness and **energy** of trees provide an "**economic**" **strength** that enables other organisms to live as participants in the "market." What can that be called if not a **sustainable community of life forms**? This is the **core of *satoyama* culture**.

By making humans the "chairman" of the "shopping district," *kunugi* and *konara* maintain youthful, attractive, and bustling "shopping streets," and build a flourishing community. *Kunugi* and *konara* continuously serve the main role and are popular with everyone.

★Philosophy of self-reliance and respect: *Shii*, champion of the climax forest



*Shii* is the supreme ruler of the climax forest. It creates a pure forest of only *shii*. Each tree supports itself, grows wide and tall, and helps form a pure forest. Looking toward the sky, you can see how their branches masterfully fit together like a jigsaw puzzle to seize all territory in the forest canopy. The leaves of separate trees do not overlap. Their strategy is to develop as a species in which individuals are self-reliant, by working as a team to eliminate

inefficiency through control of access to sunlight. One reason that *shii* was propelled to supreme ruler of the climax forest is its philosophy of mutual respect exemplified by not overlapping branches.

★Trees live in a three-dimensional world



Because humans can only live in two dimensions, they fight over territory. Trees, however, live in three dimensions, so they can accept much more diversity than humans can. *Shii* and *kashi* claim territory in the upper realm. Underneath, *hisakaki* and *kakuremino* reside in the middle realm. Below them, *aoki* stays in the lower realm. In the lowest realm are the *shida* and herbaceous species. *Hisakaki* of the middle realm does not

try to fight with *shii* and *kashi* of the upper realm, and vice versa. This is the wisdom of the trees, who live in three dimensions.

Humans cannot match trees' wisdom or tactics in terms of survival strategy. Humans, who can only live in two dimensions, take every opportunity to fight each other.

★*Sakaki*: Survival strategy of not budging an inch

Trees' orders in the competition to survive are to secure territory for photosynthesis. One way of life is to seize an area by growing big faster than others as a pioneer. However, that is not the only way to survive. Trees can exhibit other strategic wisdom. Even if they cannot grow quickly with copious sunlight, they can reduce energy used for

respiration to live in a degree of shade. They build operational efficiency, grow tall, and drive out the pioneers. Such trees conquer the area and become the leading "business."

An even bolder strategy exists: giving up on size from the start, and instead cutting energy cost to a minimum. *Sakaki's* goal is not the upper realm, but the gap comprising the middle. Moreover, it does not surrender an inch of that middle area. If the middle is taken, it will no longer have a chance to germinate and grow. It hides in the shadow of the upper realm and avoids competition. There are no bounds to how it can live below using strength and resolution. This enables the rulers of the upper realm to enjoy stable prosperity. *Sakaki* survives in stable forest stages with an obscene amount of personality as a behind-the-scenes player. While humans are called sycophants or "ass in a lion's skin" in such a case, *sakaki's* strategic nature and way of life has nothing to do with human preferences.

### ★The fourth dimension underground strategy of *akame-gashiwa*

When the forest is brightly lit up and reset by a forest fire, *akame-gashiwa*, a fast-growing deciduous, bursts forth with intense frontier spirit. It is the flag-bearer of the pioneer plants. In due course, the forest becomes crowded with its leaves and various other tree species, causing less sunlight to penetrate. It is then that the evergreens, who wait with bated breath, watching every "cent," display superior shade tolerance and make their influence felt. When deciduous *akame-gashiwa* is surrounded by evergreens, it quietly yields territory and before long is driven from the forest. This transition from deciduous to evergreen is called succession. In the long history of the natural world, there have come times when the evergreen forests too have lost their form due to forest fires, floods, typhoons, and cutting and burning by humans. In the once again newly



brightened forest, *akame-gashiwa* will drive creation of a new forest with its hearty frontier spirit. It is the descendant of past pioneers who buried their seeds. The seeds of ancestors are set to spring forth when the forest is bright again. The forest eternally repeats a cycle of rebirth by way of seeds who can sleep for hundreds of years. Here is the wisdom of trees not to grow, but to reclaim youth.

### ★*Sanshou*: The path of shade tolerance

*Sanshou* is deciduous. Many deciduous trees are shade-intolerant, preferring well-lit areas because they require a high level of photosynthesis. Evergreens, who reduce their need for light by lowering energy cost of respiration, are called shade-tolerant trees.

There are no shade-intolerant evergreens, but some short and bushy deciduous trees such as *sanshou* are shade-tolerant.

Shade-tolerant deciduous trees in poorly lit areas only use their leaves for half the year, so they must balance photosynthesis and energy expenditure by minimizing energy cost. To achieve this, their only choice is to become smaller. However, getting by as a smaller tree means that their greatest strength is not having to compete with big trees. That enables their margin for survival. *Sanshou's* seeds are small but spicy and should not be underestimated.

★**Karasu-zanshou: Give up leaves so fruit is taken - using enemies as assets**

*Karasu-zanshou* is popular with Red Helen - a swallowtail butterfly, and birds. Swallowtail butterflies lay eggs on their leaves. Birds like their fruit. Caterpillars eat their leaves, and then become food for birds. The caterpillars serve as the trees' tool to attract birds. If this was not the case, then caterpillars would eat all the leaves. Instead, they fall into *karasu-zanshou's* trap. "The enemy of my enemy is my friend" - this is the forest world. *Karasu-zanshou* rewards birds with tasty fruit. Then the birds spread the fruit seeds in their droppings. If swallowtail caterpillars and green caterpillars become butterflies and survive, they contribute to the prosperity of tree offspring by pollinating, proving that the trees' strategy is sound. However, even with good "products," to establish influence and survive over the long term as a dominant family "business" in the forest, managerial skill is necessary in addition to "product" appeal.

*Karasu-zanshou* flourishes by providing many good "products," but they have short lives compared to other trees. They grow quickly, but need a continuous supply of energy in the form of copious light. Before you know it, they are surrounded by evergreens and start to decline due to unbalance between respiration and energy expenditure. **What is *karasu-zanshou's* strategy for developing "business" as a dominant species? It is to make appealing "products," keep energy costs down as much as possible, and grow without overexertion - in other words, balanced management.**

★**Shii and keyaki: Who has the dominant business? Risk and cost management**



Trees use the help of many birds, animals, and other living things to leave descendants. It is a matter of inviting "customers." Trees compete with each other's "shops" by drawing attention to their unique charms. To attract many "customers," they must prepare appealing "products" such as

delicious fruit, beautiful colors, nectar, and fragrances. Trees who can attract a variety of "customers" often become dominant species in the forest.

Humans prize *keyaki* as a high-quality tree, but what is their status in the natural world? *Keyaki* can **grow quickly, grow big, and live long** - a three-part package of one good thing after another. However, human values do not necessarily carry weight in the natural world. **In the natural world, large size is a risky choice.**



Maintaining large size requires absorbing a lot of water, so conditions must be right. In the natural world, there are not many places with enough water to support a big *keyaki*. Seeds are entrusted to the wind, and since the mother is big, seeds distributed close to her cannot receive enough light to grow. Even though *keyaki* can grow quickly and has DNA to live long, its energy efficiency is poor, it must

be too picky about location, and it only has unappealing "products" in the form of seeds that must be spread by the wind. Even when it grows into a big magnificent tree, it has a disadvantage in leaving descendants, and faces extreme difficulty in prospering as a species.

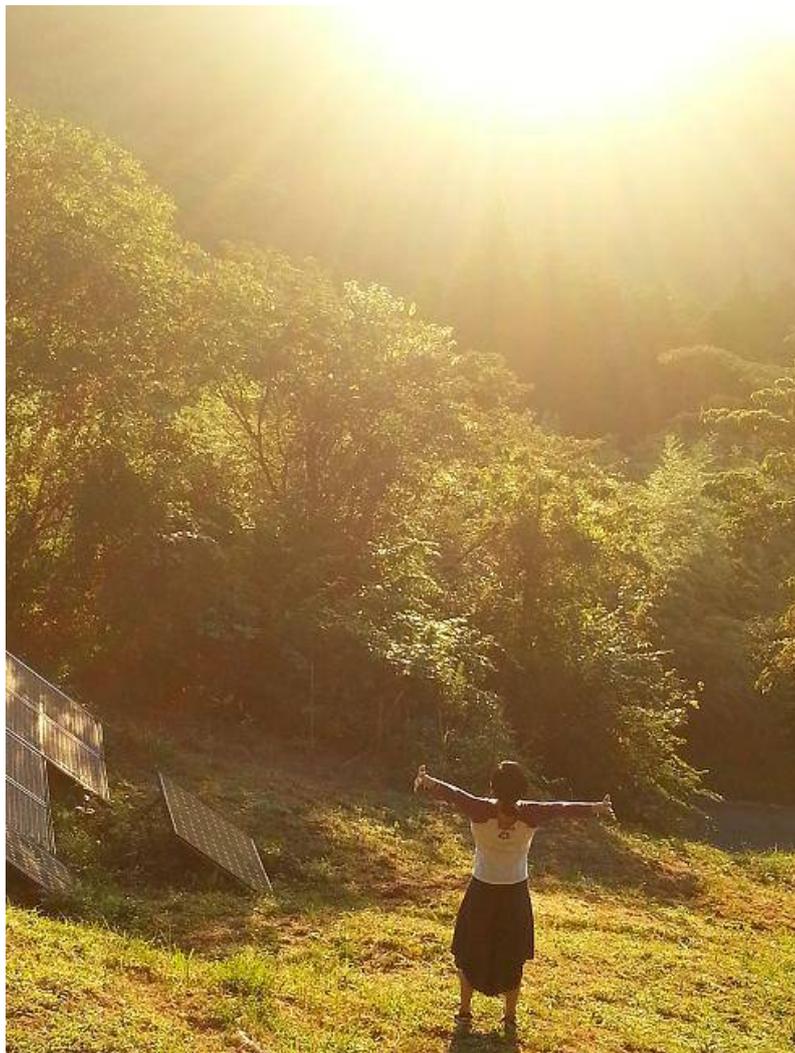


On the Boso peninsula of Japan (where the author resides), *shii* has the dominant "business." It is energy efficient, with a high capacity to take in light even in fairly shaded places. In addition, it can attract "customers" with its appealing nut "products." Acorns are universally popular with birds, *tanuki* (raccoon dogs), and field mice. Its offspring are spread in bird droppings. Small animals eat its acorns, but they also leave some, providing a chance to germinate. *Shii* has distinguished "business" sense. It becomes the dominant "business," and flourishes as a pure forest. Even though it is a disadvantage in the natural world, *keyaki* is born with a certain nature and is not allowed to live like *shii* do. *Keyaki*

has its own nature. And it has a partner who recognizes its value. Humans love *keyaki* as a high-quality tree for its hard trunks and beautiful grain. *Keyaki* has prospered as an asset in groves surrounding residences. Their beautiful broom shape can also be found in city parks and streets.

★A message from *shii*, supreme ruler of the climax forest: Trees embody life force energy.

All living things have the ability to imitate trees' natures or the qualities of forests, which are made possible when trees gather together. Some tree natures include strength, gentleness, and fast growth. The nature of shade-intolerant pioneers, who



love well-lit areas, does not match that of shade-tolerant trees, who can live in a climax forest.

The powerful forest deity who can pacify the spirits of wild nature is hard-to-please. In bad forests, which lack life force energy, you feel blocked, depressed, and overwhelmed. If a big change occurs in the forest, such as a large tree or group of trees falling, the mood shifts. Forests at shrines and other good forests are full of life force energy. That is to say, life force energy is the nature of trees. Trees choose to hone their nature, known as attributes, rather than evolve to match the external environment.

To the point of obstinance, trees boast strong life force energy precisely because they live based on

faith in their nature. Trees embody life force energy.

## Afterword (questions)

Trees are alive. They are not ornaments. Like people, they are manifestations of life. Because they are alive, they emit life force energy. They are clusters of strong life force energy who have lived for hundreds or thousands of years. That is why walking in the woods feels good, and why sometimes dense forests feel ominous. By learning about the world of trees, and applying knowledge about their ways of life to our own lives, we can sense the natural way of life known as "following your nature."

You can see your own nature by looking through the lens of trees' lifeways. By thinking about yourself, your family, friends, company, and society in terms of tree examples, you might experience a change of mind. When you learn about trees' ways of life, don't you notice a simple lifestyle based on one's nature that differs somewhat from modern common sense?

Japan, where 50% to 70% of land is forested, has a culture based on using trees and mindfulness. In Japanese, "tree usage" and "mindfulness" are both pronounced *ki-zukai*. Japan's history has been formed alongside the world of trees. In Japan, the nature surrounding humans is the activity of the community of life where trees stand at the top of the ecosystem, and there is no conceptual barrier between humans and nature. Before the Meiji period (1868-1912), there was no Japanese language equivalent to the English word "Nature."

Let's briefly change the subject from trees to "weeds." "Weeds" are part of the *satoyama* landscape. Emperor Hirohito of the Showa period (1926-1989) said, "There is no plant named weed." Actually, like "Nature," there was no Japanese word for "weed" before the Meiji period (1868-1912). In English, "weeds" were clumped together as plants considered undesirable in particular situations. However, that is only the Western view of plants. Many of the "weeds" that Westerners labeled as inedible were in fact eaten. *Nekojarashi* is the ancestor of chestnuts and was eaten during famine. Many "weeds" are the wild ancestors of grains such as rice and barley. It follows that they are edible. Moreover, without them, there would be no rice, rice cakes, or rice crackers, which shows that there is nothing unnecessary in the natural world. "Weeds" teach us how to see the normally invisible flow of genes. "Weeds" often had roles other than food, unnoticed by Westerners. Many were used in herbal medicine and dyes. *Karamushi* is used to make Ramie fiber for high quality textiles.

Japanese culture does not claim "Nature" has no use to humans and bring it into submission by force, but rather allies with "Nature" and draws strength from it. One of Japan's strongpoints is not creating discriminatory words such as "Nature" and "weeds."

Such ability to see the normally invisible is important for survival. Actually, that ability lies dormant inside Japanese people now.

That is why modern humans feel nostalgia for *satoyama* and sense resonance deep within their DNA when they go to *satoyama*. Although Japanese ancestors did not separate themselves from nature, they were in awe of places deep in the mountains where giant trees grew, and treated them as sacred areas. They treated giant trees as the markers between the divine territory of shrines and human territory. No organism's life strategy can match that of trees. No organisms except trees have such strong life force energy to live for hundreds or thousands of years, pass on numerous genes, and rejuvenate and regenerate themselves by cloning. Japanese ancestors understood the power of trees, and used it skillfully. Trees and forests have without a doubt provided immeasurable influence on Japanese people's societal structure, psyche, and rhythms of health. On that basis, this book is rich with topics for the reader to inquire about.

First, the cycle of genes, mentioned in the opening sentence, is written to mean precisely how the earth follows its own nature. I will not, however, dare to write about the grave problems we are facing as part of the earth community.

Second, how do trees' ways of life compare to our modern values? When were our modern values, ideas about life, and views of things formed? Tenshin Okakura (Japanese scholar and author of *The Book of Tea*, 1862-1913) was a great man of the Meiji period (1868-1912) who was deeply concerned about that. I hope this book serves to spark consideration of that theme.

Third, compared to the trees with their brilliant life philosophies and strategies, how do humans possess a successful nature for life? Coexistence within the natural community is fated to result from selection and cause/effect following intense competition. Surviving by overcoming various competitions and hardships within that context is very important in its own way. This book can also surely be of help from that perspective. No matter how much you say simple is better, however, doesn't living only according to the fate of competition and cause/effect seem too brutal and simplistic for humans?

I would like to finish this book by asking: What is the unique way of life entrusted only to humans?

Thank you for reading *The Great Succession*.

May a wealth of life force energy flow to you.

Shogun of Mount Ganko

\*"ganko" also means stubborn in Japanese

## Japanese pronunciation guide:

a = "ah"    i = "ee"    u = "oo"    e = "eh"    o = "oh"

## List of species:

<u>Japanese name</u>	<u>Species name</u>	<u>English/common name</u>
<i>aoki</i>	<i>Aucuba japonica</i>	
<i>akame-gashiwa</i>	<i>Mallotus japonicus</i>	Japanese mallotus
<i>harigiri</i>	<i>Kalopanax septemlobus</i>	
<i>hasakaki</i>	<i>Eurya japonica</i>	
<i>kakuremino</i>	<i>Dendropanax trifidus</i>	
<i>karamushi</i>	<i>Bohmeria nivea</i>	Ramie
<i>karasu-zanshou</i>	<i>Zanthoxylum ailanthoides</i>	
<i>kashi</i>	Genus <i>Quercus</i>	oaks (evergreen)
<i>keyaki</i>	<i>Zelkova serrata</i>	Japanese elm
<i>konara</i>	<i>Quercus serrata</i>	sawtooth oak
<i>kunugi</i>	<i>Quercus acutissima</i>	
<i>nekojarashi</i>	<i>Setaria viridis</i>	green foxtail, green bristlegrass
<i>sakaki</i>	<i>Cleyera japonica</i>	
<i>sanshou</i>	<i>Zanthoxylum piperitum</i>	Japanese pepper
<i>shii</i>	<i>Castanopsis</i>	chinkapin
<i>shida</i>	Pteridophytes	ferns, horsetails, clubmosses, spikemosses, and quillworts
<i>sugi</i>	<i>Cryptomeria japonica</i>	Japanese cedar
<i>tabu-no-ki</i>	<i>Machilus thunbergii</i>	Castor aralia, prickly castor oil tree
<i>tara-no-ki</i>	<i>Aralia elata</i>	Japanese angelica-tree