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## Research core of biological–production ecosystems in the fields of forests, grasslands and volcanic ash soils.

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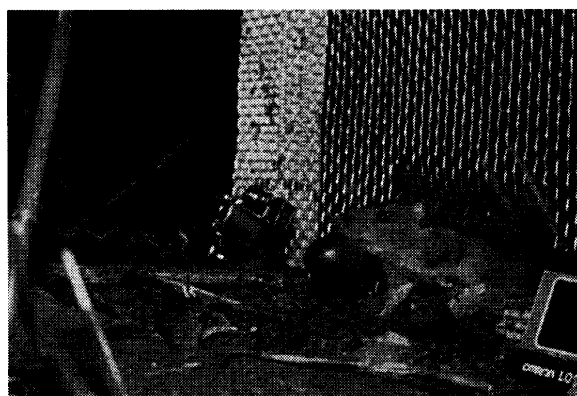
### Introduction

There are many volcanoes in Japan, especially in Hokkaido, Tohoku, Kanto, Chuubu and Kyuushuu districts. Volcanic ash soils showing distinctive properties are widely distributed around and eastern side of the volcanoes. The volcanic ash soils cover 16% of Japanese lands. Natural and agricultural ecosystems with high biological activities and productivities are formed on these volcanic ash soils. These soils and ecosystems serve as a water reservoir due to their highly porous properties and gradually provide abundant water and inorganic nutrients such as silicon and basic cations to the downstream ecosystems. Comprehensive research and education works are carrying on regarding the biological–production and ecosystems in the area of forests, grasslands and volcanic ash soils.

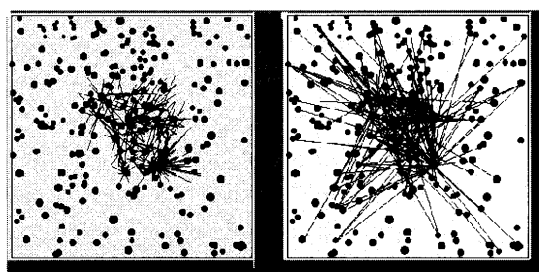
### Forest ecology

A variety of seed–size and phenology among and within species contribute to maintain succession and diversity of species in the deciduous broad–leaved forests in the temperate regions (Seiwa, 1998; 1999a,b; 2000; Kanno et al., 2001; Saitoh et al., 2002; Nagamatsu et al., 2002; Tomita et al., 2002). Figure 1 shows acorn dispersal by *Apodemus argentius*. Although many acorns germinate near their parent trees, most of them die due to species–specific diseases. Seedlings established far from their parent trees can grow, leading to species diversity in the forest (Seiwa et al., 2002a; 2002b). It was also found out that the riverside tree species, *Salix sachalinensis* and *Juglans ilanthifolia*, have a special reproduction strategy (Ueno and Seiwa, 2003; Kimura et al., 2004). Further, using DNA sequencing, AFLP and SSR analysis, ecological studies on the molecular basis are in progress covering phylogenetic relationships among species of forest plants, and

gene flow and clonal structures at the community level (Suyama et al., 2000a, b; Obayashi et al., 2002; Iwamoto et al., 2002; Tsumura et al., 2000). Figure 2 shows an example of the parent and children relationship found using the DNA analysis. The white dots show the position of mature trees in the natural beech forest in the square of 150m by 150m. The seedlings locate within 20 m from their parents whereas pollens come from farther places.



**Figure 1.** Acorn dispersal by *Apodemus argentius*. Many acorns germinate near their parent trees, but most of them die due to species–specific diseases. Seedlings established far from their parent trees can grow, leading to species–diversity in the forest.



**Figure 2.** Seed and pollen dispersal patterns revealed by DNA analysis. Positions of mature trees in the natural beech forest of 150mx150m(●), and their seed and pollen dispersal patterns. DNA analysis was done using 253 mature trees and 1258 seedlings.

### ***Genesis, properties and classification of volcanic ash soils***

Major parent material of the volcanic ash soils are tephtras (Figure 3), including some other aolian additives to various extents. Tephtras are provided to the ecosystems by huge eruption of volcanoes with different dormant periods or intermittent small-scale eruptions of active volcanoes. Strong westerly and river water play an important role to disperse tephtras in the wide areas. Rock types of volcanic ash, which affect the properties and productivities of volcanic ash soils, are defined with SiO<sub>2</sub> content of the fresh ash (Shoji et al., 1975a; Kobayashi et al., 1976). Rock type of the matured volcanic ash soils can also be estimated using V/Zn content of ferromagnetic minerals that are resistant to weathering (Shoji et al., 1975b). A major component of fresh volcanic ash is volcanic glass and it rapidly weathers under humid climate and good drainage releasing large amount of Si, Ca, Na and so on. Aluminum is residually concentrated as allophane, imogolite, Al-humus complex and halloysite, and iron, ferrihydrite and other iron minerals in the volcanic ash soils. Most of these are poorly crystalline and they give distinctive chemical (high humus accumulation, variable charge, high P sorption, and so on) and physical (low bulk density, high water retention and high water permeability, high aggregate stability, high liquid and plastic limits, irreversible changes with drying, and so on) properties to the volcanic ash soils.

High P sorption is one of the chemical indices characterizing high active Al and Fe content in the volcanic ash soils. The P sorption reaction shows various intermediate properties between adsorption and precipitation depending on the forms of the active Al and Fe. A similarity of P sorption by noncrystalline Al hydroxide to precipitation is obtained from solid-state nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectrometry (Bleam, 1991; Rothwell et al., 1980; Tropp et al., 1983; Williams, 1981; Lookman et al., 1994). Sidebands enhancement with cross-polarization supports a phosphate has P-O-H group (Figure 4a, b). No sideband enhancement (Figure 4f) suggests that the P sorption product is a material close to noncrystalline Al phosphate (Figure 4d). However, the sorption product is not exactly the same with noncrystalline Al phosphate because there is a very small difference between the chemical shift values in Figure 4c and e.

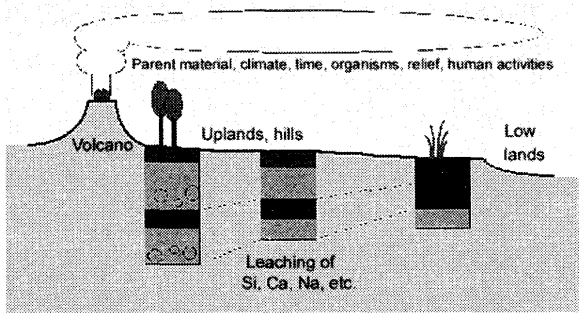
Opaline silica, or a pedogenic opal, was found out as one of the newly formed minerals in young volcanic ash soils (Shoji and Masui, 1971; Shoji and Saigusa, 1978). This mineral is formed from Si released from volcanic ash when solutes in the soil solution are concentrated with drying or freezing.

During the volcanic ash soil formation, some alkaline and alkline-earth elements are eluviated and many heavy metals are concentrated in the soils due to highly sorptive nature of the poorly crystalline components (Masui et al., 1972; Yamasaki et al., 2001; Nanzyo et al., 2002a). Consequently, content of many trace elements in the volcanic ash soils is not lower than those in other soils.

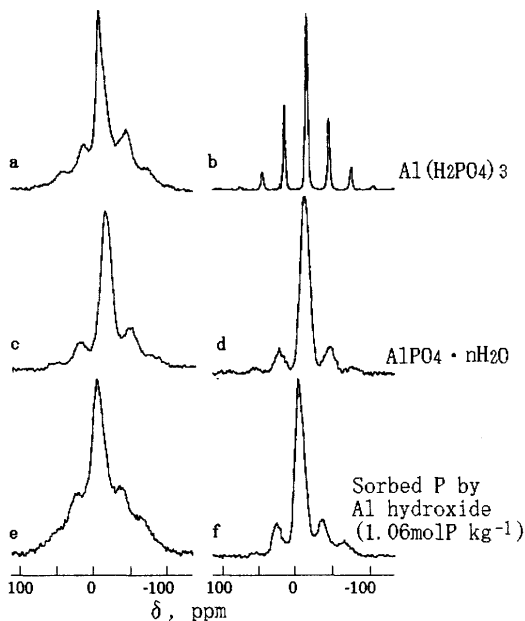
Properties of the volcanic ash soils are dependent on climatic conditions. Under temperate-humid conditions, Andosols in the WRB soil classification system or Andisols in the USDA soil taxonomy is dominantly formed whereas Podzols or Spodosols are formed under cold-humid climatic conditions (Ugolini et al., 1988; Shoji et al., 1988a, b; Takahashi et al., 1989). In the eluvial horizons under podzolization, concentration of Al complexed with soluble humus is high. This feature is reflected in the Al-humus complex accumulated in the illuvial horizon and the Al-humus accumulated under podzolization is highly extractable than those under Andosolization (Shoji and Ito, 1990; Ping et al., 1990; Ito et al., 1991; Shoji and Yamada, 1991). Properties of humus in volcanic ash soils are also affected by biological activities. Black and highly humified humus is accumulated under grass vegetation and dark brown humus with high content of fulvic acid is accumulated under forest vegetation (Takahashi and Shoji, 1988; Shoji et al., 1990a,b; Dahlgren et al., 1991). Human activities contributed to keep grass vegetation under humid climate.

Clay formation is also affected by climatic conditions and soil water movement in soil. Under semi-dry or water-saturated conditions, halloysite is formed rather than allophane and imogolite due to relatively high Si concentration in the soil solution. Some halloysites show high selectivity for K<sup>+</sup> and NH<sub>4</sub><sup>+</sup> compared with Ca<sup>2+</sup> (Saigusa et al., 1978; Takahashi et al., 1993; Takahashi et al., 2001a).

The volcanic ash soil at Kawatabi Field Center contains large amount of Al-humus complex and 2:1 to 2:1:1 intermediate minerals with scarce amount of allophane and imogolite and shows high acidity.



**Figure 3.** Schematic representation of soil formation processes from volcanic ash deposits.



**Figure 4.**  $^{31}\text{P}$  solid-state NMR spectra of P in the reference materials (a, b, c and d) and sorbed P by Al hydroxide (e and f). a,c,e : Without cross polarization (CP). b,d,f : CP with H, contact time=1ms. (Courtesy of K. Deguchi, 1986)

After recognition of nonallophanic volcanic ash soil (Shoji and Ono, 1978; Shoji et al., 1984) originated from the volcanic ash soil at the Kawatabi Field Center, the central concept of Andisols in USDA soil taxonomy was revised from amorphous clay minerals to active Al and Fe (Shoji and Fujiwara, 1984; Shoji et al., 1985; Shoji, 1985). The international type locality of the nonallophanic Andisol was set at the Mukaiyama area of the Kawatabi Field Center. Further, nonallophanic Andisol was newly incorporated in the soil classification system of Japanese cultivated soils in 1995. The nonallophanic Andisols occupy one-third of Japanese Andisols and loess from China is also contained in this soil

(Saigusa et al., 1992; Matsuyama et al., 1992; Saigusa et al., 1993a; Matsuyama and Saigusa, 1994a,b; Saigusa and Matsuyama, 1998; Matsuyama et al., 1999a, b). "Volcanic ash soils—genesis, properties and utilization" (Shoji et al., 1993) was published after establishing a database on the properties of volcanic ash soils in the northern part of circum-pacific volcanic zone (Nanzyo and Shoji, 1992; 1993; Shoji et al., 1996).

### **Biological production**

Volcanic ash soils had chemical problems such P deficiency, Al toxicity in the nonallophanic Andosols (Saigusa et al., 1980), rapid nitrogen-fertilizer loss with rain, slow mineralization of organic nitrogen, and so on. However, P deficiency was amended with heavy application of P fertilizers, the Al was detoxified with liming, amelioration of toxic Al in the subsurface horizon was studied using gypsum (Saigusa et al., 1991; Saigusa et al., 1995; Saigusa et al., 1994a,b; Saigusa and Toma, 1997; Saigusa et al., 1997; Toma and Saigusa, 1997a,b; Toma et al., 1999; Takahashi et al., 1999; 2000; Morikawa and Saigusa, 2000a,b; 2002; Takahashi et al., 2001b), and low efficiency of N fertilizer was improved using controlled availability fertilizers. The controlled availability fertilizers are also effective in reducing labor for fertilizer application because the fertilizer can be applied with crop seeds such as rice and dent corn (Saigusa et al., 1993b; Saigusa et al., 1994; Ito et al., 1988, 1997; Ito et al., 2000; Inoue et al., 2000a,b,c,d; Saigusa et al., 2001a,b; Inoue et al., 2001a,b; Taki et al., 2002), and the duration of N-release period can be synchronized with N absorption by crops (Gandaza et al., 1991; Shoji et al., 1991; Shoji and Kanno, 1994). Apatite is included in the fresh volcanic ash and it is utilized by some crops that can exudate chelating organic acids or a large amount of proton from their roots (Nanzyo et al., 1997a; Nanzyo and Yamasaki, 1998; Nanzyo et al., 1999; Nakamaru et al., 2000).

### **Future prospects**

Education and researches on chemical, physical and biological functions of volcanic ash soils in the areas of forests and grasslands will go on further to improve biological production in these areas. High quality, high yield, low cost, saving labors, fertilizers and energy, and environmental protection

in biological production are the goals of the future researches (Ombodi et al., 1988a, b; 2000a, b; Ombodi and Saigusa, 2000a, b, c, d; Saigusa, 1999; Kosuge et al., 2000; Kosuge et al., 2001a, b, c; Saigusa et al., 2001). Studies on the genetical structure and the gene flow in the forests established on volcanic ash soils lead to elucidation of mechanisms how genetical diversity is maintained in these ecosystems. The effect of different soil colloids on P availability and reactivity with acid deposition will be elucidated using different volcanic ash soils. Moderate Al release from nonallophanic Andosols is effective to control some soil-born plant diseases (Mizuno et al., 1998; Furuya et al., 1999). P foraging root growth of *Brassica* plants appears effective in improving P efficiency in the Andosols (Nanzyo et al., 1997b; Nanzyo et al., 2002b).

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