

Culture and Science of the Acorns XI - Acorns in Europe and America 4 -

Toshio Mitsunaga

Professor Emeritus of Kinki University

101-3, Kashiwabe-cho, Shimogamo, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto 606-0815, Japan

Summary

The trees providing acorn's in the family Fagaceae, the beech and oak, have been strongly bound up with European peoples lives from ancient times. Consequently, they have entered and played major roles in European religions, literature, myths and traditions. Further, the trunks have been widely used as sources of materials, from the central xylem, through the cambium and phloem (inner bark) to the outer bark. The xylem in both the beech and oak is strong and solid and therefore has been widely used for wood-working, building materials, furniture, vessels, toy and other things as lumber.

The outer bark of the beech has found application for engraving letters, taking advantage of its tough and elastic qualities as well as smooth surface as compared with other trees. These characteristics contributed to invention of type-printing. The acorn of the cork oak, a variety of European oak, is a valuable feed for pigs. Moreover, the cork layer of the tree is used as stoppers for wine bottles, building materials, parts of appliances and house-hold articles, its excellent physical and chemical properties leading to widespread employment throughout the world.