Whereabouts of Kokufu (Provincial Capitals) Observed in The Lexicons

KINOSHITA Ryō

For historical materials describing the locations of provincial capitals throughout the country recorded by the name of the district, we can name Wamyo Ruiju Selection (Wamyo Selection), a dictionary compiled around 935 A.D., three sets of Iroha Jirui Selection compiled in the latter half of 12th century as well as 10 sets of its supplementary edition made in Kamakura era, and Shukai Selection, also materialised in the same era. Shukai Selection, incidentally, is said to have been originated in 12th century. Apart from these, although not a dictionary, provincial capital has been annotated on the codices of 1127 A.D. and 1251 A.D. editions of the book of Engi Shiki.

Referring the locations of these provincial capitals to each province, a transfer of capitals had occurred in 15 out of 68 provinces throughout the country. By discussing the conditions of the transfer, we can specify to a certain extent the period when provincial capital had existed as described in various books.

Locations of provincial capitals annotated with names of the provinces on Wamyo Selection, indicate the situation at the first half of 10th century when the book was materialised, but those annotated with names of the district are considered to be the supplement describing the situation at the end of 10th century to the beginning of 11th century after the Wamyo Selection was compiled.

The provincial capital described in 3 sets of Iroha Jirui Selection can be considered to be showing the situation at the latter half of 11th century, but in the provinces where the existence of capitals in two districts are recorded, the possibility of division and separate setting up exist.

Ten sets of Iroha Jirui Selection are thought to be describing the state of affairs after the 12th century and perfectly coincide with the location of provincial capitals as much described as in the codex of Engi-shiki in the middle of 13th century.

Judging from the location of the capital of Sagami Province shown in the Shukai Selection can be taken as the original description of the situation before the middle of 12th century, but corrections are observed to have been made at the later date. This makes it impossible to define the nationwide period when provincial capitals existed.

While these whereabouts of provincial capitals as observed in the old lexicons are important historical materials to indicate the movement of provincial capitals from 10th to 13th century, it is impossible to acknowledge the location of capitals during the Ritsuryo (Statutory) period in the 8th and 9th centuries.