Enclosing the Villages and Towns

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Some villages and towns in “Sengoku Era” are all surrounded by moats or earthwork. How is this to be explained? Are these cases seen universally nationwide?

This immediately call to our mind the existence of the “Bushi’s Yakata (manor houses)”. Since the manor houses are dwellings of the bushi who are the heads of combattant groups, they have usually moats and earthworks surrounding the houses, which are to be considered as defense facilities.

Though these bushi’s manor houses have conventionally been the objects of a number of rather advanced studies, the most of them do only study on the houses from beginning to end. Unexpectedly there are few investigations on the relationship between the manor houses and the neighboring villages governed by bushi.

In this paper therefore we attempted to examine as many as cases where villages and towns are surrounded by moats and earthworks in order to grasp the relationship between bushi’s manor houses and neighboring villages and/or towns.

The Medieval era, we have divided it into the following four periods for convenience of our study:
Period A: Only manor houses and villages exist. In this stage the villages are yet dispersed (“sankyo-son”).
Period B: Vassals dwellings and villages begin to be formed around the manor houses. Agglomeration of villages appears (“shuson-ka”).
Period C: The dwelling areas of vassals and trading class begin to be recognized around the manor houses, whole of which are surrounded. On the other hand, a part of towns have their own enclosure.
Period D: The manor houses will develop into castles as strategic points (the first enclosure), around which the enclosure of vassals’ dwellings (the second enclosure) and that of trading class (the third en-
closure) form a town with clear demarcation in between. This is what we call the establishment of castles and "castle towns" ("jokamachi").

Most of towns and a part of villages will have their own enclosures at this stage.

Conventionally the development of our towns and cities have been subjects of separate and independent considerations, politically functioning towns/cities as strategic points for ruling and economically functioning towns/cities. On the other hand, however, it would almost be a truism that despite this division for reasons of convenience, these towns and cities around which there exist farm villages are for governing these latters and therefore they are no other than economically functioning towns and cities acting as a junction for economic activities between the farm villages.

In consideration of the above, this paper herewith presents a new schema of development, though simple and ingenuous, that the villages will develop into towns and cities.