Enclosure and Grid Pattern Land Division
in "Kokufu" or Provincial Center

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Since 1950 sites of "kokufu" or provincial center have been investigated and studied mainly by some historiogeographers. Based principally on the existing land divisions and actual place names, they supposed existence of such kokufu areas as having 5, 6, 8 and other "chos" (a measuring unit) of square, with 1-chō (about 119,303 yds) of gridiron pattern streets, on a hypothesis that the kokufu is a small capital-like city. This city has been presumed to have a "kokucho" area of the order of 2-chō square on the central axis of that kokufu area. The existence of the enclosure demarcating the kokufu area being not always clear, the conventional assumption of kokufu area was rather arbitrary.

Since the sites of kokucho unearthed and confirmed in ohmi province in 1963—1965 was situated just correctly on the central axis of the supposed kokufu area, this supposition as above was regarded as reasonable.

The results of the excavation of various kokufu sites performed thereafter were however in most cases different from the historiogeographical assumptions.

Archeologists, among others, have thus come to have some doubts about the very existence of the kokufu enclosure and gridiron type streets.

Also from the historical science viewpoint, it has been alleged to be doubtful to recognize, as city, such kokufu as not having peculiar borough regulations in any documentary records concerned.

According to the author, the function of kokufu as borough or city should not be ignored since such non-agrarian installations as schools, temples, markets and ateliers exist and that these facilities usually belong to the kokufu. It should however be noted that these facilities also exist outside the conventional kokufu area and that they exist in some relations with "Gunge" or county seats, "Gundan" or military stations and "Umaya" or postal stations. The author considers therefore that the larger site including these kokufu-related facilities should be called "kokufu (-related) area". According to this view is
only a lot of land in the kokufu area. In our literature therefore this narrower area will be called “fukaku” or square enclosure, wording which is seen as Dazaifu and Mutsu-Kokufu in documentary records.

The square enclosure corresponding to the fukaku have been discovered in earthen walls with roof or ditches in Suo, Ohmi, Kohzo and so forth. “Fukaku” or square enclosure with relatively clear marks have been found out in Sanuki, Higo, Tanba and Kai provinces, and similar enclosures might be discovered also in Satuma and Chikugo provinces and so forth. Since however there are many kokufu that have turned out to have no fukaku as result of excavation, existence and non-existence of fukaku depends on the provinces. If it can be reasonably supposed that the fukaku may have some military functions, such provinces without these functions would have needed some other military installations instead. Although the detail thereof remains unknown, since “Hou-Hattcho” (8-cho square) as place names remain near kokufu in Hitachi, Kai and Bingo provinces and that almost all the places with the name of “Hou-Hattcho”, numerous in Mutsu province are for the most part remains of “Josa-ku” (citadel), these places may be considered as the sites of military installations or facilities. The fact that most of fukaku are 8-cho in square may be regarded in that general framework. We can assume therefore that the fukaku may have been constructed when there were some military facilities within the kokufu area.

Even if we must admit that gridiron pattern land division in kokufu is not so regular as real gridirons, orthogonally intersecting roads have been unearthed in substantial number of kokufu sites. Therefore we may presume that there once existed some roads which were constructed according to some plans.

In conclusion the actual land divisions found here and there should be reviewed together with the execution time of their neighboring “jori” or rice field grids.