"Kokufu", "Kokucho" and Buddhism

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In an attempt to clarify the Buddhist services held in the "Kokufu" where existed public administrative organs, this paper reviews the relationship between these kokufus and the Buddhism.

First of all a space interrelation between kokufus and Buddhist temples was discussed and the Buddhist services held within the kokufus were investigated. Directing our attention mainly to the ritual "Kissho-ten Keka-ho" held in various "Kokucho" for the first time in the first year of Jingó-Keiun (767), its establishment and evolution has been elucidated. The reason why this Kissho-Keka ritual was considered much important as the Buddhist mass at the koku-chos is that the Buddhist idea of expelling old sins in last year (secularism of Buddhism in Nara Era) was closely tied with local secular ideas. The fact that this ritual of Kissho-Keka was held at a public place governed by the State implies that the State regarded this rite as suitable in order to govern the regions or provinces.

We can safely say that this ritual bespeaks the "Kissho-Keka" incantation character of State Relision of Nara Nara Buddhism, because it was held on the occasion of "Saisho-e" ritual at Kokubun-ji temples and together with "Gosai-e" rite held in the Imperial House.

On the other hand no historiographical records indicate any possible existence of particular Buddhist installations to be identified as being around the koku-chos.

Though the existence of temples belonging to kokufu is conceivable, they remain only as such. In other words, it is considered that kokufu and its vicinity had not special religious character different from that to be seen in many farm villages. In this sense too, kokufu was only a strategic point for governing farm villages from the religious viewpoint.