The Movement of the Unitary Groups
in Pit Dwelling-Settlements in the Kofun Period

Ogasawara Yoshihiko

In the dwelling-settlements in the “Kofun” (ancient burial mounds) Period in Japan (4c. A.D. -6c. A.D.), four or five pit dwellings were put together. Several small dwelling groups composed of these pit dwellings built up a settlement, and several settlements made a village.

A number of studies thus far carried on revealed the fact that the small dwelling groups which composed a settlement was a unit that made, under a cooperative form, a productive labor in sharing their daily life as consumers.

It is however necessary to clarify how such pit dwelling groups had moved if we want to further elucidate the characteristics of the groups in the Kofun period. In this paper we studied what types of the small dwelling groups are to be found at such historical sites as Goryo, Saitama Prefecture, Itoi-Miyamae.
Site, Gunma Prefecture, and Natsumi, Chiba Prefecture (7 sites in all).

As a result it has been turned out that we can divide them into three types in relation with the number of dwellings after movement compared with that before: same, reduced and increased.

By interrelative position, the pit dwellings or pit houses may be divided into two: no interrelative position changed and changed. The ancient dwellings are either circular, semicircular and L-formed. They can therefore further be typified into those changed and not changed in their array and orientation (direction). It is assumed that such differences in the movement of the dwellings were deeply related with the communal regulations applied to such groups as composed of the small dwelling groups.

Furthermore some small dwelling groups in the Kofun period are known to have performed small-scaled displacement within a certain defined range. This type of displacement or movement of dwellings had not been found in the preceding periods. This assumption allows us to suppose a first appearance, in the Kofun period, of building lots even in the settlements areas where people in general lived as was the case with the huge residences of powerful families in this period.