Gō, Mura and Settlement

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This paper discusses of what units the villages in the 8th and 9th centuries in Japan were composed. To that effect we find two sorts of data: documentary records and archaeological information. These former include Ri (Gō) and Mura, which are administrative and legal organization of village and in the latters there are data from excavation at the remains of the settlements that are an assembly of ancient dwellings. So far the relationship between the ri (gō), mura (villages) and settlements has not been elucidated. We therefore attempted to study the relationship there-between and their constitution as living community.

First of all, as a result of a study on some villages recorded in literature, we could confirm that they were local communities, which are of different nature from the ri (or gō) which is no other than an administrative organization. Then interrelation between settlements was discussed paying our due attention to the characters written onto the pottery unearthed in some remains of dwelling clusters or settlements.

Since the pottery with inscription in black ink having same characters have been unearthed from different settlements ranging four to seven kilometers of radius, we presumed that several settlements once constituted a living collectivity.

Though there remains a possibility that such group of settlements be nearly identical with village, we cannot nevertheless discard another possibility that some groups of settlements spread beyond the demarcations of villages. As for, at least, the settlements as recognized archaeologically through excavations, they are considered not to have constituted themselves a self-accomplished living sphere, but plural settlements constituted a living unit, over which existed the ri (gō) established by the ritsuryō, government within their intrinsic regime.