Family Structure in Pre-Modern Urban Society

UENO Kazuo

This paper is an analysis of family structure in an pre-modern urban society from latter period of Edo era to early period of Meiji era. In this paper we analysed Kawagoe city as an example of pre-modern urban society. Kawagoe is a typical pre-modern society in Japan, and Kawagoe is located in Saiyama prefecture close by Tokyo metropolitan. We conducted fieldwork in Kawagoe city from 1970 to 1975.

Kawagoe has various urban characteristics, for example, castle town, market town and bedroom town. Kawagoe as castle town was established in 17th century. In those days central part of Kawagoe city was divided to ten divisions (Chōnai). We analysed in this paper two Chōnais, Kaji-machi and Kita-machi.

Characteristics of social structure of Kawagoe city as follows. At first, family is comparatively large scale and has more complex construction than the other pre-modern urban society as Kyoto. This indicates that Kawagoe city has more traditional character. The second, chōnai has more floating character. In Kaji-machi and also Kita-machi, change of those members is more frequenty. Today, only 2 or 3 families continued from Edo era in same chōnai. But of these floating character, Kawagoe have more traditional character of various parts. This is basic structure of Kawagoe city.