Town Community and Nara Town Meeting Places

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An old, traditional town kept its morals and order. The town of Nara still keeps them. One of the distinctive features of Nara has been its characteristic community. The town meeting place was and is the center of the community. The meeting places for country squires in the middle ages turned to the town meeting places in the pre-modern era. The meeting places partially functioned as local administrative organs for the then regime, but at the same time they functioned as autonomous organs for townspeople. In the meeting place was a Buddhist or Shintoist deity installed to help strengthen the ties of the community. For orderly and smooth administration of the town, unanimous agreement of the town representatives was most important and the place was used for meetings as well as for the people to pledge themselves to the deity on the decision. In the first meeting of the year, an eating and drinking party was held to reconfirm the spiritual ties of the participating people. The meeting place was also used for entertainments or ordinary communication of townspeople. The meeting place was provided with tea things, utensils for collective dining and drinking, and various play things. These things were purchased by joint investment by the people and were part of their joint property. Because of the gradual change taking place in the town, some meeting places were pulled down or remodeled into ordinary houses, but other meeting places still remain and function as they were. About thirty or more such meeting places can be counted even now. In this highlevel information society, they still consist of the core of their characteristic community, serving to the activation of the town. The purpose of this thesis is to focus on the problems that face the town community by observing the changes and realities of those meeting places.