Significance and Methodology of Ground Plan Investigation of Medieval Castles

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In recent years, investigations of medieval castles have come to be conducted, at long last, in various methods from the viewpoints of philology, historical geography, archaeology, and so on. Among them, ground plan investigation for quick and easy grasp of the outline of castle remains, is wide-spread. It is an investigation which aims mainly at grasping the ancient defensive structures of a castle, including the most, earthenworks, and Koguchi (gateway), by observation of the ground surface. Then the results are compiled in a drawing”.

Since these investigations have been long supported by local amateurs, standards for investigation are not uniform. In this paper, therefore, significance and methodology of ground plan investigation are discussed in detail. Consequently, it is shown that ground plan investigation should be performed as a preliminary work before surveying or excavation. Ground plan investigation and surveying or excavation are defined as compensatory on different levels.

A ground plan investigation method, which can be treated as a standard, is presented as follows: Drawing should be based on an exact topographical chart; Distance surveying is indispensable, using a simplified surveying apparatus or by pacing; Detailed observation of the gateway and other parts, which are important points in understanding the original structure, is necessary; Preparation of a clean result drawing should be based on archeological techniques. Finally, to show methods for the utilization of ground plan drawings as materials for the clarification of area history, the concept of ground plan drawing and their preparation processes are described, together with chronological examples chiefly involving getaways of Shokuho-(Oda and Toyotomi) type castles.

Ground plan studies from now on should be carried further forward through cooperative work with others by various different researching methods to promote the study of castles. In this context, the study of ground plan investigations must be further deepened from the point of view that these investigations will clarify medieval
society through the defensibility of castles. This is a role to be played by ground plan research in comprehensive castle study which has just started. By presenting and discussing different castle images from various fields of study, medieval castles with diversified aspects will show themselves for the first time.

Figure 1: Model plan of mountain castle in the latter 16th century based on the Japanese terrain

Figure 2: Ground plan drawing and survey drawing of Iwatsu Castle (Aichi prefecture, latter 16th Century)

Figure 3: Survey drawing of Myoga Castle (Nara Prefecture, latter 16th Century)

Figure 4: Basic method of expression for ground plan drawing

Figure 5: Ground plan drawing of Mukasa Castle (Miyazaki Prefecture, latter 16th Century)

Figure 6: Ground plan drawing of Shiroyama Castle (Ibaragi Prefecture, latter 16th Century)

Figure 7: Basic model showing establishment process for modern Japanese castles

Figure 8: Chronicles of establishment process of modern Japanese castles (from middle of the 16th Century to the early 17th Century)

Table 1: Analysis of correlations between development of Koguchi (gateway) and of moat and stone wall