Production Techniques at Makunouchi
—Changes in Agricultural Techniques Described in "Aizu Agriculture Book"

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Makunouchi is a village of 50-plus households in Kozashi Machi, Aizu-Wakamatsu City. In the Edo Period, it was a suburban farming village, mainly engaged in dry-field farming and called the “kitchen garden” of the castle town, Aizu-Wakamatsu. In the 1st year of Jokyo (1684), SAZÉ Yojiemon, supervisor of the village, wrote the “Aizu Agriculture Book”, which systematized the agriculture of the Aizu region based on old customs and his own experience and experiments. To explain the contents more understandably for farmers, Yojiemon also wrote the “Aizu Agricultural Song Book” and the “Supplement to the Aizu Agriculture Book”. Instructions contained therein were passed on to Rin’emon, his son-in-law. In the 3rd year of Shotoku (1713), Rin’emon wrote the “Makunouchi Agriculture Book”, in which he described the dry-field farming techniques in a very detailed manner. The book was a true instruction manual for farmers of that time.

After the publication of the “Aizu Agriculture Book” compiled by ONO Takeo in the 19th year of the Showa (1944), Makunouchi Village drew attention from researchers in history, economics and agriculture. A series of studies on wealthy farmers by FUJITA Goro was central in these studies. The historical materials used for these studies were the “Record of Aizu Makunouchi” by Yojiemon and the “Szure Family Record” by Rin’emon. Since then, Makunouchi has been dealt with only partially in studies on the “Aizu Agriculture Book”, but there has been no special study focused on the village.

In this paper, the author attempts to grasp the village life in Makunouchi based on a folkloric survey, and to find out its regional characteristics. In particular, this paper aims to clarify the changes of folk customs concerning production techniques for commercial farming in this kitchen-garden village. This was done by checking how the techniques described in the Aizu Agriculture Book are utilized in the agriculture of Makunouchi. As a result, it can be known, from historical documents, legends and changes in agricultural tools, that the techniques written in the Aizu Agriculture Book, such as the layout of the farmhouse, method for construction of houses, cultivation techniques and agricultural rites, were handed down to recent years.

The instructions contained in the great book on agriculture, the “Aizu Agriculture Book”, remained in the agriculture of Makunouchi the kitchen garden, and they remain alive in today’s agriculture. Consciousness among the village people that Makunouchi is the village of “Aizu Agriculture Book” can be strongly felt. This is symbolized in the “eggplant seedling of Makunouchi".