Historical and Folkloric Environment of Aramaki

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Aramaki (presently, Aramaki Town, Tenri City, Nara Prefecture) is one of the 50-plus villages called Furu-go, shaping a zone of faith centering around Furu Shrine (Isonokami Shrine), and which also utilizes the water of the Furu River for irrigation. When considering the characteristics of Aramaki Village, one has to know that the people's union in Furu-go had an important meaning.

It is in the rituals for rain that this people's union manifests itself most directly. Among these rituals, the largest is a dance for rain, or furyū odori called "Furu-odori". Furthermore, "Okage-mairi" (shrine visit for divine protection) and "Okage-odori" (dance for divine protection), which occurred unexpectedly, involved the people of all the 'go', in a body. An autonomous union of the villages can be seen here.

Based on this kind of union of 'go' villages, the village of Aramaki itself was also unified. This village forms a living space, centered on the Katte Shrine, together with the Komori, Isonokami and Tsuta Shrines, which are enshrined together with the Katte Shrine or in a small shrine in its precincts. Seifukuji and other temples also provided a spiritual base for the village.

In such a living milieu, an organization for divine services, called "Miyaza", was established at an early stage, and has continued ceaselessly since the Tensho Period (later 16th century). A Miyaza document entitled Miyaza Nakama Nendaiki (Chronicle of member of Miyaza) has been handed down, and many other related documents have been preserved by the village. From these documents, the strength and continuity of the union can be seen, in spite of the changes in village life.