Miyaza, Family, and Village Organization

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This paper is a report of an investigation into the social structure, especially village organization, family, and miyaza (cult organization), of Aramaki, Tenri city, Nara Prefecture, investigations and research into have been undertaken since 1986 by the "Regional Differences and Regionalism in Japanese Folk Culture group as part of the research project on regionalism in Japanese History". Aramaki is considered to be a village which typically shows the structural characteristics of a village society in the central part of Japan. There also remain many documents and records in the possession of the "ku" or district, and the village shrine priest. Thus this village was selected as appropriate for the clarification of the social changes in the village, through the examination of both folk customs and historical documents.

This paper has the following three aims: the first is to find out the structure of the miyaza organization in Aramaki, and how it changed; the second is to clarify the family structure in Aramaki, which may be considered to be a typical village of central Japan; and the third is to clarify the characteristics of the village structure of Aramaki as a whole, with its kabuza-like miyaza organization.

This paper analyzes the organization of the village, family, and miyaza of Aramaki, and changes that have occurred, and obtains the following results. The miyaza in Aramaki, while maintaining kabuza-like characteristics, expanded its membership by a reform of the system in the early years of Showa, thus slightly easing its restrictions. The main type of family structure in Aramaki maintains the stem family; basically, inheritance is by the eldest son. Marriage is based on bride-taking, which is characteristic of the typical stem family. Furthermore, the village organization in Aramaki today is based on a levelized class, and it features an extremely equal structure in positions, including the area chief, as well as in the "Ko" organization such as Ise-ko, or Koshin-ko. Generally speaking, the structure of the village society of Aramaki is basically the lotation system, based on the kabuza-like miyaza. However, various changes since early Showa can be understood as a process of change of the society of Aramaki to a lotation system based on a muraza-like miyaza.