Sites of Settlements of Craftsmen in Tannan in the Middle Ages

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The area in and around Mihara Town in Kawachi County, Osaka, is known as the home of the “Kawachi iron founders”, who were active from the later Heian Period to the Period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties. Studies on this region have been made mainly based on inscriptions on stone monuments, and bibliographical materials; however, as excavational investigations in this region have progressed, founding sites and contemporary settlement sites have been discovered, enabling studies to be made from an archaeological approach.

Now, most founding sites from the Nara Period onward which have so far been investigated were for the most part annexed to temples or provincial government offices, and the main objects of analyses have been earthen pits for temple-bell casting, furnaces, molds connected with Buddhist altar fittings, and slag. However, from founding sites in Tannan, Kawachi, fragments of molds for cooking pots etc., furnace walls and slag have been excavated from groups of structures that constituted ordinary settlements; traces of foundry-related facilities have also been detected from some of them. These were found within the sites of medieval settlements accompanying foundry facilities. It is also highly possible that the settlement sites in this region are closely related to the records that Tannan, Kawachi, was the home of iron founders.

On the basis of the above assumption, the author, in this paper, focuses on the settlement of craftsmen as he reconstructs the medieval villages of Tannan, and considers how they related to the special social being of Kawachi iron founders shown in the results of bibliographical studies.

This study can be divided into two parts, on medieval villages and on founding sites. In the former, the author restores the environment in which villages came into being, by means of historical geography and scenic restoration assuming conditions of irrigation, and also restores the location and scale of villages, and their movement from the Ancient to the Modern Period, using bibliographical records and quantitative analysis of sites. In the latter, the author picks out the characteristics of remaining structures through an arrangement of founding sites nationwide, and those of remaining articles through an examination of the Hioki-no-shô Site; he also points out the importance of non-fixed type earthen pits and warehouse space in founding works, and the special distribution system of the iron founding groups.

These analyses made it clear that the villages in Tannan probably had at least two different processes of change according to the different conditions of the environment in which they came into being, and that the same trend can be seen in the ironfounding settlements that were attached to them. Concerning this hypothesis, the author presents an example of the reconstructed scenery of an iron founders’ village, modeled after the Hioki-no-shô. This will probably be taken up as a matter for sociological restoration and examination, together with the question of its relation with the two lineages of Tannan iron founders.