The Tōsandō in Musashi Province
—From its Association with Ancient Sites—

Sakai Kiyoji

Musashi Province, which formerly belonged to the Tōsandō, was transferred to the Tōkaidō in Hōki 2 (771). When the Province belonged to the Tōsandō, as can be seen in a record stating that the route “turned toward Ōra County in Közuke Province, and passed Goka stations to reach Musashi Province”, the route went from the eastern part of Közuke Province to the provincial capital of Musashi. The route has been discussed in previous researches.

Through progress in recent investigatory excavations, the existence has been ascertained of a route going northward for 3.5km from the west of the provincial capital of Musashi, passing between the temple and the nunnery both established by the state. Furthermore, the remains of a road have been excavated from the Azuma-no-ue Site, in Tokorozawa City, and this road has come to be considered the Musashi Road of the Tōsandō. At the present stage, however, the remains of no stations have been discovered, and the route remains unclear. This being the case, the author has attempted to search for the presumed route and to pursue its historical background through archaeological materials and historical documents.

The road seems to have been used for cultural exchanges, transportation of freight, and the movement of people. Near the remains of the road, there are many related sites and remains. Typical exchanges carried out along this road are as follows: Tiles used in the initial construction of the provincial temple of Musashi were baked in association with the Nitta and Sai Counties in Közuke Province; and tiles from the provincial temple of Musashi were used in part at the ruined Nishi-Beppu Temple, in Kumagaya City. The Nara Shrine near the ruined Nishi-Beppu Temple seems to have attracted believers as a place of prayer on the way to the Mutsu Region in the early 8th century in expeditions against the barbarians. This shrine can be compared with the Kashima Shrine on Tōkaidō.

The width of the ruined road excavated measured 12m. The road was straight, with ditches; and it dates back to the middle or the third quarter of the 7th century, judging from the date of the Azuma-no-ue Site. The fact that the width of the road was equivalent to that of the Sanyōdō, which was a main route makes it especially difficult to regard this road as a branch route. From the fact that the construction of the road dates back to before the establishment of the station system in the first year of Tairō (701), the author would rather think that the construction of the road was connected to the then tenes social situation in the Korean Peninsular. Probably, this was in part a military route to defend the country from the Silla and the Tang, and in part a route aimed at domestic politics to support the policy of expansion toward the north. In other words, the author would like to put forward the idea that this road was not a political road directly connecting the provincial capitals of Közuke and Musashi, but was originally constructed as a military road linking the Tōsandō and the Tōkaidō.