Muromachi Period Regional Lords and Their Manor Houses–The Case of Ema Family, Hida Province

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Ema, one of regional lords (kokujin) in Hida, is known for its manor house with its garden. It can be seen from historical documents that Ema was brought close to the shogun from the mid-14th Century, receiving judgements of shogunate and maintaining a very close relationship with the government, but in the second half of the 15th Century, the family became known as having an independent status, and then in the 16th Century, could no longer be seen in manor-related documents. Looking at the architectural remains shows that from the end of the 14th Century to the middle of the 15th Century there was a manor house modeled on the Hana no Gosho (Flower Palace) of shogun in Kyoto, but by the second half of the 15th Century, the functions of manor house were split off to castles and other facilities, and in the 16th Century, it lost its function as a manor house. It is now known that similar phenomena can be observed with the houses of other regional lords, and can be said to represent the change from the first half of the 15th Century when regional lords were part of a nationwide system, to the second half of the 15th Century onwards, when they became independent as territorial lords. Many regional lords declined as part of this change, and in contrast, it can be said that there had been a stable relationship between the government in Kyoto and the regional lords in the provinces from the mid-14th Century through the first half of the 15th Century. This can thus be regarded as one aspect of the Muromachi period manor-system.