Medieval Manors and Their Relation to Graveyards and Funerals

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The fact that many burial sites and graveyards in medieval communities are found in marginal areas such as manors, together with the ambitious discoveries of "urban sites" in regional cities and the emphasis on their marginality, not to mention the results of recent studies on medieval cities focusing on Kyoto, Kamakura, and other cities, from which these new discoveries stem, has received much attention. There is no doubt that behind such conditions concerning the location of medieval graveyards lie the influence of the medieval concept that death impurity must be avoided and the centripetal structure of the manorial system centered in Kyoto. This paper reconfirms the above phenomenon and at the same time points out, based on examples from field studies conducted by the author himself, the necessity of further and more diversified investigation as to the character of medieval graveyards located on territorial borders. More specifically, the paper attempts to define the historical significance of the remains and relics of medieval graveyards confirmed and organized using archaeological methodology, by examining them in the context of regional organization based on the manorial system and the mentalities and actions of the people arising from the regional government and from their daily life, confirmed through analyses of documented and visual material. However, just as the funeral sites and graveyards located on manorial borders were sites of intense border disputes between feudal lords, the results of this study exhibit an emphasis on the theory of power, which is inseparable from the study of funerals and memorial services in medieval communities, presenting us with a new challenge of finding yet another new analytical angle.