Production of Metal Wares in Ancient Castle Towns

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This paper examines workshops related to the production of metal wares, or more specifically the production of wares made out of bronze, in capital during the Asuka period through the Nara period (latter part of the 7th century through to the 8th century) to shed light on the mode of manual production adopted during this period. Recently, examples of such wares have come to light from the Asuka-ike ruins and many other related ruins, thus necessitating a comprehensive study that takes such newer findings into account.

In this paper I will first outline the findings of investigations of ruins located in the Asuka region and at the sites of the Fujiwara and Heijo capitals. The existence in the Asuka region of temple workshops around Asuka-ike can be seen as constituting the embryonic stage of production which subsequently developed into full-scale production of metal wares in the Fujiwara capital. The mode of metal ware production which operated in several residential areas that developed from the Fujiwara capital was adopted in the Heijo capital. In addition, by examining the workshops belonging to the household organizations of aristocratic residences within the Heijo capital, the workshops located in a small residential area in the south of the Heijo capital, and also the wide range of activities undertaken by the office in charge of the construction of Todaiji, this paper seeks to characterize temple workshops and the movement of artisans in the ancient period.