The Change in the Status of Eimei-ji Temple in Shotokuji Village

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This paper looks at the dispute that arose in Shotokuji village in Kateri-gun, Shimousa Province, the region where the Senzo-kabu Kumiai union of OHARA Yugaku was organized. The dispute arose over the promotion of the village’s Eimei-ji temple, a branch-temple of low standing belonging to the Tendai Sect, to a higher ranking branch-temple by parishioners, and involved Shotokuji village and Toei-ji temple in Mizowara village, which is the superior temple to Eimei-ji temple. The dispute continued from 1707 to 1713 and was settled privately after action was brought against Honzan Kanei-ji head temple. The farming families in Shotokuji village had been parishioners of Eimei-ji temple and when funerals took place rites that lead the deceased to Buddhahood were received from Toei-ji temple as well. However, as a result of the private settlement, the majority of the farming families of Shotokuji village formed links with Toei-ji temple and Eimei-ji temple and made both family temples under a system where one was for male parishioners and the other for female parishioners. There was also acknowledgement of the promotion of Eimei-ji temple. A separate system of graves for men and women and a system of separate temples for men and women is known to have existed in surrounding regions. In addition, attention has also been paid to the relationship between Seigaku and changes to the grave system. Of course, the two systems of separate graves for men and women and separate temples for men and women are not directly linked. Nonetheless, this paper is a preliminary work that attempts to reveal customs related to ancestor worship in this region and the effect that the relationship between the villages and temples had on this at a time prior to the emergence of Seigaku.

The following findings have come to light in the course of analyzing this dispute: the existence of the custom of dual family temples and the fluidity of the relationships between temples and parishioners during this period, the absence of recognition among those involved in the dispute, including the person responsible for handling the affairs of Kanei-ji temple which controls the affairs of the Tendai sect, of any incongruity surrounding the system of separate temples for male and female parishioners, and the deliberate action taken to designate the superior temple the temple for male parishioners and the branch-temple the temple for female parishioners in the course of the creation of a relationship between temples where there is a system of separate temples for men and women.