The *Myoshu-Za* in *KUINO-SHO* of *BINGO* Country

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This article discusses the construction and development of the myoshu-za in Kuino-sho, Mitsugi-gun, Bingo-no-kuni (currently the area of Kui in Mihara City, Hiroshima Prefecture). The myoshu-za was established in the Chugoku area in the beginning of the 14th century as a group of people who were called *myoshu kashirayaku*, and held social status in a village. The *myoshu kashirayaku* play a social role in a village by serving as *kashirayaku* (a head) of the *myoshu-za* (a kind of miya-za) based on the profession of *myoshu*. The social status in a village was certified and guaranteed by each village group. It was valid inside the village and supported by the finances of the village.

The *myoshu-za* of Kui Inari Shrine in Kuino-sho already existed before the first half of the 14th century, and consisted of *Mikono* (*Kagura-za*), Higashi-za, and Nishi-za. In Kuino-sho in the last half of the Middle Ages, there were *sosho myoshu-za* of Kui Inari Shrine, and associate *sosho myoshu-za* of Shimotsu Hachiman Shrine (based on myo of Shimotsu Village and Yoshida Village), and individual village myoshu-za of twelve shrines: Ushitora Shrine of Egi Village; Itsukushima Shrine, Tenman-gu Shrine, and an undisclosed shrine (*Daisen Shrine?) in Yoshida Village; (Kamigumi) Hachiman Shrine in Waso Village; Takasugi Shrine, an undisclosed shrine (*Atago Shrine?) , an undisclosed shrine (*Kami Ohata Shrine?) , an undisclosed shrine (*Naka Ohata Shrine?) , an undisclosed shrine (*Ohata Shrine?) , and an undisclosed shrine (the shrine name is unknown) in Azobara Village; and Kotohira Shrine in Shimotsu Village. This raised alarm over the belief of one shrine (*miya-za*) in one village seen in conventional studies.

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