To-ya System in the Area of Hofu City, Yamaguchi Prefecture

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In Yamaguchi Prefecture, the to-ya system of Shinto shrines is seen over a considerably wide area. However, the to-ya system has not been studied sufficiently. Studying the to-ya system in this region is important for connecting the case examples in Hiroshima Prefecture and Okayama Prefecture with those in northern Kyushu that have been studied in the past, and also indispensable for looking at the so-called "miya-za" in the Kinki area from a relative viewpoint.

This article studies a case example in Hofu City that historically has a close relationship with the area near Kyoto and Nara. As a result, it was found that there are two types of organizations for religious services in a shrine with the to-ya system in this region: one is the type of zaicho in Kasuga Shrine and miya-za in Sano Wakamiya Shrine where a particular house in a particular village in the ujiko area is involved with religious services, and the other is the type of an organization where almost all villages in the ujiko area are involved with religious services. Even in the region with the former type where a particular house is involved with religious services, there are some separate organizations where all members worship the same god such as taito-ko compared to zaicho in Kasuga Shrine, or otosho-ko compared to warai-ko in Daido. These were perhaps newly created time in history.

Even in the latter type of organization where all villages are involved with religious services, there are two types: one is the type of dividing the ujiko area into several kumi groups, and selecting to-ya by rotation from the kumi groups; and the other is the type of switching the kumi groups to assume religious services every year, and selecting to-ya from them. The seniority system is not seen in either the former or the latter types, and there are not many organizations for religious services based on a unit of myo.

The characteristic of this region is that in addition to an organization for religious services in a shrine, there are many organizations for religious services such as for mountain god, forest god, otoshi-ko, etc. within the to-ya system based on a unit of villages and kumi groups, and each has a multilayered construction in the region. Shinto shrines and small shrines in this region have been reorganized several times since the late Tokugawa period. Therefore, there might have been more organizations for religious services with the to-ya system until the middle of the early modern period.

Key words: To-ya system, ohake, expulsion of faith in a malicious god, organization of ko