The Temple’s Field Assessed by the Japanese Government in the 8th Century

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This report elucidated the actual conditions in the 8th century of the field of a temple established before the 8th century. Furthermore, it was considered how the ancient government assessed field.

Concerning the above issue, studies have been conducted in the past based on the field assessment method of the 8th century following the assumption that Jori (system of land subdivision) was implemented, mainly using documents from the mid 8th century. However, it is noted that documents from the mid 8th century indicate only the situations taking place during the mid 8th century. Additionally, recent excavation results show that extensive implementation of Jori during the 8th century cannot be assumed; therefore, reevaluation is required regarding the land assessment method.

For this reason, the author of this report has conducted a study of the field belonging to Gufukuji Temple in Yamada-gun County, Sanuki-no-Kuni Province, for which abundant documents from the early to mid 8th century is found. The study was conducted on the basis of the existence of a field assessment method found by the author based on 1-Cho (This word is units of measuring field) implemented in the area by the government during field investigation and recognition.

The following facts have become clear as a result of the study. The field belonging to Gufukuji Temple in Yamada-gun County, Sanuki-no-Kuni Province in the 8th century consisted of rice fields and other field. In the early 8th century, the government created a field record to assess the area of the rice fields that accounted for the field belonging to the temple. Following that, from the early to mid 8th century, the government performed assessment of the field, including address confirmation, through field investigations and the recognition or creation of the Handenzu (Account book of the field) based on 1-Cho implemented in the area. In the mid 8th century, the government began performing assessment of the field through maintenance of Jiin-Engi-Sizaicho (Temple’s history and list of assets), which were created in relation to the Handenzu. By that time, the government was performing assessment of the rice fields and other field.

As has been described, from the early to mid 8th century, the target of government field assessment was expanded beyond rice fields to include all the field belonging to Gufukuji temple. It is assumed that such assessments were performed for arable field belonging to other long-established
temples. Moreover, it is believed that, by presuming the expansion of field assessment by the government, an understanding can be obtained regarding the government’s policies concerning the field of temples after the mid 8th century, which have not been clarified thus far.

Keywords: Ancient Japanese government, Field assessment, Investigation and Recognition, Temple’s arable field, Rice field in territory