Radiocarbon Dating of Kannon-ji Temple, Ushiku-shi, Ibaraki

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The Kannon-ji temple in Ushiku, Ibaraki Prefecture (2976 Kuno-cho, Ushiku City, Ibaraki Prefecture) was founded, according to temple legend, in 1226 as a hall to house an Eleven-Faced Kannon statue. It was rebuilt in 1525, and the present main hall is believed to date from a 1707 reconstruction. In this research, radiocarbon dating of the preserved materials such as old lumber was done in conjunction with the restoration work on the temple's main hall and the Nio Gate, and the results were compared in terms of their relationships with the construction and repair periods assumed from written records such as on the ridge-pole signs.

The age of the outermost layer of the two old pillars (made from Keyaki [Zelkova serrata]) from around the main hall obtained during restoration work on the Nio Gate was seen using 14C-wiggle-matching to both be from trees harvested around the latter half of the 13th century or the start of the 14th. They are newer than the 1226 founding of the temple, but also considerably older than the 1525 reconstruction, and instead match the late Kamakura or Muromachi date of the Eleven-Faced Kannon, which is considered to be in the Song dynasty style. The era suggests by the style of the details of the temple's main hall (Kamakura) does not contradict this either. In addition, the bamboo nails used to fix the different wooden parts of the Eleven-Faced Kan-non statue together (which were stored separately after the Showa-period restoration of the main hall) and the age of the cloth (hemp) covering the clothing parts of the Kannon statue both point to the 1630 restoration of the statue.

Key words: Radiocarbon dating, Old temple buildings, Fist nosing, Kamakura period, Keyaki (Zelkova serrata)