Local Lords on the Escarpment: Water Resources Development by the Tachikawa Family of Musashi Province and Regional Landscapes

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Through field and literature studies on the Tachikawa family of Musashi Province, who established a manor in the Tama River midstream basin, this paper reconstructs and analyzes the water resources development promoted by local lords of manors in the plains, previously collectively analyzed as the floodplains or low wetlands. As claimed by the Moat Regime Theory, it has been believed that local lords had a priority right to develop water sources. The results of relevant studies and detailed field surveys, however, are building a basis for a more elaborate analysis of manors and development activities of local lords. In light of these recent developments, this paper aims to reconstruct the medieval landscapes of manors and communities and analyze the landscapes and water resources development in the manor of the Tachikawa family. The results of the analysis reveal the following three points.

(1) This study examines a letter on the exchange of assets issued by Suō-no-Kami Sadayo in Gentoku 2 (1330) and kept by the Tachikawa family, as well as other early-modern documents and field survey results, revealing the boundaries of the territories listed in the letter and the conditions of the locations. The results prove that the Tachikawa family developed spring water sources on the escarpment, a geographical landform characterizing the Tama River midstream basin.

(2) Spring water has been rarely studied by historians. This paper insists that springs should be considered not as points but as areas bordered by contour lines of the same altitude and characterized by archaeological evidence to specifically understand the development of spring water sources by local lords.

(3) Recent research on local lords is shifting the focus away from development and livelihoods. However, as illustrated by the example of the Tama River midstream basin, where the escarpment blessed with rich water resources provided a foundation for developing transportation networks with focal points, such as provincial governors’ offices and local lords’ manors, along the river terraces, regional landscapes were determined by regional factors. Local lords who established manors and led a life within the regional boundaries were influenced by the regional landscapes and acclimated to society. By analyzing the escarpment and water resources development on that cliff, this paper reconstructs the place of living (livelihoods of local community residents) in Tachikawa-go, including...
both the manors and communities. Moreover, this study highlights the importance of conducting a comprehensive and multi-angled analysis of manors as a “place of living” in parallel with the recent active research on city lords.

Key words: local lord, escarpment, water resources development, regional landscapes, the Tachikawa family of Musashi province