

A Study of the Spatial Composition of a Village  
—In Kurahashi, Unagami, Chiba Prefecture—

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The study of the spatial composition of a village and the life centered around it, is a primary concern. This paper examines some villages located at Kurahashi (Unagami, Chiba Pref.), which was selected for field work. An analysis of the spatial composition is attempted through examining eight items : (1) the boundaries of the village (*murazakai*) (2) residential areas (3) land for cultivation (4) non-cultivated land (5) ritual areas (6) social areas (7) place names (8) directions.

The result is as follows :

(1) In the center of the village, *Suijinsha* (literally “water god shrine”) as *ubusunajinja* (shrine of the local guardian diety) and Hōjuin as *tetsugidera* are surrounded by a circular road. From the circular road, radial roads run in four directions. The residential area of the village is limited to the inside of the circular road and the circumference.

(2) Outside the residential area lies land for cultivation. The plateau is used for fields and there are rice fields in the terraced ground along the valley ; the slopes between the rice fields and fields as well as the land around the cultivated land is not cultivated.

(3) One of the ideological boundaries that crosses the radial roads, corresponds to the physical boundary between the residential area and the land for cultivation. Another boundary is located where *dorokujin* (“guardian of the village boundary”, “road safety god”) and *tsuka* are placed at the entrance of a road running from the highway that runs in the north to the residential area. Thus, there are two ideological boundaries in the north and this has a relation to the geographical boundaries that are also dual. Possible reasons for these dual boundaries set in the north are the presence of the cultivated area stretching in the north, the fact that development is limited and the necessity for a protective boundary due to the heavy traffic along the highway.

(4) Kurahashi consists of five *seko* that were *muragumi* (small regional groups) but initially it consisted of two *muragumi* that were divided by a river. Moreover, as the entrance and exit of the village correspond to the two *dōrokujin* located on the radial roads running from South to West, and from North and East, a close relation can be found between the number of *muragumi* and entrances to the village.

(5) The words South and North have a social connotation ; South is superior

to North and this is reflected in the two groups (*muragumi*) North and South  
We can find a belief concerning the sun that underlies the superiority of South.