

Surveys of the Medieval and Early Modern Period Graveyards in Yamato

This report comprises one part of the basic research theme "Historical Analysis on Basic Beliefs in Local Societies" organized and implemented by the National Museum of Japanese History that was undertaken from 1996 through 2001 by researchers from both within and outside the Museum engaged in the fields of history, archaeology and folk studies. It is a report on surveys undertaken on a number of graveyards in Nara Prefecture that have continued to be used from the medieval period and the early modern period through to the present day.

Part One is a report on the findings of surveys of the Utano-cho Nyudani graveyard situated in the Kuchiuda Basin in Uda district and a number of village graveyards situated in the Hayama area of Tsuge-mura situated to the north. General surveys were conducted of graveyards that still exist in the Ouda-cho and Utano-cho areas situated in the Kuchiuda Basin and the forms of existing graveyards in this region were also studied.

This region is one where the custom of a dual grave system was practiced until very recent times, and there are many examples of a separation between burial sites called "haka" and sites where stone monuments called "rantouba" were erected. In an overwhelming majority of cases where this custom was practiced communal haka were built in villages or small settlements in the mountains while rantouba were built nearby the residences of each household. The next most common form was the establishment of haka on top of hills and the erection of rantouba belonging to each household further down the hill as well as the establishment of haka and rantouba belonging to each household together on top of a hill. Further, graveyards following the single grave system where burial sites and stone monuments were built on the same site are also found in this region in machi such as the former Matsuyama-machi. Although today the dual grave system is rapidly disappearing, there can be no doubt that fundamentally the dual grave system was the grave system adopted by villages in this region from the early modern period through to the modern period. Still, in Uda there is virtually no evidence of the division of haka in burial graveyards according to age or gender, as seen in Higashi-Sanchu on the Yamato plateau that includes the Tsuge-mura to the north, and it would appear that burials were made in haka of restricted sizes in the order in which people died.

A survey was undertaken of Nyudani graveyard in Utano-cho, also located in this region, which was built together with rantouba belonging to each household sited on top of a hill. In this instance, many types of stone monuments have been excavated from medieval graveyards that existed next to these graveyards, and it is presumed that these can shed light on the process through which graveyards dating from the medieval period through to the early modern period developed into graveyards that remain today. However, survey results reveal that the oldest extant stone monument dates back to 1658 and that while sites from which medieval stone monuments have been excavated and the sites of graveyards in existence today are adjacent to one another, their locations are different and thus cannot be interpreted as continuous.

Medieval graveyards in Nyudani were graveyards shared by the local warrior class referred to as "Nyudani lords" who, in medieval Uda were the Akiyama clan as well as those who shared the same name or the backing of the Sawa clan, which also boasted considerable power. These graveyards are believed to be different in character from village graveyards newly formed in the early modern period on the basis of local residence. Although there are more than a few examples in Uda district of present-day graveyards and many kinds of medieval stone monuments found nearby, we were not able to find any examples that clearly confirmed the continuation of medieval graveyards through to existing graveyards dating back to the early modern period.

The Hayama area of Tsuge-mura is also an area in which a typical dual grave system was adopted. In this instance, however, there are many examples where the haka, or burial sites, and the rantouba that are the sites of stone monuments are located next to each other. Choshu Takeda conducted an exhaustive survey of graveyards in this area long ago. His work clearly showed that in Daiji Hayama, comprised of nine small settlements (kaito), each small settlement forming a community had several temples (jian) that served as either shared or independent meeting places and that these formed a pair with the graveyards of stone monuments (mairi-baka) belonging to each small settlement. Furthermore, the stone koshin-jizo monuments built in these graveyards dating from the Eiroku period (1558-1570) that were erected by each small settlement, which was a community formed on the basis of geographical residence, were considered to be stone monuments shared among each village community. However, the rise in consciousness concerning the ie system that began from around the Genna (1615-1624) and Shoho (1644-1648) periods brought with it the first construction of gravestones for individuals. The erection of stone monuments for each household gained momentum during the Genroku period (1688-1704) through to the Kyoho period (1716-1736). These surveys and researches by Takeda in the Hayama area have been utilized as historical

materials on types of stone monuments found in graveyards and comprise a fine body of work that attempted to form an understanding of the organic relationship between villages, temples and graves. However, all the stone monuments that were studied and recorded as part of this work carried inscriptions, and stone monuments without inscriptions were completely ignored.

The object of our surveys in Hayama were the Dosaka graveyard, the Mushiroden graveyard located within the small Jofuku-ji Temple settlement—these graveyards are village graveyards in Hayama that are communal graveyards in the three small settlements of Obu, Shimizu-kita and Shimizu-minami and the Shummyo-in graveyard—a graveyard for families of the Hayama clan, who comprised the local warrior class. As indicated by Takeda, judging solely from the style of the stone monuments with inscriptions, the Shummyo-in graveyard contains stone monuments that were erected earlier than others found in small settlement graveyards. In the Dosaka graveyard and in the adjoining precincts of the Gokuraku-ji Temple materials for 16 five-tiered monuments (*gorinto*) made from separate stones and 15 *hakobotoke* (Buddhist images contained in box-shaped miniature shrines) were found, and there is no doubt that in this graveyard stone monuments were erected as far back as the 16th century. In the Jizo-do in Gokuraku-ji Temple there is a jizo monument with an inscription that reads “Koshinmachi Association” dating back to 1560, from which we can be certain that during this period communal graveyards were already being established in small settlements. These stone jizo monuments from around the Eiroku period (1558–1570) that have a striking resemblance are found not only in a number of small settlement graveyards in Hayama but in graveyards in Sanchu and Kunnaka in Yamato and remain as *mukae-jizo* to this day. This attests to the contribution of religious people to the formation or reorganization of village graveyards at the end of the medieval period. Parallel to this is the knowledge that the erection of stone monuments had already started in village graveyards in Hayama.

Further investigation is required of the similarities and differences in the character of these medieval stone monuments and early modern period stone monuments that gradually began to increase in number from the 17th century onward. There can be no doubt that the communal graveyards of villages in the Uda district whose formation we have not been able to date back to the medieval period do, in the case of Hayama, date back to the 16th century, which lies at the end of the medieval period. An important factor was our ability to confirm more than a few inscriptions on stone monuments dating from the 16th century in the Shummyo-in graveyard belonging to the Hayama clan, though it would appear that there is no need to regard the period of formation of the graveyard itself as differing greatly from those of other graveyards. The prosperity and decline of medieval graveyards in the moun-

tainous areas of Nara Prefecture are most likely related to the movements of the local warrior class living in Yamato at the end of the medieval period. What is more, in cases where graveyards dating from the 16th century have been excavated in various areas of the Kinki region, burial that involved interment and cremation was common in addition to the construction of stone monuments during this time. As for being able to link this with the custom of a dual grave system that has existed in this region from the early modern period through to the present day, this is a topic that must be examined in terms of the conversion of medieval graveyards to early modern graveyards covering the whole of Nara Prefecture.

Part Two reports on the findings of surveys conducted on two local graveyards (*goubaka*) situated in the Nara Basin, that is to say, Kunnaka, which are the Hiraoka Gokuraku-ji Temple graveyard in Shinjo-cho, Kita-Katsuragi-gun and the Nakayama Nembutsu-ji Temple graveyard in Tenri City, also in Nara Prefecture. These two local graveyards selected to be surveyed, which are situated in the western part and the eastern part of the Nara Basin, are both extremely representative of local graveyards in the Nara Basin. As graveyards with relatively old landscapes their existence today is most valuable.

As for the way in which these local graveyards were used, there is a strong possibility that these graveyards situated in the Nara Basin also had different sites for burial and for the erection of stone monuments during the early modern period, which is indicative of the so-called dual grave system. Even today there are some villages that use the Hiraoka Gokuraku-ji Temple graveyard as a communal burial graveyard where the dead are interred in graves. In the case of the Nakayama Nembutsu-ji Temple graveyard too, this large graveyard is divided into separate areas for graves belonging to each village that form part of a larger graveyard community, and judging from the distribution of older stone monuments dating back to the medieval period through to the beginning of the early modern period as well, it is difficult to conceive that the separation of these grave areas occurred during a more recent period. Furthermore, in view of the considerably large area of land occupied by the graves for each village as well as the fact that we must believe that at the beginning of the early modern period the erection of stone monuments was restricted to an extremely small group of households, such areas of graves for each village were fundamentally burial graveyards affiliated to villages and that in one corner some households erected stone monuments, which made it possible to restore the appearance of a graveyard.

In the case of Nakayama Nembutsu-ji Temple graveyard, of the ten *Daiji* that comprised this graveyard community, there are few stone monuments dating from the end of the medieval period through to the beginning of the early modern period to be found in the grave areas

of three specific Daiji, and this coincides with the discovery of the existence of more than a few stone monuments from the early modern period within the precincts of temples situated in the Daiji. We may assume that in the case of these Daiji burial took place at the village grave sites inside local graveyards and that stone monuments were erected within the precincts of temples situated in the villages. This also supports the notion that the use of graveyards according to a dual grave system was practiced.

There are indications that in some of the other local graveyards in the Nara Basin, including the Nagai graveyard in Nara City, graveyards followed the lines of the dual grave system. The findings of the surveys carried out here also point to the possibility that, as with Higashi-Sanchu in the Nara Basin during the early modern period, graveyards following the practice of the dual grave system were used over a wider area than previously anticipated. In light of this discovery, we must undertake a conscious search for the remains of other local graveyards.

Together with the matter of the forms of use of graveyards that are local graveyards, a point of particular note arising from the results of these surveys is that it has been possible to gain a clear understanding of the changes that have taken place over time in the erection of stone monuments in local graveyards as a result of an in-depth study of a large number of stone monuments. What is more, these changes that have taken place over time in the erection of stone monuments are not common to all local graveyards, as it has become clear that there are more than a few variations from graveyard to graveyard.

Stone monuments in the Hiraoka Gokuraku-ji Temple graveyard, whose dates are clear from inscriptions, gradually increase in number from the 16th century, through the 17th and 18th centuries, and, although there is a slight decrease in the 19th century, they increase suddenly for the 20th century. There are 230 remaining five-tiered monuments made from different stones, five-tiered monuments made from a single stone and hakobotoke without inscriptions that are believed to date from the 15th through 16th centuries. In the Nakayama Nembutsu-ji Temple graveyard there are two stone monuments known to date from the 15th century, 48 from the 16th century and an increase in the 17th century to 1,294. There is a sudden increase in the second half of the 17th century and the number of stone monuments reaches its peak from the first part through to the middle of the 18th century, with a total of 2,477 dating back to the 18th century. However, their number decreases to 1,175 in the 19th century, with no more than 1,729 dating from the 20th century. A count of the number of stone monuments with tiers representing the elements of air and wind, the most common of the five-tiered stone monuments without inscriptions, the majority of which is believed to date from the 15th and 16th centuries, reveals that there are 361, and that there are also 373

hakobotoke, most of which are thought to date from the second half of the 16th century. According to the results of an investigation by Jiro Muraki that attempted to type haiko-gorinto gravestones (gravestones depicting an image of five-tiered gravestones) it has been discovered that of haiko-gorinto gravestones, whose dates had been unknown, there is a considerable number that date back to the second half of the 16th century, and if we add these there is a substantial number that date from the 15th and 16th centuries.

Thus, the sudden increase in stone monuments from the second half of the 17th century through to the first half of the 18th century in both the Hiraoka Gokuraku-ji Temple graveyard and the Nakayama Nembutsuji-Temple graveyard does not merely indicate the spreading of a trend toward the erection of stone monuments, but is also extremely interesting in that it is possibly related to changes in the character of local graveyards themselves and changes to the grave system itself at the level of the local populace. Still, this issue requires further study of the situation of other local graveyards that includes a multilateral examination, which must be set as a theme for full-scale examination in the future. A huge challenge from an archaeological perspective is more accurate dating of stone monuments without inscriptions by means of an investigation that types these stone monuments.

In the course of undertaking these surveys it has been quite difficult to conduct a close study on the formation of these two local graveyards owing in part to the limitations imposed on the current study by the absence of excavation. However, in both cases there exist today a substantial number of stone monuments that date back to the 15th to 16th centuries, and the existence of large five-tiered monuments that may be assumed to possess the character of communal memorials, which are thought to date back to the 14th to 15th centuries, is significant. There is no doubt that the formation of graveyards that form the core of this type of local graveyard started during the 14th century at the latest.

We may interpret from the inscriptions on communal memorials found in the Yamashiro Kizu old communal graveyard and the Kawachi Kanko-ji Kouyama graveyard that the systematization of ceremonies at which funeral rites were held was encouraged by lower ranking priests of the Ritsu Sect. The formation of local graveyards is not easily explained by their connection with only the formation of communities called "sou" in those areas. The findings of the current survey have allowed us to conjecture that there is an exceedingly strong possibility that the formation of local graveyards in the Nara Basin dates back to the first half of the medieval period. On this point as well, a more multilateral interpretation is required concerning their formation. We cannot ignore the involvement of religious people such as priests of the Ritsu Sect who proceeded to systematize ceremonies involving funeral rites in response to requests from the people for "peace in this world and to be reborn in a good place in the

next world”, which occurred in conjunction with the formation of village communities called *sou*. Furthermore, the need for a study that includes its relationship with regional funeral sites (sites where remains were disposed of) dating from the end of the ancient period is a prerequisite for this.

With regard to this current survey, it is considerably significant that a combined investigation was conducted by means of surveys of the actual conditions of both village graveyards in Higashi-Sanchu and the Uda district in the eastern part of Nara Basin that have been understood for some time to be areas where the dual grave system existed and local graveyards in the basin area which have generally been understood for some time to be areas where the single grave system existed. The result is that with regard to local graveyards in the basin area as well, it has become clear that there is a strong possibility that during the early modern period use of graveyards following the dual grave system was practiced over a considerably wide area. Consequently, we may assume that the huge differences seen between graveyards in present-day Sanchu and Kunnaka represent nothing other than a disintegration of the dual grave system as well as differences in the rate at which they changed.

This matter needs to be studied together with the findings of the excavation of medieval graveyards that is taking place not only in Nara Prefecture but all over the Kinki region. In light of the fact that all of the medieval graveyards that have been excavated in this region basically constitute the building of stone monuments on top of burial sites, meaning that they were made following the single grave system, a huge problem arises in how to consistently explain their differences with the dual grave system that was adopted over a wide area during the early modern period. This is not merely restricted to changes in the grave system that occurred in the period between the end of the medieval period through to the early modern period, but needs to be considered within a large framework that entails the process of change in the burial systems and grave systems of regional societies since the ancient period. This naturally involves issues relating to the formation of villages as communal entities formed on the basis of geographical residence and *ie*, and also cannot be solved without being considered in relation to the role played by religion, including Buddhism, and the subject of the basic beliefs of the people.

This task of explicating and understanding the significance of the changes in this kind of local society and the changes to the burial systems and grave systems spanning the period from the medieval period through to the early modern period, including the role of Buddhism, is an extremely large task. We are keen to make further efforts to shed light on this question in light of the findings of the survey that we have reported here. In this sense as well, being

able to record the current situation of a number of village graveyards and information on all the stone monuments located in Sanchu and Kunnaka in Nara Prefecture at the end of the 20th century is a matter of great significance, and, though there may well be deficiencies, we are frankly delighted that we have achieved the anticipated objectives of this research. We will be happy if the results of this survey on graveyards in Nara Prefecture reported here should be of even a little use to research on topics ranging from burial systems and grave systems through to the basic beliefs of people, and also social history concerning funerals.