

Formation of the "Household" and Social Relationships
in a Southern Kantō Village during the 17th Century

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The 17th century was an important time in Japanese social history. Particularly, this period saw great changes in agriculture. The research discussed in this paper attempts to clarify concrete aspects of this change and the major characteristics of the resulting social relationships. An earlier paper showed, through the example of a specific village, how the sudden increase in households in the 17th century was brought about through the equal partitioning of fields, and that the resulting social relationships also were relatively equal. This paper follows the earlier one and analyzes Renkōji village in southern Kantō District. The results are as follows:

(1) In this village until the end of the 16th century, five powerful farmers collectively controlled the smaller farmers. The land survey in 1598 included the powerful farmers as *Nengu* (land-tax) payers, but it also recorded the names of the smaller farmers. Ten years later these, too, had become *Nengu* (land-tax) payers, giving a total of 14 in the village.

(2) Fifty years later in the middle of the 17th century, there were 30 farming households in the village, and after that the number increased rapidly to 60 households at the end of the 17th century. The number of households did not increase through a process of subordinate farmers or servants setting up independent households, but rather the multitude of households appeared through the equal partitioning of the fields of already existing small farmers. This reached a peak in the late 17th century.

(3) Even today, households with long histories in the village invariably have one house called the *Jishinrui*. The *Jishinrui* is the center of weddings and funerals for that household, and looks after it in other ways. The attachment is hereditary. In some cases, two houses are jointly the *Jishinrui* each other, while in other cases one house joins with another house as the *Jishinrui*. The first form became standard among households established in the 17th century.

(4) This kind of *Jishinrui* relationship was necessitated by the fact that the households were established by the equal partitioning of fields. This further prescribed the nature of the social structure of the whole village.