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Social Relationships and Local Differences : An Archaeological Analysis of Gravestones in the Edo Period

KUTSUKI Ryo

The focus of this paper concerns the origin of a distinct local difference between gravestones and the influence of the social relationship upon the gravestone buyers' subjective choices. My argument is based on the gravestones which were used during the Edo Period (A.D.1603-1868) at the Umedani, Kaseyama and Kizu village in Kizu Town, and at the Kannonji village in Kamo Town Kyoto Prefecture Japan.

My examination of the way in which gravestones with a distinctive arcshaped top were distributed and of the frequency of materials shows that 1) Although Umedani village along with Kaseyama and Kizu villages belonged to the same community which was called Kizu-Go (木津郷), there were local differences in the Umedani village gravestones; 2) The frequency of materials in Umedani village had a strong resemblance to that of Kannonji village which belonged to another community called Kamo-Go (加茂郷).

These findings show that Umedani village had a distinct local difference in Kizu-Go community and probably indicate that gravestone buyers in Umedani village ordered from the stonemason, not in Kizu-Go community, but in Kamo-Go community. According to the historical documents, there were about three hundred legal battles between Umedani village and the other villages in Kizu-Go community. An old map shows that the main road in the Umedani village led to Kamo-Go directly. This historical evidence suggests that there was social opposition between Umedani village and the other villages in Kizu-Go, and there was a closer relationship between Umedani village and Kamo-Go community than with Kizu-Go community. I argue that such social relationships influenced the gravestone buyer's subjective choices and caused them to order from the stonemason in Kamo-Go community.