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THE ARCHITECTURE OF SETTLEMENTS IN THE JAPANESE COUNTRYSIDE — A Study of the Tokorogo District

■ Introduction

Throughout Japan, the varying landscapes of villages and towns are preserved under the cultural properties protection laws. These programs are taking hold and the number of protected sites has increased as a result. Regions are selected based on their strong historical character and skill in regenerating their community.

I was part of the investigation group for the protection of the Tokorogo district, (Daisen Town, Tottori Prefecture,) a village where a traditional farm village landscape is still maintained. (Fig.1)

In this paper I write about farm village typologies and their architecture.

□ 0-1. Research Abstract

In this opportunity, we measure the cultural value of the Tokorogo district as a cultural property. This is one part of the process in this conservation project to support and foster the continuity of the surrounding farm village landscape.

The Tokorogo district is a farm village with approximately 70 dwellings and 300 inhabitants. Despite having a home registered as a “national important cultural property” as the center piece of this village, several attempts to conserve the surrounding old farm houses and canal that function to maintain the traditional countryside image, did not receive much support.

Finally, the community decided to conduct a Traditional Properties General Investigation to assess its classification. The investigation took place between 2008 and 2010, and the results were presented in September of 2010. (Fig.2)



Fig.1



Fig.2

These studies are framed by “The Cultural Properties Protection” procedures and the investigation was funded by The Agency of Cultural Affairs under The Ministry of Education.

□ 0-2. *Program for the preservation of traditional districts*

Traditional monuments preservation district program (TMPDP), established in 1975 as an extension of “the law for the protection of cultural properties” must respect the autonomy of the municipal government. In cooperation with urban planning, it shall be preserving and developing townscapes and historic settlements.

“Traditional monuments” are classified by the law for the protection of cultural properties as a group of traditional buildings of high value that comprise scenic beauty and historic surroundings.

Municipal governments identify the traditional monuments and the environment that is integral to them. Districts with this kind of historical integrity are presented, selected and finally prepared for preservation. Based on the request of the municipal government, the central government carefully inspects areas of particular value in order to determine “the selection” of an area as an "Important traditional monuments preservation district". Following this selection, they support the actions of local governments.

The TMPDP is a bottom-up process, meaning the whole program starts from the municipal government level and goes to the central government. Thus, it is no longer a top-down structure.

There are currently 93 districts that have been selected as “Important traditional monuments preservation district” (2011.04.01).

(Fig.3 Imai, Nara Prefecture)

(Fig.4 Miyama, Kyoto Prefecture)



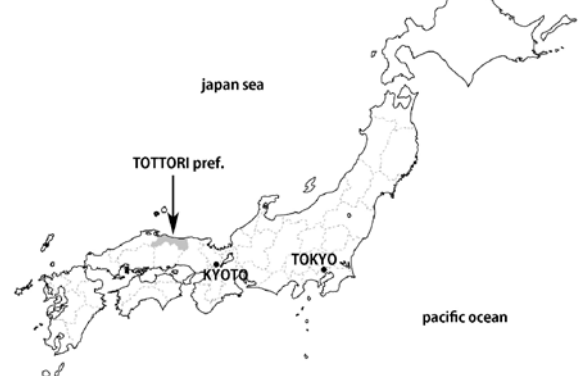
Fig.3



Fig.4



Fig.5



■ 1. **The Tokorogo district**

□ 1-1. *Location*

Located in the town of Daisen, in the western part of Tottori Prefecture, the district is one of the farm villages that developed on the foot of Mt. Daisen. (Mt. Daisen is a part of Daisen Oki National Park with an elevation of 1709 m.) (Fig.5)

Mt. Daisen is also well known as a holy Buddhist mountain that has flourished as a pilgrimage site through the ages. (Fig.6)

The surrounding landscape is composed of vast rice plantations. Gentle slopes continue up to the foot of Mt.Daisen on the village's south side. 1.7 kilometers to the north, one can reach the Sea of Japan. To the east is the Amida River that receives its water from Mt. Daisen.

Fig.5

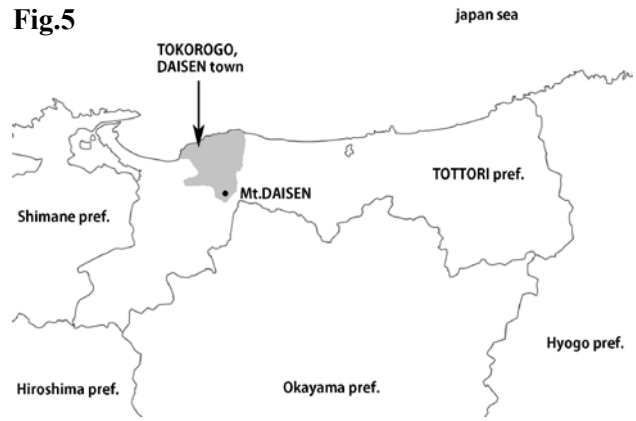


Fig.6

□ 1-2. *History*

The District of Tokorogo was known as the Tokorogo villages until World War Two. The district's origins date back to medieval times as a manor for the Shimogamo shrine in Kyoto.

The Mikamo family is considered the oldest family in the district. (Fig.7) Here, an old earthwork fortification and an embankment formed by a planted stone wall still remain. This kind of earthwork fortification is a type of construction that was made before Heino Bunri (兵農分離: a governmental system where the Samurai had the highest rank within the population). This is particularly evident in the mansion of the Dogou (土豪, medieval landlords). This proves that the

Fig.7



family had been living there since medieval times. (Fig.8) During the modern era, Tokorogo district declared its position as a farming village. As recorded in the Gouson-takacho (郷村高帳: the villages record book of the Tottori government historical record) in 1701, there were 30 dwellings with 230 inhabitants and 30 cattle. At that time the productivity of the village was rising every year, and grew during the modern era to about the size of the current settlement.



Fig.8

In 1757, the Kadowaki family, the largest landlord of Tokorogo district was designated as the Daishōya (大庄屋, a kind of head family overseeing several villages).

The Daishōya's role was to act as the administration of the 30 surrounding villages, collect payment for the government (tribute) and maintain order (sometimes judging simple legal disputes). In regard to the administrative role it played, this village was recognized as the central village of this region.

In the modern era, the district of Tokorogo was annexed into another grouping of 12 villages, but the government decided to build the town hall, a school, a post office and finally a police station at Tokorogo to show its importance as a center during the past.

However, the construction of a train station in 1926 gradually moved the public facilities closer to the station and Tokorogo lost its presence as a center.

After World War Two, the Tokorogo district was included as part of the town of Daisen and has continued this way until the present day.

□ 1-3. *The Kadowaki Family House*

The Kadowaki family house (a large straw-thatched roof house) stands out in Tokorogo district and its ancestry was well known as being a former village head family. (Fig.9, 10)

According to the Kazōmonjo (家蔵文書: an old document of household possessions) the Omoya (主屋: the main building of the house area) is identified as a

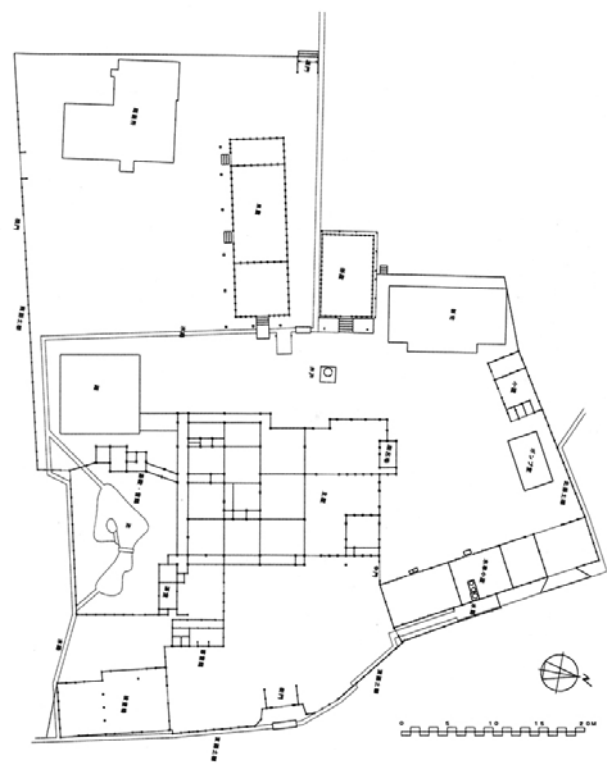


Fig.9

structure built in 1769 and is classified as the largest and oldest of the district.

Except for an addition made in one area, the house is well conserved without any great alterations. In 1974, the Omoya of this home was designated as an important cultural property by the commission of the law for the protection of cultural properties in order to represent the remains of a large traditional residential structure in the western Tottori prefecture. Moreover, the position of the Omoya and its spatial distribution

on the house site clearly shows the manner of life in the house of the village head family (Daishōya) in the Edo period. In 1993 the water mill (ends of 19c.), the rice warehouse (1892) and the treasures warehouse (1916) were also designated as important cultural properties. Thus, including all the buildings comprising the house.

This house represents the core of the Tokorogo district village landscape thanks to its traditional structure and large scale.



Fig.10

■ 2. Composition of the settlement and its architecture

□ 2-1. Spatial composition of the settlement

Urbanization of the Tokorogo district (housing and agriculture land distribution) has preserved its zoning as drawn on a map from 1843(Fig.11), verifying the inheritance of the land zoned for farming/residential use in the 19th century. (Fig.12)

Despite the irregular form of land divisions for each building that makes up the historical layers defining the Tokorogo district, as a whole they create a clear spatial organization.

The villages formed around Bouryo road which comes from the sea side (north) and connects to Mt.Daisen (south direction). Here the continuity of buildings stops abruptly and as a result, the village is divided into two parts (northern and southern side).

The Kamo shrine lies approximately to the north and creates a virtual line passing over the land that interrupts any construction. This place is called “The Gods Passage”.

The Tokorogo district is composed of two adjacent parts that total 800m of north-south and 600m of east-west extension. The upper stream of the Amida river in the south-east side is called Kami (カミ: upper or superior part) and the downstream in the north-west side called Shimo (シモ: lower or inferior part). Historically, it has been passed down that the “Shimo” settlement was formed in the middle of the 17th century by the Kadowaki family, the head of the village at that time. However, the presence of the Mikamo family dating from the middle ages on the “Kami” side of the village, show the formation of this side village known as ‘Kami’, around this family house. In other words, ‘The Gods passage’ separates the old and new formations of the village and the two influential families represent a strong historical axis. The spatial structure of the village was determined by two axes, the previously mentioned ‘Gods Passage’ that continues until the village shrine and the road crossing (Bouryo road) that runs to Mt.Daisen, the holy Buddhist mountain. These two roads have deep religious significance to the village lifestyle and also act as the axes that define the formation of the village. (Fig.13)



Fig.11



Fig.12

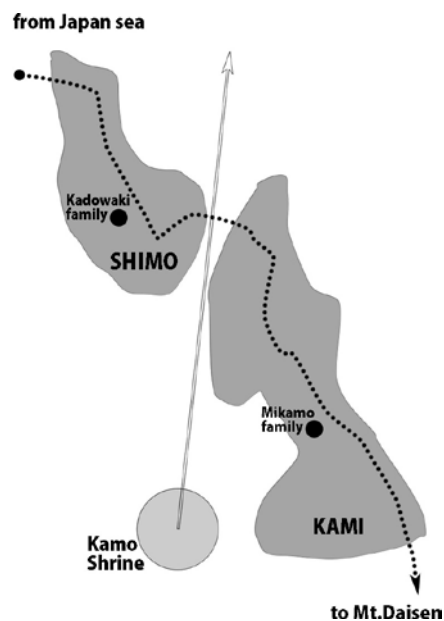


Fig.13

□ 2-2. *Site plan of homes*

The village road size is approximately one car width and has not changed since its establishment. Building sites line either side of these narrow streets surrounded by house moats and hedges that clearly define the site perimeter of each house. (Fig.14)

At the entrance, a gate is placed which is an extension of the Naya, (納屋: barn). The Omoya is built in the center of the site, facing the road. The Omoya runs parallel to the road, and its entrance is structured perpendicularly in the Hirairi style (平入り: a main entrance on the side of the house that runs parallel to the roof's ridge). (Fig.15)

Other independent buildings are placed around the Omoya such as the earthen storehouse, the Naya and the Kawaya (厠, bathroom). Some houses also had stables that were a result of the past history of cattle-raising in the village.

The land in front of each house had a similar composition in response to waterways flowing from Mt.Daisen. Water was used for farming irrigation. In addition, people drew from this water to use for domestic purposes in the house.

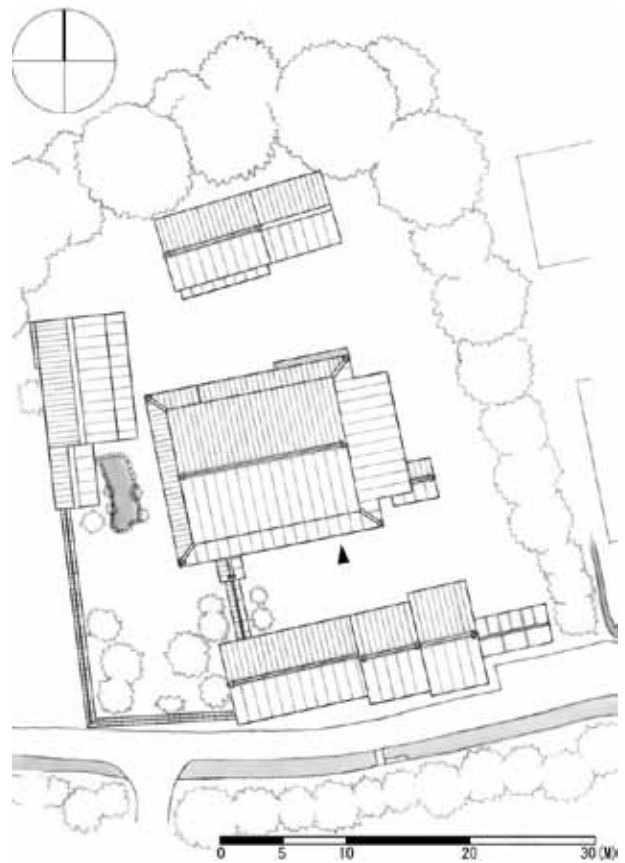


Fig.14

Fig.15



Different areas of the house have different uses that are determined by their position relative to the Omoya. Between the gate and the Omoya there is a large space. The Naya and the stables (building concerning to the farming activities) flank this space because of its close relationship with the farm land outside of the house. The storehouse is built on the other side of the site, behind the Omoya. The well is also placed there, along with the private areas of the house.

In the larger homes there is also a garden that encloses the Zashiki (座敷, a Japanese room with tatami mats). The garden gate itself, creates a complex compartment.

The village of Tokorogo maintains an important village image thanks to their residential structures that have common features over a wide area. The waterways that connect each house to the land functions as an important landscape element that is distinctive to the beauty of this region.

□ 2-3. Plans of individual homes

Japan is a land of diverse natural environments, including climate and vegetation. Accordingly, a diversity of houses exist. Their spatial distribution is typically divided by the Yuka(ユカ: the raised floor) and the Doma (ドマ: the earthen floor at the ground level). The houses in the Tokorogo district are also structured in this way. (Fig.16)

As a result of its function as a working space, the Doma takes a large area of the house and the Kudo(クド: traditional cooking stove) and the Nagashi(ナガシ: sink) are located within it. In the Tokorogo district, the Doma occupies a third of the Omoya. It has its own entrance and the people celebrate a folk ritual called Doma that has strong religious connotations.

The Doma is not just a working space, it represents the center of farming life.

For traditional farm houses all around Japan, the Yuka is essentially divided into 4 rectangles known as Ma (間: Japanese traditional spatial division). Each room is separated by sliding fittings known as Fusuma and Shōji sliding doors. They can be removed to makes the rooms into a single space for families to celebrate different events.

In the daily living space, several layers can be recognized: the Omote (オモテ: public space) and the Oku (オク: private space). There is also the Kami (カミ:

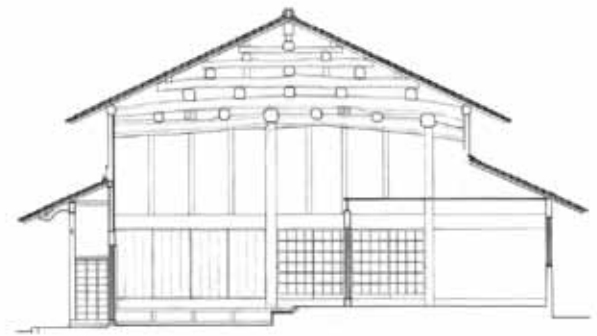


Fig.16

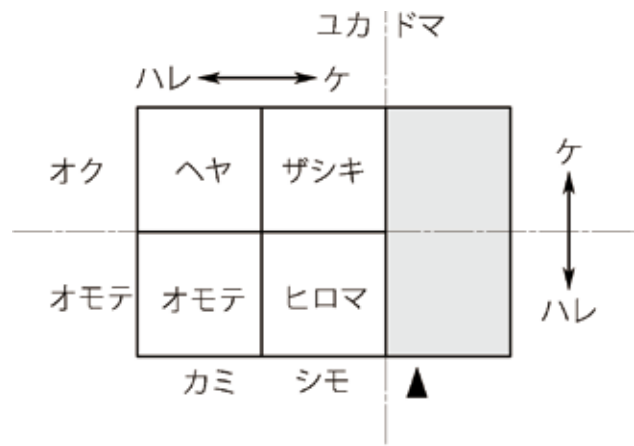


Fig.17

upper space) and the Shimo (シモ: lower space). See diagram on the right. (Fig.17)

Usually the distribution of spaces in traditional houses follows some rules based on tradition. For example the Omote space for guest rooms and the Ura space for family rooms.

□ 2-4. *Differentiation of the entrance*

As described above, in the Tokorogo district, the design of the floor plans follow a particular manner that depends upon the location of its Doma. If the main area of the house is on the left side of the Doma it will be Hidari katte (左勝手: left oriented house) (Fig.18) and if it is on the right, it will be Migi katte (右勝手: right oriented house) (Fig.19).

It is possible to find a rule for the choice of which type. On the road leading to Mt. Daisen, houses on the East side of the road are Hidari katte and those on the west side are Migi katte. (Fig.20)

The floor plans follow an axial symmetry. Therefore, all houses keep a strict order with the Omote space facing towards Mt.Daisen.

This arrangement is a result of Mt.Daisen being an important holy Buddhist mountain, and the understanding of the Omote as a space for life celebrations. Based on analysis of these examples, it is concluded that the village settlement and the spatial composition of each house is the result of an intimate relationship with the cultural beliefs of its inhabitants.

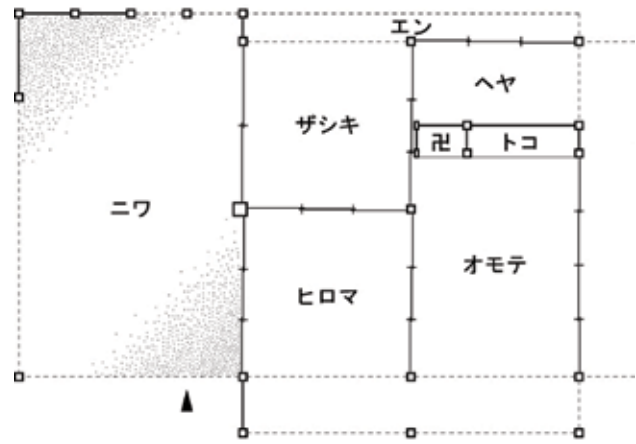


Fig.18

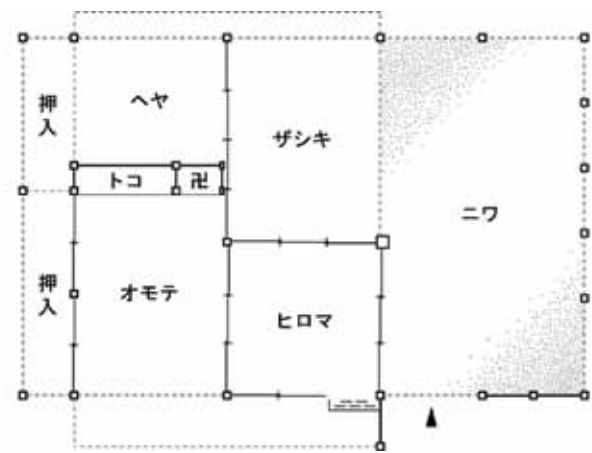


Fig.19

■ 3. **Traditional homes built in the modern age and their context.**

In 1903, a construction document was recorded for the Minami-Kadowaki family for the construction expenses of their folk house. (Fig.21)

From this document, we can understand the construction expenses in detail such as material fees and the cost of labor for the workers. From the analysis of this document, the transformation of the traditional homes of the modern age at Tokorogo district can be described.

□ 3-1. *Outline of the Minami-Kadowaki family house and its construction.*

The Minami-Kadowaki family is a branch of the Kadowaki family (owners of the previously mentioned

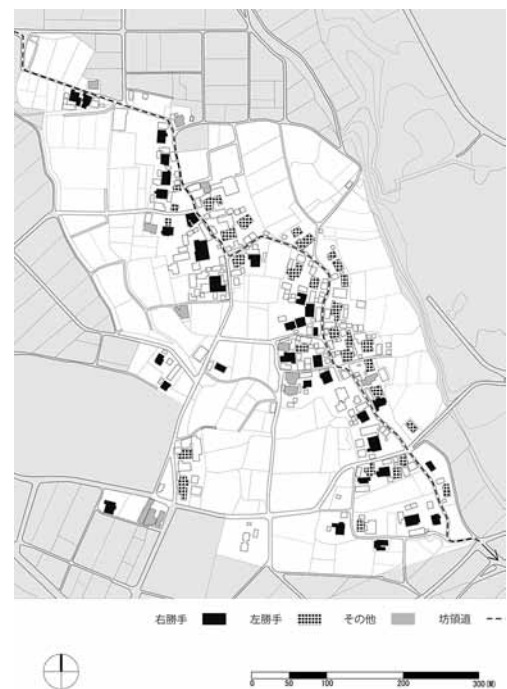


Fig.20

house that is an Important Cultural Property). It is located directly south of the head family's house. (Minami :south in Japanese. Minami-Kadowaki has been a landlord for generations as well as the head family. 17 buildings, including the Omoya and a whitewashed warehouse, are placed on the site that is surrounded by a gate wall. Its landscape of various roofs rising up is unique among the village landscape of Tokorogo. (Fig.22)

Finally, the construction record was completed in 1920, after almost 17 years. All the other buildings were constructed at this time, except for the Omoya and two warehouse buildings.

Earlier documents remaining from the 1860s also indicate and confirm the conditions of the site. (Fig.23) Through checking this document, we were able to find that new Zashiki areas and whitewashed warehouses were completely constructed during the period of 1903-1920. (Fig.24) Additions were made to older buildings to enlarge them. Here, the house site was extended to the west, increasing in size by almost 40% . In other words, the current roof landscape of the Minamikadowaki's was formed during the recording of the construction record documents referenced in this study. (Fig.25)

□ 3-2. *Construction material procurement from great distances*

In addition to some villages around Tokorogo district, the commerce and industry districts from the coastal areas were well known for their ready access to construction materials. Among them, Yodoe was the distribution base for construction materials. This was due to the fact that Yodoe was the nearest port, and the nearest train station for the Tokorogo district. Construction materials arriving at Yodoe were transported to the Tokorogo district by two-wheeled cart and human power.

The time period of the document referenced in this study coincided with construction of the national railway. The lines were laid quickly, especially around the Tokorogo district. Therefore, this document is important to understand the impact of the railway on the distribution of construction materials.

Most of the construction materials came from a remote area outside of the prefecture and were used for the finishing of the Zashiki room.

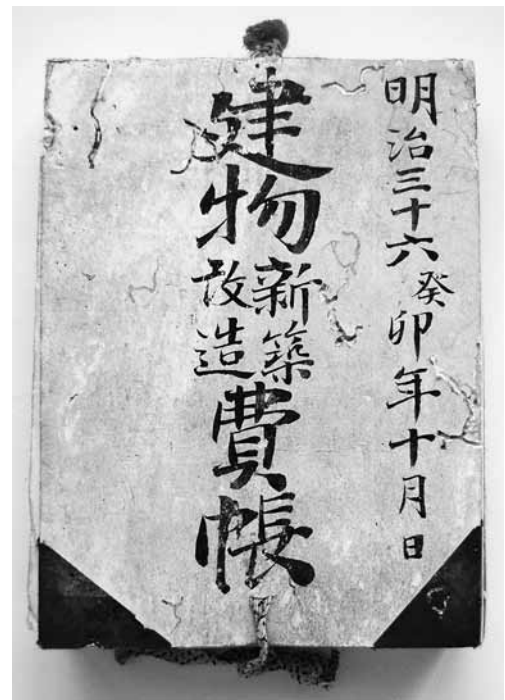


Fig.21



Fig.22

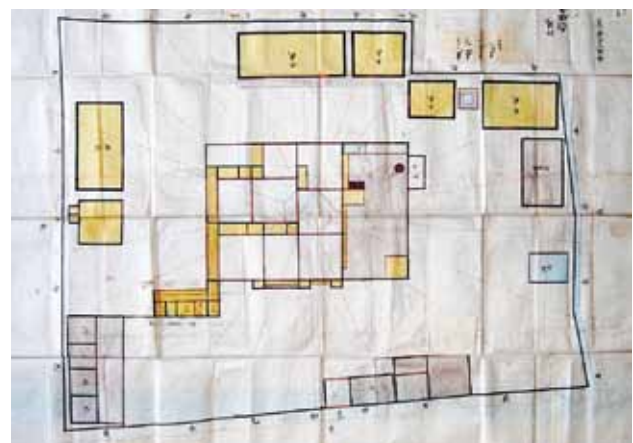


Fig.23

Findings drawn in regard to the railway and material distribution indicate that the range of the procurement area was reflected not by the railway extension, but by shipping routes.

It was found that roof tiles had been transported by ship from Shimane prefecture.

Before the railway lines, some special finishing materials came from Kyoto and Osaka, but the transport route is unknown. However, we know that Kyoto, Osaka, Shimane and Yodoe were historically on the West Harbors Route by the Inland Sea that was used by a range of shipping vessels.

The history of these vessels for materials transportation dates from the early modern era.

Furthermore, thanks to the widespread railway system, construction materials could be transported to neighboring prefectural capitals (Matsue and Tottori). The movement of construction materials from Matsue and Tottori coincided with the opening of the railway, extending the possibility of material procurement from different areas over great distances.

□ 3-3. Valuable wood from regional expositions and exhibitions

This construction document also provided information regarding the procurement of so-called “rare” wood (the classification for valuable wood in Japan). For example, ironwoods (a hard wood) that comes from Osaka is used for the Tokonoma (display space inside the alcove) pillar.

It was noticed that rare wood selection was made in local expositions and exhibitions. These modern age product fairs presented effective opportunities for the acquisition of rare woods.

□ 3-4. Distribution of wood from sacred forests

There are six cases found of the word Jinja, a Japanese shrine, in the document above. All of the data is related with the procurement of wood for construction since 1912.

After 1912, the Japanese government developed a plan for the restructuring and unification of all shrines across Japan and established the improvement of their income for their labor continuity. At this time, shrine forests began to distribute large amounts of wood for construction. In the case of the Tokorogo district, the Hiragi and Kamo unified shrines could act as the providers.



Fig.24

Fig.25



It is not possible to know the specifics of all building cases specifically, but we can find records from the Minami-Kadowaki family showing payments to shrines, that indicates the sacred forest wood trade of those times.

□ 3-5. *Conclusion*

From the construction record document analyzed in this research, it was possible to verify that the procurement of construction materials (especially wood finishing) took place in a widespread area that stretched outside the prefecture.

Distribution was primarily enabled by the development of transportation systems in the modern era. This involved not only the continuity of the shipping systems, but also the improvement of the railways lines.

The appearance of exhibitions and exposition centers as trade markets for wood used in construction, the entry of shrines into the wood market pushed by new government policies, along with all other events previously mentioned, influenced the procurement of construction materials used in the construction of traditional homes in the Tokorogo district.

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АРХИТЕКТУРАТА НА НАСЕЛБИТЕ ВО ЈАПОНСКАТА ОКОЛИНА
- СТУДИЈА ЗА ОКОЛИНАТА ТОКОРОГО-

Резиме

Низ цела Јапонија преку закони за културна заштита се зачувани различни пејсажи на села и градови.

Во овој труд се разгледуваат архитектонските населби надвор од јапонските градовите во преку студијата за реонот Токорого.

Во овој контекст се и четирите точки:

1. Краток осврт на програмата за заштита на традиционални реони
2. Историјатот и локацијата на реонот Токорого
3. Традиционалните домови изградени во современо време и нивниот контекст