

Research on Construction and Spatial Structure of Religious Space of the Izumo Grand Shrine

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1. Introduction

In this study, the Izumo Grand Shrine will be discussed, as it is considered one of the most ancient shrines, which is supposedly the original form of a garden in a palace. The purpose is to uncover the following items: the precinct and ancient forms of rituals at the Izumo Grand Shrine, space utilization structure through annual events at the Shrine and related shrines, and history of planting formations in the precinct.

2. Study Methods

In this article, in order to clarify space utilization structure at the Izumo Grand Shrine and related shrines, and history of planting formations in the precinct, the following methods have been applied: Topographic maps, sectional views, and soil layer charts were studied together with analysis of paintings to apprehend the process of scenery changes and soil layers of each time.

3. Results and Considerations

i. From Yayoi Period until the end of the 10th Century

Based on the excavation report of Izumo Precinct remains, a flow path originating from the south of the current front shrine has been detected, and its shape was assumedly Y-shaped. There is also a record that weapon-type bronze ware and jewels (green jade jewel) from the Yayoi Period were excavated during the construction in the Kanbun Era from the east of Inochi-Nushi-No-Yashiro (one of the smaller shrines attached to the Grand Shrine).

ii. From the beginning of the 11th Century until pre-construction of the Hoji Era

Since Year 4 in the Chogen Era (1031) until the ritual transfer of the main building in Year 2 in the Hoji Era (1248), the building fell five times. The average period between a transfer until a fall was 31 years. Okano (2010) stated that it was reasonable to expect that a building without a foundation would slant due to an uneven settlement and the liquefaction phenomenon.

iii. From the construction of the Hoji Era until another construction of the Keicho Era

According to a painting which is assumed to have captured the ritual transfer of the main building in Year 2 in the Hoji Era (1248), embankment construction was completed on the east side of the precinct; therefore, the building is believed to have been constructed on the elevated ground.

iv. From the construction of the Keicho Era until another construction of the Kanbun Era

Excavation research (Year 12 of the Heisei Era) unveiled that the structure of the main building was not earth-fast construction called Hottate-bashira, but was the first trial of the cornerstone method. The design is heavily influenced by Buddhism.

v. From the construction of the Kanbun Era until another construction of the Enkyo Era

More effective equipment has been completed in order to protect the shrine from flood and debris flows. The ground was gradually elevated with stone masonry as measures to flooding and landslides. The stones used for the masonry were carved out from a giant rock behind Inochi-Nushi-No-Yashiro.

vi. After the construction of the Enkyo Era

From the construction of Kizuki Taisha, the current Izumo Grand Shrine, in the Enkyo Era until the present, construction methods have been based on construction from the Kanbun Era. A new building was constructed in the first year of the Enkyo Era (1744) with partial modifications with a new placement, and the building still remains the same shape until now.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, history of three items around Izumo Grand Shrine have been clarified: its construction, spatial structure of religious space, and planting formations in the precinct.

Keywords: Shrine, tranisition, spacial structure