

## 26. Uchikowashi riots and famines

### 26.1 Uchikowashi riots in the Tenmei era

Peasant uprising and uchikowashi riots most frequently occurred in the Tenmei era (1781 - 1789) of the Edo Period. *Harifuda* (placard) was posted in villages around Fussa on February 27, 1784 (Tenmei 4). The harifuda read "Rice and other cereals maintain their high price due to the bad harvests of the recent years. Certain persons have bought up much produce from their neighboring villages. We would like to negotiate price with them. We ask the residents of your village to cooperate. If there is no cooperation from your village we can be expected to arrive at your village to force our demands." This harifuda seemed to be written after discussion by three leading headmen of Hamura Village and *kumigashira* at Senkawajosui Aqueduct *jinya*(manor house). The harifuda were posted in 37 villages in one night.

On the following day, February 28, twenty, thirty thousand farmers gathered at Ikejiri of Hakonegasaki Village (Mizuho Town). The uchikowashi riot took place from the night of the 28th to daybreak on the 29th. Four houses in Nakato Village (Musashimurayama City) and one house in Takagi Village (Higashiyamato City) were plundered. The uchikowashi riot was over in one day with 63 farmers arrested. Farmers of Fussa and Kumagawa villages participated in it. The riot was an explosion of farmers' anger against high prices of rice and other cereals due partly to bad crops and partly to the cornering of the cereals market by local merchants.



Fig.162 Safe shelter against Tenpo Era Famine ("Kosairuminkyujutsuzu", WATANABE Kazan).

## 26.2 Kanto-torishimari-deyaku and the reform union villages

The *Kanto-torishimari-deyaku* officer was established in 1805 (Bunka 2) to restore public peace and order to the Kanto region. After the Tenmei Era Famine devastated some agricultural villages, farmer classification widened, a wealthy farmer class emerging. Many other farmers lost their lands and faced ruin. Known as *mushukunin* or as *toseinin* (homeless wanderers) these idle folk became a threatening power. The Kanto-torishimari-deyaku was established to deal with the such situation.

The *kaikaku-kumiai-mura* (reform union village) was established in 1827 (Bunsei 10) to bring a further degree of control. This series of movements is known as the *Bunsei-no-kaikaku* (Bunsei Reformation). A *ko-kumiai-mura* was composed of three to five villages irrespective of lords' patronage. These associations occupied the entire Kanto region. Larger scale *yoseba-kumiai-mura* were formed from up to ten *kumiai-mura*. Fussa and Kumagawa villages belonged to the Haijima-shuku-kumiai-mura.

## 26.3 Tenpo Era Famine

In the late Edo Period, unfavorable weather brought frequent poor harvests to agricultural villages nationwide through the Tenpo era (1830 - 1843) causing serious famine and starvation. This serious situation extended into the Tama region. The *Tokoro-no-hi* stone monument preserved in Kogenji Temple, established 1836 Tenpo 7, Akiruno City (formerly Tokura Village, Tama-gun) describes numerous starving farmers from Haijima, Kumagawa and other villages gathering in Tokurayama (Akiruno City) to gather *Tokoro* yam. Village restlessness brought the Harifuda riots to Ome and Murayama, and another riot to Hachioji that year.



Fig.163 *Tokoro-no-hi* stone monument of Tenpo Era Famine (Kogenji Temple, Akiruno City). Shuho Hakugan, a the Buddhist priest of Kogenji Temple, inscribed the stone with news of the poverty and famine of 1836 (Tenpo 7).