

27. Niwaba and Kumi associations

27.1 Special groups in villages

Edo Period farmers had to cooperate in matters of daily life, agriculture and other areas. The shogunate ordered administrative groups called *goningumi* to be formed, whose minimum unit was composed of five neighboring houses. This measure was found to be insufficient, so various supplemental groups were formed. The *wakamonogumi*, composed of younger generations, some religion based groups and various other groups arose as necessity demanded.

The niwaba group of Fussa Village was linked by neighborhood associations in the local community. The word "niwaba" appeared mainly in the Nishitama region, however, its range and membership differed slightly according to the regions.

27.2 Functions and structures of the Niwaba

Minami niwaba, Uchide niwaba, Ushihama niwaba and Nabegayato niwaba (also known as Kita niwaba) arose in Kumagawa Village in the Edo Period. These four groups, linked by neighborhood associations, all shared allegiance to a common lord. Uchide niwaba arose in Hatamoto Tazawa's family fiefdom, Nabegayato niwaba in Hatamoto Nagashio's family fiefdom, Minami niwaba in the shogunate fiefdom and Ushihama niwaba arose in another shogunate fiefdom.

Niwaba were Shuku, Nagasawa, Bakurodake, Ushihama, Ueuchide, Bakurogayato, Kamiyashiki, Haragayato, Nakabusa, Kayato in Fussa



Fig.164 Picture map of Kumagawa Village (The Ishikawa family, 1788 (Tenmei 8)). This is a picture map submitted to the shogunate Junkenshi (shogunate inspector).

Village. Fussa Village was governed by five shogunate lords and Hatamotos through to the early Edo Period. Later this village was governed directly by the shogunate.

The diary of the Ishikawa family, who appointed themselves headmen of the shogunate fiefdom of Kumagawa Village, describes events run by niwaba units. Many niwaba events were religious in nature, such as pilgrimages to the *Chichibu* area's temples, distribution of holy Harunasan amulets, construction of village shrine, etc. The running of festivals and annual events was undertaken by particular niwaba. Wedding and funeral ceremonies were also arranged by niwaba units.

The niwaba functioned as a mutual aid system and became the minimum unit of village finance such as *tanomoshi-ko* or *mujin*. If any serious disease occurred, niwaba approached shaman to pray for recovery. Niwaba headmen met to solve any irrigation water supply problems occurring between farmers. Niwaba headmen met village officials to solve fire damage settlements. The niwaba was concerned with numerous village situations.

In these ways the tightly connected niwaba provided day to day support for farmers in official and private capacities through cooperation with village headman as though the niwaba itself was an actual village. The "Shinpen Musashi Fudoki-ko", compiled in the Bunsei era (1818 - 1829), states that 222 households existed in Fussa Village in those days. The confirmed number of niwaba is 10. Accordingly the number of households per niwaba would have been about 20.



Fig.165 Utensil box bearing its niwaba name in Chinese ink. Trays and bowls were common property of the niwaba. They were used in wedding and funeral ceremonies.

27.3 A village group for annual tribute payment

In Fussa Village, the *nengu* (annual tribute) was officially paid by two groups: Kin'emon *Gumi* (group) and Bunzaemon *Gumi*. However, the Koshikoku of Kawasaki Village was separated from the Bunzaemon *Gumi*, accordingly the annual tributes were really paid by three groups within Fussa Village. These groups functioned for annual tribute payment under the control of several village headmen and village officials.

The *muragumi* (village group), existing locally, was established presupposing the existence of the well functioning *niwaba*. The collection of annual tributes would be facilitated through the people being formed again into the *muragumi* group.



Fig.166 Koshinto pagoda established by Shimo Niwaba Kochu. It was established in 1796 (Kansei 8). The words "Shimo Niwaba Kochu" are inscribed at the left of the base. Its material is natural limestone and it is located at the main gate of Seigan'in Temple.