
The District Supervisor Office Field System and Its Actual Operation: A Window on Ancient Japanese Regional Society

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Explanatory Note

The main aim of this contribution is to make an examination of the office fields (*shikibunden*) of district supervisor from both aspects of the legal system and actual historic conditions.

District supervisors were regional government officials in ancient Japan, bureaucrats who were entrusted with administering their districts. They were chosen among men of influence in their local areas, and thus were persons intimately connected with the local society.

Office fields were paddy lands provided to the person currently holding a particular office, who could take the harvest as his income while in that office. Under the civil code, office fields were provided to officials from the top echelon of the State Council (Ministers and Senior Counselors) and local bureaucrats of Dazaifu Headquarters, as well as the district supervisors.

In this contribution, an evaluation of the legal basis of office fields of district supervisors, stipulated under the Rice Paddies Code, is made while taking into consideration the Tang Civil Code, which was the model for the Japanese Civil Code.

As a result, aspects of the administration and operation of district supervisor office fields that were not stipulated in the Rice Paddies Code have become clear. This indicates that the discretionary powers of those persons allotted these paddies was strong, and that they were lands to which the influence of the central government did not easily extend. Accordingly it has been possible to form the hypothesis that the actual conditions of district supervisor office fields go back to the time prior to the *ritsuryō* system, and that lands over which the local elite's influence had been strong were likely redefined as office fields.

Next, as this hypothesis needs testing, an examination was made using an actual example of district supervisor's office fields. A *mokkan* (wooden document) recovered from the Attame *jōri* (field system) site in the city of Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture, is related to the district supervisor's office fields, and it is believed that the office fields of the Iwaki district supervisor were located in the vicinity.

As the region is held to have been a base for the locally powerful elite from the Kofun period on, this situation conforms closely to the hypothesis given above, that office fields of district supervisors were redefined lands over which the local elite's influence had been strong.

From the above it can be said that the position of district supervisor office fields within the legal structure reflected the realities of local society. From this, whereas the new institutional framework of district supervisor office fields was established on the one hand through the implementation of the *ritsuryō* system, it can be seen that the traditional influence of the regional elite was not necessarily negated on the other, and from this the limits to the ancient state's centralized control over the regions, and the actual shape of conditions in regional society, can both be read.

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I. Introduction

District supervisors (*gunji*) served as the direct agents for regional control of the ancient Japanese state. Because they were chosen from among locally powerful figures, their influence over regional society was extremely strong. Accordingly, the question of how to position district supervisors within the state system was a significant problem for the ancient state, which aimed at regional control under its centralized authority. District supervisors are therefore highly significant figures when making considerations of the ancient Japanese state.

These district supervisors were to be assigned paddy land called *gunji shikibunden*, district supervisor office fields. Office fields (*shikibunden*) were a type of salary allotted to individuals in particular government posts, and during their time in office they could take the harvests for their income. The distribution of office fields to district supervisors is stipulated in Clause 32, on *gunji shikibunden*, of the Rice Paddies Code.

Clause 32 appears in the Yōrō Rice Paddies Code as follows:

For district supervisor office fields, six *chō*¹ in area of paddy land are to be distributed to *tairyō*, four *chō* to *shōryō*, and two *chō* each to *shusei* and *shuchō*.² In *kyōgō* [areas deficient in paddy land due to topography, etc.] it is not always necessary to fulfill these designated amounts.

According to this, office fields were to be provided to district supervisors, from *tairyō* down to *shuchō*, in amounts according to rank. While differing in matters such as the appellation for office fields being *shikiden* rather than *shikibunden*, this regulation for their distribution can also be ascertained for the Taihō Rice Paddies Code. Therefore it was the arrangement to supply district supervisors with office fields from the start of the implementation of the Taihō Administrative Code.

Traditionally, as office fields for district supervisors were greater in area than those of provincial supervisors (*kokushi*), they have received attention as indicating that the district supervisors stood apart from the *ritsuryō* code (Sakamoto 1964 [1929]). Also, from the existence of office fields for district supervisor posts left unfilled, which increased in the ninth century, it has been pointed out that the number of regular district supervisors diminished during the ninth and tenth centuries (Miyagi 1969; Mori 2000 [1997]). In this manner, through inquiries into district supervisor office fields, several studies have been seen that touch on the nature of district supervisors and on transitions in the district supervisor system.

Surprisingly, however, basic inquiries into district supervisor office fields, such as their position in the Rice Paddies Code, and the conditions of their establishment, administration, and operation, have amounted only to references made together with other types of office fields and rank fields in outline fashion (e.g., Takahashi 1970), and these have by no means been sufficient. Accordingly, I hope first to clarify the characteristics of district supervisor office fields by making evident their position within the legal system through an analysis of the Rice Paddies Code. In so doing I intend to conduct my inquiry while taking into consideration the Tang administrative code, which was the model for the Japanese administrative code. Next, taking up an actual example of district supervisor office fields, I hope to analyze their actual condition.

By thus conducting an analysis of district supervisor office fields from the two facets of the legal system and their actual state, I hope to discuss their historic significance. By this means, I believe it may be possible to approach the nature of regional rule under the ancient Japanese state, and the real state of affairs in regional society.

As limitations stemming from documentary sources are severe to begin with, there is much that must rely on inference, but by making active use of the results of research on peripheral topics, I hope to attempt a tentative essay.

1. In ancient Japan, 1 *chō* equaled about 1.2 hectares, or approximately 2.9 acres. (translation note)

2. *Tairyō*, *shōryō*, *shusei*, *shuchō* were the four ranks of district supervisor posts, modeled on the system of four ranks for administrators in the central bureaucracy. (translation note)

II. Inquiry into the System of District Supervisor Office Fields

1. District Supervisor Office Fields Seen in the Yōrō Rice Paddies Code

First, let us sort out the facts that are clear from the clause for district supervisor office fields given above, and the same clause seen in the *Ryō no shūge* (a ninth-century commentary on the Yōrō Administrative Code). It goes without saying that this clause stipulated the areas of office fields to be provided for the posts of *tairyō* on down. Moreover, the *Ryō no shūge* entry cites the *Koki* (an eighth-century commentary on the Taihō Administrative Code) as indicating these are for payment of *so* (a land tax levied as a portion of the harvest), from which we can confirm that they were *yusoden* (fields subject to land tax).³

Further, for the latter half of the clause stipulating that “In *kyōgō* it is not always necessary to fulfill these designated amounts,” looking at the various comments cited in the *Ryō no shūge*, one from the *Shusetsu* (a Yōrō Administrative Code commentary) states that when the designated amounts could not be fulfilled because paddy lands were deficient “no compensation is to be made in other form for the deficiencies.” But the citation of the *Anaki*, another commentary, is as follows:

The *Anaki* has this comment. “Question: The meaning of the words ‘In *kyōgō* it is not always necessary to fulfill these designated amounts’ in the clause is unclear. If one wanted to compensate,⁴ would that be allowed? Answer: Compensating would be allowed. (But according to Imashi, compensating is not allowed).⁵”

In this manner, while indicating that compensating would be recognized when “paddy lands are insufficient,” at the same time it appends the opinion of a certain Imashi that such is not recognized. It would appear that this citation for the *Anaki* indicates a difference in view between the original version of the text and the Imashi opinion, presented in what is thought to be a later annotation (Hōjō 2000), and thus it can be seen that for situations where “paddy lands are insufficient,” both the opinion that compensating with lands from *kangō* (areas with sufficient paddy) was allowed and the opinion that it was not allowed were held in parallel fashion for district supervisor office fields, in the same manner as for *kubunden* (sustenance fields, allotted to commoners and menials) and other types of field, based among other things upon Clause 14, on *kyōgō*, of the Yōrō Rice Paddies Code. Here it is not a matter of debating the propriety of either view; rather I simply wish to emphasize that the latter opinion was in existence. In other words, as background to the view indicated by the *Shusetsu* and the opinion of Imashi cited in the *Anaki*, that compensating with fields from afar would not be allowed, apart from its appropriateness as legal interpretation, there existed the notion that the distribution of district supervisor office fields should be completed within a single district. This point needs to be given sufficient attention.

I have been able to show thus far, from the Rice Paddies Code clause on district supervisor office fields and the same clause in the *Ryō no shūge*, that district supervisor office fields were subject to land tax, and there was an understanding that their distribution was to be completed within a single district. Next I would like to proceed with this inquiry through a comparison with other clauses. Below is Clause 34, on *zaigai shoshi* (outside officials),⁶ of the Yōrō Rice Paddies Code.

For office fields of outside officials, in cases where the previous occupant of a post completed rice planting prior to a change of personnel, the harvest belongs to the previous occupant. If the previous occupant had prepared the fields but

3. In addition, their nature as *yusoden* is seen in a quotation from the *Minburei* (a manual of operational regulations for the Popular Affairs Ministry, which oversaw the collection of taxes) found in the section for the *Ryōshaku* (a late eighth-century commentary on the Yōrō Administrative Code) in the *Ryō no shūge* entry for Clause 1, *denchō* (on the division of 1 *tsubo*, a block of paddy approximately 109 meters square, into ten equal units called *tan*), of the Rice Paddies Code.

4. That is, by assigning lands from areas in districts where paddy is not in short supply. (translation note)

5. The parenthetical portion of the quote is an intralinear annotation, written in smaller characters, contained in the excerpt. (translation note)

6. This term collectively indicated all officials serving outside the capital, including provincial and district supervisors, and officials stationed at Dazaifu, the government headquarters for Kyushu. (translation note)

not planted them, the successor must pay the previous occupant the costs incurred in field preparation. For *kekkan* [office fields left unassigned to a particular post holder], cultivate these using public labor. When the vacant post is filled, the new occupant is to be paid from the harvest on a prorated basis from the day he assumes office.

This is a regulation for the transfer of office fields attending a change in personnel for bureaucrats in posts outside the capital. In addition to determining possession over the *kakutō* (harvested rice) based on the relative timing of the rice planting with respect to the personnel change, it also touches on the management of *kekkan*, fields left unassigned, and the distribution of the harvest from those fields based on the timing of a replacement's assumption of office. With regard to these matters, various opinions concerning district supervisors are seen for the same clause in the *Ryō no shūge*. First, for the *Anaki*:

The *Anaki* has this comment. "District supervisors are bureaucratic posts that can be held on a lifetime basis [i.e., there is no term of office]. Accordingly there is no regulation concerning a change in office. Therefore this clause does not allude to their situation."

Also, for the *Shusetsu*:

The *Shusetsu* has this comment. "Question: This clause is referring to the office fields of outside officials, but should the district supervisor office fields be handled in the same manner? Answer: District supervisors are posts held for long periods of time. Accordingly there is no regulation concerning a change in office. Therefore this clause does not apply."

Further, the *Koki* is noted as commenting, on the payment of harvest rice from fields left unassigned, that "... district supervisors are excluded from this payment," and therefore these commentaries are united in asserting that the clause does not apply to district supervisors. Do the interpretations seen in these opinions in the *Ryō no shūge* really agree with the intent of code?

In this regard we wish to pay attention to Clause 31, on *zaigai shoshi shikibunden* (office fields of outside officials), of the Yōrō Rice Paddies Code. The clause begins with "The office fields of outside officials ...," and then proceeds to stipulate the amounts of such fields to be distributed to officials of Dazaifu (the government headquarters for Kyushu) and to provincial supervisors. But what is significant here is that these are the only "outside officials" named, while for the office fields of district supervisors, who are also *gekan* (officials serving outside the capital), a separate provision is made as the ensuing clause on district supervisor office fields. In other words district supervisor office fields are clearly not included under the term "office fields of outside officials." Accordingly, as Clause 34 on outside officials, cited above, also begins with "The office fields of outside officials," the opinion seen in several commentaries cited in the *Ryō no shūge*, that the office fields of district supervisors are excluded from the provisions of the clause for outside officials, can be regarded as agreeing with the intent of the code.

That being the case, then district supervisor office fields differed from those of other outside officials in that no legal code had been established regarding their transfer or management in a manner similar to that of the clause on outside officials. In other words, no regulation for the transfer or management of district supervisor office fields existed in the Rice Paddies Code.

I have conducted the above inquiry into district supervisor office fields from an examination of the Yōrō Rice Paddies Code. Among the findings, the lack of any regulation established as legal code for the transfer and management of district supervisor office fields is especially worth noting. Next I would like to consider this point using the differences with the text of the Taihō Administrative Code as a clue.

2. *Kugaiden* in the Taihō Rice Paddies Code

There are several differences in the Taihō Administrative Code for the three Yōrō Rice Paddies Code clauses dealing with office fields of outside officials, district supervisor office fields, and outside officials, but here I wish

to pay attention to the point that office fields of outside officials called *shikibunden* in the Yōrō Administrative Code were termed *kugaiden* (government agency fields) of those officials, while district supervisor *shikibunden* of the Yōrō Administrative Code were referred to as district supervisor *shikiden* (an alternate term for *shikibunden*), in the Taihō Administrative Code. In other words, in the text of the Taihō Administrative Code, fields which were later called *shikibunden* for both provincial and district supervisors were designated by different terms. This at least shows that at the stage of the Taihō Administrative Code, paddy fields distributed to provincial and district supervisors were recognized as being different in nature. Here I wish to consider the *kugaiden* of the provincial supervisors (as outside officials).

First, concerning the meaning of *kugai*, it indicates the buildings and their contents for government offices and headquarters, and its usage in both the Japanese and Chinese Tang administrative codes is thought to correspond to this (Hayakawa 2000b). Also, the word *kugaiden* was taken from the Tang code, the model for the Japanese code.

The regulations in the Tang administrative code concerning *kugaiden* correspond to Clauses 29 and 30 of the reconstructed Tang Rice Paddies Code in *Tōrei shūi*⁷ (Niida 1933). Of these two, regarding Clause 29 which regulated *kugaiden* of various offices located in the capital, it is possible to confirm this as Clause 32 of the superseded Tang Rice Paddies Code (of the year Kaiyuan 25 [737]), appended to the Northern Song Tiansheng Rice Paddies Code in the collection of the Tian Yi Ge library,⁸ which has received considerable attention in recent years.⁹ According to this clause, separate amounts of *kugaiden* for various offices of the capital from the Court of Imperial Granaries on down are stipulated as follows:¹⁰

Regarding the *kugaiden* for offices in the capital, lands are to be distributed in the amounts of 26 *qing*¹¹ for the Court of Imperial Granaries, 25 *qing* for the Palace Administration, 22 *qing* for the Directorate for Imperial Manufactories ... [subsequently, various government offices and the amounts of land distributed to them are named].

This mode of regulation was the same for *kugaiden* for offices outside the capital, clearly showing that in the Tang administrative code the *kugaiden* were lands belonging to government offices. This is not inconsistent with the meaning of the term *kugai*.

The Japanese code did not take the term *kugaiden* as having this kind of meaning, however. While a stipulation for *kugaiden* is indeed seen in the Taihō Administrative Code, its content is what was later called *shikibunden*, corresponding with the *shikibunden* designated in Clause 32 of the reconstructed Tang Rice Paddies Code in *Tōrei shūi* (Clause 34 of the superseded Tang Rice Paddies Code, appended to the Northern Song Tiansheng Rice Paddy Code). In other words, in the Japanese code, the meaning of *kugaiden* as lands belonging to government offices was not adopted. In that case, why was the term *kugaiden* used in the Taihō Administrative Code to designate what was, in effect, *shikibunden*? With regard to this, let us consider *kugaiden* in the Japanese code.

As seen above in the clause for outside officials, when there was a change in personnel for provincial supervisor, ownership of the harvest from the office field was determined based on the timing of the new occupant's assumption of office. For such occasions, since the timing of the "rice planting" in the clause for outside officials could not be calculated in a uniform fashion, a *kyaku* (amendment) was adopted on the first month, twenty-second day of Yōrō 8 (724) that set a specific time, the transition from the thirtieth day of the fourth month to the first day of the

7. This was a reconstruction made from surviving portions of the Tang civil code. Because great portions of the Tang legal codes have become scattered and lost, reconstructions must be made in this manner by assembling fragments that appear as excerpts quoted in later legal writings. (translation note)

8. This refers to materials discovered in 1999 in the holdings of the Tian Yi Ge library in Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, China. A Ming period copy of the Northern Song Tiansheng Administrative Code had appended to it portions of the superseded Tang Administrative Code (of Kaiyuan 25 [737]) upon which it was based. (translation note)

9. However, the reconstructed Clause 30, which regulated *kugaiden* of officials stationed outside the capital, was not treated as a superseded portion of the Tang code, but revised as part of the Song code (Tiansheng Rice Paddies Code, Clause 6).

10. The superseded Tang code is from Tian Yi Ge Bowuguan and Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Lishi Yanjiusuo (2006).

11. In Tang China, 1 *qing* equaled about 5.2 hectares, or approximately 12.9 acres. (translation note)

fifth as the boundary for the ownership of the harvest.¹² Hayakawa Shōhachi (2000a) evaluates this as an “official judgment” handed down for the regulation which by its wording had left the matter up to a “compact between the principals” in the change from an old to a new occupant of a post. That is, through this amendment the degree of the state’s involvement was strengthened with regard to the transfer of office fields, which previously could only have been left up to the old and new provincial supervisors because of the ambiguity in the regulation. This can be said to indicate the central government’s intention that the management of office fields of outside officials should be conducted by the state, and not left up to the individual officials themselves.

This nature of the *kugaiden* (*shikibunden*) is also seen in the clause for outside officials, namely in the following portion: “For unassigned office fields, cultivate these using public labor.”¹³ Regarding this “public labor” (*kuriki*), according to the *Ryō no gige* (the official commentary on the Yōrō Administrative Code, compiled in the ninth century), and excerpts from the *Ryōshaku* (a late eighth-century commentary on the Yōrō Code) appearing in the *Ryō no shūge*, *zōyō* (a type of corvée, labor owed as a tax)¹⁴ was to be used. That *kugaiden* left unassigned, meaning public fields for which there was no official to be the recipient of their distribution, were not for uses such as *chinso* (to be lent out to tenants) but to be maintained and managed with corvée that was legally under the provincial supervisor’s authority to dispatch, indicates that *kugaiden* were fields meant to be under the management of provincial headquarters.¹⁵ This point becomes even clearer when a comparison is made of the clause for outside officials with the Tang code. The following is Clause 34 of the reconstructed Tang Rice Paddies Code in *Tōrei shūi* (for the years Kaiyuan 7 [719] and 25 [737]).

The rent payment from office fields, if the transfer of office was no later than the thirtieth day of the third month for upland fields, or the thirtieth day of the fourth month for paddy, would go entirely to the successor, but if transfer was later than those dates then pay it to the former office holder. Make the thirtieth day of the ninth month be the date for wheat fields. If the predecessor had tilled the fields himself but not yet planted, then the successor should pay that cost. If planting has already been done, then according to the regulation for the collection of rent, the successor should pay rent to the predecessor. If the rent is 6 *dou*¹⁶ or less per *mu*,¹⁷ the rent is according to standing practice, but if greater, it should not exceed that level. Tenants must not be coerced into working the land, but should be recruited from volunteers.¹⁸

Looking just at this, the first part is a regulation on the ownership of rent from upland fields, etc., while the second part is a limit on the amount of rent based on the Land Tax Law (the regulation for the collection of rent in the Rice Paddies Code).¹⁹ In other words it is a regulation only of rights over rents and their amounts, and differs

12. This amendment appears in an excerpt from the *Ryōshaku*, a Yōrō Administrative Code commentary, cited in the *Ryō no shūge* entry for the clause for “Outside Officials” in the Rice Paddies Code. (translation note)

13. For this portion in the Taihō code, nearly the same text can be reconstructed from an excerpt of the *Koki*, cited in the commentary on this clause in the *Ryō no shūge*.

14. *Zōyō* referred to miscellaneous labor that was owed up to a certain limit per year. It involved tasks such as maintenance work on roads and waterways, and the construction and maintenance of government office facilities. (translation note)

15. Regarding this type of corvée (*zōyō*), Yoshida Takashi (1983) points out that it differed from the labor commandeered by local influential figures in regional society, and had the characteristic of being labor for the central government. If we accept this perspective, we can also probably regard *kugaiden* as being under the management of the central government.

16. In Tang China, 1 *dou* equaled about 5.94 liters, or approximately 0.17 U.S. bushels. (translation note)

17. In Tang China, 1 *mu* equaled about 0.052 hectares, or approximately .129 acres. (translation note)

18. This reconstruction is based on the annotation to a clause on officials of the Ministry of Revenue in Volume 3 of the *Tang liudian* (*Tang Six Statutes*), a compendium on state offices, legal statutes, and their history, compiled in 738; on a section on the land system in the chapter on *shihuo* (food and commerce) in Volume 2 of *Tongdian* (*Comprehensive Statutes*), a summary of the historical developments of governmental systems over successive dynasties, etc. This corresponds with Clause 7 of the Northern Song Tiansheng Code, which does not give a superseded Tang code clause.

19. For the interpretation of this clause, Watanabe (2006) was consulted. Regarding the latter portion (“If the rent is six *dou* or less per *mu*, the rent is according to standing practice, but if greater, it should not exceed that level. Tenants to work the land should be recruited from volunteers, and must not be done coercively.”), Watanabe points out that the characters translated here as “but if greater” do not appear in the excerpt from the Rice Paddies Code quoted in Clause 17, on office fields, of the section on government officials in the *Tongdian* (*Comprehensive*

from the Japanese code in that no mention is made whatsoever of the management of unassigned fields. As long as we are unable to check the Yonghui Administrative Code,²⁰ which was the model for the Taihō Administrative Code, we cannot determine this with certainty, but it is highly likely that the stipulation for unassigned fields, to “cultivate these using public labor,” meaning to put them under the management of provincial headquarters, is unique to the Japanese code.

By now the reason why fields that would later become *shikibunden* were called *kugaiden* in the Taihō Administrative Code should be clear: namely, the “government office fields” for outside officials in the Taihō code were certainly distributed to bureaucrats in official posts outside the capital, and in that sense were distributions made to individual bureaucrats. But with regard to practical aspects such as the division of the harvest and management of unassigned fields, as “fields for providing the livelihood of outside officials” (a passage in the excerpt from the *Koki* cited for the clause on outside officials in the *Ryō no shūge*), they were placed under the firm management of the central government or provincial headquarters. Because of the strong awareness in this manner of this aspect of management, not by individual bureaucrats but by the central government or provincial headquarters, or in a larger sense by government offices, it is thought that the term *kugaiden* of the Tang code for land belonging to government offices was adopted in the Taihō Rice Paddies Code. How, then, were *gunji shikiden* (district supervisor office fields) interpreted in opposition to this?

3. The Realities of *Gunji shikiden*

In the preceding section I pointed out that the name *kugaiden* used in the Taihō Rice Paddies Code for fields of outside officials was an appellation emphasizing the aspect of management on the part of the central government or provincial headquarters. In like manner it can also be said that district supervisor office fields, not called *kugaiden* but *shikiden*, were of a different nature from *kugaiden*, fields for outside officials in the Taihō Administrative Code.²¹ In other words, it is inferred that the district supervisor *shiki(bun)den* were not lands under the firm management of government offices, meaning the central government or provincial headquarters. This inference is also likely supported from unassigned district supervisor office fields not being cultivated with public labor, but rented out to tenants.²² Recall, moreover, the fact pointed out in the section before last: namely, that there was no legal provision in the Rice Paddies Code for the transfer or management of district supervisor office fields, in the manner seen for office fields for outside officials. It is likely conceivable that there was no regulation such as that for office fields of outside officials precisely because unlike the latter fields, the district supervisor *shiki(bun)den* were not under the firm management of the central government or provincial headquarters.

Of course, as district supervisor *shiki(bun)den* were regulated in the Rice Paddies Code, they were not totally without relation to the central authority or provincial headquarters. But when comparing them with office fields for outside officials, the degree of involvement regarding district supervisor fields from the central government or provincial headquarters is clearly low. Accordingly, even though they were regulated by the Rice Paddies Code, meaning in that sense they were under the administration of the central government and provincial headquarters, with regard to their actual management and operation, it must be understood that the district supervisors to whom they were distributed were given considerable discretionary power. This is an extremely important point for considerations of district supervisor office fields.

statutes), Volume 35, and suggests it is therefore a later mistaken insertion. While this may make the meaning clearer, I choose to await further consideration of the matter, and continue to rely upon the reconstruction found in *Tōrei shūi*.

20. Legal codes were written and modified multiple times during the Tang dynasty. This version of the administrative code was issued in 651, during the Yonghui era. (translation note).

21. With regard to this point, it was the same for the Grand Council of State office fields that were distributed to Daijōkan (Grand Council of State) officials from the *daijō daijin* (chancellor) down to the *dainagon* (senior counselors). These fields were called *daijōkan shikiden* in the Taihō Administrative Code. While the commonalities and relationships between the *daijōkan shiki(bun)den* and the *gunji shiki(bun)den* are extremely important to this discussion, I would like to leave them as a topic for later treatment. There is discussion of Grand Council of State *shiki(bun)den* in Mitani (2011).

22. This is seen in the Tenpyō 12 (740) Hamana district land tax register, quoted in an excerpt from the *Anaki*, for Clause 34, on outside officials, of the Yōrō Rice Paddies Code.

What I wish to take note of here is Yoshida Takashi's (1991: Chapter 1) observation that in land arrangements under the ritsuryō system prior to permanent privatization under the Konden Einen Shizaihō,²³ lands belonging from former times as *tadokoro* (agricultural bases or estates held privately by temples and powerful figures before the ritsuryō era) of the central nobility remained under their control by being relabeled as *kubunden* (sustenance fields) or *iden* (rank fields, allotted to officials of the fifth rank or higher) and *shiden* (lands awarded by imperial decree to particular individuals). Could this not be amplified to include district supervisors as well? These district supervisors, who were powerful local figures, presumably had their own areas of control from former times, in the same manner as the central nobility. Could not the possibility be readily imagined that within such regions where the influence of local powers was strong, their control over land was maintained by relabeling them as sustenance fields and district supervisor office fields? That district supervisor office fields, unlike the office fields of the Daijōkan (Grand Council of State)²⁴ or provincial supervisors, were subject to land tax in the same manner as sustenance rice fields, as well as rank fields and imperially awarded fields,²⁵ probably supports this inference, as does the notion previously pointed out that their distribution was to be completed within a single district. Also, through this line of thinking, the reason why district supervisor office fields were not placed firmly under the administration of the central government or provincial headquarters can be explained. Unlike office fields for outside officials, which were probably established later by the agency of the central government, because the district supervisor office fields had been within the sphere of control of regional elites from former times, we can assume that they could not have easily been assimilated under the administration of the central authority or provincial headquarters.

Above, I have conducted an inquiry into district supervisor office fields from the perspective of the legal system, based principally on the Rice Paddies Code. As a result, we can arrive at the hypothesis that in reality, district supervisor office fields were perhaps relabeled portions of areas controlled by regional elites. Here I would like to close this portion of the study, and taking up what is thought to be an actual example of district supervisor office fields, move on to an examination of this hypothesis from the aspect of their actual condition.

III. Inquiry into the Actual State of District Supervisor Office Fields

1. District Supervisor Office Fields in Iwaki District, Mutsu Province

There is a precious *mokkan* (wooden document) thought to show an actual example of district supervisor office fields. This is *mokkan* No. 2 of the Attame *jōri* (field system)²⁶ site in the city of Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture. Detailed research on this item has been conducted by Hirakawa Minami and others.²⁷ Drawing on their work, here I will outline the site's environment and the contents of the document.

Attame is a site having remains of a *jōri* field system located in the region of the ancient district of Iwaki in Mutsu Province. Near the mouth of the Natsui river, a *mokkan* (No. 1) giving an order from the district supervisor level to the *tsuchō* (port chief, charged with managing the port) was recovered, and pottery from outside the local

23. This law of 743 gave recognition to permanent private ownership of newly opened paddy. It stipulated limits on the area of development allowed based on social status and rank, and procedures for applying for permission to open fields. Prior to this, permanent private ownership of land was not recognized in principle, leading to sluggish development of new lands, and the concealment of those lands that were developed, which left state control over new paddy unattained. But in addition to progress in the development of new paddy under this law, as application prior to development was obligatory, state control over land became firmer. (translation note)

24. The highest government body under the *tennō* in the ritsuryō system. It consisted of: (1) a policy-making section composed of the chancellor (*daijō daijin*), the ministers of the left and right (*sadaijin*, *udaijin*), the great counselors (*dainagon*) and other counselors (*sangi*) and (2) an administrative section composed of *benkankyoku* staffed by controllers (*ben*) and clerks (*shi*) and *shōnagonkyoku* staffed by lesser counselors (*shōnagon*) and secretaries (*geki*). (translation note)

25. This is seen in an excerpt from the *Minburei* in the *Ryō no shūge* entry for Clause 1, on *denchō*, of the Rice Paddies Code, and in the excerpt quoted from the *Koki* for Clause 12, on *shiden* (imperially awarded fields).

26. This was a system of paddy land division implemented by the state to facilitate the surveying and management of land. A square measuring 1 *chō* (approximately 109 m) on a side comprised a *tsubo* (block), with horizontal rows (*jō*) of blocks numbered from north to south and vertical columns (*ri*) numbered from east to west forming a rectangular grid, on which the position of any block could be indicated by the row and column numbers. This facilitated the proper distribution of land such as sustenance and office fields. (translation note)

27. Hirakawa (2003a, 2003b), Hashimoto (1997), Iwaki-shi Kyōiku Bunka Jigyōdan (2000a, 2000b), etc. Hereafter, matters concerning relevant archaeological sites and *mokkan* are based upon these sources.

area dating back to the Early Kofun period was also found nearby at the Sunahata site. In the environs are located the Ōkunitama shrine and a group of tombs including the Kabutozuka mound, traditionally said to be the grave of the *kuni no miyatsuko* (a title given to local chiefs prior to the ritsuryō system), plus the Negishi site inferred by comparison as the *gūke* (district headquarters) for Iwaki, and the Natsui abandoned temple site. The Negishi site in particular is composed of facilities relating to the district headquarters such as the district office precinct and government storehouse precinct (latter half, seventh century to the ninth–tenth centuries), and before them the remains of the residence of the elite family thought to have undertaken the construction of the district headquarters (first half, seventh century to the latter half, eighth century), and from strata below the district office and storehouse precincts, the remains of a settlement accompanied by storehouses (first to latter halves of the seventh century). In other words this region was, from the Kofun period until the ninth century, a base for exchange with the outside realm utilizing water transport on the Natsui river flowing into the Pacific ocean, and at the same time, it continually functioned as the base of control over the local region.

Next, I would like to outline the region's situation regarding its local powers. According to the article on the establishment of Iwaki District in the year Hakuchi 4 (653), found in the section on the Taka District in the *Hitachi no kuni fudoki*,²⁸ as applicants for establishment of the district are seen the two names of Iwaki no Atai Miyabe and Be no Shikoaka. It has been pointed out that the latter may be equivalent to Hasesukabe no Shikoaka (e.g., Shida 1974; Iwaki-shi Kyōiku Bunka Jigyōdan 2000b). Table 1 “Families of Chief District Officials” is a compilation of families that can be ascertained from documentary materials as providing the chief district officials (the top ranks of *tairyō* and *shōryō*), from which it can be seen that the Hasesukabe family was granted the name of Oho no Iwaki no Omi (Item 3),²⁹ and the Iwaki no Omi were similarly renamed Abe no Iwaki no Omi (Item 6-3), but apart from these no other families thought to have provided chief district officials can be found. Accordingly it is believed that the posts of the chief officials of Iwaki District were held exclusively by the two lines of the Hasesukabe and Iwaki no Omi throughout the eighth and ninth centuries (Kakiuchi 2008). Also, if the Iwaki no Omi line is considered to be traceable back to the *Fudoki*'s Iwaki no Atai Miyabe, then Be no Shikoaka can most likely be regarded as Hasesukabe no Shikoaka. The presence and activity of the Hasesukabe family line in the district can also be confirmed from the recovery at the Attame *jōri* site of ink-inscribed pottery with the name Hasesukabe, and of *mokkan* with Oho. In other words, from the time of the establishment of the Iwaki District in the mid-seventh century, it is thought that control by these two powers continued throughout.

Summarizing from the above the establishment and development of the ancient district of Iwaki yields the following. Taking the lower Natsui river basin as base, and against a background of exchange with other regions utilizing water transport, local elites that had extended their influence since the Kofun period had by and large converged as the two lines of the Hasesukabe and Iwaki no Omi families by the mid-seventh century, when the district was established focusing on these two, whose regional control continued to the ninth century. During that interval, the Attame *jōri* site and the Negishi site and its environs continued to function throughout as the base of rule in Iwaki District.

Based on the above, let us consider the contents of *mokkan* No. 2. This document was an order issued from the district supervisor, and as another *mokkan* found in the same context was inscribed with the date of Ninju 3 (853), it is thought to date from the mid-ninth century. The contents consist of an order, from the Iwaki District *tairyō* “Oho no Omi” to 36 *tahito* (rice paddy workers) headed by the designation *satotoji* (a term for women belonging to the leading local families), to plant rice at a *shikiden*. As the 36 are noted with their specific names forming a list, against which check marks or the character *fū* (negative) were placed, it is thought to have been used to check the attendance of workers who gathered in response to the summons. Taken together with the remains of the *jōri* field system of the site, it may be thought that there were office fields not too far from the place where this *mokkan* was disposed, meaning the provenance of its recovery.

Now the question becomes the *shikiden*, or office fields, themselves. While these have conventionally been

28. Regarding the status of this clause as the article on the establishment of Iwaki district, see Kamada (2001 [1977]).

29. Permission was granted by the *tennō*. (translation note)

Table 1. Families of Chief District Officials

Item	Rank	Name	Source (or comment)
1	Taka <i>kuni no miyatsuko</i> [a title given to regional leaders before the ritsuryō system] (Iwaki <i>kohori no miyatsuko</i> ? [an early title for a district official, corresponding with the later <i>tairyō</i>])	Iwaki no Atai Miyabe	article on the establishment of Iwaki district, Hakuchi 4 (653), Taka district section, <i>Hitachi no kuni fudoki</i>
2	Iwaki <i>kōri no miyatsuko</i> (Iwaki <i>suke no miyatsuko</i> ? [an early title for a district official, corresponding with the later <i>shōryō</i>])	(Hassetsuka)Be no Shikoaka	(same as above)
3	<i>Iwaki-gun no hito</i> [a person of Iwaki district], <i>ge shō roku-i no jō</i> (senior sixth outer rank upper)	Hassetsukabe no Yamagiwa	<i>Shoku Nihongi</i> , entry for the third month, thirteenth day of Jingo-keiun 3 (769): “Received <i>kabane</i> as Oho no Iwaki no Omi”
4	(<i>tairyō</i> or <i>shōryō</i>)	Iwaki no Omi Chi? [final character(s) undecipherable]	Taga Castle Site, lacquer-permeated document No. 2, signed and dated Hōki 11 (780)
5	senior sixth outer rank upper	Iwaki no Omi Fujinari	<i>Ruiji Kokushi</i> , entry for first month, twenty-third day of Nenchō 3 (826): “promoted to junior fifth outer rank lower”
6-1	Iwaki district <i>tairyō</i> , senior sixth outer rank upper, eighth rank Order of Merit	Iwaki no Omi Okimi	<i>Shoku Nihon kōki</i> , entry for the third month, twelfth day of Jōwa 7 (840): “promoted to provisional junior fifth outer rank lower”
6-2	Iwaki district <i>tairyō</i> , provisional junior fifth outer rank lower, eighth rank Order of Merit	Iwaki no Omi Okimi	<i>Shoku Nihon kōki</i> , entry for the eleventh month, fifteenth day of Jōwa 10 (843): “promoted to junior fifth outer rank lower”
6-3	Iwaki district <i>tairyō</i> , junior fifth outer rank lower, eighth rank Order of Merit	Iwaki no Omi Okimi	<i>Shoku Nihon kōki</i> , entry for the first month, eighth day of Jōwa 11 (844): “Received <i>kabane</i> as Abe no Iwaki no Omi”
7	<i>tairyō</i>	Oho no Omi	Attame jōri site, No. 2 mokkan, signature for a district order
8	<i>nyōju</i> [term used for a serving girl at the central court], senior eighth rank upper	Oho no Iwaki no Omi Mikashiki	<i>Shoku Nihongi</i> , entry for the seventh month, twenty-sixth day of Enryaku 1 (782): “promoted to junior fifth outer rank lower”
9-1	(<i>seitōshi</i>) <i>besshō</i> [a military commander of forces sent to quell barbarians in the north-east]	Hassetsukabe no Zenri	<i>Shoku Nihongi</i> , entry for the sixth month, third day of Enryaku 8 (789): “died in battle”
9-2	a person of Iwaki district, junior seventh outer rank lower	Hassetsukabe no Zenri	<i>Shoku Nihongi</i> , entry for the second month, fifth day of Enryaku 10 (791): “posthumously promoted to junior fifth outer rank lower”

Source: Adapted with partial alteration from Iwaki-shi Kyōiku Bunka Jigyōdan (Iwaki Municipal Foundation for Education and Culture), Mutsu no kuni to Iwakigun (Mutsu Province and Iwaki District), in *Iwaki-shi maizō bunkazai chōsa hōkoku, dai 72 satsu, Negishi iseki (Investigation Report on Buried Cultural Properties of Iwaki City, Vol. 72, Negishi Site)*, Iwaki-shi Kyōiku Iinkai, 2000.

interpreted as district supervisor office fields, is there any possibility they might have been Grand Council of State office fields, such as those distributed to *daijin* (ministers) and *dainagon* (senior counselors), or provincial supervisor office fields? Let us check this point.

First, we can rule out Grand Council of State office fields based on their location in the district of Iwaki, in Mutsu Province. It is confirmed from a Grand Council of State order of the eighth month, eighth day of Enryaku 9 (790), contained in Volume 15 of *Ruiju sandai kyaku*,³⁰ that the Grand Council of State office fields were located in the Kinai region and nearby provinces. Further, according to the *Koki* excerpt cited by the *Ryō no shūge* for the clause on office fields of outside officials in the Rice Paddies Code, the provincial supervisor office fields were to be cultivated using *jiriki* (laborers assigned to high officials such as bureaucrats of the Grand Council of State or provincial headquarters to perform miscellaneous duties), and looking at Clause 51 of the Military Defense Code, on the distribution of *jiriki*, it can be confirmed that such laborers were distributed to provincial supervisors in numbers corresponding with the area of their office fields. Also, as seen from the tax exemption for individuals serving as *jiriki* (Clause 19, on *toneri* [attendants] and *shishō* [clerks] at court, of the Labor Taxes Code), men were chosen for the role. For the *tahito* in *mokkan* No. 2, apart from the *satotoji* there are Mibube no Fukunarime and Ō no Aome, who can also be confirmed as women from their names. Accordingly it was not *jiriki* who were summoned by this *mokkan*. Since in the same manner those summoned cannot be thought of as *zōyō*,³¹ these *shikiden* cannot be regarded as unassigned office fields for vacant provincial supervisor posts. Accordingly, by a process of elimination the *shikiden* of *mokkan* No. 2 can be said as most likely district supervisor office fields.

In this manner, the *shikiden* seen in *mokkan* No. 2 are thought to refer to district supervisor office fields.³² If we consider as well the high possibility that these fields were located in the environs where the *mokkan* was discarded, the setting for the district supervisor office fields is seen as highly distinctive: namely, district supervisor office fields were established in the midst of an area that had functioned since the Kofun period as the base of exchange and rule. Does not this type of setting strongly support the hypothesis previously raised, that district supervisor office fields were established by relabeling a portion of the area ruled by the local regional elite?

What must be borne in mind, however, is that district supervisors, who should have held their offices permanently, changed posts frequently from the eighth century, and as verified from the article concerning the founding of Iwaki District, its establishment was the achievement of a number of local powers (e.g., Suhara 2011 [1996]; Yamaguchi 2000). In other words we must consider the nature of district supervisor office fields, and their transfer and operation, keeping in mind a district supervisor class composed of a number of powerful figures (in the case of Iwaki District, the two forces of the Hassetsukabe and Iwaki no Omi families), and not just a single agent of influence. I would like to consider this point further in the following section.

2. Administration and Management of District Supervisor Office Fields

As hypothesized in the previous section, when we regard the district supervisor office fields as relabeled lands under cultivation within the sphere of influence of the district supervisors, who were the locally powerful elite, how then do we regard the passing of the district supervisor posts among a plurality of local forces on a rotating basis? What becomes problematic in this regard, is whether the district supervisor office fields were fixed in a particular location or not.

30. The *Ruiju sandai kyaku* is an anthology of legal amendments (*kyaku*) to the *ritsuryō* code, originally compiled in three separate sets as the *Kōnin kyaku* and *Jōgan kyaku* of the ninth century and the *Engi kyaku* of the tenth, and arranged according to the legal content. It is thought to have been produced in the eleventh century. (translation note)

31. The contents of various commentaries cited in the *Ryō no shūge* entry for Clause 37, on *zōyō*, of the Corvée Code, are predicated on this type of labor service being levied only on males.

32. With regard to ninth-century district supervisor office fields, it has been pointed out by Miyagi (1969), Mori (2000 [1997]), and others, that from the increase in unassigned office fields the value of holding the post was evidently diminishing. However, in the *Shoku Nihon kōki* entry for the second month, twenty-second day of Jōwa 15 (848), *shikiden* was allotted to the provisional *tairyō* of Iwase district, Mutsu province. As the same chronicle reports that the distribution of office fields to provisionally appointed district supervisors had been discontinued as of the third month, fifteenth day of Jōwa 6 (839), this incident may be regarded as a special case. Accordingly, we may consider that in Mutsu province, district supervisor office fields continued to maintain a certain level of value to those receiving them, meaning the district supervisor elite, even in the ninth century.

If we see the location of district supervisor office fields as having changed with transfers of the office, then each time the office changed hands, it would be sufficient for a portion of the area controlled by the new office holder to be relabeled as district supervisor office fields. But looking at the Grand Council of State order of the eighth month, eighth day of Enryaku 9 (790) contained in Volume 15 of the *Ruiju sandai kyaku*, which established anew, in the Kinai region and neighboring provinces, the office fields for the Grand Council of State that were “in one way or another all confused,” after clearly specifying the locations of the office fields from the chancellor on down, it noted that:

... in granting office fields for the Grand Council of State, office fields are to be distributed as provided for each post, and these must not be exchanged one with another for the distribution. Other office fields should follow this provision ...

Thus it prohibited the office fields, established previously at particular locations for separate posts of the Grand Council of State, from being changed at will, and stated this should apply to “other office fields” as well. Of course provincial supervisor and district supervisor fields are thought to be included among “other office fields.” Accordingly district supervisor office fields can be regarded as meant in principle to be fixed at particular locations. Also, in the Tenpyō 12 (740) Hamana District land tax register (*Shōsōin komonjo seishū*, Volume 16) there are 6 *chō* of “unassigned district supervisor office fields” listed as “for *yujishiden* [paddy to be let out to tenants for rent],” and keeping in mind the provision of the Enryaku 9 amendment, it is conceivable that these district supervisor office fields had become fixed in location, and that when a district supervisor post had no occupant the fields became unassigned and were rented out.³³ Accordingly district supervisor office fields, like Grand Council of State office fields, should probably be thought of as fixed at particular locations.³⁴

In the above manner, district supervisor office fields can be regarded as fixed at particular locations, regardless of changes in occupants of the various offices. That being the case, under circumstances of frequent changes in district supervisors, and as pointed out in the previous chapter, without any regulation existing in the Rice Paddies Code or elsewhere, against what background was the transfer of district supervisor office fields conducted? In this connection I wish to pay attention to the process of formation of the *Daichidoron*, a set of *chishiki*³⁵ sutras from the Kitadera temple in Kamo district, Harima province.

With regard to this *chishiki* sutra set copied by lay devotees, we have the research of Satō Makoto (1999 [1992]), and Sakaehara Towao (1999). According to both scholars, the sutra set includes a postscript written out on the twelfth month, twenty-third day of Tenpyō 6 (734); the set as a whole was copied in the Kamo district of Harima province, and subsequently added to the *Issaikyō* (complete collection of sutras) of the Ishiyamadera temple. It originally consisted of 100 scrolls assembled in 10 covered volumes, with the postscript of each scroll written by the participant in the *chishiki* project who took charge of that item. Analyzing the relation between these postscripts and the volume numbering, groups based on lineage units are detected for every one or two volumes, with each group consisting of a family in the lineage of the Harima *kuni no miyatsuko* (the regional chief of the province) plus another lineage or lineages thought to be under its rule. Sakaehara called these groups “regional small clusters,” with the *Daichidoron* clearly being copied out as a cooperative project of four such clusters. Based on this research, Yamaguchi Hideo (2000) regards this Harima *kuni no miyatsuko* lineage as comprising the hereditary district chief officer families of the Kamo district, with the four separate groups as the source of candidates from which the district

33. Also, various possibilities are conceivable such as: (1) when a person was newly appointed to a district supervisor post and until the time when district supervisor office fields were established at a new location based on his desire, the family of the predecessor could retain hold of the former district supervisor office fields under the pretext of these being unassigned fields, or (2) by the time when a person newly appointed to a district supervisor post can formally take office after the necessary procedures followed at the central government, he takes charge as a pseudo appointee of lands as yet officially unassigned but which are to become his office fields, etc. But in these cases, it might happen that the designations of district supervisor office fields and unassigned office fields are in different locations. Accordingly, it is most natural to understand the district supervisor office fields as fixed in location.

34. Keeping in mind the Grand Council of State office fields, Takahashi (1970) indicates the same opinion.

35. This term designates a lay group making a cooperative contribution for the benefit of Buddhism. In this case, it was a project to copy a number of sutras and present the set to the temple. (translation note)

supervisor selected appointees for those offices (meaning the *tairyō* and *shōryō*, the top two ranks of district supervisors), and he moreover points out, from their cooperative participation in the *chishiki* project, that while these were separate groups on the one hand, they also aimed for conciliation and unison as a single lineage. Further, he infers that this mode of small cluster operation also functioned on the occasion of changes in occupants of the district chief offices.

In view of this background for the production of the Kitadera *chishiki* sutra set, it may be considered that on the occasion of an appointment to or a change in the occupant of an office of district supervisor, consensus was sought among the various regional powers, essentially the district supervisor class. Accordingly, the office fields that were attached to the office of district supervisor can also possibly be thought of as having been established, and their management and operation conducted, including matters of transfer, based upon such consensus. Also, while it is difficult to ascertain whether the land for the office fields was carved out of the area controlled by one or another of the groups comprising the district supervisor class, or established at a new location chosen through consensus among its members, it is most likely that the selection was made through the initiative of the district supervisor class, meaning these regional powers, from an area where their influence was extremely strong.³⁶ The environs of the district supervisor office fields of the Iwaki District in Mutsu Province, pointed out in the previous section, can be said to support this inference. Earlier I hypothesized that district supervisor office fields were established by relabeling portions of areas that had been under the control of regional elites from former times, and if this hypothesis is based upon a presumption of consensus among the regional elite it surely could be supported. In this manner, precisely because the district supervisor office fields were managed and operated semi-autonomously by the district supervisor class, the Rice Paddies Code had no provision for their transfer or management.

Above, I have shown there is ample room for the hypothesis proposed earlier to be correct based upon a consideration of the actual condition of district supervisor office fields. Now, for district supervisor office fields with the characteristics pointed out in this contribution, what kind of regional society or nature of regional rule is being reflected? I would like to close this study by touching upon these points.

IV. Conclusion

In this contribution I have attempted an inquiry into district supervisor office fields from the aspects of the legal system and their actual conditions. The legal characteristics of district supervisor office fields seen from the Rice Paddies Code are the lack of regulation provided for the transfer or management of those fields, and in comparison with office fields of provincial supervisors (as outside officials), the involvement of the central government and provincial headquarters is extremely thin. From this point, and based on the assessment that under the *ritsuryō* system lands formerly belonging to country estates of the central elite remained under their control by being relabeled as sustenance fields or rank fields and lands awarded by imperial decree to particular individuals, it was possible to arrive at the hypothesis that district supervisor office fields were also relabeled arable lands within the areas of control of regional elites from former times.

In order to test this hypothesis, an inquiry into the actual condition of district supervisor office fields was conducted, using as an example the district supervisor office fields seen in *mokkan* No. 2 from the Attame *jōri* (field system) site. As a result, it became clear that the district supervisor office fields of Iwaki District in Mutsu Province were located at a base for exchange and regional control from the Kofun period. Further, if we invoke the background to the production of the Kitadera *chishiki* sutra set, it is possible to regard the district supervisor office fields as being established, and managed and operated, based on a consensus among the influential figures of the region (equating with the district supervisor class), and if we presume the consensus of this district supervisor class, then in conclusion we may recognize ample room for the hypothesis raised earlier to hold true.

36. With regard to the posts of *shusei* (inspector) and *shuchō* (secretary), while they cannot be discussed in precisely the same manner as the district chief officers, and there are many parts which remain unclear, I would like to consider that their office fields were also established under the leadership of the regional district chief officer elite.

In this manner, district supervisor office fields are seen to have existed against a background of consensus among the district supervisor class. Now as a final step, I would like to consider the nature of the district headquarters located nearby the district supervisor office fields of Iwaki District in Mutsu Province, and of regional society and regional control, by paying attention to the Natsumi abandoned temple, which is regarded as a so-called “temple peripheral to district headquarters.”

The relationship between these temples peripheral to district headquarters and district supervisor families has drawn attention because of their locations, and it has been debated whether their nature is more like *ujidera* (family temples) or *kanji* (state-supported temples). Yamanaka Toshiji, who in recent years has summarized this debate, has proposed the notion of a “quasi-state-supported temple” for these institutions in the environs of district headquarters, which functioned both as “regionally grounded *chishiki* temples managed by a core of district chief officials or the district supervisor class,” and as “temples to which public functions in the manner of a state-supported temple were added.”³⁷ Further, these temples peripheral to district headquarters, as seen for the Daiwatari abandoned temple in Mito City, Ibaraki Prefecture, are *chishiki* temples established cooperatively by multiple clans and managed under a system exceeding the bounds of any particular family, which functioned in Yamanaka’s argument “to maintain order in the district as a community” and “to strengthen the unity of the district supervisor class.” Moreover, he asserts as well that the district headquarters “had long-term continuity, being rebuilt in principle at the same locale even if the district supervisors changed, and shows its nature as a facility belonging to a third institution of authority, separate from the kin system relations of any particular clan,” and points out that temples peripheral to the district headquarters had a similar character.

This observation may be considered as applying equally to the district headquarters of Iwaki District in Mutsu Province and to the Natsumi abandoned temple site which are taken up in this contribution. That being the case, the location of the district supervisor office fields nearby has great meaning. District supervisor office fields existed on the premise of conciliation and unity within an independent district supervisor class, which emerged with the district headquarters and nearby temple at its core. Accordingly, while it is difficult to confirm whether this was true for all districts, the district supervisor office fields that were set up, as in Iwaki district, in close proximity to the district headquarters and nearby temple, may be considered to have been a symbol of the stability of regional society and regional rule.

From this nature of the district supervisor office fields, we can discern that regional control under the office of district supervisor was based upon checks and balances within the district supervisor class. The district supervisor office and the office fields that came with it, and also the district headquarters and the temple located nearby, functioned as the cornerstone of this power balance. This nature of regional society and control is most likely in one aspect the result of independent activities of the district supervisor class. However, it must not be forgotten that it was the central government, advancing a variety of measures towards concentrating its authority from the mid-seventh century on, which established the districts and the offices of district supervisor, and directed the regions to set up office fields and district headquarters. The ancient state, while uniting various regional forces, and providing the opportunities and venues for establishing stability, was at the same time using this as a sort of channel through which it gradually permeated its control, aiming to bring about regional rule under central authority. Did not the districts and district supervisor posts, and moreover the district headquarters and office fields, serve as its cornerstone?

In the end, having started with a basic inquiry into the district supervisor office fields, I have discussed the nature of regional society and regional control in ancient Japan. As stated at the outset, there is much that is based on inference, and very little has been at the level of empirical proof throughout. Accordingly I would like to plead once again that this can only be a tentative essay.

37. See Yamanaka 2005; subsequent discussion of temples in the environs of regional headquarters draws on Yamanaka’s views.

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Editor's notes

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