

A Fundamental Study of the Documents of Gufuku-ji (弘福寺)

—A Case Study of the History of an Ancient Japanese Temple—

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Gufuku-ji (Kawara-dera, 川原寺) was established in Asuka (飛鳥, 奈良) in the reign of Tenji (天智朝, 662-672) as a national temple. Since the 9th century Gufuku-ji had been declining to ask for the help of Tou-ji (東寺, 京都), which, one of the leading temples of Shingon-shuu (真言宗), was established in 799. On the other hand, Tou-ji wanted to expand its sphere of influence by acquiring branch temples. Finally Gufuku-ji became a branch temple of Tou-ji by the late 11th century. The chief priest of Tou-ji (東寺長者) ruled Gufuku-ji and intended to utilize its manors. For that purpose, Tou-ji got the documents of Gufuku-ji (弘福寺文書), and has preserved them till now. Therefore the documents of Tou-ji (東寺文書) contain those of Gufuku-ji and other Gufuku-ji related documents, which amount to forty-eight pieces. Many of them are the documents of manors. For example, the inventory of manors in 709, the terriers of the manors in Yamashiro (山城), Oumi (近江) and Owari (尾張), and the map of the manor in Sanuki Yamada (讃岐国山田郡田図) in 735. It is generally thought that manors of ancient Japan broke out in the middle of the 8th century as a result of gradual decline of national landownership. However some of the manors of Gufuku-ji had been already established by the end of the 7th century or by the beginning of the 8th century. We are now prepared to study more about manors in these periods with the documents of Gufuku-ji.