Travel and Sekisho (Barrier Stations)
—Passage of Barrier Stations by Men of the Common Class
Appeared in Travel Diaries—

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The study of the barrier stations in the Early Modern Period has been, as a matter of course, understood in its relationship to the policies of the Tokugawa Shogunate, as typically seen in the control of the Daimyo (feudal lords), the bringing in of weapons, and women coming out (from Edo, where wives of Daimyo were kept hostage), one of the important subjects of studies lies in the significance of the establishment of barrier stations.

Considering this leaning in the study of the barrier stations, passage by men of the common class receives little attention.

On the other hand, from the viewpoint of the common people, the passage of barrier stations by men of the common class was considerably different from the manner stipulated by the Shogunate. When a man of common class went on a trip, he carried a traffic bill called “Orai-Tegata”, and could pass barriers only on being checked for the bill. Even if he did not possess a bill, if he was not doubted in an interrogation, he would have been permitted to pass the barrier station.

When reading travel diaries, however, I often find passages referring to the “filing” of a bill to a barrier station——mostly to that at Hakone. It seems to have been something different from the ordinary traffic bill. In support of these passages, other passages in travel diaries include descriptions of the preparation and issuance of bills during the course of a journey. This was most frequent in travellers’ lodges in Edo.

People in eastern Japan, on their way to the Ise Shrine, entered Edo and stayed there one or two days before continuing their journey again. At that time, they had the bill issued at their lodge.

It seems these bills for passing the station were rarely described in the records of the Shogunate or barrier station. They are mentioned only as “Tochu-Tegata” (part-way bill) in a document called “Extract of Hakone Station Daily Report”. The
content of this document was a prohibition of the issuance of this type of bill in the course of a journey.

It is unbelievable that such a bill came into being spontaneously. It is probable that a temporary measure, which had been taken for some reason, survived in the form of Tochu Tegata.

In any case, it was an obvious fact that men of the common class filed a bill which was issued in the course of their trip, in order to pass a barrier station.