Nihonkokusōjito, Minamoto–Yoritomo, and the New Regime at the Beginning of the Kamakura Period

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This paper aims to critically transcend Ishimoda Tadashi’s famous thesis on the provincial Jitō of the Bunji Era (“Bunjī-Kuni–Jitō”), while learning from his powerful dialectical method.

In Chapter 1, the author argues that Minamoto–Yoritomo consistently pursued the establishment of a power structure of the same quality as that which is reflected in the Taira family’s “Kinai–Sōkanshiki” (Supreme official of the Kinai District) of the Civil War period. That is a wide-ranging local power base controlling the numerous Kuni (provinces) had been Yoritomo’s aim since the time when Prince Mochihito issued his “Shokoku–Shisetsu” (Missions to Various Provinces) ordinance, and the Tōkaidō–Sōkan (Supreme official of the Tōkaidō Region) ordinance by the Emperor Gotoba of October 1183, up to Hōjō Tokimasa’s position as “Nanakakoku–Jitō” (Jitō of the Seven Provinces) of the Bunji era. The “Nanakakoku Jitō”, which is regarded as the only reliable historical document of the “Bunjī Kuni–Jitō” (Provincial Jitō of the Bunji era), shows a wide-ranging power base existed in the Kinai district.

In Chapter 2, the author reviews the historical documents central to his argument. For example, the so-called “Bunji–Shugo–Jitō–Chokkyō” (Imperial Sanction for Shugo and Jitō of the Bunji era) which was, in fact, based on a decree of the ex-Emperor Goshirakawa–In. The author further explains that the “Chokkyō” ratified Yoritomo’s military control over the land and over the relevant rights to judge and appoint jitō.

The author concludes that Yoritomo’s charismatic status in the governmental sistem, the “Nihonkoku–Sōjitō” (Jitō of all Japan), represents the epitome of the Jitō system which had already acquired a public character since the period of rule by the cloistered Emperors and that of the Taira family; and that the “Denchi Ikko Chigyo” (the Enfeoffization of All Agricultural Fields) by the Kamakura Government corresponded to the seizure of the essential elements of the supreme power over the land coinciding with the militarization of land ownership.

In Chapter 3, the author discusses Yoritomo’s secret ambition, in taking this line, to finally settle the accounts of the division in the Imperial Line of the late Heian Period and the civil wars arising in close relation to it, on the premise that the Minamoto family was itself of Imperial blood via Gosanjō–In. Yoritomo had a concept of the nation in which he would lead the “Tokusei” (Good Politics) and “Shinsei” (New regime) under the infant Emperor Gotoba; and he sought from the beginning the marriage of his daughter with Emperor Gotoba, as a human instrument to support this concept.

Finally, in Chapter 4, the author observes that the development from Gotoba’s “New Regime” led by warriors coincided with the development from the “Good Politics” of
Yoritomo to those of the Hōjō family, and that the so-called "Jōkyū-no-ran" (Jōkyū Disturbance) should be understood within this process.