Hired Labor in Hagi Castle Town and Its Relationship to the Inland Sea Area

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Until now, studies seeking to determine the place of hired labor in urban society have focused on Edo. This paper attempts to uncover local characteristics unique to the regional cities by looking to the castle town of Hagi in Yamaguchi Prefecture as an example. First, the paper notes how the new census control method called the Koseki Shiho (family registration rules), begun within the Hagi clan in the late eighteenth century, underwent another reform in the nineteenth century. This was due to the fact that the build-up of hired labor in the castle city of Hagi had progressed, necessitating the establishment of a special regulation for this aspect. A survey of population trends in the castle town at the time reveals that there was an increase in the number of small rented houses, especially in the areas on the outskirts of the city such as Hamasakicho, meaning an increase in the number of people who originally came to Hagi to work as servants but rented houses and stayed on. In other words, it was impossible for hired labor to remain and expand in castle towns as hired labor; their existence was only made possible through engaging in the provision of miscellaneous services, such as small retailing businesses. This was inevitable in local cities where labor needs were limited. Furthermore, upon entering the nineteenth century, this situation progresses rapidly and it was found that the factors relating to such a development lay in changes in the labor provision structure. Until then the labor force had originated in Hagi and the Sea of Japan coastal regions, centering on the castle town and spreading out in concentric circles; in the nineteenth century however there was a new rush of labor from the Inland Sea coastal areas, especially from the area around Oshima. The area around Oshima was a region that, in the late Edo period, turned out a large number of migrant workers who went to other regions to work as well as a large number of emigrants going to other regions to establish their lives. The fact that Hagi was able to secure its labor supply from such regions resulted in the increase in the number of people who stayed on and led eventually to a change in the urban structure. In this way, the city of Hagi along the Japan Sea and the hired labor in this city were both greatly influenced by the economic development of the Inland Sea regions in the late modern period.