Travel and Expenses in the Late Medieval Age: Expenditures and Places Recorded in Accounts of a Journey to Northern Japan in 1563

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The historical material studied here are accounts of expenses recorded on the occasion of a journey made from Kyoto to northeastern Honshu from 1563 through the following year. These accounts are held in the collections of the National Museum of Japanese History. I have already introduced the written text contained in these accounts in Vol. 39 of the museum bulletin, but because I have since been able to identify the place names and examine the expenditures, I have prepared a further paper for this special edition on these accounts on the subject of expenditures and places.

The person who kept this record is thought to have been a priest from Daigo temple and until now the purpose of his journey has not been known. However, because the blank spaces in the accounts have been found to match those of another priest from Daigo temple who was engaged in missionary work, it is now clear that the absence of records of expenses is due to the priest staying at temples where he had related business.

However, in the other parts of these accounts it is shown not only that the priest mostly stayed in inns and that the rates charged by the inns were fairly standard, but that there were market rates (criteria) for other charges as well. This is not only the result of supply and demand related to extensive travel, but is also indicative of the existence of a system in late medieval Japan that made it possible to engage in travel purely for economy-related reasons.

Accommodation charges are consistent with those recorded in materials from earlier times dating back to the beginning of the 15th century, and nor was there much variation in the price of other charges. Thus, this record yields important information for studies on long-term price variations.

A study of the inns and establishments that provided day-time meals revealed that these places in the center of cities functioned independently in providing services for outsiders, and that many of these continued doing so into the following Early Modern period. It may be concluded that the transportation system of the Early Modern period became established on the basis of this type of journey dating from the Middle Ages, which became established in a natural and spontaneous manner.