The Introduction and Dissemination of the Vaccination Methods in the Choshu Feudal Domain

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The Choshu feudal domain is a common topic of study in research conducted on the history of the Meiji Restoration. It is for this reason that research on the Choshu feudal domain during the end of the Edo Era and the Meiji Restoration, which has reached enormous proportions, has necessarily centered on political history and economic aspects. The author has, however, stressed the effectiveness of focusing on the Choshu feudal domain during this period from the perspective of the history of Western studies.

As is well known, within research into the history of Western studies at the end of the Edo Era there are two schools of thought concerning the characterization of Western studies during this period. One emphasizes the military science aspect of Western studies, while the other emphasized the spread of Western studies to the regions, that is, Rangaku in rural villages. To put it another way, these two views are simply a question of the type of people who were advocates of Western studies at that time. It is exactly a case of the two categories put forward by Tetsuro Tasaki: the “politician oriented type with a focus on getting close to politicians from inside the system” and the “rural village Western medicine type where as local physicians of Western medicine activities were entirely status related”. There is no intersection in the broader sense between these two views in research currently being conducted on the history of Western studies during this period and additional research continues with these two running in parallel with each other.

The author has previously examined Western studies in the Choshu feudal domain from the perspective of the former, namely, by looking at it from the aspect of military science. However, the author believes that by simultaneously neglecting the latter perspective, namely the issue of Rangaku in villages, it becomes impossible to characterize Western studies at the end of the Edo Era. As has already been studied in “Bakumatsuki Choshuhan Yogakushi no Kenkyu” (A Study of the History of Western Studies in the Choshu Feudal Domain at the End of the Edo Era) (1998), a previous work by the author, more than half the students graduating from famous Rangaku schools in the Choshu feudal domain were village physicians or those who were wealthy local farmers. They accounted for 86% of students in Ogata Kōan's Tekijuku in Osaka and as much as 60% in Ito Genboku's Shosendo. In this way, at the very least an examination from this latter perspective is absolutely vital for understanding the true nature of Western studies in the Choshu feudal domain. Cognizant of the points outlined above, this paper examines the introduction, implementation and dissemination of the vaccinia virus by Dutch physician Otto Mohrni ke while investigating their intersection with the latter perspective. It unveils specific
aspects while looking at the encouragement given to samurai, retainers and their families during the process of the widespread adoption of vaccinations, the establishment and implementation of vaccination methods in each county, and an approval of vaccinations that exceeded beyond the geographical bounds of the domain’s territory.