Database on Student Records of Regional Rangaku Scholars

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In this paper I provide information on the significance of a database on regional Rangaku scholars which is one objective of this collaborative research project on regional Rangaku, describe exactly what these Rangaku student records are, present explanatory notes on the Rangaku scholar student records used for the database, and detail the specifications of this student record database.

The primary significance of this database lies in being able to show in quantitative terms more than 10,000 Rangaku scholars from the Edo Era. The names of a great many Rangaku scholars who had been anonymous in previous research on Rangaku have been uncovered. This attests to the tendency in previous Rangaku research to rely on materials relating to the top Rangaku scholars and to materials on advanced research undertaken by the Bakutu and the various feudal domains. We may even go so far as to say that such research made an assessment of an overall portrait of Rangaku by looking at just the tip of the iceberg.

Where possible, explanatory notes have been added for the source materials for the various student records used for the database. This is the first time that commentary has been written on this amount of student records on Rangaku scholars at a single stroke. Since it includes a commentary on not only student records on physicians of Western medicine but also on others such as Omura Masujiro’s artillery student records and student records on physicians that studied a mixture of traditional Chinese medicine and Western medicine, it should be possible to discern differences in their qualities. In particular, the activities of the Mino Ogaki Ema-kaikaku (Ema Family School in Ogaki, Mino) from the end of the Edo Era through the beginning of the Meiji Period had a leaning toward the warrior class, and because, unlike one aspect of Rangaku at the end of the Edo Era that showed a tendency toward military science, its records show the activities of regional Rangaku scholars who continued with medical activities, we may assume that it is indicative of the ordinary structure of such schools.

Database specifications include numbers for entry items, people's names, recorded place names, current prefectures, dates of enrolment, dates of departure, teachers, school names and affiliations as well as recorded ages, family relations, pseudonyms, guarantors, and sources. Explanatory notes have been appended for all of these categories. These selected items will form the basis of a planned database on people from the Early Modern Period.