Working Calendars of Coastal Villages in the Middle Ages

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Until now, the calendar year in villages during the Middle Ages has been portrayed in terms of the farming seasons that made up the agricultural calendar. However, one would expect there to be an annual work cycle that combines the occupations of coastal environments where there is a heterogeneous composition of work patterns incorporating occupations that do not center on agriculture. This paper reconstructs working calendars based on historical materials on the responsibilities of coastal villages in Wakasa and Echizen in the Middle Ages. In addition to ascertaining monthly characteristics, it also classifies coastal villages according to the combination of occupations. In so doing, it identifies the following characteristics of coastal villages during this period.

1. The importance of rice cultivation was generally low, and feudal lords with established beaches in their estates expected coastal villages to perform specific functions. These functions varied considerably, and included the supply of salt and marine produce, the cultivation of produce from fields and other land, silk produced by sericulture, and animal skins obtained from hunting. However, a single village did not engage in all of these functions.

2. The working calendars of medieval coastal villages consisted of the seasonal incorporation of fishing, salt making, crop and rice cultivation, sericulture, hunting and gathering. These working calendars were unlike agricultural calendars that combined other occupational activities with rice cultivation in that they demonstrated a heterogeneous composition that incorporated a number of occupations coexisting side by side. The combinations of occupations varied from village to village, which are divided into four classifications according to those combinations.

3. A basic tax-system charged on the salt-making and fishing village comprises monthly payment of salt and small-fish and seasonal payment of *tsukame* and *sushi-ake*. The occupational structure of coastal villages where the gathering of produce was not concentrated at a particular time was such that a number of working calendars overlapped each other without exactly coinciding.

4. Medieval coastal villages had two types of two responsibilities: there was the production of *mairimo* that were used as offerings at New Year’s, the year end, the main five festivals (Go-sekkki) and other religious festivals, and the supply of produce called *narimono* in the different seasons. Religious offerings and the gifting of items from those of status to those below them (gegyo) reconfirms a bilateral relationship between villages and feudal lords, in which the provision of offerings for festivals had the role of protecting occupational interests. Detailed instructions were given by feudal lords for the supply of *narimono*, which points to the role of feudal lords
as consumers.

5. There were three methods of protecting the occupational activities of coastal villages and the use of resources during this period. They were: 1) the establishment of periods when the use of resources ceased; 2) gifting to those of lower status (gegyo) and suiko loans given by feudal lords; and 3) the adoption of a system of substitution.

Key words: Medieval coastal villages, working calendar, Echizen and Wakasa, village type, the composition of heterogeneous and various occupations.