Power Structure of the Ise Clan in the Mid-15th Century and Hikan

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It is known that strategic traffic points around the Ise Bay Inland Sea, broadly speaking consisting of Ise Bay, Chita Bay, Mikawa Bay and Atsumi Bay, were under the control of the Muromachi shogun. Using the abundance of extant historical materials, this paper explores the historical influence that the power structure of the Ise clan had on that area. At that time, the Ise clan was close to the shogun and held positions in the shogunate's office of administration (mandokoro) and also had connections with the Ise Bay Inland Sea.

Through a study of the connections that existed between the Ise clan and hikan (low-ranking retainers) in the mid-15th century, this paper presents a general portrait of the organization of hikan, and in addition to identifying underlying organizational principles, it also examines characteristics of the power structure of the Ise clan.

Ise clan administrative officials who served in the capital (Kyoto hikan) served at the Muromachi palace as personal attendants of the shogun. When they served in their home province they made the local inhabitants their retainers, thus playing an important role in the formation of Ise clan hikan. The brokering by Kyoto hikan of meetings between provincial hikan and the Ise clan, attendance at imperial succession ceremonies and gifts was not ad-hoc, but a general practice. The relationship between the Kyoto hikan and provincial hikan was one of "moshitsugi—yoriko," that is, between bakufu spokesmen for the imperial court and dependent retainers.

We may conjecture that provincial hikan, who are seen as having constituted the military base of the Ise clan, gave their military cooperation to the Kyoto hikan whom they served. This most likely occurred because provincial hikan oversaw shogunal holdings and Kyoto hikan, who did not have their own provincial base, were frequently ordered by the Ise clan to assist bakufu vassals with shugo (military governor) reprimands. That is to say, the power structure afforded a give-and-take relationship between the two parties. However, since provincial hikan were still involved in farming, there were divisions and conflicts over the various local issues they faced, which even saw them resorting to arms to resolve a situation, resulting in an unstable military base.

Whereas Kyoto hikan and provincial hikan had a "moshitsugi—yoriko" relationship, a study of the process of the confirmation of inheritance confirms links between members of the same family and the right to manage family property. Accordingly, their activities as administrative officials were combined with a bureaucratic organization for family property. In other words, the power of the Ise clan was based on a two-tiered structure comprising a family property bureaucracy and a "moshitsugi—yoriko" relationship. The different actions taken by hikan in the Bunsho change in power in which Ise Sadachika lost his power were the result of a structural problem in the
power of the Ise clan caused by the differences in the two organizational principles.

It is precisely this power organization based on the characteristics of the power structure of the Ise clan that enabled local overlords (kokujin) with genealogical ties to Ise clan hikan to remain active in the Ise Bay Inland Sea area up until the Sengoku period.

Key words: Ise clan, hikan, family property bureaucracy, moshitsugi, yoriko