The Emperor's Jurisdiction and Two Bureaucracies of the Muromachi/Sengoku Period

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The prevailing view of the historical image of the Emperor during the Sengoku/Shokuho Period says that many Imperial Court nobles left the capital and headed to the provinces, with the Emperor losing his right to unify the Imperial Court society and the “Emperor System requiring neither a Department of State nor courtiers”.

This paper investigates a trial case in which Emperor Gotsuchimikado censured the Kujo family in relation to the murder of a servant called Arikazu Karahashi perpetrated in 1496 by Kujo Masamoto, former Chief Adviser to the Emperor. As a result of this, a trial commenced after the Emperor dispatch an imperial messenger to the victim’s family, the Sugawara clan, who were made to submit a complaint, and an imperial messenger was also dispatched to the defendant’s family, the Kujo family, who were made to submit a jugou petition. The opinions of attendants and persons with experience of delivering messages to the Emperor were requested by means of imperial questions, and trial deliberations referred to as gozen sata (direct judgments) were conducted after the Emperor himself arrived at the doors to the pavilion on February 5th and summoned both parties to consult with regards to events relating to work in delivering messages to the Emperor. As for whether or not imperial words were given to buke, the crime was not deemed to be serious, and gozen sata were completed on February 5th by considering punishment by dismissal for Hisatsune Kujo. This Emperor's trial case posed a difficult question in terms of whether to give priority to State bureaucracy connected to government officials, or to patrimonial bureaucracy connected to powerful families and their servants. Attendants Sanetaka Sanjonishi and Kanroji Chikanaga, who were connected to the Satsuroku family and Kujo family as relations by marriage, felt that the crime against Arikazu was clear, and they opposed punishment by dismissal as lightening the family heads’ right to punish servants and attendants. With the imperial decision of February 2nd, the Emperor withdrew punishment by dismissal of the adviser and approved as an imperial decree punishment of the Kujo family by censure and suspension of service, as proposed by the Konoe family. In this way, the Emperor of the Muromachi/Sengoku Period exercised his right to judge and punish disputes and murder cases between Imperial Court nobles, dispatching imperial messengers and putting great effort into understanding the related partyed by means of imperial questions, with the Emperor making final decisions on punishment by censure or suspension of service. On the other hand, taking the Muromachi shogun (buke shisso) as a pretext, the Emperor reciprocated by appointing a member of the Konoe family as his chief adviser. Even in the Muromachi/Sengoku Period, the Emperor exercised jurisdiction in relation to disputes between Imperial Court nobles, and it was clarified that patriarchal authority was strengthened while utilizing the shogunate as a guardian.

Key words: Emperor’s jurisdiction, Kujo Masamoto, Arikazu Karahashi murder, Emperor’s censure, patrimonial bureaucracy