Function and Information Management of Edo Castle Gatekeepers

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This paper reveals the following two points regarding Edo Castle gatekeepers by investigating the inner gates and major three gates, whose guard duties were assigned to daimyo (feudal lords).

Firstly, the paper examines the function of Edo Castle gatekeepers, which has not been deeply studied because of the argument that they substantially lost their function of defense in peaceful times without internal or external wars. This article probes into their function, centered on the inner gates that provided an interface between the castle enclosure and city space, with a case study of an individual domain (the Hachinohe domain). The results indicate that those gatekeepers obviously served as city guards in contact with townspeople on occasions such as management of the space, festivals, and pedestrians passing by at night, as well as functioned to control nighttime traffic, show courtesy, and confirm the order of samurai society.

Secondly, the paper investigates information management of the inner gates and major three gates as a basis for carrying out duties with frequent shift changes. Special attention should be paid to the fact that the domains on duty kept log books, not only Moushiokuri and Moushiawase used for shift changes of gatekeepers but also Oki-cho used as a basic ledger, without involvement of the shogunate government. Although the government created fundamental laws concerning gatekeepers and gave instructions as necessary, the operations and accumulation of practices depended on individual domains. As a result, private operations manuals were produced, and differences in judgments arose among respective gates and clans. In this way, the duties of Edo Castle gatekeepers were executed autonomously by each domain according to the judgment standards that varied depending on clans though based on certain disciplines kept by sharing information among the domains on duty. Although the study of document preparation and management of the shogunate organizations is in the stage of case accumulation, this study can illustrate a case under conditions different from those of conventional studies, where there were checkpoints whose keepers changed frequently.

Key words: Edo Castle gatekeepers, city guards, courtesy, information management, domain autonomy