
Country Grade in Terms of Legislation and Protocol

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The Yoro Code stipulates four grades of provinces under the Ritsuryo system: top, top, middle, and bottom, and the so-called “KoKu-gun Table” in the Civil Division of the Engi shiki describes specific grades for a total of 66 provinces and 2 islands. The breakdown is as follows: 13 top-ranked provinces, 35 top-ranked provinces, 11 middle-ranked provinces, and 7 lower-ranked provinces.

It has been vaguely believed in the past that the grades in the “KoKu-gun Table” were basically unchanged throughout the Nara and Heian periods. Based on this assumption, research attempting to reconstruct the kuni grades has progressed by examining in detail the names and changes in the capacity of kokushi as a matter of fact, and research on individual countries using the Shozei tax account ledgers of the Tempyo period has also deepened. However, as typified by the theory of “superior provinces (A) and (B),” there is sometimes a discrepancy between the legal status indicated in decrees and codes and the actual situation, making it difficult to accurately track institutional transitions. Some studies have already paid attention to the transition of laws and regulations, but they have discarded the relationship between the number of subordinate clerks and national grade, and the two have not been synthesized.

This paper, therefore, examines the transition from the Taiho ordinance to the Engi shiki by examining the legal system of the capacity of kokushi, including lower-ranking scribes, and attempts to delineate the provisions for the capacity of kokushi fourth-grade officials and shisei corresponding to the national grades as seen in the “KoKu-gun Table”.

In the actual appointment, it can be pointed out that the seemingly disorderly operation of kokushi capacity, if limited to the legal system, was quite strictly administered and had a close relationship between laws and ordinances. The most senior and middle-ranking states are identified with exceptions that could be called the “associate state” system, namely, associate most senior and associate middle-ranking states, and associate most senior and associate lowest-ranking states, respectively. In particular, there was an inversion of the “associate-middle countries of the top countries” and “associate-superior countries of the middle countries,” limited to the number of lower-level clerical positions. It is assumed that the complicated operation was caused by the addition of a factor based on the country’s ranking in terms of the number of quotas for national clerks to the

grades originally determined based on the country's burden-bearing capacity and other factors.

Key words: Engi shiki (set of ancient Japanese governmental regulations), country under the ritsuryo system that is controlled by the government, junior clerk, Country Grade