

The bureaucracy in 9th and 10th century
Japan as reflected in problems facing
central government official residing in
the provinces: Consideration of the
Dajokanpu dated April 11, 902

by *TAHARA Mitsuyasu*

Very little research has been done to date on central government officials who resided in provincial administrative districts (*bunaikyoju-kanjin* 部内居住官人; hereafter, *bunai-kanjin*), from their standpoint as members of the bureaucracy. This article re-examines an intra-bureau directive issued by the Grand Council of State (*Dajokanpu* 太政官符) dated April 11 Engi 2(902 CE), in order to review several issues regarding *bunai-kanjin* in relation to the ancient Japanese bureaucracy as a whole. In addition, the author also discusses problems facing the Ritsuryo bureaucracy from 902 on.

The author's analysis of insubordination on the part of *bunai-kanjin* towards provincial governors, including a case of refusing corvee imposed by a low-class military officials (*efu-toneri* 衛府舎人) and one of not paying land taxes and interest of rice seed loans imposed by lower-ranking officials in the Kinai region, leads him to the conclusion that such insubordination differed in substance according to the bureaucratic classification of *bunai-kanjin* and the regions where they were stationed. Further investigation makes clear that the system of tax exemption under the Ritsuryo Codes, at least until the time of issuance of the *Dajokanpu* of 902, covered *bunai-kanjin*.

However, the *Dajokanpu* of 902 emphasizes the fact that since the mid-9th century 1) records existed showing that *bunai-kanjin* had been "singled out for duties" by provincial authorities and 2) had been subjected to various tax impositions. However, this did not mean that *bunai-kanjin* had been stripped of their tax exempt status. Rather, based on the research arguing that the

directive was related to the formation of a new type of local administrator, which historians call “*zoshikin-in-gunji*” 雑色人郡司, the author suggests that the directive’s reference to *bunai-kanjin* should be interpreted as a comment concerning a portion of local elites with ambitions to certain provincial level government appointments, and a mere statement of the fact that in the process, *bunai-kanjin* were being incorporated into such nepotistic administrative mechanisms by local authorities.

Concerning *bunai-kanjin* in general, the *Dajokanpu* of 902, while admitting that in fact they had been subjected to various corvée impositions, in principle they were obliged to conduct their duties as bureaucrats. The author suggests that what made this institutional distinction necessary was a logic that had developed since the mid-9th century, to the effect that the public obligations of bureaucrats who had been incorporated into provincial level administrative mechanisms were the same as those imposed on ordinary tax paying subjects.

Given these findings, the historical significance of the *Dajokanpu* of 902 lies not in making us aware of the changes that had occurred in corvée obligations at that time, but rather in pointing out that changes had occurred within the whole system that was supposed to be functioning based on the status hierarchy established under the Ritsuryō Codes.