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On the Quantity of Written Data Produced by the *Ritsuryō* State

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Historians agree that *ritsuryō* state produced a lot of written information but they say nothing about the precise quantity of written data. That can be attributed to the fact that a generally accepted method of calculation of written data (or information) has never been worked out. In this research note, the author offers a first attempt at such a calculation. According to Sakaehara Towao's study, the average production of a sutra copyist was about 3,800-4,000 characters per day. As we know the number of scribes (*shishō*) in government offices, we can (under the assumption that the productivity of copyists and scribes was the same) roughly estimate the quantity (number of characters) of written data produced by *ritsuryō* state. The study shows that *ritsuryō* state produced more and more information. For the most part, increases of written documents were achieved by the center, not by the periphery. This suggests that the center was losing its interest in what was happening in the periphery. In the capital, the increase was different for different offices. It was greatest in the offices that worked for the emperor and the imperial family. Our data show that with the passage of time in the Heian period, *ritsuryō* institutions were becoming a political and cultural system without feedback.

Keywords: *RITSURYŌ* STATE, WRITTEN DATA, INFORMATION, SCRIBES, *SHOKU NIHONGI*, *ENGISHIKI*

The period that Japanese historians call the era of the "*ritsuryō* state" (*ritsuryō kokka* 律令国家, or "state based on law"; eighth through tenth centuries) is very important in many respects, not least because it was during this time that there emerged the type of culture we now call Japanese. One of its outstanding features can be traced to the present day, namely its focus on writing culture and education. It is often said that state governance in Japan in the period of *ritsuryō kokka* was characterized by *bunsho gyōsei* 文書行政, that is, administration by the use of written documents.[1] Surviving documents—many preserved in the Shōsōin 正倉院 treasury, about 200,000 items written on *mokkan* 木簡 (wooden tablets)[2], still more on lacquer paper (*urushigami bunsho* 漆紙文書)[3]—

and other existing sources prove that the flow and interchange of written documents within the framework of the ritsuryō state were very intensive. The abundance of these documents proves also that there was an adequate supply of well-trained officials who were capable of performing their office duties quite effectively.

Historians say nothing, however, about the precise quantity of written data produced by governmental institutions. Their silence—their failure to examine the issue of information volume—can be attributed in part to the fact that a generally accepted method of calculation of written data (or information) has never been worked out. In this research note, I offer a first attempt at such a calculation. As this is the first effort to propose a system for computing *ritsuryō* information volume, it hardly needs saying that my methodology and the accuracy of the figures are subject to questioning. But I feel fairly confident that even the first step toward working out a relevant methodology will make a contribution to a better understanding of the essence of the *ritsuryō kokka*.

The main primary sources for my study are the texts of *ritsuryō* codes (primarily the *Taihō ritsuryō* 大宝律令), the official chronicle *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀, and amendments to *ritsuryō* codes known as *Engishiki* 延喜式.[4]

One can divide all agents that produced written documents in the *ritsuryō* state into two main categories: the center (institutions in the capital) and the periphery (provinces, districts, and villages). The number of provinces was between sixty and seventy, the number of districts was about 600. These institutions (central and provincial offices in particular) were the main contributors to the flow of written information that circulated in the body of state. The rules for sending and receiving information (documents) were formulated in the codes known as *Taihō ritsuryō* (701-702) and *Yōrō ritsuryō* 養老律令 (compiled in 718, promulgated in 757). According to those rules, the whole system was vertically oriented and agents were not free in choosing their partners. These agents were arranged in dyads: center ↔ province, province ↔ district, district ↔ village. Direct communication was restricted within these dyadic relationships—the village could not communicate directly with the province, and the district did not have the right to send documents to the center. Horizontal connections, too, were restricted. Documents produced by an upper (superior) institution and sent to a lower (inferior) were called *jō* 上, and documents generated by a lower institution and forwarded to an upper were labelled *ge* 解. In case the partners were equal (say, two provinces) such documents were called *i* 移. As a rule, these were documents for the delivery of which an intermediate transmitter was needed (for instance, if the way of the document from the center to the final receiver was through the territories of several provinces and in this case each province informed the neighboring province about forwarding the document).[5]

Every agent in this system combined functions of sender and receiver, depending on the situation. In this way the feedback in the state's system was secured. But the context of information sent by upper and lower institutions was different and depended on the place the given institution held on the pyramid of power. The upper institutions produced orders and inquiries, the lower handed up suggestions, answers, reports, and dis-

patches.

For the problem under discussion here, we have very valuable data in the materials concerning the Shakyōjo 写経所, or Office for Copying Sutras. This office was set up in 736 for Kōmyō 光明 (701-760), the pious wife of Emperor Shōmu 聖武天皇 (reigned 724-749). Later it became a department in the giant Tōdaiji 東大寺 temple. That was a period when government's support of Buddhism reached its greatest extent.

The personnel of the Shakyōjo fell into five types. The greatest number of employees were copyists (*kyōshi* 経師). In different periods they numbered from several tens to one hundred. In addition to *kyōshi*, there were *shiji* 試字 (copyists hired after passing exams), *sōkō* 装潢 (who took care of preparation of paper and binding), *kōsei* 校生 (proofreaders) and *daishi* 題詞 (designers of titles).

In the Shakyōjo as well as in other governmental offices, working days were registered. According to Sakaehara Towao's 栄原永遠男 most helpful study, a Shakyōjo employee named Noto no Oshihito's 能登忍人 average working days per month came to 22.5 for the morning shift and 20.6 for the evening shift. It is not clear how many hours the employee worked, if he worked both the morning and evening shifts, but Sakaehara thinks that it was more than ten hours.[6]

As for the quantity of work turned out by the copyists, we have reliable data for 772. The average production per day was 8.6 standard pages for copying sutras; that makes about 3,800-4,000 characters.[7]

Upon the assumption that the average number of copyists in the Shakyōjo was fifty persons, we can calculate that every day the staff of that office copied 430 pages or 190,000 characters. Provided that every copyist worked twenty days per month and 240 days a year, that makes 8,600 pages (3,800,000 characters) a month and 103,200 pages (45,600,000 characters) a year. These data give an impressive hint about how enormous an effort this single institution made to contribute to the proliferation of written culture. At the same time one should keep in mind that it was a very special institution—the Shakyōjo did not produce new information, but only multiplied the information that already existed.

These figures give a clue to the problem of the quantity of written data that the *ritsuryō* state was producing. New information was produced by government institutions which had scribes (*shishō* 史生) on their staff. The position of scribes is of crucial importance for our study because no document could appear without their work. The content of that work was "rewriting of documents, their copying, finishing and having them signed."[8]

In accordance with the *ritsuryō*, almost all central offices (*kan* 官, councils, and *shō* 省, ministries) in the capital employed scribes; the only exception was the Jingikan 神祇官, Council of Gods.[9] But at the same time most of their departments (*shiki* 職, *ryō* 寮, *tsukasa* 司 or *shi* 司[10]) were ignored in this respect. That suggests that at the time of compiling of *Taihō ritsuryō*, the quantity of paperwork was relatively small and did not demand scribes in all sections of central offices. Subsequent to the compiling of *Taihō ri-*

tsuryō, however, the chronicle *Shoku Nihongi* informs us more than once of increases in scrivening personnel, and it tells of the addition of scribes to offices that previously had no posts for them.[11] In *Engishiki* we find a full list of scribes in all the offices, and the numbers greatly exceed those in *Taihō ritsuryō*.

Comparing the lists of scribes in *Taihō ritsuryō* and in *Engishiki*, we can detect the increase in the volume of information produced by institutions in the capital. Here I will assume that all scribes employed by the government copied the same number of characters as copyists in the Shakyōjo (that is, 3,800 characters a day). It is probable that the speed of writing and number of characters per day were not always exactly the same, because sutras had to be copied with a special stress on accurate and beautiful handwriting, and all sutras were copied in *kaisho* 楷書 style. On the other hand one can easily imagine that s*hishō* from time to time had to carry out tasks other than copying. In spite of these differences I think that this estimate cannot badly misrepresent the actual figures.

Table 1. Number of Scribes and the Quantity of Information Copied in the Eighth and Tenth Centuries

Office Name	Number of scribes according to *Ritsuryō*	Number of scribes according to *Engishiki*	Quantity of information (number of characters) copied per day according to *Ritsuryō*	Quantity of information (number of characters) copied per day according to *Engishiki*
Jingikan (Council of Gods)	0	4	0	15,200
Dajōkan (State Council)	10	11	38,000	41,800
Sabenkan(Controller of the Left)	10	18	38,000	68,400
Ubenkan (Controller of the Right)	10	18	38,000	68,400
Chūmushō (Ministry of the Centre)	20	20	76,000	76,000
Naiki (Secretaries of Chūmushō)	0	2	0	7,600
Genmotsushiki (Department of Key-bearers)	0	8	0	30,400
Chūgūshiki (Department of Empress` Palace)	0	8	0	30,400
Otoneriryō (Bureau of Senior Attendants)	0	4	0	15,200

Zushoryō (Bureau of Manuscripts and Books)	0	5	0	19,000
Kuraryō (Bureau of Palace Storehouse)	0	10	0	38,000
Nuidono-tsukasa (Wardrobe Bureau)	0	4	0	15,200
Onmyōryō (Divination Bureau)	0	4	0	15,200
Uchikura no Tsukasa (Bureau of Inner Treasury)	0	7	0	26,600
Shikibushō (Ministry of Ceremonies)	20	20	76,000	76,000
Daigakuryō (Bureau of Education)	0	8	0	30,400
San'iryō (Bureau of Court Rank Bearers without Position)	6	0	22,800	0
Jibushō (Ministry of Regulations)	10	10	38,000	38,000
Gagakuryō (Bureau of Music and Dancing)	0	4	0	15,200
Genbanryō (Bureau of Buddhist Monks and Foreigners)	4	4	15,200	15,200
Misasagi no Tsukasa (Bureau of Imperial Mausoleums)	0	4	0	15,200
Mimbushō (Ministry of Popular Affairs)	10	20	38,000	76,000
Shukeiryō (Accounting Bureau)	6	11	22,800	41,800
Shusairyō (Tax Bureau)	4	7	15,200	26,600
Hyōbushō (Ministry of Military Affairs)	10	20	38,000	76,000
Hayahito no Tsukasa (Bureau of Hayato)	0	5	0	19,000
Keibushō (Ministry of Justice)	10	10	38,000	38,000
Hanji (Bureau of Judges)	0	4	0	15,200
Shukokushi (Office of Prisons)	0	2	0	7,600

Okurashō (Treasury Ministry)	6	20	22,800	76,000
Oribe no Tsukasa (Weaving Office)	0	4	0	15,200
Kunaishō (Ministry of Imperial Household)	10	18	38,000	68,400
Dazenshiki (Department of Palace Table)	0	8	0	30,400
Mokukuryō (Bureau of Carpentry)	0	11	0	41,800
Ohiryō (Palace Kitchen Supplies Bureau)	0	5	0	19,000
Shudenryō (Palace Custodians and Supply Bureau)	0	5	0	19,000
Ten'yakuryō (Pharmaceutical Bureau)	0	4	0	15,200
Kanimori no Tsukasa (Office of Palace Housekeeping)	0	5	0	19,000
Okimi no Tsukasa (Imperial Family Registry Office)	0	2	0	7,600
Naizenshi (Imperial Table Office)	0	2	0	7,600
Sake no Tsukasa (Wine-making Office)	0	4	0	15,200
Uneme no Tsukasa (Palace Women's Office)	0	2	0	7,600
Mohitori no Tsukasa (Palace Water Supply Office)	0	2	0	7,600
Danjōdai (Censors' Board)	6	6	22,800	22,800
Sakyoshiki (Department of the Left Part of the Capital)	0	11	0	41,800
Ukyōshiki (Department of the Right Part of the Capital)	0	11	0	41,800

Himugashi no Ichi no Tsukasa (Office of the East Market)	0	2	0	7,600
Nishi no Ichi no Tsukasa (Office of the West Market)	0	2	0	7,600
Shungūbō (Heir Apparent Palace)	0	4	0	15,200
Toneri no Tsukasa (Attendants' Office)	0	2	0	7,600
Shuzenken (Table's Office)	0	2	0	7,600
Shuzōken (Storehouse Office)	0	2	0	7,600
Shudenjo (Housekeeping Office)	0	2	0	7,600
Shumejo (Stables Service Office)	0	2	0	7,600
Total	152	390	577,600	1,482,000

Under the assumption that scribes worked twenty days a month and 240 days a year, the quantity of information produced in a month at the beginning of the eighth century came to 11,552,000 characters, and the output for a full year came to 138,624,000 characters. In the tenth century, with more scribes working, the totals rise to 29,640,000 characters a month and 355,680,000 characters a year. These figures—mind that they do not include numerous documents issued by provincial and district offices and villages, Buddhist institutions, personal writings, or correspondence—are quite impressive. The *ritsuryō* state generated a mountain of paperwork. The numbers are particularly striking if we compare them to the quantity of information now existing.

Let us take *Shoku Nihongi*, the principal source for Nara period. According to our calculation it contains about 356,000 characters.[12] The chronicle covers a period of ninety-five years, from 697 to 791. On average, then, one year is covered by approximately 3,750 characters; by doing a simple calculation based on the number of characters, we can estimate that this was less than 0.003% of the information produced annually by offices in the capital at the beginning of the eighth century. Needless to say, some alterations might be called for in this figure, to take account of the fact that not all pieces of writing contained new information and some documents were written in several copies or recopied because of alterations made by the signing official, etc.[13] But that circumstance cannot eliminate the intellectual challenge to historians of a problem of interpretation. This is one of those instances when we need courage, if we want to repaint the picture, for as we begin there are only several dots remaining on the canvas that has come down to us.

Governing the state is a self-supported system with a feedback. So we should describe

how scribes were arranged in the provinces where local written information was concentrated (in the staff of districts or villages there were no special posts for scribes). It seems that well-organized educational training in the government's schools for future officials (*daigaku* 大学 and *kokugaku* 国学) produced more people than were really needed. In 758, to make way for more candidates to obtain jobs, the term of employment was reduced from six years to four on grounds that "the number of aspirants [for the posts of scribes] is big but the number of jobs is rather small."[14]

According to *Taihō ritsuryō*, all provinces were divided into "big," "upper," "middle," and "lower," but the legal code did not specify which provinces belonged to which categories. *Engishiki* labelled thirteen provinces as "big" (Yamato, Kawachi, Ise, Musashi, Kazusa, Shimosa, Hitachi, Ōmi, Kozuke, Mutsu, Echizen, Harima, Higo), thirty-five as "upper" (Yamashiro, Setsu, Owari, Mikawa, Tōtomi, Suruga, Kai, Sagami, Mino, Shinano, Shimozuke, Dewa, Kaga, Etchū, Echigo, Tamba, Tajima, Inaba, Hōki, Izumo, Mimasaka, Bizen, Bitchū, Bingo, Aki, Suwa, Kii, Awa, Sanuki, Iyo, Chikuzen, Chikugo, Buzen, Bungo, Hizen), eleven as "middle" (Awa, Wakasa, Noto, Sado, Tango, Iwami, Nagato, Tosa, Himuka, Ōsumi, Satsuma), and nine as "lower" (Izumi, Iga, Shima, Izu, Hida, Oki, Awaji, Iki, Tsushima). At the beginning of the eighth century there were sixty-one provinces, and by the time of compiling of *Engishiki* the number had increased to sixty-eight.

The number of scribes in the provinces differed, too. In the early eighth century there were three posts for scribes in each province; it seems obvious that it was expected that the volume of information produced by every province would be the same, without reference to size. Apart from these employees in the provinces, twenty scribes were employed by the Dazaifu (this was a special administrative unit for nine provinces of Chikuzen, Chikugo, Buzen, Bungo, Hizen, Higo, Hyuga, Ōsumi, Satsuma, Iki, and Tsushima) office in the province of Chikuzen. The total number of scribes at this time came to 203. That is more that the number of scribes (152) in the capital of Nara, but the difference is not very great. That proves that at the beginning of the era of rule by the Nara state, the quantity of information produced in the center and in the periphery was more or less balanced.

There were several personnel reforms affecting scribes in the provinces during the eighth century. As soon became obvious, the quantity of work was different in different provinces, and in 724, the numbers were changed: four scribes were put in big provinces, three in upper, two in the middle and lower provinces.[15] In the edict of 766, it was said that although many people were competent to be scribes, the number of posts for them was insufficient. To remedy this, the number of scribes was increased by two in every province.[16] It was then that the provincial scribes reached their highest number (about 330), but in 779, their numbers were reduced again, by one for each category of province, to five, four, three, and two, respectively.[17] That downsizing was the final decision with regard to personnel for writing and copying documents, and the number of scribes in provinces in the early tenth-century *Engishiki* coincides with the edict of 779.

That makes 255 posts for scribes in provinces,[18] and it means that by the tenth century the 390 scribes in the capital of Heian greatly outnumbered their counterparts in the periphery. Comparing this to data on eighth-century conditions in the *Taihō ritsuryō*, we see that the number of scribes increased both in the capital and in the provinces, but the percentages of increase differed dramatically: capital posts were up 156%, while those in the countryside were up just 26%. One can conclude that the major increases of written documents in Heian Japan were achieved by the center, not by the periphery. This suggests that the center was losing its interest in what was happening in the periphery.

In the center itself, the increase of scribes was different for different offices. It was greatest in the offices that worked for the emperor and the imperial family. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish the emperor's ceremonial functions and personal quotidian needs, but the contest over jobs in departments relating to the emperor and the imperial family shows that the above-mentioned growth cannot be explained by the expanding role of the emperor as a political figure whose main aim is to govern the whole country. The number of scribes in the Kunaishō 宮内省 and its departments increased from ten to sixty-eight, a growth rate (680%) that outnumbers any other council or ministry that dealt with the problems of the whole country. And we should keep in mind that by that time the functions of the Chūmushō 中務省 changed greatly too. The personnel complement of scribes in the Chūmushō ranked third among ministries (growing from twenty to seventy-two, or by 360%) but this was due to a great extent to placement of scribes in posts in the departments and bureaux dealing with the immediate needs of the empress in her *chūgū* 中宮 palace (Ōtoneriryō 大舎人寮, Kuraryō 内蔵寮, Nuidono no tsukasa 縫殿寮, Uchikura no tsukasa 内蔵司, thirty-three persons in all). If we add fourteen scribes working for the palace of the Heir Apparent, that makes 115 scribes working primarily for the emperor's family per se in these three offices (as compared with thirty at the beginning of the eighth century; that represents 383% growth). At the same time the scrivening personnel of other major offices responsible for the problems of the whole country exhibited the following percentages of increase: the principal policy-making Dajōkan 太政官, 50% (from thirty to forty-five); Shikibushō 式部省, 7.7% (from twenty-six to twenty-eight); Jibushō 治部省, 57% (from fourteen to twenty-two); Minbushō 民部省, 90% (from twenty to thirty-eight); Hyōbushō 兵部省, 150% (from ten to twenty-five); Keibushō 刑部省, 60% (from ten to sixteen); Ōkura no tsukasa 大蔵省, 300% (from six to twenty-four). The total number of scribes in the above-mentioned institutions (plus four persons in Jingikan) was 198, which represents a 70.7% increase over the 116 scribes of *Taihō ritsuryō*. We see that the number of scribes serving the emperor's family was more than in any ministry engaged in nation's problems. These data can be summed up in tabular form.

Table 2. Distribution of Scribes and Their Productivity
(Characters per Day)

	Number of scribes in Kunaishō and other offices related to royal family and their productivity	Number of scribes in other central offices and their productivity	Number of scribes in provinces and their productivity	Number of scribes in the country and their productivity
Time of the promulgation of *Ritsuryō*	30 [8.5%] (114,000)	3,122 [34.3%] (536,600)	203 [57.2%] (771,400)	355 [100.0%*] (1,349,000)
Time of the promulgation of *Engishiki*	115 [17.8%] (437,000)	275 [42.6%] (1,045,000)	255 [39.5%] (969,000)	645 [100.0%*] (2,451,000)

* Percentages are rounded to tenths of one percent; total equals 100.0 percent.

More and more documents were produced in the capital. Almost as if to offset the higher total volume of information, however, more and more of the output of official writing was consumed in the capital itself. This trend of "spatial compression" could be seen in every field of politics and culture of the Heian period. Embassies to Tang China, Silla, and Bohai were discontinued. The road infrastructure was deteriorating. Taxes were poorly collected. The aristocratic inhabitants of the capital ceased travelling. Virtually all their poetic and prose writings show that they preferred the comfortable interiors of their mansions to outdoor adventures. Compared to the Nara period they became "nearsighted"—they did not see (did not want to see) what was happening outside their mansions, outside the walls of the palace, beyond the borders of Heian. Social "space" was restricted, too, and no fresheners were allowed into the narrow and stuffy world where decisions were made. The concentration of information in the capital was a major condition for the development of the brilliant aristocratic culture of Heian Japan, but at the same time the country itself—the provinces, districts, and villages on the periphery—slipped out of the control of the capital. Our data show that with the passage of time in the Heian period, *ritsuryō* institutions were becoming a political (or let us define it as cultural) system without a feedback. And such systems, as we know from the general theory of systems, are doomed to disintegrate or perish. The theory held true for the *ritsuryō* state, yet it was not absolutely true for *ritsuryō* culture. Although a major portion of it has been lost, written information that the ancient state produced in great quantities still exists. And in this respect the efforts of the *ritsuryō* bureaucracy are still alive. These efforts formed the enduring and vitally important pattern of the Japanese for acquiring knowledge by the use of written information.[19]

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NOTES

[1] In previous articles, I have treated this in the context of a discussion of how the physical isolation of the Japanese archipelago from the continent conditioned striving for involvement in continental affairs, striving for isolation, and striving for getting written information from China. See Mesheryakov 1995, 1996, 1998.

[2] For a survey of this type of historical evidence in English, see Piggott 1990, pp. 449-470, and Farris 1998, pp. 201-232.

[3] Hirakawa 1994.

[4] *See Ritsuryō* (*compiled* 701-702), *Shoku Nihongi* (*compiled* 797), and *Engishiki* (*compiled* 727).

[5] For the documents of this type see *Izumokuni keikakuchō* in *Nara ibun*, pp. 323-332.

[6] Sakaehara 1996, pp. 227-233.

[7] Ibid., pp. 234-235.

[8] *Ritsuryō*, p. 158.

[9] The Jingikan was regulating Shinto affairs, and Shinto tradition was mainly oral in eighth century. That was the reason why Jingikan did not have scribes in its staff. Description of offices and their functions is given in Miller 1978. I have borrowed some English translations of Japanese offices from this study.

[10] I translate *shiki* as department, *ryō* as bureau, *tsukasa* (*shi*) as office.

[11] See S*hoku Nihongi*, Wadō 和銅 1.7.8, 1.8.21 (708), Wadō 5.11.16, 5.12.15 (712), Wadō 6.6.21, 6.9.21, 6.10.27, 6.11.25, 6.12.11, 6.12.20 (713), Wadō 7.10.17 (714), Reiki 霊亀 2.6.23 (716), Yōrō 養老 1.7.22 (717), Yōrō 2.6.4 (718), Yōrō 3.3.2 (719), Yōrō 4.6.23 (720), Yōrō 6.4.10, 6.6.3 (722), Tempyō 天平 9.11.4 (737).

[12] The standard edition of S*hoku Nihongi*, in the *Kokushi taikei* series published by Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, contains 557 pages with approximately 640 characters on each page. Although a few pages are not completely covered with type, that makes about 356,000 characters.

[13] In fact all documents issued by offices of the *ritsuryō* state existed at least in two copies. One was kept in the office of origin and another was sent to the proper destination (Suzuki 1997, p. 118).

[14] *Shoku Nihongi*, Tempyō Hōji 天平宝字 2.10.25 (758).

[15] *Shoku Nihongi*, Jingi 神亀 5.8.9 (724).

[16] *Shoku Nihongi*, Tempyō Jingo 天平神護 2.5.11 (766).

[17] *Shoku Nihongi*, Hōki 宝亀 10.15.27 (779).

[18] Ōmi, Mino and Sanuki were qualified as “big,” Kai, Dewa, Aki, Suō and Kii as “middle,” and Tosa as “upper.” There is no special reference to Dazaifu.

[19] This cultural pattern is alive even now. I would go so far as to submit that it is one of the major reasons for the relatively poor command of spoken foreign languages by Japanese.

要旨

律令国家における公文書の産出量
―定量分析によるアプローチ―

アレキサンダー・メシェリャコフ

律令国家が多くの公文書（記述された情報）を生み出したことは歴史家の間では周知のこととなっている。しかし、どれくらいの公文書が作成されたのか、その正確な量についての研究は少ない。その原因のひとつとして考えられるのは、文書を計量化する一般的な方法が確立していないことである。本稿の主たる目的は、その計量化を初めて試みることである。栄原永遠男氏の研究によれば、写経所の経師は一日平均三千八百から四千文字を写したそうである。律令体制下における史生の数は明らかにされているので、経師と史生の文字生産量がほぼ同じであるという仮定に立てば、律令国家における公文書の生産量の大まかな見積もりが可能になる。この見積もりをもとにすると、律令国家は、その歴史の中で益々多くの情報を産出していったことが明らかになった。また公文書の生産量増加の多くは、辺境でなく中央で見られた。このことは中央が辺境で起こる事柄に関心を失っていったことを示唆している。さらに中央においても生産量の増加は各役所で異なっており、天皇と天皇家に仕える役所における増大が最も顕著である。本稿のデータに表れた公文書量の推移から、律令国家は辺境からのフィードバックを欠いた政治・文化体制になった過程が明らかになった。

CONTRIBUTORS

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