



公家の宮廷服 シーボルト『NIPPON』(神田外語大学附属図書館所蔵)

【公家】

公家とは、前近代において天皇、朝廷に直接仕えていた貴族集団で、その身分が確立した10世紀(平安時代)から19世紀(江戸時代)まで、約800年にわたり特権階級として、京都に存続し続けました。

12世紀前半、武士勢力が新しい公権力を樹立し、武家と呼ばれるに伴い、公家は朝廷の宮人、特に上層の廷臣の総称となりました。最高の家格は摂関家で、摂政・関白を歴任し、朝政を牛耳っていました。

江戸時代末期(幕末)には、公家は138家ありましたが、明治維新を迎えると、東京遷都によって、事実上、公家社会は解体され、東京に移住させられました。そして、公家のほとんどは華族へ移行することによって、その身分は消滅しました。

公家は、平安時代には国風文化と呼ばれる『源氏物語』、『古今和歌集』、寝殿造に代表される王朝文化を開花させ、また、現代に通じる雅楽・和歌・茶道といった伝統文化の発展にも寄与しました。

【武士】

武士とは、剣術・弓術・馬術などの武芸に秀でた戦闘集団です。平安時代から江戸時代まで、約700年の長きにわたって朝廷に仕え、鎌倉時代以降は幕末まで、武士は日本の支配者でした。

武士は当初、天皇・貴族の警護や紛争の鎮圧を任されていたが、その軍事力を武器に台頭し、貴族支配の社会を覆しました。そして、朝廷を傀儡として維持したまま、武家政権(幕府)を確立し、中世社会を主導しました。



武士の礼装 シーボルト『NIPPON』(神田外語大学附属図書館所蔵)

Kuge

The Kuge were an aristocratic class that served the Emperor and the Imperial Court during the pre-modern period. They continued to exist in Kyoto as a special class for around 800 years. They existed from the establishment of the status in the 10th century (Heian period) to the 19th century (Edo period).

Warrior forces in the early 12th century established a new public authority: the Buke. Kuge became the generic name for palace officials and other higher-classed courtiers. The highest-ranking Kuge families became regent houses and dominated court politics by serving as regents and chief councilors to the Emperor.

In the late Edo period (the *bakumatsu*) there were 138 Kuge houses; however, after the Meiji Restoration, Kuge society was for all purposes disbanded as the capital was relocated to Tokyo. The majority of Kuge families were transferred to the status of nobles (*kazoku*) and the Kuge status itself disappeared.

The Kuge were responsible for the development of the courtly culture of the Heian period known as *kokufu* of which *The Tale of Genji*, the *Kokin Wakashū* and *Shinden-zukuri* architecture are all representative. They also contributed to the development of traditional culture such as *gagaku* music, Waka poetry and *Sadō* (the tea ceremony), which continue to this day.

Bushi

The Bushi (often known as Samurai) were a martial population that excelled in the fighting arts, such as fencing (*kenjutsu*), archery (*kyūjutsu*) and horsemanship (*bajutsu*). From the Heian period to the Edo period the Bushi served the Imperial Court for around 700 years, and from the Kamakura period until the late Edo period they were the rulers of Japan.

The Bushi were initially charged with the protection of, and suppression of conflict among, the Emperor and the aristocratic classes. However, with their increasing military strength, the Bushi overturned society based upon aristocratic rule. While maintaining the symbolic value of the court, they established military government (*bakufu*) and were the leaders of Japanese



【少子化】

「少子高齢化」とは出産数の減少と老年人口の増大が同時に進んでいる現象であり、現在は日本のみならず多くの先進国が直面している深刻な社会問題の1つです。この少子高齢化の主な原因としては、未婚化や晩婚化、そしてそれらに伴う晩産化や無産化がよく挙げられます。その他に、子育てにかかる養育費や教育費などの費用の増大も考えられます。

厚生労働省などのデータによると、日本では2005年に出生数が110万を切りましたが、減少の傾向は現在も続いています。少子化の一番大きな影響としては、労働人口の減少による国の成長力の低迷だと言われています。

少子化対策には、最近よくマスコミでも取り上げられているように保育施設の整備、育児休暇制度の拡充、共働き夫婦支援制度、そして出産後の再就職へのサポートなどがあります。

【限界集落】

近年、少子高齢化が進行している結果、「限界集落」という用語もメディアなどでしばしば耳にするようになりました。人口の5割以上が65歳以上の高齢者になった村や町では冠婚葬祭など、そのコミュニティの共同生活に必要な不可欠な行事の維持が難しくなり、社会的に限界に近いことから「限界集落」と呼ばれるようになりました。

特に離島や中山間地域に多い限界集落は、若い人たちが就職のために都市部へ流出したり、学校や医療機関が統廃合、または閉鎖されたり、農業などの

Low Birthrate

The combination of a diminishing number of children and an aging population is a serious social problem that currently plagues many developed countries, including Japan. One of the main causes of this phenomenon is the recent tendency for people to marry later or stay single, which causes a decrease in the total number of children being born. Other causes include the increasing costs of child rearing and tuition fees for education.

According to official data of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare of Japan, 2005 was the first year when the number of births dropped below the 1,100,000 figure, and the decreasing tendency continues in the present. It is said that the most important consequence of the low birthrate will be a negative influence on the work force, thus affecting the country's potential for growth.

As the media have been reporting recently, among the measures meant to counter the low birthrate are the construction of new facilities for children, parental leave expansion, a support system for couples where both spouses work, and support for women to return to the workplace after childbirth.

Marginal Villages

In recent years, as a result of the low birthrate and of the rapidly aging population, “marginal villages” (*genkai shūraku*) has become a term often used in media reports. A “marginal village” is a community close to its social limits, where more than 50% of the population consists of elderly people over 65 and where it has become difficult to hold various ceremonies and rituals — such as marriages and funerals — that are indispensable for coexistence within the community.

Most of the marginal villages are isolated on remote islands or in mountainous areas. This is a very serious problem that Japanese society is facing, because in these areas young people migrate to the city in search of employment, schools and health care institutions are merged or even closed down, and there is an acute shortage of labor for agriculture and industry.