

Imagining Suzuka no Seki

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遺跡の今昔

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〈摘要〉

日本古代三関特に三重県亀山市にある鈴鹿関の研究内容を基に、『私達の世界遺産』という授業を展開した。生徒たちに鈴鹿関と隣接する関の村（小関）が西暦8世紀半ばに、どのような風景かを想像してもらい、オリジナルのスケッチも作成させた。遺跡の今昔を描き、より日本の文化と歴史に理解することに繋がる。この研究による成果は、三重大学国際交流センターの「世界遺産と私たち」（英語で行う国際共修授業）での参考文献として使用される。

キーワード：鈴鹿関、古代三関、古代日本、東海道五十三次の関宿、三重県指定文化財

Introduction

The town of Seki, nestled at the base of the Suzuka Mountains in the northern part of Mie prefecture, was originally established as the first of the three main barrier stations, or San-Gen 三関 in the latter half of the 7th century CE. For nearly one hundred fifty years, the barrier station at Seki, known as Suzuka no Seki 鈴鹿関, functioned in several unique ways. For it was not only a military base with a vast defensive wall structure, but also a central crossroad of activity marking the eastern border region of the Yamato kingdom of early Japan. Serving a dual purpose, the San-Gen system was devised to guard the Yamato kingdom against a direct assault from the far-eastern territories, in addition to preventing those seeking to destabilize power structures within the Yamato kingdom by gathering opposition from outside. However, with the further weakening of centralized government control, the turnover of public lands into private landed estates or *shōen*, and the continuing expansion into the eastern regions, by the early Heian period (c. 9th century) the three main barrier stations fell into disuse. In subsequent eras, an increasing number of *Seki-sho* or smaller checkpoints, would prove an effective means of controlling the flow of people, goods and trade, while providing a steady revenue resource. From the Edo era (1603-1868),

Suzuka no Seki reemerged as a central crossroad of activity when the Tokugawa Shogunate established the Tōkaidō thoroughfare thus linking the capital at Kyoto with that of Edo. Today, Seki town's main 1.8 kilometer stretch of the Tōkaidō is remarkably well-preserved with some two-hundred properties registered as important traditional buildings by the Japanese government. Seki's annual summer festival in late July and the arrival of the gate from Ise Shrine every twenty years, are just two incredible reminders of the linkage to ancient Nara, Kyoto and Ise (see figures 1, 2).



Figure 1: Seki-Juku's Summer Festival.



Figure 2: The gate arrives in Seki-Juku from Ise Shrine.

1. Imagining Suzuka no Seki

By taking a closer look at the geographic outline of the area of the original Kinai domain of the Yamato kingdom in early Japan (see Figure 3) one can notice how advantageous an area it was for establishing a base of rule. The central Yamato province (present-day Nara prefecture) surrounded by a range of heavily forested mountains was large enough to provide protection but not too substantial as to completely negate the flow of people and goods. The wide valley of the Yamato plains, including several major rivers and its myriad of estuaries, made it possible to further develop and maintain its own livelihood. Moving slightly past the first range of mountains in an easterly direction, the topographical arrangement soon provides for an almost unbroken ridge-line of mountains running from the Sea of Japan in the

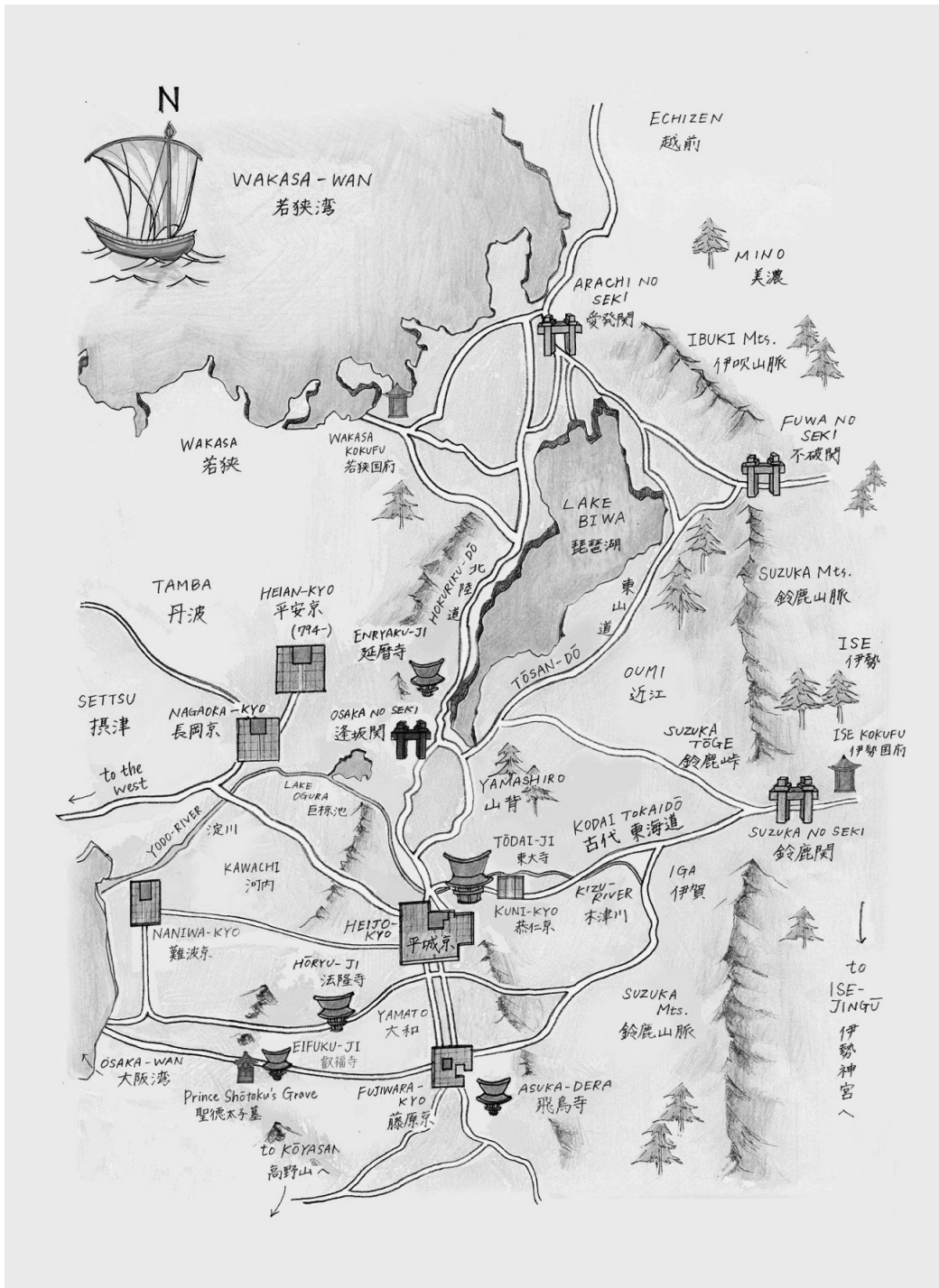


Figure 3: The Kinai Domain of Early Japan, Middle-Late 8th Century CE. Concept by author, Artwork by Matsunaga Moe.

north, to the Pacific Ocean in the south, with several peaks reaching more than 1,000 meters in height. It was in areas along this range of mountains that the three great fortified barrier stations, or San-Gen 古代三関 were located, they were as follows: Suzuka no Seki of the Ise province, or *Ise-Kuni Suzuka no Seki* 伊勢国鈴鹿関, Fuwa no Seki of the Mino province, or *Mino-Kuni Fuwa no Seki* 美濃国不破関, and Arachi no Seki of the Echizen province, or *Echizen-Kuni Arachi no Seki* 越前国愛発関. At the time of the ancient barrier system, this span of mountains, which includes the Nosaka, the Ibuki and the Suzuka, was in effect the eastern border line of the Yamato kingdom (See Figure 3).

2. Circuit of Ancient Transportation Roads

The main artery of traffic from the central Yamato province moving due east was along the old Tōkaidō (*Kodai Tōkaidō* 古代東海道) connecting with the Suzuka no Seki barrier station (see Figure 3). First documented in 672 CE (Nihon Shoki, Book XXXVIII, para. 8), Suzuka no Seki was situated at the base of the eastern side of the Suzuka Mountain range where both the Kabuto 加太峠 and Suzuka 鈴鹿峠 Mountain passes converge at the Suzuka River 鈴鹿川. From the main gate of Suzuka no Seki, the old Tokaidō extended through the main military area and into Seki's village where it branched off. One route ran northeast eventually running parallel with the Bay of Ise and then turning due east into the Tōkai frontier. The other route was the Road to Ise 伊勢別街道 which began from Furumaya Horse Station 古厩駅馬 just across the Suzuka River continuing southwards to an important government site at Saigu 斎宮 and eventually into Shima province, the Ise Shrine region 鳥国の伊勢神宮 (See Figure 3).

By the 8th century Nara era (CE 710-794), a circuit of transportation roads originating from the capital city at Nara had steadily developed with the three main being the Yamato-kaidō 大和街道 (the new name for the old Tōkaidō), the Tōsandō 東山道 and the Hokuriku-dō 北陸道. The Tōsandō (*eastern mountain route*) ran from Nara in a northeasterly direction towards the southern tip of Lake Biwa continuing along the eastern side of the lake finally branching due east into the great barrier fortification of Mino-Kuni no Fuha Seki. From here, access to and from the Mino province (present-day Gifu prefecture) and on into the middle interior known as the Tōsan frontier. The third major route, the Hokuriku-dō (*northern land route*) ran from Nara in a northerly direction continuing north along the west coast of Lake Biwa eventually leading to Echizen-Kuni no Arachi Seki, providing access to

the Echizen province (present-day Fukui prefecture) and on into the Hokuriku frontier along the coast line of the Sea of Japan (See Figure 3).

The circuit roads were populated with official main stations (post towns) and various sub-stations, which employed a horse-relay system. Pack horses and attendants ferried travelers and goods from one to another. Early rules of travel included no detouring outside of the designated route, and that travelers be assigned a bell (a post bell) that would either be collected or exchanged along route. Additionally, at main stations, for example, travelers would need to acquire a new horse(s) and attendant(s) for the next leg of their journey. The main horse-relay station of Suzuka no Seki was Furumaya Horse Station (See Figure 6, Map of Suzuka no Seki).

3. New Discoveries of Ise-Kuni Suzuka no Seki

Of the three main fortified barrier stations, the largest was the one closest to the Nara capital- Ise-Kuni Suzuka no Seki. Professor Hachiga Susumu (1999, pg. 257) writes of the great size of the Suzuka no Seki barrier station which he believes included a large western-half 西内城 and an eastern-half 東内城. In April of 2005 in the town of Seki (東海道五十三次の関宿), Mr. Morikawa Yukio (Personal Communication, Morikawa Yukio, Fed. 24th 2018), while looking for evidence of ancient fortifications in and around Kannon Mountain 観音山 discovered what appeared to be remnants of roof tiles from the ancient era. His initial discovery led to his overseeing the subsequent 2006-2007 excavation of large earthen wall fortifications on the southwestern side of Kannon Mountain. Over a period of nine years, concluding in 2015, a total of seven additional sites unearthed earthen wall



Figure 4: Tiles from wall, c. 8th century.



Figure 5: Wet-cloth style. Photos by author.

fortifications spread out across the north-south plain between Kannon Mountain and Shiro Mountain 城山. Ancient artifacts included numerous well-preserved examples of Nara era tiles that were once laid across the upper portion of the walls and reddish-brown clay pottery or *Hajiki* 土師器, which was common from the prehistoric era on into the early 10th century (See figures 4,5).

Mr. Shimamura Akihiko (Personal Communication, Shimamura Akihiko, Jan. 26th 2018) explained that the earthen fortifications are in fact one long wall that twisted and turned eventually running parallel with the Suzuka River and had an approximate length of 600 meters (See Figure 6). He expressed that current evidence suggests the great barrier of Suzuka no Seki had only the one very large main wall with additional smaller walls and gates enclosing what was the largest of all the three main barrier stations. There is little doubt that Suzuka no Seki was, as both Shimamura and Morikawa have described and shown to me, dominated by the one large wall, and similar in respect to the observations of Prof. Hachiga (1999), Mr. Morikawa (2007), Mr. Shimamura, et al (2016), and Prof. Tateno Kazumi (2016), that Suzuka no Seki included two separate areas- a western-half and an eastern-half. With these ideas in mind, I have included an original Map of 8th century Suzuka no Seki.

4. Suzuka no Seki: The Western Section 西内城, and the Eastern Section 東内城

By taking a closer look at the Map of Suzuka no Seki (figure 6), I can imagine that the western-half was, a military area 軍営 with its large barrier (大関) and fortification (城) atop Shiro Mountain, and the eastern-half, the actual village of ancient Seki with its smaller barrier(s) (小関). In the ancient 76 Article Military Code, or *Gunbō-Ryō* (軍防令全 76 条), Article 6, it is written that the main barrier stations kept an armory, which housed weapons, bows and arrows, spears and armor for use by the soldiers, and musical instruments (Article 39), including flutes and drums. Smoke and fire beacons for signaling were also kept at the barrier stations. Therefore, in the western-half area, military related buildings, supplies and the barracks for housing soldiers would likely have been included. However, it is unclear as to the total number of soldiers and administrators who were assigned to the main barrier stations, since the specific figure was not written in the original military code. Set between the two small mountains of Kannon and Shiro, with a 600 meters wall running in-between, strategically speaking, this area gives the impression of a very impressive defensive location

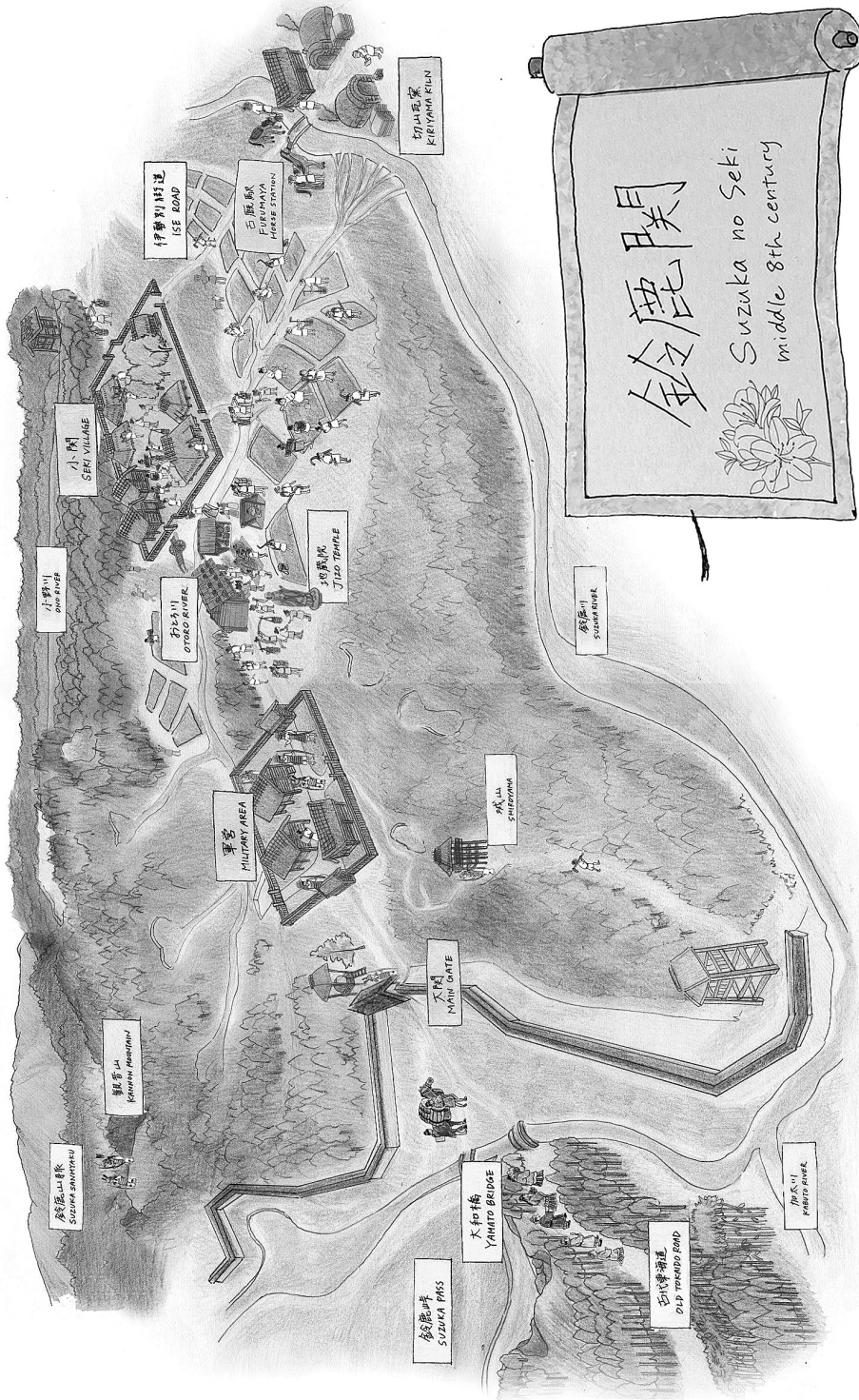


Figure 6. Map of Suzuka no Seki, middle 8th century CE. Concept by author, Artwork by Matsunaga Moe.

(See Figure 6, Map of Suzuka no Seki).

On the other hand, the eastern-half would have been most suitable for village-life organized around forestry, rice and tea farming, and trade, with the central marketplace of the barrier station (*oya-ichi*親市) set in the temple grounds of the Jizo Bodhisattva statue which dates from 742 CE (関宿地藏院の地藏仏像 c.742). A final point occurred to me while in discussion with Mr. Morikawa, who helped me realize the reason for the two separate areas was perhaps as much a natural division as it was a strategic one. The once large Otoro River おとろ川 that bisected Suzuka no Seki is today but a small stream. In ancient times, the river could have easily swelled wide enough that a small boat was necessary to pass. It wasn't until very early in the 17th century that the Tokugawa government landfilled the area, greatly constricting the flow of the river and artificially rearranging the area's topography. This national building project was undertaken to revitalize the ancient travel roads and their stations for the new Tōkaidō thoroughfare running to and from Edo (Tokyo) and Kyoto.

In Article Ten of the original Barrier and Markets Code (関市令全 20 条), it states that at the three main barrier stations, the two main gates, the western gate (大関) and eastern gate (小関) of Suzuka no Seki for example, were opened from the time of the sunrise and were

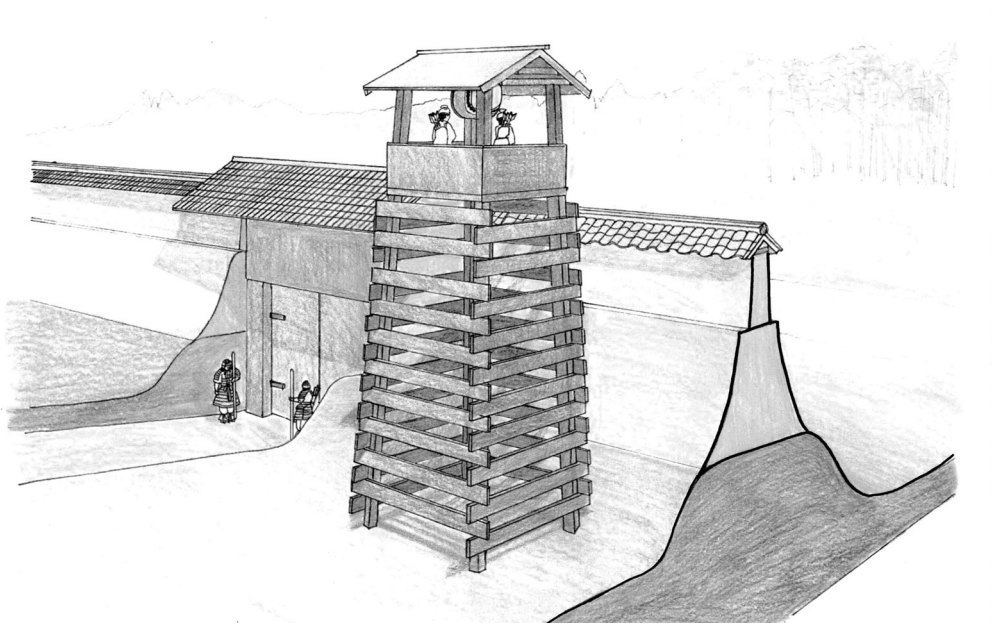


Figure 7: The Main Gate (大関) of Suzuka no Seki, ca. middle 8th century CE.
Sketch by Matsunaga Moe.

closed at the time of the sunset. Suzuka no Seki's main gate (大関) was situated approximately in the middle section of the 600 plus meter long wall just several tens of meters from the Suzuka River. The guard tower included the large drum for signaling the opening and closing of the gates, and in times of emergency, the troops to their defensive positions (See figure 7).

Below in Figures 8 and 9, photographs from February 2019 show the extent of the most recent excavations taking place at the section of wall at the base of Kannon Mountain. Here it is possible to see the thickness of the fortification and its great height rising some ten meters. (For more detailed information regarding the earthen fortifications, et al., please see: *Mahoney, 2019*).



Figure 8: Remains of Suzuka no Seki wall.



Figure 9: Remains of wall, Kannon Mountain section.
Photos by author.

5. Kai-Gen 開関 (barriers open) Ko-Gen 固関 (barriers closed)

When the three main barrier stations were in regular operation it was known as *kai-gen* 開関. However, in the event of the emperor or empress's illness, or in the case of his or her death, the three main barrier stations were closed indefinitely in a period known as *ko-gen* 固関. Several important examples from the *Shoku Nihongi* include the barrier closure from the time of the death of Empress Genmei on December 7th, in the year 721 CE. It was under Empress Genmei's rule (707-715) that the capital at Nara had been established. Another significant barrier closure occurred at the time of death of Emperor Shōmu in 756. Although natural disasters and civil disturbance brought temporary closure, it was especially during

the times of imperial succession that brought about the urgent need for closing and securing the main barrier stations. This form of martial law within the Yamato domain was increasingly necessary as the probability was high that a *coups d'état*, even a civil war could break out- when the most powerful leadership positions were left unresolved.

6. Gen-Kei 関契 (*Woodblock Code- Emergency Message Relay System*)

Whether in times of relative peace or burgeoning conflict, relaying information to and from the main barrier stations was not only time consuming but somewhat unreliable, especially when conjecture or outright sabotage disrupted communication. To counteract these problems, a unique communication system was devised using a solid block of wood with four Chinese ideographs, cut vertically down the middle into equal halves. This wood block was called *gen-kei* 関契. One half of the wood block with one half of the four Chinese ideographs was kept at the main barrier station while the other half of the original block was kept, for example, at the Nara capital. By matching the half of the messenger's block with that held at the main barrier station, both the messenger and the message could be authenticated. In fact, there were two different wood blocks that were used. One block with two equal halves was used when the main barrier station was open but would need to be closed. The other block with two equal halves was for when the main barrier station was closed but could be opened once again.

7. The Barriers and Markets Code

The Barriers and Markets Code includes 20 Articles (関市令全 20 条), describing the specific operation and the rules and regulations of the main barrier stations and the market places located within. In Article One of the Barrier and Markets Code, it is written that the governing official in charge of the main barrier station was required to check and validate each person's government certified document (*tsukō-kyokasho*). Article Two of the Code states that for those who desire to pass through a main barrier station it was required that they be processed in order of arrival and that each person must be properly prepared with official documentation, for those who are not, access would be denied. In Article Three of the Code, it states that the certified document contained information about which main barrier station, i.e. Ise-Kuni no Suzuka Seki, one had been granted access to and the details of one's business. In addition, the certified document could only grant access through one

main barrier station and did not apply to the other two main barrier stations.

To have permission to travel through the main barrier stations, persons were required to first apply at either the provincial government headquarters or, if possible, to do so at a local government office. In the case of government officials, while they only needed to present their government identification upon arrival, they also needed to apply. The application itself included six main categories, they were as follows: (1) Reason for travel. (2) Intended destination and name of barrier station. (3) Family name, rank and position (for government officials). (4) For government officials specifically: If travelling with retainers, those person's name and age. (5) Type of baggage, and or goods. (6) Number of horses, cattle, or other livestock, whether they are male or female, their individual colors and the age of each animal. At the main barrier station of Ise-Kuni no Suzuka Seki, traveler records were kept in what was called *Ise-Kuni keikaichō*. In one specific example from an August report (year unknown) a total of twenty-five certified documents were approved for passage. While no further records exist, based on the twenty-five certified documents for the one-month period, perhaps as many as three hundred certified documents were approved in any given year.

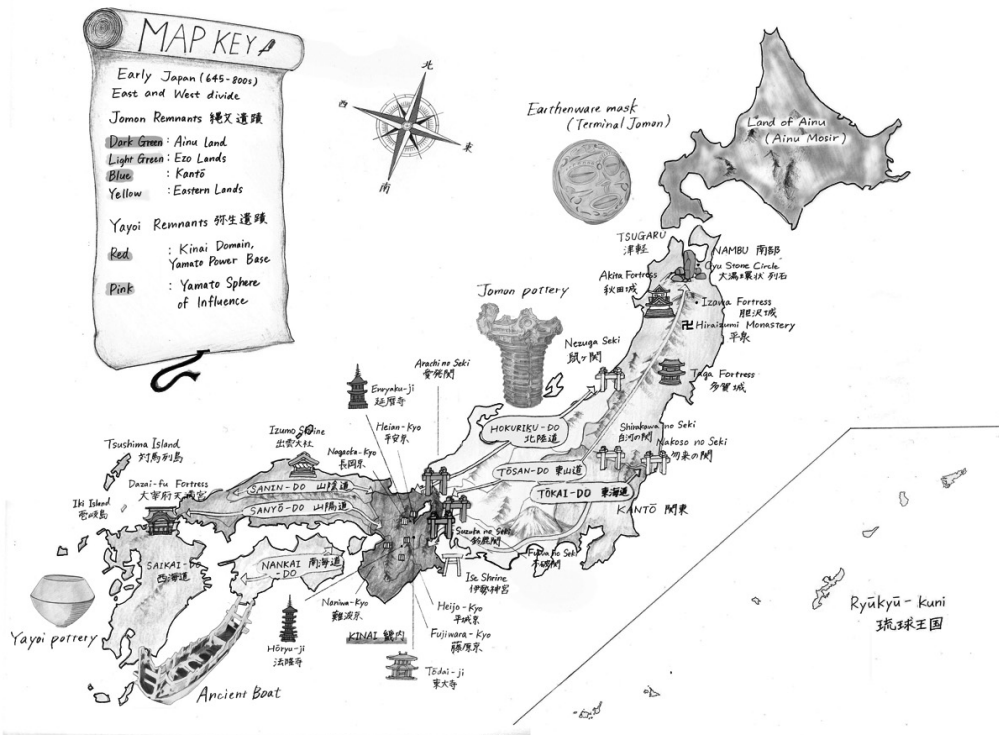


Figure 10: Map of Early Japan (645~800 s). Concept by author, Artwork by Matsunaga Moe.

Regarding temporary laborers and skilled engineers who were sent to work at the main barrier station, their individual information, including name, home province, village or township, and their age, were recorded and kept on a list at the barrier station where they were working. When they needed to pay their taxes to the nearest village or township, they could pass through the barrier station to do so. Village leaders were also given access to pass through the barrier station to deliver their tax payment to the nearest township. When the work project was completed and it was time for the laborers and engineers to return home, the workers were checked off the name list one by one. Since the workers were not in possession of a government document, the name list was their only way to gain access through the barrier.

8. Illegal Passage and Punishment

Attempted illegal passage through the barrier station (*Seki-sho yaburi*) was strictly prohibited and punishment severe. Since the main fortified barrier stations did not extend from one main site to another, the opportunity for passage through gaps in the defense was problematic. Three separate categories represented the type of crime and the severity of the punishment, they were as follows: (1) The attempted passing through the barrier station without permission to do so was called *Shido*. (2) Trying to circumvent the barrier station by using a secret path or route through the mountains known as *Otsudo*. (3) And *Boudo*, which referred to those who tried to access the barrier by using someone else's name or with a counterfeit document. Committing any one of these violations, especially at one of three main barrier stations resulted in the most severe penalties, with at least one year of jail time.

9. East of the Barriers

By the time of the reign of Emperor Kanmu beginning in CE 781, the Yamato kingdom had already begun to foresee its military expansion into the far eastern regions lying well beyond the main barrier fortifications of the Kinai domain. Some sixty years prior in the northeastern region of Mutsu (in present-day Miyagi prefecture), Japan historian James Murdoch (1910, pg. 215) writes that the Taga Fortress 多賀城 was built and garrisoned with a substantial force of imperial soldiers marking the "extreme outpost of the Empire" (see figure 10, Map of Early Japan). Although by 780, Murdoch comments, "Taga and all its munitions of war and supplies" were in the hands of the Ainu chieftains. Eventually, the

situation came to a head when in 789, the imperial forces of some 58,200 men were soundly defeated by Ainu-led forces at the *battle of Koromogawa*. At this same date, in the eighth year of the reign of Emperor Kanmu, the operation of the main fortified barrier stations of the Kinai domain effectively came to an end, remaining under *ko-gen* 固関 for some time into the early Heian period.

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