

Imperial Prize and Japan Academy Prize to:

Shigeto KIKUCHI

Associate Professor, Graduate School of Humanities
and Sociology, The University of Tokyo

for *Herrschaft, Delegation und Kommunikation in der
Karolingerzeit. Untersuchungen zu den Missi
dominici (751–888)*



Outline of the work:

Herrschaft, Delegation und Kommunikation in der Karolingerzeit. Untersuchungen zu den Missi dominici (751–888) [Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 2021], a two-volume, 1127-page work by Dr. Shigeto Kikuchi discusses the problematic issue of the king's emissaries, known as *missi dominici*, during the Carolingian Empire. The first volume consists of the list of primary sources and related literature in 80 pages and then their discussion over 278 pages, and the second volume contains a prosopography of *missi dominici* and the index in 769 pages.

Volume I's first chapter delineates the characteristics of the king's emissaries, mainly referring to such basic historical sources as royal edicts (the capitulary) and chronicles. The second chapter explores *missi dominici*'s role and function in the control and communication system between the center and the periphery of the empire, which extended more than 1,000,000 square kilometers during the reigns of Charles the Great, Louis the Pious, Ludovico II, and Charles the Bald. During this period, employment of the *missi dominici* system was clearly discernible in royal edicts and epistolary documents. The third chapter examines this practice's historical changes, from Pippin III to Charles the Bald and his sons, while also exploring connections between historical changes in governance and royal envoys during the 9th-century Frankish Empire.

Most of Volume II (700 pages) comprehensively surveys all the *missi dominici* as they appear in historical records. The section contains brief biographies of 470 individual *missi dominici* whose names are identifiable and related findings about 70 anonymous *missi dominici*. Obviously, this task was extremely difficult and demanded exhaustive research into the entire archives, that is, royal edicts, chronicles of the period, and other historical documents. A French reviewer describes this section as a "Herculean" intellectual tour de force, adding that it will be of fundamental value for all of the subject's future researchers.

In Dr. Kikuchi's view, the king's envoys—*missi dominici*—were not systematized as an "institution" from the outset but were practically employed according to the business concerned. Similarly, envoys were selected according to each occasion's purpose. Dr. Kikuchi demonstrates the system to be extremely pragmatic; this is reflected in these envoys' *not being distinguished* from other envoys, for instance, diplomatic ones, in terms of title ("*missus*").

As noted, the use rulers made of their envoys was not uniform in nature or frequency. Charles the Great, for example, employed them on quite a few occasions. Dr. Kikuchi suc-

ceeds in showing that after some decline in the system's use, a marked revival occurred during the reign of Charles the Bald and that, against a generally fluctuating background, the employment of royal envoys regained a certain steadiness in the Western Frankish Kingdom, the later Kingdom of France.

Dr. Kikuchi's comprehensive, exhaustive research provides a view of the king's emissary system unparalleled in previous scholarship. Points at issue, for example, are (a) the relationship between the king and his envoys, (b) the geographical configuration of envoys' points of departure and destinations, and (c) their social relationships to aristocratic families and other groups in the provinces.

Moreover, Dr. Kikuchi emphasizes that the king's envoys did not form a homogeneous hierarchy but were individuals from various social classes. In the case of secular agents, notably, a certain benefit ("perquisite") was accorded their duties. Although the emissaries' income entailed the liability of fines and confiscation of goods, they were entitled to a status of royal mission.

Thus by elucidating their nature, function, and formation through exhaustive research into pertinent historical documents, Dr. Kikuchi has highly significantly contributed to the study of *missi dominici* in the Carolingian state. His accomplishment will be indispensable to those who follow in his footsteps.

For these reasons, Dr. Kikuchi's work is worthy of the 2024 Japan Academy Prize.