Selected Documents of the Kamakura Bakufu

Document 14:
YORITOMO SETTLES A DISPUTE OVER THE POSSESSION OF A JITÔ SHIKI, 1187

Ordered: To Taira Michitaka.

That the false claim of Bingo Provisional Governor [gon no kami] Takatsune is denied; and that the jitô shiki of Sonezaki and Sakai Befu’s Yukitake Myô, within Kii District, Hizen Province, is confirmed.

Because of the dispute between Takatsune and Michitaka over the aforesaid places, the relative merits of the two parties have been investigated and judged, and Michitaka’s case has been found justified. He shall forthwith be confirmed as jitô. However, as concerns the stipulated taxes [shotô] and the annual rice levy [nengu], [the jitô’s] authority, following precedent, shall be subject to the orders of the proprietor [honjo no gechi]. It is recorded in Michitaka’s documentary evidence [shômon] that originally these places were Heike lands. Therefore, in the pattern of confiscated holdings [mokkan], management should proceed accordingly. It is commanded thus. Residents shall know this and abide by it. Wherefore, this order.

3d year of Bunji [1187], 5th month, 9th day
Document 24:
THE BAKUFU CONFIRMS A WOMAN AS JITŌ, 1215

The chancellery of the shogun’s house orders: to the residents of three gō within Nitta Estate, Közuke Province; Iwamatsu, Shimo Imai, Tanaka.

In accord with the last will [yuzurijō] of the husband, Yoshikane, his widow shall forthwith be jitō.

The aforesaid person, in accordance with the will, is appointed to this shiki. As to the fixed annual tax and other services, these shall be paid in accordance with precedent. It is commanded thus. Wherefore, this order.

3d year of Kempō [1215], 3d month, 22d day

Document 138.
THE SHUGO’S AUTHORITY IS DESCRIBED, 1199

29th day:

Koyama saemon no jō Tomomasa has been appointed to the shugo post of Harima Province. The housemen of this province are to obey Tomomasa, perform the imperial guard service, and in general show their loyalty. Tomomasa’s authority is limited to rebels and murderers; he is not to interfere in provincial administration [kokumu] or judge the suites of the people. And he is not, under any pretext, to cause difficulties for the notables of this province. He has been apprised of these instructions.

Questions:

1. As outlined in these short documents, what were the duties of jitō and shugo? How were their powers circumscribed?
2. The second document describes the appointment of a woman as a jitō. Why do you think this was done? What does this tell you about the responsibilities of a jitō and the qualities which the bakufu looked for in the holders of these positions?
3. What sense do you get of Japanese society in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries from these documents? What insights do they give you into the operations of the Kamakura bakufu?