

Mini-analysis of current idea

Au Chak Sang (4083567)

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After combining all of my sources together, I discovered that these sources actually had a lot of similar concentrations. Basically, they had very similar ideas in many topics. Moreover, I discovered that many sources that I found had the same reference, many of them had referenced to an article written by Hatano Jun (Hatano's writing was also the first document that I found and also deeply linked to my topic, so I marked a lot of notes in this passage). Indeed, of all the sources, Hatano's work basically had the most detailed descriptions about the water supply system in the early Edo period, this writing also mentioned how the water supply system was linked to society. Therefore, at least in this moment, I believe that this source is the foundational document for my research. Also, some scholarly works brought me a new perspective. He mentioned that the water quality from the public water supply system in Edo city was definitely ranked among the top of the world (even better than London in the same period) and he listed a few predictions for explaining this situation. Although that scholar did not mention this point of view in detail, I think this might be one possible direction of my work (that scholar provided references for another research comparing Edo and London water quality in the 17th centuries).

On the other hand, the other sources that I found also played an important role in explaining the water supply system background. For instance, many sources could bring us the answer of why the water supply system was built in an "almost hierarchical design". In fact, the structure of the water supply system was influenced by the social atmosphere since many sources that I found pointed out there was a dense social hierarchical concept in the Tokugawa period while political elites and samurai groups were in the dominant position. This could explain the dominant right to use water of samurai groups in the early water supply system design. By combining details from different sources, I realised that the water supply system was deeply linked to the social positions of people (water supply system could show the richness even in the same social class) especially under the hierarchical society. Therefore, the water supply system was not just an infrastructure but also an intermediary to analyse Edo society.

After combining multiple sources, there was a point that I missed before. In fact, samurai were not always located in a dominant position. Owing to sankin-kotai policies 参勤交代, the daimyo and political elites were forced to travel to Edo city periodically from their manor, this actually caused huge burdens especially in economic perspective. Therefore, different scholar works pointed out that the samurai class was actually declining and the water system could actually prove this declining trend. For instance, heavy maintenance costs from the water supply system were given to the samurai class (although samurai groups also enjoyed higher priority for using water). At the same time, the merchants were also a rising social group in the Edo period, the water supply system could also show this phenomenon.