

# **SANKIN KOTAI SYSTEM OF JAPAN IN EDO ERA: THE PROCESS, TARGET AND MECHANISM**

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In the political structure of the Japanese feudalism of *Edo* era, *sankin kotai* is a *Tokugawa bakufu's* essential policy aiming at seizing political power, controlling *daimyo's* activities by which, at the same time, affirming the *daimyo's* loyalty towards *shogunate*. During more than two centuries, *Bakuhau taisei* system, in which *sankin kotai*, had seen numerous changes but *shoguns* had been always trying to maintain domestic stability and their own political status. In *Edo* time, *bakufu* could establish their power upon local *daimyo* from which they built up the "lord-vassal" relationship that was very typical in Japan.

Tracing back to the history of *Edo* era, we can see a great deal of deep effects *sankin kotai* had in Japanese economic and social life. To comply with this system, almost all *daimyo* had to mobilize large human and financial resources. *Sankin kotai* system decreased economic potential of many localities. However, in assembling a mass of *daimyo* and *bushi* in *Edo*, it also produced necessary motive forces to the development of commercial economy, handicraft, monetary exchange and trade and cultural exchange. Therefore, should an intensive study on *sankin kotai* system be considered as one of the keys to understanding and explaining the political nature of the *Edo* administration, a combined power decentralizing-centralizing mechanism, as well as important economic and social changes of Japan of this time.

By implementing the *sankin kotai*, *Bakufu* basically, as they could concentrate power, reduced the autonomy of many *daimyo* with their trend of decentralized lordship. Besides, *sankin kotai* also "nationalized" the style of living and thinking of local administrators and gave them more profound and comprehensive understandings about national sovereignty and consciousness. From such economic and social environment, a staff of experienced and wide-visioned administrators appeared and they themselves played then a key role in the rising of the Japanese nation in the mid-nineteenth century.