

[要旨]

## 商人貴族論の射程

－ 貴族は有用な市民か？ －

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貴族が商業に従事することを求めたアベ・コワイエの『商人貴族論』（1756）の出版は激しい論争を引き起こした。17世紀以来、王権は実際に商業の活性化および貧乏貴族の救済という目的のため、貴族に商業を禁じた特権喪失法を緩和してきたし、貴族による商業への参入を主張した著述家もコワイエが最初ではない。商人貴族とはこの意味で決して新しいテーマではなかった。ではなぜコワイエの作品だけが大きな反響を呼んだのだろうか。

18世紀半ば、売官制に阻まれて軍人にも司法官にもなれない貧乏貴族への眼差しは厳しいものとなっていた。有用な市民であることが重視された時代にあって貧乏貴族は社会にとっての負担だと感じられるようになった。貴族にも商業を通じた経済的貢献を求めたコワイエは、有用性を社会的評価の唯一の尺度とすることで軍事的名誉に基盤をおく貴族的価値観を否定したのである。また、社会的有用性に従って編成される社会は、身分毎に固有の機能があるとする身分制社会と原理的に対立するものだった。同じ時期に通商局で検討された新勅令案をめぐる商人代表たちの議論もコワイエと同じ方向性を示している。

それに対してコワイエを批判する著者たちは、貴族は他の市民にもまして有用な市民であるとして貴族身分とその特権を正当化しようと試みる。しかし、この試みに失敗したとき、貴族への眼差しはますます厳しいものとならざるを得ない。商人貴族論は革命前夜の激しい反貴族主義を予告するものだったのである。

## The Debate over *la noblesse commerçante* in Ancien Regime France

### – How can Nobles be Useful Citizens? –

Toshimi MORIMURA

In 1756 a heated debate was provoked by the publication of Abbé Coyer's *La noblesse commerçante*, which exhorted the French nobles to practice commerce. In the early Seventeenth-Century, the French government relaxed the derogation law which prohibited commerce on the part of nobles, and Coyer was not the first author to have demanded the abolition of this law. In this sense, his publication did not raise any new questions. Why then did the work of Coyer attract such public attention?

By the middle of the Eighteenth-Century, the general public had started to become critical of poor nobles who, because of venality, namely the sale of offices, were prevented from becoming officers in the army or judges in the courts. These poor nobles were regarded as useless citizens and as a burden on society. Coyer recommended that they engage in commerce as a means of escaping poverty, and that by so doing they could make a useful contribution to economic development. His purpose was to establish "usefulness" as the only criterion of social value and to reject the value of family lineage on which the nobility was founded. The society proposed by Coyer was opposed to the traditional society of order that assigned each order to its proper function, for example, the nobility to military affairs and the Third Estate to productive activity.

In the same period, the Bureau of Commerce was examining a plan for a new edict, which would confirm the ones of 1669 and 1701, to promote commerce by the nobles. The discussion of deputies of commerce in this Bureau, who represented the interests of the principal commercial towns in France, shows that influential merchants had formulated a plan of social reorganization similar to Coyer's one.

The adversaries of Coyer were obliged to legitimize the nobility and its privilege by asserting that the nobles were the most useful citizens in the nation. If the nobles failed to prove their usefulness, then they would be forced into a more difficult position. The debate over the *noblesse commerçante* foretold the anti-nobility discourses in pre-revolutionary France.