

# COURT RANK IN SHOKU NIHONGI

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The *Shoku Nihongi* (Chronicles of Japan, Continued) is the official court history of eighth-century Japan. Presented to the court of Emperor Kanmu in two recensions, 794 and 797, it comprises the annals of the Japanese imperial court from 697 to 791. This voluminous chronicle, five volumes in the standard edition, contains an enormous amount of information on the imperial institution, economic and demographic history, and also a great amount of detail on the system of court ranks instituted in the *Taihō Ritsuryō*, promulgated in 701 and 702.

In this study I present briefly data on the total numbers of court ranks appearing in *Shoku Nihongi*, as well as information on the growth of the system over the forty volumes, or *maki*, of the chronicle. The raw data appears in a matrix developed in an MS Excel spreadsheet and available online at:

<http://rossbender.org/courtranks.htm>

Below are a number of preliminary charts and graphs based on this data. These are merely suggestions, and those students with an interest in the subject are welcome to make use of the data in any way they might see fit. Note that the old system of court ranks instituted by Emperor Tenmu gives way almost immediately to the new *Ritsuryō* system.

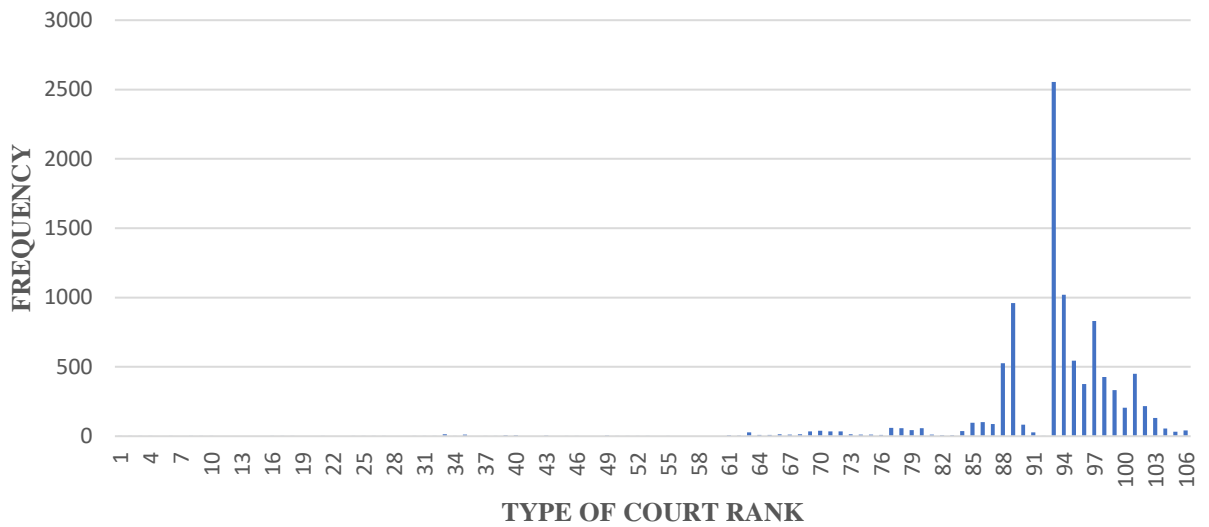
The data were compiled by searching for each occurrence of the 112 ranks appearing in *Shoku Nihongi* in each of the forty *maki*. This produced a gross count of 9,929 instances. The largest single court rank, that of Jr Fifth Lower, appeared 2,555 times. The next largest was Jr Fifth Upper, with a total frequency of 1,020. This demonstrates that the bulk of the court aristocracy held these ranks. Obviously there is much repetition, since individuals with the same rank are counted repeatedly, so that a putative net count of individual courtiers would be much smaller. However, one possible avenue of research might be to identify particular courtiers and to trace their ascent through the bureaucracy over the eighth century. Fujiwara no Asomi Nakamaro would be an excellent test case for such an approach.

The first graph shows the frequency of each type of court rank, with the obvious peak at 2,555, while the second shows the growth over time, with a trendline. Note that the table on page 3 gives a breakdown of the forty *maki* by date. Some *maki* cover only a single year in the western calendar, while others extend over as many as six years. The final two graphs show the growth over time of the Jr Fifth rank and the top six ranks.

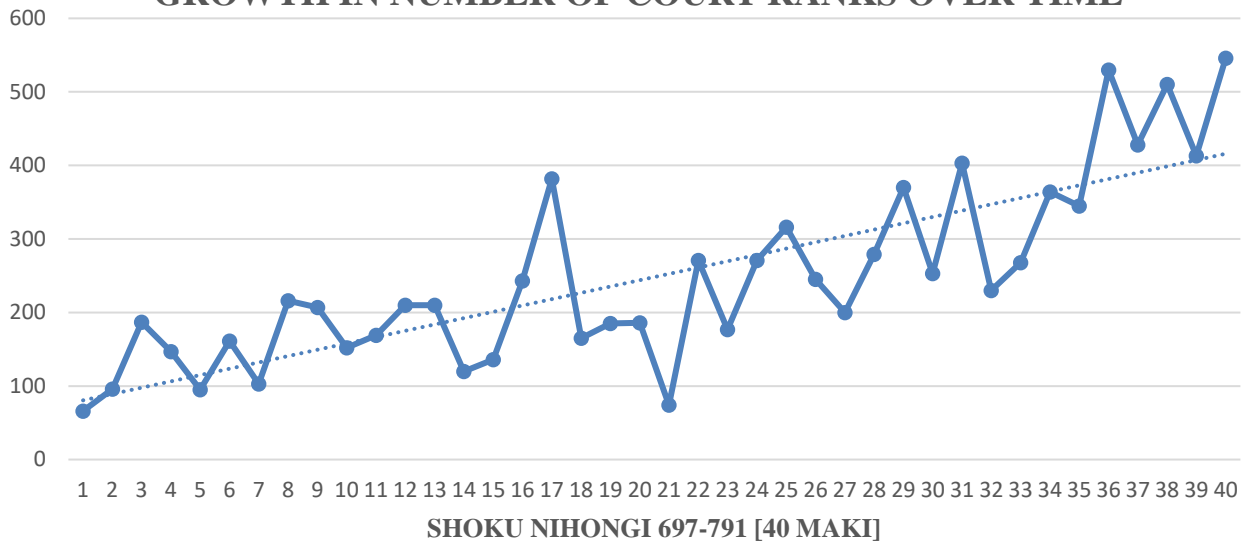
Questions about the data matrix and graphs may be addressed to Ross Bender at:

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## TOTAL NUMBERS OF COURT RANKS 697-791



## GROWTH IN NUMBER OF COURT RANKS OVER TIME

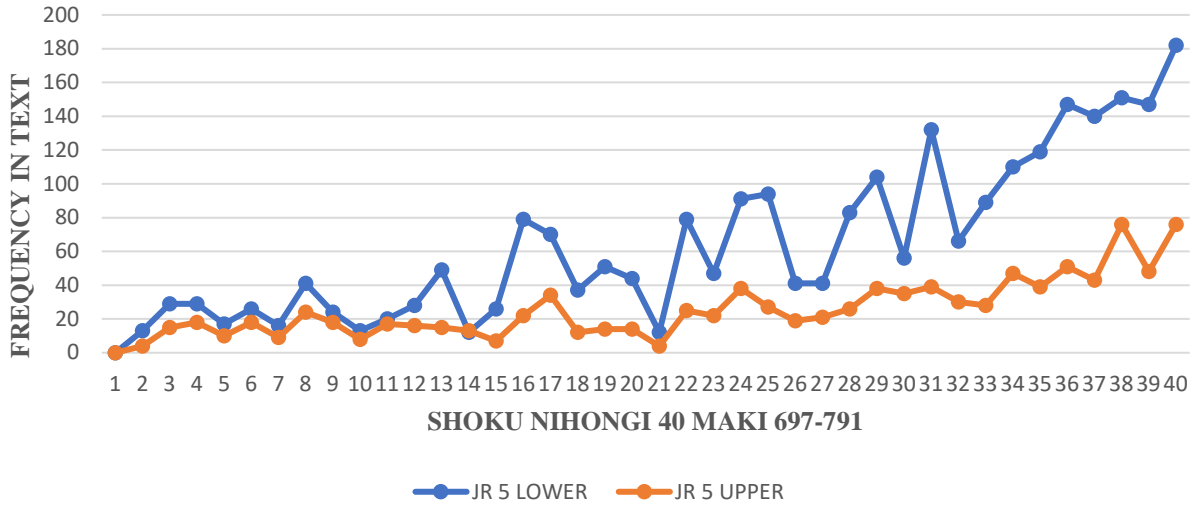


## SHOKU NIHONGI VOLUMES (MAKI) AND DATES

MAKI 1	697-700
MAKI 2	701-702
MAKI 3	703-707
MAKI 4	707-709
MAKI 5	710-712
MAKI 6	713-715
MAKI 7	715-717
MAKI 8	718-721
MAKI 9	722-726
MAKI 10	727-730
MAKI 11	731-734
MAKI 12	735-737
MAKI 13	738-740
MAKI 14	741-742
MAKI 15	743-744
MAKI 16	745-746
MAKI 17	747-749
MAKI 18	750-752
MAKI 19	753-756
MAKI 20	757-758
MAKI 21	758
MAKI 22	759-760
MAKI 23	760-761
MAKI 24	762-763
MAKI 25	764
MAKI 26	764-765
MAKI 27	766
MAKI 28	767
MAKI 29	768-769
MAKI 30	769-770
MAKI 31	770-771
MAKI 32	772-773
MAKI 33	774-775
MAKI 34	776-777
MAKI 35	778-779

MAKI 36	780-781
MAKI 37	782-783
MAKI 38	784-785
MAKI 39	786-788
MAKI 40	789-791

### GROWTH IN JR 5 RANK OVER TIME



### GROWTH IN TOP 3 RANKS OVER TIME

