



# SAMURAI DAYORI



## THE HOSTAGE

When *Samurai* started having political power, when a lord or a warrior decided to obey or take sides of another, it was very common to give a hostage as a proof of their obedience. Also, exchanging hostages between the domains as proof of the alliance happened often.

Generally the hostages were their sons. Even though they were the hostages, they were not put into jail. Their radius of action was limited, but they were treated with respect and taken good care of. They were given a good education, and sometimes they became the playmates or classmates of children of the lord or the high rank retainers. When they grew up sometimes they were given the position of the retainers. But once their own family decided to go against the lords who were holding them, they were the first one to be killed, of course.

The founder of the first *Bakufu* (samurai government), *Minamoto-no Yoritomo* had a son of *Kiso Yoshinaka* as a hostage. It was before *Yoritomo* established *Bakufu* and he was planning to take the Emperor's political power and open a new government which was *Bakufu*. *Kiso Yoshinaka's* son grew up with *Yoritomo's* daughter. When *Yoritomo* found out *Yoshinaka* was planning to be a *Shougun* which *Yoritomo* wanted to be, he killed the boy. *Yoritomo's* daughter and he were in love. Since then, she spent the rest of her life with a grudge against her father.

*Tokugawa Ieyasu* who settled down *Sengoku Jidai* and started the new era '*Edo Jidai*' lived as a hostage most of his childhood life. His father was a lord of a small domain. *Ieyasu* was sent to the lord *Imagawa* of the next domain which was much bigger and more powerful. He was treated with full respect and when he grew up he married a daughter of the lord. However after his own father's death, the retainers were waiting and waiting for *Ieyasu's* return, holding his domain and castle.

*Imagawa* made his mind to focus to be a ruler of Japan. He started off to *Kyoto*. *Imagawa's* military was marching forward, sweeping away all small castles and forts on the way, along with anybody against him. *Oda Nobunaga's* domain was on the way, too. *Nobunaga* decided to not obey *Imagawa* and he defeated *Imagawa* who had a much bigger army.

*Ieyasu* was in the *Imagawa's* army as one of the commanders, but as soon as *Imagawa* died, he took an advantage of this opportunity and went back his own domain. *Nobunaga* and *Ieyasu* later formed an alliance.

Speaking of *Nobunaga*, there is an episode about him and his hostage. (Of course there are many, this is just one example).

One warrior whose name was *Kuroda Kanbei* gave his son as a hostage to *Nobunaga*. *Kanbei* was a retainer of another tiny domain's lord but he considered *Nobunaga* was the one who was going to be leader of Japan, and the one whom he could happily dedicate his life. *Nobunaga* asked one of his retainers, *Takenaka Hanbei*, to take care of that boy. *Hanbei* took very good care of him.

When *Toyotomi Hideyoshi* was sent by *Nobunaga* as a commander to conquer western Japan, *Kanbei* was with *Hideyoshi*. There were many clans and castles they needed to take.

One lord of small domain who used to be *Nobunaga's* side changed his mind and rebelled against *Nobunaga*. *Kanbei* went to his castle to persuade him to come back to *Nobunaga*. But *Kanbei* was captured and put into jail in the castle. Fortunately he wasn't killed. The reason was probably because *Kanbei* and that lord were good friends before. He couldn't contact *Hideyoshi* or others to let them know what happened.

When *Nobunaga* heard *Kanbei* didn't come back, he thought *Kanbei* had gone over to the enemy. He got so angry and commanded to kill his son soon. *Hanbei* accepted that, but he didn't take an action. *Kanbei* was his best friend and he did not want kill his son and he believed in *Kanbei*.

*Kanbei* finally escaped the castle and came back to *Hideyoshi*. When *Nobunaga* heard that, probably he was glad *Hanbei* didn't kill the boy and regretted to give such an order in his anger. This boy who's name was *Kuroda Nagamasa* became a great warrior and a lord of domain later.

*Nagamasa* was a lucky one. I can imagine there were many hostages that were killed by a misunderstanding or wrong information.

The political marriage and adoption between the lords of domains were common to form an alliance also. Sometimes these didn't work well. There are many tragic stories

Next issue will be about these.

## WORDS FROM A MASTER OF ONE OF THE OLDEST STYLE'S IN JAPAN

"You have to take good care of everything. The spirit of martial arts is to care for every object and every living thing. Without this spirit you are not a true martial artist."

-----Taking care of only your sword is not good enough. You need to treat everything, even one piece of paper with the respect and the appreciation.

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## INTERESTING FACTS

Top 3 famous and popular warriors of Sengoku Jidai

1. *Oda Nobunaga* : almost succeeded to conquer Japan.
2. *Toyotomi Hideyosi* : one of the retainers of Nobunaga and became a ruler of Japan after *Nobunaga* died.  
-----“Its’ my turn.”
3. *Tokugawa Ieyasu* : saving his power and waiting until Hideyosi died, then became a ruler.  
-----“Now it’s my turn.”

*Nobunaga* and *Ieyasu* were the lords of small domains which were always under the threat of strong domains around them. *Nobunaga* was a strange child, even after he became a young lord after his father died and was called an idiot.

*Hideyosi* was the son of a poor samurai and lived as a farmer.

At this era there were so many other great clans and warriors. They had bigger and stronger militaries, great retainers, and larger and richer lands.

But they didn’t become ruler of the country. Didn’t they have such ambition? Probably, they just never did. Instead of those powerful lords, the lords of three small domains, and a poor kid took control of the country.

That’s the why *Sengoku Jidai* is so interesting and such an exciting time to learn about. I highly recommend the book - ‘*TAIKO*’ by *Yoshikawa Eiji* again. It is truly an impressive story.

## RECOMMENDED MOVIES

***SHOGUN’S SAMURAI-The Yagyu clan conspiracy***  
---*Starring Sonny Chiba, Sanada Hiroyuki*

For *Yagyu Juubei* Fan. The story is fiction, but based on the true relationship between 3rd *Tokugawa Shogun* and his brother and other people around them. Most of the things in the story are true.

## EVERYDAY JAPANESE

What can you say when you are leaving? There are many ways, just like English. I’ve listed some simple and common ways.

***Sayounara***--- Good-bye Many people say *Sa-yo-na-ra*. It is not wrong and very common in Japan too, but it sounds very casual. The correct word is *Sa-yo-u-na-ra*

*Shitsurei shimasu/itashimasu, Gomen kudasai*---Excuse me *itashimasu* is more polite than *shimasu*

*Osaki ni shitsurei shimasu* --- Excuse me (Only when you leave earlier than other people)

*Jaane* -- Bye (very casual)

*Deha mata*---See you again

*Matane*---See you again. (very casual)

*Osewa ni narimashita* ----Thank you for taking care of me

*Ittekimasu* --- I’m going. (Don’t use when you are going home. Mostly used when you leave home.)

*Odajini* -- Take care of yourself. ( When you meet somebody who is not having a good condition.)

## SHODOU(Calligraphy) -- The way of writing

Sometimes I hear some people call ‘calligraphy’ as Japanese handwriting.

Calligraphy is mainly the letters written by brush and ink. It is not about just good handwriting. It is one of the traditional arts. There are some different types. The main two types are *Kanji* and *Kana*. Some people think *Kanji* = Japanese letters. It is not exactly right. *Kanji* is just one kind of Japanese letters. When we say *Kanji* of calligraphy, most of the time we practice old Chinese poems and use only *Kanji*. *Kana* is mixed *Hiragana*, *Kanji* and sometimes *Katakana*. This is the way we write Japanese as we talk. Most of time we write Japanese poems like *Haiku*.

*Kana* was developed in *Heian Jidai*(794-1192). It was very important that your handwriting was good. People judged what kind or person you were by your writing. At that time, girls in high society didn’t show themselves to other people except their family and her own maids. Young men who were seeking love were never be able to meet those girls. When they heard some rumor like someone’s daughter was very pretty, well-educated, very smart, good at something, etc., they sent the poem to those girls. If they could get a reply of a gentle poem, they were lucky. They exchanged the poems back and forth several times and they could fall in love without meeting each other. They saw what kind of person each other was by those poems and writing. Of course if you were really good at writing and poetry, you could trick them - because guys imagined a beautiful girl from her poems and writing.

We don’t need to do such a thing anymore. But the good handwriting is still important in Japan. We all take a basic lesson at the school from 1st or 2nd grade through 9th grade. There is a calligraphy class at least once a week.

Calligraphy artist’s try to show the meaning or the atmosphere of words or poems and author’s feelings by letters. You need to learn a lot about brush control techniques, artistic effect of thickness of ink, brush touch of softness and strength, balance of each letter, and materials like paper, ink and brush. If the poem is about a cold snowy night, we need to let people feel coldness and darkness by letters of black ink not by drawing pictures. If the poem is about somebody’s feelings, you need to show that sadness, happiness, whatever it is with the shapes and balance of each letter, not just the meaning of the words of that poem. And of course your own personality and feeling. It is not easy at all. It is the long way to study and practice until you reach that point. Adding your personality is the last thing. Before that there are so many things you need to master.

*In this newsletter:*

*Japanese names are written by Japanese way. Family name comes first, then given name.*

*Japanese words are written close to Japanese*

*pronunciations and writing, ie. Noutou instead of Noto or Shogun instead of Shogun.*

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