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THE POLITICAL MARRIAGE AND WOMEN IN SENGOKU JIDAI

The political marriage was most common between the lords of domains to form an alliance. Adoption of their children too. But many times this didn't work well. Can you imagine how women felt when your husband had a battle against your father or brothers? Or how a mother felt if their own son fought against their father or brothers.

There was one famous woman in *Sengoku Jidai*. Her name was *Oichi-no-kata*. She was *Oda Nobunaga's* young sister and famous as one of the most beautiful woman at this time. She married one of the lord whose name was *Asai Nagamasa*. When *Nobunaga* had a battle against *Asakura*, *Asai* joined *Asakura* instead of *Nobunaga* who was his brother in law. *Asai* lost the battle but his wife and three daughters survived.

After *Asai's* death she remarried *Shibata Katsuie* who was one of the top retainer of *Nobunaga*. After *Nobunaga's* death *Shibata Katsuie* and *Toyotomi Hideyoshi* started to fight against each other and *Katsuie* lost the battle with *Hideyoshi*. *Oichi-no-kata* killed herself after letting her daughters escape.

The oldest daughter inherited a beauty from her mother. *Hideyoshi* took her as one of his wives (at this time of Japan they can have as many wives they want or they need.) What a life! She became a lover of the guy who fought against her father (*Hideyoshi* was in the *Nobunaga's* military) and stepfather. She was the mother of only one child of *Hideyoshi*.

After *Hideyoshi's* death she started to take a part of political things and controlled her son's life. (When *Hideyoshi* died, his son was still a little boy.) Some people said she was the cause of the battle of *Toyotomi* and *Tokugawa*. But I can't agree that. Some part maybe, but *Tokugawa Ieyasu* always wanted it to happen and was waiting for the excuse to come up.

Oda Nobunaga's wife was a daughter of *Saitou Douzan*. *Douzan's* domain *Mino*, and *Nobunaga's* domain *Owari* were next to each other. After *Saitou Douzan* lost the battle against his own son, *Nobunaga* had a great excuse to attack *Mino*, which he always wanted to have. He announced that battle was to avenge for his father in law.

Tokugawa Ieyasu's wife was *Imagawa Yoshimoto's* niece. *Yoshimoto* died in the battle with *Nobunaga*. Then *Nobunaga* and *Ieyasu* formed an alliance. *Ieyasu's* first son's wife was a daughter of *Nobunaga*. One day she wrote a letter to her father (*Nobunaga*). That letter said her mother

in law (*Ieyasu's* wife) and her husband had a connection with *Takeda* clan and it seemed to her they were making a plan to move against *Nobunaga*. *Takeda* was one of the most powerful clan at this time. *Nobunaga* and *Ieyasu* were under the threat of *Takeda*.

Nobunaga commanded to *Ieyasu* to kill his wife and son. *Ieyasu* couldn't go against *Nobunaga*. To protect his land and people, he killed his wife and asked his son to kill himself. *Ieyasu* got *Nobunaga's* absolute trust with this. Were they really planning to against *Nobunaga*? We don't know the truth.

If they didn't have enough daughters to send for the political marriage, they adopted the daughters from their relatives or high rank retainers.

Some stories sound like women were used like tools or just do anything they were told like dolls and they didn't have any power or couldn't do anything they wanted. Some of them were, but many times they worked as a spy or worked hard to build a strong relationship between two domains. Their words often affected on their husbands, sons, fathers in law, or retainers.

One of the biggest and most famous battle in the history '*Sekigahara no Tatakai*' (the battle at *Sekigahara*) was the one between *Toyotomi* and *Tokugawa*. But this was not between only 2 clans. This battle separated whole entire Japan into 2 sides. Usually we call "West (*Toyotomi*) vs East (*Tokugawa*)". Because *Toyotomi's* base was *Osaka Castle* and *Tokugawa Ieyasu's* are *Edo (Tokyo)*. Most of the lords in Japan had to chose which side you would join.

Tokugawa Ieyasu was on the way to north side of Japan with other many lords and their militaries to fight against *Uesugi* clan. When *Ieyasu* heard the news that *Ishida Mitsunari* who was one of the top retainer of *Toyotomi*, raised an army against *Tokugawa*, he asked all lords with him to make up their mind. He told them if they would join *Toyotomi's* side, he was not going to stop them. Many lords left their families in *Osaka* area. They would be the hostages of *Toyotomi* if they decide to support *Ieyasu*. They had a hard time to make up their mind.

One of the wife of the lord sacrificed herself for her husband. She committed suicide. It was a message to her husband to not worry about her anymore and do whatever he thought best for his people and himself.

During *Sengoku Jidai*, the women had to have the spirits as warriors. ..

KENJUTSU AND KENDOU

Kejutsu and *Kendou* were originally same thing. *Kendou* was the new name of *Kenjutsu* after *Meiji Jidai*.. Also sometimes *Kenjutsu* is called *Heihou*, *Kenpou* or *Gekiken*.

The swordsmen are called *Kenkaku/Kenkyaku*, *Kenjutsu tsukai*, *Heihou mono*, *Bugei-sha* or *Geisha*.

The image of *Kendou* is with full bogu (armor) and *Shinai* (bamboo sword), and no protection with *bokutou/bokken* is *Kenjutsu*. It is kind of true but some style of *Kenjutsu* uses bogu and *Shinai* for the training. The first *Shinai* was invented by the founder of *Sin-Kage-ryu*.(see vol.5) It was in *Sengoku Jidai*. This *Shinai* is still used at *Yagyu-Shin-Kage-ryu*.

One of the oldest style, *Maniwa-Nen-ryu* used sitting pillows to protect themselves during the training. They tied some pillows on their head and body and wore the padded gloves. By the later part of *Edo Jidai*, the bogu was improved alot and became the similar style with the bogu of *Kendou* we see now. *Ono Seiichirou* of *Ono-ha-Ittou-ryu*, *Chiba Shuusaku* of *Hokushin-ittou-ryu* and some masters of other styles let their students use the full bogu and *Shinai* at their Dojo. They were still called *Kenjutsu*.

Kenjutsu became very popular with people who were not *Samurai* by improvement of those bogu. They could learn and practice without injury. When *Edo Jidai* ended, the time of *Samurai* ended too. Some style of *Kenjutsu* were turning to *Kendou*.

Then after World War II, GHQ ordered to Japan to stop learning sword fighting. How could Japanese forget about the swords? The swordsmanship was our spirit.

Then *Kendou* was reborn as a sport. There are no *ryu*(style) on *Kendou*. Any dojo is under *Japan Kendou Association*.

EVERYDAY JAPANESE

We have different words for what kind of thing you wear.

Kiru--- Shirts, jacket, coat, *Kimono*, etc.

Any clothing cover the upper body.

Haku--- Pants, socks, shoes.

Anything for lower parts of body.

Kaburu--- hats, helmets, or anything to cover your head.

You use this word when you cover your head with jacket.

Nugu --- taking clothes or shoes off.

Opposite word of *Kiru*, *Haku*, *Kaburu*

Tsukeru --- Under wears (We often use *Kiru* or *Haku* too)

Wrist watches, belt and other accessories like necklaces, rings, etc.

Hameru--- This word is used also for accessories or watches too

Simeru --- Belt, *obi*

Musubu -- Belt or *obi* which needs to be tied

Toru, hazusu --- Taking thigs off.

Opposite word of *Tsukeru*, *Hameru*, *Shimeru*

Toku --- Untieing belt or *obi*

Sasu --- Umbrellas

INTERESTING FACTS

Many people think *Miyamoto Musashi*'s style is about two swords technique. But in fact he didn't use two swords at the fights I can't say never but that it is sure he didn't do it often. The meaning of two swords he said is everybody should train both arms to be able to use same way and same strength. Main arm for sword is left (this is the hand that controls the sword). But you should be able to use the sword with the right arm as much as your left arm and which side you use or both is all depend on the situations. Also even if you hurt one arm, you still can fight with another arm.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

THE BAMBOO SWORD and other samurai tales

--- by Fujisawa Shuhei

The same author of the recommended movie of "*Twilight Samurai*", and one of *Ohashi souke*'s favorite author. Finally I found the English version.

There are 8 short stories in this book. They are all fiction, but you still learn how they think, how they act. Also these are the essences of *samurai* stories, movies and TV shows that Japanese people enjoy daily in Japan.

MUKUSHIN-RYU NEWS

Congratulations!

Mr. Pete Campbell was awarded san-dan of *Mukushin-ryu* back in December, 2006. *Ohashi souke* said we didn't do testing for 3-dan in November when he was here, but after 3 days training his skill reached the level of 3-dan.

Mr. Campbell was happy to hear that but he didn't want to accept 3-dan without the actual test. He asked *Ohashi souke* to hold until he meet him and check his performance again.

This June the Campbell's are going to Japan and visit *Ohashi souke*. He is going to take a test this time and receive the certificate of 3-dan.

Certificate

Sorry to the students who kept waiting for *Mukushin-ryu* certificate since November. Finally they are on the way from Japan. I hope they will arrive and hand them to the students before we leave for Japan.

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.

Have a questions or request? Contact me at:

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