

The Autobiography of Wakita Kyūbei: Samurai Military Service and Recognition in Seventeenth-Century Japan

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Shortly before his death, Wakita Kyūbei (c. 1585-1660), a samurai of the Kaga Domain, dictated a memoir of his life and accomplishments. His was a unique story; born the son of a Korean ruling class family (*yangban*), he was kidnapped as a boy and raised in the house of warlord Maeda Toshiie in Japan. Without family or connections, Wakita eventually rose within the ranks of the Maeda house to end his career as town magistrate of the Kaga Domain capital, Kanazawa. Wakita's generation of samurai lived through a period of social transition; they were born and raised in the midst of warfare where one's reputation and status were gained through proof of battlefield accomplishments, but came of age after the violent upheavals had been largely suppressed by a new political order under the Tokugawa Shogunate. Wakita's success as well as challenges that impeded his career advancement may be traced to his service on the battlefield during the Osaka Campaigns of 1614-1615, the last battles fought between samurai armies in the early modern era. As the last generation of battle-tested warriors, Wakita and his peers had to negotiate their way through the traditional reward system as it entered its final phase when stipend increases and public offices replaced land rights and social mobility was severely curtailed with the elimination of warfare.¹

In the context of such overt competition for rewards and advancement among members of a provincial lord's samurai band (*kashindan*) during this transitional time, what kinds of jealousies and

¹ John Whitney Hall, "Foundations of the Modern Daimyo," in *Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan*, eds. John W. Hall and Marius Jansen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 65-78.

subterfuges did they resort to? What kinds of mechanisms for advancement (or to block advancement) were devised? What does the intra-*kashindan* politics, which almost certainly could be found in most domains such as what Wakita experienced in the Kaga Domain, tell us about the notion of “politics” in early Tokugawa times? Wakita’s personal narrative, as recorded in his autobiography toward the end of his life, can shed light on his generation’s experience of the transition to Tokugawa rule among early modern Japanese samurai elites. His narrative reveals how young ambitious samurai of the early seventeenth century, with only a limited battle record, struggled to gain recognition, honor, and position during this transitional period. It also shows how one could overcome discrimination from the Sengoku (Warring States) generation of domain leaders through perseverance, adherence to traditional practices of proving military accomplishment, and intellectual accomplishment for better career, status, and reputation.

Postwar scholarship in Japan and the United States has greatly enhanced the understanding of the broad sociopolitical transitions that impacted Japanese society. However, these “big picture” explanations of the Sengoku-Tokugawa transition tend to overlook the struggle and success of individuals, whose lives were caught in the currents of larger sociopolitical change in the context of the early Tokugawa times, including those for whom change threatened their pre-existing social status, as well as those who must adapt in order to survive. Individual examples presented by scholars are generally used to elucidate larger patterns of social and political change, such as the rise and fall of daimyo houses in the Sengoku and Tokugawa periods that dictated retainers’ promotion, demotion, or loss of status.² Even studies focusing on social mobility of domain retainers tie much of their analysis to the status of the daimyo house, and rely heavily on a broad, multi-generational approach in order to elucidate the evolution of Japan’s feudal system, utilizing graphs that reflect aggregate data regarding income, length of career, and

² John Whitney Hall, “The Ikeda House and its Retainers in Bizen,” in *Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan*, 79-88.

generational income changes.³ These macro-histories do not typically take into consideration the very personal nature of the impact of this transition on peer relations, as individuals jostled for rank and promotion amidst the shifting realities of service in the daimyo house organization.

Within extant scholarship regarding this transitional period, class and status of both the samurai ruling elite and the commoners dominate analysis of sociopolitical change.⁴ The Confucian-based hierarchy of status divisions of society were central to Japan's early modern social order. As Takagi Shōsaku argued, the division of labor, from warriors who fought the battles, peasants who produced food for the armies, artisans who produced tools and weapons, to merchants who distributed supplies, contributed to the daimyo/shogunate "garrison state."⁵ However, scholars have shown that the *shi-nō-kō-shō* (warrior-peasant-artisan-merchant) delineation of society is an overly simplified social construct that does not fully explain the range of status groups found within Tokugawa society, not to mention status-wealth disparity that worsened over the early modern period. Within this superstructure of status and class, the separate components of society were allowed to develop their own forms of self-governance, although they were ultimately answerable to the daimyo.⁶

A common research topic pertinent to an analysis of Wakita Kyūbei's experience is how daimyo reshaped the very nature of samurai

³ Ray Arvil Moore, "Samurai Social Mobility in Tokugawa Japan" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1968).

⁴ Douglas R. Howland, "Samurai Status, Class, and Bureaucracy: A Historiographical Essay," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60, no. 2 (May 2001): 353-380.

⁵ Takagi Shōsaku, "'Hideyoshi's Peace' and the Transformation of the *Bushi* Class: The Dissolution of the Autonomy of the Medieval *Bushi*," *Acta Asiatica* 49 (1985): 46-77.

⁶ David Howell, *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-century Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Herman Ooms, *Tokugawa Village Practice: Class, Status, Power, Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Kasaya Kazuhiko, "Kinsei buke shakai ni okeru shūdan to ko," *Rekishi kōron* 106 (September 1984): 45-53; Daniel Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); John O. Haley, *Authority without Power: Law and the Japanese Paradox*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Mark Ravina, *Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

as a distinct status group within Japanese society. From the rise of the early modern daimyo during the Warring States period to the establishment of hegemony by the Three Unifiers Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu, warlords developed various methods of coercion in order to prevent insurrection, from house laws that promoted core orthodox values of respect for authority and loyalty to rules limiting retainers' ability to commit violence without authorization. Perhaps the most successful tool of control and subordination was the separation of retainers from direct control of land, molding samurai into a disciplined, loyal fighting force.⁷ Samurai became dependent upon the daimyo; the only way to increase one's income was to serve the warlord loyally and well on the battlefield, or within the domain administration, particularly as opportunities for battlefield service disappeared in the early Tokugawa period. As Eiko Ikegami has shown, the use of violence, so important to a warrior's identity and social mobility during the incessant wars of the Sengoku period, was circumscribed and restricted in the interest of stability and peace in the seventeenth century, thereby eliminating battlefield service as a means for advancement.⁸

The life of Wakita Kyūbei offers a personalized account of the challenges faced by warriors in the early years of Tokugawa rule. Without multiple battles in which to demonstrate one's dedication and bravery, it became much more difficult for men like him to improve their status within the daimyo household; without war casualties, there were fewer job

⁷ *Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan*, ed. John W. Hall and Marius B. Jansen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968); Michael P. Birt, "Samurai in Passage: The Transformation of the Sixteenth-Century Kantō," in *Journal of Japanese Studies* 1, no. 2 (1985): 369-399; Philip C. Brown, *Central Authority and Local Autonomy in the Formation of Early Modern Japan: The Case of Kaga Domain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Pierre Francois Souyri, *The World Turned Upside Down: Medieval Japanese Society*, trans. Käthe Roth (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Kasaya Kazuhiko, *Shukun "oshikome" no kōzō: kinsei daimyō no kashindan* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1988); also see his *Kinsei buke shakai no seiji kōzō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1993).

⁸ Eiko Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

openings to be filled by young hopefuls. There are several official domain documents that corroborate Wakita's memoir, but he himself provided the most detailed description of his difficult career path in the service of the largest daimyo domain in the Edo era. His autobiography was first recorded in 1659, the last year of his life. According to a comparative analysis of five extant handwritten copies by Kasai Jun'ichi, Wakita, likely due to poor health, dictated his account to Morita Shōkurō.⁹ While further in-depth comparative studies on various forms and content of existing autobiographical writings (*jiden*) that the Tokugawa samurai elites left behind will be necessary, it suffices to say that the autobiographical mode of writing provided Wakita a venue to explain the difficulties he faced in building up his career in the most detailed manner, thus revealing the micro-level personal struggles and the impact of transitional political situation on individual samurai elites.

Wakita's life was shaped by warfare, although in his memoir he reveals little emotion regarding the vicissitudes of war to which he was subjected as a seven-year-old boy from a Korean *yangban* family. Wakita's childhood name was Kim Yōchōl 金如鉄 (pronounced Kin Jotetsu in Japanese). During Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea (1592-1598),¹⁰ Wakita's father and uncle were killed by Japanese as they carried their mother to safety during the invaders' attack on the Korean capital, Hansōng (Seoul).¹¹ It is unknown if Wakita was a witness to the tragic end of his father; his memoir, while denoting his Korean origins, is silent regarding the terror and devastation that he may have experienced as a small boy.

⁹ Kasai Jun'ichi, "Kaden: Kin (Wakita) Jotetsu jiden," in *Kanazawa daigaku kyōyōbu ronshū: jinbun kagakuhen* 28, no. 1 (1990): 1-6. Four of the copies are held by the Kanazawa City Library, and the fifth by the Ishikawa Prefectural Library.

¹⁰ Mary Elizabeth Berry, *Hideyoshi* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 207-234. Marius Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 17-19. Stephen Turnbull, *Samurai Invasion: Japan's Korean War* (London: Cassell & Co., 2002).

¹¹ *Tongguk sinsok samgang haengsil*, Vol. 1, ed. Kungnip tosōgwan (Seoul: Kungnip tosōgwan, 1958). *Kwangsān Kim ssi sa* (Taejōn, Korea: Hoesangsa, 1991), 427.

Presumably during the attack that resulted in the death of his father, one of Hideyoshi's generals, daimyo Ukita Hideie (1572-1655), captured Wakita in 1592 and sent the boy as a gift to his wife, Gō (1574-1634), the adopted daughter of Hideyoshi and natural daughter of Maeda Toshiie (1538-1599), daimyo of Kaga Domain. Gō, a sickly person for much of her life, sent Wakita to be raised by her biological mother, Matsu (1547-1617). It was under Matsu's care that Wakita was initiated into samurai culture. Matsu's oldest son and successor to Maeda Toshiie, Toshinaga (1562-1613), seems to have taken a liking to the young Korean. Wakita expressed great reverence and respect for them in his memoir:

In her great mercy the Lady Mother allowed me to serve the [Maeda] heir, Vice-councilor Lord Toshinaga (then Imperial Chamberlain). Through the instruction I received from both Lady Mother Hōshun'in and her Lord Son, I grew to manhood.¹²

Through the patronage of Matsu and Lord Toshinaga, Wakita was protected, nurtured, and given a place within Toshinaga's household. Once Wakita came of age, Toshinaga accepted him into his personal guard in 1605, giving him a stipend of 230 *koku*¹³ and thereby granting him status as a warrior within the Maeda house.¹⁴ Furthermore, Matsu arranged his marriage to a daughter of the Wakita family, a respected, long time

¹² This, and other quotes from Wakita Kyūbei, unless otherwise noted, are the author's translations of his autobiography. A printed version of the autobiography can be found in Kasai Jun'ichi, "Kaden: Kin (Wakita) Jotetsu jiden," in *Kanazawa daigaku kyōyōbu ronshū: Jinbun kagakuhen* 28, no. 1 (1990): 1-24. A copy of the original manuscript, also used in the translation process, is Wakita Naokata, *Wakita kadensho*, Kanazawa shiritsu toshokan, Kanazawa, Japan.

¹³ *Koku* was a measurement of rice approximately equal to the amount that an adult male consumed in one year. A samurai's stipend was calculated in *koku*. The number of *koku* received by a retainer determined military obligations to the *daimyo*, and indicated the status of a samurai relative to his peers.

¹⁴ Ishikawa-ken toshokan kyōkai, ed. *Kaga han shoki no samuraichō* (Kanazawa, Japan: Keigyōdō, 1942), 10.

retainer of the Maeda. Lacking a Japanese surname of his own, Kyūbei adopted his wife's family name.¹⁵

Despite, or more likely because of, Matsu and Toshinaga's efforts on behalf of Wakita, he began to run afoul of internal house politics early in his career. He was merely an orphaned foreigner but was given a respectable, if meager, stipend, on top of which the matron of the Maeda house arranged his marriage into a prominent retainer family that, according to the size of his father-in-law's stipend, was among the top 5% of Maeda retainer households.¹⁶ Such treatment indicated Lady Matsu's and Lord Toshinaga's partiality for the young Korean.

Reflecting on his life, Wakita specifically points to this time in his life as the catalyst for his career difficulties:

Because I had flourished so much as Lord Toshinaga's personal retainer, slanderers caused me to be put under house arrest for one year. If this had not happened, I would have received even more rewards, but this was my misfortune. After one year, Lady Hōshun'in spoke on my behalf and I was found blameless and restored as Toshinaga's personal retainer.

If Wakita's assertions can be trusted, a personal attack on his reputation, likely by someone influential whose word could not be discounted, effectively stunted Wakita's career growth just as he had entered manhood and full-time service in the Maeda house. Until Toshinaga's death in June 1614, Wakita was relegated to a life of obscurity in the small castle town of Takaoka where Toshinaga had retired in 1605.

Despite these setbacks at the beginning of his career, Wakita was determined to serve the Maeda faithfully. He had an opportunity to prove himself in the traditional samurai way four months later when the Tokugawa Shogunate called the daimyo to war in October 1614 against

¹⁵ Kashin jinmei jiten hensan iinkai, ed., *Kashin jinmei jiten*, Vol. 3 (Tokyo: Shinjinbutsu ōraisha, 1988), 255-256.

¹⁶ This is an estimate based upon nineteenth-century domain statistics. See Tanaka Yoshio, *Chihō kanryō to jusha no keizai shisō* (Tokyo: Nihon keizai hyōronsha, 2001), 222.

Hideyoshi's young heir, Toyotomi Hideyori (1593-1615). Wakita hoped to restore his reputation. He was one of the four retainers to lead Kaga forces from the Takaoka area. Wakita claimed that because he and his four companions "responded immediately to the call to muster, we were rewarded with gold and silver, not to mention the honor we brought to our names." A significant section of his autobiography is dedicated to the Osaka Winter and Summer Campaigns (1614-1615), because his service in this final battle of samurai forces was clear evidence of his dedication to the Maeda house and to his warrior credentials, crucial to the furtherance of his career as well as the identity and status of his progeny.

Kaga forces played a secondary role in the Osaka Winter Campaign (October 1614-January 1615), and as such Wakita's account includes only a brief description of events. The bulk of shogunate forces marched from the Kantō region along the Tōkaidō road under the direct command of Tokugawa Ieyasu; the Kaga samurai travelled overland and met the main body at Ōtsu, fifty kilometers northeast of Osaka. While the Tokugawa outnumbered the Toyotomi, the defenders were well protected by Osaka Castle, arguably the most formidable fortress in Japan. Because the Tokugawa made very little headway in laying siege to the castle, they turned to diplomatic subterfuge to weaken the enemy's castle defenses. After a truce was called, the bulk of the shogun's forces returned to their domains, including the Kaga army and Wakita Kyūbei. The Toyotomi agreed to reduce the defenses of the castle by tearing down the outer walls and filling in the outer moats—all done by Tokugawa laborers, who, overzealous in their work, filled in more of the network of moats than the peace terms stipulated.¹⁷ Wakita's only reference to Tokugawa underhandedness was a simple comment on their demobilization and renewed call to war the following summer:

This dismissal must have been part of a larger plan. Again
the insurrection in Osaka appeared, so the [shogunate]

¹⁷ For a more detailed description of the battle, see Futaki Ken'ichi, *Ōsaka no jin: shōgen shijō saidai no kōbōsen* (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1983); Okamoto Ryōichi, *Ōsaka fuyu no jin, natsu no jin* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1964); Stephen Turnbull, *Osaka 1615: The Last Battle of the Samurai* (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2006).

marched out again, calling the men of the provinces to action.

In May 1615, the Tokugawa forces again assembled to besiege Osaka Castle, once more outnumbering the defenders. Knowing that their defenses would not be sufficient this time, Toyotomi forces met the Tokugawa in the field, but were driven back within the castle defenses. On June 4, 1615, the Maeda, led by Toshinaga's successor Maeda Toshitsune (1594-1658), took a place of honor in the front ranks of the force assigned to attack the Tamazukuri Gate located on the southeast approach to the castle.

It is at this point that Wakita's description of the battle becomes detailed and personal. He notes the names of fellow warriors, even the type and color of armor and clothing of his comrades:

Their bannermen were routed, and even working together, the enemy forces were unable to hold even the Tamazukuri Gatehouse. The enemy retreated to the second bailey and the gatehouse fell. Our forces rode into Shinden Yard. Kazuramaki Hayato, Hara Yosan'emon, Kawai Kazuma, and I rode through the Tamazukuri gate side door. At that point, we saw on our left a group of compatriots at an intersection, so we rode in that direction. As we drew near, we saw the banners of six or seven mounted warriors about a hundred yards ahead, but we did not ride to join them. Ahead were over one hundred foot soldiers bearing white banners stationed behind a crumbling earthwork, firing their guns at us. Other enemies lying in wait now came out to join the fray, as well as more of our allies. A large contingent of the enemy was driven off by us. It was at this point that Yano Shozaemon was shot dead. In this manner I continued to press forward.

After driving them off, I looked around and there was neither friend nor foe within two hundred yards. The enemy was defeated. Along the street, Furuya Shozaemon and I remained to exchange words. At that time,

*Kazuramaki Hayato had ridden with us and was off to the left, wearing a black arrow hood bordered in gold. Next came Horikawa Yazaemon, in a white haori bearing the banner of the Personal Guard. Shortly thereafter a few more compatriots rode up to join us. We engaged with the enemy in fierce combat. Wakita Taitō and Emori Kakuzaemon also arrived on horseback, and we broke the enemies' resistance. Just as Tamazukuri gate fell to our hand, so did the Black Gate of the second bailey.*¹⁸

Osaka Castle fell later that evening. The final chapter of Japan's era of civil war was complete.

One reason for Wakita's detailed account was to prove and preserve a legacy of family honor, adhering to the standards of samurai behavior during the Sengoku era. Through this narrative, Wakita placed himself at the center of a truly vital moment in Japanese military history. This account, written some thirty-six years after the event, legitimized the Wakita clan's place within Kaga warrior society, as a participant in the final military engagement for Kaga Domain. None of Wakita's descendants ever saw battle, and as such could only rely upon the clan founder's role at Osaka to justify their continued service to the Maeda. Proof of Wakita's battle record is the sole identifier of samurai heritage for his descendants, in that he was the first, and only, member of the paternal line to see battle. This is juxtaposed with the memoir's second purpose: to remind his descendants of their Korean origin, perhaps to increase their appreciation for Wakita's participation at Osaka, and for the gratitude and loyalty owed to Lady Matsu and Lord Toshinaga, and subsequent lords of Kaga Domain.

Another more immediate reason for such a detailed account was to provide proof, in medieval warrior tradition, through the use of eyewitness testimony of one's actions in the heat of battle in order to receive recognition and rewards that were to follow the victory. Wakita notes the

¹⁸ Italics indicate the part that contains discrepancy among different versions of the original text.

warriors with whom he fought, their armor and dress, who arrived first on the scene. He needed to prove his battlefield claims, and in order to do so, must provide evidence as well as verification of eyewitness identities, to prove that he was where he said he was, when he said he was there.

Wakita's account of the battle as a record of his own exploits and a list of witnesses follows well-established methods of proof and evidence that date back at least to the Genpei War (1180-1185) and legal precedents of the Kamakura Shogunate (1185-1333).¹⁹ A brief description of armor helped to determine the identities of the combatants as well as the veracity of a samurai's claimed exploits. Warriors so described could then be called upon as witnesses, and were vital in the official determination of rewards that not only entailed financial remuneration, but also social benefits in the form of honor among fellow samurai. If one's claim, like Wakita's, contained eyewitnesses who could provide corroboration, the feudal lord would theoretically be more likely to bestow recognition and rewards.²⁰

On the day after the fall of Osaka Castle, Wakita presented his evidence before Lord Toshitsune, likely confident in receiving recognition. Unfortunately, his eyewitnesses were countered that day. According to Wakita, rivalries and jealousy within the Maeda house interfered with what Wakita considered the fair distribution of compensation for service:

The following day at Osaka castle during the official inquiry into individual military exploits, Matsudaira Hōki stated that Kyūbei (myself) and Furuya were latecomers who remained at the rear. Hōki accused us of even worse things; Yamazaki Kansai²¹ on the other hand confirmed our

¹⁹ The account regarding Kiso Yoshinaka is an early example of the description of warrior dress found in *The Tales of the Heike*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 85.

²⁰ Thomas Conlan, *State of War: The Violent Order of Fourteenth-Century Japan* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2003), 22-24 and 107-140.

²¹ Yamazaki Kansai (d. 1620) was a warrior of Echizen Province who joined Maeda Toshiie's retinue in 1581. See *Kashin jinmei jiten*, 251-252.

account. If all the rewards [granted to participants in the Osaka Campaigns] are compared, it is certain that [Hōki] carried a grudge against me....Our grudge against Hōki never ran shallow.

If Wakita's account is accurate, a senior retainer in a position of influence effectively undermined significantly junior (in age, rank, and status) retainers' chances for recognition and promotion. Matsudaira Hōki was the son of Mikawa general Matsudaira Yasumoto, half-brother of Tokugawa Ieyasu. Hōki's rise in the ranks of the Maeda house during the closing years of the Sengoku period was impressive, the kind of meteoric rise that the ensuing Tokugawa peace made almost impossible for Wakita's generation to replicate. Entering into Maeda service in the 1580s, Hōki earned recognition as the Maeda's top spearman by the time of the Battle of Sekigahara (1600), with a 3,000 *koku* stipend. Hōki's stipend increased to 5,000 *koku* when he, like Wakita, followed Toshinaga into retirement in Takaoka in 1605, to become Toshinaga's chief elder.²² It is likely at this point in time that Hōki and the young Wakita first crossed paths. While there is no evidence beyond Wakita's mention of a grudge, it is possible that Hōki was connected to the rumors that undermined Wakita's reputation and led to his subsequent house arrest.²³

While Wakita's future prospects faded in Takaoka, Hōki's career soared. Hōki was appointed by Toshinaga's successor, Toshitsune, as warden of Kanazawa Castle. When Tokugawa Ieyasu called the daimyo to arms for the Osaka Campaigns, Toshitsune appointed Hōki *musha bugyō*, or commander of the Maeda forces. He was awarded a 2,000 *koku* increase in the immediate aftermath of the campaigns for his leadership, bringing his total stipend to 10,000 *koku*—the equivalent of a minor daimyo under the Tokugawa system.²⁴ Following the campaigns, Lord Toshitsune

²² *Kashin jinmei jiten*, 247-248.

²³ The reasons for Kyūbei's arrest are not mentioned in his memoir, nor is there any known record of censure to explain this episode in his life.

²⁴ *Kashin jinmei jiten*, 247.

appointed him to his Council of Elders, one of the most prestigious administrative positions in the domain.

Matsudaira Hōki's efforts to deny Wakita recognition following the campaign are troubling at first glance. There are not many recorded instances of such internal political attacks in Japanese historical records between retainers of such clearly disparate status and rank;²⁵ Wakita's paltry 230 *koku* stipend represented less than 3% of Hōki's. Wakita and others of his generation faced a harsh reality: promotion to more significant positions required stipend increases just to make them eligible for consideration; the surest way to be rewarded with an increase was through battlefield service, just as Hōki and the older generation of retainers had done. The Osaka Campaigns were crucial if Wakita and his peers hoped to realize their ambitions to prove their honor and improve their status through the long-established method of valiant and loyal service on the battlefield. In the aftermath of the campaign, however, Matsudaira Hōki prevented Wakita and his Takaoka peers from enjoying the remuneration they expected to receive.

Despite his own success and post-battle recognition, Hōki seemed to begrudge even minor rewards for Wakita and his Takaoka associates, for whom this was their first and only battlefield opportunity. According to Wakita, Hōki used his power and influence as commander to block any just compensation. He directly countered the testimony of various witnesses in support of Wakita and his four companions, including that of Yamazaki Kansai, a retainer with a 14,000 *koku* stipend, larger than Hōki's, a feat that attests to the prestige and respect that Toshitsune held for Hōki. Wakita Kyūbei, a foreigner with few remaining connections and

²⁵ One famous case, that of Takezaki Suenaga, was enmeshed in a power struggle between the Hōjō family and the *Gokenin* of the Kamakura Shogunate following the Mongol invasions in 1274 and 1281. See Thomas Conlan, *In Little Need of Divine Intervention: Takezaki Suenaga's Scrolls of the Mongol Invasions of Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2001); Kyotsu Hori, "The Economic and Political Effects of the Mongol Wars," in *Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History*, eds. John Whitney Hall and Jeffrey P. Mass (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 184-200; Ishii Susumu, "The Decline of the Kamakura Bakufu," in *The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume Three: Medieval Japan*, eds. John W. Hall et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 128-174.

limited resources, likely had little choice but to accept the insult, silently milking a “grudge against Hōki [that] never ran shallow.”

As long as Matsudaira Hōki held his high post within the domain administration, Wakita’s future remained bleak. Fortunately for Wakita and his friends, Hōki’s failing health proved to be an unexpected advantage. During a reassessment of battlefield service rewards by Toshitsune in 1616, Hōki’s ill health prevented his attendance. Wakita’s witnesses carried the day; without Matsudaira Hōki to sway his judgment, Lord Toshitsune bestowed a modest stipend increase of 200 *koku* upon Wakita and his friends.²⁶

In 1620, five years after the Osaka Campaigns, Hōki died. Shortly thereafter, Toshitsune convened another rewards commission. This time Wakita received a stipend increase of 570 *koku*, more than doubling his stipend to a total of 1,000 *koku*.²⁷ Despite this recognition, Wakita still felt that political barriers continued to hamper his hopes of career advancement, claiming that “jealousy targeting our group that mustered from Takaoka continued in the daimyo’s office even after the death of Matsudaira Hōki.” This implied that the animosity was not merely focused on Wakita, but upon his compatriots also, the younger generation of retainers who were close to the deceased Toshinaga. Hōki, by contrast, was old enough to have served in battle not only for Toshinaga, but for the first Maeda lord of Kaga, Toshiie. His experience on the battlefield, and his fame as the top spearman of the Maeda, guaranteed a stellar career under the new Toshitsune. There appeared to be little room for advancement for a younger man like Wakita, whose origins, inexperience in actual battle, and perceived favoritism made it easy to question his loyalty, ability, and judgment. With his patrons dead, battle was the only means at Wakita’s disposal to prove his worthiness. Unfortunately, the

²⁶ Wakita’s account does not reveal the date he received this increase, but a domain record of retainer stipends lists a 200 *koku* award given to Wakita Kyūbei in 1616. See *Kaga han shoki no samuraichō*, 10.

²⁷ Wakita’s memoir and *Kaga han shoki no samuraichō* agree on the amount, but neither document note the specific year this reward was bestowed on him.

Osaka Campaigns were insufficient proof for older, more established retainers who did their utmost to crowd out such upstarts.

The final reckoning of rewards for the Osaka Campaigns did not come until 1643, after the Sengoku era warriors had either died or retired. Wakita states:

Past jealousies, arising in my youth when I moved to Takaoka as a newcomer, were perpetuated while Matsudaira Hōki had the Lord's ear. After Hōki died, it was inevitable that the Lord's ear was gratefully held by another personal retainer, Shinohara Sōei. This was truly humbling. [The reassessment of rewards] was all done according to Lord Toshitsune's wishes.

During this inquiry, Ban Hachiya testified that he saw me during the battle at Okayama and that I was still present during the battle at the entrance to the town. Proof provided by the likes of Ban Hachiya could not be denied, and Lord Toshitsune accepted [my petition].

The prominent and influential members of the Maeda house were now men of Wakita's generation, some of whom had suffered similar treatment. The aforementioned Ban Hachiya also had his hopes of recognition dashed on the day after the fall of Osaka Castle. His challenger was not Hōki, but another prominent warrior, Shinohara Kazutaka.²⁸ Only two or three years older than Wakita, Ban held the rank of *chūshōshō*, or lieutenant general, during the Osaka Campaigns. He fought at the Battle of Okayama Gate in the presence of Kazutaka who initially agreed to be his witness. When questioned by Lord Toshitsune, however, Kazutaka reneged on his earlier promise to corroborate Ban's claims. In Ban's case, it was not a lack of family connections or of foreign origin, as can be claimed in Wakita's case; Ban was the son of a direct vassal of Oda Nobunaga and at age eleven entered into the service of Maeda Toshinaga, then at fourteen moved into the service of Toshitsune. He earned a reputation for skill with

²⁸ Shinohara Kazutaka, cousin of Lady Matsu, was likely the older brother of Shinohara Sōei. See *Kashin jinmei jiten*, 219.

the spear, and by 1614 had a stipend of 4,500 *koku*. Like Matsudaira Hōki, Shinohara Kazutaka was a veteran of the bloody years of Maeda expansion in Echizen and Etchū and had earned a stipend of 15,650 *koku*.²⁹ Matsudaira and Shinohara perhaps resented the potentially exponential increases that men of Ban's generation stood to gain for one mere campaign.

Despite the political and personal setbacks he faced during his life, Wakita learned how to survive in the shifting political environment of the early seventeenth century. Within samurai culture was embedded the ideal of *bunbu nidō* (the two ways of arts and arms), a dualistic concept that is rooted, if not exemplified, in military tales and house codes since the formation of *The Tale of the Heike*.³⁰ The ideal warrior, while skilled in the arts of war, was also supposed to be a man of letters. In his youth, Wakita mastered the martial culture of the samurai necessary to prove himself on the battlefield, and did so at the only battle to occur in his adult life. While he patiently waited for official recognition for his military service, Wakita also cultivated the other half of *bunbu nidō* that was to become more valuable as Japan settled into the Pax Tokugawa, and that would enhance the Wakita family reputation despite their relatively low status among their samurai peers. As warriors settled into their role as government officials while their military role diminished with the demise of warfare, Wakita adapted his *yangban* heritage which treasured one's scholarly achievement from his early age on to benefit him in his new environment. He came to be considered the leading *renga* poet in Kaga, as well as a licensed scholar of the *Tale of Genji* and *Kokinshū*.³¹ Scholarly excellence became a trademark of the Wakita family; Kyūbei's oldest son,

²⁹ *Kashin jinmei jiten*, 235.

³⁰ Thomas Conlan, "The Two Paths of Writing and Warring in Japan," *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies* 8, no. 1 (June 2011): 85-127.

³¹ *Renga* is a type of linked verse poetry, a collaborative process involving more than one person. The *Kokinshū*, also known as the *Kokin Wakashū* (*Collection of Poems of Ancient and Modern Times*) is one of the earliest official compilations of *waka* poetry, from the tenth century.

Naoyoshi, took after his father to become a skilled poet and a Neo-Confucian scholar, and a disciple of the revered teacher Kinoshita Jun'an (1621-1698).³²

Ban Hachiya and Shinohara Sōei, men of Wakita's generation held in greater esteem due to their clan heritage, made it possible in the end for Wakita to gain humble recognition. Following the 1643 reassessment of rewards, Wakita's career improved. With a stipend now totaling 1,200 *roku* to match his intellectual reputation, he became eligible for several mid-level bureaucratic posts. He served for several years as financial magistrate, followed by consecutive appointments as judicial magistrate and finally ended his long service to the Maeda house as Kanazawa town magistrate. Wakita spent most of his long, eventful life of seventy-five years mostly in exile from his natal land, but he learned to make the most of his situation, despite setbacks and discrimination. After twenty-eight years of struggle, Wakita states, "rewards were given according to merit, making me regret the lies and dishonesty of the earlier investigation." Matsudaira Hōki, the focus of his earlier anger, was long dead; looking back through the lens of age and experience, regret, not for his own actions, but for that of others, was all that remained in the closing year of his life.

Wakita Kyūbei built a solid foundation of warrior accomplishments and scholarly talent upon which his descendants could maintain their samurai heritage. His life reveals the stresses and challenges faced by individual samurai of his generation who navigated the shifting social and political landscape in the context of early seventeenth-century Tokugawa Japan. His limited military career and the recognition he received for it are remarkable given the generational resentments that followed in the wake of a new, stable political system that eliminated traditional military methods of recognition and advancement so respected by the old guard. Wakita's determination to gain recognition for his brief

³² *Kashin jinmei jiten*, 256. Jun'an was among the most influential teachers in seventeenth-century Japan. His students included Arai Hakuseki, Muro Kyūsō, Gion Nankai, Amenomori Hōshū, and many others. Jun'an also served as Confucian teacher and adviser to the Maeda house for many years.

appearance on the battlefield combined with his scholarly achievement ultimately made it possible for him to finish his career in a series of honorable offices within the domain bureaucracy, thereby securing his posterity a respectable place within the Maeda house. In this sense, personal narratives of samurai elites, such as Wakita's autobiography, offer an excellent window through which intricate power politics within a provincial daimyo's samurai band and the experiences of individual samurai during this transitional era into the Tokugawa system can be understood.

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