The Dissolution of the Shogunate’s Army and the Establishment of the Numazu Military Academy in the Shizuoka Feudal Domain

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It is correct to acknowledge that the Numazu Military Academy established in early Meiji by the Shizuoka clan, which represented a newer and different face of the Tokugawa shogunate, was the final site for the advancement of military reforms by the shogunate at the end of Tokugawa period, albeit within an extremely limited scope that saw its evolution to a military officer training institute. However, fundamental differences between the Shizuoka clan — the regional government — and the shogunate — the central government — meant that their relationship by no means constituted one of linear succession concerning the overall military system. Unlike the navy, where desertion and annihilation caused it to vanish spontaneously, the enormous might of the army that had been created during the Tokugawa period was not needed by the Shizuoka clan, and subsequently underwent large-scale restructuring. The shogunate’s policy of strengthening the military was turned on its head by the Shizuoka clan, which took a path toward disarmament. There were more than a few areas in which there was not only no quantitative succession, but in which there was an absence of qualitative succession as well.

This paper first examines the existence or otherwise of a relationship of succession between the Numazu Military Academy and the military academy established by the shogunate at the end of the Tokugawa period. It then reveals that there was no continuation between the former and the latter, which was established by a French military advisory group, either in terms of personnel or in organization.

Next, I investigate the process of the dissolution and the reorganization of the shogunate army that began around May and June 1868, which constituted the process of the establishment of the Shizuoka clan’s military system. There is no mention in “Zoku Tokugawa Jikki” (a history of the Tokugawa period), “Ryueibunin” (records of the appointment and dismissal of shogunate officials) or “Rikugun Rekishi” (“History of the Army”) of changes to military organization after the fall of the shogunate, that is, after May 1868. In other words, there is a vacuum of documentary evidence on an interim process that connects the shogunate army with the military system of the Shizuoka
clan. This paper will clarify the actual situation at this time.

This paper will examine the characteristics of the Shizuoka clan, which adopted an unusual military system whereby it did not have any regular troops though it did maintain back-office groups for educational and work programs, within the context of its relationship with the Numazu Military Academy. It examines the existence of trained troops who were stationed at the Numazu Military Academy in 1870. Although it is thought that the academy had the equivalent of 3,000 regular troops as prescribed by government ordinance, the truth of the matter is that not only did the number of troops fall short of the number required, but they were noncommissioned officer candidates and not mere rank and file soldiers.

Although the Shizuoka clan had to discard many of its assets from the period of the shogunate army, it appropriately took over some good quality assets. In addition, the clan added new personal networks and ideas that had not been part of the shogunate army, and stood its ground against the Meiji government. They did this through the Numazu Military Academy and through the system of trained troops. As for the question of whether or not they conscripted civilians into the army, the Shizuoka clan did lag behind the government and other clans on this point. However, with regard to non-military education in the form of primary and secondary education, they exhibited a progressive approach that was ahead of the rest of the country. That is, they led the way with modernization of their educational activities rather than with their military activities. In fact, the Numazu Military Academy epitomized a school where the emphasis was on learning rather than on military affairs.