Activities and Representations of Shonai Clan Samurai Warrior on Duty in Edo

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In the metropolis of Edo, a number of samurai warriors came from various regions there for the duty of alternate-year residence in Edo. From the perspective of reviewing the relationship between samurai warriors on duty in Edo and the urban society, this article studies the diary (1843 - 1854) of the four-time stays in Edo of a Shonai clan middle-class warrior to examine the aspects of going out in Edo and how the diary represents his actual experience there.

First, going out mainly involved a two kilometer radius from the lord's residence because of the days of duty and was mostly for roaming and shopping purposes. The frequency of excursions was limited, and the majority of destinations were for viewing of seasonal flowers, festivals, Shin-Yoshiwara, plays of Saruwaka-cho, etc. that were popular Edo venues and specialties. However, most places were visited only once, while sightseeing of new locations and popular entertainers can be noted. It seems he acted by obtaining information from nishiki-e, guidebooks on sights, frequent publications, etc. as well as information from his fellow workers. Some of the visits were based on his personality such as a pilgrimage to a particular god (Atago-shrines/Asakusa Kosodate-Kannon), sightseeing based on his own tastes and interests (long-distance archery of Fukagawa Sanjusangendo Temple, fishing, sumo watching, eel restaurant), sightseeing based on his professional interest as a Confucian and a chief of attendants (sightseeing of Geba, Yushima-sédô, visit to graves of Confucians), etc. These features correlate to the activities of the Hachinohe clan upper-class Samurai Warrior.

Furthermore, the sights and entertainments he actually experienced are represented by his own judgment. Those samurai warriors were reputed as tasteless boorish samurai ("Asagiura") by "Edokko," but they did not move around Edo trusting everything of "Edo" represented by publications. Because the "Edo style" culture already existed in their hometowns, they may have had an eye for Kabuki and sumo to some extent before coming to the city itself.

The samurai warriors on duty in Edo are usually described with the image of spending their leisure time by going sightseeing all day long while saving or as rural people, but these images paint a very different picture. Further study of the samurai warriors on duty in Edo will be necessary, under varying conditions of clan, class, location of residence, etc. in order to depict the image of samurai warriors on duty in Edo.

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