Activities of Usuki Clan Samurai Warriors on Duty in Edo

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Samurai warriors dispatched for duties in Edo, a giant capital city, from their home domains on a regular basis played an important role. Most prior studies on the activities of samurai warriors on duty in Edo focused on their outings, especially trips, and described them as country bumpkins who had been scornfully called “Asagi-ura” by the permanent residents of Edo or as free people who had enjoyed sightseeing in the capital city. In contrast, the author has analyzed the diaries and life manuals of samurai warriors with the following three approaches: (1) being free from their image as country bumpkins created by the permanent residents of Edo; (2) analyzing all of their activities including those on working days and non-outing days; and (3) covering both short and long outings. Thus, the author has discussed the image of Edo as seen by outsiders, the discovery of their own culture through experience in the city (a different culture), and the merchants and communities supported by their consuming activities.

This paper analyzes Kunieda Tōma Edo Nikki, a diary written by Kunieda Tōma, a middle-class retainer of Usuki clan, during his first duties in Edo, to reveal the following three points.

First, the diary has clear characteristics as a report to his family in the home domain since it was frequently sent like letters. The future studies of samurai warriors on duty in Edo will need to take this point of view.

Secondly, this paper examines the outline of the activities recorded in the diary and compares them with those of Hachinohe and Shonai clans’ samurai warriors that were previously analyzed. As a result, this paper reveals the following three points: (1) like other clansmen, Tōma rarely travelled more than 2km from the residence of his clan due to his duties and restrictions on outings; (2) in particular, he seldom visited places far from his clan’s residence, such as Honjo and Fukagawa; (3) he had a little more outing days and a wider sphere of activities than others.

Thirdly, the analysis of his duties to examine his experience indicates the possibility that he gained recognition of the position of his clan in the daimyō (feudal) society and the magnificence of the power of the Tokugawa Shogunate. This was a typical result of the experience from duties in Edo, a political capital full of rituals. It seems that the transmission of the information acquired in the city helped to spread formalities.
Going forward, it will be necessary to accumulate case studies of different conditions (e.g., different ages in history, sizes of clans, classes of retainers, and locations of clan residences) in order to compare and analyze all the activities of samurai warriors on duty in Edo.

Key words: early modern city, Edo city, samurai warrior on duty in Edo, sites to see, an ego-document of a samurai warrior on duty of alternate-year attendance in Edo