
Samurai WAR STORIES

TEACHINGS AND TALES OF
SAMURAI WARFARE

ANTONY CUMMINS AND YOSHIE MINAMI



For Crystal, Austin and Claire – siblings who have endured my interests for many years

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Author's Note

History – as I will repeat many times in my career – is best told by the people who were there. The samurai, while extraordinarily popular, are dramatically misunderstood. That is, people know what the samurai are, they know what they look like and they even have an ingrained presupposition of how they should act. However, this samurai image – which is one of Japan's biggest cultural exports – is a 'soft' image of the reality of the medieval world of Japan. Today's image is terribly oversimplified. This work will by no means correct this problem in its entirety, but will be more of a first step in revealing the real lives of the medieval knights of Japan. Embedded in a complex hierarchy and further subdivided by skills and tasks, an understanding of the whole samurai culture takes an academic's devotion to understand. Therefore, to start to describe such a complex pattern, this text will separate out and display three main areas of the warrior culture of Japan. The first are the samurai themselves; the group of landed gentry – eerily similar to landed European knights – who are given fiefs so that they can provide war horses, gear, men and service to the name of their lords. The second is the ashigaru, or Japanese foot soldiers, a group who have all been brushed out of history. These lower class men were either conscripted, mercenary, or owed military service to a ruling family. A form of militia that were brought together for basic training and campaign duties, they make up the bulk of samurai armies and even venture into fully paid professional soldiering in some periods of history. Lastly, we consider the females of the samurai class, as seldom has there been an investigation into the position of the female in war. Three major Japanese texts have been brought together here to highlight these aspects of samurai culture and each will, it is hoped, help to develop a finer picture of a very exotic and mysterious world.

To understand medieval warfare is to begin to understand samurai culture. It is a preconceived perception that samurai combat is an honourable affair, with proud men on chargers calling out their family names and rank. However, this idealistic and simplistic understanding comes from great war chronicles, such as the *Taiheiki* text, which highlight the prowess of brave knights who have charged to their death. While this behaviour does indeed exist within the samurai class, it is only a small part of samurai warfare. In fact, betrayal, teamwork, hit-and-run, tactical withdrawal, assassination and all the facets of total war are found. Therefore, here you will read of the war deeds of both brave and cowardly samurai; read who beheaded whom; and learn all the skills needed to be an ashigaru foot soldier, or even how to decorate the heads of the dead if you happen to have the misfortune of being a female blockaded inside a castle.

Overall, this text is a foretaste of future translated volumes dedicated to the exploration of samurai warfare and the violent world in which they lived. Therefore, ignite the engine of the imagination and colour all of the mud, blood, smoke and flying banners that can be found among the black and white of this book.

Antony Cummins
Warabiki
Japan

Information on the Three Historical Manuscripts Translated

ZOHYO MONOGATARI – THE FOOT SOLDIER’S TALES

With a possible three authors, this selection of tales is written from the perspective of the lower ranking soldiers and servants of the samurai which is reflected in the syntax and tone. The purpose of this text was to teach lower-ranking soldiers the do's and don'ts of Japanese warfare through a collection of semi-fictional and semi-comical anecdotes attributed to imaginary warriors, and to deal with the very real needs of the battlefield.

The document can be dated and placed between two events, pointing to its origin somewhere between 1657 and 1684. In 1657 a devastating fire broke out in Edo called the Meireki-no-Taika, a disaster that this document refers to. Also, in 1684, a retainer of Matsudaira Nobuoki called Tashiro Sadaemon Tadakane referred to this manual in his writings, so it must have already been in circulation by this year.

The author or compiler of these war teachings is unknown, but three people are often put forward as possible authors:

1. Matsudaira Terutsuna (1619-1671) the heir to Matsudaira Nobutsuna.¹
2. Matsudaira Nobuoki (1630-1691) the fifth son of Nobutsuna.
3. Matsudaira Terusada (1665-1747) a son of Terutsuna and adopted by Nobuoki.

The first name, Matsudaira Terutsuna, was written in the postscript of a version owned by Matsudaira Furukawa Hisashi. The second candidate, Matsudaira Nobuoki, is most widely believed as the author as his name is found in various versions in their postscripts, including the one owned by the National Archives of Japan; this one is presumed to be the oldest transcription known and can be dated to 1728. The third candidate, Matsudaira Terusada, is written in the postscript of the version owned by Tokyo University; however, he is widely considered to have been too young to have compiled these stories.

It is commonly said that this manual was meant as a textbook for low-ranking soldiers or servants. However, it was actually used for education by commanders of ashigaru or foot soldier troops for several generations within the Matsudaira clan, and was transcribed repeatedly. There are various existing transcriptions of several dates (such as 1728, 1744 and 1776) but it was eventually printed in woodblock form in 1847 by Fujiwara-no-Kasuga Noriyuki.

The document consists of two volumes. Volume One has eighteen episodes and Volume Two contains thirteen episodes. The written form is a collection of tales from thirty imaginary individuals including five ashigaru soldiers, twenty-five chugen, or servants, and a 'chief of servants', all of whom talk in turn about life in battle; this includes hints about their jobs, occurrences in battle, the masters and so forth. It was given in this form to help educate those soldiers who had not experienced

actual warfare. The names of the ‘story tellers’ were constructed in jest; examples such as sunrise sunset, big deep river and narrow shallow stream, are used in the ideograms that make up their names leading to a light-hearted effect.

The writing style and syntax are constructed in a form that is meant to resemble the colloquial dialects of the foot soldiers of the time. This is quite pronounced, as most documents or manuals about warfare were, at the time, written in a more formal style and, in contrast, can make the English translation appear base. However, terms like ‘kick the bucket’ and ‘that bloke’ fully represent the feel of the document, and the difference between *Musha Monogatari* – the second text in this book – and its educated audience is pronounced.

Overall, in Japan, the document is considered a very important manual and is thought to be a strong reflection of the happenings of medieval warfare, allowing this first English translation to be a cornerstone in understanding the world of the Japanese foot soldier and permitting us to see the world of Japanese warfare through its teachings.

Although there are a number of transcriptions existing for this writing, this translation used the printed version in 1846 as its major source. However, the last paragraph that mentions the fire of Meireki, in the chapter told by Koroku, is not included in the printed book but is found in the transcription kept in the National Archives of Japan. All the images used in this book are from the transcription kept in the National Archives of Japan.

THE MUSHA MONOGATARI – THE SAMURAI TALES

Written by Matsuda Ichiraku Nyudo Hideto in 1654 and distributed as a woodblock edition in 1655, this manuscript is divided into three volumes and records the stories of the samurai of the warring periods. From famous battles to small encounters, it was penned with the aim of preserving these war tales for future generations. Nothing more than the author’s name is known of him, although it has been inferred that he may have been a monk at the time of writing as his name has connotations of religious connection.

The manual is divided into three main areas:

Jo, or Volume One, which consists of thirty-three articles.

Chu, or Volume Two, which consists of sixteen articles.

Ge, or Volume Three, which consists of fourteen articles.

While these stories cannot be verified as wholly true in every respect and cannot be considered solid historical fact, they should be treated as general outlines to what was happening in the Sengoku Period and, like war stories of the Second World War, are still told two generations after the conflict. Therefore, trust that the people and the battles contained in this manual are generally real but the minor details may have been embellished or altered. Above all, remember that they are based on the truth of a war that had not long ago ended.

The Tales of Women

The third and final section of this book includes two tales of separate women who were besieged

castles during the rebellions at the start of the Edo, or peace period; while short, they deal with the realities of battle from the female perspective and give us a great insight into the role of the woman during warfare in Japan.

OAN MONOGATARI – THE STORY OF OAN

Oan is not a name but is a title given to mean ‘old nun’ which makes this story the tale of an ageing nun, talking of her times spent within a castle siege. The author of this story was the daughter of a samurai who served Ishida Mitsunari during the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. The writer was a late member of her family who had heard this story told by Oan or the nun when he, the author, was eight or nine years old. The story is of her experience in Ogaki Castle of the Mitsunari domain. After the fall of the castle she fled with her father to Tosa on the island of Shikoku where she married but had to be supported by her nephew after her husband’s death. She is thought to have died in the Kanbu period (1661-1673) at the age of more than 80.

OKIKU MONOGATARI – THE TALE OF OKIKU

Kiku was a 20-year-old female who was besieged in Osaka Castle when it fell in 1615 and tells of her experiences, describing how she fled with a group after its fall. She later became the grandmother of a doctor named Tanaka Itoku who served the Ikeda clan. Kiku died in Bizen at the age of 83. The author of this text is unknown.

Both of the above tales were printed together in 1839 with a postscript written by Asakawa Zen’an.

1 Matsudaira Nobutsuna was the commander of the forces which defeated the rebellion of 1637/8.

Zohyo Monogatari,
Tales of the Foot Soldiers,
c.1657-1684



VOLUME ONE

鉄砲足軽小頭

Teppo Ashigaru Kogashira
The Musket Sergeant
By
Asahi Ide'emon

As it is my job to use the baton and conduct my men, I dare to state the following and I do so without presumption, so listen carefully.

I am sure I do not have to tell you this, but you should know that the main knot of your ration¹ belt should be in the centre of the back of your neck. Also, if the beads of the ration belt are on your chest, it will prevent you from taking good aim with your musket.

Be sure not to shoot too quickly as people usually do at practice. You should pull yourself together firmly so that you will avoid meaningless shots and not waste ammunition. Remember, even after a gun battle begins, do not throw away your leather musket bag, this is a rule. Fold it in two, put two or three spare cleaning rods into it, then wear it on your back by putting it into any space somewhere on your right side. If worn too vertically, it will hit your headgear and thus be inconvenient. If it is placed horizontally, it would be dangerous as the rods may hit the eyes of your allies. Therefore, you should do as you think appropriate.

When the distance to the enemy is considerable, I will pass you a Hayago² cartridge, so you can shoot. If you are close to the enemy, take out a cartridge from your satchel. Warning: if you are hurried, it may burst open. Or if you handle the Hinawa fuse wrongly, it will not ignite the gunpowder and the fuse will go out. In the event where the Hinawa fuse has gone out, use another one; there are lots more Hinawa available, so replace it.

When a bullet is stuck in the barrel, a thick cleaning rod is put inside of another rod: use this and ram it down into the barrel. No matter how big the trapped bullet is, you can still load your gun.

While the men in the front line are shooting, those in the second line should set their Hinawa fuse. The target to be aimed at for each distance of 1 cho [109m] will be directed by us, that is, those who are in charge.

Even when you cannot see the enemy, you should not carry your musket on your shoulder without loading it. Always keep it charged whenever you carry it.

In case you shoot a mounted enemy, shoot the horse first then the man. However, it depends on the timing. Sometimes you should shoot the man first and let the horse run into the enemy's line and thus disturb them.

When you get very close to the enemy, separate into the right and left groups and begin fighting with spears. When you have used up everything in your satchel, draw the cleaning rod from the waist, replace it with the musket and then draw your sword, cutting the enemy by aiming at his hand or leg. If you hit the front of the enemy helmet rashly, a blunt³ sword will bend into a shape like that of the handle of a pot.

If you get to a good distance from the enemy, clean the inside of the barrel by wiping or washing. In this case, be sure that half of the muskets should be loaded with bullets.

If you are out of breath after a lot of fighting, having just finished a tooth-and-nail battle, take out your Umeboshi plum from your ration pack and have a glance at it. Do not even lick it. Eating it is out of the question, but even licking it will make you thirsty. So keep it safe until you die. Remember it is just a medicine⁴ for when you are out of breath, just take it out in such a case, but do not eat it.

In case you are still thirsty, even after having a glance at your Umeboshi plum, sip the blood of the dead or the clear layer atop of muddy water.

One Umeboshi will do for the entire period of battle. However, if you are using peppercorns you should take the same number of peppercorns as the number of the days of the battle you are, or about 10% to be involved, in.

In summer or winter, crunch one peppercorn every morning, and you will not be struck by heat or cold. These are different from Umeboshi plums, as you will need a large supply of peppercorns.

Also, if you apply ground hot pepper⁵ from your arse to your tiptoe, it will prevent you from freezing. You can apply it onto your hands too, but if you carelessly rub your eyes with your hands, your eyeballs will be bloodshot and a lot of pain will follow.

鉄砲足軽

Teppo Ashigaru

Musketeers

By

Yuhi Irizaemon

Since we are going to cross over the river, I will tie my satchel onto my neck. Also, the foot soldier named Hikoroku is such a strange man. He does not know how to wear his ammunition bag when he is in armour, so he was trying to hang the cord around his neck, like we usually do when we do practical drills again and again but he is doing this with his helmet-hat on (because we are in armour), but the cord is too short to put it on in this manner, he should know that he has to cut the cord and tie it around his neck. He is so strange he does not know that the cord for the ammunition bag should be tied on to the breastplate of his armour. He is in no way a good musketeer.

Remember, the gunpowder in your Hayago cartridge is not only for shooting bullets but also for other uses. During this long spell of battle, we sometimes have to sleep in the fields or even in the mountains. Some may be bitten by Mamushi snakes. In such a case, put the gunpowder on where you are bitten to the amount of 1 momme [3.75g] and light it, the poison will disappear in no time, but it will not work if it is done too late. (See Fig 1)

弓足軽小頭

Yumi Ashigaru Kogashira

The Bowman Sergeant

By

Okawa Fukaemon

First of all, bowmen should always try to keep the knot of the ration belt at the centre of the back of the neck. If a ball (bead of rice) is on the chest it will touch the string, and you will not be able to shoot an arrow.

Before bow fighting begins, fix a Hazuyari⁶ bayonet blade onto your bow. While the enemy is still far away, do not shoot the arrows in your quiver but the ones I give you. Once you get close to the enemy, use the arrows in your quiver. Never try to shoot farther than the distance you are told, but within that range or closer will be fine. Take good aim when shooting, try to draw your arrow back as far as you can as you always do at the practice marks. Be sure not to be spurred on and waste arrows. One archer foot soldier should be between two musket foot soldiers; therefore, shoot your arrows while they are loading their guns. You should not shoot arrows together with the two musket soldiers. Remember, shoot in-between the intervals.

When the distance is getting too close to shoot arrows, position yourselves separately to the right or left side of the formation and keep shooting. If this is not possible, the best thing to do is to move your left so that you can shoot the right side of the enemy, as the right side is difficult to defend.

As for a mounted enemy, shoot the horse first.

When you are running out of arrows, nock an arrow, do not shoot it at once but try to make the best use of it by repeatedly pulling and loosening it, to avoid wasting it.

If the time comes you could be killed at any moment, so get close to the enemy, even closer than a spear's length and shoot the last arrow targeting a gap within the opponent. Then stab with the bayonet blade which is fixed to your bow at the enemy's face or any gap, such as an opening with the tassets that is the skirt of the armour. After that, draw anything you like, such as your sword or your Wakizashi short sword, and try to cut the hand or leg of the enemy. Never try to hit the front of the helmet with your weapon; if it is poor in quality, then it will have the edge nicked and it will not function anymore.

It is tough and painful, but if you hang on to the enemy closely, there is a chance of you stabbing him with the short blade attached to the horn of the bow. All you have to do is cling on to him and stab.

弓足輕

Yumi Ashigaru

Bowmen

By

Ogawa Asaemon

When I restrung my bow yesterday, I happened to make a little crease in the string and only with one shot of an arrow did the string break. It was a well-made bowstring but it broke with only a little crease and thus it will not do for shooting anymore. It seems to be much weaker than an un-lacquered string. As it seems we are short of spare strings, I will have to restring carefully and so that I do not make this crease again.

The shaft of this bow is 6 shaku [6ft] in length, with rattan rolled at intervals of 1 shaku. Therefore it is a bow to be used as a form of measuring ruler, the length of 1 ken [6ft]. If a ruler is in need, I can use this to measure things by placing it with the string downwards.

I think this one is a bow called the Shakudo Zukuri.⁷ (See Fig 2)

槍担小頭

Yarikatsugi Kogashira

The Spearman Sergeant

I think each of you need to have the following things in mind, but I dare say that just like a *sutra* for the Buddha or an iron rod for an ogre, the following things are accepted as known by all though should be reinforced here anyway.

Remember to put the sheath for your spear inside of your breastplate before the spear fighting begins. A long sheath should be put on your waist, just behind your sword. For the front spearmen, be aware that the first people to attack should be samurai, so do not attack until they do. Also remind yourself that a spear is not only to thrust with. All men should work as one so that all the spearheads will be pulled together and in sync, and immobilise the enemy spears by striking them downwards. Do not take it for granted that you should stab with a spear. Thrusting should be fine in a combat with one or even two enemies, but if you have a number of spears, all you need do is to unite and strike down together.

For an enemy flag, use your spear to knock it down. If the enemy is mounted, remember to stab the stomach of the horse before the mounted enemy himself, so that he will be thrown down to the ground for you to stab him.

Once the enemy is in retreat, do not chase them farther than 1 cho, as it is not necessary.

It is better for us to stay together with the flags and Umajirushi standards for the general welfare of the army and do our best to defend those marks and be prepared for whatever happens.

Always be careful about the rivet of your spear and secure it firmly, so that it will not come off in an emergency. If it has a metal clasp, be sure to keep it tight by turning it around so that the rivet will not come off.

Concerning the Omochiyari Katsugi, or spear carrying servant – normally in Edo they get quite a stipend and walk at the front of a daimyo's parade, as they are carrying the most important weapon for a samurai. However, on the battlefield, the spears are the property of their masters and not for their own use, so they must not use them. On the other hand, Kazuyari are those lower-quality spears supplied by the lord, making them different from the above great spears. You can brandish or do anything with your Kazuyari spear, remember that there is no difference between you and the deeds you can do from those of great samurai. So, you should have strong hipbones and be well prepared so you will not fall behind.

To all Omochiyari Katsugi spear carrying servants – remember, if you use your master's spear for yourself, it will turn out to be a thoughtless and cowardly act, so keep in mind that your aim is to carry the spear and not to fight with it; this is the best service you can do. Keep in mind the difference between these two kinds of spear services.

持槍担

Mochiyari Katsugi
The Spear Carrying Servant
By
Kichinaizaemon

While I was carrying a spear with silver fittings for my samurai master, I fell asleep and the silver Sakawa binding clamp on the spear end was taken out and stolen. Because of this I might be blamed and killed. Since I am to blame, I was hoping to do something fine by killing an enemy to pay for my blame. Then an enemy Musha came on horseback, and I thrust at the stomach of the horse with the

spear and at full strength, almost like I was pounding rice into sticky Mochi, but as the binding was stolen before, the spear handle cracked. When I tried to pull the spear out, the end of the spear shaft stuck firm and came off, and was left in the horse's stomach as if it was being pickled in the horse's guts. The container of pickles was the horse's body while the 'pickling weight'⁸ was the enemy. However, he did not fall from the horse's back and it turned out that I had the spear snatched from me – how unfortunate.

While I was thinking what I should do, by a turn of good luck, there came another enemy, who was carrying a spear with a hooked blade. The horse looked like it was just injured as its eye was bleeding and it had been clipped by a spear, and he looked so undignified that I thought it would be really easy for me to defeat him. Thinking I might be struck in turn if I attacked him from the left side, I came at him from his right side, taking a grip of the spear shaft and aiming at the edge on the crupper;⁹ I did this judging where it was best to strike, where it would not hit the horse's bones. I tried to pierce with force around the tuft of the crupper. However, the spear hit the horse [in the incorrect place, bounced off] and flew about 5 ken away, and I slipped and fell down. If I had fallen holding the spear in hand, the horse would have run away, but luckily I let go of the spear when I failed [and by accident] it made the horse falter and collapse.¹⁰ The enemy fell onto the ground facing upward, so I could cut off his head with ease as if he were asleep. The O-Wakizashi, or greater short sword, is so inconvenient for cutting off the head. There is a reason we wear a Ko-Wakizashi, or lesser short sword, on our armour. I was going to cut off this head, as if it were as easy as cutting the head off of a sleeping man, and while I was trying to do that – as the enemy was unconscious and hopefully before he came to – I sat astride him holding his neck with my left hand, trying to draw my O-Wakizashi again and again. However, the sash where the sword was fixed was loose, so when I tried to draw it, it came off halfway together with the scabbard. The blade of the O-Wakizashi is as long as 2 shaku and the scabbard had come off at least 1 shaku, so I had to draw the equivalent of a 3-shaku long sword with one hand, and I just could not manage it. In the end I twisted the blade so that it broke the scabbard and was finally freed. This was very troublesome. If it had taken a little more time, the enemy may have regained consciousness and my head might have been cut off instead.

Modern scabbards do not have a Sakazuno¹¹ which is a small hook that holds the scabbard to your belt and that will not allow the scabbard to come off – people think it is cumbersome nowadays.

If my scabbard had one of these Sakazuno hooks, it would have caught the sash so I could have drawn the sword much more easily. I will knock a bent nail or any other such thing onto this scabbard now.

The sword and the Wakizashi and the spear (here around me) were the property of this samurai though he is now only a head! And thanks to this head, my head can stay with my body and I am very happy about that. Over only such a small thing like silver fittings I nearly lost my life. I have heard old samurai say 'it is not good to provide armour or weapons with gold or silver fittings'. That statement is fair enough. Now I understand it totally. I have had such bad experiences due to the spears with silver fittings. I hear those who have such swords or Wakizashi with gold or silver fittings might be attacked by their allies while sleeping. The metal fittings of a saddle or stirrups, if taken away, will result, at worst, in shame. Therefore, gold or silver fittings on swords or spears are totally useless. They will cause big trouble! Though I thought that horse's eye – that I talked about earlier – was pierced with a spear and crushed, the truth seems to be that that beheaded samurai happened to hit the horse's eye with his own hooked spear. Remember, you cannot have perfection in everything.

If you have a hooked spear, it can be advantageous sometimes, but it can be a disadvantage when you are on horseback. It depends on the situation if a weapon is good or bad.

数槍担

Kazuyari Katsugi
The Lower Spearman
By
Sukenaizaemon

Oh Kichinai, Kichinai,¹² you are carrying a hooked spear with a strange sheath on! What the hell is it?
Kichinai replies: This sheath was for my master's spear, but we were told not to throw away anything from our gear. If it is a short sheath you should put it inside the breastplate and, if it is long then one should put it at the waist. So, I kept this old sheath for the master's spear and I fumbled around, trying to find it in my breastplate, but eventually I took it out and put it on this hooked spear as you see now, a spear I have looted by the way.

Also, looking at the other troops, it seems that they also have been told not to throw away their sheaths for their spears. I can see some spear-carriers carrying feather-decorated sheaths or even two layered feather-decorated ones with the greatest care. Other chugen servants are carrying ones tied around their neck with rope. The funniest thing I saw was a spear carrying servant who was carrying a cover for one shaped like an orders notice board on his back.¹³ I was laughing my head off and thought my sides would split.

These days people prefer a [decorative] sheath to help them distinguish themselves in a crowd, though it is so it may act as an Umajirushi battle standard as well. Thus, big sheaths are commonly used, but once the battle begins you have to take the sheath off and the spear will be naked without it, therefore it will no longer serve as a standard any more. If this is done it will result in not knowing where the general is and the spear carrying servants will have trouble with such a big sheath on their back. I have no idea why such large things are so popular these days. The spear sheath should be as simple and plain as a stick that is thrust out from a bush, this way is also better for the spear carrying servant. (See Fig. 3)

旗差馬印持

Hatasashi Umajirushi Mochi
The Commander's Standard Bearer
By
Magozo

When breaking into a run, I put the end of the standard's shaft into the leather support holder that I am wearing on my waist. However, when moving slowly, I will carry it and put it into the cylinder on my back.

Oh, it is so windy today. I will tie a rope onto the standard shaft and pull it to hold the standard upright. When the battle gets harder, all Umajirushi, or flag carrying servants, have to pitch in and join the battle with the enemy, then I will hit and swing away with the long shaft, if the enemy comes close that is!

馬印持旗差

Umajirushimochi Hatasashi

When marching slowly, it is better to carry the Umajirushi, or flag, in a cylinder. When moving very fast, it is more convenient to carry it in a leather bag which is worn on the waist. When you have run even faster, I will roll up the flag and carry it on my shoulder.

In case you are breaking down the enemy's formation and the battle is getting hard, all flags or Umajirushi carrying servants should get together at one place and fight with the long shaft as a weapon.

As I was carrying two flags in the bag on my back, I have put one of the flags onto the flagpole now and will keep the other one in the bag.

Magozo says: I had two flags carried in my bag but now I have put one on the pole, but still one remains in my bag. (See Fig 4)

持筒

Mochizutsu
The Musket Carrying Servant
By
Tsutsuhei

Teppei, Teppei, I will not shoot the musket I am now carrying on my shoulder, as this is the gun my master is going to use. The ignition powder container will be dirty if I hang it from my neck, so it will be annoying for my master when he puts it around his neck. Also I think I should not always wear the leather box of bullets around my neck as the cord will also get dirty. Therefore, I have put them all together in a bag and tied it up at my waist. When the battle becomes hard, I cannot fight carrying the musket on my shoulder, therefore I will put the ramrod onto the inside of my armour and the musket on my waist, so I will be able to fight in this manner.

持筒

Mochizutsu
The Musket Carrying Servant
By
Teppei

Tsutsuhei, Tsutsuhei, you are quite right. However, the musket you are carrying is so small that you can carry it on the waist but the gun that I have to carry on my back is so huge that I cannot put it on my waist. On top of that, when I am given this musket back after our master shoots it, I cannot put it on my back quickly, well, not as quickly as you attach yours onto your waist. It takes me too long and I have so much trouble. Therefore, I think you and I should take turns to carry the big gun and the small one from tomorrow on? (See Fig 5)

持弓

Mochi Yumi
The Bow Carrying Servant
By

You should be aware that a Mochi Yumi, or a bow, for our master is a totally different thing from the common Kazuyumi bow for the masses to use. Once the battle begins, I will give my master one bow and a set of arrows I have in the quiver. The other bow and set of arrows I carry are used if his string snaps or he has spent his arrows, so I must keep them on my back and keep them with care. Also you should not throw away the bow stand thinking it is of no use any more. Tie it onto your Jutsuuchigiryo bag with a 3-shaku long Tenugui cloth so that you can carry it on your back, which allows us to draw the swords on our waists and fight with them.

持弓

Mochi Yumi
The Bow Carrying Servant
By
Yaemon

As Yazaemon said above, it is totally different carrying a bow for your master from carrying a Kazuyumi bow for your own use. It is extremely foolish to shoot the bow for your own sake. Oh, also I just remembered one thing and I will tell you what that is. Even though you are carrying a spare bow and arrows for your master, do not think at all that you should keep carrying them and hold them back. If you see another samurai who is empty handed, ask your master if you can give him your spare bow and arrows, if he says yes then we will have our hands free, that way we can freely draw our swords and fight. Yazaemon, what do you think? (See Fig 6)

草履取

Zoritori
The Sandal Carrying Servant
By
Kirokubei

Hey Yaroku, you used to carry the Hasamibako travelling box, but you have been told to carry a rattan trunk instead. On top of that, you are now carrying a sword. On the other hand, I have been told to carry some other burden as well as my regular task as a sandal carrier.

Yaroku, you have profited well because of this change, but you do not know how to wear a sword or a Wakizashi short sword correctly; how strange it is, you wearing your swords this way! The great samurai people wear their swords and Wakizashi short swords on top of their armour, but they use a leather sword-belt called a Koshiate to make them firm. For people, such as me or you, Yaroku, it is really lucky to be allowed to be armoured. A leather loin cloth would be far more than we can expect. If you wear such a straight sword¹⁴ as ours on armour, you cannot draw even a 2-shaku long sword with ease. If you wear them as I do, you can draw even such a long sword as 5 or 6 shaku. I will show you how to wear them now, like so; before you wear armour, put your sword and Wakizashi short sword inside your sash, then put on your armour as if putting on a Haori outer-jacket. As the country has been in a time of peace for a long period, we are not wearing our swords with the blade facing down anymore; this [way of the blade facing up which is now popular] is so we can draw them easily. So you do not need a rather sharply curved sword, ones so curved that they look like the handle of

pot. Also, curved swords hit your heels when you are walking; even great samurai or their retainers are wearing straight swords that resemble sticks [these days], just like the servants do.

If you put the sword under the outer obi [that is the sash outside of the armour], you will have a lot of trouble in drawing it, and if you try to draw when you see the enemy, it will only be half drawn out [as you are doing it in haste]. So, some people will try to finish this draw by holding the blade with the left hand but this is wrong as they end up cutting themselves, while others will just drop the sword and end up injuring their feet.

Because of the above, you will have to handle your Wakizashi short sword with one hand, but you cannot cut through armour with one hand and also the blade will break. This will leave you without and wanting, and you will not know what to do with your hands. I remember, there was one such person, who could not draw his sword, therefore he embraced the enemy with vigour, tumbling like rice bag, up and over each other, tumbling around, which ended up with him being pinned to the ground. Next he tried to draw his Wakizashi short sword with intent and to stab the enemy from below but it had a huge gold-leafed guard, like a lid of a big pan – stopping him from drawing it. They used to say ‘carrying objects that stand out on a battlefield is good’, however this is not always good, in this case it prevented him from drawing his weapon before he was decapitated.¹⁵ I have another story of another man who was also pinned to the ground had a big knife, as he was a cook and had a knife to chop vegetables and fish. So, he drew it out when he was pinned to the ground and stabbed it through the gap of the enemy’s tassets, that is the armoured skirt about his waist. The cook then pushed upwards and wrestled the enemy over on to the ground and killed him by thrusting and turning the knife in his belly. The cook was the only one who was wearing a straight sword on top of his armour.

Also, you should remember, when you see someone on horseback draw their sword, they sometimes injure their horses as the tip of the sword hits the horse. Seeing these injuries, you may notice that curved swords or Ko-Wakizashi lesser short swords should be worn on top of the armour.

If you have a Ko-Wakizashi lesser short sword without a guard, you can draw it easily. Also, a large Kogatana – that is a big but slender knife kept next to the handle of your sword – has many benefits. You can use it if you have lost your Ko-Wakizashi lesser short sword or something like that. Therefore, Yaroku, remember you should not put a long Wakizashi short sword under the outer sash of your armour. I took off my armour – just now – to show you how to wear it, but remember you should never take off the horse’s saddle or take off your armour without our master’s order. So I should put it back on immediately.

挟箱持

Hasamibako¹⁶ Mochi
The Box Carrying Servant
By
Yarokubei

For my service for this campaign, our master liberated me from a Hasamibako travelling box, and he has had me carry a wicker trunk for him instead. Yesterday some Hasamibako box-carrier of another master was jostled in a crowd and had his trunk broken, so much so that all the things were scattered around and stolen. Moreover, as he slipped and fell, he was trampled on like a spider, making him vomit lots of blood. He then stood up and I heard he would have fought everyone then and there and died the death. However, it seems within their clan too, that fighting or any argument between allies is strictly banned, so he reminded himself of those laws and managed to stop his anger and kept a

expressionless face, however, it was grudgingly and with shame.

~~Within our clan, any fighting or argument between allies is strictly banned, not only while we are at a battle camp but also whenever we are out on any form of travel. This is so because if you are not killed by the enemy when you return from the campaign, accompanying our master, you will be free to kill [anyone who has angered you during the conflict, as happened in the above story]. That bloke had dealings with those under another lord but managed to control himself; however, he did this with a sense of shame, but if he had grabbed someone and stabbed them in the belly, things would have depended upon the strength of his arm. Being a coward is also a no-no but he must have missed that guess.~~

However, it is a grave issue if you have not killed a single enemy but have killed someone on your side, even if they are not within your own clan – remember this is an insult to the honourable Shogun. Anyway, I suggest you should have as little contact as possible with those from other clans.

We are so lucky that we can have such a light-weight wicker trunk instead of the other heavy one thanks to my master's orders; besides we are also allowed to carry a sword. Now with this weapon we have a strong backbone, so much so that we could probably defeat the great and famous ancient warrior monk Benkei!

However, regrettably, the hilt of my sword was new when we left Edo, but as it is always in contact with the metal of my gloves, the braided threads on it have been worn out. Though once I thought I would die in my first battle, I now find that I have survived long and unexpectedly, and I feel my life will last long enough, so I am now at ease. On top of that, our master is a Hatamoto, or close retainer of the lord, and stays at the headquarters, which means we are far from the battle-front, so it is only sometimes we hear the sound of muskets. This said, we had a random shot come over to us yesterday and it weighed about 5 kin [3kg]. It hit me on the nose and bounced back leaving no trace.¹⁷ So, no matter how much I think I might die, I just don't seem to be able to kick the bucket.

This worn-out hilt is a nuisance now I am still alive. Though I want to take it out and have a new one, there are no sword-smiths here, therefore, I am stuck and annoyed, though I thought such a hilt done like this would endure as long as I breathe; but now it has given me nothing but trouble. Oh, what should I do? Ah, that reminds me! You should not hold a Wakizashi short sword with both hands; instead you should hold it in one hand when fighting with it; because of this the hilt only has to be one hand's width long. As it is held in one hand it is better to be thin and should not be too thick. Thinking on, I think I should take away all the threads of this hilt and reduce it to the core.¹⁸ Then I will wrap it for some vines of honeysuckle or something else like that around here. I think I should put it into the hole of the tang and double wrap it. (See Fig 7)

馬取

Uinatori
The Groom
By
Kinroku

When accompanying our master in battle, there are essential things both of us, that is the two groom, need to carry and need to know. First, you should attach the horse ladle¹⁹ and the Hananeji no twister onto your waist. Then put the headgear, the bridle and the bit around your neck. Also, hold the saddle-girth, martingale and the stirrup leather as well.²⁰

Load the horse with the Mentsu, which is a wooden container for rice on the left saddle ring, which

the small musket and the flag-holding cylinder goes on the right saddle ring. On each of the rear saddle rings hang bags of soy beans, and a satchel on the saddle horn, a bag of dried rice on the rear saddle horn and horse shoes on the rear saddle rings, so that they are fixed firmly. Always keep hold of the leash tightly and secure the horse to something. Attach the Kobanagawa nose-band onto the Tachigiki cheek piece to hold him in place and when you feed the horse, loosen and release the bit. As soon as the feeding has finished, re-tighten the headstall and bit the horse again.

When you hold the horse still, even for a little while, be sure to put the hobbles – which is a form of mesh net that goes around the knees – on the legs and be sure not to let the horse go. If you let a young horse loose, it could cause a big commotion, so much so that it may turn out that we lose the battle. So never fail to check and restrain the horse with the rope tightly.

Also, I tell you this just in case you need to know. The Mozuogane metal fittings which are on the stirrups sometimes break and we do not have spare stirrups to replace them, so in that case, be aware that you have to fix the stirrups by tying them up with anything you can find.

A blanket should be kept on the saddle when the master is mounted. Do not throw it away, this is so that the master can use it as a mat. The under-blanket can be used for us footmen as a mat when needed. Remember you should utilise every item in your gear with great care.

馬取

Ulatori
The Groom
By
Toroku

Kinroku's above story has reminded me of something. As early as within seven days of my birth, I heard my great grandfather, Hikoza, say the following and I have kept it in mind for the last twenty-four or twenty-five years now.²¹ I remember, he said someone had a mouse on a leash which was tied around its neck, but the mouse escaped and one or two military units at first made a fuss of its escape. Then that fuss caused a bigger commotion, and made other people think that they were under an enemy attack, which in turn brought about the collapse of troop after troop as they fled in fear. Those in the rear troops tried to stick to their positions, however if the ones in the vanguard are as small as dwarfs and those in the rear are as big as the Great Statue of Buddha, then once an army begins collapsing there is no way to stop it.²² Grandpa Hikoza also told me that they were all shouting in fear and a massive army of 50,000 to 60,000 people ended up withdrawing as far as a ten days' distance, all at once. So I remind you that it is quite reasonable for Kinroku to encourage you to restrain a horse as much as he did in the above story. As even with only one mouse, things went thus. Imagine if a horse was released, it is four or five hundred times as big as a mouse, this means that the same army as above would have to withdraw by 1,000 days distance. That would be even more than going through the whole country from the tip of the west all the way to Ezochi²³ in the north, it would be quite something to see. Therefore, army protocol strictly tells us not to release a horse, so we must handle horses most carefully.

Along the same lines, you are not allowed within the battle camp to sing a Kouta ballad, recite Joruri dramatic recitation or storytelling; this is set with the aim of preventing us from raising our voices in cheer. It is for this reason too that something called a baiboku²⁴ mouth gag is used.

It does not seem likely that all of the 50,000 or 60,000 people at that time were cowards, and some

people must have been brave and composed; however, even though it was only one or two who made a fuss at the beginning, once it had turned into a big commotion, it seems to have been very difficult to contain. So remember this, never let go of a horse!

This is how to hold the bridle:

If the master holds the bridle and takes command of the horse, we grooms have our hands free and nothing to do, so it is a shame if we do not kill the enemy, for we are now wearing swords!

Also, from my experience of serving forty or fifty different masters, it depends on the clan how you should be prepared mentally.

Now I am on the battlefield serving a samurai master and I have realised that, though samurai often talk about being killed as the result of their feats in war, I say to you my friend Kinroku, there is not such a great chance of being killed, if I am honest that is. If you are killed for nothing, the enemy will be highly spirited and at an advantage while your allies will become panicked and in a disadvantageous position. If you cannot help but be killed, then at least try to kill at least one enemy if you can. Of course, killing two makes it an advantage but to kill as many as 100 would be best if you can do it. This all depends on the strength found in the sinews of your arms, if you waste your life without killing anyone, it is surely a cowardly thing to do. If you die for nothing, the rations you have been given will also be in vain, so always keep this in mind.

沓持

Kutsumochi

The 'Shoe Box' Carrying Servant²⁵

By

Kichiroku

As I am allowed to carry a shoe bag on my back instead of carrying a trunk, I can move freely in battle, so much so that I could even beat the famous warrior monk Benkei. On top of that, I am wearing a sword on my waist – I feel I can do anything. However, on deeper reflection, I am aware that my most important job is to take good care of the horse so that it will not get tired, this is more important than anything I could do in battle.

This horse was engaged in close combat fighting this morning, chasing or overtaking for about one hour, and the enemy were driven away in the end. Since the horse really has done quite a hard job, I want to feed him as much beans or porridge as he likes. However, it is not good to feed him too much at once. What I should do is let him eat little by little and do not let him lie down at night but keep him standing up. If he lies down, he will be tired and useless tomorrow.

Also, when I see other shoe carrying servants from other clans, they seem to have a lot of trouble. I mean if you hold a trunk on your shoulder, you cannot do anything, even if an enemy comes to bother you.

When we were last on the march, a horse belonging to another troop became excited, so much so that the footmen and the rider were trying hard to calm it down, but it would not be still and made the other horses around him excited. Then one shoe box carrying servant was stuck between some horses and was trying not to be kicked by them in the confusion. It turned out that his trunk hit the hip of a horse and that made the horse even more excited, making it further out of control. On top of that, he fell down and the trunk was totally destroyed in this muddle. As we have free hands, because we carry bags, I will do anything to help my comrades Toroku and Kinroku if such a thing happens to them.

(See Fig 8)

VOLUME TWO

矢箱持

Yabakomochi
The Arrow Box Carrying Servant
By
Yazo

Until yesterday, we two soldiers were carrying a burden of 100 arrows each, but this morning a skirmish of 200–300 people began and now it seems that we will run out of our supply of arrows. We cannot get the packhorses, who have the arrows, to the front of the column. Each of us has been carrying a box with 200 arrows, instead of loading them on the horses. This is because the battle has been carrying on since this morning and now my guess is that everyone is running out of arrows.

Oh, also, I just remembered one thing. I saw two strange people among the ashigaru foot soldiers. This is what they did:

Seeing the enemy were at a distance of about 10 cho away, one of the ashigaru became flustered, thinking it was the distance we were told to start shooting arrows. Even though the gun shooting had not started yet, he began shooting arrows and used up all in his quiver. When spent, he was totally out of arrows but had not succeeded in killing a single enemy, he had nothing he could do but call out to us for supplies, his voice rang out, ‘Yabakomochi!²⁶ Yabakomochi!’ However, he found that there were none of us around, so he began contemplating about what he could do with a bow, even thinking about throwing it away, as now it was as useless as a stick, but then he remembered that he had fixed a Hazuyari bayonet blade on the tip of the top of his bow. Just then, an enemy attacked him with his nose hair sticking out, that is to say, with his guard down. So aiming well at the enemy’s nostrils he stabbed with his Hazuyari blade – which is the bayonet on his bow – and it pierced through his face and out of his earhole, and as a result he claimed one head for his collection.

The other strange ashigaru that I saw before looked so pale that I thought that he may be terrified. He had shot all of his arrows but one and regained his composure,²⁷ so much so that he could remember what he was told by the protocols laid down by the army. Thinking he would shoot his last arrow at the last moment of his death, he took the arrow, nocked it to his bow string and kept hold of it by drawing and loosening his bow for a 4 or 5 cho distance as he moved, waiting for the correct moment to actually let the arrow fly. Just then an enemy came to him, charging with his mouth wide open like a crocodile, at this, the ashigaru with one arrow waited until he got as close as within a spear’s distance and when he came as close as staff length,²⁸ he shot the arrow, which pierced the enemy through the mouth to the nape and into the back plate of his armour. At which point the enemy fell down to the ground face-up and the bowman beheaded him. His early performance was poor and if you reflect on it you can see it was totally a waste of arrows as his shooting was for no reason. Thinking if even one arrow is enough for you to achieve such a feat, you must understand that it is not a good idea to keep shooting from the beginning of the battle and exhaust your arrows. The same thing sometimes happens with the samurai. Some samurai do not think us chugen or komono servants and those like me and you – are worth much and treat us roughly at first. However, if the servants bar

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