

Arts of Asia Lecture Series Spring 2014  
The Culture and Arts of Japan  
*Sponsored by The Society for Asian Art*

Samurai Life During the Edo Period  
Luke S. Roberts, University of California at Santa Barbara  
February 21, 2014

Abstract: Edo period Japan was governed by samurai who were hereditary warriors. Samurai were expected to cultivate "the dual way of arts and war." Yet it was an era of no war and much commercial growth. I will introduce the lives of two samurai of the Edo period with a particular interest in the place of the military arts and cultural activities in their lives. Sustaining one's military character was a challenge in an age of peace, but the opportunities for cultural activities were many.

Edo period 1600-1868 under Tokugawa shoguns

*daimyō* = domain lord

Tokugawa daimyo of Owari domain, Nagoya castle town

Yamauchi daimyo of Tosa domain, Kōchi castle town

*bunburyōdō* 文武兩道 the dual way of arts and war

1. Asahi Monzaemon Shigeaki 朝日門左衛門重章 (1674-1718) of Nagoya Domain  
his diary "Record From a Parrot's Cage" 『鸚鵡籠中記』 1684-1717

castle guard 100 *koku* fief

military skills: *kendō* 剣道, *iai* 居合 swordsmanship, *kyūdō* 弓道 archery, *sōjutsu* 槍術  
spearmanship,

cultural enjoyments and skills: *jōruri* 浄瑠璃 puppet theater, *gakumon* 学問 scholarship,  
*kanshi* 漢詩 Chinese poetry, *uta* 歌 Japanese poetry

2. Mori Kanzaemon Yoshiki 森勘左衛門芳材 (1768-1807) of Tosa Domain  
his diary "Daily Record" 『日録』 (1791, 1798-1807)

mounted guard 200 *koku* fief

military skills: *yōba* 要馬 (*bajutsu* 馬術) horsemanship, *hōjutsu* 砲術 gunnery, *kisha* 騎射  
(*yabusame* 流鏑馬) horseback archery, *gunpō* 軍法 tactics

cultural skills: *sadō* 茶道 way of tea, *kōdō* 香道 way of incense, *uta* Japanese poetry, *bonseki*  
盆石 stone tray arrangement, *kojitsu* 故実 rites and comportment, *gakumon* scholarship

Some further reading:

Charles Dunn, *Everyday Life in Traditional Japan*, Chapter 2 "The Samurai" (Tuttle, 1972).

Luke Roberts, "A Transgressive Life: The Diary of a Genroku Samurai," in *Early Modern Japan*, vol. 5, no. 2 (Dec 1995), pp. 25-30.

Luke Roberts, "Mori Yoshiki: Samurai Government Officer," pp. 25-42 in Anne Walthall ed. *The Human Tradition in Modern Japan*, (Scholarly Resources, 2001).