

Going to Work: A *Heishi* (Middle-Ranking Samurai) and His Entourage

It is easy to envision a daily outing for the master of a *heishi* residence such as the Takada family. Much like salaried workers today, every morning *heishi* would depart their households and commute to their workplaces—most likely the castle or a town office—for duty. Unlike modern workers, however, samurai were required to travel with a retinue, the composition of which was determined by rank.

The master of a residence like this would, first and foremost, be accompanied on either side by an attendant. On his way out of the main house, he would stop at the entrance (*genkan*), where a sandal-bearer *chugen* (servant) would toss his sandals before him. A “toss” like this would in most circumstances be considered rude; but in samurai etiquette, this was a way of expressing awe in the presence of one’s master. Afterward, a retinue of *chugen* and attendants would gather and organize themselves about him. This included a trunk-bearer who carried a change of clothing, a spear-bearer who held a spear with the family crest, and the previous sandal-bearer. *Chugen* responsible for horse care would already have saddled and bridled the master’s horse and be holding it at the ready. As soon as the master mounted, they would also fall into line.

In this way, the head of a family like the Takada would have departed his residence on horseback accompanied by about seven servants.