

## **Lords of Himeji: The Honda clan (1617–1639 & 1682–1704)**

### **Honda Tadamasa and Honda Tadatoki Build the West Bailey**

Honda Tadamasa (1575–1631) and his son and heir Tadatoki (1596–1626) arrived in Himeji in 1617 when the clan was appointed to replace the Ikeda clan as lords of the castle. Tadatoki's wife, Princess Sen (1597–1666), was a granddaughter of Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616), the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1868). The castle was expanded to incorporate luxurious residences for the couple, leading to the addition of the Chūshomaru and the Keshō (ornamental) Tower in the West Bailey, and the Musashino Goten in the Third Bailey, near the Ōtemon Gate.

The Honda clan was very wealthy. Even before their transfer to Himeji, Tadamasa and Tadatoki had a combined income of 150,000 koku of rice. But Tadatoki's marriage to Princess Sen improved the clan fortunes further. As part of the princess's dowry, Tadatoki was granted an additional income of 100,000 koku, as well as other holdings. Like the Ikeda clan before it, the Honda clan became the dominant force in the region.

### **Consolidating Tokugawa Rule in the West**

The Honda clan were loyal followers of Tokugawa Ieyasu, and they fought alongside the future shogun during his rise to power. One clan leader, Honda Tadakatsu (1548–1610), earned a place as one of Ieyasu's four most illustrious commanders. Together, they were known as the *shitennō*, or “Four Heavenly Kings,” after the four Buddhist deities who guard the four cardinal directions.

Ieyasu turned control of Himeji over to the Honda clan in 1617 after eliminating the Toyotomi clan at the Siege of Osaka Castle (1614–1615). The Toyotomi had ruled Japan before the Tokugawa. The appointment of a long-time Tokugawa supporter to important domains in western Japan, not far from the enemy's former stronghold, signaled the consolidation of the shogunate's power and is indicative of Himeji's strategic importance to the Tokugawa shogunate.

### **Illustration of Himeji Castle**

This contemporary illustration shows the central portion of Himeji Castle at the beginning of the eighteenth century, during the rule of Honda Tadakuni (1666–1704). Among the structures depicted are the gallery and watchtowers of the West Bailey and the residence built for Honda Tadatoki, the Chūshomaru.

Honda Tadamasa