

Lords of Himeji: The Matsudaira clan (1639–1649 & 1667–1682 & 1741–1749) Matsudaira (Okudaira) Tadaakira and the “European Invasion”

In 1639, the shogunate made Matsudaira Tadaakira (1583–1644) the new lord of Himeji, transferring him from a post in Yamato Kōriyama, near Nara. A grandson of Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616), Tadaakira came from the highest ranks of the extended Tokugawa clan and had served as an aide to the third shogun, Iemitsu (1604–1651).

Tadaakira’s appointment to Himeji came on the heels of the Shimabara Rebellion (1637–1638), when Christians in Kyūshū took up arms against the government. The shogun and his advisors worried that a European fleet would land in the southern port of Nagasaki in support of the Japanese Christians. Because Himeji stood between Nagasaki and the capital, they wanted an experienced commander in place to oppose an invasion (which never materialized) and mobilize other lords in western Japan. Tadaakira was ruler of Himeji until his death in 1644, when he was succeeded by his son Tadahiro (1631–1700), who was moved four years later. Control of Himeji Castle was then given to Matsudaira (Yūki) Naomoto (1604–1648), who died *en route* and was immediately succeeded by Sakakibara Tadatsugu (1605–1665) in 1649.

Matsudaira (Yūki) Akinori: High Taxes and Peasant Revolt

Members of the extended Matsudaira clan, who were related to the Tokugawa shoguns, served as lords of many provinces during the Edo period (1603–1867). In 1667, Matsudaira (Yūki) Naonori (1642–1695) became the lord of Himeji, but he was replaced in 1682. The shogunate punished Naonori for a feud with another clan by cutting his income and transferring him from domain to domain. The next Matsudaira to rule the castle was Naonori’s grandson Matsudaira (Yūki) Akinori (1713–1749) in 1741, and by that point, the clan was struggling financially.

Akinori sought to replenish the clan coffers by imposing heavy taxes on the people of Himeji. The resulting hardship was compounded by a natural disaster, and after Akinori died, a revolt broke out among the peasantry. Soldiers ended the revolt by threatening the rioters with guns—the first time during the Edo period (1603–1867) that guns were turned on the common people.

The Matsudaira (Yūki Clan): Journeymen Feudal Lords

Matsudaira Akinori (1713–1749) was a member of the Yūki clan, a branch of the huge Matsudaira clan that was bounced from domain to domain under the shogunate’s policy of relocating provincial lords. Over the course of a century, members of the clan were appointed to govern Himeji three times, although only two Matsudaira (Yūki) lords ever

occupied the castle.

First Appointment: 1648

Matsudaira (Yūki) Naomoto (1604–1648) was named lord of Himeji in 1648, but he died of illness on his way to take up the post. His heir, Naonori (1642–1695), was only six years old—too young to govern such an important domain—and so the clan was transferred to Echigo Murakami, in present-day Niigata Prefecture.

Second Appointment: 1667

Naonori returned to Himeji in 1667—a high point in a mostly luckless career. As punishment for his involvement in an internal clan feud in Echigo Murakami, Naonori's income was slashed by the shogunate and he was moved from Himeji to Bungo Hita (in present-day Oita Prefecture). Naonori was transferred a half-dozen times in all: in addition to Himeji, Echigo Murakami, and Bungo Hita, he served as lord of the provinces of Mutsu Shirakawa and Dewa (in present day Fukushima and Yamagata prefectures).

Third Appointment: 1741

Naonori's grandson Akinori (1713–1749) was transferred to Himeji from Mutsu Shirakawa (in present-day Fukushima Prefecture) in 1741. After Akinori's death in 1749, his son Tomonori (1738–1768), who was a young child at the time, was relocated to Kozuke Maebashi (in present-day Gunma Prefecture).

Matsudaira (Yūki) Naonori