

The Wakasa Takeda Family: Governors of Wakasa Province

Overview

The Wakasa Takeda family ruled Wakasa Province from the mid-fifteenth to the late sixteenth century. They were appointed to the position of *shugo* (provincial governor) by the sixth Ashikaga shogun, Ashikaga Yoshinori (1394–1441), and managed the province from Kyoto until the early sixteenth century, when they built Nochiseyama Castle in Obama. The Wakasa Takeda were known for their studies of military strategy and skill in battle, as well as for their support of the arts, such as *waka* and *renga* poetry.

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Origin and Branches of the Takeda Family

The main branch of the Takeda family claimed descent from Emperor Seiwa (850–881), the 56th emperor of Japan, and the Seiwa Genji line of the Minamoto clan, which produced some of the most famous warriors of the Heian period (794–1185). The family initially served as the *shugo* governors of Kai Province (present-day Yamanashi Prefecture). In 1221, Takeda Nobumitsu (1162–1248) was appointed the governor of Aki Province (present-day western Hiroshima Prefecture), which led to the founding of the Aki Takeda branch of the family.

In 1440, acting on orders from the shogun Ashikaga Yoshinori, Takeda Nobuhide (1413–1440) of the Aki Takeda defeated the Isshiki family, who were serving as the *shugo* governors of Wakasa Province at the time. In recognition, Nobuhide received the governorship of Wakasa, and this became the origin of the Wakasa Takeda family branch.

Governorship of Wakasa Province

At first, like many other *shugo*, the Wakasa Takeda did not live in Wakasa Province. Despite the title, *shugo* primarily resided in Kyoto, where they could participate in various functions and fulfill their duties at the court, leaving provincial governance to deputies (*shugodai*). However, after the Onin War ravaged the capital in 1467–1477, the Wakasa Takeda began preparations to move to Wakasa.

Along with the completion of Nochiseyama Castle on Mt. Nochiseyama in 1522, the sixth family head Takeda Motomitsu (1494–1551) established an official residence at

the base of the mountain. His retainers built smaller castles in strategic positions across the province to defend against attacks from the neighboring regions.

Support of Arts and Culture

Since the Wakasa Takeda were based in Kyoto for many years, they were well connected with cultured figures in the capital. Even after moving to Wakasa Province, they invited prominent poets, painters, scholars, and Zen monks to their residence, promoting the arts and Buddhist faith in the region during their rule.

Decline of the Wakasa Takeda

By the latter half of the sixteenth century, the influence of the Wakasa Takeda family had waned, superseded by the Asakura family of neighboring Echizen Province (present-day eastern Fukui Prefecture) during the power struggle between the Ashikaga shogunate and the powerful warlord Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582). As a result, the ninth family head Takeda Motoaki (1552–1582) was taken into Asakura custody. Though he was eventually returned to Wakasa after Nobunaga's victory, he was replaced in 1573 by Niwa Nagahide (1535–1585), one of Nobunaga's generals, ending the long period of Wakasa Takeda rule in the province.

Exhibition Items

Next to the Wakasa Takeda family tree is a replica of a 1574 portrait of Takeda Motomitsu, depicting him on a horse and wearing a costume for mounted archery. The Wakasa Takeda were known for passing down a type of martial training called *inuomono*, which involved shooting blunted arrows at dogs running in an arena. One volume of a guide to Takeda-style *inuomono* thought to date to the Kan'ei era (1624–1645) is opened to an illustrated page with detailed notes and tips. A document bearing the *kao* (stylized signature) of Takeda Motomitsu, sent to Myotsuji Temple in 1528, exempts the temple from certain taxes and prohibits outsiders from cutting trees on the grounds and requisitioning temple buildings for lodgings. A *waka* poem by Motomitsu displayed as a hanging scroll demonstrates the Wakasa Takeda family's skill in the literary arts.