



TOKUGAWA YOSHIKATSU AT THE EDO TO MEIJI TRANSITION



Portrait of Tokugawa Yoshikatsu
Original taken in Edo period, 1866
Copied in Showa period, 1933

<The Tokugawa Institute for the History of Forestry>

Born into the Takasu Matsudaira family, a branch of the Owari Tokugawa, Tokugawa Yoshikatsu (1824–83) became the 14th head of the Owari Tokugawa family and lived through the upheaval of the late Edo period and Meiji Restoration as the final actual *daimyō* of that household. Through the life of Yoshikatsu, who carried the burden of the leadership of the Owari domain and led the way toward a new era for Japan, we explore his unknowable decisions in this period of historic change.

Yoshikatsu was also deeply knowledgeable about painting and calligraphy, natural history, and the literary arts, and in particular gave much attention to the art of photography, which had just recently arrived in Japan from the West. He personally took many photographs himself and was even known as the “photographer *daimyō*.” The photographs he took constitute valuable records of the interior and exterior of Nagoya Castle, which was destroyed by fire in the air raids of 1945, as well as portrait photographs of members of the Owari Tokugawa family. In celebration of the completion of restoration of the Nagoya Castle Honmarugoten Palace, this exhibition presents photographs of the former Nagoya Castle along with photographs taken by Yoshikatsu from the collection of The Tokugawa Institute for the History of Forestry.

SECTION 1

FROM THE TAKASU FAMILY TO THE OWARI FAMILY

On March 15, 1824 (Bunsei 7), Tokugawa Yoshikatsu was born into a branch family of the Owari Tokugawa, becoming the second son of Matsudaira Yoshitatsu, the 10th Lord of Takasu. Ever since the direct male bloodline of the Owari Tokugawa, which had continued intact since the first-generation Lord Tokugawa Yoshinao, was broken upon the death of Munechika, the 9th Lord of Owari, the successors had been adopted from households close to the shogunal family. Beginning with 10th-generation Naritomo, four generations of Owari family heads had been adopted and there were rumblings within the family from those who wished to have a head adopted more closely from the Owari Tokugawa family line. As a descendent of this bloodline, Yoshikatsu was a welcomed successor to the headship of the family and undertook the work of reforming rule of the domain.



Sword Mountings for *Katana* Long Sword and *Wakizashi* Short Sword
Fish bone inlay, black lacquered scabbard
Edo period, 1857 and 1854
Owned by Tokugawa Yoshikatsu
<The Tokugawa Art Museum>

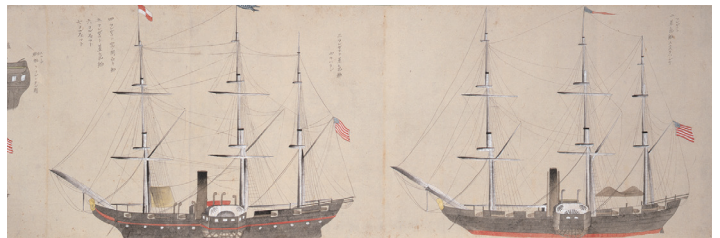


Astronomical Telescope by Gilbert Company
England, 19th c.
Owned by Tokugawa Yoshikatsu
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SECTION 2

UPHEAVAL OF THE CLOSING DAYS OF THE SHOGUNATE

Yoshikatsu lived at a time of political unrest that came to a head with the succession dispute following the death of the 13th shogun and the imminent opening of Japan’s ports under pressure from the United States. In 1858 (Ansei 5), Ii Naosuke, who had assumed the role of *tairō*, or Chief Minister, forcibly entered into a series of treaties of amity and trade with a number of nations without receiving imperial consent. In response, Yoshikatsu left for Edo Castle along with Tokugawa Nariakira, 9th lord of Mito, with the intent of demanding censure of Naosuke’s political stance. Instead, however, Yoshikatsu was himself confined to house arrest by Naosuke on the charge of having appeared at the castle at an unappointed time and consequently ceded the family headship to his younger brother, Mochinaga.



Scene of American Ships arriving at the Kanagawa Port
Edo period, 19th c.
<The Tokugawa Art Museum>



Specimen and Illustration of Insects
Collected and edited by Tokugawa Yoshikatsu
Edo period, 19th c.
<The Tokugawa Institute for the History of Forestry>

SECTION 3

YOSHIKATSU'S DECISION

Amidst the intensifying movement of revering the emperor and expelling the barbarians, the shogunate planned to restore the authority of the shogunal family through the unification of the nobility and the warrior class. After the death of Ii Naosuke at the Sakuradamon incident (1860) Yoshikatsu's house arrest was lifted, and he devoted his efforts to serving as mediator between the shogunate and the imperial court and he was appointed advisor to the shogun in 1863 (Bunkyū 3) after his first visit to Kyoto.

Meanwhile, the 15th Lord of Owari, Tokugawa Mochinaga, who had succeeded Yoshikatsu, ceded headship of the family to Yoshikatsu's eldest son and heir Motochiyo (later Yoshinori), who was just six years old, and Yoshikatsu took on a guiding role as his mentor at the end of the Edo period. In addition to demonstrating masterful negotiation skills in helping to prevent the intensification and prolongation of insurrections and rebellions over the first conquest of Chōshū in 1864 (Genji 1) and the Boshin War, which broke out in 1867 (Keiō 3) the year after imperial rule was restored, Yoshikatsu also decided to position himself on the side of the new government.



Helmet and Armor, black lacquer and indigo blue lacing
Edo period, 1849
Worn by Tokugawa Yoshikatsu
<The Tokugawa Art Museum>



Sadaaki (33) Katamori(44) Mochiharu(48) Yoshikatsu(55)

Born into the same Takasu branch family of Owari Tokugawa, 4 brothers split as friend and foe at the transition. 10 years after the Meiji Restoration, four brothers finally had a reunion and took this commemorative photo together.

Portrait of Tokugawa Yoshikatsu and His Younger Brothers
Taken by Futami Asama
Meiji period, 1878

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SECTION 4

AFTER THE MEIJI RESTORATION

In recognition of his achievements during the Meiji Restoration, Yoshikatsu was awarded the Junior First Rank in 1869 (Meiji 2), an extraordinary position for the head of the Owari Tokugawa clan. With the return of land and people to the emperor, 16th-generation Yoshinori became the first governor of the Nagoya domain, but when he resigned due to illness in the following year, Yoshikatsu took over as second governor from that time until the feudal domain system was abolished in the following year. Since the 16th Lord of Owari, Yoshinori, died childless in 1875 (Meiji 8) at the youthful age of eighteen, Yoshikatsu once again succeeded to the headship of the family, becoming the 17th Lord of Owari. After expending great effort to rescue the old feudal samurai family from great hardship, Yoshikatsu transferred the headship of the family to his adoptive son Yoshiakira in 1880 and retired, passing away at the age of sixty on August 1, 1883 (Meiji 16).

SECTION 5

DAIMYO PHOTOGRAPHER YOSHIKATSU

Yoshikatsu had an interest in all manner of new things that were arriving in Japan from the West and one thing in particular that captured his attention was the art of photography. He began to learn it in earnest in 1860 (Man'en 1) when his house arrest for his unappointed appearance at Edo Castle was lifted. From surviving historical records, we know that Yoshikatsu procured chemicals and lenses with his own private funds and that he conducted the latest studies, at times with the assistance of Dutch learning scholars in particular. The defining characteristic of Yoshikatsu's photographs was that he took many shots, generating multiple images of any given scene – essentially what we now know as panorama photographs. Also, his photos of castle interiors that were inaccessible to photography by anyone but the daimyo are also very important historical documents.



Ninomaru-Goten Second Palace and Tenshu Donjon of Nagoya Castle
Negative plate

Taken by Tokugawa Yoshikatsu
Edo period, 19th c.

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