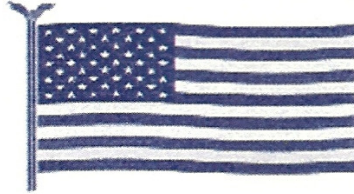


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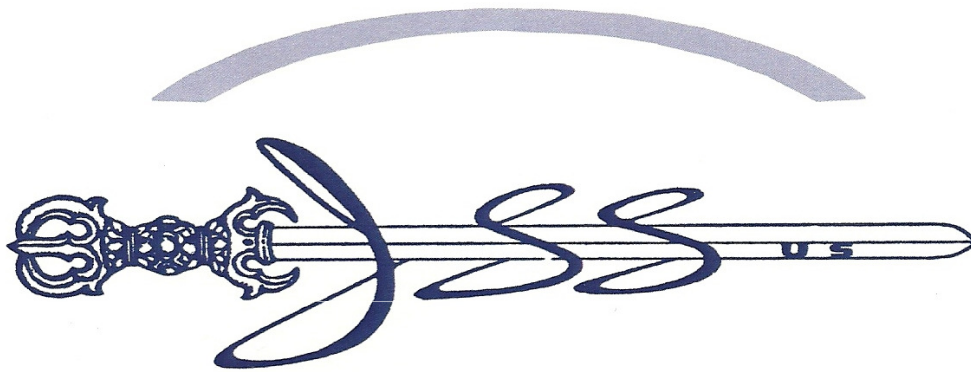
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F. A. B. Coutinho



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The *Wakasa* tale: an episode occurred when guns were introduced in Japan

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Introduction: Very often the collector of Japanese swords becomes interested in both Japanese armor and Japanese matchlocks (*teppo* or *tanegashima*). Not surprisingly, however, the books that deal with swords generally deal very superficially with *teppo*: the little information provided on the history of *teppo* may not answer all the questions which may arise.

In fact, most books mention only that the *teppo* were introduced in Japan by the Portuguese in 1543. Sometimes it is mentioned that this happened in *Tanegashima*, a small island in the south of Japan. Occasionally, some authors add a little more to the story; for example, I. Bottomley and A.P. Hobson (**Bottomley (1996)** page 124) write that “the Lord of *Tanegashima* bought two *teppo*... for an exorbitant sum”. He asked his swordsmith to copy the guns. There were some technical problems which the swordsmith finally resolved “by exchanging his daughter for lessons with another Portuguese who arrived a short time after.” Also according to Hawley (**Hawley (1977)** page 94), the governor of the Island tried to buy a gun:

“...making all sorts of offers which the trader continued to refuse. Finally the governor, perhaps to soften him up, put on a big going-away feast complete with music, drinks and *geisha*. At this feast the trader got a glimpse of the governor’s daughter who was an outstanding beauty. That did it! He offered to trade the gun for the daughter!and took the girl to Portugal, where he married her.”

The above story appears both incredible and fascinating at the same time. The aim of this article is to offer a more comprehensive story based on solid documents presented in a recent book by Olof G. Lidin (**Lidin (2002)**), wherein this book the author included and translated all the major documents related to this story. The story is even more fantastic than comments described above might suggest; in all likelihood, the story is probably true.

Consider this beautiful daughter

The story of the introduction of the *teppo* in *Tanegashima* that is described in the book by Lidin (Lidin (2002)) draws on the following Japanese documents: *Teppoki* written by Nenpo Bunshi (1555-1620), *Tanegashima Kafu*, *Kunitomo Teppoki* and *Yaita-Shi Kyosda Ichiryu no Keizu*. The Portuguese book *Peregrinaçam* by Fernam Mendez Pinto (1509?-1583) also played a role. It is not wise to rely completely on these old documents but to compare what they say and to make inferences according to the details common to most.

The girl involved was identified as *Wakasa*, the daughter of a blacksmith (a known swordsmith, see later) called *Yaite Kinbee Kiyosada*. The document that contains the story is the *Yaita-shi Kiyosada ichiryu no Keizo*, which can be translated as “Genealogy of the *Yaita Kiyosada* Family”, it was written in *Kanbun*.

It is not possible to say that the story is true with complete certainty; in Japan, however, the story has been accepted as a correct account. Figure 1 shows a statue of *Wakasa* and Figure 2 is an illustration taken from a Japanese popular novel featuring *Wakasa* and her ugly Portuguese husband.



Figure 1

Statue of *Wakasa*, holding a *teppo*, at the harbor in *Nishinoomote* (Lidin (2002))

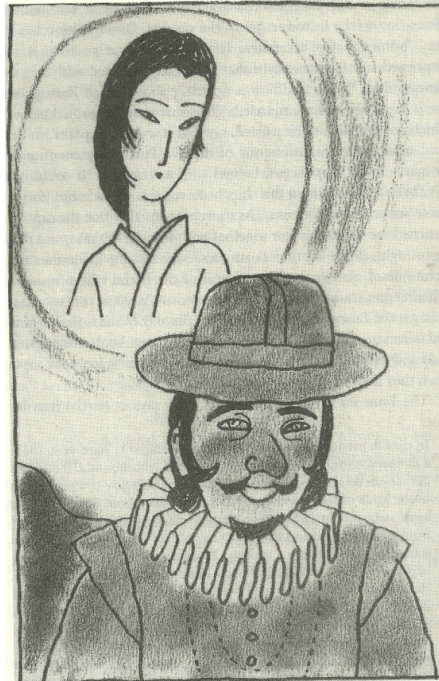


Figure 2

The beautiful *Wakasa* and the Portuguese merchant (From the popular novel, *Nanban no Uta* by Fukushima Noryio (From (Lidin (2002))

The story may be summarized as follows:

- 1) In *Tenbun* 12, 8th month, 25 day (23 September 1543) a Chinese junk, rather damaged, arrived at Cape *Kadokura* at the south of *Tanegashima* Island. This was a shallow port and unsuitable for the repairs that the ship needed.
- 2) Two days later the junk was towed to *Akogi*, a deeper water harbor, for repairs.
- 3) The Chinese junk had two or three European (Portuguese) sailors on board.
- 4) At the port a brisk trade ensued. Lidin ((2002), page 3) wrote: “**all the merchandize on board was sold at great profit.**” The preceding sentence is in bold because it is important to note that the Chinese and Portuguese surely perceived the enormous opportunity to trade offered by Japan; this will be important to understand the rest of the story.
- 5) The use of the *teppo* was demonstrated to the Lord of the Island *Tanegashima Tokitaka* (1528-1579) who was greatly impressed. According to the tradition, he paid 2000 *ryu* for one or two of the *teppo*. This cannot be entirely true because the *ryu* was introduced only in 1609, **but presumably the *teppo* were sold at a great price** (another great trade opportunity).

6) Immediately the Lord wanted the gun to be locally manufactured; accordingly, he ordered *Yaita Kinbee Kiyosada* to do it. Lidin (**Lidin (2002)** page 5) writes:

“It cannot have been easy to turn from making swords and knives to forging something entirely new. However, being ordered by his master, he switched to this new project, assisted by *Makise, Hirase* and others. Producing the barrel must have been difficult but not impossible for a trained smith but other parts were trickier...The fact is, however, that *Yaita* had problems with the screw at the bottom of the barrel...The screw itself was certainly no problem for a trained smith like *Yaita*; it was quickly copied and duplicated. It was the inside of the barrel that was the problem: how to drill the barrel helically so that the screw could be inserted. This technique did apparently not exist in Japan at this time ... Since the musket was a ‘muzzle-loaded’ it was an absolute necessity that the end of the barrel was tightly closed.”

7) In order to obtain the secrets, he offered a Portuguese his 16 year old daughter... The offer was accepted and the girl departed from Japan with him. The name of the Portuguese was *Murashukusha*. (In spite of familiarity with Portuguese, the connection between the Portuguese name and the Japanese translation has yet to be determined.) Lidin (**Lidin (2002)** page 13) describes what could have happened.

“If, with some imagination, one could try to describe what could have taken place, it would be like this. *Yaita*, at his wit's end, came on the idea of presenting his daughter to the Portuguese who had bestowed *Tokitaka* one (or two) muskets. He was under pressure and it was not easy for him to turn from swords to something complicated as a musket. He needed help and he wanted to ingratiate himself with the Portuguese whom he thought knew about the manufacture of the muskets. He had no money to pay for the help and therefore offered his 16-year-old daughter to *Murashukusha*, that is Francisco Zeimoto [this apparently was *Murashukusha*], who accepted her and married her. Another possibility is that *Murashukusha* become infatuated with *Wakasa* and proposed to her [see below why that this sounds more probable].

Alas it turned out that *Murashukusha* knew little or nothing about muskets except being able to use them. It was in this situation agreed that *Murashukusha* was to leave with his young wife on the junk soon repaired and go to NING-PO and find a Portuguese blacksmith.”

8) In the next year, 13th year (the *Kinoe Tatsu 'dragon' year, 1544*) *Murashukusha* came back with a Portuguese blacksmith and *Wakasa*. This Portuguese taught *Yaita* how to drill the barrel. After that, very good matchlocks began to be made in Japan.

9) Some time later, the story from *Yaita-Shi Kiyosada Ichiryu no Keizu* was continued; the translation was provided by **Lidin (2002)** page 12, **Hora(1958)** page 47 and **Yanagita (1975)** page 21-24:

“*Wakasa* feigned that she was gravely ill and died. A coffin (*hankaku*) was made and she was given a fine burial. The barbarian understood that he was deceived and shed no tears.”

Essentially this finishes the tale of *Wakasa*; however, some points should be clarified. To aid in this explanation it is necessary to assume that *Wakasa* story is true for the rest of this article.

1) Without powder the gun does not work. The Portuguese merchants taught the Japanese how to make powder and this knowledge was entrusted to *Sasakawa Koshiro*. The only ingredient of powder that Japan did not have at the time was saltpeter (KNO_3), immediately this became an important import item.

2) The fact that *Wakasa* was only 16 years old sounds terrible in modern times; however the Lord of the Isle was only 15 years old when he fired his first matchlock and engaged in war almost immediately afterwards.

3) Apparently the need to have a wife was imperative to the western sailors who went to Asia as bachelors. Much later the need for wives in Macau became a problem that is described in a long section entitled *The Marriage Problem*, written by Coates (**Coates (1978)** page 34):

“There were no Portuguese women in Macau, and very few in anywhere in Asia. Men therefore followed the custom set in the older settlements of marrying Asian girls, provided they were Christians, or become so by marriage.....due to the total lack of Chinese Christians, wives ranked as a significant item in the list of imports. They were primarily sought in Malacca ...Another source was Japan.

A small Japanese community was thus an early feature of Macao, where of course more Luso-Japanese weddings took place.”

In this context, it is not surprising that *Murashukusha* was anxious to acquire a wife.

4) The negotiations between *Murashukusha* and *Yaita* must have been very complicated. Understandably *Murashukusha* was anxious to get back to Japan. According to **Coates (1978)**, quoting Fernão **Mendes** Pinto (Fernam Mendez Pinto in Old Portuguese):

“Here [in Japan] unlike the experience of their colleagues in China, they were hospitably received by local rules ...and the first firearms ever seen in Japan, created a sensation which spread throughout the country.”

At this point the reason for *Murashukusha*'s decision to bring *Wakasa* and a blacksmith back with him comes into question. Various possible outcomes may be considered; one likely arrangement may have been that a great reward was expected by him if *Wakasa* returned safely with the blacksmith.

5) In modern times (20th century) it became fashionable to portray Europeans as people who did not take care of their hygiene thus making a romance like the one told in the *Wakasa* legend even less credible. However, **Lidin (2002)** page 13 and footnoted on page 49 says that:

“...on the other hand, it should not be discounted that some romance took place between the Portuguese merchants and Japanese women on this first occasion or later. That this was not perhaps a total fiction is stressed by Japanese authors like *T. Nishimura*. He says that such romance was looked askance upon until recent times and should not be reported in official chronicles. The *Yaita* house chronicle did not hesitate to report the love story, however, and it should therefore have a core of veracity.”

6) The person called *Yaite Kinbee Kiyosada* is quite possibly the swordsmith listed in **Hawley (1981)** page 278) as KIY 414. Hawley (see below) notes that the smith was active from 1532 to 1573 and that he lived in *Tanegashima*.

Kiyosada 清定	Osumi	1532-73 15	Lived in Tanegashima	KIY 414
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This could be the smith listed in **Shimizu Osamu (2005)** page 89. However, Osumu (see below) says that he signed *Sasshu Tanegashima Ju Kiyosada*, and worked in *Tensho* (July 1573 through December 1592) which would be too late for the smith referred to here. In addition, he is identified as *Kansaki* (family name) *Kinnosuke* (given name).

清貞 大隅「隅州種子島住清貞」神崎金之介。天正 中作

In the book by Homma and Masakuni (**Homma and Masakuni (2010)**), *The Nippon To Meikan*, the following information in Japanese appears:

「金兵衛尉清定作」のち薩摩に下るといふ。永禄ころ。筑前。(備考・校正・総覧)へ注)金剛兵衛か。『種ヶ島家譜』に金兵衛清定(こんびょうえきよさだ)としるす。同記天文十三年の条に「今春南蛮船熊野浦に漂来す。船客中一人の鉄匠あり。恵時・時堯以為へらく「天の授くる所なり」と即ち金兵衛清定という者を遺して鉄砲を製するを学ばしむ。朔年にして新たに数十砲を製し世に流布す。日本鉄砲の権輿か」とある。

The rough translation of this passage suggests, among other things, that he signed *Kinbei Yaite Kiyosada saku* and that in *Tenbun 13* he learned to make *teppo* from a foreign blacksmith. This quote seems to establish the smith's identity. No doubt this makes his swords even more desirable to serious collectors. An interesting perspective of *Kiyosada's* stature is offered in the following link:

http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E3%83%95%E3%82%A1%E3%82%A4%E3%83%AB:Yaite_kinbe_e.JPG

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the introduction of firearms had a profound influence on the way in which the Japanese fought battles in the 16th century. The argument continues in literature as to whether the use of firearms brought about the end of the *Sengoku jidai* in Japan. It is remarkable that the story of such powerful weaponry begins with a one-sided love story. It is possible that the smith *Yaite Kinbee Kiyosada* is the smith listed in Hawley (**Hawley (1981) as KIY414**) and very likely is the smith listed in page 210 of the *Nippon To Meikan* (**Honma and Masakuni (2010)**).

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