

THE MEMORIAL EXHIBITION OF THE 140TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE MEIJI RESTORATION

THE GLORY AND THE GLOOM OF THE
MEIJI RESTORATION

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The Hagi Museum

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The Glory and the Gloom of the Meiji Restoration

In the first year of Meiji (1868), “the Imperial Army” including the Satsuma and the Choshu domains made an onslaught on the various places in the Kanto and the Tohoku districts, raising the Imperial standard. Winning a series of battles in the Boshin War, people from Satsuma and Choshu established the Meiji government and began to build a new nation. This was the start of Japan’s modernization and becoming a member of the family of nations. But on the other hand, without even mentioning the defeated side, even the victorious side had to make great sacrifices.

In this exhibition we’d like to make a study of the reason why the Choshu domain (the Hagi domain) had to be engaged in the war in the midst of troubles both at home and abroad.

We would also like to take a look at the actual state of the war, through the articles such as weapons and kit, left by unknown soldiers who ventured to join it. Moreover, we’d like to consider how difficult it was to build modern Japan.

We would very much appreciate it if you could have a look at this exhibition and reconsider the glorious side and the gloomy side of the Meiji Restoration, on this

occasion of the 140th Anniversary of the Meiji Restoration.

Chapter 1

The opening of the country and the movement of reverence for the emperor and expulsion of the barbarians (1853~1864)

—Why did the Choshu domain follow the path of war?—

American envoy Perry's coming was so great a shock that the Japanese people were startled from their peaceful dream. As a result, the Tokugawa shogunate opened the country to foreign intercourse and concluded a commercial treaty with the Western Powers including the United States of America. But the Imperial sanction about the matter was not given. Therefore, the movement was raised up at a stretch.

Here, through the drawings and the historical references, we are to introduce the circumstances and the background about how the Choshu domain came to be an active leader of the movement to fight against the Tokugawa shogunate, and became the Imperial enemy after the rebellion at the Hamaguri Gate of the Imperial Palace in Kyoto, and also opened fire against the Western Powers in Shimonoseki.

Chapter 2

The disturbances of war and soldiers in the closing days of the Tokugawa shogunate and the Imperial Restoration (1865~1866)

—Why could the Choshu domain gain a victory? And what was the actual state of the war?—

The Tokugawa shogunate advanced against the Choshu domain twice to conquer the Choshu domain of the Emperor's enemy with permission of the Imperial Court. At the first Choshu punitive expedition, they didn't go into a battle because the Choshu domain made an apology. Later, in the Choshu domain there was a growing movement against the policy again. Thus, at the second Choshu punitive

expedition, the Tokugawa shogunate and the Choshu plunged into war.

The Shogunate-Choshu War was called the Four Fronts War in Suo and Nagato provinces (Yamaguchi prefecture) and the Choshu domain won an overwhelming victory. We are to take a look at the actual state of the war and why they were victorious by examining the weapons and kit of the unknown soldiers who ventured to join.

Chapter 3

From “the Imperial enemy” to “the Imperial army” (1867~1868)

—How could the Choshu domain of “the Imperial enemy” become “the Imperial army” ? —

Through the Political change on August 18, 1863 and the rebellion at the Hamaguri Gate of the Imperial Palace in Kyoto, the Choshu domain broke up with the Satsuma domain which came to tie up with the shogunate. However, the Satsuma domain didn't agree that the shogunate was planning to send the second punitive expedition against Choshu because the Choshu domain had already made an apology. As a result, the Choshu domain entered into an alliance with the Satsuma domain on the promise that the Choshu domain of the Imperial enemy should be reinstated.

Both the Satsuma domain and the Choshu domain took steps to overthrow the Tokugawa shogunate. As Shogun Yoshinobu Tokugawa restored the reigns of government to the Emperor, they could gain the honor of overthrowing the Tokugawa shogunate. We are to take a look at the background of “the secret Imperial sanction of overthrowing the shogunate” and the reason why “the Imperial standard” came into existence.

Chapter 4

The Boshin War and the Relation between Hagi and Aizu (1868~1869)

—Why is there an unrecoverable deep estrangement between Hagi and

Aizu even now?—

Both the Satsuma domain and the Choshu domain could get “the Imperial standard” symbolizing “the Imperial army” for the purpose of overthrowing the Tokugawa shogunate by force of arms. They came out victorious in the Toba-Fushimi battle and won some neutral domains to their side to rule most of West Japan. This encouraged “the Imperial army” to send troops to East Japan so as to hunt down and kill former Shogun Yoshinobu Tokugawa in Edo.

After the Ueno battle in Edo against the Shogi Troops who took sides with the Tokugawa shogunate, the battle fields were shifted to the Tohoku and the Hokuriku districts. The Boshin War, which brought about modernization of Japan, came to an end in Hakodate, Hokkaido. Here we’d like to pay attention to the Aizu battle, which was one of the most hard-fought battles, and think about the relation between Hagi and Aizu.

Chapter 5

Japan’s modernization and rebellions by clanspersons (1868~1877)

—What difficulties were involved in building new modern Japan?—

The Meiji New Government, which had won the Boshin War, carried out a rapid reform toward modernizing Japan to cope with the Western Powers. But after the Iwakura Mission returned from the inspection tour around Europe and the United States, there was controversy on the dispatch of an expeditionary force to Korea between the two groups in the Government. One was the Iwakura Mission group insisting that domestic administration should take priority over all others. The other group, comprising of persons who hadn’t joined the inspection tour, wanted to send an expeditionary force to Korea.

After the latter group went down to defeat, the Government advanced the encouragement of new industrial policy and deprived clanspersons of their privileges, for example the abolition of official salary. Here we’d like to introduce the

background of the revolts rebelled by the clanspersons in Saga, Choshu, and Satsuma, who were victorious in the Meiji Restoration.

- 1 *Imperial standard made of gold brocade, used by Imperial prince Arisugawanomiya Taruhito, great governor-general of the eastern expedition troops*
- 2 *Bulletin board set up in various parts of the country by the New Government*
- 3 *British newspaper account of Perry's expedition to Japan*
- 4 *Battle situation fought at the entrance to Kokura painted on the narrative picture scroll*
- 5 *Imperial army's standard with a chrysanthemum crest*
- 6 *Violent offense and defence in the Aizu battle painted on the votive picture tablet of a horse*
- 7 *Issei Maebara's troops fighting in the Hagi Revolt painted in a colored woodblock print*