

# Brief History of Princess Sen-hime and Joso City (Mitsukaido)

千姫物語 と 常総市 (水海道)

## Brief History of Princess Sen-Hime 千姫物語

Sen-Hime<sup>(1)</sup> was born on April 11, 1597 (year 2 of Keicho era) in a residence of the Tokugawa family in Fushimi, Kyoto (ancient capital of Japan) as the first daughter of Hidetada Tokugawa (who later assumed power of 2nd Shougun of the military government in Edo) and his lawful wife Oeyo. When Sen-Hime completed 7 years of age, Shougun<sup>(2)</sup> Ieyasu Tokugawa, her grandfather, decided to marry Sen-Hime with Hideyori, son of Hideyoshi<sup>(3)</sup> Toyotomi, to keep his word with Hideyoshi and proceed his political strategy.

When the war Osaka Natsunojin<sup>(4)</sup> burst, Sen-Hime decided to leave the castle Osaka to ask his grandfather, Ieyasu Tokugawa, to save the lives of her husband Hideyori and mother in law Yodo-Gimi<sup>(5)</sup>. She left when the castle was almost being taken by the troops of Tokugawa. However, for the strong intention to establish peace through the unification of the territories of Japan, the appeal of Sen-Hime was not granted. Hideyori and Yodo-Gimi decided to kill themselves and thus the Toyotomi family was extinct. Sen-Hime later married again, this time with Tadatoki Honda. She went to live in castle of Himeji and had two children. But the son Yukichiyo died at 3 years old. 5 years thereafter, when the Sen-Hime was 30, her husband Tadatoki died, with his 31 years of age.

After the death of Tadatoki, Sen-Hime left the Himeji Castle together with her daughter Katsu-Hime and has returned to Edo Castle. She began to devote herself to Buddhism, and to be called Tenjuin<sup>(6)</sup>, and she lived in Takehashi-Goten, one of the areas within the Edo Castle. As the eldest princess of the Tokugawa family with lots of life experiences, she worked for the prosperity of the Tokugawa family, giving support to her younger brother Iemitsu, the 3rd Shougun, and his nephew Ietsuna, the 4th Shougun. Although she devoted so much to politics and to the Tokugawa family, she was personally satisfied with having had five grandchildren.

On February 6, 1666 (year 6 of Kanbun era), a woman who marked her name in later generations, Sen-Hime (Tenjuin) came to eternal rest with peace and tranquility. She was 70 years old, 40 years after her return to Edo Castle

## Mitsukaido and Sen-Hime 水海道と千姫

The Gugyou-Ji, a temple belonging to a Buddhist sect Joudo-shu, which is located in Toyooka-tyou, Joso-shi (Mitsukaido), is known as Bodai-ji<sup>(7)</sup> of Sen-Hime and where her grave is.

There are several of her belongings in the temple such as a calligraphy tool, Suzuri, made of a precious stone Shiryu-Seki<sup>(8)</sup>, a picture with the portrait of Sen-Hime, etc.. And in the yard of the temple there are a main building of the temple (Hondou) and a gate (Sanmon). It is said that both were reconstructed with contributions of Sen-Hime and they were marked with the Tokugawa family crest, known as "Aoi-no-Monshou".



One of the important Buddhist monks of the time, Shouyo Ryougaku Shounin-X (tenth), who raised a Gugyou-Ji, had great confidence of Ieyasu Tokugawa and his successors Shouguns. This

monk shaved the hair of Sen-Hime and oriented her in the the way of Buddha. For this relationship with a monk, Sen-Hime chose Gugyou-Ji as her Bodai-Ji to pray for her soul. She devoted herself to rebuild a part of the temple which was destroyed by fire caused by war.

After the death of Sen-Hime in 1666 (year 6 of Kanbun era), her bones were buried in Dentsuu-In, located in Koishikawa, Tokyo. Subsequently, a part of the bones were transferred to Gugyou-Ji. The mansion Takehashi Goten, where had lost her mistress, was dismantled and its construction parts were transferred to four temples that had deeper relationships with Sen-Hime. One of the temples was Gugyou-Ji, however the buildings at that time were lost in a fire caused by fireworks (hanabi) in year 39 of Meiji era (1906). We know how the temple was reformed with the construction parts of the mansion through a copper engraving made in year 19 of the Meiji era (1886), 20 years before the fire.

#### Observations:

- (1) "Sen" is her name, "Hime" means "princess".
- (2) "Shougun" means "general". In the Edo era, it was the highest political and military position
- (3) Toyotomi Hideyoshi was the regent of the Azuchi-Momoyama era. After the end of the era, the Tokugawa Shogunate family begins.
- (4) "Osaka Natsunojin" means "war in the summer of Osaka". There were two wars between the Toyotomi and Tokugawa families, the winter and summer. Osaka was a city governed by the Toyotomi family.
- (5) "Yodo" is the name of the mother in law of Sen-Hime. "Gimi" could be translated as "Mistress", a respectful way of addressing the person.
- (6) When people begin to devote himself to Buddhism, they adopt a new name.
- (7) "Bodai-ji" means "temple in memory" to a person, where people pray for his soul.
- (8) "Shiryuu-Seki" is called in English "Charoite", is a kind of violet silicate. Literally meaning is "violet dragon stone".