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Unsourced material may be challenged and removed.Find sources: "Rōnin" – news - newspapers - books - scholar - JSTOR (January 2023) (Learn how and when to remove this message) A woodblock print by ukiyo-e master Utagawa Kuniyoshi depicting famous rōnin Miyamoto Musashi having his fortune told Ukiyo-e woodblock print by Yoshitoshi depicting Oishi Chikara, one of the forty-seven rōnin in feudal Japan (1185-1868), a rōnin (/ˈroʊni/ ROH-nin; Japanese: 浪人, IPA: [ɾo̞ːɲiɴ], 'drifter' or 'wandering man', lit. 'unrestrained or dissolute person', lit. 'unrestrained or dissolute person') was a samurai who had no lord or master and in some cases, had also severed all links with his family or clan.[1] A samurai became a rōnin upon the death of his master, or after the loss of his master's favor or legal privilege.[2][3] In modern Japanese, the term is usually used to describe a salaryman who is unemployed or a secondary school graduate who has not yet been admitted to university.[4][5] The word rōnin is usually translated to 'drifter' or 'wanderer'; however, per kanji, ろ (Rō) means "wave" as on the water, as well as "unrestrained, dissolute", while nin (人) means "person". It is an idiomatic expression for "vagrant" or "wanderer", someone who does not belong to one place. The term originated in the Nara and Heian periods, when it referred to a serf who had fled or deserted his master's land. It later came to be used for a samurai who had no master. In medieval times, the ronin were depicted as the shadows of samurai, master-less and not honorable. According to the Bushido Shoshinshu (the "Code of the Warrior"), a samurai was supposed to commit seppuku (also harakiri, "belly cutting", a form of ritual suicide) upon the loss of his master.[6][7] One who chose not to honor the code was "on his own" and was meant to suffer great shame. The undesirability of rōnin status was mainly a discrimination imposed by other samurai and by daimyō, the feudal lords.[citation needed] Like other samurai, rōnin wore two swords.[8] Rōnin used a variety of other weapons as well. Some rōnin—usually those who lacked money—would carry a bō (staff around 1.5 to 1.8 m (5 to 6 ft)) or jō (smaller staff or walking stick around 0.9 to 1.5 m (3 to 5 ft)) or a yumi (bow). Most weapons would reflect the rŷu (martial arts school) from which they came if they were students.[citation needed] During the Edo period, with the shogunate's rigid class system and laws, the number of rōnin greatly increased; confiscation of fiefs during the rule of the third Tokugawa shōgun Iemitsu resulted in an especially large increase of their number.[2] During previous ages, samurai were able to move between masters and even between occupations. They could also marry between classes. However, during the Edo period, samurai were restricted, and were—above all—forbidden to become employed by another master without their previous master's permission.[citation needed] Because the former samurai could not legally take up a new trade, or because of pride were loath to do so, many rōnin looked for other ways to make a living with their swords. Those rōnin who desired steady, legal employment became mercenaries that guarded trade caravans, or bodyguards for wealthy merchants. Many other rōnin became criminals, operating as bandits and highwaymen, or joining organized crime in towns and cities. Rōnin were known to operate or serve as hired muscle for gangs that ran gambling rings, brothels, protection rackets, and similar activities. Many were petty thieves and muggers. The criminal segment gave the rōnin of the Edo period a persistent reputation of disgrace, with an image of thugs, bullies, cutthroats, and wandering vagrants.[2] After the abolition of the Samurai, some of the ronin continued with their thuggery and their mercenary work and activities, such as participating in the infamous assassination of Korean Empress Myeongsong of the Joseon Dynasty in 1895, the Eulmi Incident.[citation needed] Graves of the forty-seven rōnin at Sengakuji Until the Sengoku period, peasants accounted for the majority of daimyō armies, so they accounted for the majority of ronin.[citation needed] Especially in the Sengoku period, daimyō needed additional fighting men, and even if a master had perished, his rōnin was able to serve new lords. In contrast to the later Edo period, the bond between the lord and the vassal was loose, and some vassals who were dissatisfied with their treatment left their masters and sought new lords. Many warriors served a succession of masters, and some even became daimyō. As an example, Tōdō Takatora served ten lords. Additionally, the division of the population into classes had not yet taken place, so it was possible to change one's occupation from warrior to merchant or farmer, or the reverse. Saitō Dōsan was one merchant who rose through the warrior ranks to become a daimyō.[citation needed] As Toyotomi Hideyoshi unified progressively more significant parts of the country, daimyō found it unnecessary to recruit new soldiers. The Battle of Sekigahara in 1600 resulted in the confiscation or reduction of the fiefs of large numbers of daimyō on the losing side; consequently, many samurai became rōnin. As many as a hundred thousand rōnin joined forces with Toyotomi Hideyori and fought at the Siege of Osaka. In the ensuing years of peace, there was less need to maintain expensive standing armies, and many surviving rōnin turned to farms or became townspeople. A few, such as Yamada Nagamasa, sought adventure overseas as mercenaries. Still, the majority lived in poverty as rōnin. Their number approached half a million under the third Tokugawa shōgun Iemitsu.[citation needed] Initially, the shogunate viewed them as dangerous and banished them from the cities or restricted the quarters where they could live. They also prohibited serving new masters. As rōnin found fewer options, they joined in the Keian Uprising of 1651. This forced the shogunate to rethink its policy. It relaxed restrictions on daimyō inheritance, resulting in fewer confiscations of fiefs, and it permitted rōnin to join new masters.[citation needed] Not having the status or power of employed samurai, rōnin were often disreputable and festive.[2] The group targeted humiliation or satire. It was undesirable to be a rōnin, as it meant being without a stipend or land. As an indication of the shame felt by samurai who became rōnin, Lord Redesdale recorded that a rōnin killed himself at the graves of the forty-seven rōnin. He left a note saying that he had tried to enter the service of the daimyō of Chōshi Domain but was refused. He killed himself, wanting to serve no other master and hating being a rōnin. On the other hand, the famous 18th-century writer Kyokutei Bakin renounced his allegiance to Matsudaira Nobunari, in whose service Bakin's samurai father had spent his life. Bakin voluntarily became a rōnin, and eventually spent his time writing books (many of them about samurai) and engaging in festivities.[citation needed] In the 19th century, Emperor Meiji abolished the Samurai class and any status the ronin had died with them.[citation needed] Forty-seven Rōnin[9] Kyokutei Bakin Miyamoto Musashi Sakamoto Ryōma Yamada Nagamasa Actors portraying ronin on left and right, employed samurai in the middle. His chonmage makes him identifiable as an employed samurai. Numerous modern works of Japanese fiction set in the Edo period cast characters who are rōnin.[citation needed] The monkier Ronin has often appeared in Marvel Universe comic series, and has been used by many characters such as Echo (Maya Lopez) and Hawkeye (Clint Barton).[citation needed] Usagi Yojimbo depicts an anthropomorphic rabbit ronin main character, Miyamoto Usagi, whom Stan Sakai based partially on the famous swordsman Miyamoto Musashi.[citation needed] Rōnin are often depicted in the jidaigeki of Akira Kurosawa, in particular Yojimbo, Sanjuro and Seven Samurai. The 1954 film Seven Samurai follows the story of a village of farmers that hire seven rōnin to combat bandits who will return after the harvest to steal their crops. The 1961 film Yojimbo tells the story of a rōnin who arrives in a small town where competing crime lords vie for supremacy. The two bosses each try to hire the newcomer as a bodyguard. The film inspired the Spaghetti Western films A Fistful of Dollars and Django.[citation needed] and spawned the 1962 sequel Sanjuro. The 1962 film Harakiri is set in Edo period of early 17th century Japan, and concerns two Ronin who present themselves at the palace of the Ii clan to request permission to commit ritual suicide. The 1998 film Ronin portrays former special forces and intelligence operatives who find themselves unemployed at the end of the Cold War. Devoid of purpose, they become high-paid mercenaries. There is also a direct comparison of the characters to the forty-seven ronin. The film 47 Ronin is a 2013 Japanese-American fantasy action film depicting a fictional account of the forty-seven rōnin. The 2015 film, titled Last Knights, is a more stylized version of the story of the forty-seven rōnin,[10] a joint production among the UK, Czech Republic and South Korea. In the manga and anime Rurouni Kenshin, the hitokiri Himura Kenshin becomes a rōnin after the end of the Edo period, wandering for ten years in order to mend his sins and to complete the restoration. Samurai Jack, the protagonist of the eponymous animated television series, is technically a rōnin because he serves no master and is mostly seen wandering the land, searching for a resolution to his quest to defeat his nemesis, the shapeshifting master of darkness, Aku, after the latter opens a time portal that sends Jack into a future where Aku reigns supreme.[citation needed] In the 2004 anime series Samurai Champloo, one of the protagonists is the rōnin Jin. Along with the vagrant swordsman Mugen, he accompanies a young girl named Fuu on a quest to find the "samurai who smells of sunflowers". In the 2023 anime series Revenger, the protagonist becomes a rōnin after a meeting with a shadowy organization following an assassination attempt. The main character in each game of the Way of the Samurai series is always an archetypal ronin who wanders into the setting one day and must choose a faction to work with or find a way to unite them against a greater foe. The 2020 video game Ghost of Tsushima features many rōnin as part of the story, including Ryuzo (Leonard Wu), the childhood friend of the protagonist Jin Sakai. In the 2020 video game Genshin Impact, the first playable character from the nation of Inazuma, Kaedehara Kazuha, became a rōnin not too long before the game's events. The 2023 video game Honkai: Star Rail features Acheron, a rōnin from the fallen planet of Izumo, as a playable character starting from version 2.1. The protagonist of the 2024 video game Rise of the Ronin is a rōnin navigating the tumultuous period of 19th-century Japan, making pivotal choices that influence the nation's future. Japan portal Gonin Gum! - groups of households which united for collective protection against ronin Japanese holdout Knight-errant, a similar figure in western literature Shinsengumi Youxia Wikimedia Commons has media related to Rōnin. ^ "Rōnin, Japanese warrior". Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved 2009-08-29. ^ a b c d Stephane Lun (2021). A Guide on Shinsengumi: the background and management. ^ Till, Barry (2005). The 47 Ronin: A Story of Samurai Loyalty and Courage. Pomegranate. p. 11. ISBN 978-0-7649-3209-0. ^ Akihiko Yonekawa. Beyond Polite Japanese. page 25. Kodansha 2001. ISBN 4-7700-2773-7 ^ 浪人 at Japanese-English dictionaries: フォレグレーション和英中辞典 Archived 2013-02-18 at archive.today or コーセンチュリー和英辞典 Archived 2013-02-19 at archive.today ^ Hubbard, Ben (2014-06-02). Samurai: Swords, Shoguns and Seppuku. The History Press. ISBN 978-0-7509-5725-0. ^ Rankin, Andrew (2012-11-20). Seppuku: A History of Samurai Suicide. Kodansha USA. ISBN 978-1-56836-448-3. ^ history, Kallie Szczepanski Kallie Szczepanski has a Ph D. in; College, Has Taught at the; U.S. high school level in both the; Korea. "What Was a Ronin in Feudal Japan?". ThoughtCo. Retrieved 2019-09-18. ^ Forbes, Andrew ; Henley, David (2012). Forty-Seven Ronin: Tsuchioka Yoshitoshi Edition (David (2012). Forty-Seven Ronin: Utagawa Kuniyoshi Edition. Chiang Mai: Cognoscenti Books. ASIN B00ADQM81l ^ Stewart, Sara (1 April 2015). "Freeman, Owen casualties of bloody bad 'Last Knights'". Retrieved from " wave; breaker; unrestrainedwave; breaker; unrestrained; dissipated man; person; people simp. and trad.(浪人 浪人 Attested earliest in Qimin Yaoshu (Essential Techniques for the Welfare of the People) [1]: 浪人 hobo; vagabond ruffian Japanese ronin (colloquial) lewd person; lecher Kanji in this term 浪 ろうGrade: 3 にA/Grade: 1 on yomi From Middle Chinese compound 浪人 (lang nyin, literally "wasteful or reckless person"). Compare modern Mandarin reading láng rén. Originally referred to someone who had no fixed residence. Used in the context of the Ritsuryō legal system of Nara and Heian period Japan to refer to someone who had intentionally left their registered residence in order to avoid tax liabilities and corvee labor requirements.[1] Later in the Muromachi period, came to refer to samurai who had left or lost their lords. This meaning was extended in more recent times to refer to potentially anyone who was not employed, and then again to refer to high-school graduates who have failed the annual university entrance exams and are studying for the next year's exams. (Tokyo) ろーじん [rōjin] (Heiban - [O]) [2][3]IPA(key): [ɾo̞ɲiɴ] 浪(ろう)人(にん) • (rōnin) ろうじん (raunjin)? a masterless samurai a vagrant, a vagabond, a wanderer 1177-1188: Iroha Jiruisshō.[4] 浪 (ラウ) someone in exile 1603, Vocabulario da Língos de Iapam (Nippo Jisho) [Vocabulary of the Language of Japan] (in Portuguese), Nagasaki, page 541.[5] Rōnin. ラウン (零人) 遣放された人. More specifically spelled 零人, a prisoner. More specifically spelled 零人, someone who has been laid off or fired, an unemployed person 1682: 好色一代男 (page 70)[6] 遣出たるは北あたじ八百八御宣の平兵. 緒方の浪人友崎老として. かざ丸浪は、何しはぞかし. 1686: 好色一代女 (page 363)[6] 「こなたは御年入衆なるが、御幸公済さるうちは、折ふし気配に御人あるべし.」 1686: 好色一代女 (page 437)[6] 「京の石垣くづれなりと、さる御年入衆の娘御なりと、新町て天神して面た女郎の奥なりと、おまえへさまも見しらしやつて御ざんず事も.」 so a student who failed the annual university entrance exams and is waiting to take them again: 浪人生 (rōnisei) 浪(ろう)人(にん)ずる • (rōnin suru) ろうじん (raunjin)?suru (stem 浪(ろう)人(にん)した (rōnin shita)) (become unemployed): 失業(しつぎょう) (shitsugyō) ^ Shōgaku Toshō (1988) 国語大辞典 (新装版) [Unabridged Dictionary of Japanese (Revised Edition)] (in Japanese). Tōkyō: Shōgakukan, −ISBN ^ Matsumura, Akira, editor (2006). 大辞林 [Daijirin] (in Japanese). Third edition, Tokyo: Sanseido, −ISBN ^ NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, editor (1998). NHK日本語発音アクセント辞典 [NHK Japanese Pronunciation Accent Dictionary] (in Japanese). Tokyo: NHK Publishing, Inc., −ISBN ^ Tadakane, Tachibana with Masamune Atsuo (ed.) (c. 1177-1188) Iroha Jiruisshō (in Japanese), Kazama Shōbō, published 1971 ^ Doi, Tadao (1603-1604) Hōyaku Nippo Jisho (in Japanese), Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, published 1980, −ISBN. 1 6.0 6.1 6.2 Ihara, Saikaku with Isoji Asō, Gen Itasaka, Seiji Tsutsumi, Kōshin Nomu (1957) [1686] Saikaku shū, jō, volume 47, Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten Publishing, −ISBN 浪人 • (nang'in) (hangeul 1) hanja form? of ("vagabond; ronin" chŭr Hân Nôm in this term浪人 浪人 chŭr Hân form of láng nhân ("ronin").