

第9回国際忍者学会大会発表要旨（2026/09/12 於:小田原三の丸ホール）

「初期忍びの概念とその後の変遷」

岩田明広（埼玉県平和資料館）

本報告では、初期の忍びの概念とその後の変遷についての検討結果を報告する。

基本的な考え方には、認知科学・認知言語学のアプローチを据えた。ヒトの認識基準となる知識構造（記憶）や認識の方法が、情報交流によって形成されるという枠組みを利用するものだ。認知言語学では表現形（記述）は概念を表すとされており、忍びについても、その記述と関連語の有無・組み合わせの関係から、情報交流をもつ特定の集団の忍びの概念を把握することができる。

分析作業では、先ず人や組織を意味する「しのび」と発音する名詞と、「しのび」を一部にもつ名詞を含む記述について、データベースを作成した。同時に、各記述に記されている「しのび」の行動や行動目的を示す語・記述についても収集した。また、行動や行動目的の語・記述の有無・消長を時間軸の上で確認するため、「しのび」の名詞の記述に広く共通する「夜の城攻め」という状況から、城・要害の史料を集め、そこに書かれた行動を示す語や記述を収集して忍び史料との比較を行った。

この結果、文字記録による情報交流をなしていた支配的地位の武士たちの忍びに関する概念とその変遷について、次の各点が把握できた。

（1）初期の忍びは、14世紀中頃の南北朝期の争乱の中で、城郭の破壊のための放火や乗取を、密かな潜入と戦いを通じて行い、時に戦場での使いも果たす存在として認識されていた。関連用語の状況を考慮すると、この忍びの概念は、中世の城が築かれ、武装した籠城が行われるようになった時期に対応すると判断できる。この状況は16世紀前半まで同様であった。

（2）16世紀後半には、それまでの活動に加え、城郭乗取後の敗残兵や住民の追散や城攻めのための情報収集を行う者たち、と認識されるようになる。この時期の忍びは、多くの軍事行動を担う者たちと捉えられていたようで、忍び概念の変革期ともいえる。

（3）16世紀末、豊臣政権による天下統一の頃には、情報収集が行動の主体になり、城郭・城下の警固や、他国の城郭・陣等で略奪・盗みも行う存在と認識されていたようだ。

（4）天草一揆後の17世紀中頃以後は、戦いが忍びの行動の概念から外れ、使い、情報収集、城下・領内の取締・搜索が忍びの活動と認識されるようになったとみられる。19世紀の異国船来航や幕末の動乱の頃も、主に情報収集を担う者たちとみなされていた。

なお、付随して把握できた点もある。忍びを作戰に投入することは「つける」と表記し、後に「遣わす」「入れる」が用いられた。「忍び込む」は、近世まで犯罪者の行動を指す語で、忍びとは無縁だった。「忍取」「忍落」は名詞「しのび」との関連のみが明確であり、忍びによる城の奪取と攻略を意味する軍事用語だったとみられる。

The Concept of Early Ninjas and Its Subsequent Evolution

Akihiro Iwata (Peace Museum of Saitama)

This report presents the results of our examination of the early concept of the ninja and its subsequent evolution.

The basic approach is grounded in cognitive science and cognitive linguistics. This theory draws on a framework that posits that the knowledge structures (memory) and cognitive processes underlying human perception are formed through the exchange of information.

In cognitive linguistics, it is held that linguistic expressions (descriptions) represent concepts; similarly, regarding the concept of “ninja,” we can grasp the concept held by a specific group engaged in information exchange by examining the descriptions of “ninja” and the presence and combinations of related terms.

For the analysis, I first created a database of descriptions containing nouns pronounced “shinobi”—which refers to people or organizations—as well as nouns that include “shinobi” as part of their name. At the same time, I collected the terms and descriptions indicating the “shinobi’s” actions and the purposes behind them as recorded in each data entry. Furthermore, to verify the presence, absence, and changes over time of terms and descriptions indicating actions and their purposes, we collected historical records regarding castles and fortifications based on the situation of “nighttime castle sieges”—a scenario widely common to descriptions of “shinobi”—and gathered the terms and descriptions indicating actions found in those records to compare them with the shinobi historical records.

As a result, we were able to identify the following points regarding the concepts held by the dominant samurai class—who engaged in the exchange of information through written records—concerning shinobi, as well as the evolution of those concepts.

(1) Early ninja were recognized as figures who, amid the turmoil of the Northern and Southern Courts period in the mid-14th century, carried out arson and the seizure of castles through covert infiltration and combat, and at times also served as messengers on the battlefield. Considering the context of related terms, it can be concluded that this concept of the ninja corresponds to the period in the Middle Ages when samurai began to fortify themselves in castles to fight. This situation remained unchanged until the first half of the 16th century.

(2) In the latter half of the 16th century, in addition to their previous activities, they came to be recognized as those who dispersed defeated soldiers and residents after the capture of a castle and gathered intelligence for castle sieges. Ninja during this period appear to have been viewed as agents responsible for a wide range of military

operations, marking a period of transformation in the concept of the ninja.

(3) By the end of the 16th century, around the time of the Toyotomi regime's unification of the country, intelligence gathering became the primary focus of their activities. They were recognized as entities responsible for guarding castles and castle towns, as well as engaging in looting and theft at castles and encampments in other domains.

(4) From the mid-17th century onward, following the Amakusa Rebellion, warfare ceased to be part of the concept of ninja activities; instead, their roles were recognized as messengers, intelligence gatherers, and enforcers conducting patrols and searches within castle towns and domains. Even during the 19th-century arrivals of foreign ships and the turmoil of the end of Edo period, they were primarily viewed as those responsible for intelligence gathering.

Additionally, several related points were identified. Deploying a shinobi in an operation was originally written as "tsukeru" (to attach), though later the terms "tsukawasu" (to dispatch) and "ireru" (to infiltrate) came into use.

The phrase "shinobikomu" (to sneak in) referred to the actions of criminals until the early modern period and had no connection to shinobi. The terms "shinobi-toru" and "shinobi-otosu" relate only to the shinobi, and can be considered military terms referring to the capture or occupation of a castle by shinobi.