Twitter Thread by AmélieMarieinTokyo



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My husband’s family history is complicated (on both side), to say the least.

Recently, he grew curious and wanted to learn more about his maternal grandfather—which was quite a force of nature.

Here’s a pretty long thread ■■

His maternal great grandfather was from a samurai family, so wealthy enough at the time to study at Todai and to become a judge. He got married, had 2 sons and then found nothing better to do than abandoned wife & kids to ran with a mistress and go do business in Manchuria.

Suffering from financial hardship, his ex-wife (from a merchant family) had to sell one of her son to another family.

She kept my husband’s grandfather with her, and remarried.

His grandfather received some good education, luckily, and studied at Meiji university.

The grandfather dreamt of becoming a prosecutor. But when he graduated, all the exams got cancelled—Japan was at war and the administration had no time to overview tests. He missed his one chance, and had to settle with becoming a public servant.

He married another descendant of a samurai family—my husband’s grandmother, an admirable lady and a nurse who had come from Gifu to Tokyo at 18.

They both were hardworking folks, who came from wealthy families who lost all their wealth in a fast changing world.

During World War 2, the grandfather heard that the US army was planning to bomb Tokyo (he heard so from a military friend, at the time few folks knew Japan was in bad shape).

Fearing for his wife and kids—my mother in law and her brother, he fled to the north, to Sendai.

However, they couldn’t go back home afterwards: you needed a permit to enter Tokyo and they didn’t have that. (Sorry for lack of details, my husband briefly explained that traveling from a city/prefecture wasn’t possible in that era. You had to stay where you were registered).

They had to settle in Chiba for a few years. They HATED it. I don’t know exactly what happened, but they suffered discrimination from the local folks. When we moved to Chiba earlier this year, my mother in law wasn’t too happy. My husband’s take on this is that his grandfather

was a scholar and modern minded person (especially when it came to women’s position in society), caring for both son and daughter to get to high education. Probably not the way of thinking in rural Chiba!

The grandfather worked then at clerical officer for several schools as well as an English teacher—he was good at English and was also selling furnitures to American soldiers in a family owned shop. Again, probably not something folks in Chiba liked!

Finally, the family managed to move back to Tokyo.

Grandfather switched jobs and... started an itinerant movie theater with a truck, a projector and a piece of white sheet. Grandmother was the driver!

But by early 70s the adoption of colored TV killed his business.

Resourceful, he then worked as a clerk at the Shinagawa Prince Hotel where he handled comminution with foreigners—his English skills were very precious and he also spoke German.

But he had quite the entrepreneur spirit and he quit to become a building manager.

However, he hated, HATED, the idea to abuse people. He never asked for ■■—key money or “gratitude money”. He also didn’t really set high rent. His business was... not profitable at all, but I guess his kindness helped a lot of folks at the time.

I guess I should add, my husband’s grandfather was politically a communist.

He was supposed to study at Waseda, but the police caught him and beat him up so badly he got both his legs broken—he had to delay his studies and missed Waseda. All his life he had bad legs.

Going back to my husband’s great grandfather, he eventually came back to Japan (from Manchuria) and became a judge in Tokyo. His mistress had died and he tried to reunite with his former family, only to discover one of his son was sold to another family and former wife remarried.

We don’t know what was my husband’s grandfather feeling towards his father, but he certainly put them aside and let his son and his daughter see him and they even went to court to see what’s the job of a judge is like.

I’m sad I never got the chance to meet my husband’s grandfather. But I did meet his grandmother and loved everything second spent with her ■.

#owari

Aaaaah saw all the typos and English mistakes. My bad! I was trying to gather the facts and switching from Japanese to English kind of messes with my brain ■