

The Taiheiki

A CHRONICLE OF

MEDIEVAL JAPAN

Translated, with an

Introduction and Notes

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The Suicide of the Protector of Etchū; the Matter of the Unquiet Spirits

Now to the protector of Etchū came men saying, "Armies friendly to the emperor seek to travel over the Hokurikudō Road from Dewa and Echigo, thinking to attack the capital." The protector, Nagoya Tokiari the governor of Tōtōmi, resolved to stop them on the way, with his younger brother Shuri-no-suke Aritomo and his nephew Hyōgo-no-suke Sadamochi. And these three encamped at a place called Futatsuzuka in Etchū, where they called together the warriors of nearby places.

Just at that time men came, saying, "Rokuhara is beaten down, and armies rise up in the eastern provinces to go forth against Kamakura." The warriors of Noto and Etchū, they who had

"The direction of the Pure Land.

"He would have to suffer because of his inability to rid his mind of worldly attachments.

galloped forward according to the protector's orders, fell back to Hoshōnosu, where they concerted together to advance against the protector's camp. And then even the protector's retainers fled away instantly to join the enemy, although previously they had thought dutifully and loyally, "We will exchange our bodies for the body of our lord; we will exchange our lives for the life of our lord!" Those who came in the morning departed in the evening, and swiftly Tokiaki's friends bore malice toward him, they who had cleaved to him and loved him. At last but seventy-nine persons remained, close kinsmen who refused to leave, or hereditary retainers grateful for many boons.

At the hour of the horse on the seventeenth day of the fifth month, there came one to Tokiari, saying, "The enemy advance to give battle with more than ten thousand horsemen." And thereupon Tokiari and his brother and nephew said:

"To what avail may we fight when our numbers are thus few? We would be mocked by men of generations to come, if through rash fighting we fell into the hands of the enemy to suffer the shame of imprisonment."

They left their camps, thinking in their hearts, "We shall send out our wives and children in a boat to sink in the sea before the enemy draw near, and we shall take our lives inside our castle."

Now the lady of the governor of Tōtōmi had married him twenty-one years before, and there were two sons of their love, eight years old and six years old. Shuri-no-suke Aritomo's wife of more than three years was great with child, while the wife of Hyōgo-no-suke Sadamochi was a lady of high degree, come from the capital four or five days earlier to be Sadamochi's bride.

Long ago when Sadamochi had first gazed for a moment upon the peerless countenance and curving painted brows of this lady, he had yearned after her, thinking, "Were there but a crack in her screen!" And when he had loved her for more than three years, by devising various means he had stolen her away. Since the days of their intimacy were but yesterday and today, death was indeed bitter to him, though previously he had lamented to her, "I would give up life for the happiness of communion with you."²⁸ Longer

²⁸From a poem by Ariwara no Narihira (827-880) in the *Shinkokinshū*.

were the months and days of his sad yearning than the life of the rock rubbed by the heavenly robe of feathers;²⁸ shorter than a spring night's dream was their love after they were joined together. How pitiful were the vows that instantly met with this affliction! Griefously did they two weep, and sorrowed to part, saying, "We have heard of the sadness of death which early or late is visited upon all men, even as the passing of the dew on the branches of a tree and the drops on its trunk;²⁹ yet never did we believe that we would part thus miserably, the one to sink beneath the waves and the other to burn to death in a fire."

Soon it seemed that the enemy drew near, for men clamored, "Behold the dust raised by horses on the east and west!" And thereupon all the wives and small children entered weeping into a boat.

As the boat rowed out toward the distant sea, the favorable wind did not leave off blowing even a little, but spitefully blew these travelers far out on the water. Nor did the ebbing tide turn back, but heartlessly drew the rowing vessel beyond the bay. Even such was the sorrow of Lady Sayo of Matsura, who waved her scarf from Tamatsushima Mountain to the boat going out to sea!³¹

Now working the oar the boatman stopped the boat among the waves. The one lady pressed the two children against her sides, the two ladies joined their hands together, and all alike cast their bodies into the water. For a time their crimson skirts and red trousers floated on the surface of the sea, which became as river waters of Yoshino or Tatsuta, dyed with fallen cherry blossoms or scattered maple leaves, but at last they sank into the depths.

When the warriors at the castle had witnessed these things, they cut their bellies all together and burned to death at the bottom of a war fire: seventy-nine men of high estate and low.

May it not be that the spirits of the dead remained there, still thinking wrong thoughts of attachment to husbands and wives? Of late a boatman coming up from Echigo suddenly met with an

²⁸ According to one explanation, the length of a kalpa is the time required to destroy a rock forty leagues long on every side by rubbing it once every three years with an angel's robe.

²⁹ An allusion to a poem in the *Shinkokinshū*. Through the dew on the branches may vanish before the drops on the trunk, the same fate awaits both in the end.

³¹ Her husband was in the boat, going to fight against Silla. She is said to have stayed there until she died.

ill wind and rough waves at that bay, wherefore he let fall his anchor. Deep in the night when the waves had quieted, all the aspect of that travel lodging became fearful: the wind from the pine trees, the moon shining on the reed flowers. Far out on the water there came a sound of women weeping and grieving, and even as the boatman listened, sorely amazed, men's voices called, "Come hither, boat!" from the beach.

The boatman could do no other, but took his craft to the shore, where three men entered its cabin, most valiant in appearance.

"We will ride with you to the offing," they said.

When the boatman had taken them out to the place where the tidal currents joined together, these three got down from the boat and stood upon the boundless waves. And soon three ladies of about fifteen, sixteen, or nineteen years floated up weeping from below the waves, clad in red trousers and many skirts.³² The men looked upon them with loving eyes, as though to draw near to them, but a fierce fire burned up suddenly, coming between the men and the women with its flames. The yearning figures of the three ladies sank to the bottom of the waves, while the men swam back weeping on top of the water toward Futatsuzuka.

Sorely perplexed, the boatman pulled at the sleeve of one of those men, asking, "In the past, what men were you?" And he answered, naming each of them, "We were the Nagoya governor of Tōtōmi, Nagoya Shuri-no-suke, and Nagoya Hyōgo-no-suke." Whereupon the three vanished as though wiped out.

Subhakarā³³ of India yearned after a queen so uncontrollably that his body was consumed by the flames of his passion, while through love of her husband the Maiden of Uji Bridge³⁴ in our country moistened her sleeve with tears where she slept alone. These were both strange happenings of antiquity, recorded in old chronicles. But sinful indeed was the love of the dead that caused such things to appear in the world before men's eyes!

³² These were the ghosts of the ladies as they had appeared in their girlhood.

³³ A fisherman who loved a queen so intensely that his body burst into flames.

³⁴ She was so jealous of her husband's other wife that she drowned herself in the Uji River.